



Australian Government

Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities



INDIGENOUS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING 25 BULLETIN

23–25 OCTOBER 2012 CAIRNS, QUEENSLAND

The role of the Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) is to provide advice to the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, the Hon Tony Burke MP, on:

- the operation of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Act 1999* (EPBC Act), taking into account the significance of Indigenous people's knowledge of the management of land and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity; and
- Indigenous Protected Areas.

The IAC also provides advice to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (the department) on Indigenous issues as they relate to the role of the department, except where an existing statutory committee exists to provide such advice.

IAC members are appointed by the Minister under section 505A (3) of the *EPBC Act*.

Membership of the IAC is based on their expertise in Indigenous land management, conservation and cultural heritage

management. The members of the IAC have a wide range of skills and knowledge in fields such as park management, tertiary education, cultural heritage management, Indigenous land management, and local, regional and state Indigenous affairs.

The current members are:

- Ms Melissa George—Chair
- Ms Chrissy Grant—Deputy Chair
- Ms Francine McCarthy
- Mr Klynton Wanganeen
- Mr Jason Field
- Mr Daniel Oades
- Mr Bruce Martin
- Mr Frank Loban
- Mr Kado Muir
- Mr Joe Morrison
- Mr Dave Johnston

Further information about the committee can be found at:

[www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/
committees/iac.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/committees/iac.html)

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Purpose

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide a publically available summary of issues we discussed at our 25th meeting held in Cairns, Queensland, on 23–25 October 2012. It is hoped that this information can assist Indigenous communities who are actively involved with land and sea country management to keep up to date with the Australian Government's environmental policies and programs and the advisory work that we do.

Meeting with local Indigenous organisations

The IAC holds two meetings per year. One meeting is convened outside of Canberra to provide an opportunity for the IAC to meet with local Indigenous organisations involved with land and sea management activities and to find out what is happening on the ground. The IAC takes these matters on board when providing advice to the Minister and the department.

In Cairns we met with the following:

- Wet Tropics Management Authority;
- Jabalbina Yalanji Aboriginal Corporation;
- North Queensland Land Council;
- Rainforest Aboriginal Peoples Alliance; and
- Balkanu Cape York Development Corporation.

It is clear that from this meeting that those Indigenous organisations have to deal with a lot complex issues around land and sea management. We discussed land tenure issues and having to comply with the *Native Title Act 1984*, pastoral and rural leases, the *Queensland Heritage Act 1992*, Regional council's regulations, *Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992*, *National Parks Wildlife Reserves Act 1975*, agreements such as Indigenous Land Use Agreements and Traditional Use of Marine Resource Agreements amongst other pieces of legislation. Discussions also included organisations having to comply with various government agencies funding requirements.

Australian Landcare Council—Indigenous Working Group

The IAC also met with the Indigenous Working Group (IWG) of the Australian Landcare Council. The IWG is the advisory group for the Australian Landcare Council within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. We are looking at ways to work together on any common issues that arise for Indigenous peoples and communities regarding land management activities and the use of Indigenous ecological knowledge in land management practices.

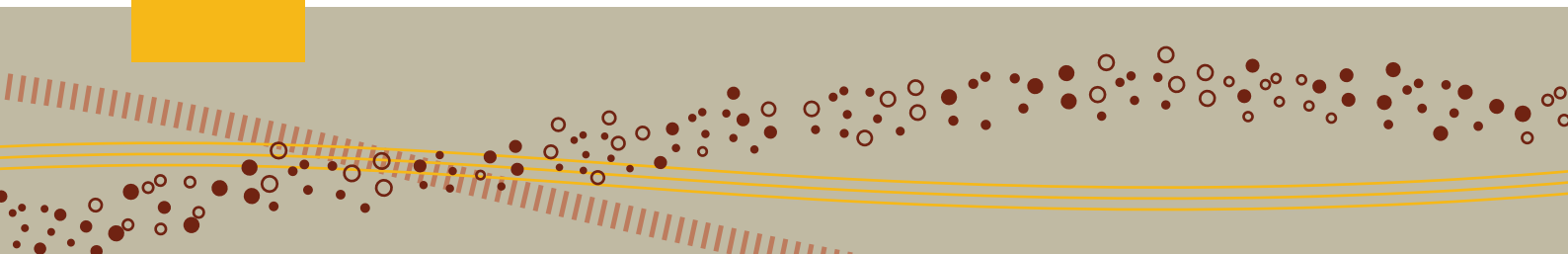
Caring for our Country

The IAC received a briefing from the department on Caring for our Country—'The next five years of the Caring for our Country Initiative'. The department has finalised their consultations with stakeholders and are now designing of the second phase of the program (which will commence 1 July 2013). An online publication is expected to be released in the coming months. Information about the Indigenous Caring for Country strategy is available at: www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/index.html

Threatened Species Scientific Committee

The department has a Threatened Species Scientific Committee (TSSC) which is also established under the EPBC Act. This committee provides advice to the Minister on the amendment and updating of lists for threatened species, threatened ecological communities, and key threatening processes together with the making or adoption of recovery plans and threat abatement plans. More details about this committee can be found at: www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/threatened/committee.html

Both the IAC and TSSC committee members have recently developed a set of draft protocols to reflect the relevant objects in the EPBC Act that seek to promote a co-operative approach to the protection and management of the environment. These protocols will recognise the role of Indigenous people in the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's biodiversity and promote the use of Indigenous people's knowledge of biodiversity.



Indigenous Cultural & Spiritual Values in Water Quality Planning

The IAC received briefing on the recently released Indigenous Cultural & Spiritual Values in Water Quality Planning report. This report presents a suite of case studies demonstrating water quality management that takes into account Indigenous cultural and spiritual values. The case studies include contributions from state government agency representatives, researchers and Indigenous organisations.

The report was commissioned by the Department to contribute to guidance on cultural and spiritual values, under a review of the National Water Quality Management Strategy Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality. It can be found at:

www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/quality/water-quality-planning-indigenous.html

Reforms for Australia's national environment law

The IAC was provided with an update on the reforms for Australia's national environment law. The background to the reforms is that on 24 August 2011 the Minister released the government response to the independent review of the EPBC Act as part of a broad package of reforms for Australia's national environment law. Announcing the reform package the Minister said that these reforms would:

- deliver better environmental protection focusing on whole regions and ecosystems and faster environmental assessments;
- provide a consistent national approach to environmental impact assessments that removes duplication, cuts red tape; and
- provide better upfront guidance on legislation requirements, with more long-term certainty and transparency.

As part of its work to implement this reform package, the Australian Government has been leading a national reform process to deliver a simpler environmental protection system that has clearer standards and gives faster decisions to ensure our nation has a both a resilient environment and a strong economy.

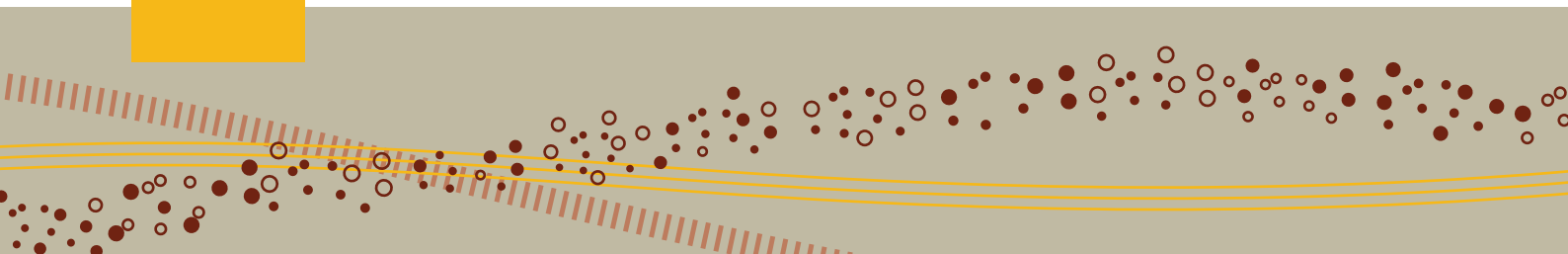
International Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Land and Sea Managers Network conference

In June 2012 the Chair and IAC member, Mr Daniel Oades, attended the International Rio+20 Conference in Rio, Brazil. They accompanied the Prime Minister, the Hon Julia Gillard MP, who announced that Australia will host an International Conference on establishing an International Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Land and Sea Managers Network. This conference will be held in Darwin from 26-31 May 2013. The IAC has been consulted on the themes for the conference and the Chair and Deputy Chair are on the national advisory group. For more information about the conference please go to: www.worldindigenousnetwork.net/

Commonwealth Marine Reserves

On 16 November 2012 Minister Burke announced the proclamation to protect more than 2.3 million square kilometres of ocean environment. This in effect is the world biggest network of marine reserves set up to protect Australia's marine environments. At the meeting the IAC was briefed on this proclamation and the government's next step of developing management plans for these marine reserves. It is important for Indigenous communities who have an interest in those areas declared a marine reserve to be aware of these plans as they should be consulted and are encouraged to provide a submission on the development of these plans. More information about the marine reserves can be found at www.environment.gov.au/marinereserves/index.html

More information about the management plans can be found at www.environment.gov.au/marinereserves/management.html



Other issues discussed

- Dugong and Turtle Issues;
- Indigenous Engagement Guidelines;
- Reconciliation Action Plan;
- Working on Country and Commercial activity Policy Proposal;
- Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Information;
- Indigenous Enterprise Development;
- Land Sector Package;
- World Heritage—Cape York Listing Listing of the Kimberley;
- Marine Species Recovery Planning and draft Threat Abatement Plans;
- Offset and Biodiversity Policy; and
- Strategic Assessments Great Barrier Reef Taskforce.

Contact

Should you require more information please contact the IAC secretariat on 02 6275 9212 or email iac.environment.gov.au

Ms Melissa George
Chair



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