



Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group Meeting 24 – 23 September 2025 Communiqué

The Aboriginal Water and Environmental Advisory Group (AWEAG) held its 24th meeting at Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) on Wardandi Boodjar, at the Bunbury Regional Office. The meeting was co-chaired by Alistair Jones and Anthony Bellottie. The main items presented and discussed included the following:

The Hon Mr Don Punch: Minister for Aboriginal Affairs; Water; Climate Resilience; Southwest

AWEAG met with Minister Punch to discuss the synergies across the Water, Climate Resilience and Aboriginal Affairs portfolios. Current groundwater extraction practices were discussed and the importance of exploring alternative options to better support the health of Country. The Minister described Country as a collective infrastructure for all that sustains life, highlighting the importance of recognising Aboriginal worldviews. Country holds deep cultural and spiritual significance and bringing together cultural knowledge and Western science can support approaches that respect cultural values while considering economic needs. He reaffirmed his commitment to collaborative approaches and cross-portfolio priorities, and welcomed AWEAG's support in progressing this work.

DWER's 10-Year Roadmap

AWEAG has endorsed its involvement in the development of the DWER 10-Year Roadmap. This strategic initiative aims to align departmental practices with key national and state priorities, including the National Agreement on Closing the Gap and the Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy. The Roadmap represents a long-term commitment to transformation. Currently in its first phase, the Roadmap is focused on gathering input to identify gaps and priorities.

AWEAG Membership Recruitment

The Aboriginal Engagement and Partnership team provided an update on AWEAG's membership recruitment. The group is working to ensure diverse regional representation and strengthen engagement in areas currently without member presence.

Water Monitoring and Legislative Reform

Discussions highlighted the need to improve access to land for water monitoring, particularly on pastoral and mining tenures. Members discussed options such as adapting Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs) and using third-party arrangements to support inclusive monitoring practices. AWEAG also raised concerns about the limitations of current legislation in managing Western Australia's water profile, noting Minister Punch's address. Key priorities identified included improving transparency in water usage data and enhancing monitoring systems to ensure sustainable water management and access to Country.

Inland Water Target Update

AWEAG was briefed on the Inland Waters Target project, including recent engagement between DWER and the National Native Title Council (NNTC). The project will be developed in stages, with AWEAG contributing to direction-setting and community engagement.

Alistair Jones

Anthony Bellottie