

Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum - Birdsville Communiqué

25 October 2002

Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum meets for second time

The Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum held its second meeting today in Birdsville, Queensland, as part of the Lake Eyre Basin Conference.

The Ministerial Forum was established under the Lake Eyre Basin Inter-governmental Agreement, signed by the Commonwealth, Queensland and South Australian Governments in 2000. The Agreement provides for the sustainable management of water and related natural resources within the major cross-border river systems in the Basin.

The Ministerial Forum comprises the Federal Minister for the Environment and Heritage, the Hon Dr David Kemp MP (as chair), the Queensland Minister for Natural Resources and Mines, the Hon Stephen Robertson MP, and the South Australian Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Hon John Hill MP. The Northern Territory Minister for Central Australia, the Hon Peter Toyne MP, also attended the meeting.

In opening the meeting, Dr Kemp noted the significance of the Lake Eyre Basin and welcomed progress towards extending membership of the forum to all relevant governments.

Dr Kemp also recognised the important contribution being made by members of the Basin community in support of the Agreement. "The ongoing support and involvement of the Basin community in implementation of the Agreement is vital", he said.

"The Agreement is about ensuring the nationally important environmental values associated with the major cross-border river systems of the Basin are protected, while also supporting the Basin's other economic and social values".

Key outcomes from the meeting included:

- i. Agreement to invite the New South Wales and Northern Territory Governments to join the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement and to keep them informed of Ministerial Forum Decisions and initiatives;
- ii. Agreement to enhance the Ministerial Forum Scientific Advisory Panel by appointing Professor Tom McMahon to provide advice on catchment hydrology issues, and Professor Geoffrey Lawrence to provide advice on rural sociology issues of relevance to the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement;
- iii. Agreement to reconstitute the Ministerial Forum Community Advisory Committee in accordance with the provisions of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, and establish necessary secretarial and other support arrangements including the appointment of a part-time facilitator;
- iv. Approval of the 2002-03 Ministerial Forum Budget and Workplan;

- v. Agreement to develop an Indigenous Reconciliation Action Plan consistent with the framework agreed by the Council of Australian Governments;
- vi. Requesting the Scientific Advisory Panel to examine the implications of current land and vegetation management practices in the upper catchment area for the health of in-stream and floodplain ecosystems in the Basin;
- vii. Approval of a number of high-level policies for the implementation of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, and the development of associated draft strategies in consultation with the Scientific Advisory Panel, the Community Advisory Committee and the Basin community;
- viii. Agreement for the development of an implementation plan for the Lake Eyre Basin Rivers Assessment and the release of an information brochure on the project; and
- ix. Agreement to the development of a Communications Plan for the Ministerial Forum, including the development of a corporate profile and logo;

Ministers also thanked the Lake Eyre Basin Coordinating Group for its efforts as the Community Advisory Committee to the Ministerial Forum over the past 12 months. A community forum was held following the Ministerial Forum, which was attended by representatives from the Lake Eyre Basin Coordinating Group, the Cooper's Creek and Georgina-Diamantina Catchment Committees and members of the local community.