

DALY RIVER MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEETING RECORD FOR

MEETING 5: 9 – 10 August 2007

Darwin Airport Resort

Present

Committee Member	Committee Role
John Childs	Chair
Dan Thomson (9 August)	Represent Non-Indigenous landowners and the NT Cattlemen's Association
John ETTY	Represent Non-Indigenous landowners and the NT Horticultural Association
Gary Higgins	Represent Tourism and the Katherine Region Tourism Association
Mona Liddy	Represent Indigenous Landowners and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group
William Hewitt	Represent Indigenous Landowners and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group
Warren de With	Represent Recreation/ Fishing interests and the Amateur Fishermen's Association of the NT
Stuart Blanch	Represent Conservation interests and the Environment Centre of the NT
Bruce Sawyer	Government Primary Industries
Ian Lancaster	Government Water Manager
John de Koning	Government Conservation and Recreation Manager
Joe Martin-Jard (10 August)	Government Regional Development Planner
Mark Meldrum	Government Land Use Planner
Darlene Lion	DRMAC Executive Officer
The Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, Ms Delia Lawrie MLA attended the meeting for Agenda Item 4	
David Money, Senior Adviser to the Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage attended the meeting for Agenda Item 4	
Brent Williams, Executive Director Natural Resource Management, Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts attended the meeting for Agenda Item 4	

Provided presentations at the DRMAC Research Forum – Agenda Item 12

Michael Douglas, Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge consortium, Charles Darwin University.

Sue Jackson, Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).

Lindsay Hutley, Tropical Environmental Management, Charles Darwin University.

Eric Valentine, Charles Darwin University.

Simon Townsend, Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts.

Bruce Campbell, Charles Darwin University.

Day 1: 9 August 2007

1. Welcome

1.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Joe Martin-Jard for Day 1 of the meeting and Dan Thomson for Day 2 of the meeting.

2. Previous Meeting

2.1 Meeting Record

The Meeting Record for Meeting 4 was accepted by DRMAC.

2.2 Action Sheet and progress on items

The Action Sheet for Meeting 4 was accepted.

3. Prepare for meeting with Minister

The Chair advised that the newly appointed Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, Ms Delia Lawrie MLA would attend the meeting from 9am to 10am to meet with DRMAC.

DRMAC discussed the issues that they would talk to the Minister about, including whether the Living Rivers Ministerial Council would be formally established and the expected timing of Government's response to DRMAC's briefing to the Minister regarding land clearing.

4. Meet with Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage, Ms Delia Lawrie MLA

The Daly River Management Advisory Committee (DRMAC) met with the Minister for Natural Resources and Environment, Ms Delia Lawrie MLA, and Brent Williams, Executive Director Natural Resource Management at the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA).

The Minister advised that she was delighted to be appointed as Minister for Natural Resources and Environment and described her interest and experience in natural resource management and the environment. The Minister advised that she had read the DRMAC briefing and was looking forward to receiving further advice from DRMAC as it examines other natural resource management issues. The Minister also advised that at a broader level, the Living Rivers Policy is in development.

Brent Williams talked about the follow up of the DRMAC briefing. NRETA has considered the recommendations and is preparing a response based on a tiered assessment approach. Brent explained the Native Vegetation Clearing Cascade Assessment process that NRETA will propose for the Daly River Catchment. The Cascade Assessment Process will build on the broad principles outlined by DRMAC.

Concern was raised about the management of conservation areas and who will manage the areas of the catchment not permitted for clearing. It was agreed that this was an issue DRMAC would discuss.

5. Closed Discussion - Member Issues

As items discussed under this agenda item are confidential to the Committee, a record of the Closed Discussion is not included in this meeting record.

6. Land Clearing Issues

6.1 Discussion on Land Clearing Issue Developments

- Cascade assessment process.

The Committee discussed the cascade assessment process.

Actions

DRMAC requested clarification on whether some of DRMAC's recommendations have not been adopted in the response proposed by NRETA.

To inform DRMAC, the Committee requested that the Department demonstrate the application of the cascade assessment process at the vegetation type, subcatchment and regional levels for the following scenarios.

1. At current levels and percentages of clearing (i.e. already cleared)
2. Scenario number 1, plus pending applications
3. Scenario number 2, plus the application of some percentage levels of clearing, e.g. 10%, 30%, 50%
4. Overlay arable soil types to each of the percentage levels provided for scenario number 3. That is, only arable soil types are cleared irrespective of veg. type and subcatchment.

The data required are the areas that could be cleared under each scenario, for vegetation types, subcatchments and region.

- Briefing for the Minister

Concerns were raised in relation to some of the details in the DRMAC briefing on land clearing forwarded to the Minister.

Actions

It was agreed that the Chair will draft a supplementary briefing on land clearing that expands on the issues in the briefing presented to the Minister and clarifies members' views. The Chair will seek comments on the briefing out of session before it is forwarded to the Minister.

The Committee requested a briefing for the next meeting on the planning and development of new natural resource management legislation.

7. Water Management Issue

7.1 Katherine Subregion Water Allocation Planning Update

Ian Lancaster provided an update on the Katherine water allocation planning process.

To date, the Katherine Water Allocation Committee (KWAC) has held six meetings, with the next meeting scheduled for 10 August 2007. The KWAC will be asked to consider the size of the consumptive pool, including considering issues such as water allocation to industry; equity of distribution and security of licences. Ian Lancaster advised that the KWAC is aiming to develop a water allocation plan by April 2008.

Ian Lancaster described some of the topics of discussion covered at the Katherine Water Forum.

Actions

DRMAC asked if the KWAC could aim to forward a draft plan for DRMAC's consideration by December 2007.

A copy of the Katherine Water Forum Report is to be sent to DRMAC members.

DRMAC requested Ian Lancaster, in his capacity of Water Controller, seek legal advice regarding alteration of existing licences.

7.2 Water Allocation Planning Ooloo Aquifer

At DRMAC Meeting no. 4 on 30 May 2007 to 1 June 2007, Ian Lancaster asked DRMAC to consider whether it would take on the role of a water advisory committee for the Ooloo aquifer and recommend issuing pending licences for extraction from the aquifer.

As requested at the May meeting, a briefing was tabled regarding water allocation planning for the Ooloo aquifer and current pending licences for water extraction from the aquifer.

DRMAC agreed to the recommendation that DRMAC take on the role of water allocation committee for the Ooloo aquifer on condition that there is local consultation with users of the Ooloo aquifer and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group. Ian Lancaster advised that with DRMAC as a WAC for the Ooloo, NRETA would still convene stakeholder forums in the various areas dependant on the Ooloo.

DRMAC agreed to advise the Water Controller to proceed to issue the pending licences for water extraction from the Ooloo aquifer for 12 months subject to Ian Lancaster providing DRMAC with information on water amounts requested and the scale of property development.

Action

Ian Lancaster to provide DRMAC with information on water amounts requested from the Ooloo aquifer and the scale of property development for out of session consideration.

8. Subdivision Issue

8.1 Subdivision Briefing Paper

A subdivision briefing paper on subdivision under the *Planning Act* and the *Pastoral Land Act* was tabled for information.

DRMAC listed the subdivision related issues for which it requires information, including:

- lack of future use planning prior to application e.g. should be required to provide information such as how much water will be required.
- tenure and size and land use issues
- large scale subdivision may require environmental impact assessment
- pastoral lease subdivision can lead to environmental degradation
- economic viability and sustainability should be assessed
- socio-economic viability should be determined
- data required regarding viability
- impact on culturally and environmentally sensitive areas/sites
- impact on sacred sites – increased communication required
- impact from increased population, including also tourism
- continued access to culturally significant areas e.g. rivers
- regional land use planning required to assist assessment
- protected areas should be thoroughly considered and planned and resourced.

Action

The Executive Officer will organise a briefing paper on the subdivision issues identified by DRMAC.

9. Reports/ Information Papers

9.1 DRMAC Issues Paper

DRMAC were asked to review and consider the draft DRMAC Issues Paper out of session. The Chair advised that comments/ issues are to be directed to

the Executive Officer. The missing and incomplete sections of the paper will be added by the next DRMAC meeting.

DRMAC will further consider the Issues Paper at the December 2007 meeting.

9.2 Landscape Design for Maintaining Ecosystems Services in Tropical Agricultural Landscapes – Steering Committee Update

The DRMAC representatives on the Landscape Design Project Steering Committee advised that the Steering Committee has not met.

Action

DRMAC requested the Executive Officer contact the project research coordinator to ask that the DRMAC representatives be kept up to date on project developments.

9.3 Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group Update

Mona Liddy and William Hewitt advised of the news from the recent meeting of the Aboriginal Reference Group (ARG), including:

- the facilitators position is to be advertised
- the Northern Land Council is waiting for funding from NRETA for the next year
- the ARG are waiting for news on the proposal submitted with the NLC for 2 ARG positions to communicate and promote DRMAC work and other duties
- the ARG provided comments on indigenous representation on the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce
- the ARG will provide submissions to the Taskforce
- the ARG will provide input to TRaCK research
- the ARG will invite the DRMAC Chair to the next meeting of the ARG to meet the Group and talk about DRMAC.

9.4 Douglas Daly Water Erosion Monitoring Trial

A paper on the Douglas-Daly Water Erosion Monitoring Trial was provided for the information.

10. Communication

DRMAC noted the publication and distribution of its first newsletter.

11. New Business

Stuart Blanche suggested that DRMAC could assist the ARG to apply for funding available for assisting Indigenous people in on ground land management.

Action

The DRMAC Executive Officer will contact Stuart for contact details and program information that can be passed onto the ARG.

Day 2: 10 August 2007

12. DRMAC Research Forum

The following presentations were provided by researchers from the Tropical Research and Coastal Knowledge (TRaCK) consortium for DRMAC and invited representatives of stakeholder groups.

TRaCK Overview and Introduction by Michael Douglas, Charles Darwin University

Values and Assets by Sue Jackson, CSIRO

Water Budgets by Lindsay Hutley, Charles Darwin University

Sediments by Eric Valentine, Charles Darwin University

Water Quality by Simon Townsend, Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts

Food Webs and Environmental Flows by Michael Douglas

TRaCK Knowledge and Adoption Plan by Michael Douglas

Scenario Planning by Bruce Campbell, Charles Darwin University

In a workshop session following the presentations, DRMAC were provided with an opportunity to contribute to questions for potential exploration by TRaCK through scenario planning. As part of the TRaCK scenario planning project, Bruce Campbell and Neil Collier will consider DRMAC's scenario planning suggestions for modelling.

Bruce Campbell and Neil Collier advised that they will provide DRMAC with a proposed plan of scenario modelling for DRMAC's consideration and feedback.

13. Reflection on Research Forum

DRMAC reflected on the outcomes of the Research Forum.

It was agreed that the Forum was useful in providing a comprehensive overview of the TRaCK projects and enabling DRMAC to provide input to them.

It was noted that the following issues will not be examined through the TRaCK program:

- impacts of clearing on biodiversity
- greenhouse gases and climate change.
- the impact of mining – concerns were raised that baseline data has not been established for assessment against and monitoring put in place.

- Sand extraction – DRMAC agreed that it would like research conducted to assess the impact of sand extraction and the amount that can be extracted without an impact on the river.

Actions

DRMAC Executive Officer to advise Michael Douglas of the research gaps noted by DRMAC.

DRMAC requested an update on the progress of each TRaCK project be provided for each DRMAC meeting.

DRMAC will convene a similar Research Forum in 12 months to provide an update on TRaCK and the opportunity for DRMAC to provide further input.

Create a link to the TRaCK website from the DRMAC website and visa versa.

DRMAC requested a presentation be provided by an officer from the Minerals and Energy Division of the Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines covering:

- where leases are held in the Daly River Catchment, as well as the location of active and prospective mines
- how much water is being used
- impacts of existing mines being managed

DRMAC requested a briefing on the Enterprise Development TRaCK project for the next meeting.

14. Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting will be held in the second week of December 2007 in Katherine. DRMAC will meet with the KWAC while in Katherine.

Actions

The Executive Officer will organise a session with KWAC members as part of the December DRMAC meeting.

The Executive Officer will liaise with Ian Lancaster about scheduling a presentation on work conducted by Northern Australia Irrigation Futures (NAIF) project, with Mr Jeff Camkin or Dr Keith Bristow.