



Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group (AWEAG)

Meeting 2 - 4 September 2019

Summary

Terms of Reference

Members discussed the need for a clearer scope, with more information on the relationship between the AWEAG and the Water Resources Reform Reference Group (which provides advice on the Water Resources Reform process).

Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) and Aboriginal Engagement Strategy

Members were informed of the progress of the department's Reconciliation Action Plan. As part of the RAP, the department is developing an Aboriginal Engagement Strategy. It aims to improve the way the department engages with Aboriginal people at all levels of policy, planning and management (from state-wide legislation and policy, to local management). The group highlighted the importance of using the strategy to improve links between the management of waste, water, environment and land management, to increase employment, engage early and slowly, and to create clear and inclusive resources.

Single Use Plastics

The public consultation period for the issues paper *Let's not draw the short straw: Reduce single-use plastics* has closed. Members commented on the department's consultation with Aboriginal people to date, and made suggestions for who to speak to in future engagement. They suggested speaking to schools and linking with existing waste/recycling programs in communities.

Minister's address

Minister for Water, Hon Dave Kelly, addressed the group. He outlined several areas where the Department of Water and the Water Corporation are working to increase engagement with Aboriginal people, increase employment of Aboriginal people, and to enable Aboriginal people to get economic benefit from water (which can happen through the creation of Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves in areas where water is available).

Members discussed a number of issues with the Minister, including:

- the importance of balancing cultural, environmental and economic needs,
- being clearer in the way water is managed and the way different agencies address cumulative impacts, and
- improving silos and red tape between management of lands, environment, and water

Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves

The Department is working with stakeholders to investigate opportunities to create Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves (SAWRs) in areas where water is available. A Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserve would put aside a portion of water (within the allocation limit), which would be managed exclusively for future economic development by and for the benefit of Aboriginal people on that



country. The group discussed how these might work in different areas, who may benefit from them, and how they may be used. The group identified that overall water management must be sustainable, all people involved must be given the opportunity to be part of the consultation, and must have the right people speaking for the right areas.

Container deposit scheme

The CEO of WA Return Recycle Renew (WARRRL) presented to the group on the upcoming container deposit scheme. WARRRL is the coordinator of the scheme. There will be a number of ways to become involved, such as becoming a refund point operator, donation point, or in processing/recovery. WARRRL are currently working with a number of community groups in the Kimberley and the Pilbara. Community groups that would like to become involved in the scheme need to apply by 21st October 2019.