

MEDIA RELEASE

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Northern Basin Indigenous forum adds Basin Plan input

More than 60 representatives from 27 Indigenous nations in the Northern Murray-Darling Basin took part in the Northern Basin Indigenous Gathering at Moree on 9 and 10 December.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority organised the gathering in consultation with a large number of traditional owners and native title claimant groups.

The purpose of the gathering - which saw participants travelling from the Lachlan in the south and the Condamine in the north - was to build stakeholder understanding of, and to seek input to key issues in the proposed Basin Plan.

Authority Chair Mike Taylor said the meeting provided a valuable occasion for traditional owners to discuss their water resource management issues and concerns.

“It was also an excellent opportunity to consider culturally appropriate options for longer term engagement,” he said.

Mr Taylor said the Authority welcomed an agreement by participants on the need for the formation of a new entity - the Northern Murray Darling Aboriginal Nations - with an interim working group nominated to provide input on the draft Basin Plan.

Cheryl Buchanan, an Indigenous member of the Authority’s Basin Community Committee said the meeting was a great opportunity to set up a framework for Aboriginal Nations to have a say on water issues within the Basin.

“The proposed new group will mean that for the first time more than 30 Aboriginal Nations of the northern Murray-Darling Basin will have the opportunity to be involved in the Basin planning process,” Ms Buchanan said.

“It will give Aboriginal communities a collective voice on water and natural resource management issues and lead to better outcomes for Aboriginal communities within the Basin.

“We have stuck to a process to get some really positive outcomes from this meeting and I’m proud of everyone who attended for their cultural integrity.

“Water is vital for our health and our culture and I know we all recognise the cultural, social, economic and environmental values in healthy rivers.

“We are looking forward to being part of the planning process to ensure we have the water we need in our waterways for the generations to come.

“Many nations with one voice will allow one of the most marginalised groups within the Basin to be heard,” Buchanan said.

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