

Rivers, the veins of our Country

Six case studies of First Nations involvement in managing water for the environment in the Murray-Darling Basin
2021-22

Knowledge sharing in the Gwydir and Warrego-Darling

Cultural Advisors listen and learn from local First Nations communities

Authors: Bec Salcole, Lani Barnes and Jasmine Clarke - Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder

A successful pilot program aimed at embedding First Nations wisdom and knowledge in the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder's (CEWH) Science Program is now being rolled out across the Murray-Darling Basin.

The pilot program commenced in 2021 as part of the CEWH's Science Program Flow-Monitoring, Evaluation and Research (Flow-MER) in the Gwydir and Warrego-Baaka/Darling system.

Flow-MER is a multimillion-dollar science program funded by the CEWH to understand how fish, birds, vegetation and river connectivity are responding to Commonwealth environmental water across the Basin.

The aim of the pilot was to facilitate and promote knowledge sharing and connection to Country, while paying respect to the Traditional Owners of the Gurnu-Baakandji and Gomeri Nations. Cultural

Advisors were appointed to guide communication and engagement between Traditional Owners and Flow-MER scientists from the University of New England and 2rog.

Liz Taylor was appointed as the first Cultural Advisor in the Gwydir region – home of the Gomeri Nation – and acknowledged the importance of working collaboratively.

“We must share our knowledge and science and work in collaboration to heal our Country and waterways and to educate and engage our future caretakers,” Liz Taylor said.

While in the role, Liz Taylor's focus was the Gwydir Warrumbools (waterholes and wetlands), which are important parts of the Gwydir region landscape.

Kerrie Saunders is the newly appointed Cultural Advisor in the Gwydir region. Kerrie is a proud Gomeri woman from Moree who is passionate about native foods, particularly native grains, and the sustainability of Country. Kerrie will be guiding the 2rog team in communications and engagements with Traditional Owners in the land of the Gomeri Peoples.

Kevin Knight is the Cultural Advisor in the Warrego-Baaka/Darling region, home of the Kurnu-Baakandji Nation. Kevin grew up on the Baaka (Darling) River and his family have been associated with the Warrego River for generations.

*Liz Taylor (Gwydir Cultural Advisor), Jane Humphries (CEWH), Shjarn Winkle (2rog) and Paul Frazier (2rog).
Photo credit: 2rog*



“I hope to achieve some positive outcomes for this program as well as for Aboriginal peoples. The health of the river and its floodplains ties directly to the health of my people,” Kevin Knight said.

Cultural Advisors bring with them tens of thousands of years of generational environmental knowledge and experience in listening and learning from First Nations communities.

While in the role, Liz Taylor and 2rog worked with the community to develop a story map on the Gomeroi Warrambools (Gwydir Wetlands) to increase understanding of their cultural significance.

Engagement with the community and stakeholders is a priority for the Cultural Advisors.

Kevin worked with the CEWH, the Cunnamulla Kunja-Baakandji community, the Kurnu-Baakandji Toorale Joint Management Committee and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to plan a knowledge sharing event at Toorale National Park at the junction of the Warrego and Darling Rivers.

This event provided the opportunity for Kunja/Baakandji people from Cunnamulla to connect with Kurnu/Baakandji Traditional Owners on Country at Toorale to learn about how environmental water is delivered and monitored.

Jason Wilson (CEWH) and Kevin Knight (Warrego-Baaka/Darling Cultural Advisor). Photo credit: 2rog



The valuable knowledge, experience and resources produced by Kevin Knight, Liz Taylor and Kerry Saunders through their engagement with First Nations communities and connection to Country, have led to the CEWH’s Science Program implementing the Cultural Advisor model program wide.

Cultural Advisors for each area are expected to be appointed by mid-2024 to increase the use of First Nations science and knowledge.



2rog Consulting staff with Kevin Knight (Warrego-Baaka/Darling Cultural Advisor) June 2022. Photo credit: 2rog



Jane Humphries (CEWH Local Engagement Officer) with Liz Taylor (Gwydir Cultural Advisor) in at the Gwydir Wetlands with Aboriginal school students, June 2022. Photo credit: 2rog

