



## Communique – Meeting No. 17 - 21 November 2023

The Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group (AWEAG) held its 17<sup>th</sup> meeting on 21 November 2023 at the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) Prime House office located in Joondalup. The meeting was Co-Chaired by Michelle Andrews and Jason Barrow and included engagements with DWER and other Western Australian Government agencies.

The main items presented and discussed included the following:

### External Presentations

#### **Department of Premier and Cabinet - Provisions to Support Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance in Proposed Legislation**

The Department of Premier and Cabinet, (DPC) was introduced and welcomed to the meeting and provided members with an overview of the provisions to support Aboriginal Data Sovereignty and Governance (ADSG) in Proposed Legislation. DPC was seeking the advice of the Advisory Group on the operational considerations of the ADSG provisions in the draft Privacy and Responsible Information Sharing Bill. Information sharing has many advantages and can be beneficial for a wide range of stakeholders, however there are security and sensitivity concern with information sharing. This Bill is seeking to ensure that all Information is shared in a cultural appropriate manner. The Advisory group was shown a Process Map for Information Sharing Roadmap image, which included the application process for obtaining information about Aboriginal people, locations, knowledge, culture.

***Members discussed and raised concerns regarding the Information Sharing Roadmap. Advisory group members expressed that a longer discussion would be required. The seriousness of the content is not appropriate to be attempted to discuss in its entirety as an agenda item, however a stand-alone day meeting as minimum.***

#### **Western Australia Return Recycle Renew Ltd (WARRRL) - Containers for Change WA Update**

WARRRL was welcomed and introduced to members to provide feedback on WARRRL's Reflect RAP and engagement activities. Appointed to the scheme in 2019 by the Western Australian government to establish and coordinate the State's container deposit scheme under the Containers for Change brand WARRRL is a not-for-profit organisation and has a mandate to recover and recycle 10¢ beverage containers whilst enhancing opportunities for social enterprise, employment, business, and grassroots fundraising. The Container Deposit Scheme Network includes several Aboriginal Communities, Organisations, non for profits and Disability operations across the state. WARRRL are requesting in procurement to employ people with disability, Aboriginal people, and other marginalised sectors. There is a wide footprint in the regional areas and WARRRL strive to be all throughout WA with emphasis in all rural and remote Aboriginal Communities.

***The Advisory members have been invited by WARRRL to contribute to their Reconciliation Action Plan meetings. Their contribution would be to assist WARRRL in their framework on building stronger Community engagement and capacity building.***

## Internal Presentations

### **Climate and Sustainability, Science and Planning - Outcomes from Kimberley Indigenous Water Forum**

The McGowan Government committed in 2017 to build no dams, safeguard the Fitzroy River, and establish an Economic Development plan based on numerous stakeholder engagements and conversations. According to the Fitzroy Discussion paper, there were suggestions for various models to be considered. The Government received 43,000 submissions, from a wide range of stakeholders including Traditional Owners, Community Organisations, and business owners. In 2023 the Government accepted an invitation to Martuwarra Fitzroy River Water Forum and attended on Country for discussions with the Fitzroy Community. The Government submitted their policy positions only a few days prior to the Forum, which didn't allow much time for the community to review and discuss. It is acknowledged that the conversation has been initiated and strive to move forward in working together.

***The Community members say thank you to Government for engaging and respecting process. Over 18 Traditional Owners turned up representing 10 different groups. A key point and take aways, from the forum was that Community are pleased to hear no more damming and that this meeting was what was needed to have, in order to have the Community and Government working in a co-design partnership.***

### **Climate and Sustainability, Science and Planning - Building Climate Resilience of West Kimberley Traditional Owners**

Climate change is occurring which is evident with the seasonal calendars being out of sync with Country. It was mentioned that a project was necessary in order to support the Aboriginal people considering these changes. The West Kimberley Climate Forum offered a place for Community and stakeholders to come together to discuss and map out a West Kimberley Climate Strategy Plan (Plan). The project has already begun with the opening night being successful. There will be a follow-on Climate forum in July 2024, with a United Nations (UN) climate scientist present at the forum. The UN climate scientist is taking a worldwide view and noting the distinct changes in the Kimberley ecosystems and changes. The body of evidence must be gathered to support the undeniable changes occurring on Country.

### **Climate and Sustainability, Science and Planning - Water Allocation Planning in the Fitzroy - Policy Position Paper**

Climate change is happening, and Indigenous people should be a part of the discussions and decision-making process. Firstly, is a Traditional Adaptation Strategy plan that addresses the Country's changing climate, as well as the need for a fundamental framework. The fundamental framework includes on how Government is involved in the Kimberley and supporting the First Nation voices of the region. The fundamental framework includes developing a West Kimberley Climate Strategy. From this strategy it will monitor the Nation's changes and launches a pilot adaptation initiative. A project to implement these strategies is currently in development.

## **Partnership for Climate Action Update**

The Government began consultation in September, with distribution of information to 100 stakeholders and conducted online information sessions. The Government has set a goal of Zero emissions and will continue to take long-term action. Through a variety of networks, First Nations Consultation extended an invitation, sent out briefings, and invited interested parties to their consultation sessions. Consultation Information was distributed in both English and Aboriginal languages, to try and ensure reach and depth with engagement. Feedback was for Government to take into consideration and plan ahead more creatively so that people could contribute and offer ideas.

***Members queries what's the intent of the legislation and was question about what it will provide the businesses. Whether or not it will be overturn and progress report and should there be one for Aboriginal communities.***

## **Climate and Sustainability, Strategic Policy - Update on Climate Change Bill**

After thanking members for their initial feedback, an update was provided on the draft legislation. The draft legislation was released by Minister McGurk, who addressed every issue in it. The Minister is aware of the interests of the community and desires that those who have expressed interest be contacted for additional consultation, will be right away. There will be post work surrounding further investigating, how to go out and consult, focusing on important component, and finding out what the Community thinks of the paper. After the Bill is progressed further, it is intended for the draft Bill to go out for distribution with a detailed paper and further consultation.

***Members expressed concerns on the draft legislation and its components. How do we work from the top tier down?***

Signature  
**Michelle Andrews**  
Co-Chair  
Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group

Signature  
**Jason Barrow**  
Co-Chair - AWEAG  
Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group

***\*Confidential agenda items discussion was not included in the Communiqué.***