



LAKE EYRE BASIN MINISTERIAL FORUM

Community Advisory Committee

MEETING No. 13, Canberra, Tues 27 and Wed 28 March 2007

AND

Joint Community Advisory Committee/Scientific Advisory Panel

MEETING No. 5, Canberra, Wed 28 March 2007

SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

REVIEW OF THE LEB AGREEMENT

Key Issues discussed

- The review consultant awaits formal submissions to the review from the LEB Governments. Following this, the final report is due in April, and the LEB Governments will then consider and discuss responses to the report, including potential changes to the Agreement arrangements.
- Some key findings of the review so far:
 - The LEB Agreement is highly valued and should be retained
 - Achievements include the generation of a ‘whole-of-basin’ mindset, a broadening from a water focus to include a more integrated NRM focus, the creation of effective dialogue and communications, and the generation of new knowledge.
 - Some weaknesses include inadequate connection with regional NRM systems and groups, insufficient application of basin-wide planning principles to NRM/NHT planning, absence of NSW in the Agreement, and too few on-ground outcomes.
- Key issues:
 - regional NRM groups — their role under the Agreement, increasing connection with them, relationship between them and the LEB Agreement post NHT2;
 - alignment with the regional NRM Facilitator network
 - advisory committee structures and possible changes to them
 - Operation of the LEB Ministerial Forum

LEB AGREEMENT AREA IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Key Issues discussed

- SA Government is about to start the formal legislative/parliamentary process needed to extend the LEB Agreement Area in SA (to include the Finke River, Neales River and Douglas Creek catchments to the west and northwest of Lake Eyre).

STATE & TERRITORY WATER PLANNING REGIMES—cross-border review

Key Issues discussed

- Objective: compare water management systems in each jurisdiction, work out how they can function together so that water planning is effective for the LEB catchments as a whole. Three major parts to this strategic need:
 1. real integration between the systems;
 2. effective consideration of the LEB and the LEB Agreement within the water planning instruments of each jurisdiction; and
 3. communication of the systems to the CAC and other stakeholders.
- This is central to the objectives of the LEB Agreement: ensuring that legislation and policies in different jurisdictions address cross-border issues well, and do not contradict each other.
- Possibility that similar reviews are being done at a national level by the National Water Commission under the National Water Initiative.

Actions

- Draft terms of reference for the working group to be re-circulated to the CAC. CAC to provide comments direct to Ian Gordon.

COOPER CREEK WATER LICENSING

Key Issues discussed

- Request from the CAC to the SAP for advice on the Qld Government treatment of Cooper Creek 'sleeper' water licences. SAP to write to the Qld Government to ask how they will upgrade the Integrated Quantity-Quality River Basin Simulation Model (IQQM) for the next round of water planning for the Cooper Creek Catchment, and ask how they will treat the sleeper licences. The SAP will emphasise the importance of building into the model the likely predicted stream flow changes coming arising from climate change.

BRADFIELD SCHEME PROPOSALS—North Queensland

Key Issues discussed

- The scheme was proposed by the Qld Government on the proviso that discussion would occur with the Commonwealth in regard to the 10 billion dollar national plan for water security.
- Qld government still supports the proposal, but it will now be progressed by the Commonwealth's Northern Australia Task Force (Senator Bill Heffernan).
- Consideration of the Bradfield proposals will depend on the terms of reference for the Northern Australia Task Force, which have yet to be agreed.

Actions

- Department of the Environment and Water Resources to keep the CAC informed about the formation and progress of the Northern Futures Task Force.
- CAC to compile a submission to the Task Force at an appropriate time in regard to the Bradfield Scheme proposals.

LEB RIVERS ASSESSMENT**Key Issues discussed**

- Progress with sub-projects (e.g. review of data logging networks, data management and reporting project, trajectories of change for fish populations, State of the Basin report)
- Connections with Bureau of Meteorology data networks.
- AridFlow project: waterholes are critical refuges; now need a list of key waterholes.
- Recent decisions include:
 - Data and Information Manager/Coordinator to be appointed
 - AridFlow water depth loggers to be reinstated
 - On-ground monitoring to be done to test the fish population modelling (species richness, abundance, biomass, population structure)
 - State of the Basin report to be compiled this year
 - Trialling remote sensing to measure Basin health indicators

Actions

- Need public communication of current progress with the Rivers Assessment.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE LEB**Key Issues discussed**

- Current status of predictions for LEB: broad and imprecise; showing increased temperature, likely changes in rainfall distribution across the Basin, increased time variability of rainfall and streamflow.
- All climate change predictions for the LEB add strength to the need to:
 - protect large numbers of waterholes in the rivers of the Basin, especially the few deep waterholes that persist beyond 2 years in dry times
 - be very cautious about approving developments that use surface water resources

LINKS WITH REGIONAL NRM BODIES IN THE LEB

Key Issues discussed

- Different roles of the LEB process and the regional NRM process; different times of establishment, varying development of process.
- Possible overlaps and duplications.
- Increase LEB presentations at regional NRM board meetings, potential to hold more joint LEB/Regional NRM meetings (e.g. potential for annual LEB/NRM forum).

Actions

- Further consider the possibility of an annual LEB Forum where all regional bodies, catchment committees etc come together with the LEB CAC and SAP and government officers to discuss shared issues, links and collaborations.

LEB CONFERENCE

Key Issues discussed

- Holding the conference jointly with the Australian Rangelands Society Conference — mixed opinions, some drawbacks (long event, Rangelands conference drew some focus away from LEB conference, fewer LEB community delegates), some benefits (good grass-roots community presentations, good balance between community, science and government)
- Venue for the next conference (2008) preferably within the Lake Eyre Basin. Possibly hold as a joint forum with the GABCC and the regional NRM groups in Birdsville (GABCC already planning to meet in Birdsville mid 2008).
- The need to begin planning for the 2008 conference as soon as possible.

Actions

- Steering committee to develop draft proposals for the 2008 LEB conference (including location, purpose, and how the conference will fit with the strategic direction of the LEB Agreement) for wider discussion at the next CAC meeting.

LEB CAC ABORIGINAL INVOLVEMENT

Key Issues discussed

- LEB CAC Aboriginal membership — SA, Qld and the NT have all recommended to the LEB Secretariat their nominees for additional Aboriginal members.
- Recommendations of the 2006 LEB Aboriginal Forum — included holding annual Aboriginal Forum, and compiling an LEB Aboriginal document. These recommendations have gone to the LEB Ministerial Forum.

Actions

- Letters will be sent from the Commonwealth to the new Aboriginal CAC nominees, offering them membership on the CAC.
- The potential for annual Aboriginal Forums is to be discussed during the review of the LEB Agreement.
- Purposes and content of a proposed LEB Aboriginal Document or set of maps to be discussed, clarified and tabled with the CAC, outlining the scope of such a project.

LEB MINING INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT**Key Issues discussed**

- Mineral resources (including oil and gas) are the largest contributor to GDP in the Lake Eyre Basin, and are largely dependent on groundwater.
- Mining operations range from small family operations (e.g. opal) to large scale operations (e.g. Cannington silver, lead and zinc mine).
- Numerous mineral deposits in the Basin along the southern and northern Basin margins are likely to be utilised in future. Uranium mining is likely to be the major growth in mining in the Basin (especially in southern areas), given current federal government policy and the high global demand for Uranium.

Actions

- Provide Minerals Council of Australia an overview of the LEB, knowledge of the Basin, the role of the LEB Agreement, CAC, SAP etc, and maintain contact with the Minerals Council in regard to reaching minerals industry networks and stakeholders.

STEWARDSHIP AGREEMENTS/PROGRAM**Key Issues discussed**

- Australian Government proposal for an environmental stewardship scheme may be considered as part of the future NHT/NAP program. The proposal is currently before Federal Cabinet. This year's budget will confirm whether it goes ahead or not.
- Would focus on matters of Australian Government priority; i.e. matters of national environmental significance (e.g. RAMSAR wetlands, national threatened species), not general payments for environmental services. Potentially long-term agreements (e.g. 10-15 years). All details yet to be confirmed, if the program goes ahead.