



Total Catchment Management *Community And Government Working Together*

Southern Sydney and Sydney Harbour Regional (Catchments) Coordinating Committees

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Clerk Assistant (Committees)
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

RE: PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

The Southern Sydney and Sydney Harbour Regional (Catchments) Coordinating Committees (SSRCC and SHRCC) has pleasure in submitting the following information with regards to the request for comments for the Parliamentary Committee Inquiry into Catchment Management

This submission will address the following 'Inquiry Terms of Reference', particularly in regards to urban catchments:

1. The value of a catchment approach to the management of the environment;
2. Best practice methods of preventing, halting and reversing environmental degradation in catchments, and achieving environmental sustainability;
3. The role of different levels of government, the private sector and the community in the management of catchment areas;
4. Planning, resourcing, implementation, coordination and cooperation in catchment management; and mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on catchment management programs, including the use of these reports for state of the environment reporting, and opportunities for review and improvement.

THE VALUE OF A CATCHMENT APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The SSRCC and SHRCC strongly endorse an 'integrated' approach to catchment management, based on the principles of *Total Catchment Management* (TCM).

TCM has been very successful to date, playing a major role in facilitating sustainable natural resource and environmental management (NREM) and a sustainable society through delivering ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable outcomes, but there is room for a lot of improvement.

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We must develop TCM to the state where it has whole of Government support and broad community awareness and participation to consistently deliver desired outcomes.

An integrated approach is also essential to ensure that the currently inadequate and stretched resources (public and private) achieve the greatest benefit for the environment and therefore, the community.

Total Catchment Management (TCM) is defined in the New South Wales Catchment Management Act (1989) as “*the coordinated and sustainable use and management of land, water, vegetation and other natural resources, on a water catchment basis, to balance resource use and conservation*”. It provides the structure for integrated NREM in New South Wales (NSW).

In practice, TCM has three elements:

- ❑ **The philosophy** - based on stewardship. In essence, holding natural resources in trust, having a duty to care, and leaving them in first-class order for the next generation (intergenerational equity).
- ❑ **The process** - a means of achieving ecologically sustainable development (ESD) through effective and efficient government-community partnerships. In this system the surface water catchment is a basic, but not exclusive, unit of management.
- ❑ **The administrative structure** - as set out in the NSW *Catchment Management Act* (1989). It recognises the value of community input, such as localised Catchment Management Committees, Landcare, Bushcare and Dunecare groups, which play a key role in working towards effective and sustainable catchment management outcomes.

Although TCM is still a relatively new government approach to NREM, this approach has already achieved a significant increase in cooperation and coordination of community and government effort resulting in highly beneficial environmental outcomes.

In particular, Catchment Management Committees (CMCs) working in partnership with local community groups, environment groups, industry, Local and State Government have been at the forefront of attracting significant State and Federal Government funding and achieving an integrated management system.

TCM is also a very cost efficient approach to NREM. It has been claimed that in NSW it costs around \$14 million annually to maintain over 1,000 volunteer members of 44 CMCs. That works out to cost less than one cent per person per day to run the CMCs. At that cost, a grassroots TCM network as provided by the CMCs is highly cost effective, returning very many times that cost in their value to the State and the community.

What is needed now are investigations into maximising the effectiveness of such a large and dedicated volunteer-base as we have in the CMCs.

Underlying principles of TCM

The review of TCM in NSW undertaken in 1997/98 identified the following principles as being central to effective NREM, at a catchment scale:

- ❑ Ecologically sustainable development.
- ❑ “Whole of government” approach to TCM.

- Participation by a full range of local community groups. This requires flexible and culturally sensitive processes to ensure that Aboriginal and Non English Speaking Background (NESB) communities are included in decision making.
- Clear investment framework for NREM, which is used by all levels of government and the broader community.
- Project management cycle approach to NREM. This requires well-planned activities, appraised, implemented and evaluated within the investment framework at a regional scale by institutions such as CMCs.
- Cost sharing arrangements that allocate the costs of investment programs between beneficiaries according to agreements negotiated at a regional scale on a program basis.
- A contractual approach to project implementation and program management, which are based on competitive funding proposals.
- A coordinated team approach to projects undertaken by agencies, local Government and the private sector, which draws on a range of skills and information.
- Regular monitoring and performance evaluation of programs, projects and outcomes.

TCM Outcomes

- TCM encourages local community / public ownership of at least the underpinnings, or broad-brush premises, and issues of environmental management including planning and development control.
- TCM can be the conceptual ground for the changes needed to achieve sustainability.
- The TCM model provides “reduced sectoral emphasis and a greater regional presence”. Its aim being to ‘enhance cooperation on a regional and catchment-wide basis, with the objective of better integration of planning and management strategies and more effective on-ground works implementation’. However, it must be sufficiently resourced.
- TCM structures should be utilised more effectively to enhance opportunities for public participation in the NREM processes.
- TCM model needs to embrace development aspects of planning and management at all levels of Government, including policy development, to provide more effective community involvement.

TCM at Work

In the case of urban environments such the Sydney Region, covering an area of nearly 2000 square kilometres and supporting a population in excess of 3.7 million people, TCM is playing a critical role.

It is essential to repair and maintain the surviving ecosystems of the Sydney Region to ensure their continued ability to support and sustain the natural and built environments and large population. Ecological sustainability must be a major focus of any NREM strategies and outcomes. TCM is helping to deliver those outcomes, particularly for ecosystems and habitats recognised as being under extreme environmental pressures.

Most environmental pressures, particularly in the urban, CBD and Harbour areas, stem from over 200 years of 'modern' society paying little respect for, or changing its attitudes and actions to adapt to natural thresholds and the sustainable carrying capacity of the Region.

“A sustainable society is one which can exist more or less indefinitely because it is both respectful of, and able to change and adapt to natural limits. A sustainable society is one which is economically, ecologically, socially and culturally sustainable.” (Ideas for the New Millennium - Peter Ellyard 1998)

Fortunately however, local community and government are now recognising and taking steps (eg. TCM) to fix those problems.

The economic costs from public health and social issues, lost production, alienated land use, waste disposal and remediation arising from past and current pollution and other environmental problems are immense.

Examples include:

- ❑ The reduction in oyster production value in the Georges River / Botany Bay area that has declined from over 42,000 bags valued at \$14.9 million in 1972, to just over 6,000 bags valued at \$2.28 million in 1997 (pers com NSW Fisheries). Such declines have been almost entirely due to severe environmental problems in the catchments.
- ❑ The cost of the upgrading the current water, sewer and stormwater systems in the Sydney Region is estimated at over \$2 billion, just to meet basic environmental standards.
- ❑ Over 400 people die each year from the effects of air pollution in the Sydney Region.

However, the application of the principles of TCM *can* facilitate the changes needed to achieve sustainability, through development and application of a strategic, cooperative and integrated approach by all levels of government and an enthusiastic and valued community.

Communities supported by Governments have a responsibility to be involved in achieving the required changes in order to get ownership of the problems *and* the solutions. In fact it is critical that the community be directly involved in this process.

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it’s the only thing that ever has.” (Margaret Mead - anthropologist).

For support to be effective it requires a whole of government approach to provide sufficient core funding to value add to the process and maintain community motivation.

Resourcing TCM

We are told that one of the greatest challenges to Government and TCM is generating sufficient financial and other resources to develop and implement strategies to address regional NREM issues.

Increased and continued financial and other support for TCM will play a major role in providing opportunities and impetus to achieve strategic NREM advances towards 'creating' sustainability.

Funding Programs such as the Commonwealth Government's NHT process play a crucial role in providing the critical seed funding to support the process. NHT Funding programs facilitate local community involvement and the development and implementation of community based actions to address urgent NREM and catchment issues.

The following table provides a simplified illustration of how effectively implemented TCM can be used as a strategic tool to achieve what we need, - to progress and change to create sustainability through the implementation of strategic catchment based actions.

Current situation / actions	Future strategic actions required
Address Issues (Repair)	Create Sustainability (Prevention)
Reactive Actions	Proactive Solutions
Problem / Symptom Centred	Solution Centred
Increase Awareness	Change Attitudes
Increase Appreciation	Change Behaviour
Reduce / Minimise Impacts, etc	Abolish / Prevent Impacts, etc.

BEST PRACTICE METHODS OF PREVENTING, HALTING AND REVERSING ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN CATCHMENTS, AND ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

TCM provides an effective framework to establish and implement ‘Best Practice Methods’ to achieve sustainability

TCM involves a “Whole of government” approach combined with participation by a full range of community groups. This provides an immense resource from which to investigate, develop, trial and implement ‘best practices’ to address NREM issues, especially when combined with the investment framework to strategically plan and apply best practice in a wide range of situations.

For example, under the TCM umbrella there has been extensive development and implementation of:

- Opportunities for community consultation and participation in the NREM processes.
- Knowledge of specific on-ground mechanisms to address NREM issues.
- Prioritisation of NREM issues and strategic actions through community consultation.
- Identification of pollution sources and level of significance, and facilitating actions to address causes and not just the symptoms.
- Development of Catchment Strategies by CMCs, bringing together community and government to undertake better management of their catchments.
- Development of relevant NREM education programs, materials and actions that result either directly or indirectly in measurable on-ground change.
- Development of urban stormwater management strategies including management plans involving Local Government and State Agencies.
- Influence in the development process for effective and sustainable State and local level planning policy, procedures and requirements.

‘Community Contracts’ or ‘Statements of Joint Intent’ have also been developed by some CMCs to provide a strategic approach to catchment management. For example, the ‘Community Contract’ developed by Hacking River CMC resulted in relevant Councils, Government agencies and local

community groups committing to progress specific strategies and actions to address catchment issues.

THE ROLE OF DIFFERENT LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND THE COMMUNITY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF CATCHMENT AREAS

The Role of the Community

As previously discussed, the role of local community involvement in, and support for, TCM is crucial. The value of community effort in economic and social terms to address NREM across Australia must not be underestimated.

Without community involvement:

- The endorsement and implementation of the changes needed to achieve sustainability will not happen. Laws and regulations alone cannot achieve the sorts of changes necessary to reverse and prevent current and future environmental impacts
- Governments of all persuasion would be either forced to make up the \$ value of community involvement through direct paid action and investment, or let the environmental problems worsen blossom. Making up that level of \$ value would cause massive shortfalls for other causes. It has been estimated by some that the value of community input to TCM and Landcare is some 10s of millions of dollars per year.

The Role of Government

Community enthusiasm and effort can only be achieved and maintained through the application of sufficient resources to motivate, initiate and maintain community effort.

The necessary resources can effectively only come from two sources, Government and commercial interests / the private sector, at the sorts of levels required,

The Commonwealth Government's NHT Funding Program and similar previous programs (previously based on core funding from Government, not the sale of public assets!) are an excellent example of the role of government in supporting crucial community action.

Grants act as critical seed funding by facilitating and motivating community involvement in NREM.

The Role of the Private Sector

Along with increased Government support there must also be a massive increase in the commercial / private sector support of NREM, as the majority of NREM issues stem from the impact of commercial and industrial activities.

It is in the short and long-term economic and social interests of the private sector, to take on that increased responsibility, however incentives must be provided to industry and the private sector.

PLANNING, RESOURCING, IMPLEMENTATION, COORDINATION AND COOPERATION IN CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

TCM has the appropriate framework and philosophy to be the conceptual ground for the changes needed to achieve sustainability through effective planning, resourcing, implementation, coordination and cooperation in catchment management.

Its aim is to enhance cooperation between government, the private sector and the community on a regional catchment-wide basis to achieve sustainable NREM

Under the NSW Catchment Management Act (1989), one of the functions CMCs is to 'coordinate the preparation of programs for funding'.

Assessment of the level of CMC (and regional TCM bodies) assistance to communities and governments in acquiring State and Federal grants would indicate the high level of coordination and cooperation that CMCs have established amongst the community in only a few years.

For example, the Hacking River CMC coordinated the acquisition of over \$300,000 in grant funding for the remediation of the Royal National Park after the devastating fires in January 1994 as well as facilitating over \$500,000 in-kind support from community and government.

Another example is the SSRCC and SHRCC in conjunction with the region's CMCs facilitated the procurement of \$2.0 million in grant funds in 1998/99 to address NREM issues in the Southern Sydney and Sydney Harbour regions last year.

These examples are not unique, as every CMCs could describe their involvement in assisting both community and government in obtaining significant grant money for natural resource and environmental projects within their catchments.

CMCs are recognised in the community as impartial committees providing a fair and honest appraisal of natural resource and environmental concerns for a specific catchment. There is no 'turf' protection as every player is situated on a level playing field. There is a great deal of respect and trust, which the CMCs have been building within their communities since their inception in 1989.

MECHANISMS FOR MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REPORTING ON CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

Under TCM, CMCs have assisted in minimising duplication and conflicting practices within catchments and demonstrated their effectiveness as a forum for the resolution of natural resource conflicts and issues.

Currently, CMCs provide a written Annual Report to the State Catchment Coordinating Committee (SCMCC) and to the Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC). This report lists the achievements and community activities as related to the functions of a CMC listed in the Catchment Management Act (1989). Most CMCs will also distribute this Annual Report to stakeholders within their catchments ie. Local M.P.s, media, community groups, government agencies and interested stakeholders.

A number of Sydney Region CMCs have held well attended 'Community Forums' where the CMCs reported on their activities to their catchment community and sought input from the local community on setting the CMC's direction for the future.

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These events were highly successful and achieved a high level of support from the community and Local Government and State Government agencies.

CMCs also liaise with the media to ensure that their activities are publicised although, in the past many of these stories have often not been published. CMCs in the Sydney Region are currently working on changing this.

Although the TCM process is still in its infancy when compared to many other government initiatives, the achievements that have been made indicate that it is a highly successful mechanism and framework. It can facilitate change in community attitudes and unite the community and government in addressing common NREM issues and concerns regarding land use and conservation.

It is also evident that the TCM model results in the '*integration*' of community and government at all levels to tackle local NREM issues on a catchment basis. This is one of the major reasons for its achievements and success to date.

However, there are many improvements to be made and monitoring and evaluation of TCM and its operations and procedures will help to provide the information needed to improve its performance. The development of effective performance management criteria is crucial to this process.

We lack comprehensive, user-friendly mechanisms for uniformly monitoring and evaluating the relative success of our efforts. There is tremendous potential for utilising electronic information technologies to improve both effectiveness and efficiency in this regard. The Federal Government and the private sector could make a substantial contribution in this area.

SUMMARY - WHAT THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

Support for TCM

- ❑ Encourage and extend the utilisation of the established TCM framework, given that:
 - ◆ TCM is the most effective mechanism currently available to address NREM issues in Australia;
 - ◆ TCM is the most effective mechanism available to facilitate continuing community involvement to achieve on-ground improvements via direct community on-ground actions and educations program;
 - ◆ The development of partnership arrangements via CMCs can help to ensure real delivery of Commonwealth Government policies; and
 - ◆ There are opportunities for the Commonwealth to lead and facilitate links to the business community for TCM. While this has occurred to a limited extent, there are substantial opportunities for Government leadership on this issue, particularly for urban areas. For example, providing greater incentives to motivate and facilitate business to accept a greater share of NREM resourcing responsibilities.

Resourcing of NREM and TCM

- ❑ Substantially increase 'core' funding and other resourcing of NREM, particularly of TCM for the delivery of NREM.

- ❑ Substantially increase funding and other resourcing of 'Urban TCM', given that:
 - ◆ Urban NREM issues are often severe and require urgent action to prevent continuing ecological, social and economic impacts;
 - ◆ Urban NREM issues directly impact a very large percentage of Australia's population;
 - ◆ Urban NREM issues have enormous State and National economic impacts on production costs (including tourism and fisheries), public health and the continued costs of environmental remediation; and
 - ◆ TCM is achieving the results needed to address many of the severe and urgent environmental problems faced in urban areas (eg stormwater management and sewage overflows).
- ❑ Substantially increase support and resourcing of community awareness aspects of Urban TCM given that:
 - ◆ Without awareness there is no understanding or ownership of the issues. Consequently, the community will not make the urgent changes needed to begin achieving sustainable solutions;
 - ◆ TCM is a prime vehicle that can deliver increased awareness through effective education campaigns; and
 - ◆ This is an ideal opportunity for the Commonwealth to be seen as taking a leadership role in TCM education and awareness raising activities, particularly for urban areas.

NHT Funding for NREM

- ❑ The Commonwealth must work to de-politicise the NHT process and set up an arms-length process to assess grants at the Federal level. This would demonstrate more faith and commitment to community and State agency based NHT assessment process.
- ❑ Encourage further devolution of NHT funds to the TCM Regions to address regional priority issues (within the appropriate guidelines).

We trust the information provided will assist the Committee in its deliberations regarding catchment management in Australia. Additional supporting information and documents are available if required. In addition, we are also personally available to appear before the Committee if requested.

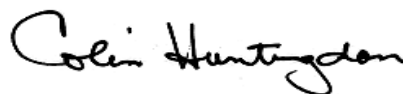
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Yours faithfully



Peter Wells

and



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