



## Meeting Update

### Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations

**Meeting Details:** MLDRIN and NBAN Joint Meeting

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> March 2018

**Venue:** Commercial Hotel, Dubbo NSW

#### Attendance

Members:

Kingsley Abdulla, Gary Abdulla (Maraura), Stephen Atkinson (Wadi Wadi), Wayne Carr, Coral Peckham, Peter Ingram (Wiradjuri), Janice Freeman-Williams, Alice Williams (Wolgalu), Bella Kennedy, Stewart Taylor (Wamba Wamba), Brendan Kennedy (Tati Tati), Badger Bates, Warren Clarke (Barkandji), Ricky Kirby (Muthi Muthi), Monica Morgan, Lance James (Yorta Yorta), Grant Rigney (Ngarrindjeri), Neville Whyman (Barapa Barapa), Rene Woods, Ian Woods (Nari Nari),

Observers:

Jason Johnson, Christine Abdulla (River Murray and Mallee Aboriginal Corporation), Lavinus Ingram (Wadi Wadi), Jenny Munroe (Wiradjuri), Damein Bell (Gunditjmara – Facilitator)

#### Key issues discussed:

- The key purpose of the meeting was to review three reports arising from the National Cultural Flows Research Project. These reports are the product of over five years of work by First Nations, in partnership with hydrologists, water planners and legal academics .
- The combined MLDRIN/NBAN group reviewed three reports: 1) The final summary report for the project: *Dungala Baake, re-thinking the Future of Water Management in Australia*, 2) A summary report on the options for legal and policy reform to give effect to Cultural Flows, *A Pathway to Cultural Flows in Australia* and 3) *Cultural Flows, a Guide for Community*.
- Delegates expressed a wish to undertake further consultation within the Nation groups about the draft reports. Extensive discussions were held about the content and key feedback was captured. Delegates agreed to a process for progressing final amendments to the drafts (see below).
- The Cultural Flows reports are a major contribution to Water Reform in Australia, working towards a future where Aboriginal water rights are embedded in Australia's water entitlement and management framework.
- NSW Office of Environment and Heritage staff presented on proposed Aboriginal Cultural Heritage legislation. Delegates discussed concerns about

the proposed new legislation and cultural heritage management structure.

- Murray Darling Basin Authority staff presented on a range of topics including:
  - Water resource plan preparation and accreditation: timelines for development of water resource plans are critically tight, especially for New South Wales. MDBA is continuing to engage with MLDRIN and others around approaches for assessment and accreditation of water resource plans
  - Environmental watering priorities. MDBA staff are working with MLDRIN on approaches to include Aboriginal environmental outcomes in high-level guidance for how environmental is managed.
  - The Living Murray Indigenous Partnerships Program (IPP): an IPP forum is being held in May in Renmark
- Staff from the NSW Department of Primary Industry (DPI) presented on the NSW Water Reform Action Plan. The Plan is a response to serious allegations and irregularities within the NSW water management framework. It includes four key areas of reform: [Water take measurement and metering](#), [Transparency measures](#), [Better management of environmental water](#) and [Floodplain harvesting policy](#).

#### Key resolutions and decisions:

- Delegates unanimously agreed on a process to provide final feedback for the National Cultural Flows Research reports. Delegates will be provided with the most updated version of the Cultural Flows reports and will have six weeks to seek comments from Nation groups and provide feedback to MLDRIN. The Research and Planning Committee will collate all feedback and make the final decision on completion of the reports for public release.
- MLDRIN and NBAN agreed to pursue preparing a submissions on the NSW Cultural Heritage Reforms.

#### Key upcoming dates

- **12<sup>th</sup> April:** Submissions due for [Inquiry into the management and use of Commonwealth environmental water](#)
- **15<sup>th</sup> April:** Submissions due for NSW [Water Reform Action Plan](#)
- **19<sup>th</sup> April:** Submissions due for Productivity Commission [Five Year review of the Murray Darling Basin Plan](#)
- **20<sup>th</sup> April:** Submissions for NSW [Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Reforms](#) due
- **24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> May:** MLDRIN Board Meeting, Albury NSW

If you have any questions about anything raised in this update please feel free to contact Will Mooney on **0404 163 700** or email: [executiveofficer.mldr@gmail.com](mailto:executiveofficer.mldr@gmail.com)