

# **12<sup>th</sup> National NRM Chairs' Forum**

## **20 to 21 March 2014**

**To be held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, 29  
Cameron St  
Launceston, Tasmania**

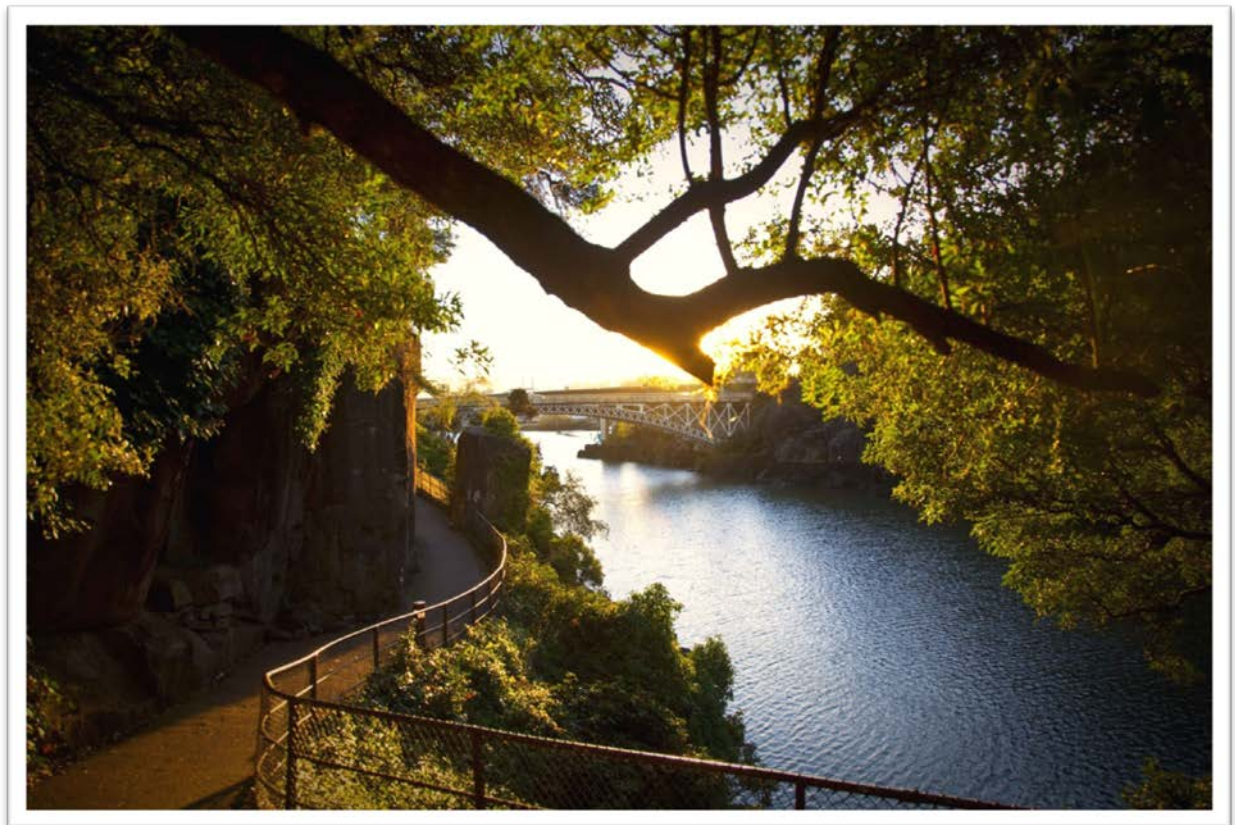
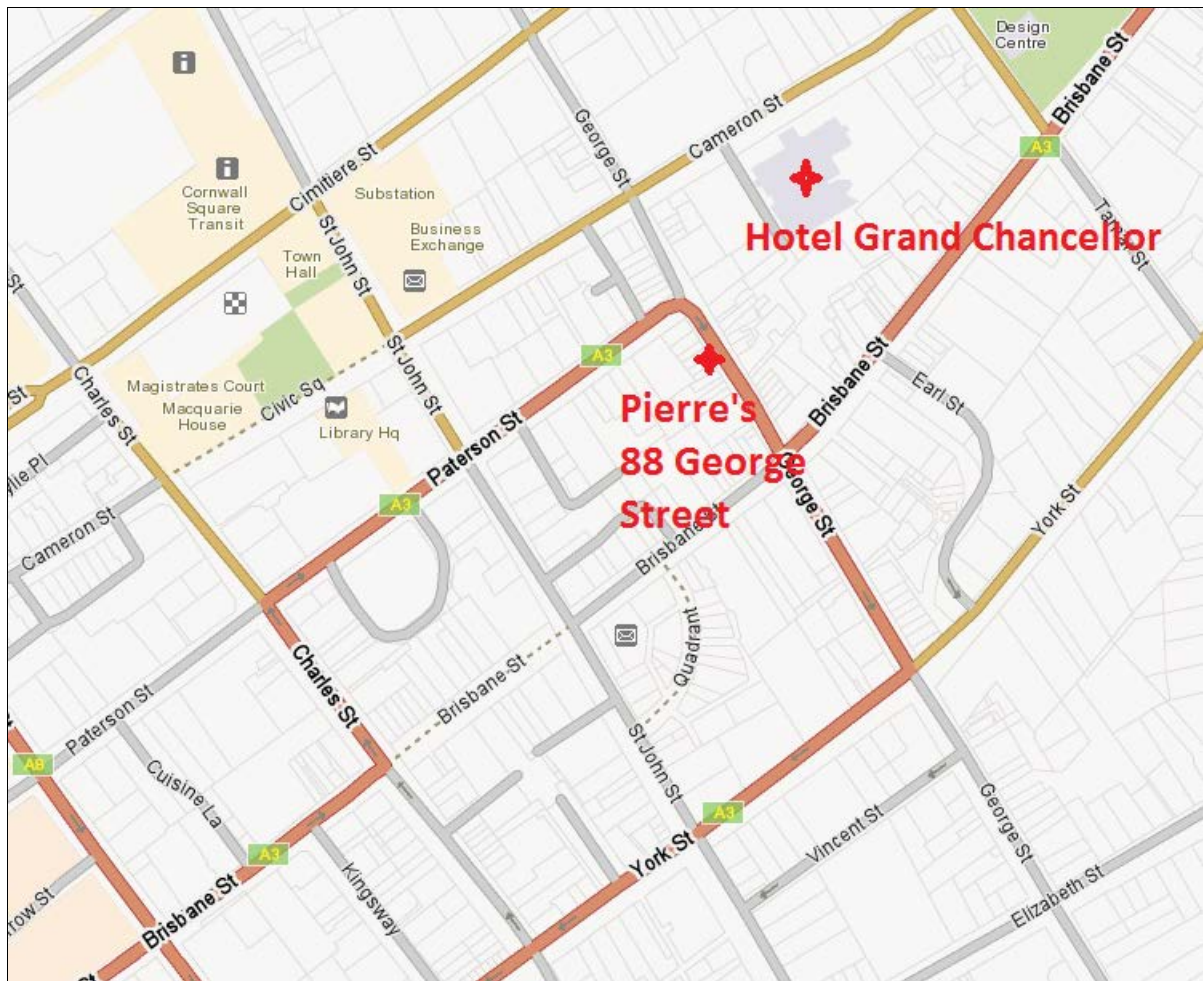


Photo: Cataract Gorge, Launceston

## **Forum Program & Papers**

**The National NRM Regions' Working Group wishes to acknowledge staff  
from NRM North and Tasmanian Chairs for their work in hosting the  
Forum.**



**Central Launceston**

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# 12<sup>th</sup> NRM Regional Bodies Chairs' Forum

Hotel Grand Chancellor, Cameron Street, Launceston Tasmania

20 & 21 March 2014

Agenda – 12 March 2014

***Forum Theme: Regional NRM organisations and the efficient delivery of the Australian Landcare Program***

## Forum aims:

1. To explore the implications for regional NRM arising from the Government's Australian Landcare Program and its commitment to *local, simple and long term*.
2. To receive progress reports on national projects: Regional Environmental Accounts pilot project; implementation of the Landcare Statement of Common Purpose; Sustainable Agriculture and regional NRM; Indigenous Land Management and regional NRM; Regional NRM Planning; and Terrestrial Carbon.
3. To identify issues for bringing to the attention of Ministers
4. To establish the budget and direction for the 2014/15 National NRM Region's Working Group work plan.

| Wednesday 19 March 2014   |   |
|---|---|
| Final day of the National NRM Knowledge Conference                                |   |
| 7.00 pm   | Free evening  |
| Thursday 20 March 2014<br>(The morning session will involve both Chairs and CEOs) |   |
| 9.00 am   | <b>Forum Opening:</b> Pam Green, Chair of the National NRM Regions' Working Group and Richard Ireland, Chair, NRM North. Includes the report for the 2013 National NRM Chairs' Forum. |
| 9.15 am   | <b>Session 1: New directions for Regional NRM – the Australian Landcare Program.</b> Briefing by Sean Sullivan, Department of Environment & Jenny Barbour, Department of Agriculture  |
| 10.00 am  | <b>Session 2: Working with Landcare.</b> Briefing on progress with the Landcare Statement of Common Purpose - David Walker (President of the NLN) and Pam Green                       |
| 10.30 am  | <b>Morning Tea</b>  |
| 11.00 am  | <b>Session 3: Localism Workshop</b><br>What does localism mean for regional NRM?  |
| 12.30 pm  | <b>Lunch</b>  |
| 1.15 pm   | <b>Session 4: The evolution of regional NRM bodies - where are we heading?</b><br>Regional NRM bodies' functions vary between jurisdictions, but they all                             |

|                |  |
|----------------|--|
|                | share one common feature – changing responsibilities, whether that is in the areas of biosecurity, drought assistance, natural disaster recovery etc. What are the trends and how can we share skills and knowledge nationally across the regional NRM sector? |
| <b>3.15 pm</b> | <b>Afternoon Tea</b>   |
| <b>3.45 pm</b> | <b>Session 5: Regional Environmental Accounts – where to from here?</b><br>Max Kitchell, Chair, Regional Environmental Accounts Steering Committee and Peter Cosier and Carla Sbrocchi, Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists                                |
| <b>4.30 pm</b> | <b>Session 6: Report from the 5<sup>th</sup> National NRM Knowledge Conference –</b><br>Max Kitchell/Richard Ireland   |
| <b>5.00 pm</b> | <b>Close:</b> Summary of main points from the day.   |
| <b>7.00 pm</b> | <b>Chairs Dinner: Pierre’s, 88 George St, Launceston</b>   |

| <b>Friday 21 March 2014</b> |  |
|-----------------------------|--|
| <b>9.00 am</b>              | <b>Session 7: Evaluation of the National NRM Regions’ Working Group</b>  |
| <b>9.15 am</b>              | <b>Session 8: Working Group Reports</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>NRM Planning in Australia</b> – report from the NRM Planning Working Group presented by James McKee, CEO NRM North</li> <li>b) <b>Sustainable Agriculture</b> – report from the Sustainable Agriculture Working Group presented by Sharon Starick, Chair, SA Murray Darling NRM</li> <li>c) <b>Indigenous Land Management</b> – report from the Indigenous Land Management Working Group presented by Kate Andrews, Chair NT NRM</li> <li>d) <b>Carbon</b> – report from Mike Berwick on the National NRM Regions Working Group response to the Australian Government’s Emissions Reduction Fund</li> </ul> |
| <b>10.30 am</b>             | <b>Morning Tea</b>   |
| <b>11.00 am</b>             | <b>Session 9: NRM Chairs forward planning: The National NRM work program and budget</b> - This session will summarise Forum outcomes and commit to action.   |
| <b>12.15 pm</b>             | Official closing comments Pam Green<br>Handover for the 2015 Forum .....   |
| <b>12.30 pm</b>             | <b>Forum close followed by lunch and then airport transfers</b>  |



## **Report from the 11<sup>th</sup> NRM Regional Bodies Chairs' Forum**

### **21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2013 at the Sebel Hotel Mandurah, Western Australia**

The 11<sup>th</sup> annual NRM Chairs' Forum was held in Mandurah, Western Australia on 21 and 22 March 2013. Chairs or deputy Chairs from 42 of Australia's 54 regional NRM bodies attended the Forum along with 18 guests/speakers. David Gardner, Chair of the South West Catchments Council and Chair of the WA NRM Leaders Group convened the Forum.

The theme adopted for 2013 was *Sustainable Water use in Natural Resource Management*. Mr **Rob Freeman**, Commissioner, National Water Commission briefed delegates on national policy drivers for sustainable water use and NRM. Rob covered the role of the National Water Commission and the National Water Initiative and the outcomes of recent reviews of both. COAG has agreed to extend the term of the Commission and has asked it to maintain its role of assessing progress by jurisdictions in meeting the National Water Initiative objectives as well as taking on responsibility for auditing progress with the Basin Plan. The question of whether the Commission's focus adequately addresses the link between water and NRM was raised during the discussion. **Professor Richard Harper**, Murdoch University, provided a Western Australia perspective on water and land management challenges. He used several local case-studies to demonstrate the importance of an integrated approach to managing land and water resources, particularly in the context of climate change and landscape options for sequestering carbon.

### **Organisational Performance Excellence**

At the 2011 National NRM Chairs' Forum Chairs received a report from Norbert Vogel (Australian Knowledge Management Group) on the outcomes of Organisational Performance Excellence (OPE) reviews of regional NRM bodies undertaken over the previous 5 years. Chairs recognised the value of the reviews and agreed to set a target of 85% of regional NRM bodies having undertaken a review by 2013.

**Kathleen Broderick**, CEO, NRM South and **Andrew Drysdale**, CEO, Queensland Regional Groups Collective, briefed Chairs on progress with the target noting that it will be met in 2013. 37 regional NRM bodies have undertaken the review (six of these had follow-up reviews resulting in 43 reviews in total) with a further 8 committed to undertaking a review by 30 June – resulting in 83% of regional bodies. Their briefing also included a high level summary of the reviews undertaken since 2011 that provided a snapshot of where the sector was at relative to best practice across a number of business elements. **Damian Postma**, CEO, South West Catchments Council, shared with Chairs his positive experience from a review of his organisation. The presentation concluded with a recommendation that

Chairs commit to continuing the project noting that follow-up reviews provide the most benefit to individual regional bodies.

**Outcomes from the Chairs discussion:**

- There was strong support for continuing the OPE project with Chairs seeing value in: demonstrating and promoting regional bodies' commitment to performance excellence; providing a continuous improvement pathway for CEOs and Executive Officers with the potential for KPIs to be linked to OPE; and for promoting the work of regional NRM in general and to funders in particular.
- Chairs considered the issue of providing formal recognition of leading practice but noted the primary purpose is to inform individual Boards of their performance. Tools for doing this include sharing of information between regional bodies through workshops, web-based case studies etc.
- The WA waterwise approach may be one way of publically promoting Board commitment to performance excellence.
- Chairs provided support for a future target of 15 reviews per year, but there was some discussion as to the frequency of the follow-up reviews.
- Chairs noted that resources will be required to support the project (an estimate of \$50,000 per year or \$1,000 per region for on-going support of the project was canvassed) and agreed that there are clear benefits in NRM regional bodies being seen to contribute.
- Chairs asked the working group to consider how to avoid doing this work twice. The NSW Natural Resources Commission also audits CMA performance in that state and in some cases regional bodies use other methods to assess Organisational Performance Excellence. The methodology should not be prescriptive. A "hybrid" system that recognises different state and regional approaches might be more appropriate.

## **Australian Government Report**

**Sean Sullivan**, First Assistant Secretary – Biodiversity Conservation Division, Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and **Michelle Lauder**, Assistant Secretary, Landcare, Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry briefed Chairs on progress with phase 2 of *Caring for our Country* call for applications. The details of the Environment Stream are now available and the details of the Sustainable Agriculture Stream will be released over the coming weeks. Discussion with Chairs centred on how regional NRM bodies can demonstrate the contribution they make to economic and social outcomes as well as protecting the natural infrastructure that underpins our resource based industries.

## Regional Environmental Accounts

**Pam Green**, Chair, Southern Rivers CMA, and Chair of the Regional Environmental Accounts Steering Committee outlined the background to the Regional Environmental Accounts project and the previous decisions of the National Chairs' Forum to support the project. She introduced **Peter Cosier** and **Carla Sbrocchi** from the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists. Peter outlined the strong international interest in the Australian pilot project and how it could be used to support the implementation of the International System of Environmental Accounts. Carla provided a more detailed briefing on the aims and progress with the regional trials. A report on stage 1 of the trials will be available in mid- 2013. **Annie Lane**, SA Executive Officer, presented a perspective from the Eyre Peninsula region that has been involved in the trial. She noted that REA provides a common language for reporting on condition of natural resources and a means of prioritising investment.

### Outcomes from the Chairs discussion:

- Chairs reaffirmed their support for the project and acknowledged the significant contribution of the Wentworth Group. They noted the forthcoming release of the Stage 1 report and provided in-principle support for the project moving to the second stage.
- Chairs recognised the important benefits to both regional bodies and investors in having a robust monitoring system in place that is capable of reporting on changes to the condition of natural resources.
- The Steering Committee was asked to consider the broader engagement of other sectors (for example the mining sector) in the second stage and to build stronger links with relevant national projects. Other matters to be considered by the Steering Committee are: the inclusion of resource managers as “assets”, caution around the accounts becoming “leagues tables” and the need for the accounts to recognise the values that underpin investment decision making.
- Chairs recognised the high level of support provided by the Wentworth Group to date and the need for this level of effort to be available into the future. Securing government investment in the process will require “proof of concept” based on a factual report of progress and a clear indication of how the accounts can transform NRM in the future.
- Chairs endorsed the Steering Committee membership for 2013/14 as:  
Max Kitchell, NRM South (convenor)  
Royce Bishop, Reef Catchments  
John Bethel, Northern Gulfs  
Pam Green, Southern Rivers CMA  
Heather Baldock, NRM Eyre Peninsula  
Chris King, Northern Agricultural Catchments Council



## NRM Chairs forward planning

**David Gardner** introduced the session and briefed members on the changes to the National NRM Regions' Working Group terms of reference. Following the Forum all existing regional NRM body Chairs will receive an invitation to submit an Expression of Interest for a two year appointment to Chair the National NRM Regions' Working Group. The position will be independent, the Chair may continue in that role for the term of appointment even if their role as regional body Chair ceases. There is the opportunity for the Chair's home State/Territory to appoint another Chair (or Board member in the case of the Territories) to bring the State/Territory perspective to the National Working Group. The process will be concluded at the 17 May meeting of the National NRM Regions' Working Group.

To assist with establishing the Forum work program for 2013/14 (to be delivered by the National NRM Region's Working Group) Chairs received progress reports on:

- NRM Planning in Australia – **James McKee**, CEO, NRM North
- The Landcare Statement of Common Purpose - **Sharon Starick**, Chair, SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Board
- Indigenous Land Management - **Kate Andrews**, Chair, NT NRM
- Carbon Working Group - **Mike Berwick**, Chair, Terrain NRM.

Following the presentations Chairs worked in table groups to consider the detail of the projects and provide direction for the National Working Group.

### Outcomes from the Chairs discussion:

There was overall support for the existing projects, but Chairs noted the risks of having too many national projects and the need for those projects to have clear terms of reference. In relation to assigning priority to projects, Chairs noted that some projects are on-going and require less attention than others.

- **Organisational Performance Excellence:** There was strong support for continuing this project and for using the information to support the development of a culture of continuous improvement in regional NRM bodies and to promote our efforts to major investors. Chairs suggested that a Business Case be developed outlining the funds required to support the project.
- **Regional Environmental accounts:** Chairs confirmed the priority for this project (see earlier discussion) and reinforced the need for the project to be sustainable in the long term by engaging the Federal government and relevant agencies in order to broaden support for the project at the national level.
- **Regional NRM planning:** Chairs recognised the need to articulate the benefits of regional NRM planning and agreed that the project should continue but Chairs suggested a tighter focus.

- **Indigenous Land Management:** Chairs supported the need for a greater understanding of opportunities to increase engagement of indigenous peoples in NRM and for developing mechanisms for sharing this information.
- **Carbon:** Chairs supported the proposal to reconsider the terms of reference for the Carbon Working Group with a focus on understanding the implications of national policy directions for regional NRM programs.
- **National NRM roundtable:** This was seen as an important on-going initiative that the National Working Group should continue to support. The Roundtable provides an opportunity to share information across a range of organisations and build partnerships at the national level.
- **NRM Knowledge Conference 2014:** Chairs continue to support the biennial NRM Knowledge Conferences and regard this as a valuable opportunity for learning and networking and suggested that one area for the 2014 conference could be sharing information on Indigenous Land Management.
- **National NRM Chairs Forum:** Chairs expressed strong support for the annual Forum of Chairs and regard this as an important part of the National Working Group's work program. Chairs held different views as to whether the Forum should be held annually or biennially and asked the Working Group to examine this issue.
- **Policy and Program Development:** Chairs recognised that monitoring and responding to invitations to contribute to related policy development processes is a major role for the National Working Group. Food Security and capacity building were two areas identified by the Chairs for attention in 2013/14.
- **National NRM awareness:** Promoting understanding of the benefits of regional NRM remains a challenge and on-going effort is required. A common national message promoted locally should underpin the awareness strategy. The project could also consider how to promote the regional NRM message through school curriculum.
- **Landcare Statement of Common Purpose:** Chairs noted the good progress being made with the implementation of the statement and agreed that the National Working Group should continue to support its implementation.
- **National Extension Framework:** Chairs recognised the importance of this initiative and asked to National Working Group to maintain a watching brief.

## Forum Close

**David Gardner** concluded the Forum with a discussion on the location for the 2014 Forum. Chairs noted current rotational policy (NSW in 2014 and then Queensland in 2015) but asked the Working Group to consider Canberra as the location for the next Forum because of the greater potential for access to Ministers.

## **National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014**

**Session: 2**      Working with Landcare. Briefing on progress with the Landcare Statement of Common Purpose

**Presented by:**   Pam Green, National NRM Regions' Working Group and David Walker (President of the NLN)

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. To receive a briefing from Pam Green and David Walker on progress with the Statement of Common Purpose.**
- 2. To note the revised Statement (attached).**

### **Background:**

3. In 2012, the National NRM Chairs Forum adopted a Statement of Common Purpose with the National Landcare Network. Part of the Statement required regular reviews of progress.
4. Pam Green met with David Walker and Vickie Webb of the National Landcare Network (NLN) on 8 October 2013 as part of the annual review of the Statement. The discussions were productive and two small changes were proposed to the statement, one covering the frequency of meetings (to be twice a year) and the other relating to a change in the role of Landcare.
5. Pam also briefed the NLN on our work on a Localism Position Paper with the NLN expressing support for the concept. Discussion also covered the implementation of the Government's Landcare program.
6. The Statement was also discussed at a meeting with Minister Hunt, attended by Pam Green and David Walker, where the Minister expressed his support for the Statement and his desire to recommend it to all regional NRM organisations and landcare groups.

## **Statement of Common Purpose**

*Landcare communities and regional NRM organisations working  
together in changing landscapes*

**Revision Date: 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

## 1. Signatories

This Statement of Common Purpose is an agreement between the **National Landcare Network** and the **National NRM Regions' Working Group**.

The National Landcare Network is the advocacy and representative body for Landcare<sup>1</sup> at the national level. It consists of representatives from peak bodies for Landcare in each State and Territory, and where no peak body exists from nominated representatives for that State/Territory.

The National NRM Regions' Working Group is the representative body of the Chairs of Australia's 55 regional Natural Resource Management organisations. Its members are the representatives from the State and Territory groups of the Chairs.

This initiative is supported by the Australian Landcare Council, Landcare Australia Limited and the National Landcare Facilitator.

## 2. Purpose of the Statement

The purpose of the Statement is to establish an enduring and productive relationship between our organisations that uses our collective capacity to optimise outcomes for the protection of natural resources in Australia.

We aim to do this by developing a collaborative relationship at the national level that will foster effective working partnerships nationally, regionally and locally, where we have interests in common, and can collectively produce better value and impact.

The benefits of working collaboratively are:

- Landcare and NRM Regions together can more effectively address environmental challenges to maintain and improve landscape health and resilience;
- Better linkages between community empowerment and ownership, and policy development and delivery;
- Opportunities for mutual public recognition at all levels, strengthening the joint and separate reputations of both partners.

The risks of not working more collaboratively together are:

- We fail to adequately address landscape challenges to achieve improved environmental health and resilience;
- We weaken our reputations in the eyes of communities, governments and other investors;
- We have a divided, disengaged and disempowered community;
- We lose community capacity and social capital.

## 3. Our Shared Objective

We share the common objective of:

*Fostering communities that are aware, engaged and active in ensuring Australian landscapes are healthier, better protected, better managed, more resilient and provide essential ecosystem services in a changing world.*

We will each pursue this objective through our established mechanisms of communication, mentoring and ideas sharing at local, state and national levels, and for linking with governments at all scales.

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<sup>1</sup> Landcare in this document refers to the grassroots movement that encompasses individuals and groups embracing the ethic of caring for their local environment. It includes all 'Care' groups: Land, Coast, Bush, 'Friends of' and farmers' production groups.



#### **4. Individual Focus**

We each have a different focus to what we do. Understanding that difference and acknowledging each other's organisational goals, operating approaches and constraints will enhance our collaboration.

##### **4.1. Landcare**

- Fosters community self-determination;
- Stimulates voluntary participation in learning about and taking action to address local environmental and sustainable production issues;
- Facilitates the adoption of changed practices;
- Builds community capacity and contributes to the social fabric of communities by enhancing resilience and cohesiveness;
- Brings local expertise and knowledge to the challenge of sustaining landscapes at broader scales.

##### **4.2. Regional Bodies**

- Develop regional landscape plans and prioritised investment targets that align government (Commonwealth, State and Territory, and Local) directions with regional community visions for the region, that are based on sound technical knowledge;
- On behalf of larger investors, broker investment in priorities outlined in regional plans, and build regional and community partnerships to implement projects;
- Foster the skills and capacities needed by communities to implement plans.

#### **5. Complementary Strengths**

The signatories recognise and acknowledge that in working towards a common objective, much of our work is interdependent and that each can bring complementary strengths to the task when collaborating effectively. For this purpose, our particular strengths are:

##### **5.1. Landcare**

- Developing local ownership of issues, solutions and the landscape changes achieved;
- Broad recognition and good reputation in the community;
- Informal structures that enable flexibility and the capacity to quickly respond and adapt to emerging issues and changed circumstances;
- Good local knowledge that supports local innovation and solutions.

##### **5.2. Regional Bodies**

- Regional perspectives of landscapes and communities;
- Engaging communities and other stakeholders in developing and implementing regional plans for landscape enhancement;
- Institutional and organisational capacity;
- Access to technical skills and expertise.

## 6. How We Will Work Together

### 6.1. A framework for delivery

We agree to meet twice a year:

- to develop views on major issues of common interest;
- to review our collaborative arrangements;
- to develop annual work plans;
- to review this statement and the success of its implementation.

We will meet at other times as needed to drive work on agreed projects.

### 6.2. What we aim to deliver

Through our respective networks at state, regional and local level, the signatories will work together on:

- developing the mutual recognition and respect that are required to make this agreement work;
- investigating and promoting mechanisms for more effective collaboration between Landcare and regional NRM bodies across Australia at all scales;
- exploring and promoting continuous improvement in the community engagement activities of regional bodies;
- identifying and addressing differences, including points of tension, at the national, state and regional scale;
- a new combined and enhanced capacity to:
  - contribute to policy formulation at the national and state levels and
  - strengthen community input at the regional and local levels.

## 7. Communication and Support for the Agreement

The signatories agree to actively promote this Statement within their member organisations and to be supportive of its intent amongst their wider stakeholders.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**David Walker**

Chair, National Landcare Network

Date: **8<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

**Pamela Green**

Chair, National NRM Regions' Working Group

Date: **8<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

## National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014

**Session: 3**      Localism Workshop

**Facilitated by:** Sue Middleton, WA NRM Rural Leaders Group

### **Recommendation:**

1. That Chairs consider the attached Localism Position Paper developed by the National NRM Regions' Working Group and working in table groups identify actions to implement localism.

### **Background:**

2. The Government's new national Landcare Program is set within the context of **Local, Simple and Long-term**. Sessions 1 and 2 have provided further perspectives on the concept of "local".
3. The National NRM Regions' Working Group has developed the attached position paper that identifies principles that outline what we mean by "local". The paper draws on work undertaken by NSW former CMA Chairs.
4. As a further input to this session, Carole Sweatman, (CEO, Terrain, and convenor of the NRM Knowledge Conference Community Engagement Workshop) will brief the Forum on the outcomes of that workshop.

# NATIONAL NRM REGIONS

## LOCALISM POSITION PAPER

### Purpose

The purpose of this Position Paper is to provide a framework for Regional Bodies to give effect to localism.

### Background

In 2010, the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Chairs' Forum endorsed the discussion paper *Australia's NRM Governance System, Foundations and principles for meeting future challenges*. That paper identified 10 principles to underpin the design of future changes in NRM governance. One of those principles was:

#### **Subsidiarity: devolve decision making to the lowest capable level**

*For best engagement of people's skills and effort, decision making needs to be devolved to the lowest capable level. However, because there is public benefit in looking after every piece of land well, governance design needs to recognise that governments have a legitimate interest in influencing local decisions. Their influence is better exerted through providing direction, standards, guidelines, incentives and sanctions, than through direct decision making at local level. All devolved decision makers need to be accountable for their decisions.*

This paper provides a framework to give effect to the subsidiarity principle governance. We have adopted the term **Localism** to describe the framework. By Localism we mean engaging people, wherever possible, in decisions that affect their life, and devolving power to make those decisions to the lowest possible level.

This paper is timely, the Australian Government's new National Landcare Policy promotes the concepts of *Simple, Local and Long-term*. Developing the position paper enables NRM regions to engage directly in assisting the government deliver its policy objectives.

### Using the Framework

The Framework is intended to guide regional NRM bodies in strengthening their localism processes. It recognises another of the NRM Governance principles: *Systems approach: match governance mechanisms to the nature of the linked social-ecological system*. This recognises the diversity of our NRM challenges across Australia and the need to need for arrangements in remote areas to be tailored to suit remote communities.

A series of principles are proposed along with a position statement. At the end of the paper we provide an example of how regions can strengthen localism.

### Definitions

**Regional community:** all people who live or work in a region, including landholders, technical experts, Aboriginal people, government agency staff and industry representatives as well as residents in villages, towns and cities.

**Devolution:** transfer of power, including assets, resources and decision-making, down to the local level.

**Double devolution:** the transfer of powers firstly from governments to a Regional Body, and secondly from that body to other local people and organisations.

*Focal scale:* the scale at which an issue, problem or system can be best understood or managed.

*Sustainable development:* development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

## **Principles**

1. An enabled community is a prerequisite to localism: An enabled community is aware, engaged, active, skilled and resourced.
2. To enable communities, devolution of decision making, planning and implementation is also a prerequisite.
3. For devolution and localism to be successful, resourcing is critical for both core support and program/project delivery.
4. Local people know their local area best.
5. Localism is expected to increase capacity and resilience in communities and the spread of innovative practice.
6. Issues are best addressed at the lowest possible scale where there is existing or potential capacity to do so.
7. Localism engenders greater ownership of local problems and solutions, and leverages greater commitment in time and resources from local people and communities.
8. Localism encourages peer support, peer learning and peer review.
9. Localism respects independence as an important empowering trait.
10. Local people should have significant influence over the issues that matter most to them or affect their community.
11. Community can be diverse, uneven and sometimes messy. This is also the strength of communities and needs to be acknowledged and accommodated.
12. Clear lines of responsibility and accountability are vital for effective local governance structures.
13. An environment for meaningful partnerships with local people, groups and communities should be created. This may involve allocating more time and resources, to develop genuine relationships built on mutual trust and respect.
14. Regional Bodies are in a unique position to provide valuable services in linking governments and local groups and people across different focal scales.

## **Position Statement**

Regional Bodies are committed to giving effect to localism and by doing so strengthen the capacity of local people and community groups and empower them to take effective action and leading roles in the sustainable development of their communities.

Regional Bodies fundamentally believe:

- that the concepts of localism and community are inextricably intertwined
- in greater devolution to capable local people and communities, and



- that localism presents a higher chance of success and innovation rather than something risky and to be avoided.

Regional Bodies also fundamentally accept that they are accountable to the regional communities we serve and ultimately to the broader community for the public funds we invest locally.

Accordingly, in making partnerships the rule, not the exception, and to fully exploit the potential of double devolution, whenever services provided by a local partner are auspiced through a Regional Body:

- the partnership arrangements must be supported by a formal agreement
- the level of devolution is to be consistent with the concept of ‘earned autonomy’, whereby high performing partners will be provided with additional power or freedoms over time
- the Regional Body will provide enabling support for local capacity building and devolution of power in ways that result in local outcomes being delivered that align with broad government priorities, and
- the Regional Body must establish quality assurance strategies to ensure the processes and outcomes delivered by our partners are valid, consistent and fair
- the auspicing of services through a regional body should be consistent with a planned strategy to support community capacity.
- In giving effect to localism, decision points will be included in every program to consider partnership opportunities and devolution.

Signed:

Effective Date:

xxxxx 2014

## APPENDIX: GIVING EFFECT TO LOCALISM – A NSW CASE STUDY

Several NSW regional NRM bodies have identified the following processes to guide the implementation of Localism in their region.

### Step 1: Developing an enabled and viable landcare community

Regional Body ensures the existing capacity, gaps, aspirations and health of landcare in the region are identified – by working closely with the community and the Regional Landcare Facilitator. Community capacity should be mapped to enable measurement of change over time. The Community and Regional Body will then determine support strategies and resource requirements to achieve an enabled community. A long term plan for supporting and increasing group capacity should be developed and implemented.

### Step 2: Measuring outcomes

The community capacity building plan should identify a functional and viable landcare community as a defined outcome in its own right. To enable appropriate measurement of this outcome, community capacity should be mapped at the beginning to create a benchmark.

### Step 3: Collaboration on projects

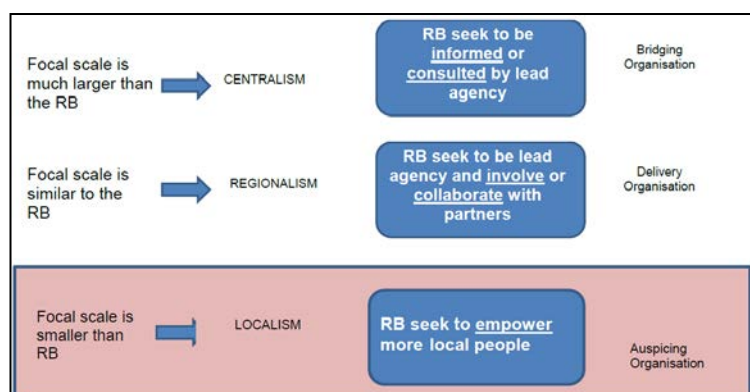
The plan for developing and supporting community capacity should set project collaboration standards to ensure that groups are empowered by appropriate processes around allocation of projects and partnership requirements. Project delivery particularly if groups do not have the capacity, or are not involved in the identification of the issue and/or the design of the project, has the potential to disempower and in time reduce community capacity).

True collaboration requires community involvement in all stages of project identification, design and delivery. The Community and the Regional Body should determine where there are collaboration opportunities and develop project concepts. These decisions should be made with respect to the strategy and principles outlined in the community capacity building plan.

Regional bodies must respect the intellectual property and independence of community and restrain from ‘co-opting’ ideas unless invited. A functional relationship relies on trust.

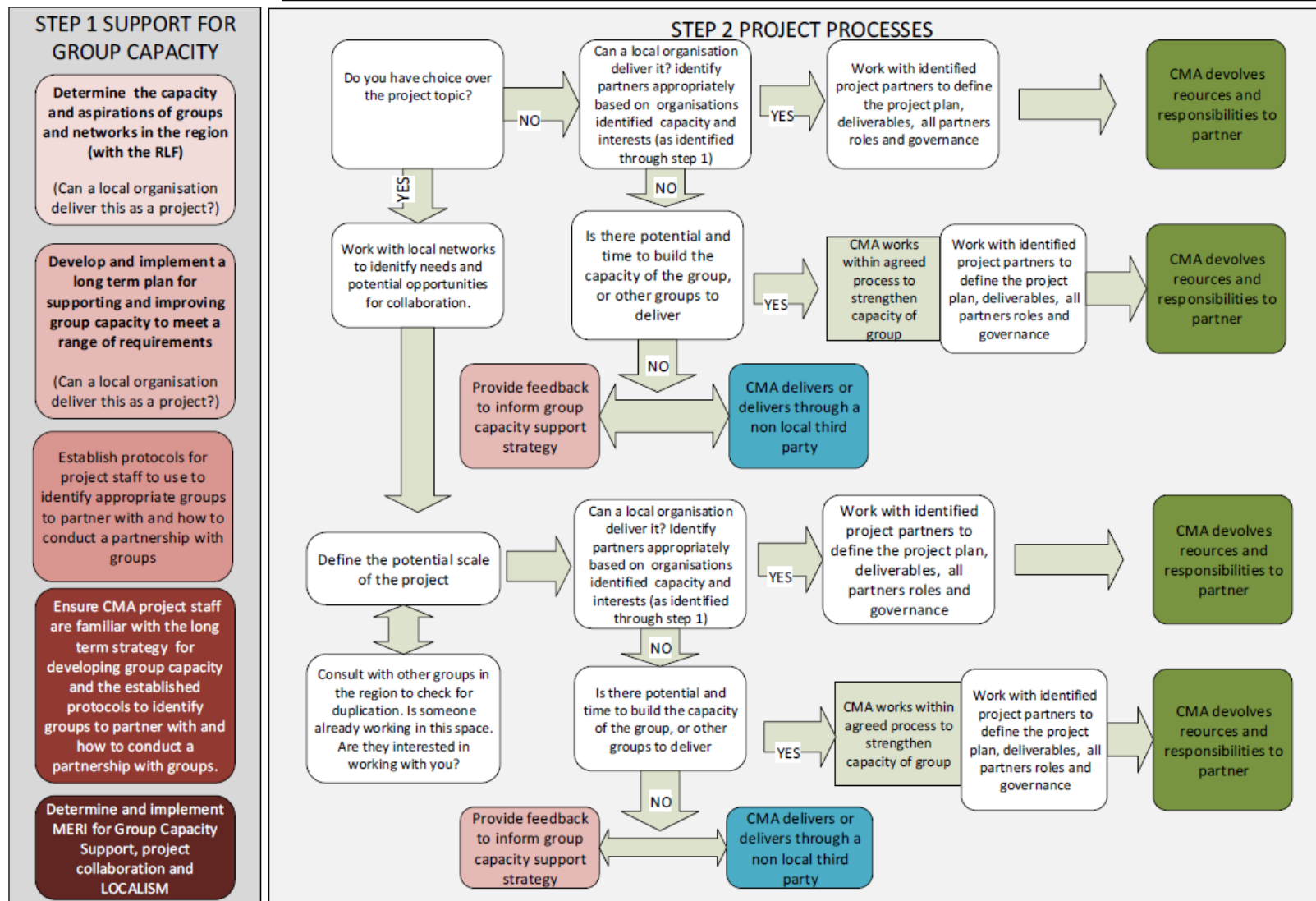
### Step 4: Determining the appropriate lead organisation and partnership roles

The Community and the Regional Body should determine the most appropriate lead organisation and determine partnership roles. The diagram below provides a guide:



### Step 5: MERI

Appropriate project MERI and MERI around the processes of project collaboration and the application of LOCALISM should occur.



## National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014

**Session: 4**      The evolution of regional NRM bodies - where are we heading?

**Presented by:** Pam Green

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. Chairs are to share information about past and current regional NRM arrangements in each jurisdiction and identify future directions.**

### **Process**

2. One Chair from each jurisdiction is invited to make a 5 minute presentation to the workshop on regional NRM arrangements in their jurisdiction. The presentation will cover:
  - a. When were regional bodies established?
  - b. In response to what? Australian Government initiatives, State legislation?
  - c. What functions do the regional bodies have? Where does the regional body revenue come from?
  - d. What significant changes have occurred in the last decade – e.g. changes to functions, ability to raise revenue, etc;
  - e. What are the strategic issues facing your regional bodies – any change in roles, responsibilities, funding etc
3. Following the presentations, table groups will discuss the reports to identify:
  - a. Trends and themes
  - b. How we can support each other (given that regional NRM bodies from different jurisdictions may have extensive experience in functions being considered for regional bodies in other jurisdictions)

### **Background:**

4. The regional NRM sector continues to change and from a national perspective we are seeing greater integration of services by State Governments with regional NRM based NRM processes. And in some jurisdictions we are seeing regional NRM bodies being asked to consider taking on functions that are delivered by regional NRM bodies in other jurisdictions – how can we share knowledge and experience between these regional bodies?
5. The evolution of approaches to NRM in Australia since the 1970s is characterised by:
  - a. Initial focus on single issue programs delivered by a range of State/Territory agencies (1970s)
  - b. The coordinated delivery of integrated catchment management programs focusing on salinity and water quality outcomes (1980s)
  - c. The emergence of volunteer local NRM group action – ‘landcare’ (1980s)
  - d. The first regional NRM organisations established in Victoria in 1994.

- e. Greater Federal government involvement with the initiation of the National Landcare Program (built on the National Soil Conservation Program) to support regional level planning and the development of local landcare and catchment-scale plans to better coordinate the local volunteer group effort (1990s)
  - f. The consolidation of the regional NRM planning arrangements with institutional reform in some States, supported by the 'Natural Heritage Trust', the 'National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality' and more recently 'Caring for our Country'. 56 regional NRM organisations now encompass all of Australia (2000-2010).
6. What we have in common:
- a. Using the right scale for linking between the very small at the local scale, to the very large at state and national level. Their whole-of-catchment capacity enables them to also make links between land, water and biodiversity, to integrate across the many issues and across multiple government agencies and programs
  - b. Applying local knowledge and science to inform planning and action
  - c. Engaging land managers, communities, landcare groups, industries and other organisations; and bringing together production and environment issues
  - d. Leveraging investments from government, industries, and philanthropic sources with in-kind support and volunteerism
  - e. Using a range of mechanisms appropriate to the specific situation to achieve the on-ground change (including incentives and market based instruments).
  - f. Every regional NRM body is governed by a Board. Boards are appointed by state/territory Ministers in South Australia, New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT, and elected or appointed by the community in Western Australia, Tasmania, Queensland and the Northern Territory.
7. Additional functions undertaken by regional NRM organisations, depending upon regional needs and State/Territory requirements include:
- a. Water planning (South Australia)
  - b. River Health and floodplain management (Victoria)
  - c. Native vegetation management and consent (New South Wales)
  - d. Environmental targets for statutory growth management plans (Queensland)
  - e. Sponsorship of agribusiness forums
  - f. Improving environmental performance of small businesses
  - g. Protection of cultural heritage and indigenous engagement
  - h. Delivery of NRM employment programs
  - i. Coastal management and development
  - j. Biosecurity
  - k. Agricultural extension



# National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014

**Session : 5** Report from the Regional Environmental Accounts Steering Committee

**Presented by:** Max Kitchell, Chair, Regional Environmental Accounts Steering Committee and Peter Cosier and Carla Sbrocchi, Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists

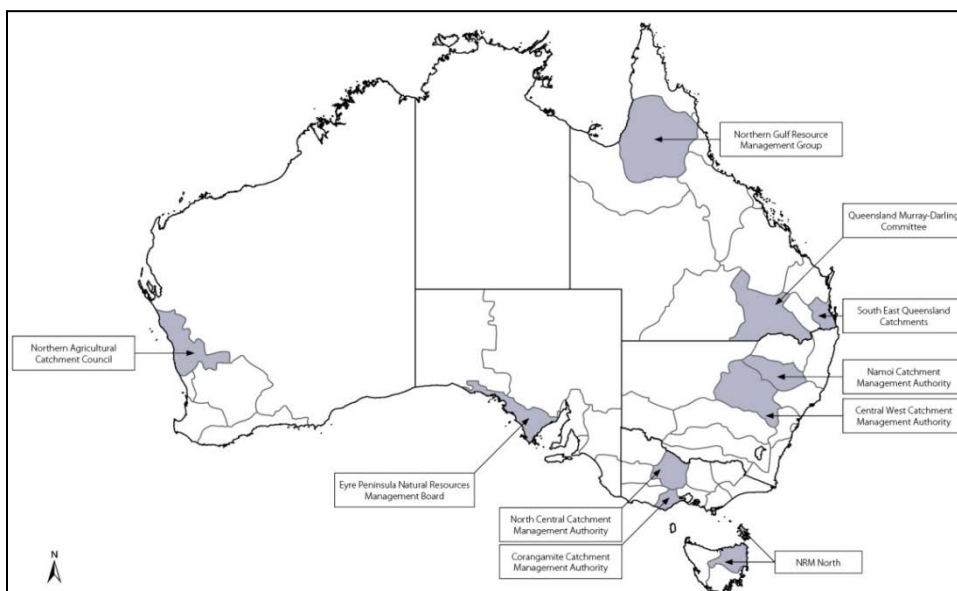
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## Recommendations

- 1. The 2014 NRM Chairs' Forum receives a report from Max Kitchell, Peter Cosier and Carla Sbrocchi on progress with regional environmental accounts.**

### Background

2. One major outcome from the 2010 National NRM Chairs' Forum was a commitment by the Forum to pilot the concept of environmental accounts as outlined in the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists *Accounting for Nature* proposal to measure resource condition change.
3. The National NRM Regions' Working Group established a Regional Environmental Accounts Working Group to progress the Forum's commitment. The Working Group acts the Steering Committee for the project and as of March 2014 its membership comprises: Max Kitchell (Convenor and Chair, NRM South, Tasmania) and comprises Royce Bishop (Reef Catchments), John Bethel (Northern Gulfs) and Heather Baldock (Eyre Peninsula NRM).
4. 10 regions have participated in developing trial accounts and these have assisted with establishing "proof of concept". The pilot regions are shown below.



5. Progress reports have been presented to the 2011, 2012 and 2013 annual NRM Chairs Forum with each Forum recommitting to the project.

### **Progress over 2013/14**

6. The Pilot Phase culminated with a workshop in Canberra in June 2013 where representatives from the Pilot Regions, the Wentworth Group and partner agencies (the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Bureau of Meteorology and the Department of Environment) reviewed the pilot Regional Environmental Accounts.
7. In October 2013, the Wentworth Group released *Guidelines for Regional Environmental Asset Condition Accounting: Quick Guide*. Copies of this guide will be presented to Chairs at the Forum and Peter Cosier and Carla Sbrocchi will brief Chairs on the content.
8. The project has attracted the strong interest of the Hon Greg Hunt, Minister for Environment. This has resulted in a workshop in Canberra in February 2014, with agency partners, to explore implementation options. Max Kitchell and Peter Cosier will brief Chairs on the outcomes from this workshop.

## **National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014**

**Session: 7**      Evaluation of the National NRM Regions' Working Group

**Presented by:** Pam Green and the Executive Officer

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. That Chairs receive the report from the National NRM Regions' Working Group on the activities of the Working Group since 1 July 2012;**

### **Background:**

2. At the 2012 National NRM Chairs Forum, Chairs agreed to increase regional subscriptions (from \$700 per annum up to \$2,000 per annum) for two years (ending at the 30 June 2014) to support the National NRM Regions' Working Group with implementation of the National NRM Chairs' work program.
3. The Chairs also agreed to receive a report of the activities of the National Working Group at the 2014 Forum.
4. The attached report summarises the key achievements along with a description of progress with the work program.
5. The Chair and Executive Officer of the Working Group will be available to answer questions from Chairs.
6. The paper leads into our discussion in Session 9 about the 2014/15 national work program.

## **Activities of the National NRM Regions' Working Group**

**1 July 2012 to 28 February 2014**

### **Background**

The 2004 National NRM Chairs Forum established the National NRM Regions Working Group: “to keep matters moving, a collective of State Chairs should be formed, to meet (say) every 3 months to monitor progress”.

Since its formation the National NRM Regions' Working Group has evolved from a group that focussed primarily on the National Forum and meeting with Ministers, to a group that is active throughout the year, proactively interacting with the Australian Government, developing national positions and making submissions to key policy developments, interacting with the national work program of the CEOs, and interacting at the national level with key groups in landcare, environment, agriculture and local government.

In 2007 the Australian Government, recognising the value of a national representative group of NRM bodies, agreed to support the operation of the working group and provided an initial grant of \$35,000 to support face to face meetings of the working group and the other tasks as agreed.

Australia Government support continued until 2013 when the Government decided to cease direct support.

In 2009 the Chairs Forum agreed to raise funds for additional and specific project work by asking for contributions (\$500 per region) from individual regional bodies. This enabled activities such as the development of the Australia's NRM Governance system report to proceed and support for the regional environmental accounts trial to proceed.

In 2012 the Forum endorsed a proposal to allow the National NRM Regions Working Group to increase regional subscriptions up to \$2,000 per year for two years. The Working Group, following a review of its Work Program and carry forward funds (from previous years and from successful National NRM Knowledge Conferences) agreed to set an annual subscription of \$1,500 for 2012/13 and in 2013 agreed to a similar subscription level for 2013/14.

### **Activities**

The Working Group has adopted a project based approach to setting the annual work program. Each project is allocated a budget against its terms of reference or its endorsed work program. Table 1 summarises the work program since 2012.

### **Key Achievements**

The increased level of resources made available to the National NRM Region's Working Group has enabled members to expand their influence on national NRM policy and program developments. Of particular importance for regional NRM bodies were the following announcements made over the past two years:

- The announcement in May 2012 by the then Labour Government to continue with phase 2 of Caring for our Country with an investment of \$2.2 billion between 2012/13 and 2017/18;
- The establishment and continuation of regional delivery funding for regional NRM bodies worth an estimated \$700 million over the life of Caring for our Country phase 2;
- The endorsement of the current government to maintain the same level of funding under the new National Landcare Program.

Significant progress has been made with initiatives designed to **build the capacity of the regional NRM sector**, of note are:

- The regional NRM Organisational Performance Excellence project and the 85% uptake of OPE reviews by regional NRM bodies;
- The completion of the Regional Environmental Accounts trial and the on-going work with the Australian Government in moving to the next stage;
- The recognition of the role regional NRM plans can play in climate change and the funding of regions to update their NRM Plans to take account of climate challenges.

We have also made strong progress in identifying and **promoting leading practice in the services we deliver**:

- Discussion/Position papers have been developed for NRM planning and sustainable agriculture;
- A database of regional NRM Indigenous Land Management activities is being compiled to share information and lift the effectiveness of regional programs;
- A Localism Position paper has been developed that sets a framework for community engagement efforts and this is being supported by work on measuring community engagement outcomes.

Building **partnerships with key stakeholders** is core business for regional NRM and this has been reflected at the regional level by:

- Development of the Landcare Statement of Common Purpose;
- Establishing the National NRM Roundtable;
- Participation in the National Farmers Federation's Sustainable Agriculture Roundtable

Developing an **Australia-wide NRM communication and information sharing network**. The regional NRM sector is unique in its national coverage. The National NRM Regions' Working Group supports:

- Annual Forums of regional NRM body Chairs
- Biannual Forums of CEOs/General Managers
- Biennial National NRM Knowledge Conference
- Specific issue working groups

## **Resources to support the National NRM Region's Working Group**

Following the 2012 National NRM Chairs Forum decision to increase regional subscriptions the National Working Group identified a 2012/13 work program with an annual budget of \$180,000.



In May 2013 the working group adopted a similar budget for its 2013/14 work program. The table below summarises the sources of funds and the actual expenditure:

|   | <b>2012/13</b>   | <b>2013/14</b>   |
|---|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Revenue</b>                            |                  |                  |
| Carry Forward                             | \$49,500         | \$38,073         |
| Transfer from Knowledge Conference budget | \$0              | \$59,886         |
| Australian Government Grant               | \$48,000         | \$0              |
| Regional Subscriptions                    | \$82,500         | \$81,000         |
| <b>Total</b>                              | <b>\$180,000</b> | <b>\$180,000</b> |
| Expenditure                               | \$141,027        |                  |
| <b>Balance</b>                            | <b>\$38,073</b>  |                  |

Between July 2012 and 28 February 2014, 43% of these funds have covered executive support and 57% operational expenses (member travel, teleconference charges and consultancies).

In addition to these resources the Working Group is able to draw on the substantial (and unpaid) time of its members. It is difficult to cost this contribution in dollar terms, but on an annual basis member's participation in working group meetings and various briefings/delegations is estimated to be over 75 days.

| Project   | Purpose   | Comment   | Outcomes   | 2012/13 Actual | 2013/14 Budget |
|---|---|---|--|----------------|----------------|
| National NRM Regions Working Group Operations Lead: Pam Green | The primary purpose of the National NRM Regions' Working Group is to facilitate communication between Australia's 54 NRM Regional Bodies and the Australian Government on matters relating to strategic policy directions for NRM. In discharging this responsibility the Working Group oversees the agenda development for the National Chairs' Forum and supports initiatives that increase communication between Regional NRM bodies | The Working Group meets mainly by teleconference, but has two in-person meetings per year. In 2012/13 there were 9 teleconferences and 2 in person meetings. Between July 2013 and February 2014 the working group held 7 teleconferences and 1 in person meeting | <p>The Working Group oversees the work program outlined below as well as maintaining regular contact with senior Australian Government officials, Ministers and their staff. Ministerial meetings include meeting with Minister Burke and Minister Ludwig over 2012/13 covering the new Caring for Our Country Program and Landcare and meetings with Ministers Hunts and Joyce in 2013 to brief them on the role of regional NRM bodies.</p> <p>The Working also developed a "Briefing Pack" for use by regional NRM Chairs in briefing parliamentary candidates for the 2013 Federal elections.</p> <p>Officials attend the monthly teleconferences and senior officials the in-person meetings in Canberra.</p> | \$39,458       | \$57,300       |
| National NRM Chairs Forum                                     | To cover expenses associated with planning the annual Chairs' Forum   | To reduce the number of projects the working group agreed to combine this with operational project above  | Forums have been held in Manduar, WA, in March 2013 and Launceston (Tas), March 2014   | \$5,438        |                |
| National CEOs Working Group Lead: Andrew Drysdale             | The National CEOs Working Group supports the National NRM regions Working Group by providing a fast   | Funding for the National CEOs Forum prior to 2012 was covered by a \$200 per region subscription,   | Forum meetings have been held in Canberra (November 2012), Cairns (May 2013), Canberra (November 2013)   | \$23,545       | \$14,000       |

| Project                                    | Purpose  | Comment   | Outcomes  | 2012/13 Actual | 2013/14 Budget |
|--|--|---|---|----------------|----------------|
|  | <p>and coordinated conduit for information and advice between regional NRM bodies, the Australian, State and Territory Governments.</p> <p>The Working Group Convenes twice yearly National General Manager/Executive Officers' forums.</p>  | this was incorporated into the National NRM Regions Working Group subscription  |   |                |                |
| Regional NRM Planning<br>Lead: James McKee | <p>The NRM Planning Working Group was established following the 2012 announcement that all regional bodies would be asked to adapt their NRM plans to guide the Carbon Farming Initiative and climate change impacts. As well as providing a point of contact for consultation with the Australian Government the working group was asked to develop a discussion paper outlining the role and contribution of regional NRM plans.</p> | <p>The National Working Group reduced funding for this project for 2013/14 because the initial design work had been completed and the NRM Planning discussion paper was almost finalised.</p> | <p>The Working provided input to the design of the Stream 1 (NRM Planning activities) over 2012.</p> <p>A discussion paper designed to promote greater understanding of the role of regional NRM planning was drafted over 2012/13 and will be presented to the 2014 National NRM Chairs Forum for endorsement.</p> | \$16,860       | \$3,000        |
| NRM Plan Target Mapping                    |  | <p>The National Working Group asked the NRM Planning Group to manage a consultancy to undertake a desktop review of the</p>   | <p>In October 2012 GHD reported on the priority issues identified by all regional NRM plans.</p>  | \$10,000       |                |

| Project  | Purpose  | Comment  | Outcomes   | 2012/13 Actual | 2013/14 Budget |
|--|--|--|--|----------------|----------------|
|  |  | priorities of regional NRM plans as an input to the 2012 Caring for our Country review.  |  |                |                |
| Regional Environmental Accounts Lead: Max Kitchell | <p>In 2010 the National NRM Chairs' Forum committed to pilot the concept of environmental accounts as outlined in the Wentworth Group of Concerned Scientists <i>Accounting for Nature</i> proposal to measure resource condition change. Chairs' concern, strongly expressed to the Ministerial Council in Darwin, was that Australia does not have a creditable and systematic approach to measuring change in natural resource condition and that NRM regions would invest in trying to redress this.</p> <p>The National NRM Regions' Working Group established a Regional Environmental Accounts Steering Committee to guide the project and 10 regions volunteered to participate in the trials.</p> | <p>The Wentworth Group has provided resources to coordinate the trial and to review (accredit) the indicators nominated by regions. They have provided progress reports to the 2012 and 2013 National NRM Chairs Forums.</p> <p>The Regional Environmental Accounts Steering Committee, comprising several regional NRM body Chairs is convened by the National Working Group and has run workshops in 2012 and 2013 to consider progress with the trials.</p> | The regional trial, involving 10 regional NRM bodies was completed in 2012 and the "proof of concept" established. Minister Hunt has been briefed on the outcome of the trial and the Australian Government is currently considering a proposal for a national roll-out of environmental accounts. | \$11,455       | \$9,000        |
| Carbon Lead: Mike Berwick                          | The national NRM Carbon Working Group has been active since 2008   | The National NRM Regions Working Group, in September   | In 2010 the Working Group was instrumental in influencing the  | \$1,875        | \$9,000        |

| Project   | Purpose  | Comment   | Outcomes  | 2012/13 Actual | 2013/14 Budget |
|---|--|---|---|----------------|----------------|
|   | with an initial focus on the emerging carbon market and opportunities for the market to support regional NRM.  | 2013, decided to postpone the reestablishment of the working group until after the 2013 elections and to consider its future role in the light of the election outcomes.  | development of the Government's Carbon Farming Initiative and in 2012 focussed efforts on options for regional NRM body participation in the carbon market.<br><br>These efforts resulted in two projects being addressed separately by the National NRM Regions' Working Group – NRM Planning and the development of a Unit Trust concept for supporting commercial partnerships with the private sector that could result in funding for regional NRM.<br><br>In February 2013 the National Working Group developed a submission to the Governments Emissions Reduction Fund Green Paper. |                |                |
| Performance Excellence Lead:<br>Andrew Drysdale | At the 2011 National NRM Chairs Forum, the Chairs acknowledged the value of performance excellence reviews of regional NRM bodies and agreed to support the adoption of this approach as a means of improving capability of regional NRM bodies and the NRM sector as a whole. Chairs set a target of 85% of the regional NRM bodies undertaking reviews by June | Following the Chairs support the Australian Government agreed to invest \$190,000 to support the roll-out of reviews. This supported the establishment of a panel of reviewers and the development of both the review and continuous improvement processes.<br><br>Chairs received a detailed report on the project at the 2013 Forum | By June 85% of regional NRM bodies had undertaken performance excellence reviews.<br><br>Following the resolution at the 2011 National NRM Chairs Forum, a process for the establishment of a small panel of lead reviewers was initiated. A comprehensive moderation process is in place to ensure a high level of consistency is maintained across review   | \$5,253        | \$30,000       |

| Project                                      | Purpose  | Comment  | Outcomes   | 2012/13 Actual | 2013/14 Budget |
|--|--|--|--|----------------|----------------|
|  | 2013.  | and agreed that the National Working Group should give priority to follow-up reviews.  | teams.<br><br>Continuous improvement across the sector has been promoted through the involvement of CEOs and senior managers from regional NRM bodies, as co-reviewers (a total of 30 CEOs and senior managers from all states have participated in this role for at least one review) and through the holding of a CEOs workshop in May 2013 to promote leading practices identified through the reviews. |                |                |
| National NRM Awareness Lead: Andrew Drysdale | A national network of regional body communications officers coordinates an annual NRM awareness project "There's a lot happening in our backyard". | Regional NRM bodies are invited to participate through local media releases highlighting their work. In 2012/13 the Australian Government supported this project and while a small allocation was made from the National Working Group budget it was not required.<br><br>In 2013/14 the National Working Group agreed that the project should be incorporated into the National NRM Knowledge Conference. | Successful campaigns were under taken in October 2013 and June 2012.   | \$0            | \$0            |

| Project  | Purpose  | Comment   | Outcomes  | 2012/13 Actual | 2013/14 Budget |
|--|--|---|---|----------------|----------------|
| Annual NLN Landcare Forum Lead: Sharon Starick | To promote the importance of landcare and other volunteer groups to the delivery of regional NRM programs.   | The National Working Group initiated discussions with national landcare organisations in 2010 to explore opportunities for supporting landcare.   | A national Statement of Common Purpose was developed with the National Landcare Network (NLN) in 2011 and endorsed at the 2012 National Forum. Two annual meetings have been held with the NLN (August 2012 and October 2013) to review progress.               | \$3,596        | \$4,000        |
| National NRM Roundtable Lead: Andrew Drysdale  | The National Working Group, in partnership with the National Farmers Federation, the Australian Conservation Foundation, the World Wildlife Fund and the Australian Local Government Association, established the roundtable in 2010 to discuss and share perspectives on national NRM policy development. | <p>The Roundtable is an informal meeting to allow participating organisations to share information about their policies and programs, to identify areas where we have common interests and to develop a shared understanding of these common interests.</p> <p>Following a decision from the NFF in 2012 to establish its own roundtable, the National Working Group is reviewing future directions for the NRM Roundtable.</p> | <p>Meetings were held on 2012 to share information on the Government's carbon policies and in 2013 on the new directions for Caring for our Country phase 2.</p> <p>Members of the Roundtable agreed to co-host the 2012 National NRM Knowledge Conference.</p> | \$3,366        | \$5,000        |
| Sustainable Agriculture Lead: Sharon Starick   | The Sustainable Agriculture Working Group monitors national agriculture and food policies to identify and promote sustainable agriculture options that are consistent with regional NRM objectives.  | The Group was established in August 2013 with the initial aim of developing a position statement for consideration by the 2014 National Chairs Forum.   | Draft position statement presented to the 2014 National NRM Chairs Forum.   | \$0            | \$9,000        |



| Project   | Purpose   | Comment  | Outcomes   | 2012/13 Actual | 2013/14 Budget |
|---|---|--|--|----------------|----------------|
| National Extension Framework Australia                            | National Extension Framework Australia is a coalition of industry and government extension providers looking at ways of improving the delivery of extension in Australia.   | The CEOs maintained a watching brief and regional NRM body staff contributed to a discussion paper on the role of Extension in NRM. This Sustainable Agriculture Working Group has taken over responsibility for this task.  | Discussion paper on the role of Extension in NRM presented to the 202 National CEOs Forum.   | \$641          |                |
| Community Engagement Statement                                    | The National Working Group identified the need for regional NRM bodies to share experiences and demonstrate outcomes from their community education effort.   | The CEOs Forum is leading work in this area and in addition to sharing information about different approaches, a workshop will be held at the Knowledge Conference to explore how outcomes can be measured.  |  | \$0            | \$4,000        |
| Regional NRM bodies Indigenous Land Management Lead: Kate Andrews | An Indigenous Land Management Working Group was established in 2012 to support Indigenous participation in NRM and regional body processes by providing guidelines for best practice indigenous engagement and sharing good examples between regions. | The working group's initial focus has been identification of best practice projects These will be considered at the Indigenous Land and Sea Management Workshop at the March 2014 National NRM Knowledge Conference where processes will be developed for the on-going sharing of information. | Progress report presented to the 2013 National NRM Chairs Forum.   | \$1,177        | \$9,000        |
| Policy and Program Development                                    | Resources are allocated to enable the National NRM Regions Working Group to contribute to NRM and related policy and program development initiatives.   |  | Submissions to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The draft National Food Plan (2012)</li> <li>The National Landcare Program design team (December 2013)</li> </ul> | \$3,613        | \$13,200       |

| Project   | Purpose  | Comment   | Outcomes  | 2012/13 Actual   | 2013/14 Budget   |
|---|--|---|---|------------------|------------------|
| Caring for our Country Stage 2 consultation Lead Sharon Starick | A consultation process was announced by the Australian Government in 2011 on the next stage of the Caring for our Country program. This was factored into the 2012/13 work program | Submission prepared and lodged the Australian Government. Ministers and senior officers were briefed. | The Government announced a continuation of the Caring for our Country program in the May 2012 budget. | \$1,500          |                  |
| <b>Total</b>  |  |   |   | <b>\$127,777</b> | <b>\$166,500</b> |
| <b>Program management (7.5%)</b>                                |  |   |   | <b>\$13,500</b>  | <b>\$13,500</b>  |
| <b>Grand Total</b>  |  |   |   | <b>\$140,886</b> | <b>\$180,000</b> |

## National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014

**Session: 8 a)** Regional NRM Planning in Australia

**Presented by:** James McKee, convenor NRM Planning Working Group

### Recommendation

1. The National NRM Chairs Forum is asked to:
  - a. Receive the report *Regional NRM Planning in Australia* prepared by the NRM Planning Working Group; and
  - b. Request advice from the National CEOs Forum on the recommendations in that report.

### Background

2. In June 2012 the National NRM Regions' Working Group established the NRM Planning Working Group to support regional NRM interaction with the Australian Government's Regional NRM planning for Climate Change Fund (Stream 1) and further develop regional NRM planning capacity across Australia. Specifically the NRM Planning Working Group was asked to:
  - a. Support and influence a national approach to NRM planning.
  - b. Collaborate and share information between regional NRM organisations to continually improve practice, performance and outcomes in NRM planning.
  - c. Contribute to the development of State, Territory and Australian Government's NRM planning activities and advise the National NRM Regions' Working Group and the Australian Government on NRM planning policy implications.
  - d. Act as a liaison and "sounding board" with Australian Government NRM planning programs to assist in providing regional perspectives to such programs and activities.
3. In response to the reference of "Collaborate and share information between regional NRM organisations to continually improve practice, performance and outcomes in NRM planning" the working group has overseen the preparation of the attached report. Dr Sarah Ryan, former Chair of the ACT NRM Council and lead author of the 2010 Chairs' Forum report *Australia's NRM Governance System*, has been the lead author for this report.
4. Regional NRM planning is one activity common to all Australia's regional NRM bodies. While planning guidelines and accreditation processes vary between jurisdictions, all share the goal of an integrated regional NRM plan that reflects the regional community's knowledge and values and relates these to Australian Government and State/Territory governments' policies.
5. There is potential for regional NRM planning to assist with meeting a wider range of government policy initiatives. Regional NRM planning for climate change is one Australian Government initiative that recognized the contribution our plans can make

and regional NRM bodies have been funded to update their plans to take account of climate change mitigation and adaptation impacts on the landscape.

6. The National NRM Regions' Working Group, in its submission to the former government's National Food Plan discussion paper, drew attention to the potential for regional NRM plans to contribute to a sustainable food industry.
7. The attached paper serves two purposes: it seeks to explain what regional NRM planning is; and it identifies potential actions to facilitate continuous improvement of our regional planning effort.

#### **Comment**

8. The report proposes the following actions to address the challenges it identified:
  - a. Encourage the governments that have not made explicit statements about the roles and objectives of regional NRM organisations and regional NRM plans to do so; and encourage performance excellence in all regional NRM organisations through a mix of clear expectations from governments and communities, independent assessment, incentives and support. In terms of independent assessment, we believe that an independent national NRM Council could play a valuable role. It is clear that in states like NSW and Victoria where independent government-appointed bodies provide advice on NRM matters to state governments, roles and expectations are clearer, and cycles of improvement in regional NRM plans are nurtured. One option would be to invest this role at a national level with the National Water Commission.
    - i. ACTION: National and state groups of regional NRM organisations promote the recommendation and governments consider these goals and these or other options for fulfilling them***
  - b. Develop a national plan for building the planning capacity of regional NRM organisations. This would pick up a number of areas flagged in the report as needing improvement, including leadership, planning community and Indigenous engagement, access to technical knowledge and research relationships, better peer-to-peer sharing of planning lessons learnt and planning for novel ecosystems induced by climate and further land use change.
    - i. ACTION: Regional NRM organisations collectively, supported by governments, to develop a national plan***
  - c. Develop relationships at the state and national level with peak local government bodies, Regional Development Australia bodies and with the Planning Institute of Australia, and work towards jointly sponsoring a national forum on regional planning encompassing all regional planning perspectives.
    - i. ACTION: National NRM Regions Working Group to lead***
  - d. Assess the outcomes of the regional environmental accounting trial for its linkages to the improvement of regional NRM planning, and continue to lobby governments for better coordination of resource condition monitoring.
    - i. ACTION: National NRM Regions Working Group to lead***

## **National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014**

**Session: 8 b)** Sustainable Agriculture Working Group

**Presented by:** Sharon Starick, Natural Resources South Australia Murray Darling Basin

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. To receive this report from the National NRM Regions' Sustainable Agriculture working group;**
- 2. To consider progress with the development of the Sustainable Agriculture Position Paper.**

### **Background:**

3. The 2013 National NRM Chairs' Forum identified Sustainable Agriculture as a priority issue for 2013/14. The National Working Group agreed to establish a Sustainable Agriculture Working Group and June 2013 called for expressions of interest (EOIs) from regional NRM bodies.
4. Following receipt of those EOIs, the National Working Group established a Sustainable Agriculture Working Group comprising :
  - a. Sharon Starick, Natural Resources South Australia Murray Darling Basin
  - b. Geoff Penton, Queensland Murray Darling Basin
  - c. Ken Moore , NRM South (Tasmania)
  - d. Jill Wilson, NACC (Western Australia)
  - e. Kay Spierings, Port Phillip and Westernport (Victoria)
5. The initial task for the working group was to develop a Sustainable Agriculture Position Paper. A draft paper is attached. Its purpose is to draw attention to the contribution made by regional NRM bodies to agriculture and to identify future challenges.
6. The draft was presented to the National NRM Region's CEOs Forum in November 2013.
7. It was also presented to the Sustainable Agriculture Workshop at the National NRM Knowledge Conference and a report from that workshop will be provided to the Chairs Forum.
8. Chairs feedback is sought on the scope of the position paper and the strategic directions proposed for each issue.

# NATIONAL NRM REGIONS' SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE POSITION PAPER

THIS DRAFT 11 MARCH 2014

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## SUMMARY

A sustainable resource base is fundamental to the future of our agriculture industries and regional communities. Regional NRM bodies plan, coordinate and deliver programs in partnership with farmers and other land managers to support a sustainable resource base. Our approach balances, economic, environmental and social outcomes.

This position paper draws attention to our work in supporting farmers and identifies some of the challenges we face and proposes broad strategies for guiding our work.

## INTRODUCTION

The Chairs of Australia's 55 regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations, at their 2013 annual Forum, gave priority to developing a Statement about the contribution regional NRM organisations make to the sustainability of agriculture in Australia. This Statement will serve several purposes:

- It would provide a framework for how regional NRM organisations can improve their sustainable agriculture efforts;
- It would promote to Governments and other stakeholders the current and potential contribution regional NRM organisations can make to the sustainability and long term profitability of agriculture;
- Natural resource management is often equated with conservation despite many natural resource management projects focusing on sustainable agriculture. There is an opportunity to reposition natural resource management to focus more on production systems and leverage greater landholder participation.

Australia has 54 regional NRM organisations that cover all of Australia. While they are established through a variety of means (some are statutory authorities of state governments, others are non-government organisations) they have in common:

- A shared objective of ensuring a sustainable future for Australia's natural resources so that current and future generations can benefit from those resources;
- They are recognised by the Australian Government as key stakeholders in the delivery of their natural resource management programs;
- A commitment to representing the views of the regional communities in the design and implementation of government investments in natural resource management. This is achieved through the preparation of regional NRM plans that align the efforts of the different levels of government with the values of regional communities;
- An understanding that profitable farming enterprises are essential – making money from farming creates the surplus for farmers to invest in sustainability and restoration efforts, by not making money farmers cannot do this and there is an increase the risk of overuse of those resources.

Engaging the farming community is central to our approach. Engagement means we recognise the need to:

- Promote awareness of the sustainability challenges;
- Value the input of farmers and their local knowledge into the solutions to meet those challenges;
- Communicate effectively to achieve real "buy-in";
- Work collaboratively with farmers to support their efforts in improving the condition of their natural resources.

## THE CENTRAL ROLE OF AGRICULTURE TO NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Agriculture occupies 61% of Australia's land mass. Some 134,000 farm businesses employing 307,000 people, manage that land<sup>i</sup>.

The ABS estimates that approximately 94% of farmers actively undertake natural resource management on their farms and 36% of farmers have set aside 9.2 million hectares for conservation/protection purposes<sup>ii</sup>.

This activity requires a significant investment by farmers. In 2008 this was estimated to be \$3.5 billion which represents \$2.60 for every government dollar invested.

In this context we see the vision for a sustainable agriculture sector as:

***Australian farms can produce food and fibre indefinitely, without causing severe or irreversible damage to the resource base and the health of ecosystems***

## A PARTNERSHIP ACROSS ALL LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT

State and Territory governments are major providers of agricultural services and are supported by Australian Government when agriculture overlaps with Australian government responsibilities. Regional NRM bodies play a critical role in aligning the efforts of all levels of government and the farming community in achieving sustainable agriculture outcomes.

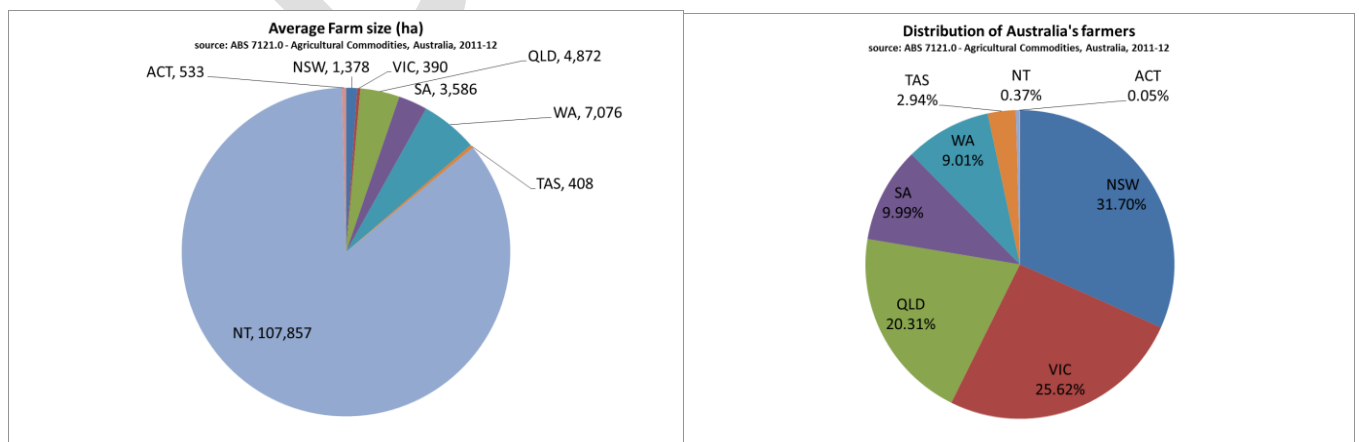
## UNDERSTANDING THE FARMING COMMUNITY

Australian farm businesses are concentrated in the eastern States but they tend to be smaller farms with the larger holdings being located in the Northern Territory, WA, Queensland and South Australia.

The beef cattle farming industry remained the largest sector in 2011-12, comprising almost one third of businesses classified to the agriculture industry. 11% of farm businesses were engaged in grain growing, 10% in sheep farming and 10% grain-sheep or grain-beef farming.

The number of farmers in Australia has declined over time falling from 246,000 in 1996-97 to 192,600 in 2010-11<sup>iii</sup>

The median age of farmers in 2010-11 was 53, with 23% being over 65. Only 2% of farmers were in the 15 to 24 age range.



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## STRATEGIES FOR REGIONAL NRM

Sustaining our agriculture industries requires a focus on building the capacity of farmers and this in turn requires encouragement for the next generation of farmers. The issue is recognised by the NFF and other agriculture groups. Regional NRM organisations can assist the efforts of these groups by contributing to:

- Strategic planning based on the integration of agriculture and natural resource management and our understanding of land use change and agriculture development within regions;
- Training and knowledge transfer;
- Leadership;
- The promotion of agriculture as an important and attractive industry for farmers and their families.

## INFLUENCING AND EXTENDING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

Innovation drives both the productivity and sustainability of our natural resources. ABS estimates that Australian governments spent \$570 million on agriculture R&D in 2011/12 (an increase from \$545 million in 2008/09)<sup>iv</sup>. A common challenge for agriculture R&D researchers is extending the findings to their research to the farming community and this is enhanced if the research is relevant to the farming business. Regional NRM organisations are well placed to assist with identifying research needs and to extending research findings to farmers.

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## STRATEGIES FOR REGIONAL NRM

- Coordinated and systematic knowledge brokering to ensure access to all available innovative research and development that reduces the need to “reinvent the wheel”;
- Develop relationships with research institutions;
- Support innovation that is regionally relevant;
- Support the expansion of GIS into business planning applications;
- Encourage incorporating community-based research and extension into formal research and development programs.

### DEALING WITH CLIMATE VARIABILITY

#### BACKGROUND

Climate variability impacts on agriculture are well documented<sup>v</sup> and relate to changes in water availability, water quality, temperatures and frequency of severe weather events. These will have a negative impact on production. In some cases additional carbon dioxide will enhance plant growth.

Understanding the regional impacts and developing direct action adaptation strategies will be crucial to the sustainability of agriculture.

#### WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

Under the NRM Planning for Climate Change program all regional NRM organisations are now preparing adaptation plans based on the best available science. These plans will take a medium to long-term perspective and assist regions in developing strategies to deal with climate variability.

#### STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Build the capacity of land owners to understand the importance of resilient natural resource management to the future of their farm businesses;
- Through the implementation of regional NRM plans inform and influence local government and their land use planning about the regional adaptation response to climate variability;
- Promote the adoption of management practices such as increased ground cover (to reduce evapotranspiration, erosion, land degradation and improve soil biota) and techniques to improve water infiltration and retention;
- Support R&D into soil carbon sequestration and new crop varieties that can adapt to climate change (e.g. frost tolerant, hotter temperatures, drier winter, increased drought)

#### REGIONAL NRM CASE STUDY

##### ***Planning for multiple use landscapes on farms, Eyre Peninsula South Australia***

***"We knew some areas were a problem on our farm but we were not really sure what to do."  
"We are now planning towards addressing these problem areas. We now have the momentum to move forward."***

Natural Resources Eyre Peninsula, working with farmers, industry groups and other experts, is building farmer's capacity to recognise and plan for future opportunities in the context of climate change. The project developed tools and processes to identify and plan multi use landscapes to deliver integrated climate change adaptation options.

Working with 10 farmers on the Eyre Peninsula we developed practical plans to take advantage of opportunities and manage risks associated with initiatives around carbon products, biodiversity values and food production.

- 10 farm businesses representing 21,800 hectares of land on Eyre Peninsula were engaged in this project and were brought together into a single group over four workshops during the two year period.

- Next generation farm plans and property plans were developed by all farm businesses and were based on a risk analysis of these properties, where each farmer identified key areas for improved productivity and improvement in their native vegetation management.
- A farm carbon story benchmark was completed with each of the farm business. The benchmarking highlighted the significant carbon stores that the farmers are custodians of with an average of nearly 190,000 t CO<sub>2</sub> equiv. On average only 360 t CO<sub>2</sub>equiv are emitted annually. All but two properties come out on the positive side of tonnes per Co2e, sequestering more than they omitted. This carbon story tool enabled the landholders to calculate and test future management scenarios.
- To further add value to this next generation property planning process, five of the ten properties undertook a more in-depth assessment and analysis of their biodiversity areas and assessed the value of their native plant species, the condition of the native vegetation and biodiversity present, revegetation options within a working farm environment and opportunities for improving stock grazing management of remnant vegetation.

## WATER VARIABILITY AND COMPETITION FOR WATER

### BACKGROUND

The agriculture sector is Australia's largest user of water – the amount varies depending on availability but can range from 50% to 65% of water consumed. Most agriculture water is used in the irrigation of crops and pastures.

The Millennium Drought and the development of the Basin Plan have highlighted the finite and variable nature of the water resource and the competition for use of that water between consumptive, environmental and agricultural purposes.

In parts of Australia, water remains available for development and there are lessons to be learnt from existing irrigation areas on the sustainable development of agriculture.

### WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

Regional NRM organisations role in relation to agriculture water use varies around Australia:

- In some States, regional NRM organisations have statutory responsibilities for either water resource planning or the planning and delivery of river health programs;
- In irrigation areas they provide incentives and advice on water use efficiency to both increase profitability and reduce of-site impacts;
- In some regions they play a key role in the delivery of drought assistance;
- They deliver technical advice relating to salinity and water quality management.

### STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Facilitate industry research and development aimed at improving saline irrigation;
- Information sharing of innovations and new technologies using demonstration sites (harvesting, water use efficiency & treatment options)

### ***Sustainable Irrigation in the Goulburn Broken***

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority in Victoria is leading a consortium on behalf of the region's irrigators to achieve farm water savings through improved farm irrigation systems. Between 2010 and 2014:

- \$103 million has been invested by Australian and State Governments;
- 22,600 hectares of irrigation farms have been modified;
- Which has achieved savings of 38.6 Gigalitres of water, these savings were shared between the irrigators and;
- 21.4 Gigalitres was returned to the Environment ;
- 4.5 Gigalitres to the regional water authority

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## SOILS

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### BACKGROUND

Soils underpin Australia's food and fibre production. Soils provide essential ecosystem services sustaining terrestrial biodiversity, filtering contaminants, absorbing organic waste etc. Australia's landscapes have produced a vast range of soils, some millions of years old.

Poor soil management leads to erosion, soil acidity, nutrient and microbial decline and soil salinity. By improving soil carbon there is the potential to both lift productivity and increase the sequestration of carbon to help mitigate climate change.

But our understanding of soils across the varied landscape and under different land uses is limited. A regional approach, based on direct engagement of farmers, is required.

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### WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

Regional NRM organisations promote best management practices for different industries to promote soil health. These include developing property management plans based on soil capacity and needs, retaining vegetation cover through minimum tillage practices in cropping areas to understanding sustainable stocking rates in grazing areas.

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### STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Benchmarking the health of soils within regions;
- Understanding and promoting soil carbon to address climate change adaptation and improve soil health;
- Maintaining investment in salinity and sodicity technical advice to farmers;
- Promoting best management of acid soils and examine the costs and benefits of different approaches – these continue to be critical risks to large areas of farming;
- Understanding soil microbial management (this is an area of biodiversity where there is little knowledge, but growing importance for system resilience);

- Continue to develop Property Management Planning as an important tool for sustainable agriculture through research into rapid assessment techniques to allow farmers to better match land use to land capability.

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## REGIONAL NRM CASE STUDY

### ***Enhancing soils in the Upper Manning Catchment of Hunter Local Land Services region***

Sandy Higgins, who recently shared his experience with Upper Hunter farmers on a tour of his beef cattle enterprise, realised a 1% increase in soil carbon over the three years he was involved in the project. Strategic grazing delivered a remarkable 250% increase in the volume of beef produced per hectare compared to his control site.

Strategic grazing is the key to minimising erosion and improving soil carbon levels by maintaining groundcover and plant litter, which in turn boosts soil biota activity. The landscape benefits from improved rainfall infiltration, soil water holding capacity and overall fertility. From there nutritionally dense pasture delivers healthier and more productive stock and the landscape becomes more resilient to drought.

Strategic grazing is delivered through planning processes, provision of planned internal fencing, strategically placed stock water supplies and stock shade, application of compost teas and use of perennial pasture species.

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## MANAGEMENT OF INPUTS

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### BACKGROUND

Agriculture productivity requires farmers to ensure sufficient nutrients are available and pests are controlled. For many farmers this requires the introduction of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides. This has supported the growth in agricultural productivity over the past 30 years.

But the use of inputs is not without risks:

- There are potential off site impacts with those inputs entering surface and groundwater systems;
- Herbicide resistance is a growing challenge for agriculture and has implications for minimum tillage practices recommended to maintain soil health;
- There is a growing concern about the long term impacts on soil biology from inputs.

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### WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

Several multi-regional projects are being implemented across Australia to reduce the impact of farm chemicals on important environmental assets, notably Reef Recuse in Queensland and the Gippsland Lakes in Victoria.

Within individual regions, regional NRM organisations are supporting programs that limit the impact of farm chemicals on regional assets.



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## STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Ensure that local, regional and state-wide programs are delivered in an integrated manner to better manage unintended impacts of programs such as no-till and integrated pest management;
- Explore the use of market signals to reward farmers for managing impacts of their production systems on environmental assets;
- Understanding the efficacy of farm inputs e.g. increase in price of fertiliser particularly Phosphorus (P) and decrease of effectiveness of chemicals. A cropping example is Group B herbicide resistance resulting in a need for more expensive chemicals to control weeds.

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## REGIONAL NRM CASE STUDY

### ***Queensland's regional NRM Groups working to protect the Reef***

The objective of the Reef Rescue Program is to improve water quality in the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by increasing the adoption of land management practices that reduce the run-off of nutrients, pesticides and sediments from agricultural land. The programme uptake has exceeded expectations. High levels of involvement have seen a total of 946 landholders involved in 1,286 projects to adopt sustainable agricultural management practices. This includes 718 cane farmers, 204 graziers and 20 horticulturalists.

Benchmark on-ground improvements as a result of projects implemented include:

- Reduction of 4480 tonnes per annum in sediment loss from farms
- Reduction of over 600 tonnes per annum of nitrogen loss from farms
- Reduction of just over 1000 kilograms per annum of herbicide loss from farms

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## GROWTH IN GLOBAL DEMAND FOR FOOD

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### BACKGROUND

“By 2050 world food consumption is expected to be 75 per cent higher than in 2007, and almost half of this increased demand will come from China alone. Australia will never be able to put food on every table in Asia, but an expanding Asian middle class offers an important opportunity for Australia’s food industry”<sup>vi</sup>.

The growing world demand for food offers Australian farmers a unique opportunity to increase production and profitability, but this has to be balanced with an understanding of the capacity of landscapes to sustainably produce that food.

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### WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

Working with governments to ensure sustainable expansion and intensification of key industries (for example irrigation development in North West Tasmania and aquaculture, dairy and horticulture elsewhere);

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### STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- There is a need to ensure appropriate balance of NRM resources to support rapid expansion of industries and this requires a baseline and proactively monitor change;

- Long term planning (as opposed to immediate on ground works) is legitimate and necessary to mitigate risks

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## REGIONAL NRM CASE STUDY

### ***NRM North Industry Partnership - Roaming Cow Dairies initiative***

Roaming Cow Dairies is a subsidiary of Fonterra - the world's largest diversified milk processing company and one of the world's top producers of dairy nutrition for export, including milk, powder, cheese and butter.

Fonterra has substantial interests within the NRM North region. The Roaming Cow Dairies Initiative contributes 10 cents from every tub of Roaming Cow yoghurt sold to provide incentives that help to continuously improve the way dairy farms operate through a \$5,000 contribution per dairy farm. NRM North partnered in this initiative through provision of additional funds to dairy farms to undertake on-ground NRM work.

With the expansion of irrigation infrastructure and the proposed expansion of the dairy industry within the region a little investment is reaping big rewards and this investment assures that we are working with dairy farms to help create a better environment and continuously improve industry environmental practices.

The first phase has focused on 'nutrient management'. This is a significant cost to producers and has the potential to impact the environment. Activities have included nutrient management plans and improving systems to broaden the area of effluent spread on pastures. The benefits include reduced costs for landholders, less wasted fertilisers, reduced greenhouse gas emissions, healthier soils and improved water quality.

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## PROFITABILITY AND LAND USE CHANGE

### BACKGROUND

Sustainability and profitability of farms are strongly linked. In the short term factors such as extreme climatic events reduces farm income and farmers need to understand and manage that risk.

In longer term farmer's ability to invest in natural resource management activities and support regional economies is directly related to their profitability.

And a decline in profitability can result in land being retired from agriculture and presents long term land management challenges.

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### WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

Regional NRM organisations advocate for improved profitability of farms and explore ways for farmers to receive payment for the ecosystem services they provide. We support market based approaches that include tendering for specific ecosystem services (Bush tender etc.) and the promotion of regional/industry branding that aligns with QA systems.

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## STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Promote business training/mentoring programs to help develop the capacity within the agriculture sector;
- Promote rural leadership programs to develop future agriculture and NRM leaders;
- Support comparative advantage and niche branding opportunities that provide benefits for farmers engaged in green and clean food and fibre;
- Recognise and develop programs to manage land retired from agriculture.

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## REGIONAL NRM CASE STUDY

### ***Wimmera CMA Catchment Tender***

The Catchment Tender project provides eligible landholders with the opportunity to tender to supply Salinity Recharge Reduction services on their land to reduce groundwater recharge that is leading to salinity problems elsewhere in the catchment.

Unlike traditional grant schemes Catchment Tender allows the landholder to calculate the price they want to receive to participate in the project. This price is entirely at the landholder's discretion and could include the full cost of materials and labour, and the 'opportunity cost' (the cost of income forgone) of excluding grazing for a period of up to five years to allow the trees to establish. The selection of successful tenders is based on the best environmental benefit for the fairest price.

The first and seconds of Catchment Tender generated impressive results 760 hectares of re-vegetation in the upper catchment steep hill region and the planting of over 152,000 new trees benefiting the entire region through salinity reduction.

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## CAPACITY BUILDING

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### BACKGROUND

Regional NRM organisations believe that extending knowledge to, and building the capacity of, farmers is essential for practice change. This requires the sharing of knowledge and the outcomes for R&D investment with farmers. Regional NRM organisations are increasingly filling the gap left by State governments that have downsized their extension services over the past two decades.

Landcare and other community based volunteer networks provide an important avenue for farmers to learn from each other and build capacity. And there is a growing interest in assisting indigenous Australians to develop the skills and capacity to own and run commercial farms.

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### WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

Our community capacity building efforts are central to regional NRM programs. Starting from the principle that local people know their local area best, we recognise that community engagement leads to an enabled community that is active and skilled in natural resource management. To support this we advocate for the devolution of decision making, planning and implementation to regional and local levels.

Our regional NRM planning and the design of regional programs reflect the importance of building the capacity of farmers and communities to take responsibility for managing natural resources.

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## STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Supporting local farming communities through encouragement, education and support to assume responsibility for protecting the health of soil, water and vegetation resources.
- This requires strong links and alliances with: agricultural industry groups, educational institutions and CSIRO to increase understanding of natural resources; and regulatory authorities, industry bodies and others that provide extension services to improve knowledge, responsibilities and skills;
- Build image of farmers as sustainable land managers and support programs that reward "Clean and Green" farm practices;
- Promote community-based programs that increase community knowledge and that tailored to local biophysical conditions and social domains;
- Investigate and support the deployment of new web-based technologies, including social media, that can assist in mentoring and creating opportunities for people to benefit from the wealth of knowledge and experience held in the industry;
- Support the development of skills and capacity building programs aimed at indigenous Australians.

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## REGIONAL NRM CASE STUDY

***Western Australia's Northern Agriculture Catchment Council is working with the broadacre increase to increase the adoption of reduced cropping traffic***

Working 120 farmers in Controlled Traffic Farming practices the project aims to increase knowledge and skills to reduce subsoil compaction, increase soil health and reduce the risk of erosion. Activities include updating technical manuals, workshops, field days, on-farm demonstrations, extension materials, and developing case studies and promotional videos.

Controlled Traffic Farming (CTF) is a crop production system in which the crop zone and the traffic lanes are distinctly and permanently separated. In practice it means that all implements have a particular span, or multiple of it, and all wheel tracks are confined to specific traffic lanes. Benefits include higher crop income from greater yield and better grain quality and improved input efficiency from less overlap, better access for in-crop operations and less fuel use from running on firm tracks.

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## INVASIVE SPECIES

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### BACKGROUND

"In mainland Australia, wild populations have become established by at least 73 species of introduced vertebrates, including 25 mammal species, 20 birds, four reptiles, one amphibian and at least 23 freshwater fish"<sup>vii</sup>

As well as a direct impact on native species, invertebrate pests are estimated to have an economic impact of \$702 million per annum while weeds are estimated to have an annual economic impact of \$2.5 billion<sup>viii</sup> to agriculture in addition to the destruction of native habitats and threatening indigenous plants

The increasing focus by government on emerging threats and biosecurity has resulted in a decline in support for the community to manage more established pest plants and animals.

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## WHAT ARE NRM REGIONS DOING?

A review of priority threats identified in regional NRM plans undertaken in 2012 found that 93% of those plans identified feral animals and 89% identified invasive species<sup>ix</sup>. In some States regional NRM organisations have a role in determining investment priorities for invasive species and in others they employ invasive species coordinators.

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## STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE

- Support regional NRM organisations in planning and coordinating invasive species management programs;
- At a regional scale increase our understanding of the impact of greater climate variability on the spread of invasive species.

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## REGIONAL NRM CASE STUDY

### ***Tackling Mimosa pigra in the Territory***

With funding from the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative, pastoral stations, Indigenous ranger groups, Territory NRM, Northern Land Council and NT Weed Management Branch have come together in the Daly & Moyle catchments (Anson Bay area) to share the challenge in managing the weed *Mimosa pigra*.

Anson Bay and its associated coastal floodplains sprawl over 3480 square kilometres in the Northern Territory, 130 kilometres south west of Darwin. *Mimosa* threatens the habitat of large numbers of waterbirds and at least 10 threatened species including the critically endangered northern quoll. The site also hosts Indigenous and pastoral operations, fisheries, wild harvest and tourism activities, which are impacted by the weed.

Activities include survey and mapping, chemical, biological and mechanical control and native revegetation to provide competition against *mimosa* regrowth. With four Indigenous ranger groups, a Landcare group, a tourist operation, several pastoral stations, the Northern Territory Government Weeds Branch, the Northern Land Council and Territory NRM working together, this project is strongly committed to landscape-scale management and the sharing of resources and knowledge to achieve the best possible outcome.

To date over 30,000 Ha surveyed for *mimosa* infestations, 16,776 Ha of *mimosa* has been treated and 11,209 Ha *mimosa* re-treated. 41 land managers showing a demonstrated improvement in knowledge and 4 partnerships developed with Indigenous groups to deliver on-ground management of *Mimosa pigra*

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<sup>i</sup> NFF Farm Facts 2012, National Farmers Federation, Canberra, 2013, page 5

<sup>ii</sup> NFF Farm Facts 2012, page 12

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<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Lookup/1301.0Main+Features3032012>

<sup>iv</sup> ABS R&D Government and private non-profit organisations 2011 – 12 Cat no 8109.0

<sup>v</sup> Garnaut Review Chapter 6

<sup>vi</sup> National Food Plan

<sup>vii</sup> Australian Pest Animal Strategy – A national strategy for the management of vertebrate pest animals in Australia Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council © Commonwealth of Australia 2007

<sup>viii</sup> <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/weeds/why/impact.html>

<sup>ix</sup> National NRM Working Group, Review of Regional Natural Resource Management Plans

Final Report October 2012, report prepared by GHD

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## National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014

**Session: 8 c)** Indigenous Land Management

**Presented by:** Kate Andrews

### **Recommendation:**

1. **That Chairs note progress with the work of the Indigenous Land and Sea Management Working Group and receive a report from the National NRM Knowledge Conference Indigenous Land and Sea Management workshop.**

### **Background:**

2. At Mandurah in 2013, the National NRM Chairs' Forum supported the need for a greater understanding of opportunities to increase engagement of indigenous peoples in NRM and for developing mechanisms for sharing this information about approaches used by regional NRM bodies.
3. A Working Group was established in June 2013 to develop of a set of national principles to guide practice in this area.
4. The first step in was to catalogue the range of Indigenous Land and Sea Management projects being implemented by regional NRM bodies. An initial review was undertaken and projects recorded in a web-based data base (link.....) that is able to be searched according to the following categories: Knowledge gathering; work on country and enterprise developments; engagement in NRM planning.
5. The Working Group also agreed to expand its membership and now includes: Kate Andrews (Chair, Territory NRM – convenor), Neil McCarthy (CEO, North East CMA Victoria), Damian Miley (Program Manager, Torres Strait Regional Authority), Matthew Ward (Regional Manager, Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara), and Bob Frazer (CEO, Cape York) .
6. The second teleconference of the Working Group was held in December 2013 and focussed on the design of the Indigenous Land and Sea Management Workshop to be held at the National NRM Knowledge Conference.
7. That workshop will be Chaired by Joseph Elu (Chair, Torres Strait Regional Authority) and Kate Andrews (Chair, Territory NRM). The Workshop aimed to develop action plans.
8. Kate Andrews and Joseph Elu will present the outcomes from the workshop to the Chairs' Forum.



## National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014

**Session: 8 d)** The Australian Government's Emissions Reduction Fund and the National NRM Regions' Terrestrial Carbon Working Group

**Presented by:** Mike Berwick, Terrain NRM

### **Recommendation:**

- 1. That the Forum receives a report from the Mike Berwick on the National NRM Regions' Working Group Emissions Reduction Fund Green Paper submission;**
- 2. Notes the need for on-going effort by the National NRM Regions' Working Group in the development of new Land Sector policy and methodologies.**

### **Background:**

3. The national NRM Chairs Forum has previously supported the need for action on climate change generally but has a particular interest in carbon stored on land and in water to provide carbon sequestering benefits and in doing maximise other landscape protection and repair benefits.
4. We have supported the Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) and regional NRM bodies were instrumental in both its conception and introduction. Our aim was to promote complementary benefits and avoid perverse outcomes from carbon plantings.
5. As part of the CFI regional NRM organisations are being funded by the Department of Environment to update regional NRM plans to guide planning for climate change impacts on the land and to maximise the environmental benefits of carbon farming projects.
6. In August 2013 the National NRM Regions Working Group agreed to defer further action on establishing a National NRM Terrestrial Carbon Working Group until after the Federal elections.
7. Following the change of Government in September 2013 the Coalition government released a Green Paper on its proposed Emissions Reduction Fund in December 2013.
8. The National Working Group provided a submission to the Green Paper outlining our interest in the matter and raising concerns about the loss of opportunity for regional NRM if the Fund focussed primarily on the lowest cost carbon abatement opportunities – that would likely be provided by electricity generators.
9. This would mean a missed opportunity for landscape restoration efforts. We proposed that the fund should assess all benefits from the reduction options and not just the carbon benefits.
10. We also noted that one barrier to more widespread participation was the red tape associated with the existing methodologies for measuring carbon sequestration and the lack of methodologies for other farming systems.
11. In response to the Green Paper proposal that efforts be made to speed up the development of methodologies, we suggested the establishment of a Land Sector advisory committee.

## **National NRM Chairs' Forum 2014**

**Session: 9**      Regional NRM bodies contribution to the National NRM Work Program

**Presented by:** Pam Green

### **Recommendation:**

**1. To recommend that:**

- a. The National NRM Regions' Working Group establish a work program for 2014/15 with a budget of \$184,000
- b. Within this work program specific allocation be made for \$25,000 towards the direct cost of holding the annual NRM Chairs Forum;
- c. Revenue to meet this budget would come from:
  - i. Carry forward from the 2013/14 budget of \$35,000
  - ii. Contribution from the National NRM Knowledge Conference of \$50,000
  - iii. Regional subscriptions being set at \$2,000 per region for 2014/15 (\$110,000) noting that this is within the scope of the previous 2012 Chairs Forum mandate that the National NRM Regions could apply a subscription of up to \$2,000 per region.
- d. The National NRM Region's Working Group develops and presents a separate proposal for 2015/16 to the 2015 National NRM Chairs' Forum.

### **Background:**

1. In 2012 the Forum endorsed a proposal to allow the National NRM Regions Working Group to increase regional subscriptions up to \$2,000 per year for two years. The Working Group, following a review of its Work Program and carry forward funds (from previous years and from successful National NRM Knowledge Conferences) agreed to set an annual subscription of \$1,500 for 2012/13 and in 2013 agreed to a similar subscription level for 2013/14.
2. The Forum requested a report from the National Working Group to this years' Forum on how the funds have been applied. That report was discussed in session 7.
3. The National NRM Region's Working Group, reviewing that report and looking at emerging issues, is proposing a budget of \$184,000 for 2014/15.
4. Key factors in arriving at this budget included:
  - a. The decision of the Australian Government not to provide financial support for the operations of the National Working Group (this was \$48,000 in 2012/13);
  - b. The need to raise funds for the direct cost of the annual National NRM Chairs Forum estimated to be \$25,000 per year (these costs include venue hire, catering etc) ;

- c. The use of some of the National NRM Knowledge Conference surplus funds to support the national work program;
- d. The use of carry forward funds from 2013/14;
- e. The current national work program to comprise of several elements:

|  |          |
|--|----------|
| Working Group meetings and running costs | \$79,000 |
| National CEOs Forum                      | \$15,000 |
| Working Group projects                   | \$35,000 |
| Organisational Performance Excellence    | \$30,000 |

- 5. After considering the factors outlined above the Working Group recommends that the annual contribution from regional NRM bodies be set at \$2,000 for 2014//15 noting that this is consistent with the 2012 Forum agreement.
- 6. Rather than proposing a budget and contribution level for 2015/16, at this time, the Working Group recommends that a report be made to the 2015 Forum. This will allow consideration of potential carry forwards and the 2015/16 work program.

## 2014 National NRM Chairs Forum Delegate List as of 12 March 2014

|           |                   |   |
|-----------|-------------------|---|
| Jeff      | Campbell          | Queensland Murray Darling Committee Inc                         |
| Mark      | Stoneman          | NQ Dry Tropics Group Inc  |
| Lindsay   | Cunneen           | Burnett Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management Inc |
| John      | Giese             | Cape York NRM   |
| Penny     | Johnson           | Cape York NRM   |
| John      | Herbert           | Condamine Alliance  |
| Ian       | MacGibbon         | Fitzroy Basin Association Inc                                   |
| Royce     | Bishop            | Reef Catchments   |
| Margie    | Millgate          | South East Queensland Catchments                                |
| Joseph    | Elu               | Torres Strait Regional Authority                                |
| Mike      | Berwick           | Terrain   |
| Pip       | Job               | Central Tablelands Local Land Services                          |
| Tom       | Gavel             | Central West Local Land Services                                |
| Terry     | Charlton          | Greater Sydney Local Land Services                              |
| Susan     | Hooke             | Hunter Local Land Services                                      |
| Alexandra | Anthony           | Murray Local Land Services                                      |
| Kent      | Lee               | North Coast Local Land Services                                 |
| Conrad    | Bolton            | North West Local Land Services                                  |
| Hans      | Hietbrink         | Northern Tablelands Local Land Services                         |
| Sam       | Archer            | Riverina Local Land Services                                    |
| David     | Mitchell          | South East Local Land Services                                  |
| Tom       | Hynes             | Western Local Land Services                                     |
| John      | Macarthur-Stanham | LLS Board of Chairs   |
| Jessica   | Brown             | LLS Board of Chairs   |
| Tim       | Ferraro           | LLS Board of Chairs   |
| Alice     | Knight            | Corangamite Catchment Management Authority                      |
| Peter     | Veenker           | East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority                   |
| Mike      | Wagg              | Glenelg - Hopkins Catchment Management Authority                |
| Murray    | Chapman           | Goulburn - Broken Catchment Management Authority                |
| Sharyon   | Peart             | Mallee Catchment Management Authority                           |
| David     | Clark             | North Central Catchment Management Authority                    |
| Lyn       | Coulson           | North East Catchment Management Authority                       |
| Neville   | Goodwin           | Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority     |
| Angus     | Hume              | West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority                   |
| Karen     | Douglas           | Wimmera Catchment Management Authority                          |
| Mick      | Murphy            | Victorian Catchment Management Council                          |
| Jill      | Wilson            | Northern Agricultural Catchments Council Inc                    |
| Bill      | Mitchell          | Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group Inc.                          |
| Bill      | Hollingsworth     | South Coast NRM Inc.  |
| David     | Gardner           | South West Catchments Council Inc                               |
| Andy      | Gulliver          | Peel Harvey Catchment Council                                   |
| Mariyon   | Slany             | Perth Region NRM Inc  |
| Chris     | Daniels           | Natural Resources Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges               |
| Parry     | Aguis             | Natural Resources Alinytjara Wilurara                           |
| Sharon    | Starick           | Natural Resources SA Murray Darling Basin                       |
| Richard   | Ireland           | North NRM Committee   |
| Max       | Kitchell          | NRM South Committee   |
| Kate      | Andrews           | Territory Natural Resource Management                           |
| Pam       | Green             | National NRM Regions' Working Group                             |
| Danny     | O'Neill           | National NRM Regions' Working Group                             |
| Claire    | Howlett           | Department of Environment                                       |
| Sean      | Sullivan          | Department of Environment                                       |
| Jenny     | Barbour           | Department of Agriculture                                       |
| Sue       | Middleton         | WA NRM Regional Leaders Group                                   |

### Apologies

|          |          |                                      |
|----------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Heather  | Baldock  | Natural Resources Eyre Peninsula     |
| Caroline | Schaefer | Natural Resources Northern and Yorke |
| Frank    | Brennan  | Natural Resources South East         |
| Paul     | Davies   | ACT NRM Council                      |