

Review of the
Tasmanian Natural
Resource Management
(NRM) Framework
and Legislation

2007

Discussion Paper



Public comment invited

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comments:

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Submissions will be accepted until
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The Review

The Tasmanian Natural Resource Management (NRM) Framework is being reviewed five years after it was established. This fulfils a commitment made in the original NRM Framework document and implements a specific provision in the Framework's enabling legislation, the *Natural Resource Management Act 2002*.

The Department of Primary Industries and Water is conducting the Review, with assistance from the NRM Council. In accordance with the Terms of Reference issued by the Minister for Primary Industries and Water (see Appendix 1), a report will be submitted to him by 29 February 2008.

This Discussion Paper is the core of the public consultation process for this Review. It provides background information and invites views and comments, especially from people who have observed, or worked with, the NRM arrangements that have been established under the NRM Framework.

The focus questions

The Discussion Paper addresses the specific issues highlighted in the Terms of Reference. It includes a focus question for each issue, to assist people to focus their input to the Review. They are supported by more specific questions that are intended to prompt other relevant considerations. There is no need to answer the questions unless you have something specific to say on them, and you may choose to answer as many or few as you wish.

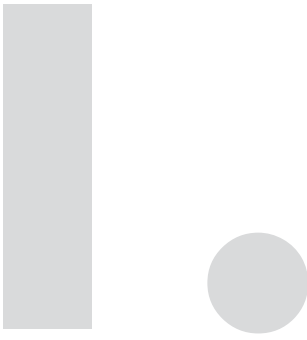
Submitting a response

You may choose to respond to the questions posed in the Discussion Paper or you may prefer to write a letter or email making general comments relevant to the Terms of Reference.

This Discussion Paper can be downloaded from the Department of Primary Industries and Water web site at www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/nrmreview. Copies of this Discussion Paper are also available from the Executive Officer (see sidebar for contact details), or by phoning 1300 368 550, or 6233 2742.

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Introduction:

The Natural Resource Management Framework

FOCUS QUESTION:

On balance, is the Natural Resource Management Framework producing positive results in the State?

* *Are stakeholders in natural resource management, and the broader community, more engaged with planning and on-ground activities since the Council and the Regional Committees were established?*

Background

The passage of the *Natural Resource Management Act 2002* was an important step in trying to deliver more effective management of natural resources in Tasmania¹. It was building on a growing awareness since the late 1980s of the need for positive action to reverse the degradation of Australia's natural resource base. This was the impetus for the development of grass-roots movements, like Landcare, which aimed to tackle specific issues such as declining soil and water quality, weeds and loss of biodiversity.

The strength of these movements lay in community involvement and practical action. The role that these groups played in the larger picture of natural resource management was recognised in 1997 with the establishment of the Natural Heritage Trust (Phase I, or "NHT I") by the Australian Government. NHT I was a single source of funding support for local groups involved in NRM activities.

Toward regional delivery

In spite of the investment of NHT I, the condition of the nation's natural resources remained under considerable pressure, and there was evidence that NHT I funding was failing to make as much difference as had been hoped, because it was not sufficiently coordinated. So in 1999 the National Natural Resource Management Taskforce, representing both the National and State Governments, released a discussion paper for developing a national NRM policy which put forward strong arguments for regional delivery. It argued that "degradation problems cannot be tackled in isolation" and that it would be necessary for all levels of government, together with "regional communities to set priorities and focus rehabilitation efforts on strategic areas where a difference [could] be made"².

In November 2000, all Australian Governments agreed that salinity and water quality were such high priority NRM issues that they signed on to the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (the NAP). The NAP was distinguished by its regional delivery structure, through selected "priority regions". The decision to tackle salinity and water quality issues at the regional level reflected agreement on the need for integrated, large-scale projects across whole catchments if a substantial impact was to be made.

¹ Natural resource management (NRM) is the management of all activities that use, develop and/or conserve our air, water, land, plants, animals and microorganisms, and the systems they form.

² Department of Environment and Heritage, *Integrating Natural Resources in Rural Australia for a Sustainable Future: A discussion paper for developing a national policy*, December 1999.

The challenge was to address these issues at a larger, strategic level whilst maintaining voluntary and enthusiastic local community engagement. The regional approach was put forward as a way of holding this difficult balance. Along with regionalisation, greater monitoring and evaluation was recommended in order to assess what progress was being made.

Development of the Tasmanian NRM Framework

In early 2001 the Tasmanian Government established a broadly based Steering Committee to identify Tasmania's NRM priorities and determine how best to implement NRM, with particular attention to the issue of the scale of regional delivery³. In July 2001 it released an *Issues and Options Paper* as part of an extensive consultative process.

While Victoria already had appropriate regional bodies (its catchment management authorities), other States and Territories had no such established regions for the purposes of NRM. A range of possible regional structures for Tasmania were put forward in the *Issues and Options Paper*, from a single region encompassing the whole State, to forty-eight catchments.

Taking full account of the consultation process, which had produced some 120 submissions in all, the Steering Committee finalised the *Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Framework*, released in February 2002. A few months later the *Natural Resource Management Act 2002* ("NRM Act") was passed, with unanimous support in both Houses of Parliament.

The legislation established three Regional NRM Committees and an NRM Council. The regional boundaries were based on the local government regional organisations (see Map). The legislation also formalised the Framework's Principles and Priorities to inform decision-making.

The reasons for the decision to establish three regions were explained on page 23 of the Framework document. The discussion concluded:

- In developing the Framework, a wide range of options for regions were canvassed, based on physical, ecological, social and administrative units. The following considerations were particularly relevant in the final decision that three regions should be established.
- » Natural resource management is fundamentally about people. What really determines the success of natural resource management is how effectively it mobilises the community, and is able to encourage consistently beneficial behaviour in terms of ecological sustainability, as well as providing economic and social benefits.
 - » It is generally best to work with familiar and established units, since people are most likely to identify with them, and thus to feel part of

³ Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment, *Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Strategy: Issues and Options*, July 2001.

- the process for identifying problems and implementing solutions.
- » In Tasmania, the arguments for a small number of regions are persuasive, and appear to be generally agreed. The State is not large enough in population, resources or area to operate more than a very few regions.
 - » The most familiar regional arrangement in Tasmania is that of the three regions traditionally associated with the telephone areas and the circulation of the State's daily newspapers. The traditional regions also have physical characteristics and landscapes which people relate to. These regions are now being given new institutional life through the development of the three regional local government associations. The local government arrangements provide an appropriate basis for the regions under the Framework.

During 2002–03 the second phase of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT2) was implemented, based on agreement by all (National, State and Territory) Governments in Australia to deliver NRM through a comprehensive national system of NRM regional bodies. This became known as “the regional delivery model” of NRM. Tasmania signed bilateral agreements on the NAP and the NHT2, which took the State's new NRM Framework as their basis.

Why review the NRM Framework now?

The NRM Act was described as the first attempt in Tasmania “to bring together industry, resource users, land managers and conservation interests to provide a coordinated approach to natural resource management”¹⁴. It was intended to meet the State's future needs in terms of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable production. The bringing together of all the main stakeholder groups was seen as one of its key innovations.

In order to assess whether the new structure would deliver its intended outcomes, and to provide an opportunity to make improvements, the NRM Act contained a provision for a review of the Framework within five years of its commencement.

What is being considered in this Review – and what is not?

The Terms of Reference (see Appendix I) outline what is being considered in this Review. The first five issues deal with those aspects of the Framework that guide the core NRM institutional structures (the Council and Regions) in their operation. These issues are considered in Part I of the Discussion Paper. Part II considers the appropriateness of the core NRM institutional structures.

The State NRM principles and priorities are open to change, and are part

¹⁴ Tasmania, *House of Assembly Hansard: Natural Resource Management Bill (No. 2) 2002*, second reading, 1 October 2002.

of this Review. The Review is not concerned, however, with specific NRM funding programs or their delivery. Funding programs will change (as is due to occur in July 2008), and the NRM Framework will continue to deliver them.

Perhaps most importantly, the Review is not trying to reconsider the whole way that natural resources are managed in this State. There is a range of legislation and policy that covers this field and is independent of the Framework.

Rather, the NRM Framework is mainly a mechanism, or a set of arrangements. Its innovation consisted in bringing interested parties to together with the intention of addressing natural resource management cooperatively and in an integrated manner.

The issue is whether it has succeeded in terms of its own stated aims.

2.

PART I

The Natural Resource Management Principles

This chapter explains the reasons for including a set of NRM Principles in the Framework, and how they are formalised.

FOCUS QUESTION:

Is it useful to have Principles in the NRM Framework?

* *Is the current set of Principles appropriate in terms of their coverage, content and drafting? If not, what do you suggest?*

Background

The Tasmanian NRM Framework does not replace or override the existing regulatory laws and institutions of the State. Its focus is on voluntary coordination by the broadest range of stakeholders, cooperating as members of the Regional NRM Committees. Each Committee determines priorities within their region, with a significant degree of autonomy.

This decentralised and autonomous decision making presents a challenge in terms of aligning strategic goals and processes throughout the Framework. The NRM Principles were developed as a mechanism to help coordinate the approach to natural resource management and are intended to inform decision making throughout the Framework. They were designed, with considerable input from the consultation process, to be as concise as possible and to provide clear guidance to Government, Regional Committees and the Council.

Approach to Natural Resource Management in other States

Natural resource management arrangements vary greatly between the States and Territories in terms of:

- » the degree of independence of the regional NRM bodies from the State or Territory Government;
- » the degree of community input in the formulation and/or the approval of regional strategies; and
- » the means by which the community is involved in the development of regional strategies.

Similarly, the articulation of guiding principles is not a consistent feature of natural resource management arrangements in each State and Territory. For example, New South Wales does not have any published guiding principles, whereas South Australia has fourteen.⁵

⁵ Appendix 2 provides a summary of NRM arrangements in Australian States and Territories, and Appendix 3 summarises their approach to principles.

What are the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Principles?

The Principles were set out in draft form in the NRM Framework of 2002 and were confirmed by the Minister for Primary Industries, Water and the Environment in March 2003, on the advice of the NRM Council.

The Tasmanian NRM Principles, for which no priority order was established, are:

Ecosystem Approach – Natural resource management should be based on an understanding of the relationship between natural resources and the ecosystems they support, and upon careful monitoring of change over time.

Balanced Decisions – Natural resource management decisions should take proper account of the range of environmental, social and economic benefits, values and costs in accordance with the objectives of the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning System.

Integrated Management – The management of natural resources should be integrated within regions and catchments, as well as across industry sectors, government agencies and specific issues.

Priority Based – Natural resource management actions are to be undertaken according to priorities that are based on the best available science and information, and relevant experience, as well as on assessment of the relative cost-effectiveness of various options.

Prevention is Better than Cure – It is often more efficient to prevent damage rather than repair it. Therefore, where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Partnerships – to be effective, natural resource management requires the establishment of partnerships between all levels of government and the community, including the Aboriginal community, industry, land holders and individuals, with agreed roles and responsibilities.

We are all Responsible – All Tasmanians receive benefits from the use, development and conservation of natural resources; they share responsibility for managing natural resources sustainably, and for providing economic resources to do so.

3.

The Natural Resource Management Priorities

FOCUS QUESTION:

How helpful has it been to include Priorities in the NRM Framework?

- * What information or direction is conveyed by these Priorities that NRM managers and participants would not otherwise have?
- * Do the Priorities cover all the key issues? If not, what is missing?
- * Should the Priorities be ordered?

The priorities referred to in the NRM Framework and the NRM Act are state-wide priorities and were determined by the responsible Minister following advice from the Tasmanian NRM Council.

The Framework recognises that there will also be regional and local priorities. These are not articulated in the Framework and are not therefore relevant to the current Review .

Background

There are eight priorities listed in the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Framework 2002. They are:

- » capacity building;
- » education / communication;
- » research;
- » water management;
- » vegetation management (forest and non-forest);
- » soil management;
- » management of weeds, pests and diseases; and
- » management of the coastal / marine environment.

The development of these priorities (2001-02) built on precedents from the Natural Heritage Trust priorities, the *State of the Environment Report* (1997), the draft *Nature Conservation Strategy* (2001), and on numerous comments in response to the *NRM Issues and Options Paper* (July 2001) and the *Draft Tasmanian NRM Framework* (October 2001).

Under the Framework it was envisaged that, as implementation progressed, there might be valid reasons for periodically re-evaluating the priorities. It states that:

The Tasmanian NRM Council will review the priorities within 12 months of its establishment, with a major review conducted 5 yearly to coincide with the State of the Environment Report process.

The Tasmanian NRM Council met on 19 March 2003 and considered the implications of reviewing the priorities twelve months into the life of the Framework. The Council noted the then imminent development of three regional strategies. It took the view that any review ought ideally to be

informed by the accredited regional strategies, and draw on the experience of Regional Committees in both their consultation and their decision-making processes with regard to the priorities. Its decision was to advise the Minister to “determine” the NRM priorities as listed in the Framework, without changes, pending accreditation of the regional strategies.

On 16 August 2005 the Council again considered a possible review of priorities. Council members were not in favour of initiating a new review process. Indications were that the regions had been able to refer usefully to the existing priorities in developing their regional strategies (accredited between April and June 2005). Members felt that it would be wrong to review the priorities without extensive public consultation, given the interest shown in this issue during consultation on the Framework itself. They therefore recommended leaving the review until the Framework was reviewed in 2007 so that there could be appropriate consultation.

Under Section 18 of the NRM Act, the Minister has the power to determine the priorities after seeking the advice of the NRM Council. The Minister must advise the Council and the Regional Committees of the determination. A single determination has been made, following the Council's advice of 19 March 2003.

Australian Government Objectives and Themes for Investment Decisions under the Natural Heritage Trust, Phase 3.

State and regional priorities are intended to reflect the asset base, and the threats to their condition, which are particular to those geographic areas.

They will be based on existing data, research and consultation. They will also, as stated in the Framework, be guided by national imperatives. It is therefore useful to note the three overarching Objectives for the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT):

- » biodiversity conservation;
- » sustainable use of natural resources; and
- » community capacity building and institutional change.

The five key themes agreed by Australian and State Governments to provide a broad focus for investment decisions under the third phase of the NHT, from July 2008, are:

- » biodiversity decline;
- » salinity and water quality;
- » coastal and peri-urban areas;
- » productive and sustainable landscapes; and
- » capacity building and institutional change.

Issues

All three regional strategies were accredited in mid-2005 and are now almost midway through their life. It is an ideal time to review how useful the priorities in the Framework have been by drawing on the experience of the Regional Committees, and of the many stakeholders and service providers who have helped them to implement their regional strategies.

Each regional strategy has its own set of broad priorities. Many, but not all, are common to all three. The experience of the regions in prioritising actions and funding within constrained budgets means they are well practised at considering and applying priorities.

Recognising the national setting, and the benefits of conducting detailed planning at the regional level, it is timely to consider the role of State priorities in a revised Framework.

4.

Accreditation Criteria, and Standards and Targets

The accreditation criteria and the standards and targets referred to in the NRM Framework and the NRM Act apply to the regional strategies prepared by the Regional Committees, and the process by which they are accredited.

Background

When the Natural Resource Management Framework was being developed, Governments around the country were developing means to ensure consistent standards among all the plans and strategies that were being produced by the new national network of NRM regional bodies.

In the Framework document there was therefore a section on "Accreditation, standards and targets" (pages 25-6) that stated: "In order to provide for a degree of consistency and quality control, Regional Strategies will need to be accredited and to include an appropriate structure of standards and targets." The summary read:

Regional Strategies will be accredited by the Government, on the advice of the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council, in accordance with criteria. The Regional Strategies will include appropriate standards and targets. Accreditation criteria, standards and targets must be consistent with those developed nationally.

This was subsequently built into the NRM Act in sections 14 and 15. By the time the Act was prepared, the national accreditation criteria had been agreed at a meeting of the NRM Ministerial Council in May 2002. It was thus possible to link the State accreditation criteria explicitly to the national ones.

When the State's NRM Council started meeting in February 2003, one of its first tasks was therefore to advise the Minister on State accreditation criteria that were consistent with the national ones. The Council advised that the national accreditation criteria should be adopted as a whole, but that five specifically Tasmanian criteria should be added. Two of these referred to the principles and priorities that are treated in the previous two chapters. The Minister approved the criteria in April 2003.

FOCUS QUESTION:

Have there been benefits from having legislated accreditation criteria, and reference to standards and targets, as part of the NRM Framework?

- * *Is it important to have provisions for State accreditation criteria in the Act? Have they added value to the accreditation process?*
- * *If the State is to continue supplementing agreed national accreditation criteria, are the current additional criteria appropriate?*
- * *Has the use of agreed standards and targets been helpful in the development and implementation of regional strategies? Are there alternative and better means of ensuring rigour and consistency?*

Additional Criteria for Regional Strategies in Tasmania

Regional strategies prepared in Tasmania will:

1. be prepared and accredited in accordance with the provisions of the *Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Act 2002*;
2. further the objectives of the Resource Management and Planning System;
3. take account of the goals and benchmarks of *Tasmania Together*, as implemented under the *Tasmania Together Progress Board Act 2001*;
4. incorporate and seek to implement the principles of natural resource management, determined by me in accordance with the *Natural Resource Management Act 2002*;
5. take full account of the priorities for natural resource management in the State, determined by me in accordance with the *Natural Resource Management Act 2002*.

The standards and targets were dealt with by the fact that the national accreditation criteria required the application of the "National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets". This established a series of key matters that should be measured (salinity, water quality, vegetation cover and so on), and a process to set ways of measuring them in a nationally consistent manner.

Application of these provisions

The development of their regional strategies was perhaps the most difficult task of the Regional Committees over the years 2003 and 2004. By the end of 2004 most of the work was done, and they submitted the final documents in early 2005. All were accredited between April and June 2005.

The accreditation was approved by both State and Commonwealth Ministers. The State Minister was advised by the NRM Council, which had carefully considered earlier drafts in mid-2004, and provided feedback to the Regional Committees. The Council assessed the drafts and the final documents against the Tasmanian accreditation criteria – incorporating both national and State criteria.

Issues

The accreditation criteria are applied only once every five or so years, when regional strategies are being prepared and reviewed. All States play a part in accrediting regional strategies but not all use the sort of statutory process existing in Tasmania. It is likely that there will, however, always be a core of nationally agreed criteria, if only because the Australian Government naturally seeks some assurance of consistency when it invests across the various States and Territories.

The standards and targets have been difficult to finalise, and to apply. They will not be finally complete until June 2008. However, there remains a national commitment to consistency in this area. All Governments believe there should be some basis for comparing what happens in different regions, and the potential to aggregate the information they produce.

As the regional strategies are intended to be more than simply mechanisms for accessing national NRM funding programs, it may be appropriate to insist that State Ministers have regard to State issues when they accredit them. On the other hand, it may be argued that such considerations could be guaranteed without legislative support.

5.

Regional Strategies

The previous chapter referred to how the regional strategies were developed and accredited. The question now is whether, once implemented, they have been effective in achieving good outcomes, consistent with the priorities set by the State and the Regional Committees themselves.

FOCUS QUESTION:

What difference have the regional strategies made to the way the State's natural resources are managed?

- * *Was the process of developing the regional strategies effective and efficient? Did it engage well with stakeholders and the community?*
- * *Is it too early to expect tangible outcomes from the implementation of regional strategies?*
- * *Are the outcomes of strategy implementation consistent with the priorities established by the regions and the State? If not, why?*
- * *Are the benefits of the strategies more concentrated in certain areas or activities than others? (For instance, comparing aspects such as capacity building, strengthening data and information, or the provision of on-ground works that address NRM matters – weeds, water quality, threatened species, and so on.)*

Background

The regional NRM strategies are all somewhat different, but they have considerable similarities, based on the common accreditation criteria and the shared input from the State and Australian Governments. All of them involved intensive consultation to identify goals and targets that could be applied to the key “assets” in the regions, such as soils, water and biodiversity.

The regional strategies are also all based on very substantial research and the collation of masses of data on regional natural resources. Much of their value derives from the unprecedented combination of detailed regional description and the identification of priorities.

The process of preparing the strategies was onerous. It was difficult to manage, and the consultation processes in particular were very time-consuming. In addition, simultaneously the regions were establishing themselves as functional organisations, and actually delivering a set of “priority action” projects – a set of “no regrets” activities, including some on-ground actions, that were clearly high priority and could be undertaken without waiting for the strategies to be completed.

In the circumstances, all the regions and both Governments understood that the strategies were a first and necessarily imperfect outcome. But they still represented a significant achievement, and both Governments were satisfied that they should be accredited to stand for the next five years.

Issues

Simply as documents the strategies can achieve nothing. Their implementation has been mainly through regional investment proposals that have been focussed on gaining investment from the two main national NRM funding programs: the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP), which applies only in two regions, North and South; and the Natural Heritage Trust Extension (NHT2), which applies to all regions, nationally as well as in Tasmania. In this they have been successful: by June 2008 the regions will have managed projects under NHT2 and NAP worth more than \$35 million.

Implementation may also be through indirect influence on other systems or on State and local government. The NRM Framework document noted (page 26):

Implementation of Regional Strategies will vary according to the type of issue that is being addressed, and the availability of existing mechanisms. For instance, in many areas a Strategy's function may be to guide other decision-making processes, such as the allocation of funds under national programs. The Regional Strategy will also be a resource available to private and community groups that wish to put some of their time and money into natural resource management, and seek guidance on how best to do so ...

In some cases, local government planning schemes, and/or their strategic or operational plans, will be the most appropriate means of achieving particular outcomes of regional natural resource management strategies. This will be facilitated by local government participation in the Framework, through both the NRM Council and the Regional Committees.

The same considerations apply to other planning instruments, such as the various sorts of management plans used in relation to parks, forests and marine farming. These plans will also be available to implement particular aspects of regional strategies.

These issues are all also relevant to the next chapter; they but affect how implementation is to be reviewed.

Therefore the effectiveness of regional strategies can only be assessed indirectly, by considering:

- » how well they lend themselves to implementation through practical projects;
- » how well they have informed the actions of other actors in natural resource management; and
- » how well each region has been able to put together and implement a set of investments to address the priorities in its regional NRM strategy.

In other words, there is no direct line between a regional NRM strategy and the outcomes of actions taken to implement it. A very good strategy might not be very well implemented, while a less good strategy might be implemented well.

Most people will not have a very close knowledge of the various factors that may affect the outcomes in any one region. But it may be helpful to consider matters such as:

- » whether the strategies are logically structured and clearly written;
- » whether it is easy to identify priorities for action from the strategies; and
- » whether the regional investment proposals have selected the most effective actions to address the issues identified as being important to the region or to the State.



Linking Regional Strategies to Existing Planning Instruments

The regional strategies coexist with various sorts of statutory plan produced under the State's planning system, including the strategic plans and planning schemes created and administered by local government. There are no formal links between NRM strategies and the statutory planning instruments, and the question is whether there should be.

Background

The issue of whether regional NRM strategies should have some formal status in the State's planning system was the topic of vigorous debate when the Natural Resource Management Framework was being developed in 2001.

The discussion was a key part of the broader debate about whether the new natural resource management arrangements should create something like a "new level of government", and have any regulatory functions. The Introduction of the Framework document (page 10) clearly summarised the outcome of this debate:

The Framework should not create a new level of Government. Governing responsibilities and powers remain with the State Government and local government. Similarly, the Framework does not create a new regulatory system. There will be no new enforcement powers affecting private citizens and businesses.

The Minister also noted in his second reading speech for the Bill:

In particular, the Tasmanian Resource Management and Planning System will continue to provide the overarching legislative framework for natural resource management, and for planning and development control.

Rather than linking the new natural resource management arrangements to planning instruments, the linkage has been to the bodies that administer them. Thus local government and the other key planning authorities have, from the beginning, been vital participants in the work of the Regional NRM Committees.

The link between local government and NRM is particularly strong. Councils set the framework for land use over much of the State through their planning schemes (though these are also overseen by the Resource Planning and Development Commission). In addition, much of what they do

FOCUS QUESTION:

Should regional NRM strategies be formally linked by legislation to the statutory land use planning system, or is the current link through cross-membership of Regional NRM Committees and planning authorities sufficient?

- * *Do you believe the existence of regional NRM strategies has had any effect on the approach and actions of land use regulating authorities, including local government?*
- * *Do you think regional NRM strategies are designed and written in a way that would be useful in a more formal planning context?*
- * *If so, how do you suggest the linkage should occur?*
- * *Do you consider that current moves towards a more regional scale of local government planning, including the proposed regional land use strategies, are relevant to the issue of linking NRM and statutory planning systems?*

is highly relevant to natural resource management, especially in the urban and urban-fringe areas, through their leading role in activities such as the management of waste, wastewater, water supply, weeds and so on.

In the broadest sense, then, it is arguable that natural resource management is core business for local government. Therefore councils have a close interest in NRM arrangements. This is enshrined in the NRM Act and also in the national funding program, the Natural Heritage Trust.

Since the accreditation of the regional NRM strategies, there has been little time to assess the extent (if any) of their influence on other planning instruments, especially local government strategic plans and planning schemes. (That topic is also treated in the previous chapter.) The discussion between local government and the Regional Committees has tended to be based on the strategies “informing” planning and action by local government; and there has been a focus on practical cooperation in the implementation of NRM priorities, such as the regional weed strategies.

The other key planning authorities, in terms of the areas they are responsible for, are State Government agencies. The most important are the Parks and Wildlife Service, which plans for and manages the State’s large reserve system; Forestry Tasmania, responsible for State forest; and Hydro Tasmania, which controls substantial land as well as much of the State’s water assets.

Like local government, these agencies are recognised in the current NRM arrangements, and have been active members of the Regional NRM Committees since their inception. As with local government, too, these agencies have all been involved in undertaking various activities funded to implement the regional NRM strategies.

Issues

When discussing the review provision of the NRM Act in his 2002 second reading speech, the Minister drew attention to this matter:

More generally, a review will address the issue of whether the cooperative and voluntary approach of the legislation is indeed working better than a more regulatory model might.

The issues for consideration, in relation to planning, include the following:

- » The effectiveness of the current linkages, which are not so much through the planning instruments, as through the active participation of the planning agencies (including the State agencies as well as local government) in the work of the Regional Committees. The issue is whether this engagement has fostered the cross-fertilisation with NRM regions that was initially envisaged.
- » The type of link that there might be between the regional NRM strategies and planning instruments. For instance, for local government the strategies might be linked either to planning schemes themselves, or to local government strategic land use plans if they are in place. The mechanism for formalising any such link would need to be in the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*. Similarly, linkages to the plans of other authorities that regulate the use or development of land would require amendments to their various Acts.
- » The place of the proposed new regional land use strategies, being developed to support consistent and contemporary planning schemes under the Better Planning Outcomes project. This is in the early stages, but may provide a new point of contact between regional NRM strategies and the statutory planning system.
- » The suitability of regional NRM strategies, as written, to be given formal status or standing in the planning system. The issue is whether they have the precision or authority required for planning purposes.



PART II

Functions of the NRM Council and Regional Committees

Under the Terms of Reference for the Review, the Secretary is asked to provide advice to the Minister as to whether the “functions of the Council and the Regional Committees continue to be appropriate for the purpose of the Act”. This is the subject of Part II, consisting of Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

It should be noted that the NRM Council is not being asked to provide advice or assistance on this Term of Reference, as it is not appropriate for the Council (including its Regional Committee representatives) to be reviewing itself.

However, individual Council or Regional Committee members, or the committees themselves, are very welcome to make submissions on this Term of Reference.

Page 20 of the Framework document contains a summary of the arrangements; Parts 2 and 3 of the NRM Act provide for the establishment, membership, functions and powers of the NRM Council and Regional Committees.

The issue is whether the functions of the bodies established under the Act are appropriate in light of what they do, or might usefully do. It is addressed more fully in Chapters 8 and 9. This chapter provides some introductory material.

In the second reading speech for the NRM Act the Minister stated:

The purpose of the Natural Resource Management Framework is to provide the State with a systematic way of integrating natural resource management, to ensure consistency and efficiency, and to result in improved natural resource outcomes.

The legislation will establish the administrative system to coordinate and integrate the activities of the wide range of people and organisations currently involved in the management of our natural resources.

Critically, as the Minister then stressed, the purpose was to do this by means of arrangements that built on and did not replace existing systems, and introduced no new regulatory powers.

It is important to note that there was then, and is still, no clear national model for how either a council or regional bodies should be set up and function. Although the regional delivery model of natural resource management has now been established across the country for several years, there is no uniformity in the make-up and function of the 56 regional bodies. There is even less uniformity in terms of State-level councils. (The interstate arrangements are summarised at Appendix 2.)

Each jurisdiction has thus made its own choices, and Tasmania has developed a model that is unique in certain respects. However, there is a spectrum of arrangements on the key aspect of whether the regions have any regulatory or administrative functions. The State's position on this spectrum helps clarify the nature of the Tasmanian system.

In three States – New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia – the regional bodies have a range of functions in the administration of State legislation, and have relevant powers to allow them to fulfil those roles. These relate to matters such as the management of weeds, water and native vegetation (though again, each State is different). But in all other jurisdictions the regional bodies have no such roles, and no powers.

The Tasmanian regions fall into the non-regulatory group. What makes Tasmania unique among this group is that the State's Framework is nonetheless statutory: the *Natural Resource Management Act 2002* gives the Council and the regions formal recognition, and provides for some ties to the State Government.

The context for considering this issue is therefore the decision, taken at the start of this decade, to establish NRM institutions that are more than merely voluntary associations, but which have no administrative role or powers. Their functions have been determined by that overarching decision.



The Natural Resource Management Council

The NRM Council is one of the core institutions of the Tasmanian NRM Framework. Its role is purely advisory. Its activities have evolved somewhat over time and the issue is whether its specified functions are still well suited to maximise the contribution it might make.

FOCUS QUESTION:

Is it useful to have a statutory body such as the NRM Council to provide the Minister with advice?

- * *If so, where can it make the greatest contribution? Is the current Council set up appropriately to provide that benefit?*
- * *If not, are there better ways for the Minister to obtain advice from stakeholders and experts?*
- * *Should the Council be primarily a stakeholder body, or a balanced body of expert individuals?*

The central fact about the Council is that it is an advisory body. Its main list of functions, in section 7(1) of the NRM Act, is introduced by the words: "The functions of the Council are to advise the Minister on the following ...". On that basis, it was established to comprise individuals "with experience, skills and knowledge in natural resource management". And although intended to "provide a balance of natural resource management interests in the State", the only mandatory members are the Secretary of DPIW and nominees of each Regional NRM Committee (section 6 of the NRM Act).

The Council has fulfilled its functions by submitting the minutes of its meetings to the Minister, and on important issues it has provided separate formal advice. Matters on which written advice has been provided have included topics considered in this Review – confirmation of the NRM Principles, establishment of the State accreditation criteria, and the State NRM priorities. But the most onerous task of the Council has been in relation to the accreditation of the regional strategies, and the approval of investments to implement them. The Council provided considerable feedback to the Regional Committees on their draft strategies, after detailed assessments, before advising the Minister to accredit them. The Council also examined the complex regional investment proposals put forward over the past few years, and has advised the Minister on each.

As can be seen from its annual reports, the workload of the Council has changed over time. It met more frequently in its first 18 months or so, when it played an active role in helping to keep the regions moving in a consistent direction while they developed their regional strategies and established their own internal working arrangements. With the regions now well established, its business has been less and its functions somewhat different.

In part the change has reflected the role Council members have undertaken when operating as members of a new body established under the Bilateral Agreement for the Natural Heritage Trust Extension (NHT2, signed in June 2003) – the Natural Resource Management Advisory Group.

The NRM Advisory Group is also an advisory body, and consists of the Council plus two members appointed jointly by Commonwealth and State Ministers. Its role is to advise the Joint Steering Committee, a body of senior officials who develop consistent advice to the Ministers in both Governments on the administration of the two main funding programs, NHT2 and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. As members of the NRM Advisory Group, therefore, Council members are closer to the operational detail of programs, and are brought into direct contact with the Australian Government. Continuation of this arrangement is under consideration for inclusion in a Bilateral Agreement for Phase 3 of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT3), to operate from July 2008.

In the context of this Review, the significance of the NRM Advisory Group is that members are there acting in a largely “representative” role: they are providing assurance to the Governments – and the Australian Government in particular, which lacks access to a key stakeholder body in the State – that important NRM issues are understood and broadly endorsed by those stakeholders.



The Regions

The regions are the most significant new element under the Tasmanian NRM Framework. The Regional Committees are established with functions that revolve mainly around the preparation and implementation of regional strategies, including a significant management role.

The nature of their functions is related also to the way the committees were established, including the nature of their membership. It is reasonable to consider these issues also in examining their functions.

FOCUS QUESTIONS:

- (a) Has it been a good move to establish three NRM regions in Tasmania?
- (b) Do the Regional NRM Committees have the capacity, as they are now set up, to function efficiently and effectively?

- * *Are the reasons for having three NRM regions in Tasmania, as put forward in the Framework document in 2002, still valid?*
- * *In the light of experience, are the functions of Regional NRM Committees, as specified in the Act, still appropriate? If you think not, do you believe they should be broadened or restricted?*
- * *Does the structure of the Regional NRM Committees, as specified in the NRM Act, support the functions they have to carry out?*

Background

The Regional Committees have been the most important innovation under the NRM Framework. The three of them have developed into active institutions with quite high public profiles. They have strong committees, a core of 6–10 staff each, and main responsibility for the delivery of projects under the NHT2 and the NAP that will have totalled well over \$35 million by June 2008.

Underpinning the arrangement has been the decision to have three regions, rather than operating only at a statewide level, or having more numerous, smaller regions. (The reasoning behind that decision, as expressed in the Framework document, is quoted in Chapter 1.) In practical terms, the most serious options are one region or three, so that the real alternative to the current arrangement would be a statewide NRM system.

Functions of the Regions

The core activity of the regions has revolved around the development and implementation of their regional strategies. This is what the Framework and the NRM Act envisaged, so that the bulk of the functions outlined in the Act relate to those broad tasks (see sections 10 and 12–16).

The Act also provides in section 10(1) for three other functions that are not strictly dependent on the regional strategies:

- (d) to promote the natural resource management principles;
- (e) to facilitate the integration of natural resource management and planning activities for the region; [...]
- (i) to develop and implement processes to ensure appropriate education and training in natural resource management.

In practice, all the regions have attempted to ensure that the first and third of these functions are met by funding activities that go beyond biophysical

interventions, and aim to inform the community and build capacity to engage with NRM. The second relates closely to the topic of the previous chapter, in relation to planning.

Membership of the Regional Committees

Because each Regional Committee would have to produce a strategy and administer substantial projects, in partnership with a range of stakeholders, it was considered essential that they should have a strong base of support and good networks in their regions. Therefore their functions are underpinned by provisions about membership that are much more prescriptive than the Council's. Section 9(3) provides that the membership should include a specified range of community, industry and government interests. The intention has been that, although the Regional Committees lack regulatory powers, their links with their regions mean that their actions will inform and be informed by the actions of other decision makers, in both the public and private sectors.

Development of Regional Strategies

It has been the regional strategies that have shaped the work of the regions in practice. Important aspects have been discussed already in Chapter 5, and the emphasis in this chapter is on whether their statutory functions allow the regions to deliver the benefits intended by the Framework and the legislation. The relevant functions are outlined in section 10(1):

(a) to identify the priorities for natural resource management in the region;

This has been the basis for structuring the regional strategies. There is still no simple template for this task, though there is now a somewhat clearer view nationally of what needs to be done, and how, than there was when the strategies were being developed in Tasmania. The terminology can be confusing, as "priorities" is often used in relation to actions, whereas in the broader sense envisaged in the Framework and NRM Act, it also applies to the identification of key assets and so on. In short, it refers to identifying both the issues that are most significant in the region, and the actions required to address them.

(b) to prepare a draft regional strategy for the region;

The preparation of the regional strategies was a longer and more onerous task than had been anticipated (see Chapter 5 above), particularly in terms of the public consultation processes. The NRM Act provided that regional strategies should be completed within 12 months, and it soon became clear that this was unrealistic. In the event, the regions took about two years to complete the strategies, which turned out to be very much in line with interstate experience. An important factor was that they were simultaneously engaged in developing their first regional investment proposals, which implement the strategies.

(c) to facilitate the implementation of the regional strategy;

This function has been entwined with the following two (ie. (f) and (g) below), since the implementation of the strategies has generally required funded activities. But it has also required the regions to set up internal structures capable of developing and delivering the plans for these activities. This has involved them in establishing executive and other sub-committees, creating rules and processes for their internal governance, and the appointment of competent staff. (The regions' progress can be traced in their annual reports, on the www.nrmtas.org.au website.)

(f) to seek, manage and allocate funds according to the regional strategy;

Both the national and the State models for regional delivery accept that NRM regions may seek funding from a range of sources. The regional strategies have allowed for this and a small amount of non-government funding has been sourced. As in most regions around the country, however, the vast majority of the funding has been obtained from the national NRM funding programs. Therefore most of the management task has been within the quite tight parameters set by the investing Governments (see also next).

(g) to coordinate the region's participation in national and state programs relating to natural resource management;

Given the centrality of the national NRM funding programs to the operations of the regions, they have built many of their processes around the requirements of those programs. This has involved working closely with the Joint Steering Committee of State and Commonwealth officials that oversees the programs. They have also developed a growing role in coordinating applications for NRM small grants programs (particularly the Australian Government's Envirofund and the National Landcare Program), in cooperation with landcare and other community groups.

(h) to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the regional strategy;

Once again, this has been done mostly in the context of the integrated requirements for monitoring and evaluation in the funding programs. There has been considerable discussion on the effectiveness of the national monitoring and evaluation methods, and they are being revised to support the new NHT3 program from July 2008. Discussion has also concerned the appropriateness of these generic methods for providing the regions with more broadly focussed monitoring and evaluation to help them assess their effectiveness as organisations.

Appendix I: Terms of Reference

The *Natural Resource Management Act 2002* ("the Act") specifies at section 20 that, within 5 years of the Act's commencement (ie. by 1 March 2008), the Minister is to review the Act. I authorise the Secretary of the Department of Primary Industries and Water ("the Secretary") to undertake the Review, and provide to me a report with recommendations.

The Secretary is to have regard to section 20 of the Act and page 28 of the NRM Framework document. Specifically, the Secretary is to **consider**:

- (a) and if appropriate suggest amendments to, the NRM principles determined under section 17 of the Act and published on page 15 of the Framework document; and
- (b) and if appropriate suggest amendments to, the NRM priorities determined under section 18 of the Act and published on pages 16–18 of the Framework document; and
- (c) the effectiveness of the accreditation criteria, approved under section 15 of the Act, and regional standards and targets, in terms of whether they continue to meet the needs of natural resource management in Tasmania, while maintaining consistency with relevant national accreditation criteria, standards and targets; and
- (d) the effectiveness of regional strategies in achieving natural resource management outcomes that are consistent with and promote the State and regional priorities; and
- (e) the effectiveness of the voluntary approach, established under the NRM Framework and the Act, to linking the regional strategies to planning instruments; and
- (f) whether the functions of the Council and the regional committees continue to be appropriate for the purpose of the Act.

The Secretary is to consult other State Agencies on the Review, through the Environment and Resource Heads of Agency Group, and to publish a Discussion Paper to encourage public input.

In assessing matters (a) to (e) above, the Secretary is to seek the advice and assistance of the Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council.

The Secretary is to provide a report on the Review to me by 29 February 2008.

David Llewellyn MHA
MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER

Appendix 2: Summary of Natural Resource Management Arrangements in other States and Territories

It is important to note that NRM arrangements in many States and Territories have undergone changes over time. The following is a summary of arrangements at August 2007.⁶

1. Queensland

There is no single, dedicated piece of legislation covering NRM.

Regional bodies

- » 14 regional bodies called Regional 'Committees', 'Groups' or 'Associations'
- » they are non-government organisations – non-statutory, with varying arrangements regarding selection and structures of committees and boards
- » responsible for developing and implementing accredited regional NRM plans

Higher level bodies

- » 4 Regional Coordination Groups comprising senior management from a number of State agencies acting as a link between the State and the regional NRM bodies
- » The Department of Natural Resources and Water (DNRW) is the key State agency involved in NRM
- » NAP and NHT funds are administered by the Community Partnerships Group, which is part of DNRW

2. Western Australia⁷

There is no single, dedicated piece of legislation covering NRM.

Regional bodies

- » 6 regional bodies called either 'NRM Groups' or 'Catchment Councils'
- » non-statutory and non-government organisations; members both community and government representatives
- » currently restructuring to become more skills based
- » responsible for developing and implementing accredited regional NRM plans

⁶The main source for this information was *Regional natural resource management arrangements for Australian states: structures, legislation and relationships to government agencies* (SIF3 Working Paper 0701, CRC for Plant-Based Management of Dryland Salinity, Perth, April 2007) by D.J.Pannell, A.Ridley, E.Seymour, P.Regan & G.Gale.

⁷Note that arrangements in Western Australia have been under review.

Higher level bodies

- » The State NRM Council provides policy advice to the Government
- » The NRM Council consists of representatives from the NRM community including agriculture, industry, Indigenous community, marine and coastal management, local government and regional development, key Government Agencies' Directors-General and the chairs of the regional NRM bodies (government officials are included by invitation only)
- » The Department of Agriculture and Food (DAF) is the lead State agency
- » NAP, NHT2 and NLP funds are administered by the State NRM Office, which is based in DAF. This office is responsible for coordinated delivery of NRM Programs and provides support to all relevant NRM committees

3. Tasmania

The *Natural Resource Management Act 2002* provides the legislative basis for arrangements and structures.

Regional bodies

- » 3 Regional NRM Committees
- » representation from the Aboriginal community, State and local governments, community interests, public land managers, conservation interests and industries in the region; only the Chairs are appointed by Government, from among members selected independently
- » statutory bodies, "declared" under the NRM Act – but non-regulatory
- » responsible for identifying regional priorities, and developing and implementing accredited regional NRM strategies

Higher level bodies

- » The NRM Council provides advice to, and is appointed by, the Minister for Primary Industries and Water. Issues on which it advises include accrediting regional NRM strategies and approving regional investment proposals
- » The NRM Advisory Group comprises the NRM Council and 2 additional members jointly appointed by the Australian and State governments. It provides advice to the Joint Steering Committee and assurance of adequate stakeholder consultation
- » The NRM Council must include one representative of each Region. It also has broad stakeholder representation
- » The NRM Support Unit administers NAP and NHT2 funds and is based in the lead State agency, the Department of Primary Industries and Water

4. South Australia

The *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* provides the legislative basis for arrangements and structures.

Regional bodies

- » 8 Regional NRM Boards
- » skills-based membership, appointed by the Minister
- » statutory bodies with administrative and regulatory powers – but quite independent; a large (but very variable) proportion of their funding comes from community NRM levies collected by local government
- » prepare regional NRM plans (with agency support), through which NRM levies are proposed, and prepare investment strategies for implementation of NAP and NHT2 programs

Higher level bodies

- » The Minister for Environment and Conservation has overall responsibility for NRM
- » The State NRM Council advises the Minister on NRM issues and policy
- » The NRM Council represents agriculture, conservation, local government and community interests
- » The Department of Water, Land, and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC) provides technical support and financial assistance to the regional NRM Boards

5. Victoria

There is no single, dedicated piece of legislation covering NRM.

Regional bodies

- » 10 Catchment Management Authority Boards
- » Statutory bodies with regulatory powers which existed for catchment management prior to the nationwide introduction of regional NRM delivery
- » members appointed by the Minister on the basis of expertise with at least half the members from primary industry
- » broad-ranging functions including advising the Minister on regional priorities and resource allocations in addition to developing and implementing regional catchment strategies (NRM plans)

Higher level bodies

- » The Victorian Catchment Management Council (VCMC) also advises the Minister and has reporting responsibilities
- » VCMC members are appointed by the Minister on the basis of their skills, experience and knowledge of land protection, water resource management, primary industries, environment protection, conservation and local government
- » The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) administers NHT2 and NAP funds
- » The impact of the recent appointment of an Environmental Sustainability Commissioner reporting directly to Parliament is not yet clear

6. New South Wales

There is no single, dedicated piece of legislation covering NRM.

Regional bodies

- » 13 Catchment Management Authority Boards
- » Statutory bodies with multiple functions, one of which is serving as regional NRM bodies
- » Broad range of administrative responsibilities and regulatory powers under legislation including, but not limited to, natural resource management
- » Administer NAP and NHT2 funds, prepare Catchment Action Plans and associated investment strategies, manage programs to implement Catchment Action Plans. Also administer the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*
- » Chairperson and up to 6 members appointed by the Minister, based on their experience, skills and knowledge in areas such as primary production, cultural heritage, biodiversity conservation, business administration and governance

Higher level bodies

- » The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) provides advice to the NSW Government regarding setting and monitoring targets and standards for NRM, and reviews and recommends approval of Catchment Action Plans
- » The NRC is a statutory body appointed on the basis of expertise
- » The Natural Resources Advisory Council (NRAC) provides stakeholder advice to the Minister for Natural Resources regarding NRM and land use
- » The NRAC has 27 members representing forestry, fisheries, farming, environmental and indigenous groups, State and local government, and industry
- » The key State agency supporting the CMAs in NRM is the Department of Environment and Climate Change

7. Australian Capital Territory

There is no single, dedicated piece of legislation covering NRM.

Regional body

- » 1 NRM Council for its single region
- » NRM Council (has recently replaced the NRM Board) is a non-statutory body with strong scientific representation. Conservation, Indigenous and rural landholder interests are also represented
- » The NRM Council prepares the NRM Plan for the investment of NHT and NAP funds
- » It should be noted that the ACT region lies entirely within the Murrumbidgee CMA of New South Wales, with which it cooperates closely

Higher level bodies

- » There is no higher level body analogous to those in the States
- » The Department of Territory and Municipal Services is the lead Government Agency

8. Northern Territory

There is no single, dedicated piece of legislation covering NRM.

Regional body

- » 1 NRM Board – the single region is divided into 3 subregions
- » The NRM Board is an incorporated body responsible for the development and implementation of the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan
- » Membership of the NRMB is based on the skills and knowledge required to support best practice governance, business, legal and contractual issues as well as the achievement of NRM and conservation outcomes
- » Members are appointed by the Chief Executive of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts; they are selected from a broad geographic base over the NT, with consideration given to gender balance

Higher level bodies

- » There are no higher level bodies analogous to those in the States but the NRMB has access to technical advisory panels for scientific and technical validity in the development and implementation of investment proposals
- » The lead Government Agency is the Department of Natural Resources, Environment and the Arts, which administers NHT and NAP funds

Appendix 3: Natural Resource Management Principles in other States and Territories

Victoria

The Department of Sustainability and Environment has published six principles that govern the way catchment management is implemented throughout the State:⁸

1. Sustainable Development

Victoria's whole of catchment approach to natural resource management seeks to deliver social, economic and environmental outcomes for the community and reduce our ecological footprint.

2. Community Empowerment

Catchment management is a partnership between community and Government. Planning and implementation of natural resource management programs should maximise opportunities for community engagement.

3. Integrated Management

Management of natural resources should recognise the linkages between land and water and that the management of one component can impact on the other.

4. Targeted Investment

Government and community need to ensure that resources are targeted to address priorities and deliver maximum on-ground benefits.

5. Accountability

Those making decisions on natural resource management should be clearly accountable to Government and the community, both in a financial sense and for biophysical outcomes.

6. Administrative Efficiency

To maximise on-ground results catchment management structures should facilitate more efficient procedures and practices.

⁸ <http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/dse/nrenlwm.nsf/FID/-C35E39DE033300D24A25679E00010C1F?OpenDocument>

South Australia

The State Natural Resource Management Plan 2006 lists Guiding Principles grouped into three categories:⁹

Our natural resources must be managed for long term social, economic and environmental outcomes by landscape scale improvements to the ecosystems which we depend upon.

1. **Win, win, win** – Ecologically sustainable development of natural resources underpins a sound economy while delivering **positive social and environmental outcomes**.
2. **Work within limits** – The use of our natural resources in response to social and economic pressures must work within **ecologically sustainable limits** to maintain their life supporting capacity.
3. **Look after the future** – Ecologically sustainable development of natural resources will protect their **capacity to provide ecosystem services** upon which the well being of future as well as current generations depends.
4. **Use without losing** – Natural resources management must embrace the **fundamental interdependence** of economic productivity and ecologically sustainable use.
5. **The whole is greater than the sum of the parts** – Natural resources management will be most effective when using an **ecosystem approach** that recognises and integrates all the components and processes of ecosystems and their use; and manages these at the appropriate temporal and spatial scales.

People and their readiness, willingness and ability to contribute to sustainable natural resources management are critical to realising the vision.

6. **People are the key** – Capable, connected and committed **people** are critical to effective natural resources management.
7. **Work together** – Government, communities and industries must **work together to integrate** the management of natural resources.
8. **Knowledge is power** – It is essential to **develop and share knowledge** and that the understanding of rural, urban, Aboriginal and scientific communities are sought and valued.
9. **Learn by doing** – Management of natural resources requires an adaptive approach that is continually improving by **testing and learning** from actions in a purposeful, persistent, information-rich, flexible and inclusive manner.
10. **Everyone's responsible** – Everyone benefits from natural resources, and **everyone must be responsible** for their share of the costs to manage natural resources sustainably.

⁹ State Natural Resources Management Plan 2006 available at http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/nrm/state_nrm_plan/state_nrm_plan.html

To fix the problems, manage the risks and capture the opportunities we must learn from the past and think beyond the present.

- I 1. **Think outside the square** – The thinking that created our natural resource management problems cannot necessarily solve them: *innovative thinking and brave decision-making* are required.
- I 2. **Prevent rather than cure** – *Preventing* the degradation of natural resources by dealing with causes is preferable to rehabilitation and treating symptoms.
- I 3. **If it's broke, fix it** – *Repair* of landscapes and seascapes will be needed to ensure that natural resources can continue to provide ecosystem services into the future.
- I 4. **It's a risky business** – Because of the uncertainties of managing and using ecosystems, *best available information* should be used in a *precautionary* way as part of a risk management approach.

Other States and Territories

While NRM regional bodies in other States and Territories often have mission statements or visions, or may have some discussion of underpinning principles in their strategic plans, there are no guiding principles at the State / Territory level.



Tasmania
Explore the possibilities

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