THE BASIN PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Culturally Appropriate First Nations Consultation with Bigambul Nation
Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water and consultants, Murawin, acknowledge and pay their respect to all the Traditional Owners and the Nations of the Murray-Darling Basin. The contributions of earlier generations, including the Elders, who have fought for their rights in natural resource management, are also valued and respected.

In particular Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water acknowledges and pays its respects to the Traditional Owners of the Bigambul Nation, past, present and future and the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of the First Nations.

Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water and Murawin are grateful for the energy and time invested by the Senior Traditional Owners and other members of the Bigambul Nation for their participation in consultation activities which has informed the creation of this report, and for kindly allowing Murawin access to previously collected cultural knowledge.

Foreword

This report has been prepared by Murawin and their associates, who have been contracted on behalf of the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water as a First Nations Stakeholder Consultant to co-design and deliver a round of Nation-Based consultations with the Bigambul Nation to record the concerns of Traditional Owners for inclusion in Water Resource Plans. However, the Bigambul Nation elected not to have formal consultation as they had already been consulted for the same purposes by the Queensland Government. The Queensland consultation was undertaken in 2017 in relation to the development of the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy 'Aboriginal People’s Water Needs in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin' report, which was released in April 2018.

This original Queensland-based consultation process was guided by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority’s Guidelines for meeting Basin Plan (Chapter 10) requirements in relation to Aboriginal peoples’ objectives and outcomes for water and other guidelines such as the Akwé: Kon guidelines for Indigenous consultation. Specifically, section 10.53 of the Basin Plan says that a water resource plan must consider the ‘inclusion of Indigenous representation in the preparation and implementation of the plan’ (1.c) and must encourage the ‘active and informed participation of Indigenous people’ (1.e).

Likewise, Murawin was also guided by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority’s Guidelines for meeting Basin Plan (Chapter 10) requirements.

This report outlines the methodology and process used by Murawin generally for producing these reports as well as the specific process applicable to the Bigambul Nation. This report also makes recommendations for future consultations, including the data use agreement. It presents the Bigambul Nation’s objectives and outcomes for the management of water, based on their water-dependent values and uses, as determined in the Queensland Government’s 2017 consultation rounds, and signed off by the Bigambul Nation.
Glossary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>AMS</td>
<td>Aboriginal Medical Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>Basin Plan</td>
<td>Murray-Darling Basin Plan</td>
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<td>BNTAC</td>
<td>Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation</td>
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<tr>
<td>ILUA</td>
<td>Indigenous Land Use Agreement</td>
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<td>MDBA</td>
<td>Murray-Darling Basin Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>MLDRIN</td>
<td>Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBAN</td>
<td>Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>RNTTBC</td>
<td>Recognised Native Title Body Corporate</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOs</td>
<td>Traditional Owners</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSRs</td>
<td>Travelling Stock Routes</td>
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<tr>
<td>WRP</td>
<td>Water Resource Plan</td>
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<td>WSP</td>
<td>Water Sharing Plan</td>
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Notes on terminology

‘First Nations’ is used to refer to the original owners of what we now term Australia, as individuals, communities and nations. It is used in preference to the generic terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’, which deny the diversity of Australia’s original inhabitants. The term ‘First Nations’ acknowledges the specific jurisdiction that individual nation groups have over certain areas of Country across Australia.

‘Bigambul’, as recommended by the Bigambul Nation Organiser and used for Native Title, is the name for the people and nation consulted for this report.

The Bigambul Nation was recognised as the Traditional Owners and were granted Native Title Rights in December 2016 covering more than 17,000 sq km in Queensland’s south-western region.

Bigambul country is located in South West Queensland, spanning the Queensland and New South Wales borders and centred on the riverine area between the Macintyre and Weir rivers.

The current boundary is defined in part by the Macintyre River in the south (which becomes the Barwon River at its junction with the Weir River), the Macintyre Brook, and with the Moonie River in the west. In the north, it extends to encompass Western Creek (a tributary of the Weir River) and in the east, the boundary falls short of Cecil Plains, Millmerran, Inglewood, Beebo and Texas. Goondiwindi is the largest town in the claim area.

‘Traditional Owners’ is the term ‘used to refer to those with recognised cultural authority to speak for Country’, as suggested by the Murray Darling Basin Authority.

Senior Traditional Owners’ has been used for those with respected senior authority within certain areas or families, as identified by the Bigambul Nation Organiser in earlier consultations. They are sometimes also referred to as ‘Knowledge Holders’ or ‘Elders’.
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1. Introduction

1.1. The report
This report outlines the process and findings of consultations undertaken with representatives of the Bigambul Nation for the development of a Water Resource Plan (WRP) for accreditation by the Murray–Darling Basin Authority, under requirements of Chapter 10 of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan.

It outlines the stakeholder engagement and consultation process and methodology undertaken and makes recommendations for future collaboration with the Bigambul people for caring for Country with particular reference to the rivers and waterways. It presents findings on the objectives and outcomes expressed by the Bigambul people for the ongoing management of their water-dependent cultural, environmental, economic and social values and uses. The report was prepared by consultants, Murawin on behalf of the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.

1.2. Consultation methodology
The consultation process adhered to the Murray–Darling Basin Plan Part 14 Guidelines for meeting Basin Plan Chapter 10 requirements which recommends a nation-based model for water resource planning consultation. In relation to defining the area for the purposes of this report, the Bigambul Nation boundaries cross over four surface water and four groundwater WRPs.

The consultation and preparation of the final plan was underpinned by Murawin’s firm belief in carrying out our work where cultural respect is at the heart of all that we do. Our approach to consultation generally is underpinned by the following cornerstones:

- **Caring for Country** which is a fundamental and inherent right and responsibility for Aboriginal people in meeting their traditional custodianship responsibilities.
- **Understanding the Cultural Landscape** and ensuring that what we gained understanding of the cultural landscape as defined by the Traditional owners to ensure this was documented in the report.
- Ensuring **Cultural Inclusiveness** in that our engagement process is inclusive of all family groups.
- **Reciprocity** and the two-way relationship between water and the Bigambul people, in that they view their connection to water as holistic.
1.3. Consultation process and recommendations

The consultation process for the Bigambul report drew on previous consultations undertaken with the Bigambul people as a first step. An initial consultation was not necessary for this project as the Bigambul Nation had been consulted for the same purposes by the Queensland Government in 2017, and the Nation representative asked us to draw on that information.

The purpose of that consultation was to develop the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy ‘Aboriginal People’s Water Needs in the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin’ report, which was released in April 2018. The report incorporated information obtained from consultation with the following Aboriginal Nations: Barungga, Bidjara, Bigambul, Euahlayi, Githabul, Gomeroi (Kamilaroi), Gungarri, Guwamuu (Kooma), Jarowair, Kambuwal, Mandandanji, and Wakka Wakka. Consultation sought to identify the values and uses of water by these First Nations, risks noted by these First Nations, and the objectives and outcomes desired by these First Nations. The report summarises information obtained from all of these First Nation groups.

To prevent over-consultation, it was requested by the Nation representative that Murawin contact the Queensland Government to request access to the information the Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (DNRME) had collected from the Bigambul Nation during these 2017 consultations.
Permission was granted by the Bigambul Nation for Murawin to do so, and information contained within this report is based solely on this information exchange, which was followed by a face-to-face meeting with the Bigambul Nation to review the data presented in this report.

Murawin confirms that the information used from the Queensland consultation contains cultural knowledge and is very grateful to the Bigambul Nation for allowing access to that knowledge.

It was made clear to the Bigambul people that the information gained in this process is still subject to intellectual and cultural property rights, and that is any information collected for this report that forms a part of Bigambul cultural knowledge may only be used for the purposes of this report and for no other purpose, and ownership of cultural knowledge remains with the Bigambul Nation.

It was also important for this consultation to recognise that the Bigambul have a Native Title determination. During the consultation process the original Nation coordinator handed over the coordination role to the Executive Director of the Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC). The BNTAC has been doing work around water and water use, and this report draws on that information.

**Table 1. Summary of key recommendations.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1: Design</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phase 2: Preparation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phase 3: Consultation</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phase 4: Review</strong></td>
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### Table 2. Summary of key findings - Categories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key findings - Categories</th>
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</table>
| **Values**                | Water is an intrinsic part of the balance of the land and must be seen holistically. It represents the balance of life.  
The health and wellbeing of the Bigambul Nation and the broader community Health for the is directly correlated to the health of the water, and land.  
Health and social and emotional wellbeing of the community is directly correlated to the community being able to practice culture to keep the land in balance.  
Many cultural sites continue to exist around water and used for cultural purposes for the benefit and maintenance of cultural connection. |
| **Uses**                  | Social uses like swimming, cooking, fishing are connected with cultural uses – passing on of knowledge and stories, and cultural practices to keep the land healthy and balanced are intrinsic to the Bigambul Nation.  
Uses have to be controlled, such as knowing when to hunt or fish for certain species, which seasons and when and where to harvest.  
The waterways are key meeting places and central to the practice of ceremony, hunting and gathering and trade.  
The waterways are a critical source of food, nourishment and a place to live for the Bigambul Nation. |
| **Risks**                 | Uses rely on the health of the system. The continued degradation of the system is a risk to all other uses and cultural practices.  
Loss of access means not being able to practice cultural Lore on Nation land.  
The water is under significant risk from inappropriate uses of the water and land. Cattle, land clearing, infrastructure, irrigation, mining, farming of inappropriate species, like cotton have continued to contribute to this degradation of water quality, access and cultural practices.  
Aboriginal people continue to be shut out of the system due to complex European laws leading to low water literacy. |
| **Impacts**               | European settlement commoditised the land and water, so the use of water is out of balance with the land, being used to support crops, uses and species which are unsuitable for the land and water.  
The effect of not being able to practice cultural Lore is being seen in the degradation of the river system and continued cultural practices of the Bigambul Nation.  
This directly impacts the health of Bigambul people and the Nation.  
Non-inclusion of Bigambul Nation leads to continual and further degradation of the system.  
Native flora and fauna is diminishing in favour of introduced species. This in turn creates a system out of balance and perpetuates and worsens the problems.  
Impacts on the environment have led to less distinction between the seasons. The seasons should dictate where and when to apply certain cultural practices can take place. This also applies to where and when certain activities and places of cultural significance are accessed and utilised. |
## Key findings - Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
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<tr>
<td>The continuing connection to Country and Pride for Bigambul people is pivotal in being able to conduct cultural practices with water (and land).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bigambul Nation gains strength and economic and prosperity through outcomes, which are part of the solution to addressing broader Aboriginal social disadvantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead in water and land management on Bigambul Nation and share in cultural best practice for other bordering Nations in working to regenerate the land and water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate Bigambul Nation cultural knowledge and western knowledge to sustain better working relationships for the health outcomes and quality of the water systems and better access for all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilise the water for commercial purposes to strengthen the health and economic prosperity of the Bigambul Nation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build the skills and capabilities of the Bigambul people to be lead agents in land, water and resources management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved water literacy for Bigambul people and the broader community and a simplification of the licencing system – redefine and start again with a more balanced, sustainable and simplified system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Codesign best practice farming industry standards that include cultural practices for sustainability and to restore the system back to improved health.</td>
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2. Terms of reference

2.1. Murray-Darling Basin Plan guidelines

The consultation process was informed by the Murray Darling Basin Authority (MDBA) guidelines for meeting the Murray Darling Basin Plan (Basin Plan) (Chapter 10) requirements in relation to Aboriginal peoples’ objectives and outcomes for water. As outlined in Basin Plan Section 10.52: Objectives and Outcomes based on Indigenous Values and Uses, Water Resource Plans (WRPs) need to ‘identify the objectives and outcomes desired by Aboriginal people that relate to the management and use of water resources’ through appropriate consultation with relevant Aboriginal organisations’. (p. 4) The MDBA Part 14 guidelines suggest appropriate consultation processes to ensure that the concerns of Traditional Owners are taken into account and consider how the Akwê: Kon Guidelines might be applied in the context of water resource planning. The Part 14 Guidelines have shaped the Bigambul Nation consultation process and are referred to throughout this document.

The MDBA, Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) and the Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) encourage a Nation-based approach to consultation. As noted in the MDBA Part 14 Guidelines, ‘Aboriginal Nation boundaries mostly don’t correspond with State Boundaries.’ The Bigambul land is described broadly by the Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation as follows:

“The riverine area between the Macintyre and Weir rivers. The current boundary is defined in part by the Macintyre River in the south (which becomes the Barwon River at its junction with the Weir River), the Macintyre Brook, and with the Moonie River in the west. In the north, it extends to encompass Western Creek (a tributary of the Weir River) and in the east, the boundary falls short of Cecil Plains, Millmerran, Inglewood, Beebo and Texas. Goondiwindi is the largest town in the claim area. [Bigambul] country is neighboured in the north by the Barunggam, and by land associated with the Mandandanji to the north-west. In the south-east at Beebo and Texas lies a transitional boundary zone in which Bigambul and Gambuwal/Kambuwal people likely share interests, and to the north-east lies Giabel country. The southern extent of Bigambul country abuts Kamilaroi country and the south-western corner meets Yuwaalaraay country.”

Figures 2 and 3 show the area within which the Bigambul Nation sits, indicating the boundaries of WRP surface water and groundwater areas respectively and listing Nations within each. Based on these maps, developed by NBAN and MLDRIN, findings from the Bigambul consultation will be used in the following WRPs:

**Groundwater WRPs:**
- Queensland Border Rivers
- New South Wales Border Rivers Alluviums
- Moonie
- New England Fractured Rock and Northern Basalts

**Surface Water WRPs:**
- New South Wales Border Rivers
- Queensland Border Rivers
- Moonie
- Condamine-Balonne
This map is published as a guide to Traditional Owner groups within the Murray-Darling Basin and may not capture all Traditional Owner groups within the Basin.

Source:
- Geoscience Australia © Topo 250K data (Series 3). Geoscience Australia © Topo 2.5 million data (2003)
- Murray-Darling Basin Authority © Murray-Darling Basin Water Resource Plan Areas - Groundwater

Figure 2. A guide to Traditional Owner Groups for Water Resource Plan Areas, Groundwater.
Figure 3. A guide to Traditional Owner Groups for Water Resource Plan Areas, Surface Water.
2.2. Roles

Murawin was engaged as a First Nations Stakeholder Consultant to provide consultation with Traditional Owners of the Bigambul Nation. The consultants worked in collaboration with the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water Principal Aboriginal Cultural Liaison Officer, Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water Aboriginal Staff and the Bigambul Nation Organiser with the following role descriptions:

The **First Nations Stakeholder Consultant** shares a cultural bond with Traditional Owners. They conduct high value/high trust face-to-face talks with Traditional Owners and co-facilitate (with Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water staff) subsequent workshops.

The **Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water Staff** coordinate all staff and consultant activities and ensures that knowledge gained is properly considered in developed state-wide strategies and policies. They ensure the knowledge gained ultimately contributes to development of Water Resource Plans, Water Sharing Plans, Flood Plain Management Plans and Water Quality Management Plans. They coordinate workshop logistics including invitations, venue bookings, catering, developing the agenda, providing the maps and workshop notes.

**Nation Organisers** (Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) and Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN)) are engaged by Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water to:

- Assist Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water staff identify key stakeholders, including Traditional Owners, for identified First Nations groups.
- Conduct culturally appropriate introductions between First Nations stakeholders, Murawin and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water staff and attend interviews with key stakeholders.
- Assist First Nations stakeholders gain understanding of the purpose of engagement and consultation and provide assistance with explaining any agreements, including information use agreements.
- Attend community workshops.

2.3. Scope of work

First Nations Stakeholder Consultants were given the following general brief prior to the consultation process. First Nations Stakeholder Consultants will:

- Work with NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water to identify and prioritise Nations they will be working with, based on the WRP delivery schedule.
- Work with NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water to build a list of key stakeholders for each Nation, identifying all Senior Traditional Owners and custodians to be consulted, providing appropriate references for how this was constructed.
- Work with NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water staff to prepare a checklist and questions, prior to the face-to-face meetings.
- With NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water staff, visit and engage with all key stakeholders face-to-face, unless otherwise specified that they are not needed. They will describe the engagement process we are seeking to undertake, supported by appropriate presentation and communications material prepared by NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water.
- At the face-to-face meetings, seek Traditional Owner agreement to attend and contribute to a one-day workshop.
- At the face-to-face meetings, identify the values Traditional Owners hold and how they wish to see them translated into water resource plan objectives.
• Brief the Nation Organiser and NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water management on the outcomes of the face-to-face meetings, and Traditional Owner expectations in advance of each workshop, so that workshop format can be tailored to suit each Nation.

• Play a key role in the one-day workshops in coordination with the Organiser to foster productive and open discussion of proposed values and objectives.

• Following each workshop, prepare a final consultation report identifying and prioritising key values, objectives and themes for the Nation.

Consultants were asked to be flexible in their approach. The actual scope of the work for Bigambul deviated from the general scope of the work as requested by the Nation Organiser, and is discussed in the next two sections.
3. Methodology

3.1. Nation-Based approach

To prevent over-consultation, it was requested that Murawin contact the Queensland Government to request access to the information DNRME had collected from the Bigambul Nation during these 2017 consultations. Permission was granted by the Bigambul Nation through the Recognised Native Title Body Corporate (RNTBC), the Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC) for Murawin to do so, and information contained within this report is based on this information exchange, which was followed by telephone and then a face-to-face meeting with the Bigambul Nation to review the data presented in this report.

This consultation is based on a Nation-based approach. It has been designed by NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment – Water, based on Dhirrranggal Solutions’ ‘Principles for Culturally Appropriate Nation-based Consultation’, and recognises traditional owner groups and their connection to country.

The consultation methodology enables First Nations people to continue their traditional roles as custodians. A Nation-based approach, encouraged by the MDBA, NBAN and MLDRIN, sustains the presence of individual Nations and allows them to contribute to Water Resource Plans within the context of their cultural boundaries. With this approach, First Nations can assist government to make better decisions in water planning.

Governance structures of First Nations are complex and in their infancy in engaging with government. The engagement approach taken was guided by MDBA, NBAN, MLDRIN and accepted cultural protocols. It relied heavily on Bigambul Elders and the RNTBC, BNTAC as the Cultural Authority for all Bigambul Nation business.

MDBA states that ‘the term ‘Traditional Owners’ is used to refer to those with recognised cultural authority to speak for Country’ and guides States to identify appropriate Traditional Owners for consultation. The use of the Nation Organiser as a guide relied on widely accepted cultural protocol and lore which determines that only internal representatives have the cultural authority to speak on a Nation’s internal governance structures, guide consultative processes and identify Senior Traditional Owners.

3.2. Data Sovereignty

Part of a culturally appropriate consultation framework acknowledges the Data Sovereignty rights that First Nations people have over their own knowledge. Indigenous Data Sovereignty is derived from First Nations people’s rights to govern their communities, Country and resources as outlined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples for which Australia has declared its support.

At the Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit held in June 2018, the Maiam nayri Wingara Indigenous Data Sovereignty Collective endorsed several foundational statements in relation to Indigenous Data Sovereignty, in short;

- Indigenous Data refers to the rights to information or knowledge which is about and may affect Indigenous people both collectively and individually.
- Indigenous Australians have the right to exercise ownership over their data including its reuse.
Ensuring data reflects Indigenous Australians priorities, values, diversity and worldviews.\textsuperscript{1} The contract signed between Murawin and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment - Water included the following definition of First Nations Cultural Knowledge:

‘Accumulated knowledge which encompasses spiritual relationships, relationships with the natural environment and the sustainable use of natural resources, and relationships between people, which are reflected in language, narratives, social organisation, values, beliefs, and cultural laws and customs’.

Murawin was required to identify any First Nations Cultural Knowledge gathered during the process. This can only be used for specific purposes in the accreditation of WRPs.

3.3. Research methods

The research methodology was aligned with the principles of Culturally Appropriate Nation-based Consultation and the MDBA Part 14 Guidelines, including the de-identification of data, the explanation of the purpose and scope and participant consent. These aligned with general considerations in the Akwé: Kon Guidelines:

- Prior, informed consent of the affected Indigenous and local communities.
- Ownership, protection and control of traditional knowledge.
- The need for transparency.

The process was participant-directed. In this case the Senior Traditional Owners asked to forego the initial face-to-face interviews and workshop, and for Murawin to produce a first draft of the report from information previously given to the Queensland Government.

The report outlines where and how data was collected, and who was consulted. A face-to-face meeting was held to sign off the report, and the questions used at that meeting encouraged open, narrative responses, in line with the principle of flexibility and MDBA guidelines to ‘use appropriate tools and mechanisms’ for recording and understanding Aboriginal objectives and outcomes. The process was used to ensure agreement with the content and to fill in any gaps in information.

3.4. Queensland Government 2017 consultations overview

As Murawin did not undertake formal consultation with the Bigambul Nation in the first instance but has utilised research from consultation with the Bigambul Nation from 2017 by the Queensland Government, we have chosen to include here and in following sections information about the research methodology employed in the earlier 2017 consultation.

In planning the 2017 First Nations engagement, the Queensland Government referred to the Murray–Darling Basin Plan, the Murray–Darling Basin Authority’s Guidelines for meeting Basin Plan (Chapter 10) requirements in relation to Aboriginal peoples’ objectives and outcomes for water and other guidelines such as the Akwé: Kon guidelines for Indigenous consultation. To meet the Basin Plan requirements and to effectively incorporate the Akwé: Kon guidelines, a working group was established for the consultation.

This working group included three Aboriginal people from the NBAN and representatives from the Queensland and New South Wales governments. Representatives from the Murray–Darling Basin Authority were involved at first to help establish the direction and function for the group. The group met several times a year and had regular out-of-session discussions as needed. The focus of the

\textsuperscript{1} Indigenous Data Sovereignty Summit Communiqué, June 2018
meetings in 2017 was to advise the Queensland Government on the most effective and culturally appropriate way of engaging with Traditional Owners during the consultation.

In 2016, a planning meeting with all of the NBAN Queensland delegates who represent the Queensland Murray–Darling Basin catchments was held in Boggabilla, New South Wales, was held. Outcomes from this meeting included detailed instructions from Traditional Owners on how to consult effectively with their Nations, and areas for improvement. After this initial meeting, further face-to-face and telephone meetings were held with the NBAN delegates. Consultation meetings followed, with open invitations to all people from those Nations who wished to attend. From these meetings and through ongoing communication with key stakeholders, secondary meetings and trips on country were planned and carried out. Several channels were employed to contact Aboriginal people from the twelve identified Aboriginal Nations in the catchments:

- Delegates from the NBAN, who were the primary contacts, organised meetings with other Traditional Owners from the Nations.
- The engagement officer tapped into the ‘Murri grapevine’, a word-of-mouth system of communication that exists because Aboriginal people are very well connected through family relationships and friendships. It involves social media, face-to-face communication, telephone calls, telephone texting and emails.
- Via internet and Facebook searches, the engagement officer identified and contacted Aboriginal organisations located within the catchment.
- The engagement officer set up the Facebook page ‘ Aboriginal engagement for water resources of the QLD Murray Darling Basin’. It currently has about 300 followers.
- The Queensland South Native Title Service contacted many Aboriginal people with cultural links to the catchment areas.

Photo 1. The Macintyre River running through Goondiwindi.
4. The consultation process

As per the original brief of this project, the Consultation Process was intended to follow a standard four phases: Design and Development, Preparation (face to face interviews), Consultation (workshop) and Analysis and Review. Murawin was also asked to be flexible in their approach. Due to not wishing to over-consult the Bigambul Nation, in the end the process proceeded through these phases:

- **Phase 1: Design and Development** – Initial planning phase.
- **Phase 2: Project Revision and Permission for Information** – Department of Planning, Industry and Environment.
- Aboriginal Cultural Officer liaised with Bigambul Nation representatives. Bigambul Nation representatives advised they did not wish to be consulted again after being recently consulted by the Queensland Government in a similar context. Murawin was advised to access and utilise information from the Queensland consultations. Permission was granted by the Bigambul Nation for Murawin to access information from Queensland consultations.
- **Phase 3: Analysis and Review** – data analysis and report writing.
- **Phase 4: Sign Off – face-to-face** sign off the final report by Bigambul Traditional Owners. This last phase was also used to provide further information to the report.

Photo 2. Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC) representatives and Murawin consultants on the bank of the McIntyre River, Goondiwindi.
5. Findings: The Bigambul Story

The connectedness and balance of all things

Bigambul Nation has a Native Title determination and has engaged in water planning around cultural flows. In considering cultural flows the Nation first pointed to the context in which water use and care sits for Bigambul people.

Bigambul do not use and manage water in a silo but manage the country holistically. Air, earth, fire and water are taken into consideration when managing the environment, and never practised in isolation. Each element supports the other and when one fails it affects the whole system. For example, when land is cleared the water system is affected too, and there is also less rain.

Environmental impacts weren’t considered / forecasted when European colonial contact commodified the land and water of the country.

The health of the river directly reflects the health of the communities that it supports, as well as the native flora and fauna.

Introduction

Feedback across all consultations focuses on the intrinsic value and uses of water and the deep cultural and spiritual connection that First Nations have with their water, as well as the concerns that First Nations have about the changes that are occurring in the river systems; and the impact that this has on these cultural and socio-economic uses of water.

The Bigambul story is one of connection, to history and place through water, and of a desire for reconnection, to see future generations connect to the physical and cultural systems associated with strong and healthy waterways. To see future generations swim, fish, cook and camp, pass on knowledge and teach their children, and tell stories that connect them to their Nation and Elders. The Bigambul Nation speak of their hope to bring together Western Science and Traditional Knowledge so that they can create a stronger voice for healthy waterways.

The Bigambul Nation have a strong desire to be more actively involved in the management of the water systems in the future and have a well-defined role in returning the system to a healthier state. Access is noted as a key issue of concern, and specifically the emotional impact of not having access, and the sense of isolation and stress this can cause due to a disconnect from the river system and an inability to meet cultural responsibilities. They want to experience better access to a healthier river system, which will contribute to a better sense of community and make Aboriginal people better connected – the rivers are where relationships are built with family and other Aboriginal groups and families – being “on the water” makes this possible.

The Bigambul Nation highlight their longing desire to build and sustain better relationships with property owners to allow access – one of the reasons why access is less than it used to be is that their Elders once worked on these properties and would be able to call farmers to gain access. This came down to the strength of personal relationships and these relationships have been to a large degree lost in recent times, and with this loss has come a significant loss of access.

Bigambul have a Native Title Determination, and the Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation (BNTAC) as the cultural authority is active in managing the Nation’s continuous connection to country. BNTAC is a central vehicle that, in the words its strategic plan:

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2 Information contained in this section is First Nations Cultural Knowledge provided for the development and accreditation of Water Resource Plans
Invest in the preservation and advancement of historical and traditional lands, cultural knowledge and practices and promote Bigambul connection to country.

Leverage commercial opportunities to build the economic strength of the Bigambul people.

Build the skills and capacity of Bigambul people through expanded training opportunities.

5.1. Cultural and Socio-Political: Stories of place and belonging (history and stories of water and Country)

Bigambul Native Title Aboriginal Corporation exists to:

Preserve pride through cultural identity and see Bigambul people become resilient, strong and empowered through leadership, knowledge and education that encapsulates self-determination, economic prosperity and independence.

Stories of place and belonging are central cultural identity. Bigambul philosophy refers to how:

The rich cultural practices, knowledge systems and cultural expressions of Bigambul people are a source of great strength and keeping Bigambul culture thriving is a necessary part of the solution to broader Indigenous disadvantage in Australia.

For the Bigambul Nation, waterways have always been key meeting places, significant for ceremonies and family gatherings. The creeks and rivers are important for ceremonial purposes such as sharing information and initiations. The water also plays a central position in many songlines, which Aboriginal people used as they travelled across the landscape, specifically, up to the Bunya Mountains where they met with other groups. As one member of the Bigambul Nation put it, “rivers are the lifeblood of our system”. Water has a strong spiritual value and creates strong connections to the Dreamtime, creation stories and cultural flows.

All of the land, including water has been severely impacted by colonisation: frontier wars, land clearing for agriculture and cattle, cattle stations which compact the soil and affect the river bed, economic development, infrastructure (weirs, dams, roads and railways, power lines), mining (exploration and wells), levy banks around properties, introduction of foreign flora and fauna (that ate out the native flora and fauna), recent introduction of cotton farming, lack of governance around water policy and licensing (leading to exploitation of water extraction), lack of consistency around governance of water management and delivery, prevention of traditional land management practices on country such as cultural burning, have all had a dramatic impact on the water.

Through the waterways flows cultural stories and histories (cultural flows) and being cut off from the water affects the social and emotional wellbeing of the Bigambul Nation. As children, Bigambul Elders estimated access to waterways was around 95-100%, and now it is estimated to be closer to 5-10% of waterways in the area.

There is a feeling that people can no longer access cultural heritage sites, and with this inability to maintain cultural responsibilities comes stress, isolation and disconnect for people to traditional lands and cultural practice.

The quality of the rivers, lack of water and the lack of access means children cannot use the waterways as their families used to in the past and the impacts have been felt on culture – with waterways being inaccessible or not useable, the only place to practice culture was on the reserves, despite there being recorded ceremonial sites at other locations. An example of one place people can access [water] was Toobeah Reserve, but the waterways were not in a good state at this place either.
For the Bigambul people, the waterways have always been a place of cultural significance for ceremonies. Today, a lack of clean water has significantly impacted on the ability to conduct men’s and women’s business.

The waterways were also used for drinking, recreationally for swimming, camping, and meeting, and as a place for getting resources to make weapons and tools. It also provided food; people would fish and use the waterways to gain access to native plants for foods.

The Bigambul people speak of a sense of peace that people get when at the river, but also of a sadness that is experienced because of the current state of the river. There are less fish, shrimps, mussels, and less plants such as native celery, pigweed (which as children they used to boil up and eat as a kind of relish), bush potatoes, white gums and reeds.

Species such as Yellow Belly, Murray Cod and Jewfish were in abundance and critical to Aboriginal people for their cultural, environmental, health and wellbeing, everyday life and livelihood values and uses – these types of species provide values and uses across all categories highlighting the holistic view of Aboriginal people to species and landscape.

The lack of water in the system impacts on these species and means that Aboriginal people cannot maintain their cultural and ceremonial activities; the only time they can fish is when it floods, and the animals taken from the river now are not as nice to eat as they used to be.

“Fishing isn’t like it used to be when we were kids.”

Jewfish especially were plentiful, however, are very rarely seen nowadays in the system around Goondiwindi.

Turtles were also a source of food but are now lower in numbers than they used to as weirs and fencing along the riverbanks prevent turtles from moving across the landscape between waterholes. Turtles are also reported to get stuck in potholes between rivers and cannot access the waterholes due to reduced flows.

In the past, soap trees were also used to stun fish with toxins. Today, cultural practices such as spearing fish from trees in the traditional way is not possible due to bad water quality. This poor water quality also means that people cannot drink the water; algal blooms are of particular concern throughout the waterways.

The Bigambul Nation want to see their waterways restored to a better condition so that Aboriginal people can return to the rivers and spend more time there with their families, telling stories and connecting to the landscape, improving the quality of life in all respects through the transmission of culture and knowledge to the next generation – this would provide a better connection to country and to each other and allow Aboriginal people to fulfil their duties for men’s and women’s business and culturally significant ceremonies.

5.2. Environmental: ecological impacts

Ecological impacts of the river system include the physical natural environment and the spiritual environment. It isn’t possible to speak of ecological impacts without understanding that deterioration or destruction of the environment is to destroy Cultural Heritage and spirituality.

Bigambul Traditional Owners have witnessed the changing of the water landscape of their Country over time. They want to tell the story about how the landscape has been modified over time, from pre-European settlement, through to the different stages of development since European settlement, from dryland farming (cattle, sheep and wheat) to irrigation and the building of towns on wetlands, as well as the broader effects of climate change. They want to tell this story and of the impacts the water landscape has felt across these stages of development.
The Bigambul Nation emphasised that a healthy water system and river means healthy people. They highlight the value of protecting natural food chains and not impacting on them and report that natural food chains have been interrupted due to reduced water flows, reduced water quality and degraded systems.

People have witnessed the impact of this disruption to the natural system:

- There used to be more waterbirds, but their population appears to have declined due to the reduction in wetlands across the landscape.
- Trees are falling into the rivers because of the effects of erosion and stock and there is little regrowth of the larger trees.
- Clearing of land has had a big impact and resulted in lower riverbanks.
- There is increased siltation as a result of dams and weirs, resulting in reduced quality of water.
- Carp are environmental vandals and their introduction has resulted in many issues to the environment in the waterways, including churning up of the water (making it more turbid) and taking food sources from native fish.

The Bigambul people expressed several key issues of concern for the degradation of the natural state of their water ways:

- Water pumps do not have screens and can affect native fish and fingerling populations.
- The only time that there is enough water is when it floods – Bigambul people feel that when a good rain season occurs irrigators shouldn’t be allowed to excessively pump.
- On Toobeah Reserve, there is bad erosion of the riverbanks and when floods subside the pockets of water leftover that do not flow, end up smelling and killing native fish.
- Weeds and pests are a problem and cause issues with the natural food chain, for example, carp, prickly pear, cactus, parthenium.
- The Moonie River is in a bad state because of over-pumping.
- There were also questions around how pumps are monitored and compliance enforced, with the comment made that the penalties are not high enough.
- Not enough done yet with Basin buybacks – more water needs to be recovered and returned to the environment.

People also make note of how the seasons are changing in recent years; they attribute this to climate change. The seasons determined where camps were settled, what food sources were available, ceremonies and land rejuvenation.

The Bigambul people have expressed a clear desire to be leaders in the management of the systems in the future and have a clear role in returning the system to a healthier state. That role is both to look after the physical landscape as well as to look after the spirituality and balance of the land.

They want to see a better balance achieved for how water is shared between farming and other users, including for Traditional Owners to use for cultural purposes.

The Bigambul people assert that more water is needed in the system to restore it back to a healthy state and indicate that they want to see more water allocated downstream for important cultural sites like Narran Lakes.

What the Bigambul people desire to see is a more responsible and sustainable, best-practice farming industry in the area, to ensure not only that water is used more efficiently, but that more water is left in the system.
5.3. Health and Wellbeing: loss of custodianship and management systems

The Bigambul Nation speak of the clear connection between healthy waterways and the social and emotional wellbeing of their people due to the intrinsic close connection to land and water. They stress the significance of places to Aboriginal people and the impacts on people when these places are impacted and degraded. Cultural responsibility is important and when people are not allowed access to the waterways to maintain these cultural responsibilities, people's health is impacted.

There is a governance system for water in Australia that is different from the way Bigambul manages water in the past.

“We are the river people”.

“Look after the land and the land will look after you”.

The Bigambul people report of the perception that important cultural sites were being degraded on purpose by landowners – a major cause for concern. There is a feeling of a loss of custodianship and right to ownership and access:

- The boats and the people using them show little respect for the waterways.
- There is a sense that Councils and government is more concerned with farmers than other groups, including Traditional Owners. They state that Councils have conducted work, such as roads, without consulting with the Traditional Owners.
- Many issues were raised about the Local Councils and the perceived mismanagement of the waterways and a lack of a management plan for dealing with the issues.
- Signs have been erected by farmers prohibiting access on the land – people expressed concern about this and question, are fishing permits required to fish?

The Bigambul people express a sense of hopelessness of what they can do to improve the system – they feel restricted that they can’t do anything to make the river better and to be able to contribute to making the system healthy.

5.4. Economic: employment and community renewal for the future

The Bigambul Nation express a clear aspiration to become more actively involved in the management of the waterways of their Traditional Lands. They actively seek to reconnect to the waterways to help create stronger cultural relationships for their communities for the future. Access (or lack thereof) was highlighted as a key issue of concern; people want to see access to waterways increased like it was in the past. They cited the example of Welltown Station which had an Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) created that allows access to the waterways on the property.

The Bigambul Nation mentioned the role that Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) could play in restoring water systems – the Traditional Owners hold a great deal of knowledge about the relationships between ecosystems and people – they want to see this TEK engaged to assist in the management of the waterways.

Bigambul Nation aspires to economic development that includes land, water and resources management and the monitoring and regeneration of country through the development of Bigambul Rangers.

In the future they would like to experience a better balance between farming and other users, including cultural purposes, and see a role for Traditional Owners to be working closely with
farmers to help create sustainable, best-practice farming. They spoke of better relationships being built between farmers and Elders. Better connection between Western Science and Traditional Knowledge was also highlighted for the future – bringing together the science that is being done currently in the Border Rivers and having a discussion with Aboriginal people about the crossover with Traditional Knowledge.

5.5. Partnerships for a strong healthy Nation

Bigambul Nation stresses the central role of partnerships and co-designing the management of water (and land) with others. Land owners and irrigators are part of the grass roots community that Bigambul seeks to engage with. Indeed, it is central to Bigambul culture to manage resources in sustainable ways, and Bigambul understands that this only happens with strong partnerships and co-design with all of those that affect the system.

Bigambul Nation desires to be a lead agent in this process and is best placed as Traditional Owners to do so. Furthermore, with the inclusion of Traditional land rejuvenation practices the Bigambul National believe that this can be accomplished more expeditiously with local, State and Federal funding initiatives.

5.6. Inspection of Bigambul Water

As a part of water resource planning Bigambul undertook numerous inspections of several specific water sites, and that information fed into this report.
Photo 3 and 4. The degradation of the land and water at Turtle Bend on Bigambul Country.
6. Findings: Categories

6.1. Values and uses

Table 3. Values and uses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and Socio-Political</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>Waterways are key meeting places for Bigambul people and are important for ceremonies and family gatherings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Practices / Responsibilities / Custodial Relationships</td>
<td>Creeks and rivers are important for ceremonial purposes, such as sharing information and initiations, and songlines. Inability to connect to river system and meet cultural responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>Water has a strong spiritual value and creates strong connections to dreamtime and creation stories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Songlines; verbal maps of the landscape.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sites</td>
<td>The waterways contain many cultural sites; some of which can no longer be accessed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>Places are significant to Aboriginal people and people are impacted when places are impacted and degraded. Need clean water for Men’s and Women’s Business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social and Recreational</td>
<td>Fishing, swimming, camping, meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bush Tucker</td>
<td>Fishing, gathering of native plants and animals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>Drinking, cooking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Passing on knowledge to children and telling of stories to connect them to ancestors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Access</td>
<td>For fishing, cultural practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>To bring together Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Western Science.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Bigambul people are the leaders in teaching how to respect and manage the water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Water has strong connections to Dreamtime and Creation Stories.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Information contained in this section is First Nations Cultural Knowledge provided for the development and accreditation of Water Resource Plans.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inter-connectedness</td>
<td></td>
<td>Holistic perspective of Aboriginal people to landscape and species within landscape. Natural food chains have been interrupted due to reduced water flows, reduced water quality and degraded systems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. Key values and uses.

From the subcategories above, the following key values and uses emerged. The table below also indicates whether these values have social, spiritual, cultural, environmental and economic significance as suggested by the MDBA guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Key value or use</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people have always valued the waterways as key meeting places, important for ceremonies and family gatherings. These gatherings are used as opportunities to pass on knowledge, teach children and tell stories which connect them to their ancestors.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people value the position of the creeks and rivers as important for the transmission of culture and ceremonial purposes, such as sharing information and initiations, and songlines.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people recognise the importance of respecting and protecting the native fish species and turtles which live in the waterways.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people utilise parts of the water system for cultural reasons e.g. using native flora and fauna in making weapons and tools.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people recognise the importance of clean water for swimming, drinking and continuing traditional fishing practices in (spearing fish from trees).</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people, historically and contemporarily, value the use of water for cultural sites, e.g. Narran Lakes.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people utilise clean water from the waterways for cultural men’s and women’s Business.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people recognise the interconnectedness of water; its role in maintaining healthy natural systems.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 6.2. Risks and impacts

Table 5. Risks and impacts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-categories</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and Socio-Political</td>
<td>Cultural practices adversely impacted</td>
<td>Unable to continue traditional fishing practices, e.g. spearing from trees on the river banks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge loss</td>
<td>Gathering and meeting on waterways reduced Potential loss of culture and cultural knowledge being passed onto next generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connectedness and community</td>
<td>Lack of water and lack of access means children cannot use waterways like their parents, grandparents etc. would have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Wellbeing</td>
<td>Connection between waterways and mental health</td>
<td>Due to the close relationship to land and water for Aboriginal people. Impacts on people when places of significance are degraded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Poor relationships</td>
<td>Loss of relationships between Elders and farmers/property owners resulting in reduced access to waterways on properties.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Partnerships between users</td>
<td>Relationships between users are not strong. Some farmers putting up signs prohibiting fishing and access. Feeling that Council prioritises particular stakeholders over others (e.g. farmers over Traditional Owners).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Native flora and fauna</td>
<td>Population of particular species is reduced. E.g. fish (Yellowbelly, Jewfish, Murray Cod), yabbies, turtles, shrimps, mussels, waterbirds, native plants (e.g. pigweed, native celery).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td></td>
<td>Perceived mismanagement of waterways and lack of management plan for dealing with issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degradation</td>
<td></td>
<td>Erosion, disruption to natural food chains, siltation, reduced water quality, reduced flow, pumping, reduced water, algal blooms, land clearing and impact on riverbanks. Impact of boats.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Influences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Climate changes and changes to seasons in recent years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduced species</td>
<td></td>
<td>Carp, other pests and weeds (prickly pear, cactus, parthenium).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6. Response to key risk or impact.

From the subcategories above, the following key responses to the risks/impacts emerged. The table below also indicates whether these values have social, spiritual, cultural, environmental and economic significance as suggested by the MDBA guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Response to key risk or impact</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Spiritual</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Economic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people see a clear connection between healthy waterways and good mental health and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal people.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people see access to waterways as being a key issue of concern.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people report there being negative impacts on key species in the waterways; reduced populations of native flora and fauna in the area.</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people have witnessed that natural food chains have been interrupted due to reduced water flows, reduced water quality and degraded systems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people report that reduced flow and pumping is a key issue of concern.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people highlight erosion, clearing of land, siltation and algal blooms as key risks to the waterways.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people are concerned about the impact of introduced species on the natural state of waterways and the ecosystems within them.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people report that lack of clean water has impacted on ability to conduct cultural business.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people have concerns about Councils and governmental mismanagement of the waterways.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>The Bigambul people note that poor relationships between stakeholders impacts upon access to waterways.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3. Objectives and outcomes

The MDBA Part 14 Guidelines advise the aim of consultation processes should be ‘to identify Traditional Owners’ objectives for water management, and the desired outcomes that the objectives would contribute towards.’

- ‘Objectives are commonly understood to mean ‘aspirations’ or ‘goals’ and is often expressed as wishes.’
- ‘Outcomes is commonly thought of as the result of achieving an objective – in other words, what happens (or is envisaged to happen) when a wish is fulfilled.’
This part has two sections – the first section is a table that reflects the key community responses of objectives and outcomes, and the second based on the strategic direction of the Bigambul Nation as discussed in the community consultation held at Goondiwindi on 20 July 2019.

**Table 7. Key community responses to objectives and outcomes.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time period</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Now</td>
<td>Inclusion and Representation</td>
<td>A role for Traditional Owners to play in working more closely with farmers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balance</td>
<td>Of how water is shared between farming and other stakeholder uses, including cultural purposes for Bigambul people. More water allocated downstream for important cultural sites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment</td>
<td>Governmental and Local Council commitment to more responsible, sustainable farming practices to ensure water is used in ways which do not impact negatively on environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protection</td>
<td>Of native flora and fauna.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connection</td>
<td></td>
<td>Between Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Increased transmission of culture and knowledge to next generation, allowing people to fulfil cultural responsibilities to Country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td></td>
<td>Increased access to waterways for connection to culture activities, e.g. gatherings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Improvements</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improving water quality and cleaning up the rivers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future</td>
<td>Story-telling</td>
<td>Changes to the landscapes are illustrated using conceptual diagrams which story-tell the changes to the waterways.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Connection</td>
<td>Between Western Science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge – bringing together these two knowledge spheres. Aboriginal people return to the rivers and spend more time with community, telling stories and connecting to the landscape as they have always done through time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Bigambul Nation more involved in the management of the water systems and have a clear role in returning the system to a more healthy state.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outcomes for water on Bigambul Nation are reflected in some key strategic directions discussed at the consultation meeting:

1. Agreements for access with land owners that allow Bigambul people to walk the country and practice cultural responsibilities.
2. Participation of Bigambul Nation in water literacy programs to enable effective management of water.
3. A simplification of the water and licencing system to enable participation.
4. Taking the lead role in reform of the system on Bigambul land.
5. Support from State and Federal Governments in recognising that Bigambul Nation knowledge can lead the way in water reform, including funding a position within Bigambul Nation responsible for water resource management.

6. Education and career paths for Bigambul people around water management, including:
   - Rangers
   - Environmental Protection Officers
   - Resource Managers

7. Involvement in decision making around all water use and flows.

8. Being granted cultural access licences and develop policies on cultural flows.

9. Enhancing relationships with other users of water, including other Nations. This could include:
   - The establishment of forums for discussion with neighbouring Nations
   - Respect of all water knowledge, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal
   - Establishing Regional Councils with membership that represents all water users