



## **COMMUNIQUE**

### **Meeting No. 21 – 10 December 2024**

The Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group (AWEAG) held its #21 meeting on 10 December 2024 at the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) Prime House office located in Joondalup. The meeting was Co-Chaired by Chris Shaw, Leanne Evans and Jillian Collard.

The main items presented and discussed included the following:

The meeting started with an Acknowledgement of Country which was facilitated by Chris Shaw.

The final meeting of 2024 allowed members to reflect on the year's achievements and challenges, and to share ideas for improving in 2025. It also acknowledged the difficulties faced and discussed strategies for future success.

#### **Achievements for 2024**

AWEAG held its first Strategic Planning Day in March to establish key priorities and set the strategic direction for the future.

Development of the AWEAG Relationship Model enhances efficiency and accountability among stakeholders, providing a solid foundation for success. However, it will require time to adapt.

AWEAG Meeting 20 in Kalgoorlie included a visit to the wastewater treatment plant and a cultural tour by Jason Dimer, a Traditional Owner of the region. Members appreciated learning about DWER's work and Jason's in-depth cultural insights, expressing gratitude for his shared knowledge and heritage.

The department appointed Deanne Fitzgerald and Marissa Hastings to Senior Leadership roles. They will work with Jillian Collard to ensure Aboriginal perspectives are integrated into DWER's work and decision-making processes.

#### **Challenges for 2024**

This year has been challenging, following the repeal of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act, the Referendum outcome, and the stalled Water Reform Bill. Additionally, the loss of resources for the Aboriginal Engagement and Partnerships Team has significantly impacted the team.

Following last year's outcomes, members have faced challenges in staying positive and aligning with goals like environmental repair, Caring for Country, and addressing the Aboriginal Heritage Act's impact on Indigenous people. With WA's variable climate, protecting the environment and driving positive change is crucial. When members feel unheard or see important documents like the Water Bill dismissed, it becomes even more challenging. It's particularly difficult for Indigenous advisors when their input is overlooked, as they advocate



## Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group

for future generations.

We've faced challenges with the items brought to the table. It would be more effective to have a project we can drive to achieve outcomes. Additionally, the lack of clear feedback on achievements makes it hard to form opinions. Recruitment processes need to be clearer and more concise for members.

Responses should be more relevant to our work and collaboration. We need better communication and feedback from the state government, and our input should be considered in decision-making.

### **Setting up for success in 2025!**

Moving forward in the new year our focus will be on the developing a Roadmap that provides us with clear steps to how the department works towards Closing the Gap outcomes and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy.

Elevating and promoting AWEAG across the agency and sector. Developing strategies to address key issues and continue to strengthen the governance.

High focus on AWEAG recruitment campaign to increase membership and fill vacancies.

Cultural Calendar Dates to be inclusive of events and significant dates per region.

**The next meeting is scheduled for 12 March 2025.**

---

**Mr Chris Shaw**

Co-Chairperson

Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory  
Group

---

**Ms Leanne Evans**

Co-Chairperson

Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group