

# Government Response to the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Review<sup>1</sup>

## Recommendations

**Recommendation 1. That a State NRM Program be continued in order to protect Western Australia's unique and highly valuable natural assets for current and future generations.**

### **Government Response: Agreed.**

The Government agrees that a State NRM Program should be continued, recognising that the State contributes around \$380 million per annum to NRM outcomes within State Agency budgets. Additional funding directly to a State NRM Program will enable key state priorities and targets to be met. A \$30 million program has been delivered in the 2009-10 State Budget, with a review of the program to guide consideration of further NRM investment leading into the 2010-11 budget process.

**Recommendation 2. The Government will adopt a new WA NRM Policy developed in conjunction with this response. This will be followed by the State NRM Plan and Implementation Strategy, which will be developed as a part of the Government's NRM Policy.**

### **Government Response: Agreed.**

The Government will table in Parliament and release to the public the WA NRM Policy<sup>2</sup> with this response to the NRM Review. It should be noted that the State NRM Policy has been two years in development, and the result is broad policy rather than specific outcomes rather than specific priorities and targets. The latter will be delivered in the State NRM Implementation Strategy being developed as a part of the Government's new NRM Policy.

**Recommendation 3. That investment through the State NRM program is transparent and focussed on State priorities.**

### **Government Response: Agreed.**

The Government has adopted a policy of defining State priorities, which will guide NRM investment by the State. Future investment will also rely on improved investment analysis and decision-making which will be delivered in the State NRM Implementation Strategy.

**Recommendation 4. That a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework for the State NRM Program is implemented to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the State NRM Program.**

### **Government Response: Agreed.**

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<sup>1</sup> *Natural Resource Management Review, Western Australia, February 2009*

<sup>2</sup> *Western Australian Natural Resource Management Policy, 2009*

The Government has continued funding to the State NRM Office, which will be tasked with the development of a unified monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework. The Government plans to measure all State NRM activity including that undertaken within State Agency budgets using this model. This will be used for assessment of all NRM delivery in Western Australia, and for the first time will allow for comparative analysis such as expected versus actual outcomes, assessment across themes and with other management programs.

**Recommendation 5. That community engagement is an integral part of the State NRM program with particular emphasis at regional scale.**

**Government Response: Agreed.**

The Government will continue to engage with the community, and a key role for the community to identify those regional assets the community identify as important. The Government will also consider the community prioritisation of regional assets in setting the State NRM priorities.

The Government proposes that Regional NRM Groups remain as the principal point of community engagement in the NRM process.

**Recommendation 6. That roles and responsibilities for implementing (planning; service delivery; monitoring, evaluation and reporting and; adaptive management) the State NRM Program are clearly articulated.**

**Government Response: Agreed.**

The Government has prepared a new State NRM Policy<sup>3</sup> to better identify and communicate the roles of different groups. Regional communities, through Regional NRM Groups, will provide asset identification and regional prioritisation roles. This information will be coordinated with the implementation of the WA NRM Policy by the State NRM Office.

Regional NRM Groups will also be requested to provide feedback on the value and effectiveness of State and Commonwealth NRM programs relevant to their region.

The State Government, through the State NRM Ministerial Council, will identify (via the State NRM Implementation Strategy; incorporating state and regional priorities), specific projects that best fulfil the outcomes of the WA NRM Policy, and will decide on appropriate delivery organisations. These might include but are not restricted to State agencies, regional and sub-regional groups, local government authorities, NGOs, community groups, educational institutions, the private sector, and even individual community members.

The State NRM Office will manage contracts with delivery organisations, manage compliance issues including Federal Caring for Our Country compliance, develop a standardised reporting framework, and provide support to the State NRM Ministerial Council and any state NRM advisory group.

The roles and responsibilities in NRM implementation are outlined in the new State NRM Policy and will be further specified in the NRM Implementation Strategy.

**Recommendation 7. That roles and responsibilities for community engagement processes (planning; service delivery; monitoring, evaluation and reporting and; adaptive management) are clearly articulated.**

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<sup>3</sup> *Natural Resource Management in Western Australia*, May 2009, Minister for Agriculture and Food

**Government Response: Agreed.**

The Government supports community engagement in the process of planning NRM outcomes, in particular the identification and prioritisation of assets and feedback and monitoring the implementation and progress of investments.

The regional NRM groups, or catchment councils, are well placed to deliver community consultation. This would be a continuation of part of their current activity.

**Recommendation 8. That project planning ensures that service delivery occurs at the most appropriate level – individual, organisation or partnership.**

**Government Response: Agreed.**

This is a key principle of the State NRM Policy. The Government proposes that the most appropriate and efficient organisation to deliver projects and services would be tasked with their delivery. This might include but not be restricted to State agencies, regional and sub-regional groups, local government authorities, NGOs, community groups, educational institutions, the private sector, and even individual community members. All decisions on the appointment of service delivery agencies will be made by the WA State NRM Ministerial Council.

**Recommendation 9. That the State provides support for community engagement.**

**Government Response: Agreed.**

The Government proposes to contract the community engagement process of the State NRM Program and core administration at the level of \$250,000 per annum for each NRM region, complementing the Caring for Our Country core funding to region groups provided by the Commonwealth.

It is envisaged that existing Regional NRM Groups would provide those services, however should they be unable or unwilling to provide the required services, the State NRM Ministerial Council would need to decide on alternative organisations which could be contracted to provide the required services. These contracts would be managed by the State NRM Office.

**Recommendation 10. That the State government provides a contribution towards the core administration costs of the organisations selected to undertake the community engagement component of the NRM program.**

**Government Response:**

See Recommendation 9.

**Recommendation 11. That prior to the selection of any organisation to provide community engagement as part of the State NRM Program, evidence is provided of the essential skills required.**

### **Government Response: Agreed.**

The State NRM Ministerial Council will require an organisation proposing to undertake community engagement and consultation as part of the State NRM Program to have adequate capacity for that role. Advice in that regard would be given by the State NRM Office.

**Recommendation 12. That the provision of community engagement services is managed through the use of business contracts with appropriate providers.**

### **Government Response: Agreed**

The Government, through the State NRM Ministerial Council will engage through business contracts appropriate community consultation organisations. These contracts will be managed by the State NRM Office.

**Recommendation 13. That the NRM Council be replaced with new advisory groups.**

### **Government Response: Partially Agreed.**

The WA State NRM Ministerial Council is the only decision making body under the new State NRM Policy. The State NRM Ministerial Council will establish a revamped mechanism in the form of a peak body with regional representation to provide communication between the State NRM Ministerial Council, regional NRM groups and the greater WA NRM community on NRM matters. This body will perform the functions of the existing NRM Council, although the detail of its structure and roles will be developed by the WA Ministerial Council. The State NRM Ministerial Council will also be asked to decide on its' need for an independent advisory group on NRM to be formed.

**Recommendation 14. That a peak body consisting of representatives of organisations providing community engagement services be established to provide advice to the State Government.**

### **Government Response: Partially Agreed**

See recommendation 13 above. A peak body encompassing the roles of the existing NRM Council will be maintained, but the WA State NRM Ministerial Council will establish its structure and clearly define its roles. Organisations providing community engagement services will be able to continue collaborative partnerships, forums and meetings between community and delivery organisations. The State NRM Ministerial Council will establish a new mechanism to replace the previous State NRM Council's roles in providing communication between the State NRM Ministerial Council and community and regional NRM groups on NRM matters. This would not prevent direct communication between those community bodies to Ministers of the State.

**Recommendation 15. That an independent body be established to provide high level advice to the lead Minister for NRM on environmental, economic and social issues relevant to the State NRM program.**

### **Government Response: Agreed in Part.**

The WA NRM Ministerial Council will decide on the need for an independent advisory body on NRM as a part of its initial discussions.

**Recommendation 16. That the State Government seek a partnership with the Commonwealth Government on opportunistic funding programs to deliver NRM outcomes in WA where priorities align.**

**Government Response: Agreed**

The State Government has sought to re-engage with the Commonwealth, with the aim of commencement of negotiations with the Commonwealth to prepare a Caring for Our Country Cooperative Agreement. It should be noted that every effort will be made to ensure Commonwealth and State investment is complementary, focused on State priorities and maximizes benefits for Western Australia.

**Recommendation 17. That programs are initiated to ensure Local Government, indigenous communities, education institutions and industry are engaged and more actively participate in the State NRM program.**

**Government Response: Agreed**

The State NRM Policy identifies that many groups should be involved in NRM delivery in Western Australia, including State agencies, regional and sub-regional groups, local government authorities, NGOs, community groups, educational institutions, the private sector, and even individual community members. Indigenous communities are also important for engagement on regional NRM priorities, and as a resource that can assist in service delivery, particularly in remote areas.

**Recommendation 18. That an investigation is conducted to determine the most appropriate regional boundaries and the number of Regional NRM Groups.**

**Government Response: Agreed**

The Government proposes to look at the issue of regional boundaries during the 2009-10 financial year. This will be an internal Government investigation involving consultation with regional NRM groups.

**Recommendation 19. That the above investigation includes advice on an appropriate structure for community engagement and NRM program implementation in the Swan-Avon catchments.**

**Government Response: Agreed**

The Swan-Avon catchment will be examined, as will all other regional NRM groups.