



Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry

Department of Environment and Heritage

**NATURAL  
RESOURCE  
MANAGEMENT  
MINISTERIAL  
COUNCIL**

**Record and Resolutions**

**First Meeting**

**Canberra**  
**31 August 2001**

**RECORD AND RESOLUTIONS**

**OF THE**

**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

***“To promote the conservation and sustainable use  
of Australia’s natural resources.”***

**FIRST MEETING  
CANBERRA, 31 AUGUST 2001**

© Commonwealth of Australia 2001

ISSN 1446-0114

This work is copyright. Apart from any use as permitted under the Copyright Act 1968, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the Secretary, Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, c/- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, GPO Box 858, Canberra ACT 2601.

Produced by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Canberra

**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**FIRST MEETING  
CANBERRA, 31 AUGUST 2001**

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>Page</b>
Council participants	ii
Officials in attendance	iii
Agenda / Resolutions	v
Chairman's opening comments / welcome and apologies	1
Report of the outcomes of CEOs' meeting	2
Resolutions	3
Meeting media release	67

**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**FIRST MEETING  
CANBERRA, 31 AUGUST 2001**

**COUNCIL PARTICIPANTS**

Senator The Hon Robert Hill	Minister for the Environment and Heritage
The Hon Warren Truss MP	Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
The Hon Richard Amery MP	Minister for Agriculture, and Minister for Land and Water Conservation New South Wales
The Hon Bob Debus MP	Minister for the Environment New South Wales
The Hon Sherryl Garbutt MLA	Minister for Environment and Conservation Victoria
The Hon Stephen Robertson MP	Minister for Natural Resources Queensland
The Hon Kim Chance MLC	Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Western Australia
The Hon Rob Kerin MP (representing The Hon John Olsen, MP)	Deputy Premier and Minister for Primary Industries and Resources South Australia
The Hon Mark Brindal MP	Minister for Water Resources South Australia
The Hon David Llewellyn MHA	Minister for Primary Industries, Water and Environment Tasmania
The Hon Kon Vatskalis MLA	Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment Northern Territory
Mr Brendan Smyth MLA	Minister for Urban Services Australian Capital Territory
Mr Noel Playford	Senior Vice President of ALGA

## OFFICIALS IN ATTENDANCE

*[\* Denotes member of the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management (SCNRM)]*

### Commonwealth

Mr Roger Beale AM *	Department of the Environment and Heritage
Mr Stephen Hunter	
Mr Max Kitchell	
Mr Mike Taylor *	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
Mr Bernie Wonder	
Mr Ian Thompson	
Mr Gerry Smith	
Dr John Zillman AO *	Bureau of Meteorology

### New South Wales

Dr Bob Smith *	Department of Land and Water Conservation, and State Forests
Dr Chris Guest	
Dr Kevin Sheridan AO *	Department of Agriculture
Dr Richard Sheldrake	
Mr Don Hayman	
Mr Brian Gilligan *	NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
Ms Lisa Corbyn *	Environment Protection Agency
Ms Gail Le Bransky	Cabinet Office

### Victoria

Ms Chloe Munro *	Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Mr Peter Sutherland	
Mr Philip Heaphy	

### Queensland

Mr Terry Hogan *	Department of Natural Resources and Mines
Dr Gerry Gentle	
Mr Scott Spencer	
Dr Warren Hoey *	Department of Primary Industries
Dr Ian McPhail	Environment Protection Agency

### Western Australia

Mr Keiran McNamara *	Conservation and Land management
Dr Graeme Robertson *	Department of Agriculture

### South Australia

Mr Rob Thomas *	Department for Water Resources
Mr Claus Schonfeldt	
Mr Allan Holmes *	Department for Environment and Heritage
Mr Dennis Mutton *	Primary Industries and Resources SA
Ms Elizabeth Young	Department of the Premier and Cabinet

### Tasmania

Mr Kim Evans *	Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment
Ms Sue Chapple	

**Northern Territory**

Mr John Pinney \*

Dr Bill Freeland \*

Department of Lands Planning and Environment

Parks and Wildlife Commission of NT

**Australian Capital Territory**

Mr Alan Thompson \*

Ms Elizabeth Fowler

Department of Urban Services

**Australian Local Government Association**

Mr John Pritchard

***Secretariat***

Mr John Graham

Ms Shareen Wall

Ms Dawn Manning

## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

### FIRST MEETING CANBERRA, 31 AUGUST 2001

#### AGENDA / RESOLUTIONS

Res'n No.	Item title	Agenda Item No	Page No.
	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>		1
	<b>REPORT OF THE OUTCOMES OF CEO'S MEETING</b>		2
	<b>RESOLUTIONS</b>		
	<b>NRM Ministerial Council arrangements</b>		
1.1	Implications of Ministerial Council changes	4.1	3
1.2	Strategic focus for the Council	4.2	9
1.3	Administrative and supporting arrangements	4.3	13
1.4	Technical experts and advisory community group (or groups) structure and functions	4.4	32
	<b>Policy Issues</b>		
1.5	Water reform - Future strategic directions	5.1	35
1.6	National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation	5.2	41
1.7	Policy issues for future consideration	5.3	43
	<b>Program Issues</b>		
1.8	National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ) - Progress report and key next steps	6.1	44
1.9	NAPSWQ - NRM best practice management - Government management standards	6.2	47
1.10	Linkages between the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust Extension	6.3	49
1.11	Program Issues for future consideration	6.4	51

	<b>Performance/Evaluation Issues</b>		
1.12	NAPSWQ - Monitoring and evaluation	7.1	52
1.13	Indigenous reconciliation - Report on programs	7.2	56
1.14	Performance/Evaluation issues for future consideration	7.3	60
	<b>Administrative matters</b>		
1.15	Financial report	8.1	61
1.16	Next meetings	8.2	63

# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

## FIRST MEETING CANBERRA, 31 AUGUST 2001

### WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Hon Warren Truss, the meeting Chair, welcomed Ministers to the first meeting of the new Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. He noted that this meeting marked the beginning of a new era in dealing with natural resource management issues in Australia and hoped it would be an era of increased cooperation between jurisdictions working together to address the natural resource management (NRM) degradation and conservation issues that are of such significance to the nation.

He believed that the assembling of such a large group of Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers was a clear demonstration of the high priority NRM matters are given on the national agenda. He believed this new Council would provide the impetus to address these significant issues.

He noted that all governments had agreed to refocus attention on NRM issues through the rearrangement of several Ministerial Councils. Many of the Ministers present had come from a background of previous Ministerial Councils such as ARMCANZ and ANZECC. Given the differences between how the previous Ministerial Councils had operated, one of the important matters on the agenda today will be to set the operating framework for the new Council.

With regard to managing the meeting, Mr Truss said that he and Senator Hill had agreed to Chair alternate meetings.

The Chairman welcomed the Hon Kon Vatskalis as the newly appointed Northern Territory Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment, who was attending his first Ministerial Council meeting. Also welcomed was Councillor Noel Playford, the Senior Vice President of the Australian Local Government Association. The Chairman saw local government representation around the table as a further demonstration of the desire for a cooperative relationship on NRM issues between all the jurisdictions.

The Chairman referred to the fact that invitations had been extended to New Zealand and Papua New Guinea as members and observers respectively and that they would likely be participating in future meetings of Council.

Apologies were noted from:

- . The Hon Keith Hamilton, MP for Victoria
- . The Hon Henry Palaszczuk, MP for Queensland
- . The Hon Judy Edwards, MLA for Western Australia
- . The Hon John Olsen MP, Premier of South Australia and who was represented by The Hon Rob Kerin MP.

Ministers agreed that it would be appropriate to issue a media release reflecting the meeting outcomes. This is reproduced at pages 67 to 70.

## **REPORT OF THE OUTCOMES OF CEO'S MEETING**

The Chairman asked the Chairs of the Standing Committee on NRM to provide a report on the discussions of that body.

It was reported that the discussion by officials highlighted the need to bring together issues that are about the broad vision, direction and key issues for early action by Council.

This resulted in a discussion paper for Ministers to use as a guide to managing their agenda and to set the scene for Council into the future.

Another focus was on process and procedure to set in place arrangements for the new Council and its underpinning structure. It was reported that Standing Committee intended to focus on streamlining the agenda for future meetings so as to focus on actionable, policy items rather than process issues that can so easily dominate agendas.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.1</b>

### IMPLICATIONS OF MINISTERIAL COUNCIL CHANGES

1. Standing Committee reported that the Prime Minister and Premiers agreed, at their meeting on 8 June 2001 to, amongst other things, establish three new Ministerial Councils; (a Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC), a Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC) and an Environment Protection and Heritage Ministerial Council (EPHMC)). The Prime Minister and Premiers also agreed to abolish four existing Councils (the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ), Ministerial Council in Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA) and the Heritage Ministers Forum).
2. The underlying purpose behind these changes was to provide a mechanism for the integration of the dual objectives of sustainable use and management of Australia's natural and environmental resources and the conservation of biodiversity in a national context.
3. On 5 July the Prime Minister wrote to Premiers/Chief Ministers concerning the implementation of this COAG decision. A copy of that letter and its attachments is at Annex A. The Prime Minister, asked that the first meeting of the new NRMMC, to be jointly Chaired by the Commonwealth Ministers for Environment and Heritage and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, (Ministers Robert Hill and Warren Truss), and be held before the end of August 2001.
4. The draft objectives and scope of the NRMMC are detailed at Attachment B to Annex A. Standing Committee advised Council that it intended to address interfacing issues between the NRMMC and, in particular the PIMC and the EPHMC and to develop a clear understanding of how best to handle cross-cutting issues of relevance and importance to more than one of the Councils. The Chairs of the relevant Standing Committees will address these matters and report on progress to the next meeting of Council.

### RESOLUTION

5. Council **NOTED** the implications of the recent decisions by COAG on changed Ministerial Council arrangements, in particular on the scope and operation of the new Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council.

**ANNEX A:** Copy of the Prime Minister's letter to Premiers/First Ministers

The Hon R J Carr MP  
Premier of New South Wales  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

My dear Premier

I am writing concerning establishment of the three new natural resource and environment related Councils and the Ministerial Council on Energy and associated changes agreed by Heads of Government at our meeting on 8 June.

As you know, we agreed to a number of immediate changes to streamline the operation of Ministerial Councils as well as commissioning further work by Senior Officials on more fundamental structural reform of the Ministerial Council system. I will be contacting you separately on how these changes will be progressed.

However, I am keen to ensure that the energy and natural resource and environment related Councils are established as soon as possible and seek your cooperation in expediting administrative arrangements including nomination of your Ministerial representatives.

In relation to the immediate streamlining of existing natural resource and environment related Councils, the schema at Attachment A outlines the key changes proposed, and the draft table at Attachment B indicates the division of responsibility between the three new Councils.

I consider that the following meetings of the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ) (17 August 2001), the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) (29 June 2001) and the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC) (29 June 2001) should be considered their final meetings. I understand that the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA) was not planning to meet again until next year, so I propose that this Council's work now flow directly into the new Primary Industries and Natural Resource Management Ministerial Councils.

Arrangements to transfer the work programmes of the old Councils to the new Councils (the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Ministerial Council, the Primary Industries Ministerial Council and the Environment Protection and Heritage (EPH) Ministerial Council) will commence immediately. I have asked the chairs of the new Councils – the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry and the Minister for the Environment and Heritage, as appropriate – to expedite arrangements for a smooth transition to the new Councils and to consult with your government.

The proposed arrangements for the three new Councils are outlined in Attachments C to E. Relevant chairs will write shortly with further details of the proposed inaugural meetings. I would ask that if you have not already done so, that you provide the names of your Ministerial representative(s) for each Council to me as soon as possible and no later than 13 July 2001.

I consider that the 25-26 July 2001 meeting of the Australian and New Zealand Minerals and Energy Council should be its final meeting. In light of COAG's agreement that the new Ministerial Council on Energy be established and meet as soon as possible, the Minister for Industry, Science and Resources will be writing shortly proposing its inaugural meeting, before the end of September this year. I would appreciate it if you could advise me of your jurisdiction's representative as soon as possible and no later than 13 July 2001. Details of the proposed administrative arrangements for the Council are set out at Attachment F to this letter.

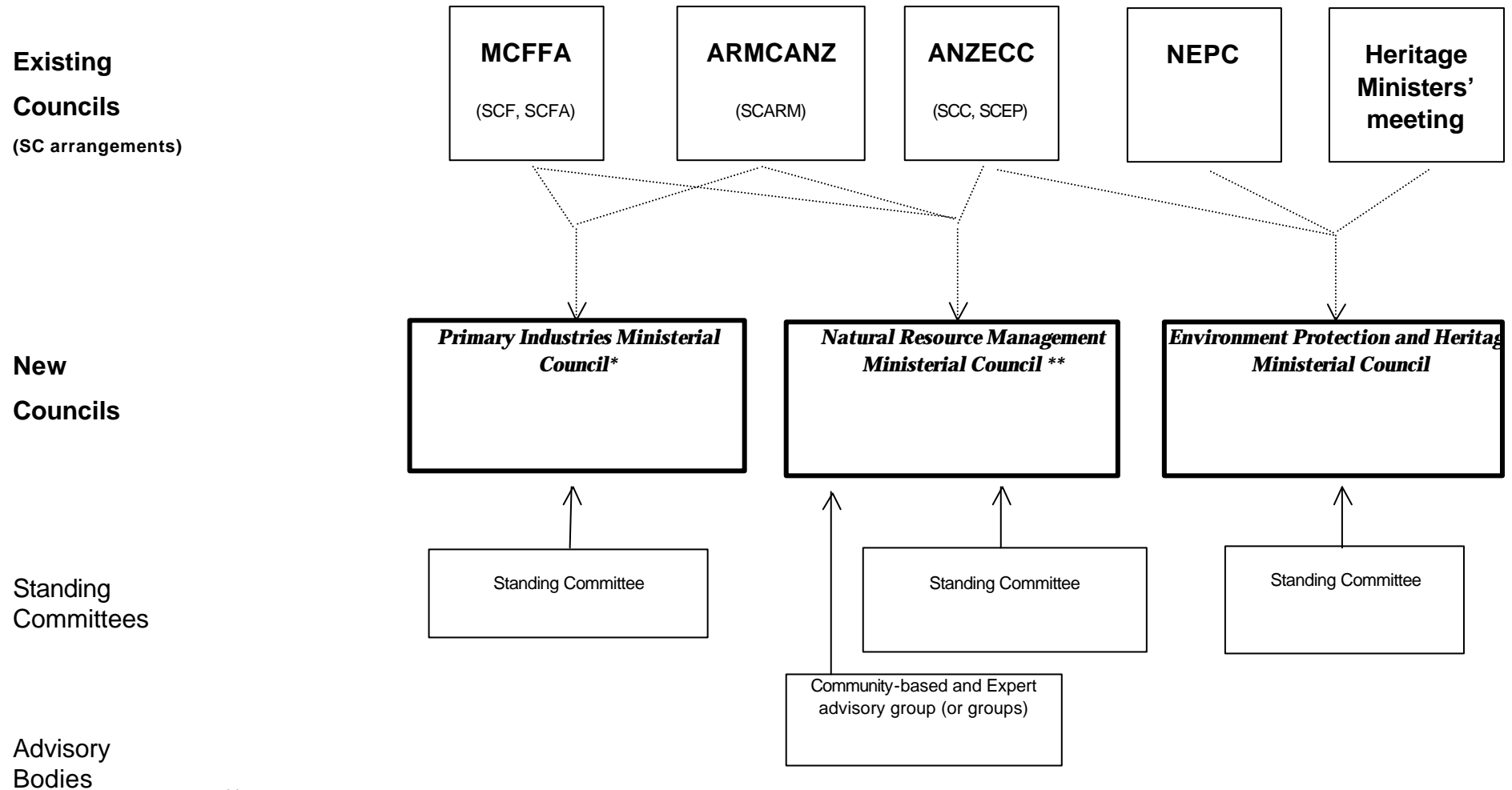
Please note that I have written to the President of the Australian Local Government Association inviting their participation as observer on the NRM Ministerial Council (copy attached). Following consultation by chairs with state and territory members of the three natural resource and environment related Councils and the new Ministerial Council on Energy, I also propose writing to the Prime Ministers of New Zealand and Papua New Guinea to advise them of the new arrangements and to invite the participation of their representatives on these Councils as appropriate.

I have written in similar terms to all Premiers and Chief Ministers.

Yours sincerely

(John Howard)

## NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENT – RELATED COUNCILS



Notes:

\* Ministerial management of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council business may involve additional fora (eg. Fisheries and /or Forestry)

\*\* The NRM Ministerial Council will have representation from two Ministers per jurisdiction



**DRAFT OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENT-RELATED MINISTERIAL COUNCILS**

<p align="center"><b>PRIMARY INDUSTRIES MINISTERIAL COUNCIL</b> (combined industry/production elements of ARMCANZ and MCFFA)</p>	<p align="center"><b>NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL</b> (combined NRM elements of ARMCANZ, MCFFA and ANZECC)</p>	<p align="center"><b>MINISTERIAL COUNCIL ON ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AND HERITAGE</b> (non-NRM elements of ANZECC, NEPC and Heritage Ministers' Meeting)</p>
<p>To develop and promote sustainable, innovative and profitable agriculture, forestry and fisheries/aquaculture industries, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? product and market development for sustainably produced food and fibre products</li> <li>?? food safety</li> <li>?? animal and plant health</li> <li>?? animal welfare</li> <li>?? industry levies</li> <li>?? industry accreditation schemes / quality standards (ISO, EMS)</li> <li>?? regional and rural economic and community development</li> <li>?? structural adjustment</li> <li>?? integrated research, information, and other capacity building measures, particularly in sustainable production systems and product/market development</li> <li>?? monitoring the extent, value and trends in the nation's resource based industries</li> <li>?? international issues (eg. promoting Australian products overseas)</li> </ul>	<p><i>To promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? best practice governance arrangements for natural resource management</li> <li>?? implementation of National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality including a national framework for NRM standards and targets, and accreditation criteria for regional NRM plans</li> <li>?? monitoring the health of the nation's natural resources</li> <li>?? water resource management, water quality, incl. the national water policy reform agenda</li> <li>?? land use management</li> <li>?? sustainable native vegetation management</li> <li>?? sustainable cropping and grazing systems</li> <li>?? sustainable fisheries management</li> <li>?? greenhouse issues - land/vegetation aspects</li> <li>?? salinity issues</li> <li>?? biodiversity strategies and policies</li> <li>?? management of national parks and protected areas</li> <li>?? nature conservation on private and public lands</li> <li>?? sustainable use and conservation of native flora and fauna (terrestrial, aquatic, marine)</li> <li>?? threatened species and ecological communities, threatening processes</li> <li>?? migratory species and their habitat</li> <li>?? sustainable management of the coastal zone, including conservation of coastal/marine species and interface with / impacts from terrestrial systems</li> <li>?? wetlands management</li> <li>?? weeds and feral pests</li> <li>?? integrated research, information exchange and other capacity building activities to support the above responsibilities.</li> <li>?? development of innovative policy tools including regulation, market-based instruments, ecosystem services, and means for engaging the corporate / philanthropic sectors and the wider community</li> <li>?? international issues relevant to sustainable natural resource management</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure the protection of Australia's environment and heritage places.</p> <p><i>Environment protection responsibilities include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? protection of air, water and soil quality</li> <li>?? development and management of National Environment Protection Measures</li> <li>?? improving the environmental performance of Australian industry</li> <li>?? minimisation and management of hazardous and non-hazardous wastes, including product stewardship</li> <li>?? management of hazardous chemicals in the environment</li> <li>?? SOE reporting</li> <li>?? environmental indicators and monitoring of environmental quality</li> <li>?? data on releases of chemicals and wastes to the environment</li> <li>?? international aspects of environment protection</li> <li>?? development of the policy tools needed to manage the above issues.</li> </ul> <p><i>Heritage responsibilities include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>?? natural and cultural (historic and indigenous) heritage</li> <li>?? world and national heritage listing and management</li> <li>?? national heritage policy</li> <li>?? legislative framework for heritage protection.</li> </ul>

### **Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council**

#### **Objectives and scope**

The table at Attachment B outlines the draft objectives and scope of this Ministerial Council. This includes responsibilities in relation the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality as proposed in my letter to Premiers and Chief Ministers of 21 December 2000.

It is expected that the Council will finalise its objectives and scope at its first meeting.

#### **Composition and Chair**

As proposed in my letter to Premiers and Chief Ministers of 24 March 2001, the Council will have up to two representatives per jurisdiction.

The Council will be chaired jointly by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage and the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

Decisions of the Council will be carried on the basis of unanimous voting.

It is proposed that invitations are made to New Zealand to become a member, and to Papua New Guinea to become an observer, of the Council.

#### **Standing Committee**

Council will need to agree on the most appropriate standing committee arrangements at its first meeting.

#### **Advisory Bodies**

As advised in my letter of 21 December 2000, the Council would receive technical and policy advice from a group or groups of experts and community-based representatives. The functions, membership and operating arrangements for this group (or groups) should be finalised at the first Council meeting.

#### **Secretariat**

The Council Secretariat will be located in the Commonwealth, with contact details to be advised shortly.

#### **Meetings**

The inaugural meeting of the NRM Ministerial Council should be as soon as possible.

## **Primary Industries Ministerial Council**

### **Objectives and scope**

The table at [Attachment B](#) outlines the draft objectives and scope of this Ministerial Council. It is expected that the Council will finalise its objectives and scope at its first meeting.

### **Composition and Chair**

The Council will be chaired by the Commonwealth Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. It is recognised that more than one Minister per jurisdiction may be required for this Council (reflecting jurisdictions' portfolio arrangements).

Decisions of the Council would be carried on the basis of unanimous voting.

It is proposed that invitations are made to New Zealand to become a member, and to Papua New Guinea to become an observer, of the Council.

### **Standing Committee**

Council will need to agree on the most appropriate standing committee arrangements at its first meeting.

### **Advisory Bodies**

The first meeting of Council should consider whether any advisory bodies are necessary.

### **Secretariat**

The Council Secretariat will be located in the Commonwealth, with contact details to be advised shortly.

### **Meetings**

The first meeting of the Primary Industries Ministerial Council will be proposed shortly by the chair, following consultation with states and territories.

## **Environment Protection and Heritage Ministerial Council**

### **Objectives and scope**

The table at Attachment B outlines the draft objectives and scope of this Ministerial Council. It is expected that the Council will finalise its objectives and scope at its first meeting.

### **Composition and Chair**

The Council will be chaired by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment and Heritage and comprise a single representative per jurisdiction.

Decisions of the Council would be carried on the basis of unanimous voting, unless specified otherwise for decisions addressing statutory requirements.

It is proposed that invitations are made to New Zealand to become a member, and to Papua New Guinea to become an observer, of the Council.

### **Standing Committee**

The Council should agree on appropriate standing committee arrangements. The chair will put forward a proposal on this and other relevant arrangements shortly.

### **Advisory Bodies**

The Council should determine whether any advisory bodies are necessary.

### **Secretariat**

The chair will propose secretariat arrangements for the Council shortly.

### **Meetings**

The first meeting of the Environment Protection and Heritage Ministerial Council will be proposed by the chair, following consultation with states and territories.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.2</b>

### STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR THE COUNCIL

1. The Prime Minister's letter of 5 July 2001 to Premiers and Chief Ministers set out the scope of the Natural Resource Management (NRM) Ministerial Council's work and draft objective as reported in the previous resolution.
2. This new Council brings together, for the first time, Ministers with responsibilities for natural resources, environment and primary industries, and will provide the basis for a more focused, integrated and nationally consistent approach to NRM policies and activities across Australia. This structure will enable Australia to focus on the array of natural resource management challenges facing the nation, and provide an opportunity to more strategically and collectively implement action to bring about the fundamental changes required.
3. The spectrum of the issues identified by the Prime Minister provides an indication of the breadth of NRM issues to be considered by this new Council and the agenda for its first meeting reflects this breadth. Council believed it was important to determine the priorities that will need attention in 2001-02.
4. Council considered that the three immediate priorities are implementing the NAP, progressing the CoAG water reform agenda and developing the extension to the NHT. In addition, key priorities also need to be addressed for example, declining water quality, declining native biological diversity, sustainable production systems and ecologically sustainable fisheries management. In each of these, Council will decide where its collective action can best advance national approaches to natural resource management.
5. As a first step for this new Council, members considered and agreed to the Council's draft objective as proposed in the Prime Minister's letter:

**“To promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources”.**
6. In addition, Council agreed to a vision statement, terms of reference, immediate priorities and strategic focus. These are detailed at [Annex A](#)
7. Ministers discussed the inter-relationship of the NRM Ministerial Council with the Primary Industries and Environment Protection and Heritage Ministerial Councils. It was argued that the NRM Council should focus more on the setting of standards

and acceptable outcomes and the Primary Industries Ministerial Council in particular should be directed towards setting policies and strategies for achieving those agreed standards and outcomes - although it was recognised that there is not always a clear distinction between these.

8. Ministers saw the NRMCC as the senior overarching Council which dealt with, amongst other matters, cross-over of issues between related Ministerial Councils as well as overseeing implementation of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, COAG water reform and development of the extension to the Natural Heritage Trust. It was agreed that Standing Committee should further consider this issue in the context of a work program for the Council and report back to the next meeting for further consideration.

## RESOLUTION

9. Council **AGREED:**
  - (a) to the objective for the Council, as proposed by the Prime Minister, noting that this will require proper regard to the full range of Australia's biophysical regions. The objective is stated as:  
  
**“To promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia’s natural resources”.**
  - (b) to the vision statement, terms of reference, immediate priorities and strategic focus detailed at Annex A; and
  - (c) to task the Standing Committee with the preparation of a draft work program for the Council, for discussion at the next meeting.

**ANNEX A:** Objective, vision statement, terms of reference, immediate priorities and strategic focus

## **NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL - OBJECTIVE, VISION STATEMENT, TERMS OF REFERENCE, IMMEDIATE PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIC FOCUS**

### **Objective**

To promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources.

### **Vision statement**

Governments working together to promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources through:

- ?? a meaningful and shared understanding of sustainability (leading to clear national goals);
- ?? adopting innovative and imaginative means to manage the natural resource base and achieve healthier landscapes, vibrant communities and strong regional economies;
- ?? understanding the geographic and social diversity of the nation; and
- ?? engaging all communities in constructive partnerships recognising the importance of natural resources to industry and community.

### **Terms of reference**

- ?? To develop policies and strategies for national approaches to the conservation, sustainable use and management of Australia's land, water, vegetation and biological resources.
- ?? To oversee the development and implementation of national natural resource management programs including the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP), the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and other agreed programs.
- ?? To monitor and evaluate outcomes of these policies, strategies and programs and the health of the nation's natural resources.
- ?? To promote community understanding of and engagement with the key challenges associated with the sustainable use and management of Australia's land and water, vegetation and biological resources.
- ?? To liaise with other Ministerial Councils and other bodies on matters relevant to the activities of the Council.

### **Immediate priorities**

In bringing this together, the three significant and immediate priorities for the Council are:

- i. implementing all aspects of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) with the recognition that many NAP activities (eg standards and targets, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building, etc) will have congruence with other activities for which the Ministerial Council is responsible;
- ii. progressing the COAG Water Reform Agenda and consider future strategic directions in water policy; and

- iii. developing agreed Commonwealth and State delivery and funding arrangements for the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust.

Other key priorities for the Council are:

- iv. addressing the decline in water quality of inland rivers, wetlands, coastal rivers and estuaries and secure reliable water supplies for human use, industry and the environment;
- v. promoting action to reverse the decline in the native biological diversity, secure the long-term viability of native ecosystems, and maintain healthy ecosystem function as a basis for ecologically sustainable industries including agriculture, grazing, forestry and fisheries; and
- vi. promoting the conservation and ecologically sustainable development of marine resources.

### **Strategic focus and key policy, program and performance/evaluation issues for the future**

#### Suggested approach

The Council will provide leadership in the integrated management of Australia's production systems, natural resources and environment. This will assist to achieve the best outcomes for the economy, primary production, social wellbeing and the health of the nation's natural assets (water, biodiversity, soil, coastal and marine ecosystems). Strategy formulation, decision making and service delivery will be on a partnership and devolved basis.

#### Key issues for the future

- ?? managing scarce resources (particularly water) for both sustainable growth and ecosystems;
- ?? definition of governance arrangements and the rights, duties and responsibilities of resource users;
- ?? increasing indigenous people's capacity and participation in managing Australia's natural resources;
- ?? understanding the sources of degradation and the costs and benefits of prevention, repair, mitigation and adaptation strategies;
- ?? valuing our natural resource assets for the production and ecological services they provide;
- ?? designing innovative tools and policy measures for the delivery of improved outcomes (eg markets for water, carbon, salinity and ecological services);
- ?? clear and effective communication systems to engage all levels of community;
- ?? skilling communities to develop effective natural resource management;
- ?? actively and constructively manage adjustment implications of changes in resource use; and
- ?? identifying a series of high level performance indicators that are meaningful, practical, cost effective and affordable.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.3</b>

### ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

1. To assist Council, Standing Committee and its underpinning committees to operate effectively, Council was asked to consider a range of operational matters as detailed in a draft Processes and Procedures manual.
2. The Processes and Procedures were consistent with the COAG approved *Broad Protocols and General Principles for the Operation of Ministerial Councils* (COAG June 2001).
3. It was suggested to Council that its regular meetings be held during June/July and/or November/December each year and that these meetings be preceded by five to six weeks by meetings of Standing Committee.
4. It was drawn to Minister's attention that COAG will require, every 2-3 years, a review by Council of its structure, objectives and performance, and an evaluation of the implementation of its decisions. Similarly, each 2-3 years Council must review its committees of officials and working parties to ensure that these are reduced in number to those which are essential, that those retained are clearly focussed, given a fixed time to achieve their objectives and that their terms of reference include a sunset clause. The outcomes of the review process should be made available in a report to COAG if requested.
5. With regard to the existing underpinning committees of the pre-existing Councils, Council directed that Standing Committee review these and develop a committee structure appropriate to the work program of the new Council.
6. Standing Committee believed that, as with the previous ARMCANZ, it was likely that some degree of financial delegation from Council to Standing Committee would assist in ensuring a quick response to initiatives and would remove from the Council agenda relatively minor, straightforward issues. Examples of such expenditures would be insect pest eradication initiatives, weed eradication programs, conference sponsorships, consultancies, etc. It was proposed that this matter be taken up with Council at its next meeting.
7. Ministers discussed the possibility of Council meetings being held back to back and that these meetings be held twice a year in March/April and October with Standing Committee meeting about five weeks beforehand. Tasmania offered to host both the next meetings if this was the preferred approach of members. Tasmania's offer was accepted and it was agreed Standing Committee would

report back out-of-session on the possibility of back-to-back Council and Standing Committee meetings.

## RESOLUTIONS

8. Council:

- (a) **ENDORSED** in-principle the directions identified in the draft processes and procedures at Annex A and directed Standing Committee to further refine the document for approval by Council;
- (b) **DIRECTED** Standing Committee to review existing underpinning committees and develop an appropriate committee structure to accommodate the work program and identify ways to streamline overall operational and procedural arrangements of the new Council; and
- (c) **AGREED** that the preferred timing for Council meetings be March/April and October and that Standing Committee would report back to Ministers on the possibility of the next meetings of the Primary Industries and Natural Resource Management Ministerial Councils being held back to back in Hobart.

**ANNEX A:** Draft processes and procedures for the Natural Resource Management Council and its associated Natural Resource Management Standing Committee

(incorporating decisions taken at NRMMC 1, 31 August 2001)

**PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES**

**FOR**

**THE**

**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**AND ITS ASSOCIATED**

**NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**  
**STANDING COMMITTEE**

**AND**

**UNDERPINNING ADVISORY**  
**COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS**



# PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

## CONTENTS

### INTRODUCTION

#### **1. MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

- 3.6 Objectives and terms of reference
- 3.7 Membership
- 3.8 Chairing arrangements
- 1.4 Secretariat support
- 1.5 Meeting arrangements
- 1.6 Management of agenda
- 1.7 Decision-making
- 1.8 Devolution of responsibility
- 1.9 Representatives on outside bodies
- 1.10 Record of meetings
- 3.6 Reporting to COAG

#### **2. STANDING COMMITTEE**

- 2.1 Responsibilities and terms of reference
- 2.2 Membership
- 2.3 Chairing arrangements
- 2.4 Secretariat support
- 2.5 Meeting arrangements
- 2.6 Management of agenda
- 2.7 Decision-making
- 2.8 Devolution of responsibility
- 2.9 Representatives on outside bodies
- 3.6 Record of meetings

#### **3. GENERAL POLICY FOR COUNCIL/STANDING COMMITTEE AND SUBORDINATE BODIES**

- 3.1 Meeting venues
- 3.2 Publishing policy
- 3.3 Media releases/statement
- 3.4 Availability of documents
- 3.5 Conferences/workshops
- 3.6 Regulation impact statements

#### **4. COST SHARING ARRANGEMENTS**

#### **5. TECHNICAL EXPERTS AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

#### **6. SUBORDINATE BODIES AND THEIR OPERATION**

- 6.1 Structure
- 6.2 Membership and observers
- 6.3 Chairing
- 6.4 Secretariat support
- 6.5 Timing and frequency of meetings

## 6.6 Reporting

## PROCESSES AND PROCEDURES

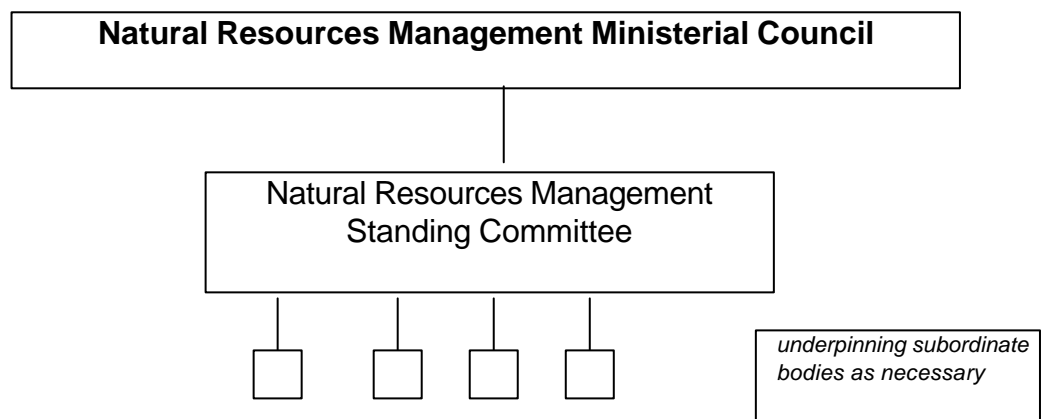
[The following *Processes and Procedures* are consistent with the COAG approved *Broad Protocols and General Principles for the Operation of Ministerial Councils* (COAG June 2001) - see Attachment 1.]

### INTRODUCTION

The division of Constitutional powers between Australian State, Territory and Federal governments severely limits the opportunity for consistent approaches to the implementation of national policies, plans and proposals.

Ministerial Councils are a device to help overcome this problem. Ministerial Councils in various forms have been in existence almost since Federation. In 2001 the Prime Minister, State Premiers and Territory Chief Ministers reviewed these Councils - both in terms of number and format - and agreed to a series of changes, including the creation of a Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. It was also agreed that the Council be underpinned by a single Standing Committee of senior officials.

In respect of this document, the Council and Standing Committee structure is represented diagrammatically below.



Meetings of the Ministerial Council and its related Standing Committee will be held at least annually.

### 1. COUNCIL

#### 1.1 Objectives and terms of reference

The agreed objective of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council is:

*To promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources.*

The terms of reference of the Council are:

- ?? To develop policies and strategies for national approaches to the conservation, sustainable use and management of Australia's land, water, vegetation and biological resources.
- ?? To oversee the development and implementation of national natural resource management programs including the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP), the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and other agreed programs.
- ?? To monitor and evaluate outcomes of these policies, strategies and programs and the health of the nation's natural resources.
- ?? To promote community understanding of and engagement with the key challenges associated with the sustainable use and management of Australia's land and water, vegetation and biological resources.
- ?? To liaise with other Ministerial Councils and other bodies on matters relevant to the activities of the Council.

## **1.2 Membership**

Council membership is open to two Ministers from each Australian jurisdiction. Such Ministers will have portfolio responsibility in their jurisdictions for any of the matters within the scope of the interests of the Council

- for consideration of issues out-of-session the Secretariat will direct papers to all Council members, with the most appropriate Minister in each jurisdiction asked to provide a single State/Territory response.

It is the responsibility of Ministers to ensure they are in a position to appropriately represent their governments at meetings, in particular for issues which require financial commitments. Issues with cross-portfolio or whole-of-government implications or of a highly controversial nature may require prior consideration by governments at Cabinet level.

Where new issues or alternative proposals arise at meetings on which a Minister believes further consideration by his/her Cabinet is required, it is the responsibility of that Minister to make this position clear to the Council.

As necessary, other Ministers may be invited to participate in Council meetings.

## **1.3 Chairing arrangements**

Council is chaired jointly by the Commonwealth Ministers for the Environment and Heritage, and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry.

## **1.4 Secretariat support**

A Joint AFFA/EA Commonwealth Secretariat will support the Council.

## **1.5 Meeting arrangements**

Council meetings are held at least once a year or more often if the work program demands, usually in March/April and/or in October.

Meetings are hosted on an agreed rotation by all non-Commonwealth members. Extraordinary meetings may be held from time to time, called by the joint chairs and generally hosted by the Commonwealth.

At any given meeting, the dates and venues of the next two meetings will be decided in accordance with the agreed order of rotation.

### **1.6 Management of agenda**

A draft agenda for each meeting will be prepared by the Secretariat in consultation with the members of Standing Committee and approved by the Council Chairs.

The draft agendas will be circulated to all Ministers via their agency heads who are Standing Committee members.

### **1.7 Decision-making**

Decisions of the Council are arrived at by consensus.

### **1.8 Devolution of responsibility**

With regard to financial issues, Standing Committee will seek from Council a degree of delegated responsibility to take decisions on financial issues up to a limit determined by Council, and without reference to Council, with the proviso that Council is provided, at each regular meeting, with a consolidated summary of all decisions involving the expenditure of funds.

### **1.9 Representatives on outside bodies**

From time to time Council will be asked to provide a representative on a particular industry or other body. In these situations, the Standing Committee Chair/s, after the necessary consultation, will resolve the matter on behalf of Council and provide an information report to Council's next meeting.

### **1.10 Record of meetings**

A record of meeting discussion and resolutions will be prepared by the Secretariat and circulated to all members for consideration/comment, and approval.

If they are not contentious, requested amendments to the meeting record will be incorporated by the Secretariat, and the final record published. Where significant changes are requested these will be discussed/resolved by the Secretariat with the Council Chairs who will have the prerogative of accepting or rejecting any proposed amendments, and the final report published as soon as possible, including on the Council's Internet site.

Any media communiqués issued at the conclusion of the Council meeting will be incorporated in the published meeting record.

### **1.11 Reporting to COAG**

Councils exercising formal decision making responsibilities must submit a report on decisions taken on an annual basis to the Council of Australian Governments.

Additionally, COAG requires that every 2-3 years Ministerial Councils should review their own structure, objectives and performance, and evaluate the implementation of Council decisions. Similarly, each 2-3 years Council must review its committees of officials and working parties to ensure that these are reduced in number to those which are essential, that those retained are clearly focussed, given a fixed time to achieve

their objectives and that their terms of reference include a sunset clause. The outcomes of the review process are to be made available in a report to COAG if requested.

## **2. STANDING COMMITTEE**

### **2.1 Responsibilities and terms of reference**

The main objective of the Standing Committee is to support the Ministerial Council in the achievement of its objectives and to develop cooperative and coordinated approaches to matters of concern to the Council.

Having regard to the specific terms of reference of Council, Standing Committee's role is to:

- (a) direct the work of its subordinate committees;
- (b) secure cooperation between members; and
- (c) advise Council on the initiation, review and development of Standing Committee activities.

### **2.2 Membership**

Membership of Standing Committee is limited to Department Heads/CEOs of Commonwealth, State/Territory and New Zealand government agencies responsible for the policy/regulatory issues which fall within the ambit of the Council, as well as a representative of the Australian Local Government Association.

As with Ministerial Council arrangements, where a State or Territory is represented by more than one Standing Committee member, those members may "delegate" one of their colleagues to act on their behalf at any meeting.

For consideration of issues out-of-session, agenda papers are directed to all Standing Committee members.

### **2.3 Chairing arrangements**

As with the Council, the Standing Committee is jointly Chaired jointly by the heads of the Commonwealth agencies responsible for Environment and Heritage, and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

### **2.4 Secretariat support**

Secretariat support for Standing Committee is provided by the Commonwealth.

### **2.5 Meeting arrangements**

Meetings are held at least four weeks before Council meetings. Meetings are hosted on an agreed rotation by members. Extraordinary meetings may be held from time to time and these will generally be hosted by the Commonwealth.

The cost of meetings (other than fares and accommodation costs of delegates) is met by the meeting host. Detailed requirements regarding meeting arrangements are available from the Secretariat.

### **2.6 Management of the agenda**

Items are only placed on the agenda of the Standing Committee through the Standing Committee Chairs or the Chairs of its principal underpinning committees. This ensures a focus on strategic issues.

When seeking nominations for agenda items, the Secretariat circulates a timetable to Standing Committee members and principle committee secretaries detailing timeframes and deadlines for the receipt of papers and their distribution to members.

Draft meeting agendas are circulated to all members for comment at least five weeks before meetings. The agendas are agreed at a teleconference of Standing Committee members.

Agenda papers are prepared to a consistent format. This format is explained in *A Guide to Authors* which is available from the Secretariat.

Agenda papers are circulated at least three weeks prior to meetings.

As far as possible, "information" items and routine matters are dealt with by Standing Committee out-of-session.

## **2.7 Decision-making**

As with Council, decisions by Standing Committee are reached by consensus.

## **2.8 Devolution of responsibility**

Standing Committee and its advisory/technical committees at all levels (hereinafter referred to as subordinate bodies) are required to address a wide range of activities independently. This requires a significant degree of devolution of decision making powers and responsibility from the Council.

The extent of such delegation is yet to be taken up with Council.

## **2.9 Representatives on outside bodies**

All Standing Committee members have the opportunity to represent the Standing Committee on outside bodies. The final decision on representation will be made by the Standing Committee Chairs, or their delegates.

Standing Committee representatives on outside bodies have an obligation to consult with and seek guidance from relevant Standing Committee members. Such representatives are required to report on their activities to Standing Committee.

## **2.10 Record of meetings**

Within two weeks of Standing Committee meetings, a draft record of meeting discussion and resolutions together with details of follow-up action, will be prepared by the Secretariat and cleared by the Standing Committee Chairs prior to being circulated to all members for consideration/comment and agreement.

The published meeting record will contain the agreed meeting resolutions as well as resolutions relating to items circulated out-of-session prior to the meeting. The record will also include details of required follow-up action arising from the meetings, specifying the member or members responsible for action on particular items.

If they are not contentious, requested amendments to the meeting record will be incorporated by the Secretariat. Where significant changes are requested these will be discussed/resolved by the Secretariat with the Standing Committee Chairs who will have the prerogative of accepting or rejecting any proposed amendments. Circulation of the Standing Committee report will be limited to Standing Committee members.

An action list covering all agenda items will be attached to the summary record,.

The Secretariat will maintain a complete record of all Standing Committee and Council agenda papers and resolutions.

### **3. GENERAL POLICY FOR COUNCIL/STANDING COMMITTEE AND SUBORDINATE BODIES**

#### **3.1 Meeting venues**

The locations of Council/Standing Committee meetings will generally be restricted to the capital cities of Australia and to Alice Springs, although Ministerial Councils may choose to opt for other locations if necessary, having regard to economy, convenience and relevance to the matters being discussed.

#### **3.2 Publishing policy**

When reports, discussion papers, etc are submitted to Council/Standing Committee for consideration, the subordinate body which submits the report should state whether, and in what manner the report might be published (including an approximate cost). This will facilitate decisions on how the report might best be made available for distribution to organisations and the public.

Significant papers (policy papers, codes of practice, standards, etc) will be published in a Council/Standing Committee Report series which is coordinated through the Secretariat.

The Secretariat will maintain a site on the Internet to provide information on all aspects of the Council/Standing Committee and their subordinate bodies. Publications (many free), including Council meeting records, will be made available through this site.

#### **3.3 Media releases/statement**

It is not appropriate for a subordinate body of Council to issue media releases, or to make statements on its own initiative without the approval of Council. Draft media releases or statements should be presented for Council approval and decision as to the manner in which such statements might be made.

#### **3.4 Availability of documents**

With the exception of published reports, as a general principle Council/Standing Committee working documents remain restricted to member organisations of Standing Committee.

COAG has determined that, subject to the applicability of the relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory Freedom of Information legislation, unless all members of Council

agree, any discussion by, or document of the Council, or any committee, sub-committee, working group officer or agent of the Council shall be confidential. Requests for Council and Standing Committee documents under the provisions of the Commonwealth Freedom of Information (FOI) Act are to be referred to the Council Secretariat in the first instance.

Where persons on Standing Committee subordinate bodies, eg working groups, are not officers of a member organisation of Standing Committee, the documents used by and prepared during the working group's tasks are provided to those persons for their use only as members of the working group and are not to be distributed more widely. Similarly, the discussion of issues in these meetings is confidential.

### 3.5 Conferences/workshops

Requests for approval of conferences and workshops are considered in the first instance by the relevant advisory committee. The advisory committee will then seek Standing Committee approval, generally out-of-session. All proposals should be nominated by the relevant subordinate body, or in the case of a member organisation, the relevant Standing Committee member.

## 4. COST SHARING ARRANGEMENTS

4.1 As a general principle, costs related to Council/Standing Committee activities are shared by the Commonwealth and the States/Territories in an agreed ratio related to the particular initiative. For example:

- . **national interest formula** (50% Commonwealth and 50% State/Territory funding for particular plant/animal exotic disease eradication campaigns) but applied to relatively few initiatives
  - involves all members to varying degrees as funding is generally a function of the gross value of production of the particular commodity being considered, or some other agreed formula.
- . **population based general funding formulae**
  - applied to the majority of funding situations where the costs are shared between the Commonwealth and States. The formula is revised from time to time by the Secretariat. The latest (based on ABS population figures at 1999) is set out below:
    - A = Commonwealth contributes 1/7<sup>th</sup> of the cost with the State/Territory members contributing to the remaining 6/7ths in proportion to their population; and
    - B = Commonwealth contributes 50% with States/Territories contributing pro rata according to population.
- . **bilateral issues**
  - only involving particular members with costs shared on an agreed basis.
- . **administrative issues** (eg publications and workshops)
  - costs to be shared by all members on an agreed basis.

**Cost sharing formulae based on ABS population figures as at 1999**

	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>
	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>%</b>
Commonwealth	14.3	50.0	11.9
New South Wales	29.0	16.9	24.1
Victoria	21.3	12.5	17.7
Queensland	15.8	9.3	13.2
Western Australia	8.4	4.9	7.0
South Australia	6.8	3.9	5.6
Tasmania	2.1	1.2	1.8
Northern Territory	0.9	0.5	0.7
Australian Capital Territory	1.4	0.8	1.2
New Zealand	-	-	16.8
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**A** = 1/7<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth and 6/7<sup>th</sup> States/Territories by population.

**B** = 50% Commonwealth and 50% States/Territories by population.

**C** = Australian Commonwealth/States/Territories plus New Zealand, by population.

- 4.2** In certain instances New Zealand will also participate in these cost sharing arrangements.

## **5. TECHNICAL EXPERTS AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

*Decision yet to be taken by Council on this matter.*

## **6. SUBORDINATE BODIES AND THEIR OPERATION**

*[In this context, "subordinate bodies" means all committees, task forces, working groups, etc which report to Standing Committee either directly or indirectly.]*

### **6.1 Structure of subordinate bodies**

Bodies subordinate to Standing Committee will take various forms ranging from high level advisory committees and task forces through to networks and working groups.

The title of subordinate bodies that are established to report/work to more than one Standing Committee/Council must be prefixed with the word "Joint".

To guard against duplication, Standing Committee must be advised of the establishment of any subordinate body, with the exception of those with a life of less than six months. Such advice must be accompanied by a statement of the functions proposed, draft terms of reference, membership, the agencies accepting responsibility for convening and supporting meetings, as well as a termination/review date.

All subordinate bodies must have clearly defined terms of reference and an approved workplan, which directly relates to the Council workplan.

## **6.2 Membership and observer status**

### General principles

Membership of subordinate bodies is generally limited to one person nominated to represent the interests of each Standing Committee member. Such nominees must have sufficient professional/technical expertise, seniority and delegated authority to speak and act on behalf of those they represent.

With the exception of the advisory committees, persons may be co-opted on a temporary basis, for a specific purpose. These may include representatives from universities, industry groups, statutory authorities, other Ministerial Councils, non-government organisations, other specialist personnel and stakeholders. Persons, other than those co-opted on a temporary basis, continue as members until they are replaced by their sponsors.

The involvement of relevant industry in the work of subordinate bodies is encouraged, as is the involvement of all stakeholders in committee-sponsored workshops/annual industry meetings, etc.

The Chair of a subordinate body may at any time invite persons who are not represented on Standing Committee to attend individual meetings of that body, but only in an advisory or consultative capacity for the purpose of assisting members, and on the understanding that any papers or discussion relating to that meeting be treated as confidential. When such an offer is considered, the Chair of the subordinate body in question should discuss the issue with the Chair of the next most senior subordinate body (ie to which it reports).

### Exceptions

Some subordinate bodies will have a valid requirement for membership outside the principles stated above and these are considered on a case by case basis.

## **6.3 Chairing of subordinate bodies**

As far as possible, Chairs of subordinate bodies should be members of the committee to which they report. If a deputy Chair is not nominated at the time of the appointment of the Chair then the committee itself should nominate a deputy as soon as possible.

Chairs generally hold office for not more than two years from the date of their appointment.

Unless otherwise agreed, each member of Standing Committee is entitled to have only one representative on each subordinate body except for such times as that representative is acting as Chair, when an alternate may be nominated to represent the member.

## **6.4 Secretariat support**

As a general principle subordinate bodies are serviced by the agency providing the Chair.

As far as possible, secretariat support (as with chairing), should be shared by all Standing Committee members.

## **6.5 Timing and frequency of meetings**

The Chair of subordinate bodies should discuss with the Chair of the committee to which they report, and with the Secretariat, their proposed meeting schedule/arrangements to ensure linkages to Standing Committee's procedures/timeframes.

Meetings of subordinate bodies must be timed to allow agenda papers to be available at least 10 working days prior to the meeting of the committee to which it reports - and four weeks in the case of Standing Committee.

Subordinate bodies may meet as often as business warrants although it is not expected that they will meet face to face more than twice each year.

## **6.6 Reporting**

As a general principle, subordinate bodies are to report on their activities and the outcomes of their meetings to the committee to which they are responsible. Such reports are to be available within one month of meeting. This, generally, will be done out-of-session.

Reports to Standing Committee should be as follows:

- (a) all matters for decision by, or for information of, Council or for decision by Standing Committee are to be submitted as separate agenda papers; and
- (b) all other matters dealt with are reported to Standing Committee by way of a consolidated information paper, generally out-of-session.

Reports are to be submitted to the Secretariat in the required format at least four weeks prior to the meeting of Standing Committee. (See *Agenda Papers - Guide for Authors* issued by the Secretariat from time to time.)

**Attachment 1:** COAG Protocols and Principles for the operation of Ministerial Councils

## **BROAD PROTOCOLS FOR THE OPERATION OF MINISTERIAL COUNCILS<sup>1</sup>**

### ? **Representation of Constituent Governments**

It is the responsibility of Ministers to ensure they are in a position to appropriately represent their governments at Council meetings. This is of particular importance where resolutions require commitment, especially financial commitment, from respective governments.

Issues with cross-portfolio or whole-of-government implications or of a highly controversial nature may require prior consideration by governments at Cabinet level.

Where new issues or alternative proposals arise at meetings on which a Minister believes further consideration by Cabinet is required, it is the responsibility of that Minister to make this position clear to the Council.

Ministerial Councils exercising formal decision making responsibilities should submit a report on decisions taken on an annual basis to the Council of Australian Governments.

### ? **Development of Agenda**

Council arrangements should include processes for ensuring that all parties have input to the development of agendas and that agendas are agreed at the earliest possible date prior to meetings, with provision for discussion of additional items at meetings only by agreement of members.

### ? **Provision of Agenda Papers**

Council arrangements must include processes for ensuring that agenda papers are circulated sufficiently in advance to allow appropriate prior consideration by the constituent governments, particularly where there are budgetary implications. Draft agenda papers must generally be circulated at least three weeks prior to a meeting. Additional papers can only be prepared after this with the agreement of the majority of jurisdictions.

### ? **Arrangement of Officials' Meetings**

Officials' meetings held to develop issues for the consideration of Ministers should be held at least three weeks prior to the meeting of Ministers to allow proper consideration of the issues involved.

### ? **Record Keeping Arrangements**

Processes for record keeping and minute taking are the responsibility of individual Councils.

### ? **Resolutions**

Decision-making procedures such as voting rules are the responsibility of individual Councils. Arrangements for making announcements of resolutions reached by Ministerial Councils should be agreed by all members of a Council.

---

<sup>1</sup> Agreed to by COAG on 7 December 1992. Revised by COAG on 8 June 2001.

When matters require further consideration, any Ministerial Council announcements should not pre-empt this further consideration.

? **Liaison between Councils**

When considering intergovernmental matters which have implications beyond the areas of responsibility of a Ministerial Council, other relevant Councils should be consulted through liaison between the Chairs in the first instance. Ministerial Councils should also refer such issues to Heads of Government where they have major cross-portfolio or whole-of-government implications.

? **Involvement of the Australian Local Government Association**

Except for matters where membership is explicitly set out by statute or agreement, it is up to individual Ministerial Councils to decide whether the Australian Local Government Association should be a member or attend proceedings.

? **Involvement of other Countries**

Except for matters where membership is explicitly set out by statute or agreement, it is up to individual Ministerial Councils to decide whether other countries or any other parties should be members or attend proceedings.

? **Efficiency of Council Operations**

Ministerial Councils should ensure the efficiency of their administrative arrangements and exercise due economy. They should regularly review their meeting arrangements and the number of meetings held having regard to the costs involved and the benefits to be gained.

In this respect, arrangements for the operation of individual Councils should also take account of involvement of its members in other Ministerial Councils, including the possibility of joint or back-to-back meetings where appropriate.

? **Consultation with Interest Groups**

In any consultations with relevant interest groups, Ministerial Councils should ensure that consideration of major policy initiatives by their constituent governments is not pre-empted or precluded. The status of any documents released to those groups or the general public should also be made clear.

? **Information about Councils**

Each Ministerial Council should make available in a convenient form, information on its:

- title and membership;
- role and responsibilities, including any pursuant to statute or agreement;
- administrative arrangements; and
- contact officer and address.

?? **Reports to COAG**

Ministerial Councils should make available a summary of Council outcomes to Heads of Government through the Chair of COAG after each Council meeting, if requested.

? **COAG Principles and Guidelines on National Standard Setting by Ministerial Councils and National Regulatory Bodies**

Under the 1995 COAG Principles and Guidelines, Ministerial Councils are required to prepare Regulation Impact Statements (RISs) for all regulatory proposals which would affect business or impact on competition. The RIS obligations complement similar requirements at the Commonwealth and State/Territory levels and can also be used to satisfy those obligations. Regulatory proposals must satisfy the principles for good regulatory practice and the guidelines for the preparation of RISs set out in the COAG Principles and Guidelines.

Under amendments to the COAG Principles and Guidelines endorsed by Heads of Government in November 1997, draft RISs should be provided to the Commonwealth Office of Regulation Review (ORR) for comment prior to finalisation. The ORR's role is to assist Ministerial Councils and national (ie intergovernmental) regulatory bodies prepare RISs which comply with the COAG Principles and Guidelines. The ORR will report annually on compliance with the COAG Principles and Guidelines and can at any time bring concerns it may have about particular regulatory proposals to the attention of Heads of Government through the COAG Committee on Regulatory Reform.

? **The Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Arrangement (TTMRA)**

Ministerial Councils have statutory decision making functions under the TTMRA. Councils can be required to make determinations in relation to the Temporary Exemption, Special Exemption and Referral mechanisms. Council determinations are made on a vote in favour by at least two-thirds of the Participating Parties to the TTMRA. When considering TTMRA issues, New Zealand is to have full membership and voting rights on Ministerial Councils. Any proposed standards or regulations considered under the TTMRA are to be developed consistent with the COAG Principles and Guidelines.

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR THE OPERATION OF MINISTERIAL COUNCILS<sup>2</sup>

The following are principles for the efficient and effective operation of Ministerial Councils:

1. Membership of Local Government and New Zealand (and/or other regional governments) should not intrude on the central functions of the development and coordination of policy, problem solving and joint action by jurisdictions within the Federation. However, such membership may often be desirable to facilitate consultation and national policy development.
2. Every 2-3 years each Ministerial Council should review its structure, objectives and performance, and evaluate the implementation of its decisions. This would be assisted by procedures for tracking the implementation of decisions and agreements made between the Ministers. The review should include an assessment of the Council's structure and relationship with other Ministerial Councils, and identify any areas of overlap. The outcomes of the review process should be made available in a report for COAG if requested.
3. Each Ministerial Council should clarify its field of coverage and the powers it exercises, consistent with the brief that Ministers hold from their governments.
4. The locations of Ministerial Council meetings will generally be restricted to the capital cities of Australia and to Alice Springs, although Ministerial Councils may choose to opt for other locations if necessary, giving serious regard to economy, convenience and relevance to the matters being discussed.<sup>3</sup> Meetings of Ministerial Councils should consider rotation of venues to ensure that the burden of travel does not fall disproportionately on some jurisdictions.
5. Every 2-3 years Ministerial Councils should review the structures of their committees of officials and working parties to ensure that these are reduced in number to those which are essential, that those retained are clearly focussed, given a fixed time to achieve their objectives and that their terms of reference include a sunset clause. The outcomes of the review process should be made available in a report to COAG if requested.
6. Ministerial Councils should meet annually. Councils may meet more than once a year in exceptional circumstances or where the work program of the Council clearly demonstrates a need. In all cases, when Ministerial Council meetings are scheduled, Ministers should check the agendas to ensure that a face-to-face meeting is necessary. Ministerial Councils should make full use of the technology available to increase the efficiency of their operations, including to reduce the need for face-to-face meetings.
7. Council agendas should focus on items of strategic national significance. Items of a procedural and technical nature should be delegated as far as possible to standing committees of officials to determine, or be dealt with out-of-session (e.g. by correspondence).
8. COAG should arrange for a list of Ministerial Councils to be published and regularly updated, including for each, details of its field of policy, roles and functions, operational objectives, membership, standing committees of officials, committees and working parties, secretariat arrangements and contact points.

---

<sup>2</sup> Endorsed by COAG on 8-9 June 1993. Revised by COAG on 8 June 2001.

<sup>3</sup> This principle incorporates changes proposed by the Prime Minister in his letter of 14 April 1997 to Heads of Government and endorsed by them.

This publication should also include the Protocols for the Operation of Ministerial Councils, and the COAG Guidelines for the Creation of New Ministerial Councils. Individual jurisdictions should ensure that this publication receives wide circulation among their agencies.

9. A Ministerial Council should only be formed or abolished with the endorsement of Heads of Government. The COAG Guidelines for the Creation of New Ministerial Councils should also be applied in all cases. To achieve consistency of nomenclature, it is desirable that, as far as possible, continuing, multilateral meetings of Ministers from the various jurisdictions of the Australian Federation should be called Ministerial Councils. Groups of senior officials which support Ministerial Councils should be called Standing Committees.
10. In cases where the field of policy covered by a Ministerial Council covers more than one portfolio in any particular jurisdiction, it is a matter for each jurisdiction to determine which Minister or Ministers are to attend and to arrange appropriate liaison.
11. Each Council may wish to review its arrangements for chairing with a view to considering the option of rotating the chair. Ministerial Councils may wish to examine their secretariat services along with chairing arrangements, in the light of options available, to ensure they have the arrangement which is the most effective for that Council.
12. All Councils should formalise their procedures so that they are consistent with the Protocols for the Operation of Ministerial Councils.
13. Subject to the applicability of the relevant Commonwealth, State or Territory Freedom of information legislation, unless Council approval is received, any discussion by, or document of the Council, or any committee, sub-committee, working party, officer or agent of the Council, shall be confidential.

oooOOOooo

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.4</b>

**TECHNICAL EXPERTS AND COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP(S):  
STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS**

1. In his letter of 5 July 2001 to First Ministers, the Prime Minister proposed that the NRM Ministerial Council receive technical and policy advice from a group or groups of experts and community-based representatives. The Prime Minister proposed that details of the group (or groups) be finalised at the first Council meeting.
2. The Commonwealth believed it was important that the NRM Ministerial Council have access to independent advice from technical experts and community representatives on natural resource management issues.
3. A proposed model for receiving such advice was presented (below) for Council's consideration. To facilitate communication and exchange of ideas between scientific experts and community representatives, the model proposed one group to provide both technical and community based advice.
4. It was proposed that a Natural Resource Management Advisory Committee be established, comprising up to 11 (part-time) members, including an independent Chair, and a balance of eminent natural resource scientists and prominent community representatives.
5. Membership would be drawn from the community, including farmers, and would also include experts covering the following disciplines: soil science, hydrology, sustainable farming systems, primary industries production, terrestrial ecology / biodiversity, aquatic ecology / biodiversity (marine and freshwater), vegetation management, integrated NRM planning, evaluation and monitoring techniques and community development and communications, including education and training. The Committee could contract other experts for advice on specific issues.
6. Membership would be determined by the NRM Ministerial Council based on a short-list of potential members proposed by the NRM Standing Committee.
7. It was proposed that the Committee have primarily an advisory role, with a charter to oversee independent audits of broad, overall National Action Plan progress as well as other NRM policies and programs. The Committee would have some limited capacity to commission work as directed by Council, and

would provide public reports, through the Council, on matters such as progress in implementing the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

8. The following responsibilities were proposed for the Advisory Committee:
  - ?? advise on any matters referred to it by the NRM Ministerial Council
  - ?? advise on the National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets, including
    - standards for salinity and water quality (due Dec 2001)
    - standards for other NRM issues, including biodiversity (due Dec 2002)
  - ?? advise on national accreditation criteria for regional plans
  - ?? advise on the adequacy / robustness of monitoring and evaluation processes
  - ?? advise on national priorities for collaborative capacity building in support of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust
  - ?? undertake or oversee independent audits of broad overall progress on implementing National Action Plan and other NRM commitments, including
    - land and water reforms
    - progress being made towards meeting regional targets;
  - ?? review annual reports from States/Territories and regional bodies on implementation of regional plans; and
  - ?? a more general function of supporting the Council and providing technical advice on the broader NRM issues to be taken on from ANZECC ARMCANZ, and MCFFA (which could include, for example, protected area management, coastal issues, and land/vegetation aspects of greenhouse strategies).
9. The Committee would likely meet four times a year, although more frequent meetings may be required in the first year.
10. It was also proposed that secretariat support for meetings be provided by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council Secretariat, located in the Commonwealth.
11. Most States did not support this proposition. While acknowledging the need for appropriate technical and community advice, there was concern that a single body on a standing basis would not be practical given the breadth of issues to be addressed. Instead, most States wanted the flexibility to call on appropriate technical and community experts from time to time to provide advice on specific issues. An alternative of advisory committees established on an issue-specific basis and made up of expert and community representatives was proposed.
12. Several States questioned the need for an advisory committee at all on the basis that they and the Commonwealth already have effective advisory bodies. Others were concerned at the apparent lack of accountability of such a committee and whether it should report to Council direct or through the Standing Committee.

13. As there was no consensus the matter was referred to Standing Committee for the preparation of a paper to Council.

**RESOLUTION**

14. Council **AGREED** that Standing Committee prepare an out-of-session paper for Council on the issue of any Advisory Committee arrangements to support Council.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.5</b>

### WATER REFORM – FUTURE STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

1. The COAG Water Reform Framework, agreed in 1994, is approaching the end of its envisaged implementation cycle in 2005.
2. The High Level Steering Group on Water (HLSGW) with CEO level representation from ARMCANZ and ANZECC agencies and established by SCARM in 1998 to assist jurisdictions in their implementation of the framework, believed that with the COAG agreement to the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality and the newly established NRM Ministerial Council, it was timely to consider the future strategic direction for water in the context of the overall management of the nation's water resources.
3. At its 17 August meeting ARMCANZ considered a paper prepared by the HLSGW on "Strategic Approaches for Water Management in Australia" (Annex A) which focuses on achievements to date in water management, current challenges, issues warranting early attention and outputs from the HLSGW that may assist with addressing the future agenda.
4. ARMCANZ members endorsed the paper and referred the important issues it raised for NRM Ministerial Council consideration.
5. The achievements to date have been significant, particularly in the urban context, but also in the rural environment.
6. Notwithstanding the significant achievements, much remained to be done. Ministers' guidance on issues and priorities covered in the paper was sought for incorporation into a work program.
7. The paper also identified relevant recently completed HLSGW products: *A National Approach to Water Trading*; and *Improved Management of Groundwater* for the attention of NRM Ministers.
8. Subject to Ministers' agreement and noting that some work is already in place, Standing Committee will develop a work program which will ensure that these areas are able to be addressed on a priority basis and brought forward for Ministers discussion and decision where appropriate.

## RESOLUTIONS

9. Council:

- (a) **NOTED** the importance of maintaining a focus on water as a key issue in its ongoing agenda to meet the management challenges set out in the paper *Strategic Approaches to Water Management in Australia*, prepared by the High Level Steering Group on Water; and
- (b) **REQUESTED** Standing Committee to develop a work program, along the lines suggested in the paper, which will allow discussion of and as necessary, decisions to be taken on water issues requiring a priority national focus at future NRM Ministerial Council meetings.

**ANNEX A:** Strategic Approaches for Water Management in Australia

## STRATEGIC APPROACHES FOR WATER MANAGEMENT IN AUSTRALIA

### Introduction

The COAG Water Reform Framework, agreed in 1994, is near to the end of its envisaged implementation cycle. The High Level Steering Group on Water, established by SCARM in 1998 to assist jurisdictions in their implementation of the framework, has also come to the end of its task. The HLSGW believes that with the COAG agreement to the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality and the newly established Ministerial Council on Natural Resource Management, it is timely to consider the future strategic direction for water in the context of the overall management of the nation's water resources.

This paper discusses the current situation, current challenges still to be addressed, and proposes an agenda for addressing priority issues at the national level.

### Background

The 1994 COAG Framework explicitly links economic and environmental issues within a coherent and integrated package of reform measures which include:

- ?? pricing water for cost recovery;
- ?? establishing secure access to water separate from entitlements to land;
- ?? providing for permanent trading in water entitlement;
- ?? specific provision of water for the environment;
- ?? water service providers to operate on the basis of commercial prices;
- ?? improved institutional arrangements; and
- ?? public consultation and education.

The benefits of the reforms in urban areas are substantial and include more efficient water use arising from a more focused, performance-orientated culture.

In rural areas, water is moving to higher value uses in line with expectations of the reforms. Much of this traded water underpins the growth of wine industry exports. The remaining issues need to be considered against a background of this progress and the benefits that are already evident.

Of particular interest to rural and regional Australia is the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality (NAP). The NAP has been agreed by governments to ensure that our land and water management practices will sustain productive and profitable land and water uses and our natural environments. The NAP builds upon and advances implementation of the COAG water reform framework and recognises that reform of pricing, property rights and regulatory instruments for land and water use is needed to protect the long-term sustainability of the resource base.

### Strategic Approach

The sustainable management of water resources is a goal which has been agreed to at the highest level, and one that all jurisdictions are committed to achieving. ARMCANZ,

in considering a National Water Policy Agenda, noted the future policies should focus on achieving the following benefits:

- Sustainable rural and regional growth;
- Enhanced environmental quality of rivers, streams and groundwater;
- Reduced conflict between competing users of the resource; and
- Increased customer satisfaction.

Notwithstanding the achievements, current management challenges are significant and include:

- (a) Increased competition for a finite resource
  - implementing market-based instruments (including pricing, property rights and water trading) and overcoming the impediments to trading while adequately managing the environmental impacts of trade;
  - addressing land use change impacts on water allocations;
  - planning now to accommodate the impacts of climate change;
  - integrated management of groundwater, surface water and overland flows;
  - implementing water use efficiency and conservation policies and programs to address ever-increasing demands on water;
  - pressure on rural use from increasing water demand from major urban centres;
- (b) Stressed rivers and streams
  - ensuring environmental values are given appropriate protection;
  - reconciling adaptive management approaches to environmental flow allocations with the requirement for Government to provide certainty for water entitlement holders;
  - improving and giving greater clarity to the current level of technical and scientific uncertainty regarding river health;
  - implementing monitoring programs that allow the ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of water resource planning processes in meeting economic, social and ecological outcomes;
- (c) Dealing with over-allocation
  - dealing with existing over-allocation of available water resources;
  - involving communities in decision making and coping with change and improving community understanding of the ecological condition and stresses on our river and groundwater systems and of the importance of the precautionary principle;
  - addressing inefficiency of water system infrastructure and resulting water transmission losses, with consideration of the principles for sharing of benefits from publicly funded savings measures.

### **Relevant HLSGW Products**

Work has proceeded on a number of these issues by the HLSGW:

1. *A National Approach to Water Trading* has been through its public consultation phase and provides a national framework of principles for water trading in surface and groundwater systems across Australia. This product can assist in informing the water using community and help jurisdictions to focus on the impediments that need to be overcome to encourage water-trading markets.

2. *Improved Management of Groundwater.* Groundwater has essentially been the forgotten element in water resource management. The National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality requires measures to implement the COAG water reform requirements relating to groundwater and for integration of surface and groundwater management. The HLSGW work on improved management of groundwater will assist jurisdictions in implementing these requirements. The suite of HLSGW outputs on improved management of groundwater comprises:
- a paper on Managing Over-Allocated Groundwater Systems as advice to jurisdictions to deal with the pressing issue of over-allocation of groundwater;
  - a “best-practice manual” for managing over-allocated groundwater systems, that could be used on a discretionary basis as part of the toolbox by jurisdictions;
  - a paper on Groundwater Trading as advice to jurisdictions to progress implementation of trading in groundwater systems;
  - paper on Groundwater Trading as advice to jurisdictions to progress implementation of trading; and
  - a Groundwater Quality Protection policy discussion paper that could be used for targeted consultation and finalisation of a Policy Position Paper.

A further HLSGW project is producing an updated and revised version of the ARMCANZ and ANZECC 1996 National Principles for the Provision of Water for Ecosystems, with a draft revised paper to be released shortly for targeted consultation. The HLSGW has also advanced the preparation of a report on managing externalities, which will continue to be pursued taking into account comments received during the public consultation stage.

## **PRIORITIES REQUIRING EARLY ATTENTION**

While some high quality analysis and policy development has been completed, much remains to be done. However, most States have legislation and plans in place that can specifically deal with a number of outstanding issues. There are some areas that could benefit from engagement of Ministers and where possible national agreement may be of significant value.

Ministers might wish to develop work to agree on, for example:

### **POLICY SETTINGS**

- resolving common **governance issues** which could overcome impediments to water trading (improved definition and determination of sustainable yield, pricing, infrastructure, stranded assets, restrictive rules, administration addressing environmental impacts);
- guidance on implementing **environmental allocations**, including the need for an ongoing adaptive management approach to water sharing, reductions to flows arising from climate and land use change and issues relating to river restoration;
- a common approach to **structural adjustment** resulting from re-allocation and implementation of market measures;
- addressing the need for common policies for infrastructure replacement and management; and
- **water use efficiency, re-use and conservation.**

### IMPROVED DECISION MAKING

- supporting **education and information**, in particular national information on water; management (ie the extended audit) to monitor national performance and raise consciousness in the community about the need for and benefits from the sustainable management of water;
- supporting greater scientific effort to establish **improved knowledge** of the linkages and drivers of river health;
- improving **consultation with the water industry** (including, resource managers, service providers and relevant community representatives and environmental organisations); and
- supporting initiatives (policies, technology, research).

In dealing with water management issues, it is essential to take a whole system approach and view water in its broader natural resources context. Water, whether in a stream or confined aquifer, is controllable, it can be harnessed, regulated and traded. If action to control water is addressed in its total natural resource system context, the broader catchment and private landholders, who have both rights and obligations, as well as urban issues, are drawn into consideration. A systems approach also elevates social issues to a level where they are seen together with technical issues, which is essential if the overall objective of sustainable resource management is to be achieved. Too often issues are dealt with at a technical level first, without the social issues being addressed. A systems approach raises the additional challenge to manage the public/private interface of change.

In relation to urban issues it is important to be aware of the urban/rural interface and ensure that the implications of increased urban demand are effectively dealt with. The public perception of urban water quality is also an increasingly important issue as highlighted by the 1999 Sydney water quality episode and concern about the potential threat from salinity in Adelaide's water supply. Changing consumer expectations for water quality will increase pressure to maintain water quality in catchments. Community expectations for ever higher standards in public water supply inevitably lead to higher treatment costs, demanding a more risk focussed approach that balances risk against cost. Ministers could seek advice on trends in urban consumption and on new solutions to manage demand and improve water quality, particularly innovation in water reuse and stormwater to develop water sensitive urban design.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.6</b>

## NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE VEGETATION

1. Council was advised that the *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation* (the Framework), published in December 1999, is an initiative of the former Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council. The Framework sets out desired national outcomes for vegetation, and best practice management and monitoring measures to facilitate achieving these agreed national outcomes.
2. Under the Framework, Commonwealth, State and Territory native vegetation commitments are being implemented through individual work plans, which specify commitments and timetables for progress.
3. In February 2001 progress against the Framework was independently evaluated and an assessment made of the appropriateness, effectiveness and efficacy of the work plans for achieving long term sustainable native vegetation management. The Evaluation Report was released for public comment. The key findings were that:
  - ?? although significant advances have been made, overall the policies and measures to reverse the decline in the extent and quality of Australia's native vegetation cover have not been sufficient to advance the goal, which remains far from being achieved nationally;
  - ?? jurisdictions could demonstrate good progress in implementing their Work Plans: however, the Work Plans are operational level documents which are not clearly or logically linked to the Framework desired outcomes or vision;
  - ?? jurisdictions need to develop quantifiable and measurable objectives (*targets*) for native vegetation management; and
  - ?? progress would be best evaluated through a consistent monitoring of vegetation extent and condition at regional or jurisdictional scales, through a coordinated national program in a regular cycle and against a set of agreed performance indicators.
4. Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments committed themselves, through the Natural Heritage Trust Partnership Agreements to reverse the long-term decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation cover by June 2001.

5. There has been significant progress under the Framework in many respects through the Natural Heritage Trust investments and individual State and Territory reforms. Nevertheless, the decline in the extent and quality of native vegetation continues and Australia is still well short of achieving this goal.
6. Sustainable management and conservation of native vegetation is required for many natural resource outcomes - maintaining land productivity, addressing salinity, improving water quality, protecting biodiversity, reducing greenhouse emissions, and is essential to safeguard government investments in natural resource management. It also provides continuing and potentially new economic opportunities for rural Australia.
7. The draft NRM Standards and Targets Framework, currently out for consultation, has initially identified interim salinity and water quality standards. These standards include native vegetation in the minimum set of targets that each region needs to establish in their regional plans. The second tranche of NRM standards will cover biodiversity and potentially other NRM matters. Again native vegetation targets will be required in the minimum set of biodiversity targets required for regional plans.
8. The Framework provides a useful baseline of best practice in vegetation inventory, measurement and planning and thus provides a valuable, nationally consistent guide to regional vegetation planning and target setting for the National Action Plan and for the regional elements of the extension to the Natural Heritage Trust.

## RESOLUTIONS

9. Council:
  - (a) **ADOPTED** the *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation*;
  - (b) **ACKNOWLEDGED** that increased effort is required to achieve the national goal of reversing the decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation cover and to develop targets for protection and restoration of native vegetation;
  - (c) **NOTED** that work is being undertaken as part of the draft natural resource management Standards and Targets Framework and the national biodiversity conservation strategy to define specific targets for reporting upon the protection and restoration of native vegetation; and
  - (d) **NOTED** that the Commonwealth and State Standards and Targets Working Group will examine how the Desired Outcomes and best practice elements of the *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation* can be incorporated into the natural resource management Standards and Targets Framework.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.7</b>

### POLICY ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

1. The amalgamation of the Ministerial Councils has created a broad range of issues within the scope of the NRMMC that will require active Council involvement over the next year and into the future. For example, several of the emerging issues relate to previous ANZECC and ARMCANZ decisions, while others are cross cutting natural resource issues. :
  
2. A selection of policy issues that Council may need to focus on at future meetings is listed below:
  - ?? Ramsar Wetlands/Migratory Waterbirds
  - ?? Oceans Policy
  - ?? Coastal Policy
  - ?? National Biodiversity Objectives and Targets
  - ?? Code of Practice for Firewood Merchants
  - ?? environmental markets to address NRM issues
  - ?? Environmental Management Systems (EMS) framework in Australian agriculture
  - ?? National Fisheries ESD Framework
  - ?? an Australian Landcare Management System
  - ?? Salinity and Biodiversity Taskforce Paper
  - ?? introduced marine pests – Developing national management arrangements
  - ?? preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (September 2002).

### RESOLUTION

3. Council **NOTED** the range of issues detailed for consideration at future meetings.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.8</b>

**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY  
– PROGRESS REPORT AND KEY NEXT STEPS**

1. The Council of Australian Governments agreed on 3 November 2000 to adopt the \$1.4 billion National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. Key objectives of the National Action Plan (NAP) are to:
  - ?? prevent, reverse and stabilise trends in salinity, particularly dryland salinity affecting the sustainability of production, the conservation of biological diversity and the viability of infrastructure; and
  - ?? improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment.
  
2. An Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) that sets out the overarching commitments and obligations of all jurisdictions to the NAP has been signed by the Prime Minister and First Ministers of all jurisdictions except Western Australia. WA has established a review of the State's Salinity Strategy, and will await the outcomes of that review before responding on the IGA.
  
3. The first Bilateral Agreement was signed between the Commonwealth and South Australia on 8 June 2001, furthermore:
  - ?? discussions are progressing between the Commonwealth and each of the other jurisdictions, excepting Western Australia, on the content of Bilateral Agreements; and
  - ?? officials expect to complete a number of Bilateral Agreements in the months ahead that will allow program funding to proceed.
  
4. Substantial progress has been made by the Commonwealth, States and Territories in setting out the core supporting structures for implementing the Action Plan. Major areas of progress include:
  - ?? development of criteria for the accreditation of regional plans (discussed further below);
  - ?? development of an interim national framework for natural resource management standards and targets;
  - ?? a communication program (discussed below);
  - ?? the elements and delivery arrangements for capacity building – training of facilitators and coordinators, information sharing, technical support teams, and research and development; and
  - ?? consideration of opportunities for market-based incentives for landholders to adopt best practice management and consider off-farm impacts of their actions.

5. In accordance with the Intergovernmental Agreement, a multilateral working group has developed national criteria that will be the basis for accreditation of an integrated catchment/regional natural resource management plan for each priority region. The draft national criteria have been considered by Senior Officials of First Ministers' Departments. Several jurisdictions have indicated agreement at Senior Officials level. Following agreement of First Ministers on the accreditation criteria, guidelines based on the accreditation criteria will be developed in consultation with jurisdictions, regional organisations, and other stakeholders. The guidelines will inform the regional bodies in priority regions of the State/Territory and Commonwealth requirements and expectations for investment of the National Action Plan funds in their region.
6. A joint communication program is being developed by the Commonwealth, States and Territories. It will outline agreed targeted actions, common messages, opportunities for common badging and arrangements for acknowledgment of respective investments. Some initiatives underway include:
  - ?? A series of fact sheets about the Action Plan and issues related to salinity and water quality.
  - ?? Public information through community meetings, presentations to stakeholder groups and via the Internet.
  - ?? In addition to on-going presentations to stakeholder groups, the Commonwealth, in consultation with States/Territories, convened a National Stakeholder Consultation Forum in early July as part of the process of engaging National community stakeholders, advising them of progress and seeking their views on aspects of the Action Plan implementation arrangements.
  - ?? Successful regional consultations were held in Queensland in March-April 2001 over the Action Plan and its implementation in priority regions; these consultations provide a good model for other jurisdictions.
7. The salinity mapping program has commenced, with initial activity in the St George area of the Condamine-Balonne-Maranoa priority region in Queensland. Discussions are proceeding with each jurisdiction to reach agreement on the appropriate level of investment in salinity mapping, and the best areas and appropriate technologies, including airborne geophysical mapping.
8. Commonwealth, State and Territory officials will also continue to develop, through the various Working Groups, the structures and operational arrangements needed to implement the Action Plan. Some immediate key tasks will be to complete the arrangements for training, information sharing, technical support, and research and development under the capacity building component of the Action Plan; to identify options and undertake pilots of a range of market-based incentives for landholders to adopt best practice management; reach agreement on the targeted actions and delivery mechanisms of a communication program; to continue to engage and consult with regional communities on the initiative, its progress and their central role; and to conclude the national standards and targets framework by the end of the year, as required in the Intergovernmental Agreement.

9. Concern was expressed by the Commonwealth Ministers at the apparent slow progress in implementation of the NAP. They indicated it was now the responsibility of Ministers to involve themselves in the process as officials can only take the negotiations so far. A number of jurisdictions welcomed the Commonwealth Ministers' offer to broker a way through some of the difficult issues confronting States in agreeing to bilaterals.

## **RESOLUTION**

10. Council **NOTED** progress in implementing the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.9</b>

**NAPSWQ - NRM BEST PRACTICE MANAGEMENT  
– GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS**

1. The Inter Government Agreement on a National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality sets out two broad components of natural resource management (NRM) standards:
  - ?? national natural resource condition outcomes that can vary between biogeographical regions or catchments; and
  - ?? national standards defining best practice management of natural resources which when adopted will assist in the achievement of natural resource condition outcomes.
  
2. The draft consultation document *Interim National Framework for Natural Resource Management Standards and Targets* is undergoing broad consultation, along with interim standards for salinity and water quality. Part B of this document describes how national standards defining best practice management of natural resources are intended to assist in the achievement of national natural resource condition outcomes.
  
3. The draft consultation document proposes that such management standards will cover the scope of issues addressed in integrated catchment/regional plans, and be capable of applying broadly to NRM systems established by governments – legislative, policy, process and institutional.
  
4. Under this proposal the following broad principles would apply at national, state, regional and local levels, to policy and planning relating to natural resources, and are proposed for inclusion in the Framework as a basis for the development of National Standards Defining Best Practice Management of Natural Resources:
  - ?? decision-making which is integrated (ie considering environmental, social and economic considerations), comprehensive and transparent, including adequate stakeholder consultation;
  - ?? an adequate legislative basis, with appropriate compliance and enforcement mechanisms;
  - ?? accredited regional/catchment scale planning processes as a key element;
  - ?? adequate monitoring and evaluation - including agreed protocols for measurement, and regular review and external audit;
  - ?? agreed protocols for data custodianship, management and exchange;
  - ?? decision-making based on good science and information and, where appropriate, predictive modelling; and
  - ?? consistent with the principles of adaptive management and continuous improvement.

5. A Commonwealth discussion paper has been prepared which proposes an approach to the development and implementation of the national standards defining best practice management of natural resources for Governments - legislative, policy, process and institutional. These standards are not intended to duplicate existing processes but are comprehensive in their scope and would apply to management of all natural resources for which the NRM Ministerial Council has responsibility. This paper provides some suggested principles and an approach that could be used as the basis for further Working Group development.
6. Several State Ministers expressed concern about the prescriptive nature of the Standards and indicated a preference for defining desired outcomes rather than the means by which the outcomes should be achieved.

## RESOLUTIONS

7. Council:
  - (a) **NOTED** the commitment in the Inter Governmental Agreement on a National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality to develop national management standards defining best practice natural resources management;
  - (b) **NOTED** the Commonwealth discussion paper; and
  - (c) **AGREED** to Standing Committee further developing an approach to national management standards defining best practice natural resources management and a process of implementation, for consideration by the Council at its next meeting.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.10</b>

**NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST EXTENSION – LINKAGES WITH THE  
NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR SALINITY AND WATER QUALITY**

1. The extension of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) is additional to the Commonwealth Government's commitment to the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. NHT funding will be available in the National Action Plan (NAP) regions.
2. An important element of the redesign of the Trust will be extensive consultation with stakeholders. Over the next few months, Environment Australia and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry – Australia will consult with groups that have been involved with the Natural Heritage Trust, to assist in the design of the extension. The State and Territory Governments, as major stakeholders, will play a significant role in the redesign. Initial consultation meetings were held on 22-23 August.
3. New institutional arrangements for the extension of the Trust will be integrated as closely as possible with those established for the National Action Plan. Investment from the Trust will be available across Australia to address the broad range of objectives of the Trust. The National Action Plan provides additional support for salinity and water quality outcomes in the 21 priority regions.
4. The intention would be to identify common outcomes for natural resource management and to draw on the Trust and the National Action Plan as necessary to fund activities to deliver these outcomes, taking into account the constraints and characteristics of each funding source. For example where Trust investment occurs in an Action Plan region, integrated delivery processes and a single comprehensive accredited regional plan to guide investment will be used wherever possible.
5. Further opportunities for integration exist in a number of areas. These include linking investment to changes in institutional arrangements to facilitate sustainable NRM practices and use, (for example, seeking consistency in State / local government regulatory and institutional frameworks to ensure that the achievement of Trust objectives are not compromised), and to land and water policy reform; as well as the integration of monitoring and evaluation frameworks and of data management systems.

6. Communication activities for the Trust and the NAPSWQ will be complementary and, where possible, integrated, recognising that the Trust has nationwide coverage and the NAP is focussed on the 21 priority regions. However, it is important that the Trust retain a separate identity as it is achieving growing 'brand recognition' and acceptance in the community. The NAP also needs to build an identity of its own to strengthen its credibility in addressing the specific issues of salinity and water quality. Opportunities for integrated communications will in the main be at the regional level where the synergies, both in outcomes and in delivery, between the two initiatives will be maximised.
7. Implementation of the Trust is guided by Partnership Agreements between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories, and by Memoranda of Understanding between the Commonwealth, States and Territories and local government. Implementation of the NAP has three levels of Agreement, intergovernmental, bilateral and at the regional level. With the move to regional delivery under the Trust, there will be a need to develop regional delivery agreements under the Trust Partnership Agreements. The NAP and NHT regional agreements would ideally be based on a common model.
8. There was general agreement that integrating the delivery of the two initiatives will require close cooperation between the Commonwealth, the States and Territories and regional communities.
9. A number of States indicated their concern that matching funding would be required for the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust. There was also concern about cost-shifting between the NHT and NAP. In response, the Commonwealth Ministers indicated that there would be no cost-shifting between the two programs and that the Commonwealth had allocated \$1 billion of new money to the extension of the NHT.

## **RESOLUTION**

10. Council **NOTED** that arrangements to closely integrate the operations of the National Action Plan and the Natural Heritage Trust will be developed.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.11</b>

### PROGRAM ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

1. The amalgamation of the Ministerial Councils has created a broad range of issues within the scope of the NRMMC that will require active Council involvement over the next year and into the future. For example, several of the emerging issues relate to previous ANZECC and ARMCANZ decisions, while others are cross cutting natural resource issues. :
  
2. A selection of program issues that Council may need to focus on at future meetings is listed below:
  - ?? funding allocations for collaborative national activities
  - ?? NRM standards and targets framework
  - ?? Natural Heritage Trust extension
  - ?? native seed supply
  - ?? quarantine border control - Impact of Budget decision
  - ?? fire ants
  - ?? nature conservation on private land
  - ?? management of parks and protected areas.

### RESOLUTION

3. Council **NOTED** the range of issues detailed for consideration at future meetings.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.12</b>

### MONITORING AND EVALUATION

1. Given the agreed objective of the NRM Ministerial Council as being *to promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources*, and bearing in mind the scope of the Ministerial Council as including the implementation of the NAP as well as the National Framework for Natural Resource Management (NRM) Standards and Targets, and accreditation criteria for NRM plans; and also the inclusion of such issues as biodiversity strategies and policies and sustainable native vegetation management, there would be considerable advantages in a multilateral approach to monitoring and evaluation of major natural resource management programs, including the NAP and the extension of the Trust.
2. Additionally, the recent review of the Trust by the Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) recommended that the agencies consider "*strengthening joint arrangements for analysing and reporting on performance information between the Commonwealth and States/Territories on related programs*", particularly "*common performance indicators and data-sharing protocols*. Additionally, the report recommended that agencies should *implement intermediate performance measures as an integral part of accountability arrangements*."
3. This work is related to other items in the Council agenda in particular the ongoing role of the National Land and Water Resources Audit.
4. Standing Committee believed that multi-lateral agreement on the monitoring and evaluation framework would provide for effective reporting on joint initiatives. A shared approach to the overall information structure, reporting requirements and data management and collection processes would be an integral part of the framework. It would use common data sources, not only to reduce cost, but also to improve comparability and consistency. It would draw on sources such as the NLWRA, the National Carbon Accounting System developed by the Australian Greenhouse Office, and other modelling activities.
5. An information structure that contained, but was not limited to, a core set of measures, would be capable of being used to report against state and national outcomes as well as the direct needs of NRM programs. Under this framework, a "nested" set of indicators could be developed for national, state/territory, regional and local level activities, to provide performance information at each of these

levels. The current and future measures developed through the NRM Standards and Targets process could be used for this purpose. (See Annex A).

6. The monitoring and evaluation framework should also ensure appropriate linkages to accountability and funding decisions, including the implementation of regional plans at the regional level.
7. Standing Committee advised that NRM programs are about managing the resource, not just the resource itself. Both NAP and the Trust have impacts on people, particularly as the agents for change. Consequently, NAP and Trust objectives include socioeconomic outcomes such as capacity building. Additionally, resource changes take a long time, requiring the use of intermediate outcomes and measures as recommended in the recent ANAO report. Many of these have socioeconomic aspects. Environmental, economic and social performance information would be desirable as outcomes of NRM programs.
8. A business case will be prepared to allow consideration of a common project / program management information system to be shared between the Commonwealth and the States. This will streamline the collection and analysis of performance information and address one of the ANAO report's key findings. There may be advantages in sharing this system with the Trust because of the common client group and the increasing potential for complementary activities in both programs. The proposed monitoring and evaluation working group could also be responsible for developing the business case.

## RESOLUTIONS

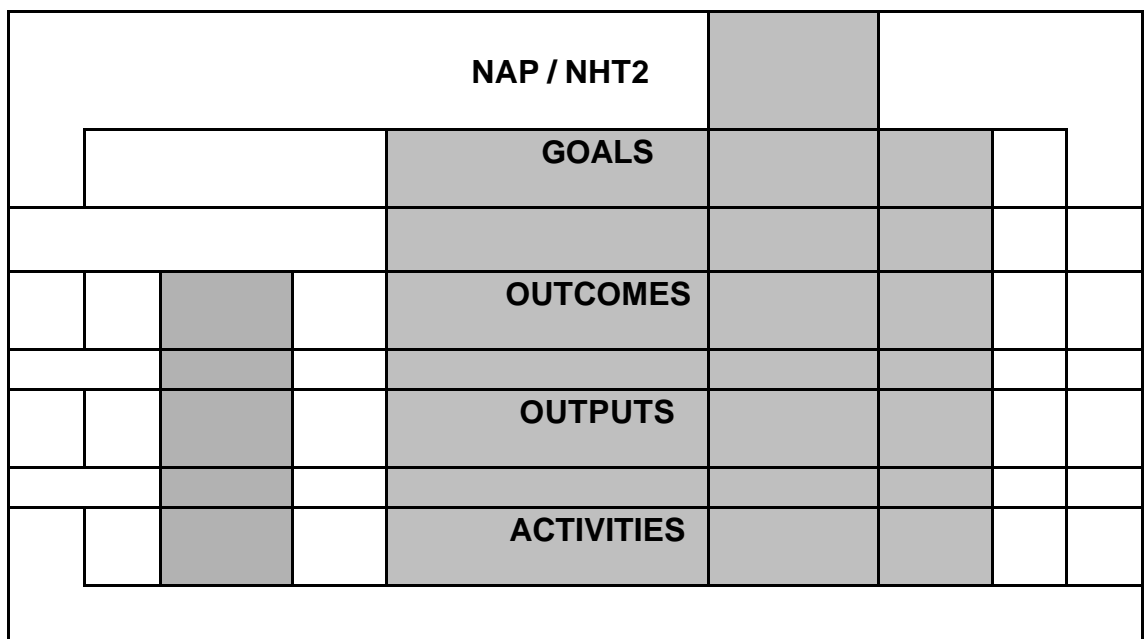
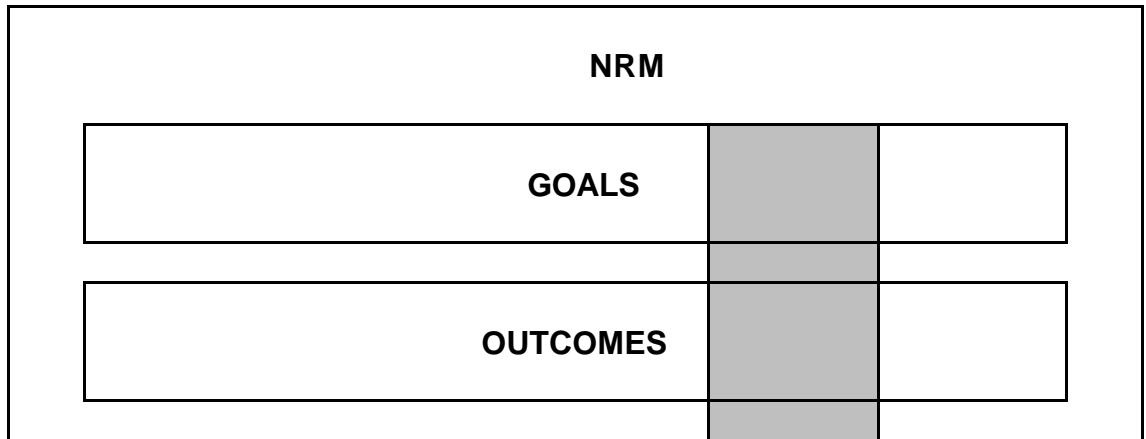
9. Council:
  - (a) **APPROVED** the formation of a multi-lateral officials working group, chaired by the Commonwealth, to address national monitoring and evaluation issues, with its initial tasks being to:
    - ?? establish a national natural resource management monitoring and evaluation framework;
    - ?? finalise the monitoring and evaluation framework for the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) concurrently with the national framework; and
    - ?? contribute to the monitoring and evaluation framework for the second phase of the National Heritage Trust (the Trust);
  - (a) **AGREED** that the framework will include a performance information and reporting structure, which includes economic and social indicators as well as resource condition indicators, intermediate and long term indicators and consider the use of an information management system to be shared between the Commonwealth, States and regions;
  - (b) **AGREED** that participation of a multilateral working group would be at a high level given that careful attention has to be given to the

development of a national monitoring and evaluation framework to ensure it effectively meets the needs of the Ministerial Council and Standing Committee;

- (c) **NOTED** additional issues to be considered in the framework including:
  - ?? developing overarching principles addressing for data collection and management issues of data quality both in space and time;
  - ?? ensuring all data collection be fully costed and effectively linked to existing programs; and
  - ?? that any additional set of indicator suites would need to be considered by Standing Committee prior to Ministerial consideration by 2002; and
- (a) **AGREED** to provide nominees for the multi-lateral working group from jurisdictions by 7 September 2001.

**ANNEX A:** Information Structure

**INFORMATION STRUCTURE**



*Legend*

<i>Management Information</i>	
Performance Information	
Core Performance Information	

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.13</b>

### INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION - REPORT ON PROGRAMS

1. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a framework to advance reconciliation at its meeting on 3 November 2000. The framework includes a new approach for governments based on partnerships and shared responsibilities with Indigenous communities, program flexibility and coordination between government agencies.
2. In addition to reviewing Commonwealth mainstream and Indigenous-specific programs and services, Ministerial Councils are required to develop Action Plans, performance monitoring strategies and benchmarks to promote economic independence and address the disadvantage experienced by Indigenous peoples.
3. With the changes to Ministerial Council arrangements the NRM Ministerial Council will need to refocus its efforts to include the activities/programs of agencies previously under the ARMCANZ umbrella with those of ANZECC agencies.
4. An outline of an Action Plan to advance Indigenous Reconciliation was endorsed at ANZECC 21/NEPC20 (Resolution 471) with the outline to be developed into an Action Plan for consideration at its (then) December 2001 meeting.
5. It is proposed that membership of the Standing Committee Taskforce which developed the Outline be broadened to reflect the agency membership and responsibilities of the new NRM Council and that work begin on finalising the Action Plan.
6. Council was asked to endorse the preliminary report to COAG (at Annex A) on progress with the development of an Action Plan and associated strategies.

### RESOLUTIONS

7. Council:

- (a) **NOTED** that ANZECC/NEPC discussed and adopted an Outline for an Action Plan to Advance Indigenous Reconciliation at their recent meetings in Darwin;
- (b) **AGREED** to the process proposed for further development of the Action Plan; and
- (c) **ENDORSED** a report (at Annex A) for COAG on progress with the development of an Action Plan to Advance Indigenous Reconciliation under the NRMCC.

**ANNEX A:** NRMCC Action Plan for COAG Framework to Advance Indigenous Reconciliation

## **NRMMC ACTION PLAN FOR COAG FRAMEWORK TO ADVANCE INDIGENOUS RECONCILIATION**

### **PROGRESS REPORT TO COAG**

A Taskforce was established by ANZECC and NEPC to develop an outline of an Action Plan to Advance Indigenous Reconciliation. The outline of this Plan was considered and endorsed by ANZECC 21 and NEPC 20 in Darwin.

COAG's revised Ministerial Council structure came into effect with the formation of the NRMMC combining ANZECC, ARMCANZ and the MCFFA Ministerial Councils. A Taskforce with a broader representation to reflect these changes will further develop the Action Plan outline, performance monitoring strategies and benchmarks under the framework of the NRMMC for endorsement at the next Council meeting.

On completion of the Action Plan and endorsement by the Council a full report will be provided to COAG on the NRMMC Action Plan to Advance Indigenous Reconciliation.

### **OUTLINE OF ACTION PLAN TO ADVANCE RECONCILIATION**

The NRMMC noted that the responsibility for progressing the priorities in the COAG Reconciliation Framework are not the primary responsibility of its member agencies. However, the special associations of indigenous people with the nation's natural and cultural heritage and their relationship with Australia's biodiversity and natural resources were recognised. In this context, NRMMC believed that its member agencies were well-placed to make a significant contribution to COAG's agenda.

The policies, programs and activities of NRMMC members are central to the interests of the Indigenous community. Partnerships with Indigenous peoples were seen as essential if NRMMC were to achieve their own agency goals. Accordingly NRMMC agencies will seek constructive and equitable engagement with indigenous people as both clients and partners.

A proper review of performance, and one which can lead to improved delivery of services and programs, will require input from the Indigenous communities and not be solely a process of self assessment. In doing so NRMMC saw it as important to identify what works and what is good practice in program and policy development and implementation.

The NRMMC Action Plan to Advance Reconciliation will be underpinned by the following principles:

- ?? Indigenous people are key stakeholders, clients and partners with spiritual, cultural and economic interests in the lands managed by member agencies;
- ?? Indigenous people are providers of environmental services and contribute to the achievement of national environmental objectives;

- ?? working effectively in partnership with Indigenous interests is an essential part of achieving our business goals;
- ?? programs and policies should be developed with Indigenous people rather than for them; and
- ?? effective evaluation and monitoring informs our policies and programs.

COAG identified three key outcome areas:

- ?? community leadership;
- ?? reviewing and re-engineering programs and services to achieve better outcomes for Indigenous peoples; and
- ?? building links between the business sector and Indigenous communities to advance economic independence.

With respect to these three outcome areas, environment, conservation and natural resource management agencies within each jurisdiction will examine the contribution they can make by:

1. Reviewing programs and services;
2. Reviewing internal agency business;
3. Developing or participating in cross agency working groups;
4. Incorporating capacity building and economic independence; and
5. Collecting relevant data to assist with performance and program development.

The NRMCC believed that a national approach with each jurisdiction maintaining flexibility to develop and implement its own strategies depending on local needs and circumstances, will result in high level outcomes against the points above.

oooOOOooo

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.14</b>

### PERFORMANCE/EVALUATION ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE

1. The amalgamation of the Ministerial Councils has created a broad range of issues within the scope of the NRMMC that will require active Council involvement over the next year and into the future. For example, several of the emerging issues relate to previous ANZECC and ARMCANZ decisions, while others are cross cutting natural resource issues. :
2. A selection of performance/evaluation issues that Council may need to focus on at future meetings is listed below:
  - ?? National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ) related issues: reporting arrangements on NAPSWQ progress; and
  - ?? land and water resources assessment.

### RESOLUTION

3. Council **NOTED** the range of issues detailed for consideration at future meetings.

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.15</b>

### FINANCIAL REPORT

1. A summary of the financial impact by jurisdiction of decisions under consideration by Council is at Annex A.

### RESOLUTION

2. Council **NOTED** the paper.

**ANNEX A:** Summary of the impact of financial decisions across jurisdictions

## SUMMARY OF THE IMPACT OF FINANCIAL DECISIONS ACROSS JURISDICTIONS

**Item 6.4 Fire Ants** - for information only of NRM Ministerial Council, as funding for this initiative is currently being sought through ARMCANZ processes. At the time of preparing this paper funding for this initiative had not been agreed by all jurisdictions.

Stage 2 (treatment stage) of the eradication campaign over at least five years is estimated to cost \$123.4 million, with expenditure phased as follows:

Year	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06
Budget \$m	34.0	31.0	31.0	13.7	13.7

The spread of the 2001-02 costs across jurisdictions is:

	%	\$
Commonwealth	50.00	17,000,000
New South Wales	17.02	5,786,800
Victoria	12.77	4,341,800
Queensland	8.67	2,947,800
Western Australia	4.80	1,632,000
South Australia	4.20	1,428,000
Tasmania	1.33	418,200
Northern Territory	0.46	156,400
Australian Capital Territory	0.85	289,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>34,000,000</b>

<b>Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council</b>	MEETING NUMBER: 1
	LOCATION: CANBERRA
	DATE: 31 AUGUST 2001
<b>RESOLUTION</b>	<b>NO: 1.16</b>

### NEXT MEETINGS

1. Standing Committee brought to Ministers' attention the COAG decision on the operation of Ministerial Councils which states *inter alia* that:
  - ?? "...Ministerial Councils should meet annually. *Councils may meet more than once a year in exceptional circumstances or where the work program of the Council clearly demonstrates a need.*"
  - ?? "... Officials' meetings held to develop issues for the consideration of Ministers should be held at least three weeks prior to the meeting of Ministers to allow proper consideration of the issues involved."
  - ?? "... *Draft agenda* papers must generally be circulated at least three weeks prior to a meeting. *Additional* papers can only be *prepared* after this with the agreement of the majority of jurisdictions."
2. Given the scope and extent of the agenda of the NRMCMC, Standing Committee envisaged Council needing to meet again towards the end of 2001 and twice during 2002. Accordingly, it was proposed that the next meetings be scheduled for mid-December 2001, June/July 2002 and December 2002.
3. However, given the likely impact of an election towards the end of 2001, Council decided to postpone its next meeting to early 2002. Additionally, as reported under Resolution 3 above, Ministers discussed the possibility of at least two of the three new Councils meeting back to back and that these meetings be held twice a year in March/April and October with Standing Committee meeting four to five weeks beforehand.
4. Tasmania's offer to host both the next meetings of Standing Committee and Council was accepted.
5. It was agreed that Standing Committee would report back to Ministers on the feasibility of having back-to-back Ministerial Council meetings.
6. The dates and rotation/hosting arrangements for future Standing Committee and Council meetings will be advised out-of-session as soon as possible, bearing in mind that the most recent meetings of both ARMCANZ and ANZECC were hosted by the Northern Territory.

**RESOLUTIONS**

7. Council **AGREED** that:

- (a) its meeting schedule be, generally, March/April and October;
- (b) whenever possible, the meetings of the Primary Industries and Natural Resource Management Ministerial Councils be held back to back
  - with the next meeting being held in Hobart;
- (c) the associated meetings of Standing Committee be held four to five weeks prior to the Council meetings and be hosted as for the Council meetings; and
- (d) the dates and rotation/hosting arrangements for future meetings be advised out-of-session as soon as possible.

# Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council

Media Release

---

NRMMC 1

31 August 2001

## NEW COUNCIL RESPONDS TO LAND AND WATER CHALLENGES

Primary Industries, Natural Resources, Environment and Water Ministers from across Australia met jointly for the first time in Canberra today to consider the way forward on Australia's pressing natural resource management issues.

The new Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council was set up by the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers to develop a coordinated approach to issues affecting the sustainability of Australia's land and water resources. The move recognises that the sustainable use and conservation of Australia's natural resources is a critical part of ensuring the continued enjoyment of a high standard of living by all Australians. All Australians benefit from natural resource based industries (for example, primary industries directly employ around 440,000 people with export income of over \$32 billion in 2000/01). Tourism and other industries also rely on natural resources and are major contributors to national prosperity.

The Council will tackle major issues such as salinity, deteriorating water quality and declining biodiversity. Land and water degradation costs Australia more than \$3.5 billion per year. Salinity already affects around five percent of Australia's cultivated land, one-third of Australia's rivers are in poor condition and species loss is a critical issue.

These challenges are impacting significantly on many rural communities and in some cases are directly affecting their viability. These issues also impact on our urban people, particularly through water supplies and coastal and marine environments.

Protecting natural values is fundamental to long-term economic prosperity and inevitably new and innovative approaches to landscape change and production practices will be necessary. One of the key principles for success is governments and community working in partnership to ensure that rural and regional communities are supported in maintaining and expanding profitable food and fibre production on a sustainable basis.

The new Council has already seen the benefits of bringing different perspectives to the one table. Ministers:

?? welcomed the extension to the Natural Heritage Trust and looked forward to implementing the second stage as a partnership between all levels of government, industries and communities

- ?? agreed to a consistent framework for the implementation of the Natural Heritage Trust and the \$1.4 billion National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
- ?? established a Taskforce to develop an indigenous reconciliation Action Plan, to enable indigenous communities to better participate in, and contribute to, natural resource management.
- ?? adopted the *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation*
- ?? agreed to develop a national monitoring and evaluation framework for natural resources that allows communities and governments to measure their progress in addressing natural resource challenges, in a cost-effective, affordable and practical manner.

### **Immediate Priorities**

Council also agreed on significant and immediate priorities:

- ?? implementing all aspects of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) with the recognition that many NAP activities (eg standards and targets, monitoring and evaluation, capacity building, etc) will have congruence with other activities for which the Ministerial Council is responsible
- ?? progressing the COAG Water Reform Agenda and consider future strategic directions in water policy
- ?? developing Commonwealth and State delivery and funding arrangements for the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT)
- ?? addressing the decline in water quality of inland rivers, wetlands, coastal rivers and estuaries and secure reliable water supplies for human use, industry and the environment
- ?? promoting action to reverse the decline in the native biological diversity, secure the long-term viability of native ecosystems, and maintain healthy ecosystem function as a basis for ecologically sustainable industries including agriculture, forestry and fisheries and
- ?? promoting the conservation and ecologically sustainable development of marine resources.

### **Key Issues**

The Council agreed that key issues to be considered and acted on in the near future would be:

- ?? managing scarce resources (particularly water) for both sustainable growth and ecosystems
- ?? definition of governance arrangements and the rights, duties and responsibilities of resource users
- ?? increasing indigenous people's capacity and participation in managing Australia's natural resources
- ?? understanding the sources of degradation and the costs and benefits of prevention, repair, mitigation and adaptation strategies
- ?? valuing our natural resource assets for the production and ecological services they provide
- ?? design innovative tools and policy measures for the delivery of improved outcomes (eg markets for water, carbon, salinity and ecological services)
- ?? clear and effective communication systems to engage all levels of the community
- ?? skilling communities to develop effective natural resource management

- ?? actively and constructively manage adjustment implications of changes in resource use
- ?? identify a series of high level performance indicators that are meaningful, practical, cost effective and affordable.

**Further inquiries:**

Yvonne Best – Media Adviser Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (02) 6277 7520  
0418 415 772 [yvonne.best@ffa.gov.au](mailto:yvonne.best@ffa.gov.au)

Belinda Huppatz- Media Adviser Minister for Environment and Heritage (02) 6277 7640

## NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

### Objective

To promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources.

### Vision

Governments working together to promote the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources through:

- ?? a meaningful and shared understanding of sustainability (leading to clear national goals);
- ?? adopting innovative and imaginative means to manage the natural resource base and achieve healthier landscapes, vibrant communities and strong regional economies;
- ?? understanding the geographic and social diversity of the nation; and
- ?? engaging all communities in constructive partnerships recognising the importance of natural resources to industry and community.

### Terms of Reference

The proposed Terms of Reference for the NRM Ministerial Council are as follows:

- ?? To develop policies and strategies for national approaches to the conservation, sustainable use and management of Australia's land, water, vegetation and biological resources.
- ?? To oversee the development and implementation of national natural resource management programs including the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the NHT and other agreed programs.
- ?? To monitor and evaluate outcomes of these policies, strategies and programs and the health of the nation's natural resources.
- ?? To promote community understanding of and engagement with the key challenges associated with the sustainable use and management of Australia's land and water, vegetation and biological resources.
- ?? To liaise with other Ministerial Councils and other bodies on matters relevant to the activities of the Council.

oooOOOooo