

Indigenous Advisory Committee Bulletin Meeting 42

The Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) held its 42nd meeting on 17 August 2021 via videoconference.

Update from Parks Australia's Senior Advisory Group on Joint Management

The [Senior Advisory Group \(SAG\)](#) was established to undertake an independent review of the joint management arrangements with Traditional Custodians for Commonwealth National Parks. The Booderee, Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks are all Aboriginal land leased to the Australian Government and jointly managed with the Director of National Parks. The group is co-chaired by the Hon. Amanda Vanstone AO and Mr. Joe Martin-Jard, along with six members who have experience and expertise in Indigenous affairs and governance. Ms Vanstone provided an update on recent SAG activities, highlighting that while consultation had been constrained due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, the group had virtually engaged with stakeholders including land councils, tourism operators and Traditional Custodians. Clear themes had been identified including barriers to employment, governance, and the benefits of increased Traditional Custodian representation on management boards. This self-determination is vital to success which were key themes highlighted in submissions to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) review submissions.

New Sea Country Indigenous Protected Areas Program

Earlier this year the Prime Minister announced a \$100 million Oceans Leadership package, which included \$11.6 million for a new Sea Country Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) program. The new IPA program will establish new Sea Country IPAs and expand existing IPAs to incorporate Sea Country. As part of this new program is a \$9.7 million competitive grant opportunity restricted to Indigenous organisations. The remaining \$1.9 million will support activities such as developing a monitoring and evaluation system and holding an IPA Network conference. The IAC discussed complexities around eligibility and the need to improve accessibility for Indigenous groups to participate in these opportunities such as ensuring flexible application processes (e.g. by video) and cultural authority to represent Traditional Custodians or undertake work on Country.

Our Marine Parks Grants

Also funded under the Oceans Leadership Package are two new rounds (3 and 4) of the Our Marine Parks Grants valued at \$17.2 million. Administered by Parks Australia, the first round will open in October 2021. Parks Australia sought advice on any concerns, issues or improvements that might be made to the design of the grant guidelines to encourage Indigenous participation. The IAC referred to the advice provided for the Sea Country grant guidelines to improve the accessibility and flexibility of the application process, and the use of an Indigenous communications expert to improve messaging to community.

Indigenous Advisory Protected Areas Program Evaluation

The National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) and the department who are jointly undertaking an evaluation of the Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) Program, sought advice on the draft evaluation questions. The evaluation will help inform the development next phase of the IPA program (post 2023). The IAC highlighted potential methodology linkages with the National Environmental Science Program and the importance of acknowledging ethics and protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property.

Threatened Species Strategy – development of Action Plan

The acting Threatened Species Commissioner provided an update on consultation to support the development of an Action Plan for the new Threatened Species Strategy, which will provide a framework for prioritising action and investment under the Strategy. Indigenous engagement and

participation are key areas of focus under the Strategy with Indigenous engagement and land management cutting across the eight Action Areas under the Strategy and Action Plan. While the Strategy is focussed on EPBC-listed species, priority species will include culturally significant species and the 'importance to people' is one of the principles informing the prioritisation process.

Modernisation of Indigenous Heritage

The department provided an update on the Australian Government's commitment to lift the standard of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage protection. In response to the tragic events at Juukan George (WA), Australian Government environment and Indigenous ministers convened a roundtable, in September 2020, with their state and territory counterparts. Ministers noted the Australian Government's intention to address Indigenous heritage protection reform opportunities as part of its response to the final report of the EPBC Act Review and welcomed the intention to engage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in a national reform process. Ministers noted the commitment to develop a national standard on best practice Indigenous engagement under this reform. This will be delivered, in partnership with Indigenous Australians which would initially be delivered through a Partnership Agreement between the Australian Government and the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance. The IAC will work with the department to support the delivery of the reforms.

About the IAC

The IAC is a statutory body established in 2000 under the EPBC Act.

All members of the IAC are Indigenous Australians and are ministerially appointed based on expertise in Indigenous land and sea management, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and cultural heritage management.

Members:

- Mr Duane Fraser (Chair)
- Ms Teagan Goolmeer (Deputy Chair)
- Mr Robert (Robbie) Dalton
- Dr Leah Talbot
- Ms Chrissy Grant
- Dr Stephen van Leeuwen
- Mr Stan Lui
- Dr Donna Odegaard

Past Bulletins and further information can be found at www.awe.gov.au/indigenous/committees/iac.html