

# Indigenous Participation Strategy

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## Purpose

The purpose of the Indigenous Participation Strategy is to develop partnerships with Indigenous people and communities so they have the opportunity to fully participate in land and sea management, utilising their significant and unique knowledge, skills and understanding.

## Acknowledgement of Sea Country

OceanWatch Australia respectfully acknowledges Australia's Indigenous people, pays its respects to Elders past and present, and recognises their important role as custodians of cultural and ecological knowledge for the benefit of all Australians.

OceanWatch also recognises that traditional and contemporary Indigenous culture and heritage co-exists with the contemporary management and use of marine natural resources.

## Vision

To incorporate the significant and unique knowledge, skills and understandings of Australia's Indigenous people and communities into the management of Australia's Sea Country and marine natural resources.

## Guiding Principles

The following statements act as guiding principles for Indigenous participation in the management of Australia's marine natural resources.

With respect to marine NRM planning and implementation, and within the scale of resourcing available, OceanWatch commits to:

1. recognising Indigenous people and communities as primary stakeholders
2. developing formal engagement and participation processes that include Indigenous people and communities
3. acknowledging the inherent rights of Indigenous people and communities to contribute to the management of Australia's Sea Country.

4. acknowledging the inherent rights of Indigenous people and communities to the customary utilisation of marine natural resources.
5. building capacity within marine NRM that results in meaningful engagement with Indigenous people and communities.
6. building capacity within Indigenous people and communities that results in meaningful engagement with marine NRM.
7. ensuring equitable outcomes for Indigenous people and communities.
8. recognising the importance of developing partnerships with Indigenous people and communities to ensure the inclusion of cultural knowledge and heritage values in marine NRM implementation.
9. recognising that knowledge of Indigenous culture, heritage and customary practice belongs to Indigenous people and communities

## Indigenous Sea Management

Indigenous people have developed a close, interdependent relationship with the land, water and living resources of Australia over tens of thousands of years. That relationship includes rights and responsibilities of particular Indigenous communities to areas of land and water, and the accessing and utilisation of marine resources according to custom. These customary activities include ceremony, exchange, trade or barter and consumption.

Indigenous people's stories and dance tell of times when there was abundant sea life, and their knowledge of marine natural resource management is many thousands of years old. In many places around Australia, this knowledge is shared with those who manage marine environments.

## Objectives

Relevant to the scale of resources currently available within marine NRM, the mechanisms described below are core objectives of OceanWatch's Indigenous Participation Strategy.

### 1. Ensure Indigenous Representation - OceanWatch Board of Directors

OceanWatch's voluntary directors guide the organisation's strategic direction and oversee governance. The OceanWatch *Policy for Appointing and Remunerating Directors* ensures the optimisation of the performance of the Board of OceanWatch through the appointment of its directors. Directors are appointed on the basis of maintaining a balance of skills and expertise identified within the policy; one defined area of knowledge and expertise is Indigenous issues. Consequently, an Indigenous person has been a member of the OceanWatch board of directors since 2003.

## **2. Ensure Indigenous Representation - National Marine NRM Expert Advisory Group (NMEAG)**

The purpose of the NMEAG is to ensure OceanWatch can utilise strong working relationships with key stakeholders to enhance National Marine NRM Plan development and coastal marine NRM operational activities. NMEAG Terms of Reference are available publically at;

<http://www.oceanwatch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/OceanWatch-Australia-Marine-NRM-Expert-Advisory-Group-Terms-Of-Reference.pdf>

## **3. Engage with - Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) Indigenous Reference Group (IRG)**

The scope of the FRDC IRG is primarily to ensure that fishing and seafood industry focused research, development and extension (RD&E) delivers improved economic, environmental and social benefits to Australia's Indigenous people. The FRDC IRG is expertise based, advisory in nature, and makes recommendations to FRDC on strategic issues relevant to Indigenous RD&E in the fishing and seafood industry.

## **4. Ensure Opportunities for Indigenous Input into Marine NRM planning**

- a. Ensure Indigenous Participation - Marine NRM Fishing and Aquaculture Forum.
- b. Seek funding through the Australian government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Develop a proposal to employ 5 FTE Indigenous project officers to provide a greater Indigenous interface with marine NRM nationally. The project officers' role will be to engage with Indigenous communities to ensure the incorporation of the knowledge, culture and aspirations of Indigenous Australians into Australia's first marine NRM plan.

- c. Engage Indigenous stakeholders through the Marine NRM Survey
- d. Consider feedback on the draft Marine NRM plan from Indigenous stakeholders

Present and discuss Marine NRM plan at the FRDC IRG meeting June 2017. Consider feedback from FRDC IRG members and incorporate into final plan.

## **5. Ensure Opportunities for Indigenous participation in Marine NRM implementation**

- a. Seek funding through the Australian government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy

Utilise Indigenous project staff to work with Indigenous communities to facilitate on ground responses to priorities identified within the marine NRM planning process.

- b. Utilise the skills, knowledge and networks of the OceanWatch Indigenous director in marine NRM implementation
- c. Utilise the skills, knowledge and networks of the Indigenous NMEAG member in marine NRM implementation

## Implementation and Outcomes

### 1. OceanWatch Board of Directors

Current OceanWatch director Craig Aspinall is an Aboriginal man from the lower north coast of NSW who has devoted his private and working life to the natural and cultural values associated with the marine environment. He holds a number of university and VET qualifications and is a graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

Craig has been a director of OceanWatch since 2005, and has actively been engaged in strategic oversight including facilitation of board workshops leading to the development of the OceanWatch Strategic Plan 2011-2014. Craig has also previously been retained in a consultancy position to deliver aspects of the *Our Valuable Estuaries Teacher's Resource Kit* for NSW primary and secondary schools, deliver a synopsis of marine related priorities within regional NRM organisations plans and strategies, developed the Indigenous customary fishing topic within the *OceanWatch Master Fisherman* training and assessment program, and provided advice and support for project staff delivering on ground works including Indigenous engagement and cultural heritage protection components (*Tide to Table program*).

### 2. National Marine NRM Expert Advisory Group (NMEAG)

The NMEAG includes an Indigenous person with knowledge and experience in Indigenous communities and cultural fishing.

Current Indigenous NMEAG member, Mick Leon, is an Aboriginal Culture & Heritage Supervisor and Ethnophysiography Researcher. He holds qualifications including Dip. Ind. Arch. University of New England and Dip. Ind. Ed. Australian Catholic University.

Mick has been actively engaged in the strategic development of marine NRM through participation in the initial fishing and aquaculture forum held in Sydney on 26th June 2014, participation in all NMEAG forums, distribution of information through Indigenous networks, and provision of feedback throughout the development of the marine NRM plan.

### 3. Fisheries Research and Development Corporation Indigenous Reference Group (FRDC IRG)

OceanWatch has committed to attending FRDC IRG meetings annually to engage members on marine NRM planning and implementation, and to utilise the networks of FRDC IRG and its members.

The OceanWatch Executive Director (ED) has attended and presented at FRDC IRG meetings:

Broome - 29th July 2014, Cairns - 8/9 March 2016.

As a consequence of interactions with the FRDC IRG, the ED has been included in the steering committee of FRDC project 2014/233 - *Improving access for Indigenous Australians to and involvement in the use and management of Australia's fisheries resources*. as well being an invited participant in the *Ecological Sustainable Development - Risk Assessment Trial Workshop* held in Cairns on 9th March 2016 as part of that project.

#### **4. Ensure Opportunities for Indigenous Input into Marine NRM planning**

##### **a. Ensure Indigenous Participation - Marine NRM Fishing and Aquaculture Forum.**

The aim of the forum, held on 26th June 2014, was to establish the values, benefits and key opportunities for marine NRM now and into the future. Forum participants undertook workshop activities to establish a baseline of the seafood industry and saltwater community's understanding, perceptions and expectation of stewardship through marine NRM.

Indigenous participants:

Bryan Denny - Indigenous commercial fisher, Tasmania

Mick Leon - Indigenous customary fisher, NSW

Klynton Wanganeen - Commissioner for Aboriginal Engagement, SA

Stephan Schnierer - School of Environmental Science and Management, Southern Cross University, NSW

Participant:

Chris Calogeras, FRDC IRG Secretariat, Qld

##### **b. Seek funding through the Australian government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy**

A proposal was developed to employ 5 FTE Indigenous project officers to provide a greater Indigenous interface with marine NRM nationally. The project officers' role would be to engage with Indigenous communities to ensure the incorporation of the knowledge, culture and aspirations of Indigenous Australians into Australia's first marine NRM plan.

The proposal was not funded.

##### **c. Engage Indigenous stakeholders through the Marine NRM Survey**

An online survey was distributed through marine NRM networks. The 720 respondents answered a range of questions revealing participant's:

- current engagement with NRM planning, decision making and projects,
- marine NRM values,
- support for the marine NRM vision,
- prioritisation of threats to the health of the marine environment,
- prioritisation of future marine NRM actions.

The survey was widely distributed, 12 respondents identified Indigenous fishing as the marine activity they most identified with.

#### **Consider feedback on the draft Marine NRM plan from Indigenous stakeholders**

All stakeholder feedback relevant to the draft Marine NRM plan will be considered prior to finalisation of the plan in June 2017.

## **5. Ensure Opportunities for Indigenous participation in Marine NRM implementation**

- a. Utilise the skills, knowledge and networks of the OceanWatch Indigenous director in future marine NRM implementation.
- b. Utilise the skills, knowledge and networks of the Indigenous NMEAG member in future marine NRM implementation.
- c. Seek funding through the Australian government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy

A proposal was developed to employ 5 FTE Indigenous project officers to provide a greater Indigenous interface with marine NRM nationally. The project officers' role would be to work with Indigenous communities to facilitate on ground responses to their priorities identified within the marine NRM planning process.

The proposal was not funded.

## **Measures of Success**

### **Attendance at Board meetings**

1. Number of OceanWatch board meetings attended.
2. Engagement with corporate and NRM planning processes.

### **Engagement with NMEAG**

1. Number of meetings/teleconferences attended by Indigenous NMEAG member.
2. Out of session feedback received.

### **Invitation to engage with FRDC IRG**

1. Number of meetings invited/attended.
2. Inclusion as steering committee member on Indigenous projects.

### **Attendance at national fishing and aquaculture forum**

Number of Indigenous invitees attending and engaging in workshop activities.

### **Australian government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy**

Success in attracting Australian government investment.

### **Indigenous participation in marine NRM survey**

Number of respondents identifying as Indigenous.

### **Feedback on draft Marine NRM plan**

1. Formal feedback on draft Marine NRM plan from Indigenous Director.
2. Formal feedback on draft Marine NRM plan from Indigenous NMEAG member.
3. Formal feedback on draft Marine NRM plan from FRDC IRG members.

## Review and Evaluation

The following table identifies key evaluation questions for review of the Indigenous Participation Strategy.

Measure	Key Evaluation Questions
APPROPRIATENESS of Indigenous participation strategy	Will implementation of the Indigenous participation strategy result in appropriate engagement with Indigenous stakeholders?
IMPACT of participation strategy on Indigenous participation	To what extent has implementation of the Indigenous participation strategy developed partnerships with key Indigenous stakeholders?
EFFECTIVENESS of Indigenous participation strategy	To what extent has implementation of the Indigenous participation strategy contributed to the incorporation of the significant and unique knowledge, skills and understandings of Australia's Indigenous people and communities into the management of Australia's Sea Country and marine natural resources?
EFFICIENCY of Indigenous participation strategy	Has the Indigenous participation strategy resulted in efficient use of available marine NRM resources?