



LAKE EYRE BASIN COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEDIA RELEASE

LAKE EYRE BASIN COMMITTEE TO MEET IN MARCH

The Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee (CAC) will hold its sixth meeting on 2nd and 3rd March this year, in Adelaide.

Chair of the CAC, Mr Angus Emmott of 'Noonbah' near Stonehenge in Queensland, said the Lake Eyre Basin has been recognised in Australia and overseas as a unique part of the world.

"The basin is among the largest internally draining river systems in the world, but paradoxically it is also widely known to be a dry place with scarce water resources," Mr Emmott said. "These resources need to be managed carefully, and the role of the CAC is to find out what community members think and feel about these resources and the way they are managed."

"We know that boom-and-bust cycles are normal for the Lake Eyre Basin, but there are big gaps in our knowledge of how the system works. It is our job to bring a wide spectrum of community interests to this difficult debate."

The Lake Eyre Basin, straddling four state/territory borders, includes areas of Queensland, South Australia, the Northern Territory and a small part of New South Wales. The governments of the Commonwealth of Australia, Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory have all signed the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement, and are committed to working together to ensure the many values of the basin are maintained.

"The Lake Eyre Basin Agreement was a major milestone in a debate that has involved governments, community groups and industry representatives since the early 1990's," said Mr Emmott.

The current 13-member Lake Eyre Basin CAC was appointed in October 2003 by the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Heritage to provide community advice and feedback on water and related natural resource issues in the basin. The group has advised Ministers on various matters since it was formed, including outback tourism issues, petroleum exploration, water resources planning, natural resource monitoring, and Indigenous cultural heritage and land management.

The March 2005 meeting is the second meeting of the CAC held in Adelaide since the group was formed.

"We meet three to four times each year," Mr Emmott said. "We plan to meet at Innamincka, Birdsville and Camooweal later in the year. We feel that if our job is to represent community opinion and feedback in our advice to Ministers, then it is important that we meet in places where community members can attend our meetings if they wish."

At its March meeting, the CAC will discuss the Georgina Diamantina Water Resource Operations Plan, the Lake Eyre Basin Rivers Assessment, and the review of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement scheduled for later this year.



Following its last meeting in November 2004 in Alice Springs, the CAC recommended among other things that sufficient resources be available for effective consultation with Indigenous people and communities, and that resources be obtained for a comprehensive social and economic study of the basin.

“We have made a number of recommendations to the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum since the committee was appointed,” Mr Emmott said.

“One of our strongest has been that decisions about managing the water and natural resources of the basin need to be based on adequate knowledge, not only about the environments of the basin, but just as importantly about the people, communities and economies of the basin.”

“Without knowing enough about either the environment or the people, we risk making decisions we will regret later,” said Mr Emmott.

The proposal to conduct a social and economic study of the basin is the result of this conviction, and will be discussed further at the meeting in Adelaide.

Observers are welcome at CAC meetings. The Adelaide CAC meeting will be held in conjunction with the twelfth meeting of the Lake Eyre Basin Scientific Advisory Panel (SAP), and the third joint meeting of the CAC and the SAP. More information about the meetings can be obtained by contacting the CAC Facilitator, Mr Vol Norris on (07) 4658 4435 or 0427 440 799.

1st February 2005

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