

News from the LEB CAC



LAKE EYRE BASIN MINISTERIAL FORUM

Community Advisory Committee

Number 2

July 2004

Ministerial Forum Meeting—NT signs LEB Agreement

The Lake Eyre Basin Inter-governmental Agreement provides for the sustainable management of water and related natural resources in the major river systems of the Basin.

At the third meeting of the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum on 10th June 2004 in Alice Springs, the NT Government joined the Australian, Queensland and South Australian Governments in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, an important milestone since the Agreement was signed in October 2000.



The Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum during meetings on 10th June 2004 in Alice Springs— from left to right: Hon John Hill MP (SA Minister for the Environment and Conservation), Hon Dr David Kemp MP (then Australian Government Minister for Environment and Heritage), Hon Stephen Robertson MP (Qld Minister for Natural Resources Mines and Energy), Hon Dr Peter Toyne MLA (NT Minister for Central Australia).

Dr Peter Toyne, NT Minister for Central Australia, welcomed the opportunity for the Northern Territory to become a party to the Agreement.

“With half of the Basin’s 57,000 population living in Alice Springs, the Northern Territory Government decided it would be beneficial to participate in the management of the Basin,” Dr Toyne said.

The Northern Territory indicated that the whole NT portion of the Basin would be

included in the Agreement Area. The South Australian Government will review the Agreement Area boundary in South Australia to complement the NT initiative, following consultation with community and industry interests in the region.

The LEB Community Advisory Committee will be expanded to include community representation from the Northern Territory.

Other initiatives approved by the Ministers at their meeting include:

- release of an information paper on LEB river systems
- Agreement to proceed with the second phase of the Lake Eyre Basin Rivers Assessment
- Agreement to release draft strategies under the Agreement for community consultation
- Agreement to compile a basin hydrology atlas and to reinstate three stream gauging stations for the basin
- endorsement of the CAC work plan, and the CAC’s approach to Indigenous engagement.

(See elsewhere in this newsletter for further details).

The next meeting of the LEB Ministerial Forum will be in mid-2005 in South Australia.

LEB Community Forum

The 2004 Lake Eyre Basin Community Forum was held in Alice Springs on 10th June after the Ministerial Forum meeting.

The Community Forum was an opportunity for the Ministers to discuss basin issues with NRM Groups, Landcare Groups and other community and sector groups in the basin.

Ms Betty Pearce and Ms Pat Dodds, of the Lhere Artepe People, opened the Forum with a Traditional Owner welcome to country.



Ms Betty Pearce and Ms Pat Dodds, of the Lhere Artepe People, after their welcome to country for attendees of the LEB Community Forum in Alice Springs on 10th June 2004.

Discussion between the LEB Ministers and community members included:

- Aboriginal involvement in the Agreement
- community involvement in government and scientific processes
- the Qld Government’s proposed Wild Rivers initiative
- NT Regional Natural Resource Planning
- Community involvement in the Georgina Diamantina Water Resource Plan in Qld
- possible changes to the size of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement area in South Australia
- the Great Artesian Basin issues
- Tourism networks in the Lake Eyre Basin.

LEB Rivers Assessment

An assessment of the health of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers is required every ten years under the LEB Agreement.

A draft methodology for carrying out the an assessment has been compiled, and will be peer-reviewed in the scientific community. On-ground pilot monitoring projects will follow, and a budget will be proposed for carrying out the assessment. The project is in

the early stages of methodology development, and will not be implemented for some time.

The LEB CAC, at its third meeting on 11th June in Alice Springs, discussed community involvement in the Rivers Assessment. Given the large size of the basin, the current paucity of scientific information on the health of the basin's resources, and the depth of natural resource knowledge held by many community members, the CAC believes that the Rivers Assessment would be strengthened by the close involvement of community members. The CAC will discuss this with the Lake Eyre Basin Scientific Advisory Panel (LEB SAP).

Other challenges for the project include effective coordination with monitoring carried out by other organisations, including state agencies and regional NRM Groups.

Draft LEB Strategies

Under the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, the Ministerial Forum is required to develop or adopt policies and strategies for the management of the Agreement Area.

In addition to the five policies adopted at the 2nd meeting of the Ministerial Forum in Oct 2002, the Ministers adopted the following second policy at their meeting on 10th June 2004:

Policy 6—Whole of Basin Approach:
'Water and related natural resources in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area will be managed through a whole-of-Basin approach so as to achieve complementary outcomes, through the implementation of State/Territory legislation and the plans and associated investment strategies of relevant regional bodies in Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory.'

A number of draft strategies to implement these policies will now be open to community consultation and review. The CAC will work with government representatives to facilitate this community review.

Indigenous Involvement

The Ministerial Forum, at its meeting on 10th June 2004, endorsed the CAC's principles for involving Indigenous people in the Agreement:

1. **sustained effort**—Indigenous engagement should be a long-term commitment
2. **face to face contact** with Indigenous people is essential — requiring regular consultation and/or regular gatherings
3. **coordination**—LEB CAC must **assist and complement** the efforts of other groups in

the basin who also seek to involve Indigenous people.

After its meeting on 11th June 2004, the CAC recommended the following steps to the Ministerial Forum:

- a Lake Eyre Basin Indigenous Forum should be held in Alice Springs in October 2004;
- the CAC Facilitator and Indigenous CAC members should travel to Indigenous communities in the basin to consult Indigenous organisations, community members and peak bodies;
- an Indigenous Cultural induction session should be arranged for CAC members.

LEB Conference 2004

The Biennial Lake Eyre Basin Conference will be held this year at the Crown Plaza Hotel in Alice Springs from 27th to 29th October, following the first Lake Eyre Basin Indigenous Forum.

The conference is an opportunity for the Lake Eyre Basin community, regional body representatives, scientists, government officials, land managers, industry representatives and other stakeholders to discuss matters relating to the sustainable management of the basin. The conference themes will be 'Working Together' and 'Sharing Knowledge'.

Issues to be covered in keynote presentations and facilitated group discussions will include:

- knowledge and information
- Aboriginal land and culture
- cross-border issues and planning
- community involvement in government/scientific processes
- tourism networks.

Posters are invited on subjects relating to the conference themes. Registration and program details can be found on the web at www.plevin.com.au/leb2004/.

Hydrology of the Basin

At its third meeting on 10th June 2004 the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum approved funding for compiling a hydrology atlas for the Lake Eyre Basin.

The project, proposed by the Lake Eyre Basin Scientific Advisory Panel, will be conducted in late 2004. It will combine all available data into a description of the hydrology of the entire Lake Eyre basin, as a foundation for future monitoring. The most recent description of the hydrology of the entire basin was done

almost 20 years ago and focused strongly on major flood events that fill Lake Eyre.

The Ministerial Forum also agreed to allow up to \$100,000 to re-instate three priority gauging stations to measure stream flows in the basin.

Coordination of monitoring strategies

At its third meeting in Alice Springs, the CAC discussed the need for coordination of natural resource monitoring among jurisdictions, groups and processes in the Lake Eyre Basin.

Current initiatives in monitoring or data gathering in the basin include:

- preparation of a hydrology atlas for the Basin
- the LEB Rivers Assessment
- Qld government monitoring in the Georgina-Diamantina and Cooper's Creek catchments
- resource condition monitoring by the Arid Areas Catchment Water Management Board in South Australia
- resource condition monitoring by regional NRM Groups in Qld, SA and the NT
- the SA AridFlo project on the ecology and hydrology of the Lake Eyre Basin rivers
- the new Arid Rivers Natural and Cultural Heritage Program to address management, monitoring and restoration priorities for Lake Eyre Basin rivers.

The CAC believes that in order to maximise the long-term value of the total investment in monitoring in the basin, coordination of effort is required between all organisations and groups involved. The CAC will consult with the SAP in this regard and compile a project proposal for a review of current monitoring activities and requirements in the basin.

CAC meetings

The next meeting of the LEB CAC (Meeting 4) will be held in Longreach on 14th and 15th of September 2004.

CAC meetings are open to interested observers, with provision for closed sessions for discussion of sensitive or confidential matters.

For more information about the next CAC meeting, or to raise any issues to be included in the agenda, please contact the CAC Chair, Mr Angus Emmott, on 07 4658 5953 (akemmott@bigpond.com) or the CAC Facilitator, Mr Vol Norris, on 07 4658 4435 (vol.norris@deh.gov.au). Minutes of previous CAC meetings and advice to the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum are available from the CAC Facilitator.