



Trusted Environmental and Geological Information Program

Basin Reference Group — Communique Meeting 2 | 17 November 2022

The Trusted Environmental and Geological Information program held the 2nd Basin Reference Group meeting on 17 November 2022 in Brisbane. The meeting was a hybrid meeting (online and in person).

Over 50 members attended, including representatives from local, state and federal government, First Nations Australians, natural resource management bodies and industry. This communique outlines key topics discussed by the group during the meeting.

The morning session started with an overview of the program's scope, an update on its current status and the effect of recent events on the forward work schedule. The remainder of the day was an opportunity for the group to discuss the importance of information, science, communication and genuine engagement as it relates to the program.

Group discussions included:

- the importance of ensuring information is delivered in an easily understood and engaging way for communities. Information from advisory groups doesn't always reach back to the community, so having a long term, trusted relationship with community members is key to keeping stakeholders informed. The group emphasised the importance of providing community groups with consistent communication throughout the program.
- the importance of genuine early engagement with First Nations Australians as a first step for all projects. The group also heard about the need for local employment opportunities for First Nations Australians. Local employment opportunities provide a benefit to community, but also gives better opportunities for First Nations people to pass on knowledge to the next generations and improves communication. The group also discussed some examples of potential research, collaboration and knowledge sharing opportunities that could support communities.
- A direct quote from Mithaka Aboriginal Corporation in consultation with other First Nation members present reflected the importance of Tangible Cultural Heritage to First Nations. Specifically: :

"First Nations participants stated that the protection and preservation of First Nations Tangible Cultural Heritage is imperative moving forward. The Channel Country including the land on which the subsurface waters referred to in the TEGI assessment exist, are under researched from an archaeological and anthropological perspective, thus a massive gap in First Nations and Australian/global history exists. Mining or any activities in this area must take a more nuanced approach to how they operate to ensure they are not party to another cultural genocide".

- updates on the program's science and data collection provided by program scientists. The updates focused on key subject themes for the program including geology, resources, groundwater, surface water, ecology (protected plants and animals) and the causal network approach to risk assessments.
- updates on several potential resource projects in the basin areas.
- the importance of Great Artesian Basin aquifers to the ongoing sustainability of the environment, communities and industry within the regions. Responsible management of the Great Artesian Basin was noted as being crucial, particularly for major developments which need to understand, monitor and manage any impacts to this important source of groundwater.

The Basin reference Group was shown an example of a data guide to be published under Stage 1 of the program. They were also given an overview of the next steps, including opportunities to be considered through Stage 2 of the program.

The program committed to work with the Basin Reference Group to determine the best way to hold the next meeting. Members stressed the importance of maintaining communication throughout and at the conclusion of the program.

The program team can be contacted by email at TEGI@ga.gov.au. For more information on the program see <https://www.ga.gov.au/about/projects/resources/trusted-environmental-and-geological-information-program>.