

Evolving water governance practice
Using the OECD Principles to engage under-represented stakeholder groups in water governance: Fitzroy River Declaration

MADJULLA INC.

Promoter of the practice:

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Location : Australia



Timeframe: December 2016 → ongoing



Scale (s): Basin



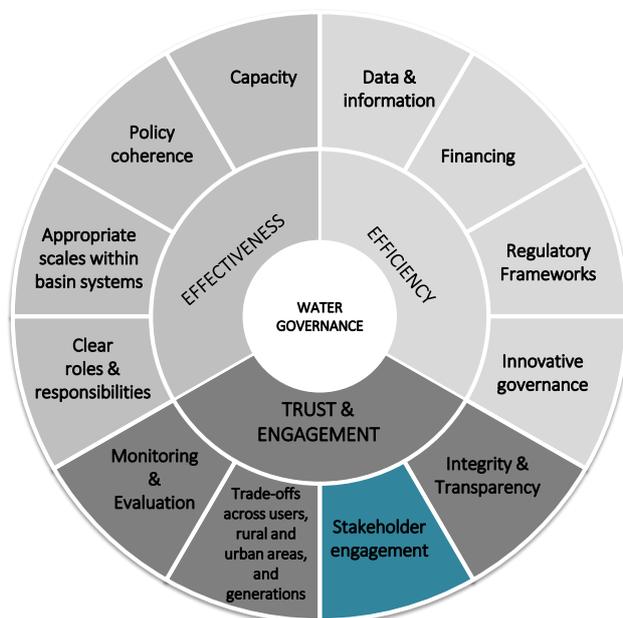
Water function(s): Water resources management

Stakeholders involved	
Regional / provincial government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Western Australian State government
Local Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kimberley Land Council Shires of: Broome, Derby/West Kimberley, Halls Creek.
Industry / Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Industry groups: mining, gas, petrochemical extraction, tourism, wild harvest, farming, pastoralists etc
Civil society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traditional Owners: custodians, knowledge holders, water experts and water managers for the Fitzroy River. Aboriginal Corporations/ Registered Native Title Bodies Corporates: Walalakoo RNTBC AC, Bunuba Dawangarri AC RNTBC, Gooniyandi RNTBC AC and Yanunijarra AC
Advisors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal support: lawyers and researchers
Others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supported by science community Recreational/ fishers and hunters

Brief description of the practice

According to Madjulla Inc, in the Fitzroy River basin (Kimberley region, Australia) the OECD Principles on Water Governance are providing a tool for First Peoples (First Nations) to address State governance challenges with an innovative governance framework. A coalition of the River's First Peoples developed a political declaration and action plan, aiming to protect the River's traditional, environmental and heritage values. The Aboriginal Traditional Owners claim to have always been the river's guardians and that increasing development is jeopardising the future of the river and its peoples. The **"Fitzroy River Declaration", based on the OECD Principles**, urges the government to recognise First Law and Indigenous rights. The cultural governance framework proposed in the Declaration supports managing cumulative impacts in collaboration with government and other stakeholders.

OECD Water Governance Principle (s)



Governance gaps in implementing the practice according to the practice promoter

- **Innovative governance** based on First Law and Indigenous Traditional Knowledge
- **Lack of involvement of under-represented stakeholder groups** (Indigenous/ First Peoples) in the decision-making process of the Fitzroy River Basin

Reported links to OECD Principles

<p>Principle 10: Stakeholder engagement</p>	<p>The OECD Principles on Water Governance have been used to design the Fitzroy River Declaration which guides collective action of Indigenous First Peoples in the basin. The Declaration is claimed to be the result of the leadership of Traditional Owners, who identified a governance gap in Western Australian State law. Madjulla Inc reports that the Declaration is structured around the OECD Principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principle 1: Roles and responsibilities. The Declaration calls for acknowledging the role and responsibilities that Indigenous First Peoples have in water governance and management • Principle 2: Appropriate scales within basin systems. The Declaration recognises that floodplains are an integral part of tropical river ecosystems and must be considered in river management. It explicitly calls for the engagement of the State and Shire governments to better adapt policies to local conditions • Principle 3: Policy coherence. The Declaration acknowledges that First People’s vision of the world does not make arbitrary distinctions between environment, water, health etc. The Fitzroy River Declaration will lead to policies that cut across sectors and seek long-term well-being for the River and the people that live from it. • Principle 4: Capacity. The Declaration sets a set of competencies required to carry out their duties, mapped through broad stakeholder workshop and leadership by the Aboriginal traditional custodians of the Fitzroy River Catchment. • Principle 5: Data and information. The Declaration calls for better data and information on the physical and hydrological conditions of the catchment, based on Traditional Knowledge as well as Western science. • Principle 6: Financing. The Declaration intends to promote better governance arrangements that help mobilise water finance and allocate financial resources in an efficient, transparent and timely manner, through investments in measures to improve catchment management. • Principle 7: Regulatory frameworks. The Declaration claims that there should be legislative measures to protect the River and ensure long-term support for the other actions that feature in the Declaration. The latter is claimed to be of wider public interest since it would improve Australia’s implementation of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. • Principle 8: Innovative governance. The Declaration is innovative because it applies the strengths, knowledge and wisdom of indigenous communities to face modern water governance challenges. • Principle 9: Integrity and transparency. The Declaration will result in greater integrity of decision-making by promoting agreement between Registered Native Title Body Corporates (RNTBCs), the government and other stakeholders. The proposed Management authority will build accountability and trust. • Principle 10: Stakeholder engagement. Indigenous First People’s perspectives as Traditional Owners of the river and long term experience as land managers can provide unique insight into the national water policy developments. • Principle 11: Trade-offs across users, rural and urban areas, and generations. The Declaration is an instrument that intends to set up a governance framework for managing trade-offs and considering cumulative impacts. • Principle 12: Monitoring and evaluation. The Declaration intends to use the OECD Water Governance Principles as the standard to monitor and evaluate water governance in the basin
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Reported link to SDGs



Online information:

[Kimberley Land Council website](#)

[News item: Traditional owners unite to protect Fitzroy River](#)

[Madjulla Inc. website](#)

[Scientist’s statement of support](#)

Note: The information in this profile was submitted by the practice promoter to the OECD Water Governance Initiative - any bias or errors in the original data or text is the sole responsibility of the practice provider. The practice is published at face value and should under no circumstance be considered as a vetting, assessment or certification by the OECD. Access the online map with the 54 Evolving water governance practice at <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy/evolving-water-governance-practices.htm>