

DALY RIVER MANAGEMENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING RECORD FOR
MEETING 1: 19 JULY 2006

9am – 3.30pm, Link Boardroom, Skycity Casino, Darwin

Present

Committee Member	Committee Role
John Childs	Chair
Dan Thomson	Represent Non-Indigenous landowners and the NT Cattlemen's Association
John Eddy	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
Linda Fazledeen	Government Regional Development Planner
Ian Lancaster	Government Water Manager
John de Koning	Government Conservation and Recreation Manager
Darlene Lion	DRMAC Executive Officer
David Ritchie, Chief Executive of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts attended the meeting for Agenda Items 1 - 4.1	

Absent

Jim O'Neill – Proxy for Mr Mark Meldrum	Government Land Use Planner
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1. Welcome

1.1 Welcome by the Minister

As the Minister for Natural Resources and Environment, Ms Marion Scrymgour MLA, was not able to attend the meeting, the Chief Executive of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts (NRETA), Dr David Ritchie, welcomed the Committee to the first meeting of Daly River Management Advisory Committee (DRMAC).

David broadly described the outcomes of the Daly River Community Reference Group (DRCRG), the role of the DRMAC in building on the work of the Group and the challenges associated with making decisions based on a degree of uncertainty. David explained that DRMAC would develop and present options for the sustainable use and conservation of resources in the entire Daly River Catchment, although for some issues the scope of the Committee's work may relate to a particular area of the catchment, for example the land clearing moratorium area.

1.2 Welcome by the Chair

The Chair of the DRMAC, John Childs, welcomed the Committee and talked about the importance of the Committee's role and developing a good working relationship amongst Committee members. John advised the members that DRMAC's role is to advise government through the Minister and the Living Rivers Ministerial Council and that advice is to be provided in good faith and with good intentions. DRMAC is not a catchment authority and does not have the statutory powers and responsibilities of an authority.

2. Discussions about DRMAC

Committee members introduced themselves and described their background and the contribution they can make to the Committee.

This agenda item will be a standing item on the agenda to ensure an opportunity is provided at the start of each meeting to raise issues about the Committee.

3. DRMAC Role and Procedures

3.1 Roles and Procedures

The Roles and Procedures of the DRMAC were considered and accepted.

It was agreed that personal attendance at meetings was preferred. However as absences sometimes cannot be avoided, members who wish to nominate a proxy will advise their nomination through the Chair. All nominations will be forwarded to the Minister for consideration and approval.

Questions were directed to David Ritchie regarding:

- The frequency of meetings of the Living Rivers Ministerial Council and administrative support arrangements for the Council; and
- The progress on the formation of a Water Advisory Committee in the region and the delay in processing of applications for water licences; and
- The amount of information now available on water resources in the region and the priority area for addressing water management; and
- The breadth of the terms of reference for DRMAC and the term of appointment of government officers to the Committee; and
- The lack of representation of Local Government on DRMAC: and
- The ability of DRMAC to influence the allocation of National Heritage Trust (NHT) funds and the strategic focus of the NHT; and
- Land clearing in the King River area.

In response, David Ritchie explained that the Living Rivers Ministerial Council will be responsive to the needs of DRMAC. In order to keep the Council briefed on DRMAC's work and activities, DRMAC will provide briefings and the resolutions of their meetings to the Council.

The questions regarding the establishment of a Water Advisory Committee and water management were referred to Ian Lancaster for a response. Ian explained that as a priority, NRETA will investigate and consider water resources and management issues in the Venn area and that a Katherine Sub Region Water Advisory Committee (WAC) is proposed to be established shortly. NRETA now has more information to work with as modelling work on the Tindall aquifer has just been completed. The WAC will initially focus on the Tindall as it is the area where there is most demand for water. The WAC will refer all its recommendations to DRMAC for consideration. Ian stressed however that this approach is early thinking and that it is still to be formally developed in consultation with the Minister for consideration by Cabinet.

It was noted that the breadth of the DRMAC terms of reference allow the Committee to advise on all mechanisms relating to the management of natural resources. In order to ensure continuity, the term of appointment for government officers is the same as it is for other Committee members. Government officers were nominated for appointment on the basis of their knowledge, history and experience in the Territory and not just as a result of their position in the public service.

David Ritchie explained that the plan for the NHT Regional Investment Strategy provides a lot of funding opportunities for the Daly Region and that there is a huge opportunity for DRMAC to influence the NHT3.

In relation to the query regarding land clearing in the King River area, David Ritchie encouraged DRMAC to request briefings and information from NRETA on such concerns. David also encouraged DRMAC to raise any concerns they have about other areas outside the focus area.

3.2 Adaptive Management Process and Projects

The paper for Agenda Item 3.2 *Adaptive Management – Developing Common Understandings* was briefly reviewed and discussed.

It was agreed:

- That the adaptive management approach, as outlined, will be the basis for DRMAC's operation, deliberations and the framing of advice.
- Reliability of information, particularly scientific advice and technical information, needs to be scrutinised for validity and accuracy. Mistrust of this information was an issue for the DRCRG.
- The issue of how to reverse decisions and the implications of this will need to be carefully considered.
- Any advice must take into account the certainty that enterprises need to maintain viable businesses.
- DRMAC should consider using a risk assessment process.
- DRMAC will develop its own approach, probably based on the issues we are addressing.
- To note the checklist of questions to use in implementing an adaptive management approach outlined in the paper for Agenda Item 3.3.

The Committee were advised that the NT Cattlemen's Association will shortly forward a paper to the Minister on their project "Adaptive Management of Ecologically Sustainable Development of the Douglas-Daly Region". A copy of it will be made available to the Committee as soon as possible after that.

Action

- Arrange a presentation at the next DRMAC meeting on the NT Cattlemen's Association project "Adaptive Management of Ecologically Sustainable Development of the Douglas-Daly Region".

The Committee will need to decide whether and how it will comment on such projects or papers. It was agreed that as DRMAC undertakes its work, in addition to considering science, emphasis should also be placed on history and experience particularly of the people in the Daly.

Mona Liddy recommended that DRMAC takes a slow cautious approach as it considers natural resource management issues. All information needs to be carefully assessed as science often produces contradictory information. Mona

stressed the importance of DRMAC's work, particularly in relation to water which is critical to our survival.

Concerns were expressed about reversing an allocation. John Childs suggested that DRMAC could try to ensure that reversing is not harmful. Certainty for businesses will be a consideration, in addition to the environment.

3.3 DRMAC Priorities

The paper for Agenda Item 3.3 *Priority Issues for the Daly River Management Advisory Committee to Address* was briefly reviewed and discussed.

It was agreed that the priority issues for DRMAC to address are:

- Land Clearing
- Water Management
- Subdivision.

4. Reports/ Information Papers

4.1 Daly River Community Reference Group Report

The following important features of the Report were noted.

- The level of detail was important in capturing what the community wanted to say.
- Community and people were represented in the Report. They felt ownership of the Report as it recorded their contribution accurately.
- It was necessary to be precise about detail in order to guarantee relevance.

It was agreed:

- that the CRG Report would be a valuable reference in DRMAC's investigation of issues, in particular:
 - The specific recommendations.
 - The items on page 79.
 - The specific actions proposed on pages 100-110.

Concerns were raised about the implementation of the Report's recommendations.

David Ritchie explained that the Government has accepted the Report's central recommendations, specifically the high value placed on maintaining environmental flows around current levels, the need for better scientific understanding of groundwater and river flows, the need for stakeholders to be involved in decisions about land use and the benefits of an adaptive management approach. The Government has set out the way forward in the Minister's Ministerial Statement on the Daly River in August 2005. This included the establishment of the DRMAC which was seen as a more

appropriate model for representing stakeholder values than a 'catchment management authority' based on interstate models.

Action

- Mona Liddy agreed to provide copies of the version of the CRG Report developed for Indigenous people to the Executive Officer for distribution to DRMAC.

4.2 Research Programs Summary

The paper for Agenda Item 4.2 *Research and Knowledge Schedule - Daly River* was reviewed.

It was noted:

- The Table represents some research in progress.
- There are other research projects in place, eg agricultural.
- Currently there is no coordination of the research conducted or of researchers visiting the area and expecting cooperation.
- The results of the research are not communicated back to people in the region.
- The permit system for research related to Indigenous people and places is not being adhered to.
- The Daly River is currently a favoured place to do research.
- DRMAC wants to influence research so that it is useful to the Committee.
- DRMAC could be a reference group for research funding bodies. However, DRMAC does not want to become involved in research project approval processes or the administration of research.

Action

- Make some formatting/ indexing changes to the research project list, including adding a footnote date, subheading/ themes (such as agriculture, aboriginal interests) and a list of historical research/ work completed.
- All DRMAC members to be consulted about government reports and research gaps they can identify, both current and historic.
- Review the CRG report for research projects that can be added to the list.
- John Etty to organise a copy of the Katherine Water Use Study for the Executive Officer to distribute to DRMAC members.
- Provide an updated research list to DRMAC.
- Draft a proposal to the major research funding bodies, the Research and Development Corporations, NHT, NLP, ARC, for the consideration of DRMAC in regards to:
 - Requesting applications for research in the Daly River be referred to DRMAC for consideration and comment where appropriate; and
 - Advising them of DRMACs priority issues; and

- Advising them of the need to adhere to the permit system for research on Indigenous land.

4.3 Ministerial Statement on the Daly River

The Ministerial Statement delivered by the Minister for Natural Resources and the Environment, Ms Marion Scrymgour MLA, was noted.

5. DRMAC Action Plan

5.1 Action Plan

Issues identified by the Committee for consideration included:

- The moratorium on land clearing.
- The moratorium on subdivisions
- A defacto moratorium on water extraction.

It was agreed that the Committee would as it's first priority develop a list of issues on land clearing. A water issues list would be developed at the next meeting.

The Committee developed an agreed set of issues relevant to land clearing. Some issues were also raised in relation to water licence applications.

Issues related to three aspects of land clearing were considered, including:

1. Guidelines for individual landowners, applications, requirements and management practices:
 - extent, location
 - use of cleared land eg. types of crops, pasture, irrigation
 - implications of use of land
 - cultural impacts
 - biodiversity impacts/ conservation agreements
 - viability and benefits of use of cleared land
 - invasive plants
 - invasive animals
 - environmental assessment and bonds
 - economic assessment
 - property planning
 - ongoing use of cleared land eg initially cleared for dryland and pasture and later used for irrigated horticulture
 - approval process
 - public notification of land clearing applications
 - also current applications for clearing, eg Stray Creek subdivision, Edith River
 - push for clearing – how much
 - impact on government expenditure & infrastructure
 - postclearing management
 - distance from watercourse
 - land/ soil types (appropriate soils etc)
 - buffer zones

- reserves, eg wildlife corridors
2. Regional clearing guidelines, criteria and maps, with reference to:
- vegetation types
 - locations
 - conservation features
 - soil types
 - scale
 - environmental bonds
 - fire effects
 - use of felled timber
 - approval authority
 - role of EPA
 - monitoring & compliance

Action

- NRETA to provide maps showing the locations of current water extraction applications and information on how much water extraction has been applied for.
- NRETA to provide maps showing vegetation and areas of land currently cleared, after checking for accuracy.
- NRETA to provide a briefing paper with information on each of the points identified as relevant to land clearing.
- The Executive Officer to provide copies of the current "Land Clearing Guidelines" for pastoral lease land and for other tenures to DRMAC members.

6. Communication

6.1 Community Engagement Process

6.2 Communication Strategy

The paper for Agenda Item 6.2 *DRMAC Draft Communications Plan* was reviewed. Suggestions for amendments to the Plan included:

- residents of Darwin and the public should be added to the primary target audience, as described on page 2; and
- Television media should be added.

It was agreed that:

- DRMAC should have a clear identity and media presence. The media could be used to increase community understanding of DRMAC, which in turn would increase community input into DRMAC activities.
- Communication will be a standing item on the DRMAC agenda.

Action

- As a priority, NRETA to develop a draft pamphlet describing DRMAC's roles and responsibilities, how DRMAC operates and people to contact.
- Name badges to be provided for DRMAC members.
- Develop a newsletter for mail out to people in the Daly and for visitors.
- DRMAC to use email and the website (including an email feedback point for people to forward their comments to DRMAC).
- DRMAC to distribute information to the Indigenous community in the Daly through Mona and William and the Daly River Aboriginal Reference Group (DRARG).
- DRMAC to provide information in Association newsletters, eg. in AFANT and NTHA newsletters.
- DRMAC to develop fact sheets on particular topics and invite people to respond and send DRMAC information.
- DRMAC to engage in activities which encourage discussion with the community, eg social events.
- DRMAC to use the promotion/ education materials (the fly through video) developed by the DRCRG.
- DRMAC to develop a slogan and look. Suggestions for slogans were "DRMAC... caring for our Daly" and "DRMAC... looking after the health of the Daly".

7. Other Business

Mona and William described the establishment and operations of the DRARG, including:

- The DRARG has been in place since 2005 and includes 2 people from each of the nine Indigenous groups in the Daly.
- DRARG nominated representatives for DRMAC.
- DRARG are negotiating a Memorandum of Understanding with the NT Government.
- DRARG wish to have a say in any changes being considered for the Region and be a part of any change.
- DRARG would like to be able to tap into scientific expertise.
- DRARG does not want to see the Daly River dry up or destroyed or mistakes made.
- DRARG wishes to maintain their independence in addition to their participation in DRMAC.
- DRARG values the opportunity to be a part of DRMAC.

8. Next Meeting

8.1 Next Meeting Date

It was agreed that the next DRMAC meeting would be held in October 2006 in the Daly Region. The Executive Officer was requested to advise a date as soon as possible.

As DRMAC will consider land clearing, DRMAC will look at areas of relevance to land clearing (Stray Creek, Douglas) and talk to people who can provide the Committee with information.

The Minister will be invited to attend. DRMAC requested that her office be advised of the meeting date asap.

Mona offered to arrange a Welcome and Visit to Country if the meeting is held near her country.

A social activity will be arranged for meeting with the community.

Agenda items for the meeting will include:

- Further development of advice on land clearing (major item)
- Development of an action plan on water management, in particular the key issues.
- A presentation on the project "Adaptive Management of Ecologically Sustainable Development of the Douglas-Daly Region"
- Communication update.

A possible agenda item for the DRMAC meeting February 2007 was noted, namely a briefing by John Brisbin on the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan – Research Investment Strategy 3.

The meeting closed at 3.15 pm.