

Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group Meeting

Communique

Meeting in Karratha, Western Australia

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The Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group advises the Australian Government on northern development, maximising benefits and implementation outcomes for Indigenous Australians.

The Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group held its twelfth meeting in Karratha, Western Australia on 29 August, 2024.

The meeting was arranged alongside the Developing Northern Australia Conference (DNAC), which included the Chair, Mr Colin Saltmere, and members, Mr Peter Jeffries and Ms Niniella Mills, as invited guest speakers.

While in Karratha, the IRG met with The Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resources and Minister for Northern Australia and her advisors, as well as the newly appointed Special Envoy for Defence, Veterans' Affairs and Northern Australia Mr Luke Gosling OAM MP to provide them with an update on the work of the IRG.

Minister King also introduced new Western Australian Senator Varun Ghosh to IRG members. Senator Ghosh had previously interacted with the IRG when members were invited to present at the inquiry into economic self-determination and opportunities for First Nations Australians earlier this year.

At the conclusion of DNAC, IRG members met with Ms Dot West, Mr Lyndon Ormand-Parker and Mr Che Cockatoo-Collins, Co-Chairs and member of the First Nations Digital Inclusion Advisory Group to discuss their digital inclusion roadmap, and separately with Messrs Duane Fraser and Allan Dale, Board member and Chief Scientist respectively from the Cooperative Research Centre for Developing Northern Australia, to progress conversations around the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act reforms.

Following a warm welcome by a representative of the Ngarluma People of Karratha, the IRG resumed their work to enhance economic and social prosperity for First Nations people in northern Australia. Members in attendance were Colin Saltmere, Troy Fraser, Peter Jefferies, Gillian Mailman, Ninielia Mills and Flora Warrior. Tara Craigie and Jerome Cubillo were an apology for the meeting.

To further their objectives, the IRG held discussions with;

- Representatives from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on the development of the National Statement on First Nations in Agriculture;
- Representatives of Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility around the Indigenous employment strategies and the recently announced statutory review; and
- Northern Australia representatives from the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Next meeting

The next meeting of the Northern Australia Indigenous Reference Group is scheduled for late-November 2024 in Canberra, adjacent to the Hon Madeleine King MP, Minister for Resource and Minister for Northern Australia, Annual Statement to Parliament.