

# NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

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## Communiqué

**NRMMC 8**

**15 April 2005**

Primary Industries, Natural Resources, Environment and Water Ministers from across Australia met in Darwin on Friday 15 April 2005. This was the eighth meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. Specific issues dealt with by Council are detailed below.

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

Council received a comprehensive presentation from the NRM Community Forum which met earlier in the week. The Forum comprises mainly chairs of Natural Resource Management regional organisations who focused during the 2005 meeting on the subjects of Partnerships, Risk Management and Science. Council discussed with the Forum a number of issues relating to Regional Delivery, including future funding for the current regional model, broadening the range of investment sources and communicating positive messages about regional NRM in Australia.

### **McKell Medal**

Council presented the 15<sup>th</sup> (2004) McKell medal to Mr and Mrs Tom and Cynthia Dunbabin of Dunalley, Tasmania. Mr and Mrs Dunbabin were awarded the medal for their outstanding and long-term contribution to NRM in providing practical examples of the integration of business profitability and sound environmental practices.

### **National Water Recycling Guidelines**

The NRM and EPH Ministerial Councils agreed to a process for clearing the draft National Water Quality Management Strategy (NWQMS) *National Guidelines On Water Recycling – Managing Health And Environmental Risks*. The draft Guidelines will be released for public consultation in July 2005. This will be a major milestone in the development of this important document that is designed to facilitate safe and effective water recycling for rural and urban areas as part of the National Water Initiative.

### **Implementing the “Defeating the Weed Menace” Program**

Council discussed the Australian Government’s new \$40 million weeds program for action against Australia’s most threatening and invasive weeds. The program will support coordinated weed control work with Australia’s network of natural resource management regions and raise community awareness about Australia’s serious weed problem.

### **Review of the National Red Imported Fire Ants Program**

Council noted the satisfactory progress of the eradication Program and results from an independent scientific review. Council agreed to modified milestones concerning treatment, surveillance, auditing and scientific review in continuing the Program. Council also approved the 2005/2006 budget component of \$24,566,000 subject to funding approval by jurisdictions. The Program is subject to an efficiency audit which will be conducted by an external auditor before June 2005.

### **Market-based Instruments – Agreement for Round 2 Funding**

Council noted the preliminary findings from Round One of the National Market Based

Instruments (MBI) Pilots Program that demonstrated the potential of MBIs to deliver cost savings in natural resource management and their contribution to the design of innovative approaches for measuring environmental outcomes.

Council agreed to take forward a second round of pilot programs, up to a maximum of a further \$5 million. This funding is subject to the development and approval by Standing Committee of an indicative work plan and a full evaluation of Round One projects.

### **National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions – Intergovernmental Agreement**

Australian Government, Victorian, Tasmanian and Northern Territory Ministers signed an Intergovernmental Agreement that sets the framework for the development of the National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions. Remaining jurisdictions are still to finalise their approval processes in relation to the IGA. The National System will provide the basis for ensuring that marine environment is protected and marine resource based industries are best positioned to respond to the threat posed by marine pests.

The Agreement paves the way for jurisdictions to work 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.

### **Treatment of Commercial Fishers in the Establishment of Marine Protected Areas**

Council agreed that where future Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) are declared for biodiversity conservation purposes, relevant jurisdictions will consider on a case by case basis, offering assistance to impacted fishing enterprises and fishers and subject to the provisions of such declarations, relevant jurisdictions will treat fishers consistently whether they are participants in State/NT or Commonwealth managed fisheries.

### **Farm Forestry National Action Statement**

Council endorsed in-principle a new Farm Forestry National Action Statement. The Statement outlines actions for the Australian, State and Territory governments and the forest and wood products industry to further develop farm forestry. Farm forestry has the potential to provide many positive economic, social and environmental outcomes for rural and regional communities. The Statement sets out a vision to increase the adoption of commercial tree growing and management as a potentially important element of Australian farming and a component of regional natural resource planning.

Council also requested Standing Committee provide advice to Council's next meeting on options for full endorsement of the NAS proposed actions.

### **Strategic Directions for the NRM Ministerial Council**

Council considered options for future strategic directions and discussed a number of current and emerging priority issues considered to be of national significance in natural resource management. These issues include the ongoing effectiveness of the regional delivery model in implementing the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and Natural Heritage Trust (NHT); the National Water Initiative; decline in biological diversity; sustainable land management; climate change; invasive species and the conservation and ecological sustainable development of marine resources.

**National Water Initiative**

Council endorsed the further development of a National Water Initiative work plan that outlines the Council's role in overseeing and implementing the National Water Initiative Intergovernmental Agreement. The objective of the work plan is to assist jurisdictions in meeting their obligations under the National Water Initiative where the National Water Initiative requires nationally consistent and compatible actions.

The Council will invite the Chair of the National Water Commission to present an overview of its work plan as soon as practicable to assist in ensuring coordinated implementation of the National Water Initiative. Council also noted the value of consulting with other Ministerial Councils, including the Primary Industries Ministerial Council and the Environment Protection and Heritage Council, in progressing the National Water Initiative.

**NRM and Climate Change**

Council received a presentation on Climate Change from Prof Tim Flannery (Chair, South Australian Premier's Round Table on Sustainability Climate Change). The Council recognised that the impacts of climate change stretch across many sectors of the economy, the environment and society, and in particular can affect NRM activities. The Council agreed to review its work program with a view to consider how climate change may affect the conduct of existing NRM activities.

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading**

The Council discussed a proposal for domestic emissions trading as a means of delivering greenhouse gas abatement and natural resource management outcomes. Council noted the potential of emissions trading, supported by complementary measures, to deliver cost-effective emissions abatement consistent with the national interest.

**NAP/NHT2 Implementation Progress Report**

Council was pleased to note that all NRM regions are expected to have accredited Plans in place by mid-2005. Regional delivery has progressed from the implementation phase to the investment phase where projects will be based on regionally identified priorities and with progress measured within a mutually agreed monitoring and reporting framework. Council noted that jurisdictions are considering the next phase of NRM programs bearing in mind that 2005-06 to 2007-08 represents the final three-year investment period for the current NAP/NHT2 programs.