

News from the LEB CAC

LAKE EYRE BASIN MINISTERIAL FORUM



Community Advisory Committee

Number 5

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*Seasons greetings and best wishes
for the New Year, from the LEB CAC*



Lake Eyre Basin Conference 2006

Ninety-six people attended this year's Lake Eyre Basin Biennial Conference on 7th and 8th September in Renmark, South Australia.

The conference immediately followed and overlapped with the 14th Biennial Conference of the Australian Rangeland Society.

The conference theme, 'LEB — Today and Tomorrow', and threads, 'Place', 'People' and 'Possibilities', encouraged a focus on the future and a balance between biophysical and socio-economic issues. Twenty-three papers were presented by community, government, industry and scientific/technical speakers, including two speakers discussing river basin management elsewhere in the world.

Plenary discussions gathered feedback from attendees on the future of the Basin and the Agreement, and generated a number of key issues for the future:

- long-term resourcing of cross-border processes
- robust and clear institutional arrangements
- effective stakeholder engagement and strong community-government interactions
- relevant research and communicating knowledge
- support for leadership in the Basin, human and social capital and the diversity of people
- maintaining the profile of the LEB.

Conference proceedings have been completed and will be available in PDF format, either downloadable from <http://www.lebmf.gov.au> or available on CD (contact the LEB Secretariat or the LEB CAC Facilitator).

2nd LEB Aboriginal Forum August 2006

On 22-23 August 2006, approximately 40 people attended the 2nd LEB Aboriginal Forum at Mt Serle Station in the Flinders Ranges, South Australia.

The Forum aimed to:

- develop an Outreach Strategy to build links with LEB Aboriginal people and groups
- exchange knowledge and discuss Aboriginal priorities for water and related land issues
- develop collaborations of mutual benefit in implementing the LEB Agreement.

The close tie between people, country, culture and health was a strong theme in the Forum, and participants' recommendations included:

- recruit the 4 additional Aboriginal members of the LEB CAC immediately
- hold Basin-wide LEB Aboriginal Forums annually, preceded by smaller Aboriginal Forums in Qld, SA and the NT
- compile an LEB Aboriginal document, containing the history and social/economic profile of LEB Aboriginal people, and a progressive summary of LEB Aboriginal water and land priorities
- include communications with Aboriginal people and groups as a clear component of the LEB communications strategy.

These recommendations have been communicated to the LEB Ministerial Forum, and will be considered in the current review of the LEB Agreement. Attendees also discussed the need for continued close collaboration with regional, state and commonwealth processes.

A film record of the event will be distributed on DVD to participants and other Aboriginal

people and groups in the Basin. The Forum Report will be distributed in hard copy, and PDF copies will be downloadable from <http://www.lebmf.gov.au/publications>



2006 LEB Aboriginal Forum, Mount Serle Station, SA (photograph: David Willington).

New Aboriginal CAC members

In 2005 the LEB Ministerial Forum agreed to increase the Aboriginal membership on the LEB CAC to a total of six, two from each participating State/Territory.

There are currently two Aboriginal members on the CAC, one each from South Australia and Queensland. The selection process and criteria for filling the four new Aboriginal positions were discussed at the 2006 LEB Aboriginal Forum, and invitations to apply for the new positions were circulated widely in the Basin by email and post in October 2006.

Applications closed on 17th November and a total of sixteen expressions of interest were received. These have been referred to the participating States and Territory, and the four new members are expected to be selected and formally appointed early in 2007.

The CAC welcomes the strengthening of its Aboriginal membership, and looks forward to

working closely with the new members to further improve its engagement with Aboriginal issues and concerns for the cross-border water and related natural resources of the Basin.

Review of the LEB Agreement

The LEB Agreement has now been in place for five years, and is due for its first formal review.

A lot has changed since the Agreement commenced 5 years ago, such as the formation of the regional NRM Boards. The LEB participating governments will look closely at what is working and how to implement the Agreement more effectively into the future.

In 2005 the LEB Ministerial Forum agreed to the terms of reference for the review, and following an open, competitive tender process, URS Australia Pty Ltd has been engaged to conduct the review (contact: Lili Pechey lili_pechey@urscorp.com)

URS has commenced work, and comments and input will be sought from a broad range of interested people. We welcome any insights you have about implementation of the LEB Agreement over the past five years. This is your chance to contribute to shaping the LEB governance arrangements so that the natural resources of the Basin are managed as sustainably as possible.

The attached information sheet outlines the objectives and terms of reference for the review, the proposed program for stakeholder consultation, and how to register your interest in contributing. Consultations are scheduled for the last week in January, to avoid duplication with other consultations for the LEB Social and Economic Study. The review will be finalised in April 2007.

Further information about the LEB Agreement is available at <http://www.lebmf.gov.au/> and a copy of the Agreement can be viewed at <http://www.deh.gov.au/water/basins/lake-eyre/publications/agreement.html>.

Lake Eyre Basin Rivers Assessment

In the past year, the review of the condition of all watercourses and catchments within the LEB Agreement Area has included work on three pilot studies:

1. Reviewing and documenting surface water monitoring networks in the Basin (e.g. stream monitoring stations, flood warning stations, ecological monitoring sites) to evaluate their suitability for use in the Rivers Assessment, to recommend networks to be upgraded or set up, and to recommend monitoring instrumentation suitable for conditions in the Basin.

2. Evaluating existing database systems for the long-term management of monitoring data. With a 10-year reporting cycle, Rivers Assessment data must be managed prudently from the beginning. This study will determine the best method of storing monitoring data so that it is easily and widely accessible and useable.
3. Measuring changes in fish populations under the relatively natural/pristine conditions of the LEB, for later assistance in identifying impacts that threaten the ecology of the system.

Key activities planned for 2007 include:

- Prepare a State of the Basin report, drawing on existing research, to summarise the current understanding of the LEB rivers and provide a baseline to measure future change.
- Design a web-based data management and information delivery system.
- Identify and establish on-ground monitoring protocols.
- Pilot the monitoring of riparian bird biodiversity and colonial waterbird breeding.

The LEB Rivers Assessment Project Officer (Ms Amy George) is based in Adelaide with the South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation.

LEB Social and Economic Study

The three-year study 'People, Communities and Economies of the Lake Eyre Basin' is now well underway.

The Study has four parts:

- LEB Social Atlas
- People and Organisations
- NRM Group Case Studies
- Monitoring organisations and change

Work is almost complete on the Social Atlas, which provides a profile of the natural resources and people of the LEB, and contains maps of land systems, surface and ground water, land tenure, population distribution, industry and products, employment and education, infrastructure and governance in the Basin. An NRM network inventory for the LEB will accompany the Social Atlas, to help identify how private and government sectors influence the use and management of natural resources of the Basin.

Part two of the project has commenced, looking more closely at the variety of groups that influence the use and management of LEB resources. It will identify factors that contribute to success of these groups, and is currently employing Community Researchers to assist with interviewing LEB community stakeholders.

The NRM group case studies will be selected following Part two of the project, and will continue through 2007.

The final outcome of the project will be recommendations for an ongoing monitoring system for communities, economies and NRM management systems in the LEB, based on the outputs from the case studies and the investigations in Part two of the project.

LEB Hydrology report

A report on the Hydrology of the Lake Eyre Basin was released in mid 2006.

The Atlas reviews rainfall, evaporation, temperature and streamflow data, as well as information on landform, geology and soils, to produce an up-to-date description of surface water hydrology across the whole Basin, the first such compilation of hydrological information for the whole Basin since 1986.

The report has provided important input into the LEB Rivers Assessment, and has been widely sought by universities, libraries, researchers and regional NRM bodies.

The report and appendices can be downloaded from <http://www.lebmf.gov.au/publications>

To enquire about obtaining hard copies of the report, please contact the LEB CAC Facilitator or the LEB Secretariat.

LEB Ministerial Forum

The fifth LEB Ministerial Forum meeting, originally planned for November 2006, is being conducted as an out-of-session exchange of papers because of tight parliamentary and Ministerial schedules.

Agenda papers, background briefings and recommendations are currently circulating among the four members of the LEB Ministerial Forum, and outcomes are expected to be finalised after the Christmas period.

LEB CAC meetings

The next meeting of the LEB CAC (Meeting 13) will be held in Canberra in the week of 26 March 2007.

CAC meetings are open to interested observers, with provision for closed sessions for sensitive or confidential matters. For more information about the next meeting, or to raise issues to be included in the agenda, please contact the CAC Chair, Mr Angus Emmott (07 4658 5953 akemmott@bigpond.com) or the CAC Facilitator, Mr Vol Norris (07 4658 4435 vol.norris@deh.gov.au).

Outcome summaries of previous CAC meetings can be downloaded from <http://www.lebmf.gov.au/publications>. For minutes of previous CAC meetings and advice to the LEB Ministerial Forum, please contact the CAC Facilitator.