

Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee
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The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

29th July

Minister Causley,

Please find accompanying a submission to the Inquiry into Catchment Management from the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee.

Regards

Mark Fleming
Chairman
Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee

Inquiry into Catchment Management

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee makes decisions for the good of the entire catchment, it embraces the concept of Total Catchment Management for the management of Natural Resources.

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee is composed of twelve community representatives who live, work and/or hold land within the catchment (two of which represent the koorie community), one individual representing environmental interest, four individuals representing the three local governments within the catchment and seven individuals representing state government departments. Each individual is able to bring a different knowledge, skill base and perspective to the committee. Each individual makes a valuable contribution to the effective functioning of the committee.

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee is uniquely placed being the only forum where representatives from government departments, local government and the community can discuss common issues affecting the catchment.

The representatives from government departments feel that their attendance at meetings allows a rapport to develop between themselves and the community members. This allows the representatives (who are often regional managers) to understand local issues better and perhaps offer solutions. It allows the community members to feel comfortable with the specific department (through the individual) and make it more likely that issues will be raised in the first instance.

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee currently have strong links with local government. The Eurobodalla Shire Council contribute \$30,000 annually for on-ground works through the Landcare program. This money is matched by the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee small project fund. Currently the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee is investigating closer links with local government, which may see Catchment Management responsible for Estuary Management, Coastal Issues and others. Please find the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee Options Paper as an attachment.

The core of the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee is its community members. The community members outnumber the local government and department representative members. Being in the majority makes the community members feel they are able to make decisions that carry weight. Living and working in the community gives the community members a sense of connection with, and responsibility to, the wider community.

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee meets once every second month at various points within the catchment. At meetings all members are given the opportunity to discuss issues of concern within the catchment. Highlighted issues

requiring action may be directed to representatives concerned, to the coordinator to source further information or to a sub-committee created to progress specific issues.

Sub-committees

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee currently operates with four subcommittees, the last three of which were created two years ago. These are the Executive, Land and Vegetation, Water, and Communications. The sub-committees allow particular issues to be progressed.

Executive sub-committee

The executive sub-committee is empowered by the full committee to

- Develop the budget and Business Plan for approval by the full committee
- Make recommendations regarding Small Project Funding
- Provide submissions to a variety of documents
- Provide direction to the coordinator

It has also initiated or supported the following:

- Publication of Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee Strategic Plan
- Supportive of Batemans Bay Coastal Management Plan
- Continued support to other sub-committees; Land and Vegetation, Water and Communications (all link with components of Business Plan and Budget)
- Supported local community groups with funding applications
- Undertaken various site visits with Care and Community groups regarding possible projects
- Attended numerous landcare groups meetings to discuss role of CMC and principles of TCM
- Committee members attended conferences/workshops as part of community capacity building component of committee development
- Involvement in development of Eurobodalla Shire Councils Management Plan, including a separate page on TCM (with logo)
- Membership of the newly formed Illawarra South East Regional Organisation and Illawarra South East Regional Assessment Panel
- Working with Aboriginal Community Groups on funding and community awareness issues
- Assessed National Heritage Trust applications and ranked at a local level

Small Project Funding

A major role of the Catchment Committee is the promotion of Small Project Funding and allocation of \$30,000 annually to on-ground works. Small project funding is available year round. The grants are flexible and accessible to the wider community. According to the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee annual

report regarding Small Project Funding, \$30,000 equates to \$173, 500 on-ground, which represents excellent value for money.

The executive committee carefully assess each application as submitted and will often suggest additions or changes to projects to ensure their compliance with guidelines or to enhance the value of the project. The Small Project annual report, for projects funded in 1997-1998, is included as an attachment.

Land and Vegetation sub-committee

The Land and Vegetation sub-committee formed to tackle issues such as

- land degradation
- noxious flora and fauna
- vegetation management

The Land and Vegetation sub-committee has instigated or supported the following:

- Organised and held a community meeting in Araluen to discuss draft Land degradation survey
- Supported Belowra Valley Landcare in NHT applications
- Organised and ran official launch of works at Belowra Valley
- Lobbied council for greater resourcing put into on ground weed removal
- In consultation with Landcare coordinator have ensured Landcare groups are more catchment focused
- Media releases and radio interviews regarding Land and Vegetation matters
- Financially supported various initiatives:
 - Master tree growers video production
 - Lantana biological control development
- Attendance at TCM/Landcare coordinators conference and field days
- Attendance at Keyline Farming Field Day
- Support Landcare groups to tackle land and water degradation, and encourage groups to tackle issues from a catchment management perspective
- Encourage the formation of Landcare groups, on conjunction with Eurobodalla Landcare Management Committee
- Promoted development of a catchment based landcare forum
- Identified and facilitated possible funding for weeds and mine rehabilitation issues at Majors Creek
- Provided direction and support for the South Coast Land Degradation Survey
- Introduced landcare coordinator to interested landholders

Case Study: Belowra Valley

The Land and Vegetation sub-committee, with support from the full committee, have been instrumental in the success of the Belowra Valley project. The Belowra Valley area was identified as being severely degraded in the Land Degradation Survey of South-East NSW. This survey was supported by the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee and funded by the Federal Government.

Armed with this knowledge and with assistance from the Department of Land and Water representative on the committee, the Belowra Valley Landcare Group was able to secure funding from small project funding, Section 10 soil conservation money, the Eurobodalla Shire Council and (potentially) Natural Heritage Trust amongst others. The project aims to halt erosion at the heads of gullies in the valley by redirecting water flow and fencing out stock. The farmers are committed to the project and will manage the project beyond the life of the project funding.

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee in this instance brought together the Department of Land and Water Conservation and the Belowra Valley Landcare Group. With luck and support from all, further funding will be forthcoming.

A media article describing the situation is attached. Also the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee extend an open invitation to Minister Causley to visit the Belowra Valley area to see first hand the existing degraded situation and areas where earth works have commenced.

Water sub-committee

The Water sub-committee formed to tackle issues such as

- Water quality
- Water quantity

The Water sub-committee has instigated or supported the following:

- Organised meeting to discuss \$50000 held by Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee for use by Araluen community
- On-going liaison with Araluen Community regarding water management
- Supported employment of Water Quality Monitoring Project Officer
- Supported application of purchase of stream-watch and bug-watch kits to be used by school and community groups
- Supported application by council to co-fund fecal sterol testing in the Tuross River
- Continued to collate and coordinate local water monitoring and testing activities
- Attendance by CMC members at annual coastal conference
- Attended Bug watch training day
- Liaison with Far South Coast CMC, DLWC and the community re formation of Water Reform Committee for the South Coast
- Organised Algal Identification Day for Streamwatch Teachers and local community
- Promoting solutions to problems at the headwaters of the three main catchments
- Liaising with ESC re management of coastal development
- Attendance of CMC Members at Estuary Management Committee Meetings
- Survey of possible human impacts on the Clyde River due to unregulated camping
- Provided direction and support for the Tuross River Catchment Estuary Processes study

- Provided direction and support for the Batemans Bay Clyde River Catchment Estuary Processes Study

Case Study: Araluen and Majors Creek

The Water sub-committee, with the support of the full committee, have been instrumental in negotiations with the Araluen and Majors Creek communities. The Araluen and Major Creek area was identified in the South-East NSW Land Degradation Survey as having badly degraded creek beds resulting from past mining activity. The area also has a noxious weed problem and potentially contaminated groundwater.

The Araluen community has secured \$30,000 to investigate groundwater issues and \$20, 000 has been secured for work with stressed rivers. The community has prepared and released a Water Management Plan for comment.

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee are currently financing a contour survey of the Majors Creek area and will then source funding for an overall management plan for the area. The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee is confident that an overall plan will then attract further money for on-ground works.

Communications sub-committee

The Communications sub-committee formed to tackle the issues of

- public awareness
- public education

The communications sub-committee has instigated or supported the following:

- Coordinated and promoted Bug Watch spring and autumn surveys
- Supported employment of TCM Education officer
- Supported and contribution to Catch On new Catchment/Landcare newsletter
- Supported and participated in plantings by schools on Tuross River
- Supported production of Promotional Catchment Posters
- Actively canvassed schools for Landcare nominations
- Organised and coordinated water week activities
- Supported Education Forum held in Queanbeyan
- Organised, promoted and conducted three successful World Environment Day Events at local primary schools
- Work experience, high school students and community members provided with information
- Issued numerous media releases covering catchment management
- Presented TCM displays promoting catchment management issues at the major local shows

- Successful coordination of - Eurobodalla Clean Water Action Campaign (ECWAC)
- Produced and launched very successful “Help Keep Our Waterways Clean” Calendar as part of ECWAC. Winners were presented with prizes at each school
- Undertook Water Week activities at local primary schools – activities included tree planting and creation of a water garden
- Development joint Schools education program with the Eurobodalla Regional Native Botanic Gardens
- Organised topical TCM displays at libraries and TAFE
- Liaison with TAFE about discussing TCM principles to various course classes
- Supported successful application for Greening of Schools Grant

Case Study: World Environment Day

The Communications sub-committee, with the support of the full committee, have been instrumental in coordinating activities for World Environment Day. Each year a local primary school is approached to host World Environment Day. On the day representatives from organisations and community groups are brought together by the efforts of the committee. Groups who participate include Coastcare, Landcare, National Parks and Wildlife Service, State Forests, Fisheries, a Local Koorie Group, the Eurobodalla Regional Botanic Gardens, Eurobodalla Worm Farmers Association, Bug Watch, the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee, the Illawarra Tafe and the local High School. Each group or organisation encourages the students to participate in an environmentally based activity. For example the students may learn about bag and size limits, learn about the health of their local wetland, investigate items washed up on the beaches, learn propagation techniques, learn about water quality in a catchment, play games, have their face painted or be entertained by a play. All enjoy the day thoroughly and the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee can provide further information to teachers.

A note on Case studies

This submission represents part of what the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee do as a committee. Case studies illustrate the strong skill base of, and participation by, members of the committee.

With respect to management of Natural Resources, the case studies also represent how the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee facilitate the involvement of other stakeholders who would not usually have cause to communicate with each other.

Other Issues

Structure

The existing structure of the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee with its combination of community, local government and government department representatives is sound. The committee members feel that catchment committees should not be so large that they lose their important links with the community.

Communication

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee members feel that communication between the catchment and state level could be greatly improved. One suggestion was to hold an annual conference (similar to that held by the Rural Lands Protection Board) where local catchment and state catchment members could share information.

Accountability

The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee feel that more emphasis should be placed on each body being accountable to themselves and to each other. This would involve department representatives signing off on work to be done by their organisation. It would also include catchment committees reporting to the State Catchment committee in a format that can be used, by the State Catchment Committee, to promote the success of catchment committees. There should also be some formal training for chairs to ensure consistency in approach throughout the state.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are suggested by the Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee:

- The Lower South Coast Catchment Management Committee wishes to see a strong statement of support for catchment management from the three tiers of government.
- The current allocation of \$30, 000 for small project funding should continue due to the on-ground amplification of this money.
- Retain the existing structure of the committees with their mix of Government department, local government and community representatives.
- Improve communication between catchment committees and the State catchment committee.
- Ensure that catchment committee areas are not so large so as to restrict communication with the local community.
- Investigate closer links with local government.
- Instill a sense of accountability in all levels of participation within catchment committees.
- Insist on some formal training for chairs to ensure consistency in approach throughout the state.

Further questions regarding any aspect of this submission can be directed to Nerrida Richards TCM Coordinator on (02) 44 74 1235 or Mark Fleming, Chair on (02) 44 72 3753.