

Indigenous Advisory Committee Bulletin No.5 Meeting 29

4 December 2014, Canberra, ACT

The newly reconstituted Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC) met for the first time on 4 December 2014 in Canberra, following formal appointment on 22 October 2014 by Minister for the Environment, the Hon Greg Hunt MP.

The meeting, chaired by Ms Melissa George, focused on providing new members with a clear understanding of the Committee's role and Terms of Reference and setting a forward work plan for the Committee. Members were also provided with updates and progress on a number of existing issues, including the Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan and the Green Army Programme, and discussed a number of priority issues such as Native Title and environmental conservation, Indigenous engagement guidelines under the EPBC Act, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act reform.

Members also had the opportunity to meet Minister Hunt and discuss with him the Committee's proposed priority activities for the next 12 months.

Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan

Members heard from the Australian Crime Commission on its intelligence role and the establishment of a Wildlife and Environmental Crime Team as a component of the Dugong and Turtle Protection Plan. The Committee was advised that this Team will engage with Indigenous communities to ensure an awareness of the impact of illegal poaching and trade, and requested the IAC play a role in assisting and advising on the community consultation process.

The Committee also discussed the review of the Marine Turtles Recovery Plan, and noted the expectation for it to be finalised this year. The Committee will continue to work with the Department and participate in relevant working groups in relation to the finalisation of the plan.

Native Title opportunities

The Committee discussed Native Title opportunities and requested the Department continue to progress work around the analysis of intersects between the EPBC Act, Native Title Act and GBRMP Act, and the implications for EPBC Act offsets with respect to the future acts regime and the impact on cultural use entitlements.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act (ATSIHPA) reform

The Committee has previously raised concerns around any moves that could weaken the ATSIHPA, noting that the Act is an Act of last resort and is considered the last line of defence for protecting Indigenous heritage. The Committee provided the Department with its priority issues for reform, including timing and efficiency of the process, amendment of the reporting mechanisms; an onus on the Commonwealth to make a decision within a set timeframe; and the development of best practice standards. The Committee will work with the Department on a scoping paper for future reform of the ATSIHPA in the first quarter of 2015.

Meeting with the Minister

The Committee met with Minister Hunt at Parliament House and the Chair led discussion around the Committee's key priority areas of work that will form its forward work plan. The Minister also noted a desire for specific advice from the Committee on Indigenous Protected Areas and the development of a National Land and Sea Managers Network.

Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs)

The Committee reiterated its concerns around the future of IPAs, particularly the issue of funding beyond 2017-18 and ongoing support for the IPA brand. The Committee will continue to work with the Department on the long term viability of IPAs.

National Land and Sea Managers Network

The Minister has sought advice from the Committee on the establishment of a National Land and Sea Managers Network. The Committee will work with the Kimberley Land Council in the first instance in early 2015 to develop a scoping paper outlining the mechanics and requirements, including funding, for the Minister's consideration.

About the Committee

The Indigenous Advisory Committee is a statutory committee established in 2000 under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 to advise the Minister for the Environment on the operation of the Act, taking into account the significance of Indigenous peoples' knowledge of the management of land and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Members

All members are Indigenous Australians and are not appointed to represent particular regions or organisations. Members are ministerially appointed based on expertise in Indigenous land and sea management, conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity and cultural heritage management.

Current members are:

- Ms Melissa George (Chair)
- Mr Bruce Martin (Deputy Chair)
- Ms Denise Lovett
- Ms Josie Douglas
- Mr Wayne See Kee
- Mr Ricky Archer
- Ms Teagan Goolmeer
- Mr Joseph Elu
- Mr Robbie Dalton.

Further information can be found at

<http://www.environment.gov.au/indigenous/committees/iac.html>