



# Lake Macquarie Catchment Management Committee

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

The following comments are from the Lake Macquarie Catchment Management Committee and as such reflect knowledge of catchment management in NSW and more specifically, experiences of the Lake Macquarie CMC.

### The Development of Catchment Management in Australia

The development of catchment management in NSW formally began in 1989 with the Catchment Management Act. Since then its development has been slow and spasmodic. Catchment Management Committees set up to implement the Act have been given little direction and hence have developed individual ways of approaching catchment management. Much has been achieved, but there has been no uniformity.

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

The catchment approach is extremely valuable in addressing the “bigger picture”. The environment can not be looked at in separate compartments; it is integrated and needs to be managed as such. For example, in Lake Macquarie the issues being dealt with include; erosion and sedimentation, urban development, stormwater, vegetation clearing, wildlife corridors, aquatic ecosystems and community awareness. Each of these will impact to some extent on the other issues.

The catchment approach is clearly based on water issues. Biodiversity does not follow the same boundary and a larger regional approach would be more beneficial when addressing vegetation and fauna issues.

### Best Practice Methods of Preventing, Halting and Reversing Environmental Degradation in Catchments and Achieving Environmental Sustainability

There is, of course, a plethora of best practice methods being used all over Australia. Different methods are useful for different situations, as not every catchment is the same. It would be useful if a compendium of BPMs was developed for each broad environmental ecosystem in Australia. CMCs and Government agencies would be able to contribute their knowledge and experience in this field.

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

All levels of government have an integral role in catchment management, as they are the regulators and implementors of policy and legislation. The private sector as

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members of the community need to be aware of their impact on the environment and how they can better managed it. The community is vital is achieving effective catchment management. By far the greatest impact on the natural resources of a catchment area is the general population. By having them involved at the management level they will become more aware of the problem and part of the answer in providing a solution.

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

Planning needs to be streamlined. At present there are State Strategies, State planning policies, regional environmental plans, local environmental plans, catchment plans and strategies etc. Often when these plans and strategies are developed there is little acknowledgment of existing and overriding plans. Planning still needs to be on a hierarchical basis, but they need to be complimentary to each other and integrated.

The NSW Catchment Management Act 1989, provides a good opportunity for bringing the community into catchment management but does not provide enough resources for the CMCs to be truly effective.

The CMCs in NSW have worked well, given the few resources allocated. The ideology behind CMCs and Total Catchment Management is very good and should work well. However, increased resources needs to be dedicated to the program. Funding could be increased, but this is not the main resourcing problem. Government departments need to commit their time and personnel to making TCM work, which includes having public servants on Committees not just observing but taking on a real membership and being involved in the Committee.

Any kind of catchment management committee needs to have some level of authority. At the very least catchment management strategies should be signed off by the relevant Minister and linked to planning legislation.

A Regional approach to catchment management is becoming more apparent as the right approach. There is still a need for local catchment management, especially for the inclusion of the community, but the broader regional management can address issue more strategically and with greater emphasis on biodiversity issues.

No matter what boundary is used, there needs to be mechanisms in place which enable and encourage catchment managers and authorities to integrate across the boundary. Environmental issues of one kind or another will always cause some overlap of boundaries.

### Mechanisms for Monitoring, Evaluating and Reporting on Catchment Management

Apart from physical environmental monitoring, regular monitoring and reporting on funds expended in catchment areas is essential. Monitoring plans for regions and catchments need to be developed and undertaken by all stakeholders, including the community, Landcare groups, Council, CMCs and State Government.

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If you would like further information on any of these comments please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 4929 9857.

Yours sincerely

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