



**THE HON TANYA PLIBERSEK MP**  
**MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND WATER**

**THE HON LINDA BURNEY MP**  
**MINISTER FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS**

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**DELIVERING WATER OWNERSHIP FOR FIRST NATIONS**

The Albanese Labor Government is embarking on an ambitious world-leading initiative to deliver First Nations water across Australia.

First Nations have been calling for enduring water holding arrangements for more than a decade. Now, the Albanese Labor Government is investing \$9.2 million to make it a reality.

Currently First Nations peoples hold rights to about 40% of Australian land through native title – yet own and control less than 0.2 percent of our surface water entitlements.

This lack of water has robbed Indigenous Australians of economic opportunities, particularly in rural Australia, while disrupting important cultural practices.

The Government will consult and design an enduring arrangement for First Nations peoples to own, access and manage water in Australia.

We will do this in close partnership with First Nations groups, to ensure that communities are leading discussions around what the arrangements will look like, where they will sit and how they will work.

The Government will work with the Committee on Aboriginal Water Interests, the Coalition of Peaks, the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation and other stakeholders to develop a model that is considered fit-for-purpose by Australia's First Nations people.

***Quotes attributable to the Minister for the Environment and Water, Tanya Plibersek:***

“Water runs through the heart of many First Nations. And it’s central to First Nations development and economic self-determination, particularly in rural and remote Australia.

“Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have told me that the current arrangements for water holding isn’t always appropriate for First Nations, who have their own cultural and economic needs and aspirations.

“It’s important we get this right. It’s a crucial step in reversing the legacy of Indigenous dispossession and under representation in water ownership and decision-making”

***Quotes attributable to the Minister for Indigenous Australians, Linda Burney:***

“As a government we have heard loud and clear that it is time to get on and deliver First Nations water access and ownership.

“Both Minister Plibersek and I are fully committed to working across government and with First Nations peoples to make this happen.

“I recognise that all progress towards commitments will need to be achieved in line with our commitment to implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart in full.”

***Quotes attributable to Committee on Aboriginal Water Interests Co-Chair Rene Woods:***

“Australia has the opportunity to lead the world and to develop water holding arrangements in partnership with First Nations peoples that meet the needs of today and can meet tomorrow’s ambitions.

“CAWI looks forward to providing advice to the government about the sort of arrangements that will best provide the economic, Cultural, social, spiritual, and environmental outcomes First Nations peoples want to achieve.”

***Quotes attributable to Committee on Aboriginal Water Interests Co-Chair Grant Rigney:***

“We have encouraged governments to support our efforts to access, own and manage water for many years to meet our cultural and economic requirements. Establishing national water holding arrangements is long overdue and I welcome the announcement.

“Self-determination must be a key feature of any enduring water holding model.”

***Quotes attributable to the Coalition of Peaks member Jaime Lowe:***

"The Coalition of Peaks welcome this announcement and are happy that decisions will be made in partnership with our people as outlined in the National Agreement Closing the Gap.

"It is important to remember that all water once belonged to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These waterways sustained our communities for millennia and we know how to best care for them.

"Greater ownership of water for our people will not only mean greater economic opportunities but it will improve our health, education and well-being; as the Cultural and social determinants of health are all interconnected."

**ENDS**

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