

Regional Natural Resource Management

Why have regional NRM? What benefits does the regional model bring Australia?

Benefits of the Regional NRM model

The Regional Model – NRMs working with everyone

The regional model isn't all about NRMs but is about NRM regions working and partnering with a remarkable range of farmers, communities, landcarers, industries, NGOs etc. - at multiple scales from local to national. That's how we work. Whether seafood producers, Landcare groups, farming systems groups, individual farmers, tourism operators, Indigenous corporations, rural RDCs... it's our job.

And because we are based in the community, at the regional scale, we have the relationships built up over decades required to do this. And we can help build and re-build capacity when required and help partners along when needed. A fundamental role in rural, regional and outback Australia.

For example, nrmregionsaustralia.com.au/improved-dairy-industry-productivity/

Accountability for tax-payers' dollar

Regional NRM bodies have established systems to provide accountability -

- Financial
- Governance
- Project management
- Monitoring and evaluation, and reporting

Regions have systems and accountabilities through their State or Territory jurisdictional requirements along with the Australian Government requirements such as MERIT.

NRM regions and the Australian Government have also established accountability and improvement mechanisms: the NRM Regions' Organisational Performance Excellence Program and the Australian Government's MERIT system and Performance expectation framework (www.nrm.gov.au/publications/aust-government-performance-framework-implementation-manual).

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Continental coverage

Australia is the only country, let alone continent, where natural resource management organisations, and strategic plans, cover the entirety of the nation – something that is looked upon with envy from many overseas countries. This national ‘infrastructure’ developed over many years constitutes organisational capacity and systems; knowledge and skills; networks and relationships; strategic plans, and committed people.

nrmregionsaustralia.com.au/nrm-regions-map/

This enables the Commonwealth government to deliver its objectives and legislative responsibilities across the country, even where there is less capacity.

Ensuring aligned and strategic investment

Past national programs have been critiqued for an ad hoc or vegemite approach to investment.

Working with regional bodies and through regional NRM strategies enables strategic investment. Regional NRM strategies prioritise actions and investment working with local communities. NRM regions and strategies link or align priorities vertically (national, State to local level) and horizontally (across tenures, land-types and land-uses). This targets investment and delivers outcomes from a paddock to regional to national scale; enabling the best return on investment and an impact that adds up over time and across the country. For example, www.naturalresources.sa.gov.au/alinytjara-wilurara/about-us/our-regions-plan

It adds up to making a difference. It also allows investment where they may otherwise be no capacity.

There is an opportunity for the Australian Government to deliver additional Commonwealth objectives through the regional NRMs just as State governments are, such as flood recovery in Tasmania or industry adjustment in the Goulburn Valley of Victoria.

Multiple and appropriate delivery mechanisms

Over time NRM has improved. Our methods and tools have grown in diversity and sophistication and we can deliver in whatever way will be most appropriate, efficient and effective.

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We can work with the diversity found across our country, people and industries. This may be working with individuals or groups, businesses or government; using grants or capacity building, market-based instruments or practice change. No one size fits all.

NRM organisations reflect regional difference, regional needs and landscape diversity. Australia is a vast and diverse country crossing many landscapes and natural resource uses with different challenges. NRM regional planning ensures on-ground works don't happen in isolation and instead help local communities find local solutions that meet their needs and suit the local environment.

The breadth of what regional bodies do – and what natural resource management is – is mind-boggling. For example, nrmregionsaustralia.com.au/big-data-helps-graziers-to-manage-rangeland-areas/

Making the investment go further

An important function of regions is to encourage investment from a variety of investors and ensuring better alignment of investment so that the benefits can be fully realised.

A clear example is ensuring that \$ spent by state and local governments on works enhances, rather than detracts from efforts at biodiversity conservation. A good example of this is roadside maintenance where slight adjustment to works programs can enhance biodiversity values of these often important habitat linkages.

Regional NRMs leverage investment from a range of sources, at least matching every \$ of Australian Government funds. Furthermore, with support from regional NRMs local communities contribute at least \$5 for every \$1 of Government investment – what other local community model achieves this?

NRM and Landcare is unique to Australia. It has been quietly built over 30 years by people who care about their local land, water and communities.

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