

Cultural Water in Southeast Australia – The Challenges of Translation and Implementation

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Outline of Presentation

Environmental Flows, Cultural Flows, and Cultural Heritage Management

- Cultural Water/Flows
- Cultural Water in Australia/Victoria
- The Cultural Heritage System in Victoria
- Challenges
- The Future



Cultural Water – what is it and why is it important?

The definition of **cultural water** means the values and demands of specific **water** sources that relate to a specific geographic area, a **cultural** group, a religion or heritage requirement, etc. An example of **cultural water** is the groundwater which will be required by the residents of the Navajo Nation in Arizona.

Innovative Approach to NRM

- Origins
- Implementation
- Benefits



Cultural Water in Australia

How does it transfer and how do we define it?

CulturalFlows are 'water entitlements that are legally and beneficially owned by Indigenous Nations of a sufficient and adequate quantity and quality, to improve the spiritual, cultural, environmental, social and economic conditions of those Indigenous Nations'. *This is our inherent right.*

- Natural Context and differences
- Practical Application – from irrigation to natural flows
- Who's adopted it and why
 - Murray –Darling Basin Authorities and Aboriginal Communities



The National Cultural Flows Research Project

Murray Lower Darling River Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) and the Northern Basin Aboriginal Nations (NBAN) - The Echuca Declaration, September 2010.

The project aims to secure a future where Indigenous water allocations are embedded within Australia's water planning and management regimes, to deliver cultural, spiritual and social benefits as well as environmental and economic benefits, to communities in the Murray-Darling Basin and beyond.

We want to provide rigorous and defensible knowledge on Indigenous water interests for the benefit of Indigenous people. The project will draw on a range of scientific research methodologies and generations of cultural knowledge to:

Provide a greater understanding of Indigenous values relating to natural resources, including water

Equip Aboriginal people with information to ensure that Aboriginal water requirements and preferences are reflected in water policy

Inform the development of new governance approaches to water management that incorporate aspects of Aboriginal governance and capacity building

While the focus of the National Cultural Flows Research Project is on the Murray Darling Basin, the project has been established for the benefit of all Aboriginal nations across Australia. The project will develop a framework, principles and solid evidence base that can be applied outside of the Basin, to inform the recognition of Aboriginal water rights in different jurisdictions. It will do this through the use of case study sites that consider cultural flows in different cultural, social, economic and ecological settings.



Cultural Heritage in Victoria

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and TOSA 2010

- Strengthened Protection
- RAP System
- Watered down Native Title
- CHMPs
- Harm prohibited



Others Exploring Cultural Water/Flows

Indigenous groups and Government Agencies

- Wurundjeri and Melbourne Water
- Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples
- SA Government
- How well does it work?



Victorian Aboriginal Communities

Beyond compliance

- Challenges of sustainable businesses
- Striving to develop other heritage activities
- NRM is key area but challenging



Challenges – A Case Study

When Environmental Flows Hasn't Considered Cultural Flows

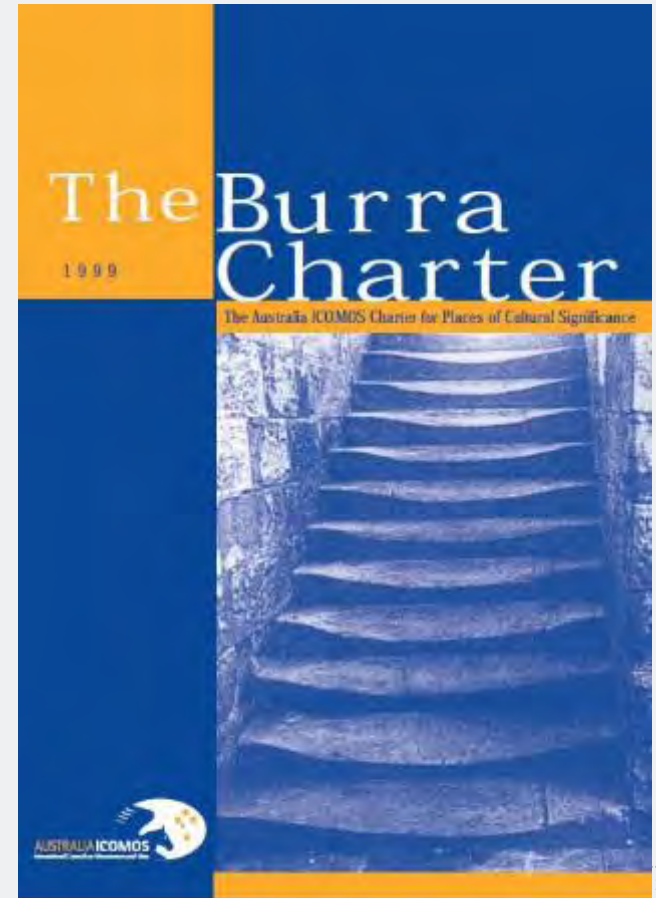
- Environmental Flows and Cultural Heritage Compliance
- Environmental Water and Harm
- Beyond Compliance – Cultural Water



Future for Cultural Water in Victoria

What's its use and benefit

- Benefit is involvement of indigenous communities
- Difficulty with interpretation of harm and management of key cultural places without Cultural Flows
- Difficulty with resourcing indigenous groups without more funding in this space



How to move forward

Balancing competing aspects

- Indigenous community needs and capabilities
- Legislative definitions need not get in the way
- All stakeholders need to get involved





Questions?