



JOINT COMMUNIQUE

Dr Mike Kelly

Australian Parliamentary Secretary for Water

Minister Alison Anderson

Northern Territory Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage

Minister Jay Weatherill

South Australian Minister for the Environment and Conservation

Minister Stephen Robertson

Queensland Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and the Minister for Trade

7th Meeting of Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum

MINISTERS APPROVE ACTION TO PROTECT THE FUTURE OF THE LAKE EYRE BASIN

01 June 2009

The Lake Eyre Basin, the largest internally-draining Basin in the world, has once again 'come to life' as a result of flooding rains over the last few months.

There has been an abundance of both plant and animal life produced in the Basin over this time – and a consequential influx of tourists – clear evidence of the 'boom' conditions that are so critical to maintaining the viability of this unique river and wetland system.

In this context, it is appropriate that the seventh meeting of the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum held on the 21 May 2009 reaffirmed its strong support for protecting the Lake Eyre Basin.

Dr Mike Kelly, Parliamentary Secretary for Water, in his role as Chair of the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum, committed it to continuing to ensure the sustainable management of the Basin into the future.

"The decisions made at the Ministerial Forum will contribute to the future good management of the Basin to ensure its long-term viability."

"There is a spirit of partnership in a genuine basin-wide approach to protect and sustainably manage this unique environment, and I am honoured to be part of it" Dr Kelly said.

A significant outcome of the Ministerial Forum meeting was the decision to endorse a five-year Action Plan, outlining a range of priority actions to be implemented in support of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement, an inter-jurisdictional

agreement aimed at avoiding or eliminating adverse cross-border impacts on the Basin.

“The Action Plan focuses on 11 key actions; the central one being to strengthen institutional arrangements so that Ministerial Forum decisions better take into account stakeholders’ views and, when made, are implemented more effectively,” Northern Territory Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, Alison Anderson said.

“A lot of work has already been done by jurisdictions and community and regional groups and this Plan builds on that work by committing to specific actions, with clear responsibilities and timelines identified.”

The South Australian Minister for the Environment and Conservation, Jay Weatherill was particularly pleased that the Ministerial Forum approved a three-year Communication Plan for the Basin as part of the Action Plan.

“The Communication Plan targets four primary groups identified in the LEB Communication Strategy – tourists, Indigenous communities, regional natural resource management bodies and land holders, although more general communication activities have also been included. Improved communication will be vital in ensuring all stakeholders work together in sustainably managing this important resource.”

“A key component of the Communication Plan is an Annual Report from the Ministerial Forum to the Basin Community, the first of which was released on 21 May 2009.”

In addition, a number of recently completed scientific publications were approved for public release. Two of the publications – the Lake Eyre Basin Socio-economic Study and the Lake Eyre Basin Knowledge Strategy – will provide important information to assist the implementation of the Action Plan.

“The Knowledge Strategy takes stock of what we currently know and what we need to know to sustainably manage the Basin’s rivers and associated natural resources into the future,” a spokesperson for the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and the Minister for Trade, Stephen Robertson said.

“Historically there has been limited information on such ecosystems in Australia and the Strategy will help scientists to focus their efforts in gaining essential knowledge about the ecology and hydrology of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers.”

The Socio-economic Study is an innovative project that brings together four distinct elements into an integrated research program:

- social, economic and resource profiles of the Basin;
- a toolkit of success factors of engagement;
- case studies of individual and organisational attributes; and
- a monitoring framework to facilitate learning in NRM organisations.

The Ministerial Forum acknowledged the on-going hard work of the Lake Eyre Basin community and scientific committees set up under the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement, which came into effect in 2001.

The Ministerial Forum also welcomed the passage of the Northern Territory's Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Act, which formalises the Northern Territory's on-going commitment to cross-jurisdictional protection of the Basin.

The Ministerial Forum comprises the Australian Government Parliamentary Secretary for Water, Dr Mike Kelly (Chair); Ms Alison Anderson, Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage (Northern Territory); Mr Jay Weatherill, Minister for the Environment and Conservation (South Australia) and Mr Stephen Robertson, Minister for Natural Resources, Mines and Energy and Minister for Trade (Queensland).

For more information on the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum and outcomes of its 7th meeting, visit www.lebmf.gov.au

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