

Report on how local communities influenced Basin Plan implementation – South Australia

The South Australian 2014–15 annual report on using local knowledge and solutions to implement the Basin Plan (Schedule 12, Item 6)

Reporting context

The success of the Basin Plan and associated water reforms depends on working closely with communities and stakeholders who can provide the necessary local knowledge and solutions to effectively implement the Plan.

The Basin Plan requires Basin States, the Authority and the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder to draw on local knowledge and solutions across a range of Basin Plan activities including long-term watering plans, annual environmental watering priorities and water resource plans.

It also requires that the best available knowledge (including scientific, local and cultural knowledge), evidence and analysis be used where practicable to ensure credibility, transparency and usefulness of monitoring and evaluation findings.

The purpose of this report is to monitor the extent to which local knowledge and solutions have influenced implementation of the Basin Plan during 2014–15. The report is a requirement of Chapter 13 of the Basin Plan and relates to Item 6 of Schedule 12.

Indicators for measuring success

The use of local knowledge to inform Basin Plan implementation is evaluated using the following indicators:

- How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation **(6.1)**
- Processes used to identify stakeholders and other relevant groups and individuals from local communities and peak bodies **(6.2)**
- How stakeholders and other relevant groups were engaged **(6.3)**

6.1: How engagement influenced Basin Plan implementation

Where possible include specific examples of:

- *how local knowledge and solutions were used by the reporter*
- *how involving communities made a difference to Basin Plan implementation*
- *how decisions changed as a result of community involvement*

Local knowledge might include knowledge drawn from Traditional Owners and other Indigenous people and groups. When reporting on Aboriginal participation and influence, processes of involvement may be as important as outcomes.

In 2014-15 reporting, we would expect use of local knowledge to feature in development of Water Resource Plans.

Examples or case studies are not mandatory but may be a useful way to describe how local knowledge and solutions inform implementation of the Basin Plan.

(max. 800 words)

Response

The South Australian Government uses engagement to influence Basin Plan implementation in range of areas including environmental watering, development of long-term water plans, major projects and water resource planning. For 2014-15 reporting, South Australia has provided an example of engagement to inform water resource planning.

Local knowledge and solutions are used to inform the development of water resource plans in South Australia through well-established community engagement processes linked to water allocation and natural resource management planning. In particular there has been a focus on building on well-established Aboriginal engagement processes to inform water resource planning. South Australia is committed to building effective partnerships with all Aboriginal Nation Groups as water resource planning is further progressed.

In 2009, the South Australian Government and the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (NRA) entered into the *Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement 2009*. The agreement acknowledged the crucial importance for Ngarrindjeri to be involved in water planning and implementation processes and committed to joint work on the best ways to achieve this input.

In February 2014, a two-day workshop was held on-country with representatives from NRA, First Peoples of the River Murray and Mallee, the South Australian Government, various Natural Resource Management (NRM) Boards, New South Wales Aboriginal Water Initiative, Commonwealth Environmental Water Office, and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority to discuss water planning and management, including the Basin Plan. The workshop also focussed on current and future Ngarrindjeri engagement and how the water planning process could better recognise Ngarrindjeri interests.

As a result of the workshop, it was agreed that a Statement of Commitment (SOC) would be prepared under the *Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement 2009*. The SOC sets expectations for engagement and participation and provides a framework for collaboration and mutually respectful processes in the development and implementation of water resource plans. It also aims to support coordinated Ngarrindjeri engagement enabling water planners from different NRM regions to engage collaboratively with the NRA in the single forum.

Importantly, the SOC supports a country-based planning approach for Ngarrindjeri, focussing at the scale of the Ngarrindjeri traditional lands and waters, rather than pre-defined water resource plan areas. The SOC is complemented by a Cultural Knowledge Agreement which protects Ngarrindjeri interests in any cultural knowledge they may share during the development and implementation of water resource plans.

- 6.2:** Processes used to identify stakeholders and other relevant groups and individuals from local communities and peak bodies
- Where possible include process used to identify stakeholders and other relevant groups/individuals (max. 800 words)*

Response

The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) identifies stakeholders and other relevant groups and individuals from local communities and peak bodies using DEWNR's guidelines, including the DEWNR Community Engagement Resource Handbook, which are based on the South Australian Department of the Premier and Cabinet's guide, Better Together: Principles of Engagement and the values and practices of the International Association of Public Participation (IAP2).

Key areas for community involvement include water resource planning, environmental water management and major projects. Particular attention is paid to ensuring Aboriginal communities and individuals participate in water resource planning and environmental water planning activities. Engaging the community is generally undertaken in collaboration with or through the relevant Natural Resource Management boards.

A successful example of effective stakeholder identification and involvement is through the \$155 million South Australian Riverland Floodplain Integrated Infrastructure Program (SARFIIP). Works on the Katarapko Floodplain have been implemented with the benefit of extensive involvement from the Katfish Reach Steering Group from project conceptualisation through to delivery. The Katfish Reach Steering Group was formed through a stakeholder identification and analysis process with a focus on ensuring strong representation from each stakeholder group, including non-government organisations, government and community.

- 6.3:** How stakeholders and other relevant groups and individuals were engaged
- Where possible include:*
- *range of audiences engaged*
 - *range of opportunities (types of engagement)*
 - *relate these to the Basin Plan obligations to have regard to local views (Chapter 8 and 10)*
- (max. 800 words)*

Response

SA engages a range of stakeholders in relevant Basin Plan implementation activities using a range of approaches dependent on the activity and audience. For the purpose of 2014-15 reporting a case study of engagement approaches in relation to the delivery of environmental water to priority assets in 2014-15 is provided.

In 2014-15 the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources (DEWNR) engaged a range of stakeholders to inform the delivery of environmental water including:

- liaison with Local Action Planning (LAP) officers and committees and the First Peoples of the Murray and Mallee Region to determine the optimum timing for pumping water to temporary wetlands and to plan water delivery and monitoring;
- frequent regular meetings with key stakeholders including the Chowilla Coordination Committee, the Chowilla Community Committee, First Peoples of the Murray and Mallee Region, landowners, councils

and SA Water staff regarding the potential impacts and outcomes of the first testing of the Chowilla Environmental Regulator in spring 2014;

- consultation with the Community Advisory Panel (CAP) and the Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) for the Lower Lakes, Coorong and Murray Mouth and the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority (through the Kungah Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement (KNYA) Taskforce and Yarluwar Ruwe Committee) regarding the timing and delivery of environmental water for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth;
- consultation with stakeholders regarding weir pool raising events particularly with landholders who may have been affected by the raising of Locks 1 and/or 2;
- engagement across government on the real-time management of environmental water delivery through cross agency committees including the Barrage Operations Advisory Group, the Environmental Flows Reference Group, the Chowilla Operations Group and the River Murray Operations Working Group;
- a factsheet for circulation to key stakeholder groups seeking input on sites for environmental watering;
- workshops attended by key government stakeholders, environmental water holders and scientific experts to discuss annual environmental water planning and annual environmental watering priorities for the South Australian River Murray for 2015-16;
- consultation with key stakeholder groups on draft annual environmental watering priorities for 2015-16.

DEWNR also commenced consultation on the proposed content of the Long Term Environmental Watering Plan in 2014-15. This included presentations and distribution of fact sheets and questionnaires to various groups and site visits to potential watering sites for Indigenous groups. Local Action Planning committees and officers and Indigenous groups have also provided monitoring data and on-ground knowledge to help determine sites for environmental watering.