

**SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS**

**Opening statements**

Submission No: ..... 2 .....
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*DEWHA*

- The report is, overall, a reasonable assessment of the strengths of current arrangements and those areas which require further attention.
- The Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality conclude on 30 June 2008 and to the extent that we can we have looked at opportunities to address areas identified in the report as these programs come to an end.
- The Australian Government's new initiative for investing in environment protection and sustainable management of natural resources, Caring for our Country, is scheduled to commence on 1 July 2008.
- While we are still developing a number of the administrative systems to support Caring for our Country, we have and will continue to take the findings of the Audit into account as part of our considerations of arrangements for the delivery of this new program.
- The Audit notes the progress made in improving the administration of regional delivery, particularly in the area of governance.
- As we move into the implementation phase of Caring for our Country, we will continue to support ongoing improvements in governance and administration by regional bodies.
- Actions are currently underway to improve the knowledge legacy of the program –the Caring for our Country initiative places particular emphasis on improving outcomes in this area and in being able to more clearly measure and report outcomes from the Government's investment.
- The new business model that characterises Caring for our Country will greatly assist in this area.

*DAFF*

- We agreed with the four recommendations in the ANAO report and they will provide guidance for the design of future regional delivery arrangements under the new environment and land management program, Caring for our Country.
- The new program begins at the conclusion of the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality on 30 June 2008.
- The report acknowledges that progress in implementing improvements in administration following the 2004 Audit of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality has been comprehensive and well-focused on significant risks; and that the administrative arrangements relating to the regional delivery model have been subject to substantial review and improvement since the previous audit.