



Media Release

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MARY RIVER MEETING HELPS TASKFORCE GET THE MESSAGE

Up to eighty key Indigenous experts and community representatives strategically involved in water issues across northern Australia travelled to Mary River Crossing east of Darwin last week for two days of talks on Indigenous water issues.

Hosted by the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce, the meeting was arranged by the North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance.

The Taskforce is chaired by prominent Indigenous leader Joe Ross from Fitzroy Crossing in WA and was formed last year by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to examine opportunities for sustainably developing water resources across northern Australia.

The Taskforce is also charged with assessing the potential impacts of new developments and considering institutional and governance arrangements to improve the management of water.

“With the Murray-Darling basin drying up there is strong focus on land and water resources to the north and people want to know what can be done. That’s why it’s so important the Taskforce concludes its work quickly but thoroughly,” Mr Ross said.

“For Indigenous people, water is inseparable from land and culture and any discussion of the development of water initiatives in the north must include conversations with Indigenous people, ideally early in the process.

“The Mary River meeting ensured the Taskforce has a clear understanding of the interests and aspirations of Indigenous people and the water issues they consider to be important.

“We are consulting widely to ensure our work takes into account the interests of all stakeholders across the north to benefit the whole nation.”

The Mary River meeting was attended by prominent Indigenous leaders from the Northern Territory, Queensland and Western Australia.

The Taskforce reports to the Australian Government in December 2009. More information on the Taskforce can be found at www.nalwt.gov.au.

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