

STATE OF VICTORIA

SUBMISSION

TO THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON

ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

INQUIRY

INTO

CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

Across Australia, there has been considerable degradation of both our land, water and biodiversity resources, which has had and will continue to have major impacts on rural communities, economic production and natural ecosystems, unless it is arrested. The Government of Victoria puts a very high priority on halting the degradation and restoring our natural resources. This is essential to revitalise rural communities, to maintain economic growth and to ensure that our natural biodiversity is maintained for future generations.

Victoria has been investing in its land, water and biodiversity resources in this way since 1949, when the first Soil Conservation Authority in Australia was established. The declaration in 1970 of the *Environment Protection Act 1970*, was a significant milestone providing a single, integrated piece of legislation to protect the environmental quality of the State's land, air and water resources. Work continued in the 1980s with a strong focus on involving communities and evolving decision-making to regional communities. This was evident in the work tackling salinity and its effects in rural areas, on the establishment of whole-of-catchment waterway management and ultimately with the development of the first Landcare programs in conjunction with the Victorian Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

This commitment continues in the 1990s. With the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* Victoria established ten Catchment and Land Protection (CALP) regions for the State and ten CALP Boards to develop integrated land and water management plans for each region. In 1997, nine Catchment Management Authorities were established in the nine rural regions to coordinate the implementation of priority actions for land and water management in these regions.

This level of commitment to effective land and water management is reflected in the level of investment by all parties involved. In 1999/2000, the Victorian Government will spend in excess of \$110m, complemented by a Commonwealth contribution of \$50m. Past experience has indicated that for every dollar invested by Government, industry and landholders invest an additional five dollars.

The key objective of land and water management in Victoria is ecologically sustainable development. Ecologically sustainable development (ESD) is multi-objective in nature, requiring integration of ecological, economic and social objectives. This is consistent with the InterGovernmental Agreement on the Environment (IGAE).

In Victoria, the concept of integrated catchment management (ICM) underpins ESD-based management of land and water resources and contributes to biodiversity management. Effective management of these resources requires:

- the involvement of regional communities in decision-making on issues affecting land, water and biodiversity resources within their region;
- the integration of economic, social and environmental objectives for the management of land, water and biodiversity resources within a catchment to establish a set of management goals and targets shared by the regional community;
- setting priorities for the management of land, water and biodiversity;
- identifying management options and coordinating the activities of groups involved in land, water and biodiversity management within a catchment towards the shared goals. These include both public land managers, private landholders, water authorities, waterway managers, local government, Landcare and other community groups; and

- monitoring the effectiveness of management strategies.

Integrated catchment management provides the capacity to do this. It is the management approach which offers the most effective mechanism for Governments to form partnerships with regional communities to fulfil their common objectives for the natural resources under their stewardship.

Victoria considers that robust catchment management arrangements based on community input into decision-making will become increasingly important as the nation starts to deal with challenges such as those posed by recent salinity projections. These projections clearly show that incremental change at the local level will not deliver the changes at the landscape scale that will be necessary to address these issues effectively. These problems will require industry and community adjustment on an unprecedented scale.

We believe that Victoria's institutional arrangements will enable these challenges to be effectively addressed and will deliver ESD into the future because they have been designed to provide an integrated framework for land, water and biodiversity management, facilitate community involvement and target activity in priority areas.

The success of Victoria's approach is reflected in the recent World Bank Reports that stated that water and catchment management in Victoria are world's best practice. In addition, the OECD in its Environment Performance Review of Australia viewed Victoria's institutional arrangements for catchment management as encouraging, and suggested them as a model for other States.

In the light of these reviews, Section 2 of this submission includes a description of the Victorian approach to catchment management to assist the Inquiry with its third Term of Reference on Best Practice. The description focuses on the philosophy and institutional structures and processes rather than specific technical best management practices (BMPs) for the range of land and water management activities undertaken in Victoria. Information on these technical BMPs can be supplied on request. Section 3 raises particular issues regarding Commonwealth–State interaction on catchment management in the framework of the remaining terms of reference of the Inquiry.

2. INTEGRATED CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT IN VICTORIA

2.1 Goals and Outcomes of Catchment Management

To effectively implement ICM as a management framework for effective sustainable development, it is essential to clearly identify the goals and desired outcomes for the management of land, water and biodiversity resources.

In Victoria **the primary goal of catchment management is**

to ensure the sustainable development of natural resource-based industries, the protection of land and water resources and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

The Victorian framework for catchment management has been developed to achieve:

- community involvement in and commitment to natural resource management;
- sustainable development of natural resource-based industries;
- maintenance and improvement in the quality of water and condition of rivers;
- prevention and reversal of land degradation;
- conservation and protection of the diversity and extent of natural ecosystems;

- minimisation of damage of public and private assets from flooding and erosion; and
- minimisation of the economic and environmental impacts of pest plants and animals.

To achieve these outcomes, Victoria has developed five basic principles which govern the way catchment management is implemented throughout the State. These are:

- **Community Empowerment**
Catchment management is a partnership between community and Government. Planning and implementation of natural resource management programs should maximise opportunities for the community to make decisions and exercise choice about service delivery.
- **Integrated Management**
Management of natural resources should recognise the linkages between land and water processes and the potential for management of one element to impact on another.
- **Targeted Investment**
Government and community need to ensure that resources are targeted to address priorities and deliver maximum on-ground benefits.
- **Accountability**
Those making decisions about service delivery on natural resource management should be clearly accountable to Government and the community, as partners, for outcomes.
- **Minimising Bureaucracy**
Catchment management structures should be as efficient as possible and avoid waste resulting from duplication between groups or costly coordination, in order to maximise the funds available for the task.

The primary goal, outcomes of and principles for catchment management were developed and endorsed by the Victorian Government after consultation with the Victorian community. They provide the context in which Victoria's institutional arrangements for catchment management have been developed.

2.2 Legislative Framework

To fully understand the Victorian model it is important to understand the statutory context of the institutional arrangements for catchment management. The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* enabled the development and implementation of Regional Catchment Strategies (RCS) in each of the ten CALP regions across the State. The *Catchment and Land Protection Act* operates in conjunction with a range of other legislation that influences the management and quality of Victoria's natural resources (e.g. *Forests Act 1958*, *Environment Protection Act 1970*, *National Parks Act 1975*, *Planning and Environment Act 1987*, *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*, *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*, *Water Act 1989*). These other Acts focus on particular 'subjects' of natural resource management. For example, the *Environment Protection Act 1970* deals with protection of environmental quality and prevention of pollution, the *Water Act 1989* provides the basis for the management of the State's water resources. State environment protection policy, developed under the *Environment Protection Act*, provide a statutory framework of goals and objectives for environmental quality within which RCSs are developed and implemented.

2.3 Institutional Arrangements within Regions

Many of the activities related to the management of land and water resources undertaken under each of these Acts are coordinated through the Regional Catchment Strategies (RCSs). The RCSs were developed in consultation with regional communities and government agencies working in natural resource management within the region. In developing the RCSs, communities and regional management agencies worked together to develop an integrated vision for their catchments. They agreed on objectives for land and water management in their regions and determined priorities for action and investment.

The RCS were developed within the context of a range of statewide and national policies related to the management of land and water. These include the Decade of Landcare Plan, the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development, State environment protection policies, the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy and the Victorian Salinity and Nutrient Management Strategies. In a number of cases, the RCSs are the major vehicle for the regional implementation of these broader strategies.

The RCSs have been endorsed by Government and are recognised as the over-arching strategy for the development, management and conservation of land and water resources in each region. The implementation of these strategies is the key focus of Victoria's land and water management program for the next decade.

On 1 July 1997, Victoria established Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) in the nine non-metropolitan CALP regions to effectively and efficiently coordinate the implementation of the RCSs. Arrangements for the Port Phillip Region, which includes the Melbourne metropolitan area, are currently under review.

A major role of each CMA is the strategic overview of management of land, both public and private, and water. To do this effectively, they must facilitate the development of partnerships with key implementing groups within the catchment to achieve the objectives of the RCS. These implementing groups include public land managers e.g. Forests Service and Parks Victoria, private landholders, rural and urban water authorities, Department of Natural Resources and Environment (NRE) regional staff, industry, Landcare and other community groups and particularly local government which has a significant role in ensuring that the statutory planning arrangements complement the RCSs. The responsibilities of these implementing groups are outlined in Table 1.

The success of the Victorian catchment management arrangements depends on the partnerships built with these implementing groups, with the CMAs taking a pivotal role in the coordination of these activities.

The responsibilities, structure and operations of the CMA are described below to illustrate how these facilitate community input into decision-making, develop partnerships with implementing groups and integrate regional catchment management activities.

Table 1 Regional Groups Involved in Catchment Management

Catchment Management Authorities

Develop and coordinate implementation of the RCSs. Undertake integrated waterway and floodplain management. Develop a coordinated regional investment plan for catchment management activities.

NRE Regions

- ***Catchment and Agricultural Services*** – support community groups to implement appropriate works and best management practices, provide extension services, monitor implementation and effectiveness, facilitate research in sustainable management practices, enforcement and planning.
- ***Parks, Flora and Fauna*** – the role of PFF involves maintenance of biodiversity across the landscape on all land tenures in conjunction with the land and water managers. It includes overseeing the management of parks and reserves.
- ***Forests Services*** – directly manages 3.47 million ha of State forest in accordance with management plans and prescriptions based on Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management principles to provide for conservation, recreation, and education, as well as commercial use, including timber production. The Forests Service also has responsibility for fire management on 7 million ha of State forest and parks and reserves on public land. Both timber production and fire management activities are subject to respective Codes of Practice. Management of State forest which is predominantly situated in catchment headwaters has a key hydrological role.
- ***Land Victoria*** – management of Crown land, including coordinating land-use planning.

Parks Victoria

Manages the State's network of national, state, regional and metropolitan parks, other conservation reserves, many significant cultural assets, and Melbourne's bays and major waterways.

EPA Regions

Facilitate the protection of environmental quality objectives established in State environmental protection policies through the application of statutory tools under the Environment Protection Act, together with other non-statutory approaches, to control discharges to the environment and encourage improved environmental performance. Some of the key tools employed by EPA in regional operations include licensing, enforcement, development and promotion of best practice environmental management guidelines, scientific and technical support, action partnerships, education and conflict resolution.

Local Government

Regulate local development through planning schemes, undertake on-ground works, manage urban drainage and some rural drainage.

Rural Water Authorities

Provide irrigation, drainage, salinity control, some urban water supply and other water-related services, contribute to management of specific water supply catchments.

Non-metropolitan Urban Water Authorities

Provide water and sewerage service to urban communities, contribute to management of specific water supply catchments.

Regional Coastal Boards

Peak regional coastal management advisory bodies. Develop coastal action plans and advise government on coastal development. Facilitate implementation of Victorian Coastal Strategy and specific Coastal Action Plans.

Landcare and other landholder groups

Identify and tackle common problems in a cooperative way, implement on-ground works and best management practices.

2.3.1 Responsibility and Operation of a CMA

Responsibilities of CMAs

Each Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is responsible for:

- ongoing development and review of the Regional Catchment Strategy;
- identifying priority activities and work programs to implement the Regional Catchment Strategy;
- advising State Government on Commonwealth and State resourcing priorities at a regional level;
- providing services related to integrated waterway and floodplain management. These focus on maintaining and improving river health and the minimising costs of flooding whilst preserving the natural functions of the floodplain; and
- monitoring and reporting on the condition and management of land and water resources.

Structure of CMAs

The basic structure of a CMA is designed to maximise community involvement in decision making. This structure comprises:

- **The Board** which is directly responsible for the development of strategic direction for land and water management in the Region.
- **Implementation Committees** which are responsible for the development of detailed work programs and the oversight of on-ground program delivery for specific issues or sub-catchments. These committees are the conduit for local community input.
- **Staff** to support the Board and Implementation Committees, and to oversee development and implementation of programs and investment.

Operation of CMAs

The RCSs provide an integrated framework for land and water management at a broad scale. Once priority issues have been determined, more detailed action plans may be developed.

Mechanisms to translate integrated planning into integrated management include the annual preparation by a CMA of a three-year rolling Regional Management Plan (RMP) which is in effect, a detailed investment strategy for the use of all natural resource management funding whether it is provided by Government or collected locally. To develop this plan, CMAs work with all operational groups in their region who are funded by Government. These include NRE regions (particularly those providing Catchment and Agricultural Services), EPA and rural water authorities. The CMAs must also involve their communities through their Implementation Committees. The RMP represents a major step forward in integrated natural catchment management.

CMAs are funded through State Government resources provided through the RMP process, Federal funding through the NHT for specific on-ground projects, and regional resources provided through the waterway rate.

2.3.2 Relationships with Other Players in the Catchment

Whilst the CMAs have been established to provide the key focus for catchment management in Victoria, the successful implementation of the RCS requires the cooperation of the many other groups within a catchment (see Table 1).

Where implementing groups are funded by Government (e.g. NRE staff involved in catchment and agricultural service provision, rural water authorities), partnerships are developed through the Regional Management Planning process.

CMA's are also developing relationships with the other players in their catchment. Of particular importance are the land managers, both public and private, and local government. Private landholders are involved through Landcare groups and a range of local planning processes and incentives schemes. Public land managers include the Forests Service Division of NRE and Parks Victoria. As these groups manage 25% of land within Victoria, their participation in the catchment management framework is of considerable importance.

Local government has a highly significant role in the implementation of the RCS because it manages the statutory planning framework which is particularly important in the planning and development of new initiatives. A close relationship between the CMA and local government is necessary to ensure that the appropriate environmental and natural resource management concerns identified in the RCS are incorporated into planning schemes and development controls. This is assisted by a requirement in the State section of the Victorian Planning Provisions for local governments to take account of the RCSs and their component action plans. In addition, guidelines for the interaction between CMA's and local government have been developed (copy attached for information). CMA's also undertake partnership projects with their local governments in urban areas. For example, the Port Phillip RCS provides an important linkage between catchment management arrangements and the urban stormwater partnership program between local government (Municipal Association of Victoria), government (EPA) and the water industry (Melbourne Water).

Finally, CMA's interact closely with Victoria's Coastal Boards to minimise the impact of land-based pollution on coastal and marine environments.

2.4. Statewide Arrangements

The CMA's and the various implementing groups in catchment management in Victoria operate within a statewide policy framework which is predominately developed by three major groups. These are:

Victorian Catchment Management Council

The Victorian Government has also established the Victorian Catchment Management Council as a peak body to provide statewide advice to Government on matters related to natural resource management. The Council advises Government on:

- the condition of land and water;
- the priorities for catchment management; and
- the priorities for research and investigation.

The Council also:

- encourages the cooperation of bodies involved in the management of land and water resources; and
- promotes community awareness and understanding of issues relating to catchment management.

(The Council has submitted its own submission to the Inquiry which is included as an Attachment to this submission.)

Department of Natural Resources and Environment

NRE is the government department responsible for the integrated management of Victoria's natural resource base. In the area of catchment management, NRE has several areas of responsibility, with the Catchment Management and Sustainable Agriculture Division playing a lead role in advising Government on policies and strategic priorities for catchment management and managing government investment in catchment management activities to enhance the public good. In addition, regional staff in various divisions are key implementing groups (see Table 1).

Environment Protection Authority

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) is responsible for protecting the environmental values and beneficial uses of the air, water and land of Victoria from the adverse impacts of wastes and emissions to the environment. The capture of community expectations for environmental quality, through the development and recommendation to Government of State environment protection policy, is an important part of the State's strategic policy framework for catchment management. In addition, through mandatory functions, such as licensing, and other, discretionary, tools (for example, cleaner production and other guidance for industries), EPA works to improve environmental performance and eliminate key risks to environmental quality.

2.5 Strengths of Victoria's Approach

The benefits of Victoria's approach are apparent, in more integrated programs, better resource management outcomes for the funds invested, and a high level of community involvement in all levels of decision-making and action. These are discussed below.

Clarification of Roles and Responsibilities

The creation of the CMAs has resulted in the establishment of one peak catchment body in each region with responsibility for coordination of implementation of the RCS. In doing this, the roles of 48 single issue-based community advisory and service delivery groups were integrated into the structure of the nine CMAs. This has clarified the roles and responsibilities of natural resource management groups within a region and has provided a clear focus for the community on natural resource management.

Integrated Management

Integrated management has been improved through several mechanisms. These include:

- integrated planning through the RCS which represents the first fully integrated natural resource management plan.
- integrated management through the development of a regional investment plan. This provides a detailed integrated investment strategy which directs the activities of catchment management service providers funded by State and local revenue.

- the establishment of the CMA as a service deliverer in integrated waterway and floodplain management. This has resulted in, for the first time across the State, the establishment of a management agency with a clear focus on waterway condition and the management functions to effectively undertake action, i.e. effectively a ‘local custodian of river health’.

Effective Investment

These institutional arrangements offer two major benefits in terms of ensuring that investment in natural resource management is optimally targeted at the key priorities.

- i. The Regional Management Planning process provides the mechanism for ensuring that all funding provided for natural resource management, including that provided by State and Commonwealth Governments and the locally collected resources are directed at the key areas of the RCS. This avoids dissipating resources through fragmented management structures and piecemeal investment in uncoordinated small-scale projects.
- ii. The capacity of the CMAs to collect a tariff to support integrated waterway and floodplain management. This is critical to developing ownership by local communities of their natural resource management problems and solutions. It generates greater community awareness and willingness to become involved in decision-making. It operationalises the concept that everyone, both urban and rural people, lives in a catchment and is both affected by and affects the condition of the catchment. It particularly brings urban communities into the catchment management framework, where traditionally they have not been active players.

The collection of the tariff puts in place a mechanism to develop appropriate cost-sharing arrangements for the work involved. It also enables the community to plan long-term strategies which are required for catchment management – there are no quick fixes. The levy allows catchment communities to be real partners in the determination of appropriate activities for their regions. It provides the capacity to enter into partnerships with industry, local government and other players on actions of regional benefit and to maximise the opportunities provided by State and Commonwealth Government funding. It is also critical in providing a catalyst for investment by Landcare groups and landholders.

Finally, the collection of a tariff creates a framework for increased accountability for natural resource management by the CMAs not only to Government but also directly to their local communities.

CMA tariffs have been collected in the east of the State for many years. Rating in the west occurred for the first time last financial year. While there were some complaints, experience has shown that it takes one to two years to raise community awareness about the nature and importance of the work undertaken by these authorities. However, it is encouraging that the CMAs in the west are already reporting that the majority of their communities agree that work is needed and want to see works on the ground.

Community Empowerment

Victoria’s catchment arrangements facilitate community involvement and guide their energies to delivering targeted outcomes in priority areas. Community input and involvement is formalised within the CMA structure by the role of the Board and the Implementation Committees (ICs). The Boards, appointed by Government, are generally composed of people recognised by local communities for their skills and leadership in various natural resource management areas.

The ICs are crucial to the success of the CMAs. They are the mechanism by which an Authority can develop and undertake focussed work programs and communicate with and access local views in the community with an interest in a particular resource management issue or sub-catchment. Their

membership and method of operation are designed to facilitate these outcomes. The ICs have a major decision-making role in the Regional Management Planning process in setting priorities for work and the specific activities to be undertaken in land and water management in their region. (Information on the structure and role of the ICs in each of the CMAs can be provided on request.)

In addition, CMAs provide a focus for coordination of Landcare groups and activities. In doing this, they provide Landcare with a link and input to the broader regional natural resource management programs.

Accountability

Victoria's catchment arrangements promote accountability. The RMPs form the basis of clear agreements between Government and the CMAs and other regional service providers. In addition, the collection of a tariff introduces clear lines of responsibility back to the local communities.

On-ground Action

The new arrangements are already resulting in a number of major planning activities and on-ground works. (Several reports illustrating the number of on-ground activities across a range of programs being undertaken in Victoria are attached.) The progress made has been greatly enhanced by the provision by the Commonwealth Government of NHT funding which has enabled the acceleration of many catchment management programs and the development of a number of innovative initiatives.

Monitoring and Adaptive Management

The CMAs have both the role and the capacity to undertake monitoring programs that are relevant to their management responsibilities. In Victoria, monitoring is carried out in the context of statewide standards (e.g. State environment protection policy) and programs (e.g. Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy, Index of Stream Condition). In addition, each CMA has a responsibility to report on the condition and management of land and water resources within its region. Thus the capacity to undertake adaptive management has been enhanced in Victoria by the establishment of CMAs.

2.6 Summary

Victoria's approach is a major step forward in integrated catchment management and demonstrates the value of ICM as a model for the management of land and water resources. Our catchment management arrangements provide an integrated framework for land and water management, facilitate community involvement and target investment in priority areas, and provide an important mechanism for promoting biodiversity management.

3. ISSUES IN COMMONWEALTH–STATE INTERACTION

Victoria's experience in catchment management highlights a number of key issues which are relevant to the Inquiry's terms of reference.

3.1 Roles in Catchment Management

It must be recognised that effective catchment management requires a partnership between governments (State, local and Commonwealth), communities, industry and individuals. Each has a significant role to play in catchment management. The nature of each group's role in the partnership needs to be clearly understood and agreed. The roles that we consider appropriate are outlined in Table 2. In summary, the major focus of the Commonwealth and State Governments is to support regional communities to make decisions and implement on-ground works which will in the long term contribute to ESD in their region. The Commonwealth Government should provide national leadership, funds and incentives to facilitate integrated approaches to catchment management. State Governments set strategic direction, establish legislative and institutional frameworks for catchment management and also provide funding.

It is important that these roles and responsibilities are clearly understood by all parties. Only then, can partnerships for the improvement of land, water and biodiversity management be developed and effectively implemented.

Table 2 Roles in Catchment Management

Role of Commonwealth Government

The Commonwealth has a number of roles in catchment management. These include:

- contributing funding to States, groups and individuals to achieve national objectives for catchment management;
- facilitating national or interstate coordination where this is necessary;
- providing national leadership to develop and catalyse coordinated and integrated approaches to public investment across jurisdictions;
- investing in the development of better management principles, tools and systems;
- improving the knowledge base through strategic research and development;
- improving incentives especially in areas of Commonwealth responsibility;
- ensuring that the wider Australian community is well informed about natural resource management issues;
- facilitating the monitoring of the effectiveness of natural resources management at appropriate scales; and
- ensuring that Australia meets its obligations under international and other agreements.

Role of State Government

The role of State Government includes:

- setting statewide policy and strategic directions for natural resource management and environmental protection;
- establishing legislative frameworks;
- establishing effective catchment/regional institutional arrangements;
- purchasing natural resource and environment management services to achieve State objectives. These services include the provision of advice, research and monitoring, planning, extension, on-ground works and some referral and enforcement functions;
- implementing State responsibilities under nationally agreed strategies;
- participating in effective intergovernment processes and national approaches where this is necessary; and
- providing funding to groups and individuals to achieve State and regional priorities.

Role of Catchment Bodies

The major role of catchment bodies is to ensure the sustainable development of natural

resource-based industries; the maintenance and where possible improvement of land, water and biodiversity resources; and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage by:

- developing in partnership with the community and service providers, Regional Catchment Strategies and consequential action plans which define the vision for the catchment and set targets for land and water management;
- providing advice to the State Government on both Federal and State resourcing priorities at a regional level through budget processes;
- the development and implementation with regional service providers of a project-based work program which is in line with the implementation of RCSs;
- the development of relationships with other agencies in the catchment, such as rural and urban water authorities, industry and local government;
- providing a focus for regional investment in natural resource management;
- providing mechanisms for community involvement in natural resource management; and
- monitoring the condition and management of the land and water resources in their region.

Role of Local Government

Local government is one of the key groups in the implementation of regional catchment strategies. Its role should include:

- incorporating catchment management objectives, priorities and actions into statutory planning processes;
- facilitating local industry involvement in catchment management activities; and
- providing local support for local action groups.

Role of Landcare and Other Groups

Local community groups, such as Landcare, tree groups, and Waterwatch groups, will continue to lead the way in tackling land, water and biodiversity problems and finding profitable and effective solutions. Their effectiveness will be maximised by being involved in the decision-making process and coordinated under an integrated approach to regional natural resource management.

Role of Industry

Industry has a significant stake in ensuring that the natural resource assets on which their industry is based are managed in accordance with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. They also have a major responsibility in ensuring that they minimise their impact on the environment by the implementation of best management practices.

Role of the Individual

One of the strongest lessons from the past is that Government alone cannot achieve sustainable catchment management. The major part of what has to be done, must be done on private land by individual landholders. All landholders within a catchment, both urban and rural, have a major stake in maintaining the land, water and biodiversity assets of their region and passing these on to the next generation in a more productive state.

Whilst Table 2 outlines our view of the roles in catchment management, several specific issues relating to these roles are worth mentioning. These include:

- role of volunteer groups such as Landcare; and
- the need for interstate coordination.

Role of Landcare and Other Volunteer Groups

Table 2 recognises that there is a crucial role for Landcare and other community groups in catchment management. These volunteers are critical to achieving Governments' economic, environmental and

social goals for natural resource management. However they are often fragile, with the threat of burn-out putting them at risk. Governments need to recognise both the value of the social infrastructure they represent and their vulnerability, and provide ongoing commitment and continued support.

Interstate Coordination

As mentioned in Table 2, there can be a role for the Commonwealth in facilitating interstate coordination on catchment management where this is necessary. A prime example of this is the Murray Darling Basin Commission which acts as a forum for the coordination of the activities of four State Governments and the Commonwealth in a nationally important area. Victoria considers that this is an excellent initiative which is delivering a synergistic program with benefits far in excess of those that individual States could deliver. In relation to Victoria, this is the key area requiring interstate coordination. In areas such as the Snowy-Genoa region and in management of joint groundwater resources with South Australia, interstate arrangements have already been put in place. Commonwealth facilitation is only required where arrangements have not yet been put in place by the States.

3.2 Planning, Resourcing, Implementation, Coordination and Cooperation

3.2.1 Scales of Planning

The objective of catchment management is ecologically sustainable development which requires the integration of ecological, economic and social goals. It must be recognised that the integration of these objectives can only be effectively achieved at the scale at which ecosystem processes generally operate, socially distinct communities are apparent, regional development opportunities provided by the characteristics of the land, water and biodiversity resources in the region can be specified. Consequently, it should be acknowledged that the planning, decision-making and implementation of land, water and biodiversity management is best undertaken at the regional scale.

The role of the State and Commonwealth Governments in this is to provide the policy framework within which regional planning and management should occur (see Table 2). Effectively, there needs to be a hierarchy of planning at the national, State and regional scale which are vertically integrated with the primary focus being on regional planning and management. This has not been fully recognised to date, with the Commonwealth seeking to invest in a number of small, localised projects which are not necessarily clear priorities in regional plans. This can lead to investment of Commonwealth funds for sub-optimal outcomes, add onerous requirements on community groups in developing applications and make the assessment process unnecessarily cumbersome.

3.2.2 Resourcing

Effective catchment management requires significant effort from all parties, i.e. individual landholders, the community, industry and State and Commonwealth Governments.

There is a role for the Commonwealth in providing funding for catchment management (Table 2). This is a role which the Commonwealth has actively embraced in the past and funds provided through the NHT and its predecessors have contributed greatly to environmental improvements.

However, it needs to be recognised that improving the condition of land, water and biodiversity resources and implementing ecologically sustainable development is an activity that must undertaken for the long term. Consequently, long-term programs for continued investment in catchment management need to be developed. These long-term programs will need to recognise the roles of all players including those of landholders who already make a significant contribution to catchment management, through their individual efforts, e.g. in improving water use efficiency, planting trees.

Long-term programs should include cost-sharing arrangements which clearly reflect these roles. Finally, they will require long-term commitment by all partners to ensure continuity and certainty of effort. Only when this has been achieved, can communities start to implement their plans with a sense of certainty in their future and use them to attract investment in regional development.

3.2.3 *Coordination at the Commonwealth Level*

Victoria has developed an approach to the management of our natural resource base which promotes ESD by integrating land, water and biodiversity management, resource development and use, and the protection, conservation and environmental management of natural resources.

Currently, there is little external evidence that such an integrated approach exists at the Commonwealth level. Different departments appear to have different priorities, funding and planning requirements, and accountability mechanisms. This can be very confusing and onerous for groups applying to the various Commonwealth funding programs. In some extreme cases (e.g. Waterwatch) it has resulted in different funding criteria being used in different parts of the State, putting at risk the integrity of the statewide program for community water quality monitoring. In view of this, stakeholders are increasingly demanding a more coherent policy framework at the national level because it has become evident that the economic, social and environmental considerations must be dealt with in an integrated way not separately.

It is necessary for Commonwealth departments to develop a national vision for natural resource management, to integrate their funding programs in ways that ensure that they address the key priorities and facilitate the smooth delivery of natural resource management by the States and their regional catchment bodies. The early steps in the development of the Natural Resources Management Policy are encouraging and should continue to this end. It is important that this policy explicitly recognises the primary role of State Governments as land and natural resource managers (IGAE) and the vital role and interests of local communities as custodians of their land, water and biodiversity assets.

3.3 Monitoring Effectiveness of Catchment Management

Victoria believes that monitoring outcomes is a key part of catchment management for a range of reasons including:

- understanding resource condition trends;
- researching effectiveness of best management strategies;
- changing or finetuning management strategies; and
- understanding best investment strategies.

Victoria's major focus is to ensure that monitoring is useful to inform decision-making. Thus our monitoring programs are driven by the particular needs of resource managers, including landholders, catchment managers and government resource users and managers.

It is important to recognise that monitoring should be undertaken as part of adaptive management. Given this, it should be matched to management needs and focused at the catchment/regional scale.

Victoria does recognise that information is required at both the State and national levels to assist in setting funding priorities. This can generally be gained from collating information collected at the regional scale; it should not drive monitoring programs. Where it does, this results in inefficiencies in data collection. To some extent, this problem has been recognised in the National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA), which is attempting to put in place a framework for data collected at the

regional scale to be collated at the national scale. However, in some parts of the NLWRA, national priorities, which are not matched to local needs, are still driving the information collected.

Finally, there is a need for coordination amongst Commonwealth agencies in their information requirements. There is considerable overlap in the information required by the NLWRA, the State of the Environment Report, reporting against the Regional Forests Agreements and a range of other initiatives. However, these are all slightly different in their requirements and timeframes. It would be more useful and efficient if those Commonwealth agencies requiring data from State and regional bodies were able to coordinate their needs.

4. CONCLUSION

Victoria considers that catchment management can only occur as a partnership between governments, communities, industries and individual. It is crucial that the roles and responsibilities of each are clearly specified and understood. Victoria's approach to catchment management offers a model to others interested in these partnership approaches.

Victoria looks forward to the outcome of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage Inquiry into Catchment Management and would be pleased to attend a public hearing.

5. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

Victorian Catchment Management Council Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Catchment Management July 1999.

Catchment Management Structures Working Party February 1997, *Review of Catchment Management Structures in Victoria*, Report to the Minister for Agriculture and Resources & the Minister for Conservation and Land Management.

Government of Victoria 1997, *Future Arrangements for Catchment Management in Victoria*. Response by the Victorian Government to the Catchment Management Structures Review.

Government of Victoria 1997, *Managing Victoria's Catchment – Partnerships in Action*.

Department of Infrastructure and Department of Natural Resources and Environment October 1997, *Working Together in Catchment Management. Local Government and Catchment Management Authorities*.

Department of Natural Resources and Environment 1999, *CMSA [Catchment Management and Sustainable Agriculture Division] Highlights 1998*.

Nutrient Management Strategy Implementation Committee 1999, *Third Annual Report of the Victorian Nutrient Management Program 1997–1998*, Victorian Catchment Management Council, Department of Natural Resources and Environment and Environment Protection Authority.

Summary of CMAs On-ground Actions in 1997/98.