

Intercol 2021 Abstract

Water Compliance & Significance to Wetland Connectivity – Through an Aboriginal Lens

NRAR Board Member Phil Duncan

Phil Duncan is the first Aboriginal person to be appointed to the Board of the NSW Natural Resources Access Regulator (NRAR). NRAR's Principal role defined under Section 10 of the NRAR Act identifies the Principal objectives of the Regulator.

- The principal objectives of the Regulator are—
 - (a) to ensure effective, efficient, transparent and accountable compliance and enforcement measures for the natural resources management legislation, and
 - (b) to maintain public confidence in the enforcement of the natural resources management legislation.

NRAR acknowledges that First Nations people comprise a minority of the global population up to 300 million of 7,000 million. Many of those First Nations 'peoples are oppressed, marginalised and dispossessed of land, water, knowledge and a cultural life.

NRAR appreciates that, in the Aboriginal world view, people and Country (including lands, waterways and seas) are interdependent entities that are intrinsically linked in the landscape through cultural and spiritual significance. This means that there is no separation of nature and culture - the health of the natural environment and cultural wellbeing of Aboriginal people is directly influenced by the health of the cultural landscapes.

NRAR appreciates the continued cultural responsibility that Aboriginal people have exercised over these millennia to sustainably managed their lands, waters and natural resources for the health of their Countries and our peoples. They have understood the importance of water and its centrality to life and have cherished it accordingly. Aboriginal peoples' traditional ecological knowledge, like their stories, are passed down from generation to generation and continue up until this day. This has allowed Aboriginal people to live in a symbiotic relationship with the land and water. They used it, lived from it and nurtured it. Aboriginal people's and communities, usage was sustainable, and continues so today, where it can. Through dispossession, and then mismanagement of their lands and waters, with a disregard for their culture, knowledge and understanding, we have witnessed the detrimental effects upon both our peoples and our environment; for Aboriginal people and communities, exist in harmony and in pain with their traditional countries.

Many Aboriginal peoples in NSW have been marginalised through the deprivation of traditional lands and waters and the difficulties encountered in practising customary law through ceremony and looking after Country.

NRAR Board and the Agency honours the past, respects the present and is committed to ensuring active participation with and for Aboriginal people, across NSW in the Water Compliance arena. Phil's presentation will be focussed on showcasing this significant commitment and continues to move forward noting that "We are better together" when we work collaboratively for a common outcome that delivers co-benefits and brings culture and environment together for our next generations.

Leslie P DUNCAN

NSW Natural Resource Access Regulator - Board Member