

CULTURAL FLOWS' OR ALLOCATIONS: WATER POLICY IN AUSTRALIA AND INDIGENOUS INTERESTS

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ABSTRACT

One of the significant failings in Australian water policy and legal reform is the identification and description of Indigenous values in forms that are feasible to implement and interpret in governance and cultural heritage processes. This issue will remain a contentious one while policy frameworks fail to address the indigenous customary rights, property rights and cultural rights in water resource management and regulation and only sporadic attention is directed to the role of indigenous people in water policy, law and management regimes. Australia's system of water allocation and pricing conflicts with traditional conceptualisations of water use and potentially inhibits economic development. The findings from three case studies from different state jurisdictions are reported with an emphasis on the 'fit' between indigenous cultural concerns and Australia's state and federal water policy concepts that are predicated on quantitative and economic mechanisms.

PALAVRA-CHAVE: Indigenous culture, water policy, Australia, Indigenous water rights