

21st January 2021

Australian Government
Department of Agriculture, Water, and the Environment

RE: Have Your Say Survey – Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program Guidelines

The [REDACTED] is thankful for an opportunity to share feedback with the Department regarding the Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program guidelines.

[REDACTED] commends the Department for their support of community involvement in ecological restoration. The Murray-Darling Healthy Rivers Program provides a great opportunity for Traditional Owners and broader community groups to take part in environmental education programs and to play an active role in the preservation of our rivers, wetlands, and floodplains.

We suggest that for projects seeking to restore publicly significant environmental sites, a strong foundation can be found in community consultation and the establishment of a clear shared vision for the site in question. We acknowledge that the assessment criteria state a preference for projects that are “shovel-ready”, however for community organisations, resourcing this vital development stage remains a continuous challenge.

We note that the program calls for “strong community ownership” of projects. We argue that for this to be achieved, the activities funded by the program must be broadened to support community organisations throughout the consultation and planning stage. While community groups may identify a need for restoration and protective action, there are significant barriers to developing a cohesive plan for that action when operating with limited resources.

As the program seeks to improve economic activity whilst maintaining community involvement in project delivery, we recognise an opportunity to train community members and Traditional Owners in the monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) of project outcomes.



We perceive an opportunity for this program to support wildlife surveys in the context of environmental education, providing an avenue for hands-on community involvement in the restoration of rivers, wetlands and floodplains. Involving the community in MER and survey activities can support recognition of the long-term positive impacts of this program and facilitate ongoing community ownership over restoration projects.

The [redacted] team welcomes an opportunity to discuss this feedback further with the Department. Please direct correspondence to [redacted].

Kind regards,

