

30 July 1999

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

Dear Sir/Madam,

### **INQUIRY INTO CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT**

I am responding to the Inquiry into Catchment Management on behalf of the Johnstone River Catchment Management Association (JRCMA) who are an incorporated catchment group that operate out of the Catchment Centre office located in Innisfail in the Wet Tropics Region of North Queensland.

As you would be aware, the Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) concept is based on a coordinated approach to the management of our natural resources and was adopted as policy by the Queensland government in 1990. When the Johnstone River Catchment Management Association was formed in 1991, it brought together people from a wide variety of backgrounds who all in some way, gained from and affected the catchment.

Prior to the inception of ICM there was a considerable amount of work being carried out in isolation by individual organisations relating to the proper management of our natural resources in the Johnstone River catchment. Since its formation, the JRCMA has undertaken a number of projects that have brought together these key organisations to work together on various NRM issues. This *integration* of activities not only prevents duplication, but also ensures the best possible result and encourages people to work together. Although the JRCMA very seldom physically carry out the research/on-ground works, it does however, act as a catalyst for the project, coordinating efforts to maximise efficiency and results.

In mid 1992 the Pilot Study began operating from a shop front Catchment Centre in the centre of Innisfail. The centre serves as the base for the coordinator and an administrative assistant who support the work of the Association, and also provides administrative facilities for other NRM research organisations and community groups operating in the catchment. The centre also provides ready access to information about ICM for members of the community and industry organisations.

The following projects have been carried out both in the formulation of the Management Strategy and its implementation during the period 1991 – 1999, which have involved people from a wide variety of backgrounds. The most significant of these projects are:

- Production of a Catchment Atlas
- Downstream Effects of Agricultural Practices Project – Water Quality Monitoring
- Stream Habitat and Fisheries Resource Assessment
- Acid Sulphate Soil Mapping
- Nutrient Balances and Transport Research Project (NUTBAT)

- Dairy Effluent Management
- Riparian Zone Management Research Project
- Upper Johnstone Catchment Revegetation Project
- South Johnstone Reach Stabilisation.

Along with these projects, a National Landcare Program (State Agency) funded project involving the monitoring of Downstream Effects of Agricultural Practices (DEAP), ran in conjunction with the work coordinated by the Johnstone River Catchment Management Association for the NUTBAT project.

The overall purpose of ICM as defined by the State Government is: ***to integrate the management of land, water, and related biological resources to achieve their sustainable and balanced use.*** The success of the projects listed above exemplifies the need for an *integrated* approach to the management of our natural resources.

The majority of on-ground changes that have occurred and need to occur in areas across Australia that will improve the current state of our Natural Resources, are in most cases related directly to local landholders. Since the inception of ICM, landholders in the Johnstone River Catchment have been actively involved with the ICM process and related projects. The community sees ICM as a tool for focusing the efforts of Natural Resource users, which also allows landholders to have 'ownership' of the solution. This has resulted in the establishment of strong working relationships between landholders, local industries and the JRCMA.

The development of best management practices in the banana, cane, pawpaw and dairy industries in the Catchment has been achieved by working cooperatively with farmers, industry groups and state agencies. This cooperative approach ensures that they do not perceive the changes as a legislative threat, but as proposed changes that they have contributed to.

The JRCMA regularly holds ICM activities which continually strengthens the working relationships of organisations concerned with NRM issues in the catchment. Credibility for the JRCMA has come about from years of community education and participation, but more importantly from the reputation of ICM as being a means of getting things done.

In order to ensure that the numerous organisations concerned with or affecting NRM issues, carry out future activities which aim to achieve the sustainable use of our natural resources, it is imperative to have a process in place which is solely concerned with coordinating these activities. This has been carried out successfully by ICM groups to date, and will continue to do so in the future.

If you require any further information on any of the JRCMA projects or any further clarification, please contact me at the Catchment Centre on 07 4061 6477.

Yours sincerely,

Pete Gleeson.  
**Project Manager – JRCMA INC.**