



Australian Government

Department of Climate Change, Energy,
the Environment and Water

Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests Communique #7, September 2024

Meeting 30, Canberra, 11–12 September 2024

The Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests (the Committee) met on the land of the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Peoples in Canberra on 11-12 September 2024. The meeting was hosted by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department).

The Committee received an update on the Commonwealth Government's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water initiatives, including the Murray—Darling Basin (Basin) Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program, national and Basin enduring water holding arrangements, the Cultural Flows Planning for Cultural Economies Program, and the development of the Inland Waters Target.

The Committee welcomed presentations on groundwater from Mr Anthony Brinkley from the Bureau of Meteorology, and Mr David Robinson and Ms Jess Scott from Geoscience Australia. Members valued the opportunity to discuss CAWI's insight on the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, knowledges and Cultural values in groundwater planning and management, and to learn about national groundwater mapping initiatives.

The Committee reviewed consultation feedback on the draft National Water Agreement (NWA) Principles, including from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The Committee provided further advice to the department on how the NWA could address this feedback. The Committee also discussed, and also at numerous NWA-related meetings, the future NWA workplan and the Committee's proposed role in the design, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the NWA. The Committee highlighted the need to build Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples formal knowledge of contemporary water planning and management to support their engagement on the NWA going forward.

The department updated the Committee on the Expression of Interest process to fill committee member vacancies. The EOI have been finalised and successful applicants have been provided a Letter of Offer. It is anticipated that new appointees will be onboard for the next Committee meeting in November 2024. The department will work with jurisdictions and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations to address any further Committee member vacancies.

Next meeting

The Committee's next meeting will be held in Canberra (Ngunnawal and Ngambri Country) from 27-29 November 2024.

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