

# Report on how local communities influenced Basin Plan implementation – ACT

The Australian Capital Territory 2014- 15 annual report on using local knowledge and solutions to implement the Basin Plan (Schedule 12, Item 6)

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## Reporting context

The success of the Basin Plan and associated water reforms depends on working closely with communities and stakeholders who can provide the necessary local knowledge and solutions to effectively implement the Plan.

The Basin Plan requires Basin States, the Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to draw on local knowledge and solutions across a range of Basin Plan activities including long-term watering plans, annual environmental watering priorities and water resource plans.

It also requires that the best available knowledge (including scientific, local and cultural knowledge), evidence and analysis be used where practicable to ensure credibility, transparency and usefulness of monitoring and evaluation findings.

The purpose of this report is to monitor the extent to which local knowledge and solutions have influenced implementation of the Basin Plan during 2014- 15. The report is a requirement of Chapter 13 of the Basin Plan and relates to Item 6 of Schedule 12.

## Indicators for measuring success

The use of local knowledge to inform Basin Plan implementation is evaluated using the following indicators:

- How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation (**6.1**)
- Processes used to identify stakeholders and other relevant groups and individuals from local communities and peak bodies (**6.2**)
- How stakeholders and other relevant groups were engaged ( **6.3**)

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## 6.1: How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation

*Where possible include specific examples of:*

- *how local knowledge and solutions were used by the reporter*
- *how involving communities made a difference to Basin Plan implementation*
- *how decisions changed as a result of community involvement*

*Local knowledge might include knowledge drawn from Traditional Owners and other Indigenous people and groups. When reporting on Aboriginal participation and influence, processes of involvement may be as important as outcomes.*

*In 2014-15 reporting, we would expect use of local knowledge to feature in development of Water Resource Plans.*

*Examples or case studies are not mandatory but may be a useful way to describe how local knowledge and solutions inform implementation of the Basin Plan.*

### **Response**

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The Environment and Planning Directorate has engaged the local community to assist with the development of the ACT's Water Resource Plan. The knowledge drawn from the various groups has been used to assist in the development of various aspects of the ACT's water resource plan. More specifically, the engagement with key stakeholders has enabled the ACT to address more comprehensively and on an informed basis the matter of risk assessment.

An outcome developed with Rural Landholders during a meeting in July 2014 was that rural water was to be clearly identified in the Water Resource Plan as a significant component of water use in the ACT and critical for sustainable farm management and agricultural production (5.3.1). The Rural Leaseholders also requested that they be kept informed and have recently been made part of the governance structure of the catchment coordination group that includes water issues but also catchment management more broadly.

Continual engagement with different representatives from local indigenous groups including the Buru Ngunawal Aboriginal Corporation, King Brown Tribal Group, Little Gudgenby River Tribal Group, Ngarigu Currawong Clan; and United Ngunawal Elders Council have provided advice on particular indigenous issues such as cultural flow health index and developments and the path to indigenous water values and uses. The advice on these issues has been developed with the community and incorporated into WRP (13.1). Additionally, the ACT in collaboration with the MDBA conducted a field trip throughout the ACT over a one week period to capture the water values and uses and priorities of the Indigenous community.

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## 6.2: Processes used to identify stakeholders and other relevant groups and individuals from local communities and peak bodies

*Where possible include process used to identify stakeholders and other relevant groups/individuals*

### **Response**

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The ACT Government through the Environment and Planning Directorate (EPD) has been utilising local knowledge and information in preparing and implementing those aspects of the Basin Plan that relate to the ACT. The involvement of local groups and stakeholders and the use of local

knowledge and information are exemplified in the ACT's development of its draft Water Resource Plan as required for completion in 2016.

The ACT did not require a process to identify key stakeholders to inform the implementation of the Basin Plan as the ACT had already identified the key local stakeholders throughout the development and implementation of similar works to the Basin Plan, such as the ACT Water Strategy. The size and structure of the ACT limits the number of stakeholders as compared to other Basin states. EPD has and maintains close relationships with the key stakeholders that relate to water and water resource planning. For instance, EPD works closely with the one ACT water utility, ICON Water, during utility performance reporting, regular water quality monitoring and trade obligations such as the Living Murray Initiative. Similarly, EPD has maintained relationships with the rural lessees, water experts and key community groups that have previously assisted and advised on the development of the ACT Water Strategy or review of the Environmental Flow Guidelines.

The ACT, in partnership with the Murray-Darling Basin Authority, conducted a series of indigenous engagement workshops to develop an Aboriginal Waterways Assessment Tool. The identification of the local Indigenous community was made through EPD's designated Aboriginal Natural Resource Management Facilitator who was able to identify members within the local Representative Aboriginal Organisations (RAO's) to initiate engagement with the ACT regional indigenous communities on aspects of the water resource plan.

The ACT has also been consulting with New South Wales on various aspects of water resource planning and environmental management particularly with respect to catchment management and improving water quality.

Note: the ACT is not involved in a number of Basin Plan water recovery projects, such as constraints managements, that involve community groups more broadly.

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### 6.3: How stakeholders and other relevant groups and individuals were engaged

*Where possible include:*

- *range of audiences engaged*
- *range of opportunities (types of engagement)*
- *relate these to the Basin Plan obligations to have regard to local views (Chapter 8 and 10)*

#### **Response**

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The ACT Government through the Environment and Planning Directorate has engaged with a range of stakeholders mainly on the development of the ACT's Water Resource Plan by workshops and meetings. The stakeholder engagement process includes:

- The Water Utility – Icon Water
- Local water scientific experts including from the ACT university sector
- Indigenous community groups and representatives
- Rural landholders group
- Catchment management groups
- ACT Government agencies including the Environment Protection Authority
- NSW Government Primary Industries (Water Division) officials

Once again, the ACT has worked and continues to work closely with these groups over a number of years and on a range of policy developments. Engagement with these groups was mainly through meetings and workshops. For example, EPD had previously established a panel of local scientific water experts to draw on when independent expert advice is required. This panel was approached for consultation on the assessment of the ACT's risk assessment process for the Water Resource Plan.

A number of meetings were held with Indigenous representatives in regard to the development of the Aboriginal Waterways Assessment Tool to outline how the tool can consistently measure and prioritise river and wetland health so that the community are better placed to negotiate for their Country's water needs. These meetings also covered what expectations were required of those participating and highlighted that the intellectual property rights of the tool once complete. Murray Lower Darling Region Indigenous Nations group (MLDRDN) have also been consulted on the development of the ACT water resource plan.