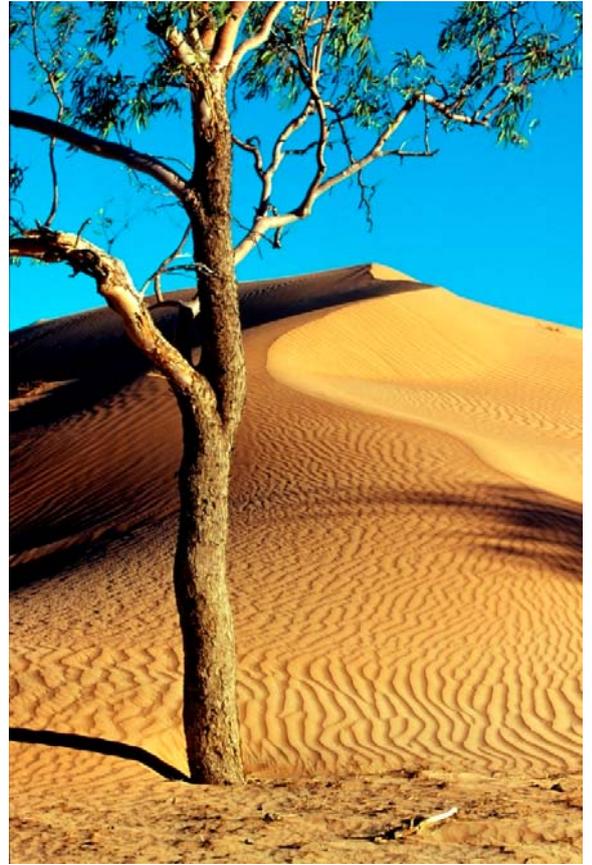


Lake Eyre Basin Communication Strategy

April 2008



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Part 1 – Background

Introduction

This communications strategy has been developed to guide future communications activities relating to the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement.

It will inform the development of an annual communication action plan. Together, these documents will guide activities that will raise general awareness of the special biodiversity and heritage value of the Basin.

This communication strategy is based on extensive discussion and engagement with individuals and community groups within the Lake Eyre Basin.

Background

The Lake Eyre Basin covers about 1.2 million square kilometres, almost one-sixth of Australia, and is one of the world's largest internally draining river systems. The arid rivers of the Basin also rank among the world's last unregulated dryland rivers, and are home to a 'boom-and-bust' ecology adapted to enormously variable flow conditions. The Basin supports a range of nationally important natural, social and economic values.

The Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement brings together the Australian, Queensland, South Australian and Northern Territory Governments to ensure the sustainability of the Lake Eyre Basin river systems, in particular to avoid or eliminate cross-border impacts. The Agreement was signed by Ministers of the Australian, Queensland and South Australian governments in October 2000, and has been enacted in the Australian, Queensland and South Australian Parliaments. The Northern Territory signed in 2004.

The Lake Eyre Basin Agreement currently applies to:

- the Cooper Creek system (including the Thomson and Barcoo Rivers);
- the Georgina and Diamantina River systems within Queensland and South Australia, ending at Lake Eyre;
- the Northern Territory portion of the Basin¹; and
- The Macumba, Neales, Umbum, Sunny, Douglas and Finke River systems in South Australia.²

The purpose of the Agreement is to provide for the development or adoption, and implementation of Policies and Strategies concerning water and related natural resources in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area to avoid (or eliminate so far as reasonably practicable) adverse cross-border impacts..

¹ The Northern Territory became a signatory to the Agreement in 2004, however, the Parliament of the Northern Territory is yet to ratify the Agreement.

² These additional South Australian catchments were included in the Agreement area after the Agreement was signed. These areas are yet to be ratified for inclusion by the Parliament of the Northern Territory.

The Agreement incorporates a number of guiding principles that recognise the significance of the Lake Eyre Basin for ecological, pastoral, cultural and tourism reasons, and the need to make decisions which will foster ecologically sustainable development using a precautionary approach and take account of the significant knowledge and experience of local communities.

Ministerial Forum

The Ministerial Forum was established by the Lake Eyre Basin Inter-governmental Agreement. The Ministerial Forum comprises:

- the Australian Minister for Climate Change and Water, Sen the Hon Penny Wong (as Chair)
- the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources and Water, the Hon Craig Wallace MP
- the South Australian Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Hon Gail Gago MLC
- the Northern Territory Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, the Hon Leonard Kiely MLA

The Ministerial Forum is required by the Agreement to meet at least once per year. Its role is to implement the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement by developing or adopting Policies and Strategies for the management of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Area in accordance with the purpose, objectives and principles set out in the Agreement.

There are two committees that provide guidance and feedback to the Ministerial Forum, these are:

Community Advisory Committee: The role of the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee is to seek out community views relevant to matters covered by the agreement, to represent a wide-range of interests in the Lake Eyre Basin community. On the basis of this, they provide community advice, representation and feedback to the Ministerial Forum and then communicate decisions back to the community. Membership of the committee includes Aboriginal members to strengthen links with Aboriginal groups within the Basin.

Scientific Advisory Panel: The primary role of the Scientific Advisory Panel is to provide relevant, timely and high quality scientific and technical advice to the Ministerial Forum on matters relevant to the management of water and related natural resources within the Agreement Area.

The need for communication activities

Previous communication activities have occurred in an ad hoc manner as there has not been a dedicated communications officer.

This strategy provides a strategic foundation for the development of an action plan aimed at raising awareness among specific target audiences of the importance of the Lake Eyre Basin and of the work being carried out for the sustainable management of the Basin.

In addition, the Ministerial Forum identified the development of a comprehensive communication strategy as an important element of the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement and the twelve high priority Lake Eyre Basin Strategies endorsed by the Ministerial Forum in October 2005, in particular:

- To develop and implement a communication strategy to raise public awareness of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement and the work of the Ministerial Forum, the Community Advisory Committee and the Scientific Advisory Panel.
- The communication strategy will include annual reporting to the Basin community through the Ministerial Forum on progress in implementing policies, strategies and other activities under the Agreement.

Previous communication activities

The following communications activities have already taken place to support and promote the Lake Eyre Basin:

- Websites - www.lebmf.gov.au and www.lakeeyrebasin.org.au
- Ministerial communiqués – distributed nationally after each Ministerial Forum.
- Newsletter – distributed to 700 stakeholders approximately bi-annually from the Community Advisory Committee.
- Brochures, flyers and fact sheets
- media releases to radio and print news outlets in the Basin providing information about recent or upcoming meetings
- Reports –various scientific reports on the Basin
- articles and updates in existing regional publications across the Basin

Lake Eyre Basin Aboriginal Forums

There have so far been two Aboriginal Forums which have brought together Aboriginal people from throughout the Basin to discuss Aboriginal visions for natural resources in the Basin, introduce and discuss the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement and discuss Aboriginal involvement. This Forum has been a successful method of communication with Aboriginal groups.

Lake Eyre Basin Biennial Conferences

There have been three Biennial Lake Eyre Basin Conferences since the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement was signed: in Birdsville (2002), Alice Springs (2004) and Renmark (2006). These conferences have brought together representatives from Governments, the community, research organisations, and regional Natural Resource Management groups to discuss matters of cross-border importance for the natural resources of the Basin.

Program aim

The aim of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement is to ensure the sustainability of the Lake Eyre Basin river systems, in particular to avoid or eliminate cross-border impacts.

Purpose and scope of the strategy

Communication in the Lake Eyre Basin has until now been achieved in a number of ways but has lacked a broad, unifying strategy. This document is a long-term, ongoing strategy to fill this gap. It has the following purposes:

1. To articulate the background and objectives for communications activities under the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement.
2. To set out a clear context and initial priorities for further development of annual Lake Eyre Basin Communications Action Plans.
3. To identify stakeholders, see Attachment A, and set out initial priorities for engagement and building good relationships over the next twelve months.

Communication objectives

The communication action plan should aim to achieve the following objectives:

- A coordinated and consistent approach to communicating with the target audiences;
- Improve access to Lake Eyre Basin information for a wide range of audiences;
- Raise public awareness of the values of the Lake Eyre Basin and the Agreement to ensure greater understanding of the need to protect and properly manage the area;
- Develop and maintain good relationships with and between existing stakeholders and bring in new stakeholders as appropriate;
- Develop information materials for use by all jurisdictions;
- Foster a shared sense of responsibility towards the management of the Lake Eyre Basin;
- Develop a plan to improve communication with Aboriginal audiences; and
- Develop and annually review a communications action plan to meet the aims of the program;
- Develop synergies and avoid duplication of communication effort across all natural resource management organisations working on and within the Lake Eyre Basin.

Key messages

- The Australian, Queensland, South Australian and Northern Territory Governments are working together to protect and manage the Lake Eyre Basin.
- The communities of the Lake Eyre Basin have an important role to play in protecting the biodiversity and environment of this unique region.
- The Lake Eyre Basin is a unique river system which is the home to valuable and diverse flora and fauna.
- The need to balance the ecological integrity and natural function of in-stream and floodplain ecosystems with the viability of economic, social, cultural and other activities in the Basin.

- The Community Advisory Committee is responsible for maintaining inclusiveness, trust, openness and reciprocal benefit with the communities and interest groups in the Basin.
- The Scientific Advisory Panel is responsible for providing high-quality scientific advice to the Ministerial Forum to support the development of policies and strategies for the Lake Eyre Basin.

Target audiences

Primary

- Natural Resource Management regional groups
- Aboriginal groups
- Landholders
- Tourists

Secondary

- Conservation groups
- Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee
- Petroleum Industry
- Mining Industry
- Professional scientists and technical experts
- State, Territory and Local Governments
- General public
- Education institutions
- Media

Additional information about these target audiences is located at Attachment A.

Part 2 – Communication Action Planning

The Communications Officer will be responsible for developing a 12 month communications action plan which will include:

1. Stakeholder liaison.

- This should include face to face meetings to not only share information but to build and develop relationships between stakeholders. This could be by:
 - regional visits;
 - seminars;
 - workshops; and
 - school visits.
- Relationship building is a key component of this and future communication strategies and actions. All current communications in the Lake Eyre Basin are directed towards a broad range of stakeholders and these communications will continue. However because of limited resources, for the first twelve months of this strategy the priorities for engagement will be with the NRM regional bodies, Aboriginal communities, landholders and tourists.

2. Undertaking the following communication activities:

- Development of a new ‘brand’ for the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement which can be used across all electronic and hardcopy promotional material.
- Revise and update existing leaflets and brochures on the Lake Eyre Basin.
- Support the updating of the current Lake Eyre Basin Agreement web site (www.LakeEyreBasinmf.gov.au) and its integration and linking with the earlier Lake Eyre Basin web site (www.lakeeyrebasin.org.au).
- Identify and provide regular Lake Eyre Basin articles to the major hard copy and electronic land and natural resource newsletters distributed within the Basin. This also includes coordinating Community Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Panel members, on a roster basis, to produce a draft article every two months for these newsletters.
- Provide communication advice and support to various project teams to develop and distribute communication products in order to maximise awareness of key Lake Eyre Basin initiatives such as:
 - 2006 Lake Eyre Basin Conference proceedings
 - Aboriginal Forums
 - Lake Eyre Basin Rivers Assessment project progress and outcomes
 - The Lake Eyre Basin Social and Economic project: ‘People, Communities and Economies of the Lake Eyre Basin’
 - Aridflo report on Environmental Flow Requirements for Australian Arid Zone Rivers

- the Lake Eyre Basin 5-year Action Plan, (subject to approval from the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum)
 - the Knowledge Strategy of the Lake Eyre Basin Scientific Advisory Panel
 - Lake Eyre Basin community reporting initiatives, including presence/absence reporting for Cane Toads and Red-Claw Crayfish in the Basin.
3. Building on existing Aboriginal communications activities.
 4. Managing communication budget (subject to approval from the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum)
 5. Establishing sustainable and continuing communication systems and practices with Lake Eyre Basin stakeholders.
 6. Establishing processes for internal clearances among all jurisdictions for communications material about the Basin.
 7. Annual reporting to the Basin community through the Ministerial Forum on Lake Eyre Basin Agreement issues and progress and the work of the Ministerial Forum.
 8. Evaluation of the communication progress to ensure the communications action plan is meeting the needs of the Ministerial Forum and the Lake Eyre Basin stakeholders.

Sub-messages

The Communication Officer will note that the following sub-messages has been identified with stakeholders as being important in communication for the Lake Eyre Basin:

- That people and place are inseparable, and that environmental, social, economic and cultural aspects of the Lake Eyre Basin are interrelated.
- That scientific and social research is continually being carried out to better understand the physical, biological and social systems in the Basin, and to highlight their vulnerabilities and threats, and, that these threats need to be managed in an integrated way.
- That all surface water and ground water extraction and use in the Basin have consequences for the place and for the people.
- That people are learning new ways to manage the Lake Eyre Basin. (That managers of the Lake Eyre Basin are adaptive to changes and priorities in natural resource issues and management.)
- That the Lake Eyre Basin has environmental, economic, social and cultural values that should be protected for current and future generations.
- That the Lake Eyre Basin is one of the world's largest internal drainage systems, and that the highly variable water flows support a variety of unique flora and fauna and also supports important wetlands.

Budget

The budget for the first 12 month communication action plan is yet to be confirmed.

Contacts

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Timing

The initial communications action plan should be developed and provided to the jurisdictions for comment and clearance within one month of the Communications Officer commencing.

Attachment A

Audience	Why Important	What they need
Primary Target Audience		
NRM regional bodies	<p>Critical sources and distributors of information on the Lake Eyre Basin. These Boards are frontline in the delivery of a range of information on research, best practices and funding sources.</p> <p>Some NRM Boards also have the statutory authority for extension and compliance issues.</p>	<p>Institutional arrangements between NRM Boards and Lake Eyre Basin ie Bilateral agreement, NRM Board Plans and Lake Eyre Basin messages are consistent.</p> <p>Communication Officers are in regular contact.</p>
Aboriginal community	<p>Aboriginal groups are active land owners and managers in the Lake Eyre Basin, and possess important knowledge on the sustainable management of Lake Eyre Basin natural resources.</p>	<p>Clear lines of communication between Aboriginal groups and organisations associated with the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement.</p> <p>The need for continued close collaboration with existing regional, State and Australian Government processes</p> <p>The importance of water and natural resource management for</p>

Audience	Why Important	What they need
		<p>Aboriginal people in the Lake Eyre Basin (noting the tight integration of water land, culture and health issues)</p> <p>Principles and protocols for effective communication with Aboriginal people, groups and communities in the Lake Eyre Basin</p> <p>Aboriginal representation on the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee</p>
<p>Landholders and land managers</p>	<p>These people are the front line custodians of Lake Eyre Basin., and their actions are critical to the future health of the Lake Eyre Basin.</p> <p>Their understanding of Lake Eyre Basin values, their background and knowledge of the Basin, and their ability to influence how resources are managed in the Basin, are keys to long-term sustainability.</p>	<p>A broad understanding of the importance of the Lake Eyre Basin and the need to consider social, environmental, cultural and economic impacts of land management practices.</p> <p>Information on current knowledge and research on sustainable land management practices.</p> <p>Access to the Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee and Scientific Advisory Panel for</p>

Audience	Why Important	What they need
		two way communication. Information on funding programs.
Tourists	<p>Tourism can have major ecological and social impacts at specific locations in the Basin, and at specific times of the year.</p> <p>They are important economically and are also a link between the Lake Eyre Basin and the general non Basin community.</p>	Information about the values of the Basin and why they should be protected, information relating to the impact of tourism on whole of Lake Eyre Basin environment, and on how tourists can help to protect the Basin
Secondary Target Audiences		
<p>Operational stakeholders</p> <p>Community Advisory Committee, Scientific Advisory Panel MF, jurisdictional officers</p>	<p>These relationships are critical to maintain as they are the core groups established to manage the functions and goals of the Agreement</p> <p>They are also important in maintaining links with Lake Eyre Basin stakeholders</p> <p>These groups lead the communication of Lake Eyre Basin management initiatives, influence government policy and budget allocations, and have a profile in the media.</p>	Maintenance of relationships and contact. Sharing of knowledge
Conservation groups	These groups can help to support Lake Eyre Basin priorities as well as being a source of professional and technical expertise	Links with Lake Eyre Basin stakeholders
Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee	This group is also interested in cross border issues, has similar interests and issues to the Lake Eyre Basin, and a significant geographic overlap with the Lake Eyre Basin.	Formal and informal links with Lake Eyre Basin operational groups

Audience	Why Important	What they need
Petroleum Industry	A significant industry in the Basin, with potentially large environmental impact, and a major player in long-term sustainability	Access to knowledge of the Basin, the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, and active participation in key relationships under the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement.
Mining Industry	A significant industry in the Basin, with potentially large environmental impact, and a major player in long-term sustainability	Access to knowledge of the Basin, the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, and active participation in key relationships under the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement.
Professional scientists and technical experts	<p>These people are responsible for advancing scientific and technical knowledge of the Lake Eyre Basin.</p> <p>They are also likely to lead discussion and debate about evolving and current issues.</p> <p>They are likely to foreshadow threats to the Lake Eyre Basin.</p>	<p>They need access to the views and approaches of peers working in the Lake Eyre Basin, along with the views, experience and practices of innovative land managers in the Basin</p> <p>They need ready access to data and information on the management of Lake Eyre Basin.</p>
State, Territory and Local Government agencies	Key players in planning and land use decisions across the Basin	Current and reliable information on the state of the natural resources of the Basin, key cross-border threats identified for the Basin, and collaborative programs underway to address these threats.
General public	This group, while lacking an understanding of Lake Eyre Basin, can nevertheless	Need to understand the importance

Audience	Why Important	What they need
	affect the Lake Eyre Basin through their influence on government policy and economic development more generally.	of the Lake Eyre Basin in terms of water and water related NRM Important to keep Lake Eyre Basin in the public eye to keep a focus on its protection.
Educational institutions	These institutions can influence understanding of the Lake Eyre Basin in the wider community.	An understanding of the Lake Eyre Basin issues and significance developed into curriculum
Media	Key avenue of influence on government and the wider community.	Issue based and success stories from the Lake Eyre Basin written