



Indigenous Advisory Committee Bulletin No.2 Meeting 26

24–25 May 2013, Darwin, Northern Territory

The Indigenous Advisory Committee (IAC or Committee) held its 26th meeting in Darwin on 24–25 May 2013. A range of issues relevant to the Committee, the Department and the operations of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999* were discussed, including: Commonwealth Marine Reserves, the Comprehensive Strategic Assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Adjacent Coastal Zone, EPBC Regulatory Reforms and the Environmental Offsets Policy.

The Committee also met with the National Environmental Research Program Northern Australia Hub and the Indigenous Land Corporation who presented on Indigenous engagement in their respective areas.

National Environmental Research Program

The Australian Government recognises the vital role research plays in delivering effective environmental management, policies and programs. The Department's National Environmental Research Program (NERP) funds environmental research to improve our capacity to understand, manage and conserve Australia's unique biodiversity and ecosystems through the generation of world-class research, and its delivery to Australian environmental decision-makers and other stakeholders.

Five research hubs are funded by this Department under the NERP. These are:

- NERP Tropical Ecosystems Hub
- NERP Environmental Decisions Hub
- NERP Northern Australia Hub
- NERP Landscapes and Policy Hub
- NERP Marine Biodiversity Hub

Read more www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/nerp/

The NERP Northern Australia Hub addressed the IAC meeting about their engagement in research from the Kimberley to Cape York (wet/dry tropics). This is an area of very high biodiversity values which is dominated by pastoral use but with 30 percent Aboriginal ownership and an expansion of Indigenous Protected Areas across this landscape. Despite the fact that there is less than one percent of vegetation cleared, there are major environmental issues including mammal decline, increasing development pressures and climate change (e.g. sea level rise, inundation of salt water into land, etc).

The Northern Hub research focuses on 20 programs with partners to halt biodiversity loss, improve planning for biodiversity conservation and improve partnerships for management and monitoring. An Indigenous engagement strategy has been developed as an integral part of development to address communication, jobs, ethics, sharing of knowledge and representation on the Hub's Steering Committee.

Indigenous Land Corporation (ILC)— Fish River Station, Northern Territory

The ILC presented on the Fish River Station which is jointly run by ILC and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Fish River is a Perpetual Crown Lease purchased as a conservation property and managed under Category Two of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature with the aim of developing and divesting to traditional owners. The property has high conservation value and is managed for fire, feral animal and weed control with a focus on monitoring and reporting using cyber tracker.

Prior to purchase in 2010, 75 percent of the property burned annually, half in the late dry season. A Plan of Management has been developed; an Indigenous advisory group established and work is underway with the Northern Land Council to develop a governance and divestment strategy.

The Fish River Fire Project is a registered offset entity and a registered project under the Carbon Farming Initiative. Significant benefits flowing from the project include employment, environmental benefits, contribution to revenue and opportunity for traditional owners to work on and access their country. Cross tenure partnerships exist with neighbours including Tipperary Station pastoral lease. Read more www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/australia/explore/fish-river-station.xml.

Commonwealth Marine Reserves

The IAC was updated on the progress of the Commonwealth Marine Reserves. The Minister approved plans for the Temperate East, South-east, South-west, North-west and North Marine reserves networks, and the Coral Sea marine reserve were subsequently tabled in Parliament in March 2013. This has created the world's largest marine reserve network that will protect more than 2.7 million square kilometres of our ocean environment.

An extensive public consultation process was conducted over the past four years on the new marine reserve network and the science and planning that underpins it. Adopting advice from the IAC, this process also included a Commonwealth Marine Reserves Indigenous Forum held in Darwin on 5 December 2012 to inform Indigenous stakeholders about the creation of the reserves and to seek input into the development of the management plans. The forum provided an opportunity to explore ways Indigenous communities and organisations could participate in the management of marine reserves and resulted in a set of principles to assist in the development of appropriate management strategies and actions. The final forum outcomes report is available on the Department's website.

The management plans provide certainty about the activities that will be allowed in the reserves over the course of the plans' 10-year lifespan. With the exception of the South-east Marine Reserves Network management plan which comes into operation on 1 July 2013, the plans for the rest of the network do not take effect until 1 July 2014. Management plans for all the networks and Coral Sea Reserve can be found at: www.environment.gov.au/marinereserves/consultation/index.html

Comprehensive Strategic Assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage and Adjacent Coastal Zone

The IAC was briefed on the progress of the comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area and Adjacent Coastal Zone.

The strategic assessment has two components—a marine component led by the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) and a coastal component led by the Queensland government. GBRMPA and the Queensland Government have primary responsibility for Indigenous stakeholder engagement throughout the comprehensive strategic assessment. The Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment Research Reports were finalised in July 2013.

An independent review of The Port of Gladstone was conducted with regard to management arrangements. IAC involvement in this review has resulted in effective Indigenous engagement which included a submission from the Gidargil Development Corporation in Bundaberg and a meeting with traditional owner groups.

The Department has drafted referral guidelines for Outstanding Universal Values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. These guidelines are a tool to help determine whether an action needs to be referred to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment for consideration under national environment law.

The draft referral guidelines was put out for public comments and this closed on 1 October 2013.

The Great Barrier Reef Strategic Assessment Research Reports, the Independent Review of the Port of Gladstone Report and the draft referral guidelines for Outstanding Universal Values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area can be found on the Department's website.

www.environment.gov.au/coasts/gbr/index.html



Nagoya Protocols

The Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization (the Protocol) is a global agreement that implements the access and benefit-sharing obligations of the Convention on Biological Diversity.

The Convention on Biological Diversity is a multilateral treaty with 193 parties, including Australia.

The three objectives of the convention are:

- the conservation of biological diversity;
- the sustainable use of its components; and
- the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the use of genetic resources.

Australia ratified the Convention on Biological Diversity on 18 June 1993. More information can be found at the Convention on Biological Diversity website.

The Protocol was adopted in Nagoya, Japan in October 2010, after six years of negotiations. Australia signed the Protocol in January 2012, and is now developing its approach to implementation and ratification.

A fact sheet about the Nagoya Protocol has been developed to explain the protocol. This fact sheet is a public document and is available at www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/science/access/biological-diversity.html

World Indigenous Network Conference

At the 2012 International Rio+20 Conference the former Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard MP announced that Australia would host an International Conference on establishing an International Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Land and Sea Managers Network.

As a result, the inaugural World Indigenous Network (WIN) Conference was held in Darwin on 26–31 May 2013. It was a successful international event for more than 1200 international Indigenous peoples and local communities land and sea managers from over 50 countries. Members of the IAC were heavily involved as part of the National Advisory Group in the design and development of the conference. Ms Melissa George, IAC Chair, co-hosted this event with Mr Chaske Spencer from the Lakota Sioux tribe. Mr Spencer is an actor and activist who was raised on Indian Reservations in Montana and Idaho and is involved in numerous projects working with Native American families and communities.

Six international ranger exchanges occurred prior to the conference and were also part of the Conference program. These exchanges were delivered in partnership with the Department and the Pew Environment Group, The Nature Conservancy, The Thin Green Line, Parks Forum and Ocean Revolution. Indigenous people from Canada, Mexico, North America, the Solomon Islands, Africa and New Zealand participated in these exchanges, while host organisations in Australia included the Kimberley Land Council, the Torres Strait Regional Authority, Yalata Community and Kakadu National Park. These proved to be excellent opportunities for information exchange and partnership development between participating parties.

Outcomes from this conference included:

- the announcement that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—Equator Initiative (EI) will host the World Indigenous Network secretariat. EI assumed this role in July 2013;
- two young Indigenous leaders will have the opportunity to gain work experience through a short term placement with the UNDP—EI in New York City, USA and also attend the 8th Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal, Canada to assist in the preparation and running of a World Indigenous Network side event; and
- work towards the development of a national Indigenous land and sea managers network for Australia.

More information on the World Indigenous Network Conference 2013 can be found on www.worldindigenousnetwork.net/win-conference-darwin-2013

Dates for the next IAC meeting

The proposed dates for the next IAC meetings are 26 and 27 November 2013. It is proposed the meeting be held in Canberra.

It is also planned that the IAC heritage working group and the Australian Heritage Council will meet on 28 November 2013 to discuss the 'Protocol for Formal Engagement' currently being drafted. This protocol will guide the two groups on how they should formally engage on Indigenous matters connected with their roles.

Contact

Should you require more information please contact the IAC secretariat on 02 6102 7536 or email iac.environment.gov.au

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Chair

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