

# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

---

## Communiqué

NRMMC 7

3 DECEMBER 2004

Primary Industries, Natural Resources, Environment and Water Ministers from across Australia met in Melbourne on Friday 3 December 2004. This was the seventh meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. Specific issues dealt with by Council are detailed below.

### **National Action Plan and Natural Heritage Trust 2 Implementation Progress Report**

Council received a report outlining progress in implementing regional natural resource management through the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust Extension. Council noted that most regions will have completed regional plans and investment strategies by early 2005. The development phase is therefore substantially complete and programs are now moving to the investment phase with highly significant "on the ground" projects being delivered in the current and future years.

Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes from investments will come increasingly into focus, particularly their contribution to agreed regional targets. Council also noted that New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia have finalised plans under the national monitoring and evaluation framework and that the remaining plans are expected to be completed within the next six months.

### **National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and the Natural Heritage Trust 2 (NHT)- 2003/04 Annual Regional Programs Report**

Council received the Regional Programs Report, which sets out the achievements of the National Action Plan and the regional component of the Natural Heritage Trust in 2003-04. Council agreed to release the 2003-04 Regional Programs Report and 2003-04 Regional Programs Report Summary pending incorporation of final comments from States.

The 2003-04 report focuses mainly on the achievements gained through foundation and priority project funding, as funding through investment strategies has only recently commenced.

An important element of the report is regional summaries that show the linkages between investments, management action targets and longer-term resource condition targets. Reports on progress against management action targets and resource condition targets will commence in the 2004-05 Regional Programs Report.

### **Community Forum and Regional Delivery**

Council considered progress on a report by its Regional Implementation Working Group, examining issues raised by the 2004 NRM Community Forum and developing options for improved regional delivery. Council agreed to consider a final report out of session that would then be provided to participants prior to the next Forum being held in Darwin in April 2005 in conjunction with the meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council.

Council reconfirmed that the Community Forum provided an important opportunity for regional chairs to get together and exchange ideas. Council discussed measures for making the Forum more useful for community groups with different levels of experience.

### **National Water Quality Management Strategy – Guidelines**

The National Water Quality Management Strategy (NWQMS) is recognised by COAG as an important element of the water reform framework and national water policy agenda. In this context, Council agreed to the publication and public release of the following three guidelines as part of the NWQMS (noting that New South Wales has not agreed at this time):

- Guidelines for Sewerage Systems – Sewerage System Overflows;
- Guidelines for Sewerage Systems – Biosolids Management; and
- Australian Drinking Water Guidelines and the *Water Made Clear* attachment (in conjunction with the National Health and Medical Research Council).

### **Landcare and NRM Community Group Insurance**

Council considered a report requested in April 2004 of a scoping study of public liability and personal accident insurance for Landcare and related natural resource management groups. The Council requested further work by its Standing Committee to explore options for the provision of insurance to Landcare groups to be considered at its next meeting.

### **Revision of the National Weed Strategy**

Council agreed to review and update the National Weeds Strategy, originally endorsed in 1997 by the Ministerial Councils responsible for agriculture and resource management, environment and conservation, and forestry. The revision provides the opportunity to reflect advances in natural resource management and will identify strategies, actions, targets, and timelines to reduce the detrimental impact of weeds on the sustainability of Australia's productive capacity and natural ecosystems. The revised strategy will be consistent with the National Framework on Invasive Species, which is currently being developed by Council.

### **Siam weed eradication**

Council agreed, subject to funding approval by jurisdictions, to support eradication of Siam weed from Queensland sites near Mission Beach, Townsville and Mossman at a cost of \$1.12 million over the years 2004-06. Over the next two years the program will continue eradication while undertaking mapping to confirm there are no other outbreaks of Siam weed. Farmers, local councils and community groups will be enlisted to help in spotting the weed and ensuring it does not spread to new areas. Council also agreed to a two year delimiting study, subject to a Standing Committee review of progress after one year.

### **Marine Pest Incursions – Intergovernmental Agreement**

Council agreed that jurisdictions would seek approval to an Intergovernmental Agreement that sets the broad framework for the development of the National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions with final Council agreement to be sought out-of-session in early 2005. Council noted that the Australian Transport Council had also agreed in-principle to the Intergovernmental Agreement on 19 November 2004. Jurisdictions will be working together over the next two years to develop detailed implementation arrangements for the National System, including the ballast water management framework, legislative provisions and funding arrangements. Industry and conservation interests, and the Australian Transport Council, will be closely involved in the development of the National System.

### **International Ballast Water Convention**

Council supported Australia's signature of the International Convention for the Control and Management of Ships' Ballast Water and Sediments. Australia has been at the forefront in introducing international measures for reducing the risks posed by the introduction of exotic marine pests and diseases through ships' ballast water. Signing of the Convention sends a strong message to the international community that Australia is serious about implementing ballast water controls and supports the convention in principle. A formal process for consideration of Australian ratification of the Convention includes completion of a national interest analysis, consultation with relevant stakeholders and any necessary passing of legislation by the Australian Government.

### **Integrated Coastal Zone Management - Implementation Plan for a National Approach**

Council agreed that jurisdictions would seek approval for the Implementation Plan for the *Framework for a National Approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management* with final Council agreement to be sought out-of-session. The Framework was adopted by Council in 2003 to protect coastal and estuarine water quality, coastal biodiversity and the economic base of coastal areas around Australia.

### **Integrated Oceans Management - A National Approach**

The Council agreed to work towards a collaborative approach to oceans management and agreed to utilise the *Draft Framework for a National Approach to Integrated Oceans Management* as well as forward it to other relevant Ministerial Councils. The Draft Framework is the outcome of constructive and cooperative high level discussions between the Australian, State and Territory Governments. It includes principles that will guide Australian Governments in the application of Integrated Oceans Management nationally.

### **Offshore Constitutional Settlement: Fisheries Arrangements**

Council agreed that greater flexibility and efficiency was needed in Offshore Constitutional Settlements (OCS) fisheries arrangements to improve fisheries management across jurisdictions. Council also agreed that a broad power to amend existing and future OCS fisheries arrangements will be established in relevant Australian Government, State and Northern Territory legislation.

### **Resource Sharing in Commonwealth Managed Fisheries**

Council Ministers agreed to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreeing that the States and Northern Territory will manage the non-commercial component of any resource sharing arrangements developed for Commonwealth managed fisheries. It was noted that the Northern Territory needed to clear whole-of-government processes before it was able to sign. The MOU is a key instrument in managing resource sharing in Commonwealth fisheries. Council noted that arrangements for individual fisheries would be developed in accordance with the resource sharing package considered by Council.

### **National Fisheries Compliance Strategy**

Council endorsed the National Fisheries Compliance Strategy. The Strategy outlines the strategic objectives and principles that Australian fisheries agencies will pursue to promote cost-effective compliance programs that are nationally consistent and deter illegal fishing activity. At the heart of the Strategy is the need to achieve collective responsibility and action among major stakeholder groups and the community generally.

### **COAG Review of Ministerial Councils and Revised Processes and Procedures for NRMMC**

Council noted changes agreed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to the protocols and principles for the operation of Ministerial Councils and agreed to revised processes and procedures for Council and its Standing Committee.