

# GREAT ARTESIAN BASIN COORDINATING COMMITTEE

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GABCC Secretariat, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources  
GPO Box 858 CANBERRA ACT 2601      [gabcc@agriculture.gov.au](mailto:gabcc@agriculture.gov.au)  
Freecall: 1800 900 090                      [www.gabcc.gov.au](http://www.gabcc.gov.au)



## CHAIR'S COMMUNIQUÉ No.5

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The Great Artesian Basin Coordinating Committee continues to provide advice to governments with responsibilities for the GAB. This advice emphasises efficient, effective and sustainable whole-of-Basin management and coordination of activity between stakeholders to that end.

The Committee does not have a resource management or lobbying role. Operational matters for Basin management are primarily the responsibility of State/Territory agencies.

The Committee comprises members who represent the Australian, New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia and Northern Territory governments, as well as representatives of communities, industries and other sectors with interests in the Basin.

See the Website [www.gabcc.gov.au](http://www.gabcc.gov.au) for a list of current members and for the Committee's Operating Arrangements.

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This Communiqué is intended to encourage communications with all GAB stakeholders and communities. We encourage you to seek further information on any of the items raised, by contacting members of the Committee or the GABCC Facilitator.

### Summary of Meeting Outcomes – GABCC 37, Canberra 14-15 December 2016

#### GAB Strategic Management Plan

The main item for this meeting was once again revision of the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Strategic Management Plan (SMP). This meeting coincided with the intended near-final point in drafting, however unfortunate delays in drafting resulted in an incomplete draft plan being available.

The meeting engaged in robust discussion of the available content, and of plans for stakeholder communication and consultation.

In particular, the meeting encouraged greater attention to development of SMP content and related communication which addresses the real needs of community and industry stakeholders, in addition to the concerns of jurisdictions. This emphasises that reliance on regulation is unlikely to be effective unless users are actively involved in development of policy and plans.

The meeting expressed concerns about the drafting delay causing a contraction of the period for stakeholder consultation, with the effect that the SMP consultation process cannot be efficiently coupled with Queensland water planning consultation in February-March 2017, although all elements of that process will refer to the draft SMP, at whatever stage of development. This emphasises that adequate time needs to be available for community and industry stakeholders to gain an adequate understanding and an acceptance of the SMP, to avoid a sense that the plan has been imposed without listening to and addressing their concerns and interests.

The meeting commended activities undertaken by the Indigenous representative to contact Indigenous stakeholders in NSW and Queensland to discuss the SMP, as well as plans to extend this process to organisations based in other jurisdictions.

### **GAB Infrastructure**

The meeting discussed progress of GABSI 4, finalisation of the program in June 2017, and options for infrastructure maintenance post-GABSI.

In particular, the meeting emphasised the need for GABCC to be included in ensuring that stakeholders are well informed, with opportunities for jurisdictions and community/industry to work together to define desirable outcomes, including completion of capping and piping and attention to subsequent maintenance.

The Committee is developing communication about the post-GABSI situation and the extent of the challenge, identifying goals and outcomes, and options to address these.

### **GABCC Operating Arrangements**

As agreed at GABCC 36, non-government members provided a response to the Australian Government paper tabled at that meeting. There was concern that the proposed changes would weaken the role and effectiveness of the Committee, were not justified by a sound case for change, and were an unhelpful distraction during finalisation of the SMP and the stakeholder consultation period. The response disagreed with most of the proposed changes, and the basis of that disagreement has since been conveyed to the Senior Officials Committee.

### **GAB Research - presentations**

The Committee was pleased to receive final presentations from three researchers who had been recipients of PhD scholarships initiated by the Committee. The outlined research addressed the ecology of endemic macro-invertebrates in GAB discharge springs, and aspects of the Desert Goby fish in arid waterholes.

### **GAB Research – key questions**

The meeting discussed key GAB research questions to be considered and given priority attention in future investment, particularly knowledge gaps which inhibit the ability to manage the GAB resource at a whole-of-Basin level and achieve the agreed outcomes. The outputs will help to shape the next GAB Researchers Forum in 2017, to be convened by GABCC.

### **GABCC Annual Report**

The Committee finalised comment on the GABCC Annual Report for 2015-16, which will be published on the GABCC website following approval by the Senior Officials Committee.

### **Next Meeting**

GABCC 38 will be the only opportunity likely to be available to review the draft SMP before its release for consultation. The meeting is likely to be in March (subject to availability of the draft SMP), with the focus to be on the final draft SMP, development of scenarios as a tool to aid stakeholder engagement and understanding of the SMP content and strategies for communication and consultation.

Juanita Hamparsum  
Chair

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