



Basin Community Committee

Bringing a community perspective to the Murray–Darling Basin

COMMUNIQUE

18 February 2020

The Basin Community Committee met in Canberra on 13-14 February and welcomed the appointment of **Hon Keith Pitt MP** as Minister for Resources, Water and Northern Australia. The Committee is looking forward to a productive working relationship with the Minister and will invite him to make use of the Committee to connect with communities around the Basin.

With four members finishing their term this month, the Committee thanked the valuable contribution of **outgoing members** Howard Jones, Joanne Pfeiffer and Karen Hutchinson who served since 2013, and Rory Treweek who served since 2009 including many years as the Chair.

The Committee noted the recent rains have been very welcome, but that the Murray-Darling Basin is still in **drought**. Communities are still hurting, particularly where water for critical human needs is in short supply. Communities are affected by ongoing dry conditions, with the impact to production, profitability, health and wellbeing significant. The Committee continues to call for government bipartisan support for communities.

At the meeting, the Committee heard an update from the Office of the **Inspector General** for the Murray-Darling Basin that highlighted the level of community interest in water and the frustration with parochial politics. The Committee noted the ongoing importance of **climate change**, and progress on using **water for the environment**—including the targeted use of limited water available for the environment this year, and the pilot program for the trade of unregulated flows on an event-by-event basis in the Lower Balonne.

The Committee received an update on the progress of several **reviews** currently underway in the Basin, including the ACCC's inquiry into water markets, the Independent Panel assessing social and economic conditions in the Basin, and the Interim Inspector General's inquiry into water sharing arrangements in the southern Basin. Communities have contributed significant time and input into these processes, and the Committee urged governments to respond quickly and decisively to review recommendations.

The Committee received a report from its Subcommittee on **Indigenous Water**, which committed to connect with all Basin Community Committee members across the Basin. All Committee

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For more information on the Basin Community Committee

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members will be invited to events and meetings to increase their cultural capacity and relationships with Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) and Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN). The Committee discussed how Communities of Practice could improve how First Nations people are engaged, and the need to expand various River Ranger programs.

The Committee recognised the challenges to achieving effective Indigenous involvement in water stewardship. Committee members supported the early initiatives of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to build this process and is looking forward to assisting this effort at the local community level.

BACKGROUND

Members of the Committee were appointed by the Authority after an extensive selection process involving all Basin governments. They reflect the diverse perspectives of towns and communities across the Basin, as well as the diversity of experiences around water reform.

Contact your local Basin Community Committee member via enagement@mdba.gov.au to share your views on how the Basin Plan is being implemented. See more at mdba.gov.au/BCC

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