



Landmark agreement signed between Commonwealth and Ngarrindjeri Nation

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The Commonwealth Water Holder and the Ngarrindjeri Nation have sealed a partnership that will give the local Indigenous group a say in the management of environmental water in the Lower Murray region.

It's the first of agreement of its kind between the Commonwealth Water Holder and an Aboriginal organisation.

Rick Hartman from the Ngarrindjeri Regional Authority said the agreement would mean environmental assets in areas such as the Coorong and Lower Lakes will be cared for according to the cultural practices of the Ngarrindjeri People.

"Ngarrindjeri people have been calling for an agreement with the Commonwealth Government for some time now and this agreement enables us to have some input into water planning around the delivery of environmental water into the River Murray, Lower Lakes, Coorong area", Mr Hartman said.

"It's really important that the environmental water goes to wetlands that Ngarrindjeri people have access and enables Ngarrindjeri people to get back onto their country and participate in their cultural activities," he said.

"Ngarrindjeri People have lived along the river, lakes and Coorong as well as the southern ocean for thousands of years and all of our cultural practices have evolved around living around the water and in order for us to continue our culture, we need to have water into these spaces so they are healthy."

"If these places are healthy Ngarrindjeri people can be healthy as well."

The priority regions have not been identified yet but areas such as Sugar Shack and wetlands are one region.

The Ngarrindjeri people were critical of a recent Senate Inquiry into the Murray Darling Basin plan but Mr Hartman said this agreement went some way to addressing the concerns.

"It gives the Ngarrindjeri people an opportunity to have an involvement in water planning. We have always been involved and living on the river so we really needed to be put into a position where we could have some say in water planning."

Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder David Papps said he hoped more of these partnerships would be possible.

"Really at the heart of it is an attempt to marry the best of science around environmental watering with the cultural knowledge of indigenous communities, in

this case the Ngarrindjeri Indigenous people, to get the best possible outcome for those wetlands to which our water goes," Mr Papps said.

Mr Papps said there were two main outcomes from this agreement.

"The cultural knowledge of the Ngarrindjeri and the local community gets plugged into a decision making so there are a lot of intersections between the environmental outcomes that we need to deliver for the plan and the very strong ties to country that the Ngarrindjeri have and that will play out in the decision making," Mr Papps said.

"For example making sure the communities totemic species are in good health."

"The second this is a chance for the Ngarrindjeri and the local community to be involved in the monitoring and decision making and to acquire some particular skills around that that will help them manage their land," he said