

**Central Coast Catchments Committee Incorporated**

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The Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir / Madam,

I am writing on behalf of the Central Coast Regional Catchment Committee (NSW) to provide you with a submission to the Standing Committee's inquiry into Catchment Management. Please note that the scope of this submission mainly covers NSW and, in particular, the Central Coast of NSW.

If you have any enquiries regarding the attached submission, please contact Mr. Neil Dufty on (02) 4381 2314 or any of the three Catchment Management Committee (CMC) Coordinators in the Central Coast NREM Region as follows:

- Mr. Michael Dean, Coordinator, Brisbane Water and Gosford Lagoons CMC. Phone: (02) 4324 3844
- Ms. Anna Ferguson, Coordinator, Lake Macquarie CMC. Phone: (02) 4929 9857.
- Mr Shaun Northard, Coordinator, Tuggerah Lakes CMC. Phone (02) 4350 5158.

I trust this submission assists your committee in its inquiry.

Yours faithfully,

Neil Dufty  
Coordinator  
Central Coast Regional Catchment Committee

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**Central Coast Regional Catchment Committee**  
**Submission to the Standing Committee Inquiry into Catchment**  
**Management**

**Executive Summary**

The development of catchment management in Australia has been partly based on models from the USA including the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District.

The pioneering work of Ernest 'Watershed' Jackson in advocating total catchment management in Australia should be acknowledged. The NSW Soil Conservation Service also played an important role in developing catchment management practices in NSW.

Catchment management has great value to environmental management due to its requirement for stewardship and ownership of natural resources by communities on a catchment basis.

This committee prefers a model of NREM Management with Catchment Management Committees (CMCs) as the centrepiece of the coordination process. Regional Catchment Committees provide opportunities to better resource CMCs to assess regional funding applications and also to develop and implement regional NREM strategic plans.

## Central Coast Regional Catchment Committee

### Submission - Inquiry into Catchment Management by House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage

- The Development of Catchment Management in Australia

Catchment management activity in eastern Australia can be tracked back at least 50 years ago. Part of the initial public 'movement' for catchment management stems from the models of the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Muskingum (Ohio) Watershed Conservancy District from USA.

The Tennessee Valley Authority commenced in 1933 with the basic objective:  
*"...to supplement the efforts of a region, to develop its total resources for the benefit of the area and the Nation. Its mission was, and continues to be, to bring resources into balance. The problem was even more basic to spark individual initiative and co-ordinate the efforts of all echelons of government".*

The Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District of Ohio was also set up in 1933 funded largely by President Roosevelt's New Deal of the Depression years. This scheme has emphasised the importance of integrated natural resource management in the hands of local communities who have the means and authority to work co-operatively with the appropriate government agencies.

There is evidence that the Hunter Valley Research Foundation inspected Muskingum in 1961 with a view of setting up a similar catchment management model in the Hunter Valley of NSW. It is believed this 'Muskingum experience' added to the early catchment management activities of the Hunter Valley Conservation Trust which was established in 1950 (this area is now managed by the Hunter Catchment Management Trust). Some twenty years later, the Hunter Valley Conservation Trust issued the following statement about its activities:

*"It (the Trust) functions on the principle that the complete catchment of a river system is the ideal unit for conservation practices, that a flood mitigation program cannot be completely divorced from proper conservation practices and that co-operation between valley landowners, local groups and Government Departments is essential if ultimate success is to be achieved."*

In 1960, the Watershed Association of Victoria was formed to lobby for the formation of locally controlled and co-ordinated catchment projects (similar to what we now call Catchment Management Committees). A pioneering figure involved in this and several other organisations (including the Victorian Irrigation Research and Promotion Organisation) was Ernest 'Watershed' Jackson. Mr. Jackson gained the nickname of 'Watershed' for his promotion of the catchment philosophy over some 40 years, particularly in the Murray-Darling

Basin. (note: the term 'watershed' is synonymous with 'catchment' in northern hemisphere countries). He completed a book on the Catchment Philosophy entitled *'Replenish the Earth'* in 1982. Ernest Jackson through serving on numerous committees, writing books, articles and letters to politicians greatly swayed political opinion to introduce total or integrated catchment management in Victoria and New South Wales.

During the 1970's, the catchment management movement collected impetus with numerous community projects being implemented and endorsed by government agencies. A major initiative through state soil conservation agencies was Group Catchment Projects in which neighbouring properties formed Group Conservation Areas to control erosion, promote correct land management and increase productivity. A well-known example of a Group Conservation Area is Victoria's Eppalock Catchment Project. It involved a co-ordinated land and water conservation project primarily aimed at minimising sediment flows into the newly-constructed Eppalock Dam. Not only did the erosion control measures reduce the sediment flow by one-sixth but also farm productivity increased threefold.

The work of the Westernport Catchment Co-ordinating Group was another early example of what we now call Total Catchment Management. Westernport Catchment drains into Westernport Bay in southern Victoria. The Catchment Coordination Group functioned under the Department of the Premier and had its professional staff and funding by virtue of the State Co-ordination Act. One of the Group's responsibilities was "...to ensure that the planning and management of development of the Westernport Catchment was carried out in accordance with the Government's expressed aim of using the Catchment's resources in the best interest of the whole community." The Coordinating Group also developed a comprehensive catchment community education program called the Westernport Catchment Awareness Program.

During the 1970's the NSW Soil Conservation Service also demonstrated an interest in catchment management with several official documents on the subject and field officers promoting the catchment philosophy particularly in rural parts of the state. In fact, the service had a long history of catchment management activities dating back to 1915. Dr. Brian Roberts of the University of Southern Queensland provided a significant influence through his academic writing and development of practical extension courses.

It should be noted that during this decade, several documents, including government policies, mentioned catchment management as meaning 'water reservoir catchments'. These documents did not necessarily embrace the philosophy of government and communities working together for sustainable management of natural resources on a catchment basis. They were more related to protecting a water storage area which could mean restricting most or all development in the catchment area.

The 1980's saw great momentum in lobbying for Total Catchment Management as government policy embodied in legislation. Some milestones included:

- The advent of catchment education in schools and community. A major conference was organised by the Association for Environmental Education (NSW) in 1983 at Griffith, NSW to focus on Catchment Education, particularly in rural areas. The Ernest Jackson-led Catchment Education Trust continued to 'educate' federal and state governments on the great benefits of total or integrated catchment management. Soil Conservation Services in NSW and Victoria also produced teaching resources and community information on catchment management themes. Streamwatch / Waterwatch and Saltwatch commenced in the late 1980's as major catchment monitoring programs particularly in schools. State Governments developed natural resource management based on the catchment philosophy. In his 1984 State Election Rural Policy Speech, the Hon. Neville Wran stated, "...The concept of total catchment management will be comprehensively implemented in each of the major river valleys of this State, protecting the land, improving stream flow and controlling erosion as an integrated policy." The concept of Total Catchment Management was then adopted by the NSW Government as a necessary element of its land use policy.
- In 1989, the Catchment Management Act was passed setting up Catchment Management Committees and Trusts. Total Catchment Management was defined under the Act as "the coordinated and sustainable use and management of land, water, vegetation and other natural resources on a water catchment basis so as to balance resource utilisation and conservation."
- The spread of Landcare groups originated in Victoria in 1986. The Landcare groups provided opportunities for community members to work together in on-ground natural resource management projects.

Total Catchment Management has been progressively implemented in NSW since the Catchment Management Act was introduced in 1989. Over this time, the TCM program coordinated through the Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) has developed into the primary community-government partnership for achieving sustainable natural resource management in NSW. There are now over 40 CMCs and 3 Trusts in NSW with over 600 community people involved directly in these committees.

A NSW Government Review of Total Catchment Management commenced in 1996. Outcomes of the Review included the development of 14 Regional NREM Bodies in NSW and the move towards a "whole " of government approach to TCM.

In summary, the development of catchment management in NSW has involved a 'movement' including government and community members extending over at least 50 years. The movement gathered momentum in the late 1970's and 1980's as a grass-roots mechanism to sustain natural resources. TCM is now mainstream in coordinating and integrating the natural resource and environmental management in NSW.

- The Value of a Catchment Approach to the Management of the Environment

Catchments are naturally occurring units of the environment, which contain a complex array of inter-linked and inter-dependent resources and activities, irrespective of political boundaries. They are a natural planning unit that link natural resources of air, land, water and biodiversity. They therefore have great value in managing the environment.

The natural balance of resources in a catchment can be easily disrupted by changes in land use, by mismanagement or through bad planning. People in all parts of a catchment can be involved in improving and sustaining their local environment by carrying out sensitive catchment actions.

The catchment approach has great value in environmental management as it is based on natural units and empowers communities and governments to act for their catchment. The concepts of 'stewardship' and 'ecologically sustainable development' are central to the catchment approach.

- Role of Different Levels of Government, the Private Sector and the Community in the Management of Catchment Areas

Government at all levels and the community have an important cooperative role in catchment management. CMCs and CMTs in NSW provide an excellent mechanism for this to happen. An example of the achievements of a CMC involving local council, state government agencies and community is attached.

The Private Sector has a role in supporting CMCs and other catchment management activities and carrying out best practice environmental practices to minimise impacts on catchments.

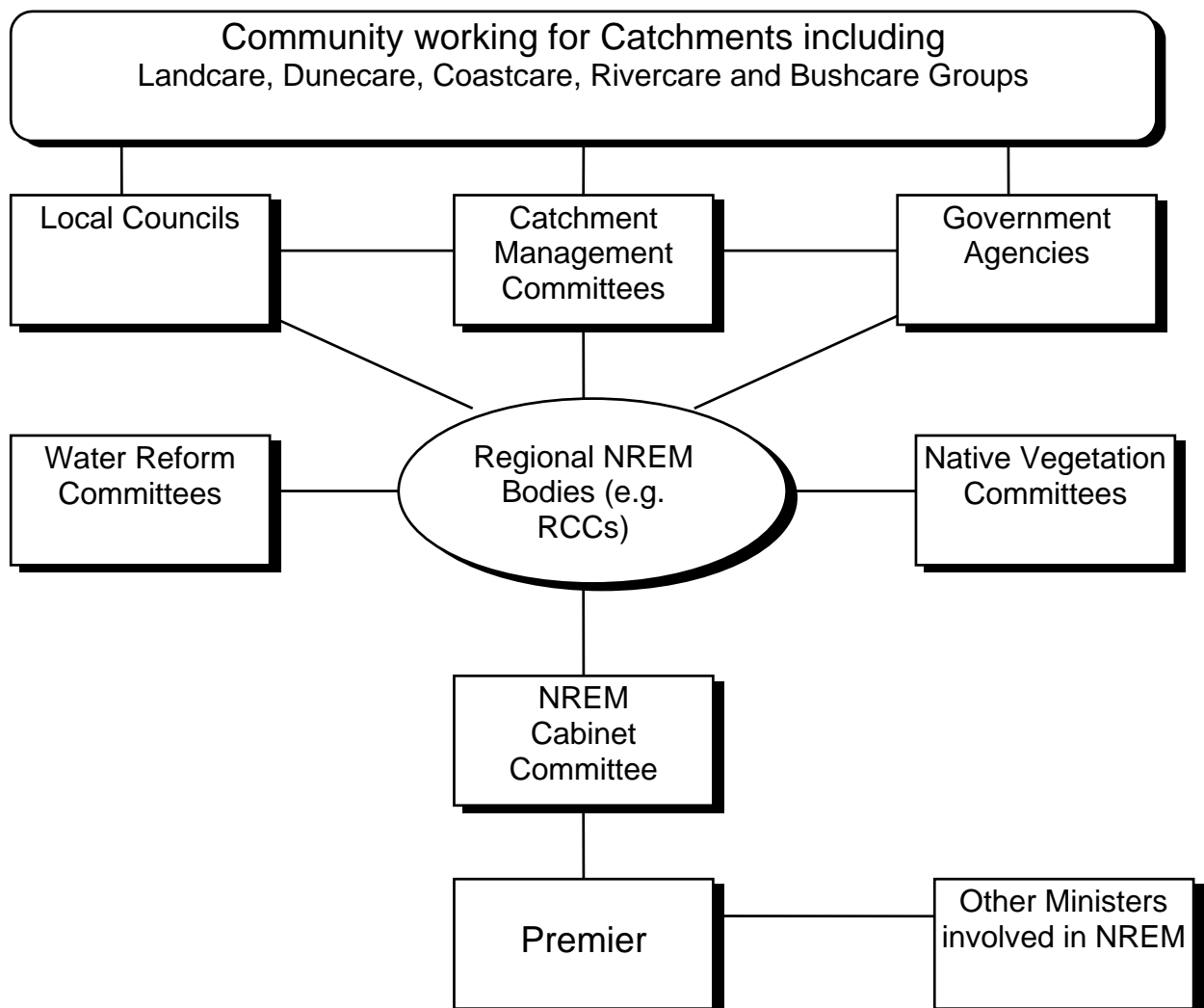
- Planning, Resourcing, Implementation, Coordination and Cooperation in Catchment Management

All of these processes should be part of catchment management at local and regional scales. More specifically:

1. CMCs and Regional Catchment Committees (RCCs) should be involved in government (particularly local council) environmental planning. Early involvement in the development of plans is encouraged.
2. CMCs and RCCs should continue to have the opportunity to devolve funding to landcare and other community groups based on local catchment and Regional NREM Strategies. CMCs and RCCs should be adequately resourced to carry out their roles and implement these strategies.
3. Regional and Catchment Strategic Plans should guide the integrated implementation of NREM. Of particular concern in NSW is the plethora of committees working in NREM. These committees include Water Reform Committees, Native Vegetation Committees, National Parks and Wildlife Service Advisory Committees as well as CMCs and RCCs. The committee should be integrated through the RCC and the Regional Strategic Plan to prevent duplication of activity and wastage of resources. A preferred model of NREM management is shown below:

## PREFERRED MODEL OF NREM MANAGEMENT

(Compare with current Total Catchment Management Framework attached)



This model stresses the importance of community in catchment management. Cooperation and coordination are important in developing the links in the above model.

## Mechanism for Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting on Catchment Management Programs

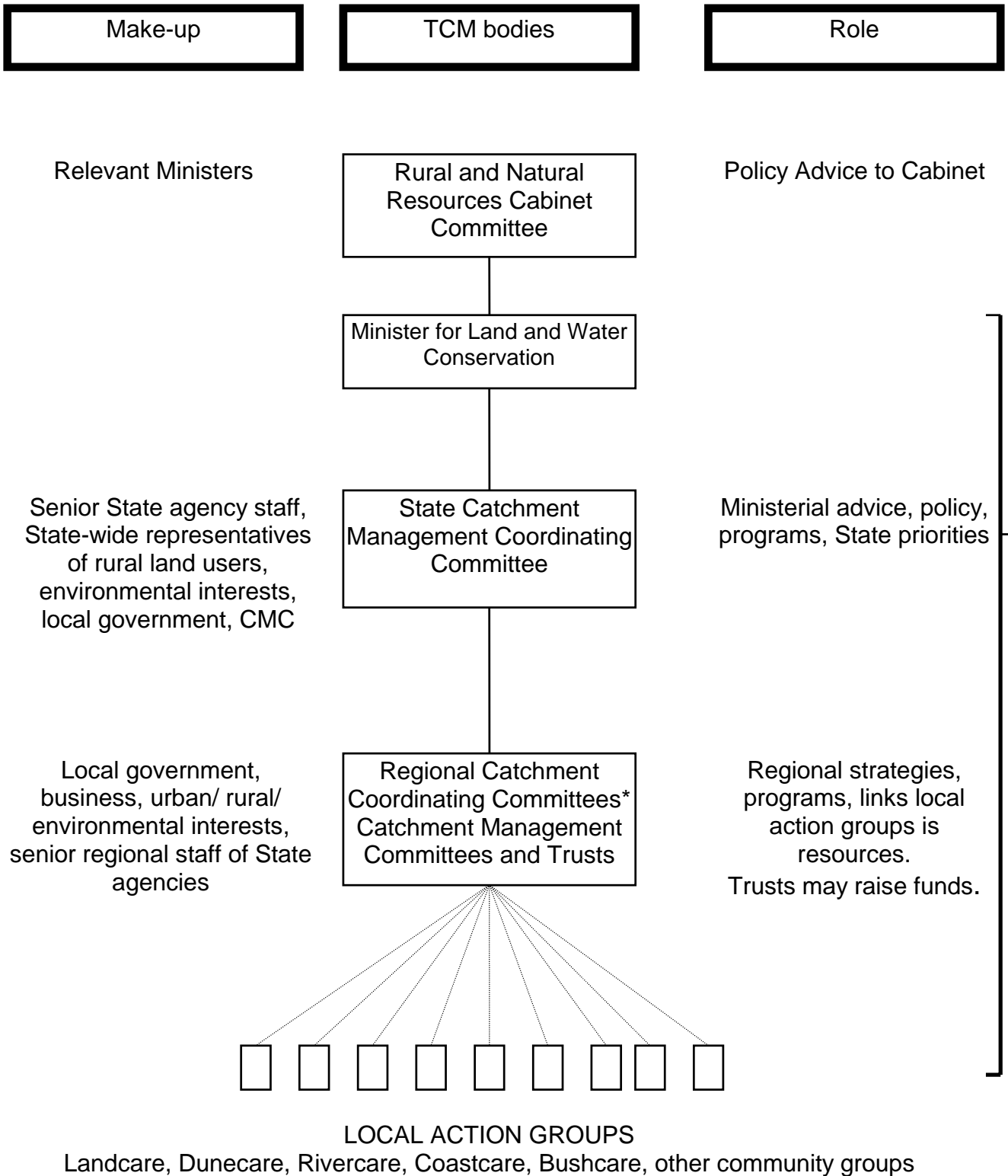
There should be improved accountability in grants (including Natural Heritage Trust) distributed to community groups for NREM programs. Accountability could be improved by:

- On-ground assessment of the project performance by RCCs and CMCs.
- Regular reporting by community groups to CMCs and RCCs
- Annual Auditing of CMCs and RCCs by NSW Government.

A major initiative on the Central Coast Region is the development of a NREM Support System. This system allows for the GIS mapping of the location and other features of funding on the Central Coast. It also provides historical information of investment using a database.

Reports from CMCs are being provided for Council State of Environment Reports. CMCs can also act as 'watchdogs' for the catchment and be a 'one-stop shop' for community enquiries and concerns about their catchment.





Described in Act

\*Regional Catchments Coordinating Committees (RCCCs) are new sub-committees of SCMCC, established as a result of the TCM Review

Figure 1 Total Catchment Management Framework