

A Statement from the attendees of ‘Our Water, Our Future: A Gathering of Lake Eyre Basin Traditional Owners’ April 9-10, 2019

On April 9th and 10th, 2019 representatives from a number of Traditional Owner groups throughout the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin came together in Brisbane to discuss caring for their traditional lands, rivers and waterways.

We, as Traditional Owners of the country and waters of the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin acknowledge the Tibooburra resolution (2011) and have come together again to deliver this shared statement.

For the Traditional Owners, caring for country is more than a matter of economic prosperity, it is a sacred and ancient traditional responsibility carried forward from mother to daughter, father to son and includes social, environmental, and cultural considerations. Traditional people live by the seasons and think of country as their mother and of water as the sacred lifeblood, keeping them connected through hunting, fishing, and ceremonial practices. We are kept strong and understand our culture by connecting to the stories and songs that live in our country, and through them continue to observe our own traditional lore, customs, cultural boundaries and obligations.

Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin is one of the world’s greatest desert river basins and it is currently under threat from a range of development pressures. Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin Traditional Owners are standing together to protect and manage the waterways, floodplains and groundwaters of the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin for future generations.

Representatives from eight Traditional Owner groups of Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin who attended this Gathering have united to:

1. Recognise the Tibooburra Resolution (2011) and voice our support for restoring strong legislative protections to Queensland’s Channel Country rivers (Cooper Creek, Georgina and Diamantina rivers and tributaries) and floodplains including excluding unconventional gas (coal seam, tight, and shale gas) mining and other mining and resource extraction *from the river and floodplain areas*
2. Support Traditional Owners to assert our cultural authority across the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin
 - a) Recognise and assert our collective cultural continuity through sharing and learning our traditional stories and connecting to country for current and future generations across the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin
 - b) Honour our responsibility and obligation we collectively have to the country and water over our traditional lands - Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin.
3. Establish a Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin Task Force¹ to lead the establishment of a peak body (terms of reference, structure, membership etc)

¹ The Task Force is a temporary body nominated at the gathering to drive further engagement with Traditional Owners of the Kati-Thanda Lake Eyre Basin in the establishment of a peak body to be nominated and endorsed at a later date

4. Work towards the establishment of a Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin Peak Body² to be endorsed by Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin Traditional Owners to:
 - a) Engage with and support Traditional Owners in protecting country and waterways in relation to our specific cultural authority and knowledge of the lands where we live and practice traditional culture.
 - b) Lead engagement with stakeholders, governments and Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin Traditional Owners on management decisions that are affecting our country and waterways within Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin.
 - c) To develop position statements on Traditional Owner governance and management arrangement for the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin that includes irrigated agriculture, overgrazing, vegetation and feral pest management, mining, petroleum, and unconventional extraction methods such as fracking across the entire Kati Thanda – Lake Eyre Basin
 - d) To collaborate, guide and negotiate with governments and stakeholders to fully resource state and/or federally funded Indigenous Rangers in the Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin to deliver cultural, social, economical and environmental benefits for Kati Thanda-Lake Eyre Basin and its people in accordance to their cultural obligations to county

² The intended Peak Body will not represent individual Traditional Owner groups in relation to their traditional rights to land/ Native Title rights - authority to speak for country always remains with the traditional owners of that land