



Media Release

13 March 2019

## Justice for the Darling River & Menindee Lakes Public Hearings in 8 Towns in Far Western New South Wales

From 19-29 March 2019, people who reside in far-western NSW are invited to share their views with a Citizens' Inquiry into the Health of The Darling River and Menindee Lakes. Public Hearings are being held in Mildura, Wentworth, Broken Hill, Menindee, Wilcannia, Bourke, Walgett and Brewarrina. Everyone's invited.

All evidence provided at the Hearings, or submitted online, will be included in a major report presented to Governments and media. The report will make recommendations based on community created solutions, about the future of the Darling River.

"The Citizens' Inquiry is being organised so that community concerns about the Darling River – and suggestions for ways forward – are taken seriously by politicians and decision makers," said Dr Michelle Maloney, Lawyer and Chairperson of the Citizens' Inquiry. "By collating evidence and testimony from people along the Darling River, we will help to amplify their voices and demand positive change. The legal and power structures that have brought the Darling River to its present tragic state need to be transformed," says Dr. Maloney.

Holding a Citizens' Inquiry into the health of the Darling River and Menindee Lakes was one of the recommendations that came out of the 2018 Australian Peoples' Tribunal into the Impacts of industrial-scale Agriculture on Community and Nature's Rights.

The Citizens' Inquiry will provide a safe, fair and unbiased forum for all members of affected western NSW communities to share personal testimony about their lives and the state of the Darling River and Menindee Lakes. In doing so, they will share concerns and suggestions for a sustainable way to the future.

The Citizens' Inquiry has been created and managed by community leaders, human rights lawyers and First Nations Elders - who are volunteering their time to support communities affected by the declining health of the Darling River. The Inquiry is a Special Hearing of the Australian Peoples' Tribunal for Community and Nature's Rights, which is run voluntarily by environmental and human rights lawyers to support communities.

### How to share your views

People who live in regions and towns connected to or associated with the Darling River and Menindee Lakes can participate in the Citizens' Inquiry in two ways:

continued

1 - You can submit written or recorded audio/visual recorded testimony to the Inquiry, any time before 30<sup>th</sup> April 2019 at the Inquiry website - [www.tribunal.org.au](http://www.tribunal.org.au)

2 – People are also invited to share their testimony at one of the Public Hearings in western NSW. If you want to give testimony at one of the Public Hearings, you can register to do so at the Citizens' Inquiry website. [www.tribunal.org.au](http://www.tribunal.org.au)

The Inquiry's focus is on the personal experience of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who live along the Darling River, as well as personal testimonies and evidence from scientists engaged in research and monitoring of the Darling and its ecosystems. Lawyers with knowledge and understanding of current governance systems for the Darling River and Menindee Lakes are also being encouraged to contribute.

#### TERMS OF REFERENCE

If you wish to submit written or recorded testimony, please respond to any of, or all of the following 2019 Citizens' Inquiry into Health on the Darling River and Menindee Lakes - Terms of Reference:

- Are you reliant on the Darling River for drinking water, household water use, business use and/or farming?
- What is the current state of the Darling where you live? (Describe what you see.)
- What are the impacts of the Darling River on your personal and family life and your community or township?
- What are the impacts of the Darling River on your personal business and your community economies?
- What can you see as being the impacts of the zero-flows of the Darling River on the biodiversity and natural systems that make up the river and connected waterways, catchments and ecosystems?
- In your view and understanding, what are the prime causes of the current state of the Darling River Basin?
- In your view, what could or needs to be happening to restore the Darling River and its' human and natural communities to a sustainable good health?

Written and pre-recorded testimonies can be submitted to the Inquiry at any time before 30 April, via the Citizens' Inquiry website – [www.tribunal.org.au](http://www.tribunal.org.au)

**The Inquiry will compile all testimonies, photographic evidence and statements in a report with recommendations to New South Wales, Queensland, Victorian and South Australian and Federal Governments by May/June 2019.**

For further information about the *2019 Citizens' Inquiry into the Health on the Darling River and Menindee Lakes*, please contact:

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