

NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

Communiqué

NRMMC 17

23 April 2010

Primary industries, natural resources, and environment ministers from across Australia met in Darwin on Friday 23 April 2010. This was the seventeenth meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council. Specific issues dealt with by council are detailed below.

McKell Medal

The winner of the 24th McKell Medal was Mr Bill Crabtree from Beckenham in Western Australia. Mr Crabtree has been a driving force encouraging farmers to adopt no-till farming systems that improve soil structure and nutrient recycling, and reduce soil evaporation, wind and water erosion.

The McKell Medal is awarded annually by the council to recognise outstanding achievements in shaping community attitudes and practices in natural resource management. The medal honours the contribution to soil and land conservation of Sir William McKell, former Governor-General of Australia and former Premier of New South Wales.

Two certificates of merit were awarded: one to Ms Lyn Dohle for her work encouraging adoption of improved land management practices on Kangaroo Island and one to Ms Lorraine Edmund for her work on biodiversity conservation and weed management in the Flinders Ranges.

Regional Chairs' presentation

Council received a presentation from the Chairs of the Regional NRM bodies. Key points made by the chairs were the need for ongoing work to improve NRM governance, the strong interest regional bodies had in supporting a national system for environmental information and accounts, opportunities for regional bodies to pursue carbon sequestration in the landscape, continuing effort to encourage volunteers and Landcare as part of approaches to environmental and resource management improvement.

National Water Initiative pricing principles

The council endorsed the National Water Initiative (NWI) pricing principles. The NWI pricing principles provide a set of guidelines or road map for pricing practices and will assist jurisdictions to implement water pricing in a consistent way. The NWI pricing principles and associated 'regulation impact statement' are available from the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts website:

www.environment.gov.au/water.

The Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity and the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement

The council endorsed the draft Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity for consideration by COAG and noted it provides a blueprint for governments to collectively use their resources to ensure that Australia maintains its favourable biosecurity status. The council also endorsed that National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement as the first deliverable under the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity.

Future operation and cost-sharing arrangements of the ad hoc, long-term eradication programs

The council endorsed the recommendations of the National Management Groups established for the oversight of the ad-hoc, long term eradication programs for, Siam weed, the four tropical weeds (koster's curse, limnocharis, mikania vine and some miconia species), red imported fire ants, and electric ants determining the future operation and cost sharing arrangements for these programs. Future response arrangements are to be managed in line with the principles contained in the National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement.

Ornamental Fish Management Implementation Group (OFMIG)

The council noted the need to develop a regulatory framework for the management of ornamental (aquarium) fish in Australia. Over the next year the Australian Government will continue to work with the state governments to recommend control options for the regulation of ornamental fish traded in Australia to achieve national consistency and best practice. OFMIG will also continue working through the 'grey list' to determine the next tranche of species that should be added to the National Noxious Fish List.

Progress on the implementation of the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy 2009–2014

The council has noted the first report from the National Koala Conservation and Management Strategy implementation team. This report outlines the wide range of activities underway nationally to manage and conserve koalas and provides a baseline to assess how implementation of the strategy is progressing. Ministers noted the need for better koala population monitoring, in order to track population trends and assess the effectiveness of management actions.

A national approach to addressing climate change impacts on oceans and coasts

The council notes that COAG is expected to consider national priorities and actions for climate change adaptation in 2010. The council has agreed to the development of a coordinated approach to address the impacts of climate change on natural resources in marine and coastal systems. The council acknowledged the need to coordinate this work with the COAG Senior Officials Group on Climate Change and Adaptation.

Progress on the implementation of the Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) framework

The council noted the achievements made in implementing the Intergovernmental Coastal Zone Management framework (ICZM framework). It also agreed to refine the role and governance of the ICZM framework to address implementation challenges. The council acknowledged the most pressing priorities for mitigating against the impact of climate change on natural resources in the coastal zone. It will begin mobilising resources to address these priorities, ensuring effective connectivity with broader coastal strategies. The council will endeavour to collaborate with other

ministerial councils (those responsible for local government and planning, and police and emergency management) to promote cross-portfolio engagement on strategies. The council acknowledged the need to coordinate this work with the COAG Senior Officials Group on Climate Change and Adaptation.

Aquatic environments: a national approach to monitoring, evaluation and reporting

The council endorsed the ‘common assessment and reporting framework’ and supported the development and adoption of a national approach to monitoring, evaluation and reporting for estuarine, coastal and marine environments. Over the next year, national, state and territory governments will work together to recommend options for implementing a national approach to monitoring, evaluation and reporting in estuarine, coastal and marine environments.

Advancing Indigenous reconciliation in primary industries and natural resource management—employment: key actions and partnerships

The council confirmed its commitment to increasing the participation and employment of Indigenous people in the primary industries and natural resource management sectors, with the potential to assist in addressing ‘Closing the Gap’ priorities. Jurisdictions will continue to consider the range of strategies that can be best progressed within their state or territory, including joint strategies and partnerships with the Australian Government.

National approach to natural resource management in the rangelands

The rangelands cover much of Australia. They contribute greatly to Australia’s biodiversity. In addition, much of Australia’s agricultural and mineral worth comes from the rangelands. The council today endorsed the ‘Principles for Sustainable Resource Management in the Rangelands’ for publication. The principles provide a reference for committees reporting to council to use when developing national strategies. The principles outline the unique features and values of the rangelands and guiding factors underpinning resource management in Australia’s stunning rangeland landscapes. The publication is available at:

www.environment.gov.au/land/rangelands/policies.html