



**RESOURCE**

# Impossible dreaming – does Australia’s water law and policy fulfil Indigenous aspirations?

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**Description / Abstract**

Despite provisions in the National Water Initiative (NWI) to the effect that Indigenous Australians should have greater participation in water planning, they are still excluded from participating in management involving water governance and economic development. This article examines the success or otherwise of State legislation and policy and of native title claims in the overall context of fulfilling the goals of the NWI. It argues that the implementation of the NWI gives a low priority to Indigenous needs in over-allocated catchments, that its goals are prejudiced by delay and difficulties in native title determinations, that consultations with Indigenous peoples are either lacking or outdated, and that outcomes generally preclude economic development. It is argued that the adoption of co-management models, especially in northern Australia, where the Indigenous land estate is substantial, may better satisfy the goals of the NWI.

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