

Legal dimensions of Water Resource Plan (WRP) requirements under the Basin Plan:

A workshop with MLDRIN delegates 25 June 2015, Goolwa, SA



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Summary of key messages

- Relatively few existing processes for engaging with Aboriginal people are aimed at water resource planning. Information collected in other contexts (eg native title claims or the development of the Basin Plan as a whole) may not be fit for purpose in the context of water planning requirements, may not occur at the appropriate WRP scale, and may not even be available to water planners or to Aboriginal people themselves.
- Ongoing consultation is required regardless of any base of existing information: Aboriginal views and knowledge are dynamic rather than static.
- Engagement and consultation should occur at key points during the process of developing WRPs and associated regional documents, as laid out in the Basin Plan, rather than as an afterthought at the end of this process.
- Meaningful and comprehensive engagement will require providing sufficient resources to support that engagement.
- Meaningful engagement will also require decision-makers to have clear rules, protocols and standards in place for disclosing, using and managing Indigenous knowledge. These standards should be developed together with Aboriginal people, reflecting their concerns about controlling this information appropriately.
- In expressing Aboriginal views and interests as part of consultation processes, Nations can maximize their influence by directly relating these views and interests to these key elements that are likely to affect their interests, using the language of the Basin Plan.
- The current state of engagement processes – especially considering the volume, complexity and scale of Indigenous consultation needs – appears to be a major risk to fulfilling Basin Plan obligations. The lack of substantive consultation in relation to the recently released Basin annual environmental watering priorities is a case in point.

Introduction

The Murray Lower Darling Rivers' Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) invited Environmental Justice Australia (EJA) to prepare and deliver a one-day capacity building workshop for MLDRIN delegates in late May 2015. The workshop coincided with a two-day MLDRIN meeting in Goolwa, SA. The workshop was prepared and delivered jointly by Dr Rebecca Nelson, an independent water lawyer and consultant, and Dr Bruce Lindsay, from EJA. Assistance on the day was also provided by Carmel Sutcliffe, a PhD candidate from the University of South Australia.

The program for the workshop was as follows:

- A presentation from Dr Nelson on water resource planning as required under the Basin Plan and the Commonwealth Water Act, with particular reference to legal obligations and opportunities for Indigenous engagement in the development and preparation of Water Resource Plans (WRPs). A copy of the presentation was provided to MLDRIN delegates and appears as an appendix to this document.
- A workshop session in State-based groups focusing on 'mapping' current engagement processes and the existing knowledge base Aboriginal Nations are taking into water resource planning.
- A further workshop session aimed at identifying Nations' interests to be advanced through water resource planning and consideration of these in the context of identified points of engagement in decision-making cycles relevant to WRPs.

Overview of presentation on water resource planning

Aims and objectives

Dr Nelson's presentation on WRPs included an outline of the aims and objectives of the day. These were:

- Identify legal vehicles within the water planning process for the expression of First Nations' agenda, priorities and values;
- Consider delegates preferred processes for engagement and expression of outcomes in water resource planning;
- Consider additional capacity building needed.

Broad nature of engagement

Dr Nelson's presentation dealt in particular at length with the first of these points – the articulation of key points for engagement for Aboriginal Nations in water resource planning as provided for in statutory WRP provisions of the Basin Plan. A central component of the day, therefore, was outlining to delegates key points of influence in WRP development and attendant obligations on authorities to involve Aboriginal Nations in decision-making through consultation requirements under the Water Act and Basin Plan.

This approach emphasized that Indigenous engagement can – and indeed should – occur in an ongoing manner at important 'leverage' points in the development of WRPs and related instruments. These key points are set out in the Basin Plan, and should be understood alongside

general obligations to consult with Indigenous peoples under the Act and Basin Plan. Indigenous engagement should not occur solely as an activity subsequent to the substantial development of WRPs.

Context and features of water resource planning

The presentation commenced with an introduction to the main features of water resource planning established under Commonwealth water law (the Water Act and Basin Plan) and through State and Territory water laws. It focused the presentation (and the workshop generally) on *mid-level* arrangements and mechanisms for water management in the Murray Darling Basin (MDB) – obligations to prepare and accredit WRPs and related Basin-wide documents, such as environmental watering priorities and risk guidance. These mid-level arrangements are themselves established by the high-level Basin Plan and the Water Act, and in turn, influence low-level instruments like licenses, entitlements, and projects.

The development of WRPs is to occur at the State and Territory level and compliance and accreditation of WRPs by the Commonwealth Minister is to occur by 2019. All WRPs are to be consistent with requirements of the Basin Plan by this time. Preparations for and development of WRPs are currently underway.

Indigenous engagement in water resource planning

Obligations on Basin States developing WRPs include the following (Basin Plan, cl 10.52):

- Identify Indigenous outcomes and objectives for water resources;
- Have regard to Indigenous values and uses relating to water resources;
- Specify opportunities to strengthen and protect Indigenous values and uses in accordance with Indigenous outcomes and objectives; and
- Provide at least as much protection for Indigenous values and uses through WRPs as currently exists in law.

Consultation obligations in the preparation of WRPs (Basin Plan, cl 10.53) include consultation with regard to the views of relevant Indigenous organisations about:

- The matters noted above (subcl 10.53(1)(a));
- Native title rights, claims, indigenous land use agreements, in relation to water resources of a WRP area (subcl 10.53(1)(b));
- Registered Aboriginal heritage in relation to water resources of a WRP area (subcl 10.53(1)(c));
- The inclusion of indigenous representation in the preparation and implementation of a WRP (subcl 10.53(1)(d));
- Indigenous social, cultural, spiritual, and customary objectives and strategies for achieving these objectives, noting that these objectives need not relate specifically to water resources (subcl 10.53(1)(e));
- Encouragement of active and informed participation of indigenous people (subcl 10.53(1)(f));
- Risks to indigenous values and uses arising from the use and management of water resources in a WRP area (subcl 10.53(1)(g));
- Cultural flows (cl 10.54).

There are five inter-related and overlapping sets of obligations in these provisions of the Basin Plan: identifying certain matters, having regard to certain matters, specifying opportunities to strengthen and protect, providing a minimum baseline of legal protection, and consulting about certain matters.

The consultation requirements under cl 10.53 involve broad consultation. There are some overlaps with cl 10.52, such as at paragraphs (a) and (e). Importantly, the scope of these requirements encompasses:

- Legally recognized interests;
- Interests expressed in other ways, such as through concepts of risk, objectives and desired outcomes;
- Procedural factors, such as the nature of inclusion and participation in decision-making.

These consultation requirements are qualified or framed by the application to water resource planning of Indigenous *views* about these matters.

The concept of ‘water resources’ which are the focus of planning – and Indigenous input – is to be read broadly, as defined in the Water Act, and not limited solely to the physical aspect of water. Water ecosystems more generally, for example, are also within the scope of water resource planning.

Focus on key WRP elements and key points of influence

A Basin State should have regard to Indigenous views and interests in relation to a WRP as a whole. In expressing Indigenous views and interests as part of consultation processes, Nations can maximize their influence by using the language of the Basin Plan and directly relating these views and interests to key elements of WRPs and associated documents, which are likely to impact these interests.

These key elements, as identified in Dr Nelson’s presentation, include:

- Limits for taking water, especially sustainable diversion limits (SDLs) and SDL adjustment processes;
- Identifying and managing risks relating to water resources;
- Identifying and managing interception activities; and
- Planning for environmental watering.

For reasons of limited time, the presentation did not cover a number of other important areas of water management dealt with under the Basin Plan, such as management of salinity and water quality, and responding to extreme events such as drought.

Dr Nelson’s presentation identified a series of more *specific points of influence* arising from these key WRP elements, which may be summarized as follows:

- Rules for the protection of priority environmental assets and ecosystem functions (including rules on the time, place and rate of take of water resources, as well as rules for management and use of take);
- The listing, classification and management of risk, **including engagement on any risk guidelines developed by the MDBA;**

- Risk management processes concerning interception activities with a significant impact on water resources in the WRP area; and
- Basin annual environmental watering priorities, and long-term watering plans and annual watering priorities at the WRP area level.

Workshop discussions

The group workshops were intended as an ambitious preliminary experiment in strategic discussion and planning around key points of influence in the WRP process. This included the aims of firstly taking stock of and ‘mapping’ current engagement approaches and knowledge bases underpinning these, and, secondly, identifying some examples of Nations’ views and interests and beginning to consider how these views and interests may be applied to engagement around specific points of influence. The workshop ultimately provided an opportunity to begin the first exercise, but limited time to address the second.

Existing engagement and knowledge as a basis for water resource planning

Notes were taken from the first group workshops concerning current engagement. These notes provide a limited record of issues and insight from delegates about bases from which engagement is currently proceeding. In brief, the state of current engagement and consultation is variable, ranging from reasonably regular and engaged processes between representatives and government to largely non-existent engagement. The general tenor, however, is that structure and processes of engagement are highly problematic and appear to be largely inadequate to the difficult, complex and time-consuming processes of genuine and meaningful participation in water resource planning.

In respect of engagement, the following concerns and issues were some of those identified:

- Insufficient resources, including financial and human, in order to allow proper consultation, led by MLDRIN and First Nations themselves, on the broad range of issues on which consultation is needed and in order to facilitate proper communication across Nations (and often very large geographic areas).
- Confusion and/or uncertainty as to what was being asked of Aboriginal Nations and how this fitted into the water planning process;
- Inappropriate people or individuals speaking for Country or speaking on behalf of Indigenous interests in particular places;
- Failure on the part of public authorities to articulate clearly their responsibilities and mapping those duties and responsibilities (lack of transparency in government);
- Failure of Government to deal with Nations’ voices and interests seriously.

There are a range of formal and informal mechanisms that underpin engagement with government at present. These include, at the more formal end of the spectrum, contractual arrangements with State agencies (eg Ngarradjeri), ILUAs or other statutory settlements. Less legally formal mechanisms include MoUs, and then at the informal level, working arrangements with catchment or water authorities or other relevant government agencies. It is important to note that relatively few existing engagement exercises are aimed at water resource planning (rather than, for example, in the native title claim context), and therefore may not be fit for purpose in the context of the Basin Plan requirements. It is also unclear the extent to which the MDBA and Basin States have access to the knowledge collected by existing engagement

processes that occur in other contexts—arguably, part of the body of ‘best available information’ to which they must have regard.

In relation to governmental obligations under the Basin Plan (for example, engagement obligations of the States), it is arguable that the current *state* of engagement processes – especially considering the volume, complexity and scale of indigenous consultation needs – is itself a major risk to fulfilment of Basin Plan obligations.

The first workshop session also considered the question of available knowledge bases to inform water resource planning at key points of influence. These include submissions to the Basin Plan development and other processes, cultural mapping projects, recorded stories, anthropological record, historic archives, and so on. A key element of the knowledge base is oral knowledge, especially of Elders.

Delegates emphasized that there are enormous sensitivities around disclosure and use of Aboriginal knowledge, and justifiably so, given scope for its misappropriation and misuse, leaving aside questions of traditional and cultural rules around disclosure and use. Moreover, there are keen sensitivities around providing knowledge that is then subsequently used in official or technocratic processes outside of the control, power and influence of communities and Nations. These factors speak to the clear political role of Aboriginal knowledge (knowledge as power) in water resource management and tendencies to *appropriation*, for instance by government agencies and experts, either against or merely indifferent to Nations’ interests, voices and will.

Failure on the part of relevant statutory decision-makers and/or agencies to have clear rules, protocols and standards in place for disclosure, use and management of knowledge – reflecting Nations’ interests, will and desire to control their knowledge – appears to be a key risk factor in those decision-makers/agencies meeting their statutory obligations under the Basin Plan.

Nations’ views and interests applied to water resource planning

The second group workshop aimed to identify examples of Nations’ interests and priorities in WRP areas and begin to consider how it might be possible to engage in key parts of the water resource planning process in order to advance these interests or achieve these priorities. For example, identifying particular objectives in particular WRP areas could lead to pursuing them through engaging in individual processes like SDL adjustment projects, environmental watering priorities, or managing risks to water ecosystems.

The group discussion proceeded in a broad, preliminary way, identifying the following types of priorities, outcomes or actions as those that delegates wished to see in WRPs:

- Reintroduction of water back into devastated sites;
- Dedicated water entitlements owned and managed by First Nations (Cultural Flows)
- Action on impacts of boats eroding lake banks;
- Changes to storage policies so that minimum river levels are maintained regardless of irrigator demand;
- Avoidance or mitigation of slumping banks where this is damaging cultural heritage sites;
- Avoidance of exposure of burial sites when water levels drop in particular water bodies;

- Consultation on water quality;
- Integration of Indigenous seasons into water planning;
- Identification and management of almond plantations as ‘interception activities’ generating risks to water resources;
- Identification and management of carp as risk to water resources;
- Controls on land development and water extractions as risks to water resources and Indigenous objectives;
- Identification and management of genetically modified cotton crops as ‘interception activities’ generating risk.

Although the workshop provided insufficient time to identify geographically specific examples of Nations’ interests and priorities, it was clear that a number of important projects have been completed and/or are underway, which offer ways to articulate Indigenous uses, values, objectives and outcomes, as a basis for incorporation into water resource planning. These projects include the National Cultural Flows Research Project, development of a cultural health index framework, and the MDBA’s Yarns Woven report. Various other localized projects have occurred, such as the Barapa Barapa Water For Country project, and there is a substantial body of knowledge available through existing cultural heritage surveys and mapping that may be applicable to water resource planning exercises. There is also discussion in the academic literature on the articulation of Indigenous views and interests and their application to water planning and management.¹ Delegates emphasized that ongoing consultation was required despite any base of existing information: First Nations’ views and knowledge are dynamic rather than static.

While all important initiatives, the generation and recording of this type of knowledge does not necessarily equate to ‘active and informed participation’ in planning and decision-making processes. Such projects may be problematic in two ways:

First, articulating and transferring Indigenous knowledge through these projects to decision-makers does not equate to ‘active and informed participation’ in the substance and process of decision-making itself. Rather, without real agency, influence and control over the information and how it is interpreted, identification and use of knowledge is more akin to appropriation than ‘having regard.’

Second, such projects may not necessarily facilitate consultation and engagement at the *geographic scale* now appropriate to the task of water resource planning. That is, the key focus of activity in respect of implementation of the reform agenda that commenced with the Water Act is now at the level of WRPs. The relevant scale of engagement is necessarily now considerably more diffuse and resource intensive than, for instance, at the high, political level of the Water Act and the Basin Plan.

As the presentation indicated, the focus of engagement is now at the level of both discrete planning arrangements (such as SDL adjustment mechanisms or environmental watering) and regional application (WRP areas). The requirement to have regard to Indigenous views in

¹ See eg Sue Jackson, Carmel Pollino, Kirsten Maclean, Rosalind Bark, Bradley Moggridge ‘Meeting indigenous peoples objectives in environmental flow assessments: case studies from an Australian multi-jurisdictional water sharing initiative’ (2015) 522 *Journal of Hydrology* 141; M Barber and S Jackson ‘“Knowledge making”: issues in modelling local and indigenous knowledge systems’ (2015) 43 *Human Ecology* 119

preparing a WRP as a whole is unlikely to be met by deferring or ignoring the need to engage until WRP preparations are well-advanced and substantial bureaucratic inertia makes it impractical or impossible to affect the course of action or decision-making.

Pre-workshop survey of delegates on water resource planning: knowledge, experience and resources

Before the workshop, delegates were asked to fill out a brief, 2-page questionnaire concerning water resource planning and their and/or their Nations' prior experience of water engagement and consultation. Some key responses from that exercise are outlined in tabular form in Table 1 (Appendix 1). This questionnaire confirms the need for the direction of further resources and effort to capacity building, among other activities. Indeed, delegates were asked expressly about resources they had available for engagement and 14 delegates of 26 indicated they had no resources available for engagement activities. Several other delegates indicated limited funds were available. As to human resources, such as expertise, some delegates indicated heritage, ecological, community and traditional knowledge expertise. Some indicated availability of MDBA or other legal forms of expertise, although this seems more sparse.

Three main areas of inquiry were included in the questionnaire.

The first of these was immediately pertinent to capacity building, as it asked delegates to assess their current knowledge of the legal regime, specifically the Basin Plan and Water Act, and its consultation requirements. One-third to one-half indicated only 'limited' knowledge of these key factors. Knowledge of consultation requirements was higher than of the Plan and Act themselves.

Second, levels of current and pre-Basin Plan engagement were also concerning, with more than half of delegates (57%) indicating no or limited engagement currently occurring. This is an improvement on how pre-BP experience was viewed (around 75% of delegates indicated no or limited engagement pre-BP). Only 4 of 26 delegates indicated current engagement levels were 'high' or 'extensive'. Further relating to capacity building needs, delegates were asked about perceived levels of preparedness to engage in water resource planning. Positively, around 40% of those responding indicated they were ready to engage in consultation around WRPs. Given some disparity with perceived levels of knowledge, this response may indicate a solid organizational capacity for consultation and engagement as distinct from detailed knowledge of water resource planning and its legal framework.

Thirdly, around one-quarter of delegates responding indicated a low level of preparedness for consultation. Also, delegates were asked about the level of development of Nation's priorities and goals for water resource planning. Significantly, for strategic planning and capacity building purposes, a large majority of delegates indicated these development processes had no substantial work to date or were only in the early stages of development.

These results may reflect the limited development of explicit guidelines and knowledge about the operation of WRP requirements within State and Commonwealth agencies. The limited knowledge and preparedness of delegates is symptomatic of a broader lack of certainty about the process of undertaking and accrediting Aboriginal consultation for WRPs. This paucity is concerning given the immanent roll out of water resource planning.

Taken together, these preliminary results suggest some key areas for further knowledge and capacity building and strategic work by and among MLDRIN, which the workshop and presentation were able to address in only a preliminary way.

Directions for capacity building and engagement

It appears that there are shortcomings in the practice and possibly the policy approach to Aboriginal consultation in respect of water resource planning to date (noting that WRP development in some areas is likely to be in its early stages). It would appear that consultation and engagement in relation to water has been patchy, uneven, poor and/or difficult, especially having regard to the more intensive, complex task of consultation with respect to local- and regional-scale tools such as WRPs and associated Basin-wide instruments. As a telling example, the Basin-wide annual environmental watering priorities were released at the end of June 2015,² without any discrete Indigenous consultation process in their preparation. The Basin Plan requires the document to be prepared having regard to Indigenous values and Indigenous uses (cl 8.29(3)(g)), but in practice it refers to these matters in only a cursory and generic way.³

We are now at a critical juncture in the achievement of genuine Indigenous engagement and consultation in water resource planning. As noted above, engagement on planning is now shifting from high-level and Basin-wide questions to mid-tier regional and functional issues. Engagement on these issues will be fundamental to successfully implementing the Basin Plan over the long-term. The procedural arrangements and obligations established for Indigenous consultation and involvement in the Basin Plan are, appropriately, ambitious. On paper, they are broad and inclusive. It appears there is still considerable work required to translate them into comparable practice. With concerted, strategic and targeted will and resources, a great deal can be achieved that reflects on-ground Aboriginal aspirations and justice.

As we emphasized in the workshop and reiterate here, engagement and consultation should occur at key points during the process of developing WRPs and associated regional documents, as laid out in the Basin Plan, rather than as an afterthought at the end of this process. Government authorities and agencies are already undertaking important practical and policy work to develop WRPs, for example, reviewing State water resource planning instruments. They are also undertaking associated activities, including identifying projects or rule changes to effect SDL adjustments. One approach to encourage appropriate engagement in such near-term processes is to:

- acquire detailed information about what States are proposing to do; and/or
- identify key Indigenous priorities in WRP areas (for example, water level maintenance at particular sites);
- suggest to State and Commonwealth authorities that such priorities need to be considered at specific key decision-making points, such as SDL adjustment processes; and
- express the view that Traditional Owners wish to engage on those issues at such decision-making points.

² <http://www.mdba.gov.au/sites/default/files/pubs/2015-16-Basin-annual-environmental-watering-priorities.pdf>

³ At 15

As an immediate issue, we note that SDL adjustment mechanisms are to be finalized by mid-2016.

Challenges and opportunities

In light of the above remarks, key challenges and opportunities include:

Challenges

- The shift in water planning to a more diffuse, complex and resource-intensive situation.
- The identification of key opportunities for engagement. The workshop included our attempts to identify some of these opportunities. Further work needs to be done to 'map' those opportunities and develop strategic planning arrangements around them.
- Problems with the structure and conduct of Indigenous engagement to date and, arguably, the potential for collapse in meaningful, or optimal, forms of Indigenous engagement, especially under the complexity and resource-consuming nature of water resource planning.
- Weaknesses in consultation/engagement processes are a key challenge, both to MLDRIN (having Nations' voices heard) but also expose significant, potential problems for government agencies in meeting their obligations.
- The ongoing task of 'translating' Nations' priorities, outcomes and objectives into the language and machinery of the Water Act and water resource planning – or further crafting those interests into 'inputs' explicable to the water planning process and given weight by it.
- Building capacity in terms of (a) familiarity and confidence with water resource planning (its technical and legal content) at regional levels, especially on Country and across TO groups, (b) campaigning effort and resources at regional and at (southern) Basin levels, (c) knowledge and insight ('intelligence') into current and proposed state of government programs.

Opportunities

- Practical and localized (regional) issues can be dealt with and should be factored into current and upcoming planning/decision-making processes.
- There are multiple (if not abundant) opportunities for and points of engagement by Nations in water resource planning. Basin States have obligations to consult around these points of engagement.
- Development of a program for targeted (for example, working group) activity around key potential points of influence at Basin-wide or higher levels, for example, policy development.

Suggestions for short-term actions

- Make contact with lead staff involved in developing each of the specific WRP elements and Basin-wide documents identified by the workshop as holding key points of influence; express a desire for Traditional Owners to be consulted in relation to that element or document; and outline resources required to facilitate this consultation. The most immediate element in this regard is SDL adjustment projects to be proposed by Basin States.

- Enter into discussions with States and MDBA over the need for strategic resources and timetables for TO consultation and engagement over WRP development at regional/WRP area levels.
- Enquire with MDBA and Basin States as to whether they have received or commissioned internal legal advice on their Indigenous consultation obligations in respect of water resource planning, especially on consultation in specific planning, decision-making and instrument-making processes associated with WRPs (or development of related Basin-wide instruments). Doing so would demonstrate a serious attempt to fulfill consultation obligations.

Suggestions for longer-term actions

- Develop a capacity building program for TO engagement in water resource planning at the level of WRP areas, to be rolled out through 2015.
- Prepare grant applications with such a capacity building program in mind, including by applying to private or philanthropic funding sources.
- Consider commissioning legal advice on Indigenous consultation obligations on government agencies in relation to particular elements of water resource planning under the Basin Plan (or consultation in respect of other water management processes under the Basin Plan).

Appendix 1: Pre-Workshop Survey

Table 1: MLDRIN delegates' responses to WRP survey

Current knowledge of Basin Plan		Knowledge of consultation requirements of BP		Level of engagement to date		Pre-BP level of engagement		Level of current preparedness		Development of goals and priorities	
Limited	13	Limited	11	None	7	None	8	Long way off	6	No substantial work	8
mod	8	mod	6	Limited	9	Limited	12	Getting ready	9	Early stages	14
High	3	High	8	Moderate	6	Moderate	4	Ready	11	Substantial work underway	1
Other	2	Other	1	High	3	High	1			Quite or very advanced	0
				Extensive	1	Extensive	1			Other	3
N=	26		26		26		26		26		26

Questionnaire to MLDRIN delegates in preparation for 25 June workshop

Introductory (optional)

Please identify the Aboriginal Nation you are representing for MLDRIN.

Please identify the general geographic area of Country you are speaking for. (eg the area you are most familiar with within your Country)

Please identify the principal Aboriginal Organisation you are representing. (eg. Native Title Applicant body, Corporation)

If known, please identify the Water Resource Plan area(s) which apply to your Nation's Country (may be more than one WRP area).

Tick here if you do NOT know which WRP area(s) apply to your country

Knowledge of water resource planning

Please indicate how you would describe your current knowledge of, or familiarity with, the Basin Plan and the Commonwealth Water Act. (bold or circle the best alternative)

Limited Moderate High

Please indicate how you would describe your current knowledge of the requirements for Indigenous consultation in Water Resource Plans, included in the Basin Plan. (bold or circle the best alternative)

Limited Moderate High

Please indicate what level of engagement you have had to date on behalf of the Nation you represent with State or Commonwealth official (including MDBA) regarding Water Resource Plan development. (bold or circle the best alternative)

None Limited Moderate High/considerable Extensive

Please indicate what level of engagement you have had on behalf of the Nation you represent with state water planning processes, before Basin Plan processes commenced (bold or circle the best alternative)

None Limited Moderate High/considerable Extensive

Resources for engagement

Please describe generally the levels of financial and human resources available to your organisation to engage in Water Resource Plan development, eg if possible indicate generally numbers of paid or voluntary staff, budgets.

Please describe generally the level of expertise available to your organisation to engage in Water Resource Planning processes, eg type of expertise (eg legal, policy, heritage, ecological, hydrological), nature of their engagement (eg community member or leader, independent expert, staff member; contract, ongoing; FT, PT).

How would you describe your Nation's level of preparedness to engage in consultation over Water Resource Plans (bold or circle the best alternative)

Ready to start now Getting prepared A long way off being prepared

Development of water resource plan goals and priorities

Please indicate how developed are your organisation's and community's goals and priorities for water resource planning. (bold or circle the best alternative)

No substantial work to date Early stages of development Substantial work underway Quite advanced Very advanced

Optional

Please list any key questions or concerns you have about the Water Resource Planning process:
Eg Do you know what part of the Basin Plan refers to Indigenous consultation for WRPs?