Welcome everyone. This is the first newsletter provided by the BMEET team, to keep Traditional Owners and the local community informed about the Ranger activities at Fletchers Lake. We will publish this newsletter every two months.

BMEET’s latest project started on the 02/01/2014 and will run for 6 months. BMEET successfully obtained funding for this project when the works team and Uncle Ray Lawson travelled to Canberra in November 2013 to lobby for ongoing funding to continue our management work at Fletchers Lake Reserve.

We met with the office of the Indigenous Affairs Minister (Nigel Scullion) at Parliament house. As well we had other meetings which gave us the opportunity to show how important this type of project is to our company and the Community.

We convinced the government that funding our work would bring an important economic and social benefit to our community and region.

This funding will allow BMEET to continue our cultural and natural resource management work around Fletchers Lake Reserve until the end of June 2014. We will need to find more money to keep this work going.

One of the first programs we have done since then is the management and monitoring of environmental water into Fletchers Creek. The first time this has happened in over ten years. This has been a great success so far and we are hoping to get more environmental water flows later this year.

We have also been engaged in pest plant and animal control and the identification and management of cultural heritage sites as well as general management activities such as maintaining fire breaks and fencing maintenance.
Background
The Barkindji Maraura Elders Environment Team Ltd (BMEET) was created by the Barkindji Maraura Elders Council (BMEC) in 2010 to provide employment and training opportunities in environmental, natural resource and cultural heritage work for young unemployed men and women in the Gerard, Dareton, Wentworth and Euston communities.

These communities have a very high unemployment rate and significant social welfare and anti-social issues.

BMEC is the primary indigenous advisory body for dealing with culture and heritage issues around Lake Victoria – the main water storage system for South Australia, holding water from the Murray for release into SA. Lake Victoria is a major cultural site, with thousands of burials and other sites of cultural significance.

BMEET works team is comprised of young Aboriginal people from Dareton, Wentworth, Gerard and Euston areas.

Twenty four participants have been trained to Certificate II in Agriculture in 2011/12 and 14 of these completed their training to Certificate III in Agriculture in November 2012.

Fletchers Lake and the associated wetlands provided a rich natural environment for semi-nomadic Aboriginal people for thousands of years.

Radiocarbon dating of site material adjacent to the Reserve indicated occupation 12-17 000 years ago (H. Johnson quoted in Kerr and Wesbrooke 1977).

Under arrangement with the current land holder, the NSW Office of Water, BMEET have been carrying out cultural and natural resource management work on the 3,600 ha of the Fletchers Lake Reserve since 2012.

This is a very important cultural heritage area for Barkindji people and the community are extremely happy that Barkindji people are now looking after their country again.

The Fletchers Lake Indigenous Ranger Project is supported through funding from the Australian Government’s Working on Country Programme.”
Our Achievements

Management of training programs getting 26 out of 29 graduates in Certificate II in Agriculture and 14 out of 14 of these continuing on to graduate with a Certificate III in Agriculture.

Amongst others, tendering for and managing successful work contracts in:
- Riverine Restoration project at the Australian Inland Botanic Gardens through the Lower Murray Darling CMA
- 12 month Caring For Country program - Tradition Meets Science – Developing Appropriate Management for Fletchers Lake near Dareton.
- 2 projects with the Murray CMA – fencing at Fletchers Lake and a landscaping project at Namatjira Avenue Reserve.
- Maintenance programs with Murdi Paaki Regional Housing
- Weed clearance work with Wentworth Shire Council
- Community cleanup at Namatjira Avenue Reserve with the Greater Western Area Health Service.

In the long term, BMEET is interested in being involved in the development of IPAs in the region, the development of appropriate enterprises and the management of land and property for the benefit of Aboriginal people.

BMEET has developed good partnerships with the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre, the Murray Darling Wetlands Working Group, Western Local Land Services, the Dareton Local Aboriginal Land Council and the Coomealla Health Aboriginal Corporation.

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