



Australian Government

Department of Climate Change, Energy,
the Environment and Water

Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests Communique #10, June 2025

Meeting 34, Broome, Western Australia, 17 – 19 June 2025

The Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Water Interests (the Committee) met on the land of the Yawuru people from 17 to 19 June 2025. The Committee was Welcomed to Country by Yawuru Elder, Aunty Dianne Appleby. The meeting was hosted by the Australian Government's Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department).

The Committee met with representatives from several First Nations organisations from Western Australia, including Nyamba Buru Yawuru, the Yamatji Southern Regional Corporation (YSRC), and the Kimberley Land Council (KLC). Nyamba Buru Yawuru discussed the work they are doing on-Country at Roebuck Plains Station, including management and monitoring of bilarra (wetlands), the complexities involved, and the need for a better understanding of what is happening at the national level. The YSRC and Yamatji Water informed the Committee of how Yamatji Nation gained access to water through their Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) and the work they are doing to quantify and identify economic livelihoods from their water allocation.

The KLC highlighted the strength and resilience required of them as leaders advocating against further allocation of surface water from the Fitzroy River (martuwarra). The CEO and the Chair of the KLC emphasised the importance of protecting the health of ecosystems, while noting the impact of over extraction of groundwater.

The Committee received an update on water policies and programs from State and Territory representatives.

The Committee visited the Roebuck Bay area, on Yawuru Country, with Mabu Buru Tours. During the field trip, the Committee had the opportunity to hear from Mr Johani Mamid, a Yawuru, Karajarri, Nyul Nyul, Bardi man, and Karajarri man, Uncle Mervyn Mulardy. Uncle Mervyn, Johani and the Karajarri dancers shared songs, dances, and stories about Country, a very moving experience for which the Committee was grateful. Johani and Uncle Mervyn also discussed some of their key governance and water management learnings and priorities.

The department facilitated a workshop with the Committee on the National Water Agreement, discussing the Committee's ongoing role in its implementation. The Committee also received updates from the department on other water initiatives including: the First Nations Water Enabling Program; the development of the Inland Waters Target; the engagement process for the Murray-Darling Basin First Nations Enduring Water Holding Arrangements; and excitingly, the recent first purchase under the Aboriginal Water Entitlements Program.

Next meeting

The Committee's next meeting will be held in person and is scheduled for 12 August 2025.

Other Committee activities and ongoing work

Submissions

The Committee has recently drafted and submitted a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission's (ALRC) *Review of the Future Acts Regime: Discussion Paper (2025)* and also to the Australian Government's *Inaugural independent review of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap*.

The ALRC review submission focused on water issues of the future acts regime under *the Native Title Act 1993 Cth*, building on the issues outlined in the Committee's previous submission to the ALRC *Review of the Future Acts Regime, Issues Paper. 50 November 2024*. The Closing the Gap review submission focused on the ways of working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and relevant considerations related to the Target 15C Inland Waters Target in the National Agreement.

Fact Sheets

The Committee is continuing to develop a series of fact sheets with the aim of building broader water literacy knowledge, and to assist governments with water action planning and management processes under the National Water Agreement. This will now include a videography component that will be used to visually convey the fact sheet topics.

The fact sheets, including videos, will be published on the department's website once finalised.

Contact: CAWI@dcceew.gov.au