



Wetland watered under Cultural Access Licence, Hay

[www.csiro.au](http://www.csiro.au)

# Indigenous Water Management in the Murray-Darling Basin: Priorities for the Next Five Years

Sue Jackson  
14 October 2010

National Research  
**FLAGSHIPS**  
Water for a Healthy Country



# Background

- MDBA obligated to assess social and economic impacts of the Basin Plan under *Water Act 2007*
- to 'have regard for' social, cultural, Indigenous issues
- Jan 2010 MDBA contracted CSIRO to conduct a scoping study of effects of changes in water availability (*Jackson, Moggridge and Robinson 2010*)

# Indigenous context

- 70,000 people in 2006, ~ 3.5% of total MDB
- 15% of national Indigenous population
- Growing rapidly
- Much younger age profile
- Higher levels of disadvantage
- Less often employed in two major industries (agriculture and retailing)



# Indigenous water management

- Indigenous people have distinct perspectives on water and diverse and interdependent interests
- But, these are not well understood:
  - Severe lack of quantitative data on Indigenous water uses and values of the Basin
  - Constrains the measurement of impacts



Nari Nari wetland watered using licenced water, Hay.

# Indigenous water management

- There are many barriers to accessing water and participating in water management, esp. environmental water management
- Indigenous people are developing policy ideas and keen to participate in restoring the health of the MDB
- The Basin Plan offers many potential opportunities
  - To be involved in environmental water mgmt
  - To contribute knowledge
  - To develop secure livelihoods from NRM.

# Indigenous water management

- Need to put more effort into identifying and meeting Indigenous water requirements in water resource plans
- Environmental water management needs to be more inclusive of Indigenous uses, values and priorities
  - Assessment techniques
  - Evaluation of costs and benefits
  - Governance models to support Indigenous management
  - Capacity building
- Indigenous groups need support to contribute to local plans
- And impacts need to be monitored.

# Summary

- Basin Plan represents a significant opportunity to address neglected area
- But, there are substantial knowledge gaps
- Research is needed to influence the next Plan
- In the short term, focus should be on adapting and reforming water resource planning to meet Indigenous water requirements
- Also need more policy discussion between Indigenous people, all levels of government, researchers and other stakeholders.

**Water for a Healthy Country**

Sue Jackson

**Phone:** 08 89448415

**Email:** [sue.jackson@csiro.au](mailto:sue.jackson@csiro.au)

**Web:**

[www.csiro.au/science/MDBscience](http://www.csiro.au/science/MDBscience)

[www.csiro.au](http://www.csiro.au)

National Research  
**FLAGSHIPS**  
Water for a Healthy Country

