

Media Release



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Attention: News editors, Chiefs of staff, environment reporters

Alps Aboriginal Group aims high

Representatives of various Aboriginal groups from right across south-east Australia met on 10 and 11 August in Beechworth, Victoria, as the Australian Alps Traditional Owners' Reference Group.

This was the fourth time the group had met in the last twelve months and follows on from their last meeting in Bright in April this year. The meeting was chaired by Uncle Ernie Innes, a Taungurung Elder.

The meeting was sponsored by the Australian Alps Liaison Committee (AALC), a body incorporating government agencies that manage the Australian Alps national parks (AAnp); the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Parks Victoria, and ACT Parks, Conservation and Lands, and Parks Australia.

The Group discussed a number of matters about Aboriginal involvement in the management of the Australian Alps national parks. The list of initiatives being discussed came out of a meeting of over 100 traditional owners that occurred in 2005 at Dinner Plain in Victoria known as the Australian Alps First Peoples' Gathering.

Key topics for the Beechworth meeting were planning for a second Australian Alps First Peoples' Gathering, fire management in the Australian Alps, and discussing Aboriginal Tourism opportunities.

Mr Innes said, "Our main concern is the planning for the next First Peoples' Gathering. This will be an important consultative mechanism for the Group. The Group has only eight members so we can't possibly know what Traditional Owners from right across the Alps region want in terms of their wishes for the management of the Australian Alps national parks. The Gathering will be a great opportunity to bring together a wider constituency so we can get some feedback from them, not only about how the Reference Group has been going, but where we should be taking our agenda in the future."

"The first gathering in 2005 led to the formation of the Reference Group and set a broad agenda. However, we are proposing that this next Gathering will be more focussed and it gives the Reference Group an opportunity to present a report card. We want to make sure we are properly representing the views of the broader Aboriginal community. "

"But not only will it be a more formal opportunity to give and receive feedback. It will help ensure we preserve our ancient tradition of Aboriginal People from all around the Alps region meeting in the high country and paying respect to our traditions and elders, past and present."

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Australian Alps cooperative management
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