

## Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) Bulletin Meeting 39

The IAC held its 39th meeting on 26 & 27 August 2020 via videoconference.

### Ministerial Session

The Committee met with the Hon Sussan Ley MP, Minister for the Environment, and discussed a number of key environment and heritage matters including the EPBC Act Review and stronger controls to protect our Indigenous heritage. The Committee appreciated the time taken by the Minister to contribute to the meeting and welcomed the meeting of Environment and Indigenous Affairs Ministers in September.

### Executive Session

The Committee also met with the Secretary and Executive Leadership Team. The Secretary acknowledged the extensive expertise of Committee members and the value of their advice as a resource to support the Minister and Department. The Committee looks forward to working with the Executive Leadership Team to strengthen strong working relationships with Indigenous Australians.

### Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

Lyn O'Connell, Deputy Secretary and Indigenous Champion, met with the Committee to discuss the draft RAP. Committee members noted that they are keen to see that the RAP makes real change, not just for the Department but more broadly for Traditional Owners. The IAC Chair welcomed the opportunity to join the RAP Committee and request for involvement from the IAC in the launch of the RAP at NAIDOC week.

### Review of the EPBC Act

The EPBC Act Independent Reviewer, Professor Graeme Samuel AC, discussed the Interim Report and Committee members welcomed the frank assessment on the shortcomings of Indigenous engagement. The Committee are hopeful that government will adopt stronger controls to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural values. The Committee will continue to provide input to the draft standards and further advice on the proposed role of the Indigenous Advisory Committee.

### State of the Environment

The Committee congratulated Dr Terri Janke, on her appointment as the SoE Co-Chief Author and Mr Joe Morrison on his appointment as the SoE Indigenous Lead Author.

The Committee recognised that the SoE has an excellent team of Indigenous authors, including Dr van Leeuwen, and presents an opportunity to give a voice to Indigenous people and their relationship with the environment. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to continue to provide input.

### Indigenous Data Project

Department officials discussed the Indigenous Data Project, with Committee members highlighting the importance of learning from prior projects in this space. The Committee noted it is important to emphasise that Traditional Owners own the data, collected for a specific purpose and this should not be shared unless Free, Prior and Informed Consent is given by the owners. The Committee recognised the efforts of the team in linking in with various networks across government, encouraged broader Indigenous expert representation on the data network and welcomed further requests for advice on this project.

### Development of a Departmental Science Strategy

Department officials discussed the draft Department Science Strategy and sought advice on how to best incorporate Indigenous science into the strategy. The Committee welcomed the initiative taken by the Department to explore options to maximise outcomes of Indigenous and western science and to embed

Indigenous science knowledge further into the Department. The Committee encouraged officials to review the IAC's submission to the EPBC Act review that raises a number of issues relevant to the strategy. The Committee welcomed the opportunity to provide further input and participate in this work.

### Best Practice Standards for Indigenous Cultural Heritage Legislation

Australian Heritage Council Members, Rachel Perkins and Dr Lyndon Ormond-Parker, together with Matthew Storey (Office of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council) and Department officials discussed the draft Best Practice Standards for Indigenous Cultural Heritage Legislation. The IAC commended the team for the great work on this standard, and endorsed in principle the standards with minor revisions.

### Vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage in Australia

Australian Heritage Council Members, Rachel Perkins and Dr Lyndon Ormond-Parker, with officials summarised the purpose of the vision document which is to capture the aspirations of Indigenous Australians in managing Indigenous heritage and encourage alignment of activities underway in each jurisdictions to this Vision.

The Committee endorsed the Vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage in Australia.

### Investment Package Supporting Bushfire Recovery for Wildlife and Habitat

The Committee recommended that the grant guidelines for Indigenous Fire and Land Management Workshops, accommodate some flexibility to support applicants in lodging 'compliant' proposals and be easy to follow so it is not difficult for groups to engage and apply. The Committee recommended that a member join the assessment panel, as per the approach taken for other Indigenous grant programs.

### Environment Biosecurity

The Chief Environmental Biosecurity Officer, Ian Thompson, highlighted the opportunity and need to incorporate Indigenous values in the biosecurity priority setting. The Environmental Biosecurity Office is seeking to understand what is of value to Indigenous people in living systems and landscapes that could be degraded by invasive species, weeds and diseases or inappropriate response actions.

The Committee highlighted the NESP Threatened Species Hub and Marine Hub that have undertaken extensive work in this space, as well as international work that would be applicable. The Chair affirmed the value of this project and welcomed further requests for advice.

### National Water Initiative

Officials discussed the refresh of the National Water Initiative, established in 2004 as a shared jurisdictional commitment on managing water. The Committee welcomed the creation of a sub committee on Indigenous water interests and the value of this sub committee to inform the water target for closing the gap.

## About the Committee

The Indigenous Advisory Committee is a statutory committee established in 2000 under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

All members of the Committee 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 are not appointed to represent particular regions or organisations.

### Members:

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

Further information can be found at <http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/committees/iac.html>