



Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia

MID-TERM REVIEW OF THE NATURAL HERITAGE TRUST

THE RESPONSE

AUGUST 2000



Department of
AGRICULTURE
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Introduction

The Natural Heritage Trust seeks to stimulate activities in the national interest to achieve the conservation, sustainable use and repair of Australia's natural environment.

The Trust was established in 1997 with a total funding budget of \$1.25 billion most of which was to be expended in five years. (This was later expanded to \$1.5 billion over six years). An additional \$300 million was set in perpetuity.

A mid-term review, commissioned by the Trust's Ministerial Board, has reported on the achievements of the Trust and has made suggestions for building on these achievements as well as fine-tuning current aspects of administration.

Consultants conducted 29 independent reviews in all, evaluating the administrative arrangements and performance of 17 Trust programs; including six regional reviews and three thematic studies on dryland salinity and associated vegetation management, urban environment and inland waterways.

The key element in assessing the performance of the Trust is its success in stimulating investment and activity - creating institutional frameworks and developing partnerships for the future. Achievement of the broader goals of conservation, sustainable use and repair of Australia's natural environment will take many years and will also be in response to many factors in addition to the Trust's investments. Consequently, the achievement of these long-term goals will not be measurable in the short-term.

The judgment from the mid-term review is that the Natural Heritage Trust is performing well in meeting its objectives, although there are ways of improving this performance. This has been a significant achievement in view of the complex nature of the Trust, the size of the budget and the large number of participants. No fundamental failings were found in the administration of the Trust, for example in the area of financial accountability.

The evaluations' recommendations are a mixture of measures that might be implemented in the short to medium term to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of Trust program delivery, and strategic measures that will require further development. While a number of recommendations may be adopted in the short term, the major outcome from the mid-term review will be its contribution to the design and development of a new national policy for natural resource management. This national policy will provide the framework for policy instruments, programs and delivery arrangements that will build on the initial six years of the Natural Heritage Trust.

Achievements of the Natural Heritage Trust

It is important to acknowledge and stress that a great deal has been achieved in a very short time, in terms of implementing the strategies to achieve the overall purpose of the Trust. (Administrative Arrangements Review)

The mid-term review found that the Trust has been successful in raising the level of investment in the natural environment and in adding value to the contribution of other community and State government stakeholders. The Commonwealth funding for the Natural Heritage Trust is shown in Appendix A.

‘The programs that constitute the Natural Heritage Trust have been able to deliver a seven-fold increase in Commonwealth expenditure on natural resource management, sustainable agriculture and environmental protection from 1996-97 to 1998-9’ (Administrative Arrangements Review).

‘In the Blackwood region additional expenditure is estimated in the ratio of 3.4:1 although it may be as high as 11:1 if the impact of further expenditure by farmers taking up improved practices and investing their own funds is taken into account’ (Blackwood Regional Review).

‘Through the One-Stop-Shop process, for every one dollar of Trust funds invested in Bushcare projects, an additional \$2.60 has been contributed from other sources’ (Bushcare Review).

‘The Natural Heritage Trust contribution of \$37.6 million has leverage a further \$75.5 million and, by our estimates, it may indirectly influence as much as 80% of the overall annual investment in improved management of dryland salinity by all providers which we estimate to be approximately \$134 million’ (Dryland Salinity and Associated Vegetation Management Thematic Study).

Raising Awareness and Empowering Communities

The Trust has been successful in raising community awareness and empowering communities to create new social networks to facilitate cooperative activity across regions.

‘By giving out funding for specific projects, the government has empowered communities. There is a growing belief that “now we can fix some of our own problems”’ (Central Queensland Regional Review).

‘There is a spirit of cooperation in the air; people realise that to help themselves they have to help each other’ (Blackwood Regional Review).

‘Indigenous communities generally welcome the Program because it recognises that conservation management and indigenous land use can coexist’ (Indigenous Protected Areas Program Review).

‘There is general agreement that the Trust has provided a significant input into community environmental awareness and capacity for action in urban areas. The Trust has also generated important new urban social networks and change.’ (Urban Environment Thematic Study).

‘The commitment to the Natural Heritage Trust and the Trust programs in community organisations is very high’ (Administrative Arrangements Review).

'Participants in all regions identified that the Trust stimulated active community participation and facilitated people working together collaboratively'. (Integrated Regional Summary Review).

Institutional Arrangements

The mid-term review found that the partnerships with the States and Territories have to a large extent been effective in delivering the Trust's objectives. The review also noted the success of regional approaches and encouraged these to be strengthened progressively.

'Partnership Agreements signed between the Commonwealth and States provide positive benefits to the parties and provide the basis for effective delivery of Trust funds to community groups' (Bushcare Review).

'The Partnership Agreements have been an important innovation in inter-governmental cooperation and collaboration in Australia' (Administrative Arrangements Review).

'Important contributions to institutional reforms have also been made but there have been no reforms of regulations on land clearing in Queensland' (Bushcare Review).

'Evidence from the Upper South East, Blackwood and Goulburn-Broken regions suggests that effective integration between Commonwealth, State and local government activities in program delivery increases the efficiency and effectiveness of natural resource management investments at regional scales' (Integrated Regional Summary).

'The National Landcare Program has contributed to more integrated institutional arrangements for natural resource management. This has included integration of organisational activity at the catchment and regional levels as well as policy and other changes relevant to natural resource management' (National Landcare Program Review).

'The Natural Heritage Trust has also been catalytic in encouraging an integrated approach to policy development in relation to natural resource management, environmental protection and sustainable agriculture at both the Commonwealth and State levels. The progressive development and implementation of a regional approach to delivery is also regarded as an essential component of its success' (Administrative Arrangements Review).

On-ground Outcomes

The Trust has supplemented pre-existing programs such as Landcare with new programs including Bushcare. The consultants found that in doing so, the Trust has facilitated a more comprehensive and holistic approach to natural resource management. This has helped build capacity and raised awareness of the triple bottom line of economic, social and environmental sustainability benefits.

The long-term goals of the Trust in relation to broad environmental and sustainability outcomes will take many years to be realised. In the short term, measurement of the on-ground achievements of projects funded by the Trust indicates that the Trust projects are achieving their objectives. In the longer term, the National Land and Water Resources Audit (a Trust program) and State of the Environment reporting will provide base-line data to assess landscape scale change associated with Trust programs.

Some 300 000 people have been involved with the Trust through its 22 programs. Highlights of activities to January 1999 from a selection of programs are:

'The majority of National Landcare Program interviewees indicated that there are improvements in the condition of on-farm and off-farm natural resource areas as a consequence of the National Landcare Program' (National Landcare Program Review).

Through Waterwatch Australia some 2200 community groups monitor 5495 sites in 246 catchments across Australia.

Since 1997 the National Reserve System program has purchased 1.3 million hectares.

Five Indigenous Protected Areas have been declared involving 515,382 hectares.

Key Issues raised in Mid-Term Review

This document outlines the overarching issues arising from the recommendations of the mid-term review. These are the key issues that affect the operation of the Trust as a whole. It does not address program-specific issues. Issues specific to individual programs are being addressed by the responsible Minister.

Long-term Government Commitment

The mid-term review concluded that because of the magnitude of overall environmental problems and their impact on the whole economy, the Natural Heritage Trust, or its successor, should be developed as a long-term source of funding.

Ministerial Board Response

The Government is considering its long-term response to natural resource management through a high level Ministerial Group. This group was formed in recognition of the need for a new national framework for protecting, maintaining and enhancing Australia's natural resources, to provide the basis for sustainable production, healthy ecosystems (including healthy rivers and estuaries) and viable rural communities.

The Ministerial group is considering a number of key reports which address issues such as salinity, soil degradation, loss of biodiversity, sustainable land and water management, and acid sulphate soils. Through this process the Government aims to build on the achievements of the Natural Heritage Trust, and to continue to promote more sustainable and more integrated management of soils, water, vegetation and biodiversity.

Government Policy Settings

The mid-term review raises issues related to future directions for Government policy. It is recognised that program expenditure through the Natural Heritage Trust alone will not be sufficient to achieve the Government's environment and natural resource management objectives. Governments need more effective incentives and regulatory regimes to stimulate additional private investment in the natural environment.

Ministerial Board Response

The Commonwealth Government has established a process for developing its future policy and long-term commitment on natural resource management, as discussed above. It is important to note however, that under the Constitution the States and Territories have major responsibilities for the environment. The Commonwealth acts in partnership with the States in delivering the Trust. The development of the Commonwealth's future policy directions is being undertaken in conjunction with the States.

The Trust is developing a range of policy instruments to encourage investment by the private sector in biodiversity, for example rate relief and covenants. However, the potential for applying a more varied policy mix for natural resource management is acknowledged. Information about best practice in these approaches and other innovation is disseminated through seminars, field trips, Trust publications and Natural Heritage Trust training.

Strategic Approach

All Trust programs have strategic plans linking program objectives to the overarching Trust goal and objectives.

The Trust's Goal is:

- To stimulate activities in the national interest to achieve the conservation, sustainable use and repair of Australia's natural environment.

The Trust's Three Key Objectives are:

- To provide a framework for strategic capital investment in the natural environment;
- To achieve complementary environmental protection, natural resource management and sustainable agricultural outcomes consistent with agreed national strategies; and
- To provide a framework for cooperative partnerships between communities, industry and all levels of government.

The mid-term review recommended an overall strategic plan be formulated for the Trust, with clearly and consistently stated purpose, objectives and outcomes and the means for achieving them. Strategic plans for the individual Trust programs should have strong links to the overall plan.

Ministerial Board Response

While some programs did predate the Trust, for example Landcare, each program's objectives are designed to meet the overall Natural Heritage Trust objective of long-term sustainability. Post-Trust strategic outcomes will be decided through the development of the Commonwealth Government's national policy for natural resource management. The Board has reaffirmed the importance of strategic outcomes for the Trust with a greater emphasis on targeted initiatives and a regional approach that involves greater devolution of program delivery to regions where appropriate institutional arrangements are in place. The Board also agreed to give priority to targeted regional-scale initiatives during the next round of decision making for funding. Trust grant guidelines were revised to ensure this emphasis was clear. Facilitators from Bushcare and other programs, non-government organisations, State Assessment Panels and Regional Assessment Panels were briefed to ensure they understood the stronger emphasis on targeted initiatives for the 2000-01 funding round.

Also refer to Regional Approaches.

Partnerships

The Natural Heritage Trust is based on partnerships between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories. As already stated, under the Constitution the States have the major responsibility for natural resource issues. The mid-term review suggested

that the partnership arrangements should be further strengthened and extended to more effectively include local government, the community and industry.

Ministerial Board Response

The Board reaffirmed that partnerships remain at the core of the Trust and agreed, in particular, to build on the Trust's links with local government.

However, with only one year of funding remaining it is not considered practical to renegotiate the existing partnership arrangements with the States. Similarly, the scope for creating formal agreements with other sectors is limited. Over time, stronger relationships with local government will need to be managed in cooperation with the States, taking into account the differing legislative and administrative frameworks that operate in each State jurisdiction. The Government is considering these issues in the development of its national policy for natural resource management.

Investment Focus

A number of the consultants' reports express concern that the community grants process may have diluted the potential of the Trust to achieve its overarching objective of establishing self-sustaining and strategic investments. While the community focus has been necessary to achieve commitment to the Trust's objectives, it has resulted in funds being spread over a large number of smaller projects that may have less impact than strategically directed larger projects. Against this background, some of the review reports propose that the Trust should have a stronger investment focus, with larger, more integrated projects and the development of investment sharing frameworks. An investment framework would require a wider range of activities in addition to on-ground works, including enhanced regional strategic planning.

Ministerial Board Response

The Trust is now actively seeking more devolved grants and targeted initiatives. The Board wrote to State Ministers in 1999 to advise them that it was seeking proposals for significant larger-scale initiatives. Support for small, community driven projects has been a deliberate strategy but now needs to be balanced with the advantages provided by larger initiatives.

The Board acknowledged the importance of a strong investment focus for the Trust's activities. The Board agreed that greater effort was required to attract further private sector investment and corporate support. There may be potential to link these efforts with other government and corporate investments, for example the Australian Greenhouse Office is identifying industry associations and sectors which need to, and can be, engaged in partnerships in natural resource management.

Regional Approaches

The thrust of recommendations is for the Trust to strengthen its regional approach, and increase support for planning and implementation at the regional or catchment level.

Ministerial Board Response

The Ministerial Board reaffirmed its support for targeted initiatives and regional-scale projects addressing issues of major regional concern. The Trust already places importance on regional-scale activity as a mechanism for delivery of its objectives.

In strengthening the regional approach, the variability between each region's capacity to plan and manage must be recognised. Integrated regional projects will be further

encouraged, as will the use of devolved grants for the implementation of small, local projects whose objectives are consistent with the overall regional plan.

In devolving funds and responsibility, it will be important to continue to empower community groups. Representative structures in the community organisation and effective management will be important in maintaining community support. Trust facilitators and participants in the Regional Assessment Panels have been reminded of the need to ensure regional plans are taken into account in project assessments.

Program Structure

A number of reports noted the large number of separate programs that fall within the scope of the Trust. The concern was that administrative barriers could prevent achievement of integrated Trust goals by encouraging single-focus projects. The Administration Arrangements Review proposed including the Coasts and Clean Seas programs within the One-Stop-Shop structure, to promote the integration of the programs within the Trust.

Ministerial Board Response

The Board considered that major changes to the program structure at this stage of the Trust would result in increased costs and time delays in its final eighteen months. However it is important to note that the One-Stop-Shop process was designed to present potential proponents with a single entry point to Trust programs, and encourage cross-program integration. There is scope to encourage further integration within the present structure and this potential is being investigated. Possible opportunities include access to other government programs such as Green Corps and Work for the Dole with Trust projects for additional human resources. This has been welcomed by Local Government proponents in particular. In the longer term, program structure will be considered in the context of the future national policy for natural resource management.

Governance

The Administrative Arrangements Review suggested, that for management of future natural resource programs, a single administration unit with a chief executive officer would provide a core of unity, a sense of overall purpose and direction, and would lessen some of the administrative complexities evident in Trust delivery.

Elements in the current administrative arrangements under the *Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997* are the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board and the Natural Heritage Trust Advisory Committee. There are also a number of joint implementation groups established under a Memorandum of Understanding as well as program-specific advisory committees that advise Ministers.

Ministerial Board Response

The strength of current arrangements is the effective cooperation between Environment Australia and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australia.

The benefits of creating a single administrative unit at this stage in the life of the Trust are not considered sufficient to justify the cost and disruption in project assessment and delivery.

The Board is paying particular attention to the issue of governance in the process of considering the Commonwealth's goals and future engagement in the national policy for natural resource management.

Communication

Communicating about the Trust and its objectives to the public and stakeholders was noted as a shortfall. In the first year of the Trust, few resources were committed to communicating beyond application information. In addition, the Administrative Arrangements Review recommended that the various streams of activity be combined into a single communications strategy with emphasis on promoting the investment focus of the Trust.

Ministerial Board Response

A number of strategies have been implemented such as the training initiative 'Building Regional Capacity', a pilot scheme, which has as one of its aims to foster and promote communication networks. Communication with stakeholders will also be continued through existing mechanisms such as the Natural Heritage Journal, information signs on Trust projects, the Trust information video, the Trust web-site that contains all 29 reports from the mid-term review, and an annual communications strategy for the Trust encompassing, for example, television community announcements, magazine articles and the Trust Report Card.

Capacity Building

Consultants identified the need for participants in Trust activity to have the right technical skills, support infrastructure and access to knowledge to undertake their tasks effectively. Their proposals included greater emphasis on technical support for projects, improved strategic links with research agencies and support for training and information dissemination.

Ministerial Board Response

The Board acknowledged and reiterated the importance of capacity building to promote the community's ability to achieve Trust outcomes and enhance the community's ability to sustainably manage Australia's natural resources in the longer term. The Trust has been successful in raising awareness and empowering communities. This is shown by the number of project proposals received, the range of proponents, the level of strategic planning, and the number of training initiatives for regions and catchments. In particular, the Trust has encouraged indigenous community involvement through the employment of Indigenous Land Management Facilitators and has devolved funds to organisations such as Greening Australia whose role has included encouraging the community in new forms of environmental works, for example the establishment of seed banks.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Performance indicators for Trust programs are included in Partnership Agreements with the States. Consultants for the mid-term review were asked to comment on and recommend refinements to these indicators, as well as develop an overall indicator framework for the Trust. Two consultants noted that a review of performance indicators would assist in better monitoring and evaluating of the Trust's performance.

Ministerial Board Response

The Board reiterated the importance of monitoring and evaluation for the management of the Trust and agreed to refine processes for monitoring and evaluating the Trust's achievements.

However, the difficulty of undertaking a systematic assessment of both short-term and long-term goals against performance indicators is evidenced by the often poor quality of data that was supplied in project application forms and progress reports. Reasons for this poor data quality include the complexity of the initial application form (since

refined) and the requirement to report on proposed and actual annual outputs. Community participants in the Trust frequently do not have the time and experience to supply data. Seasonal constraints or late receipt of funding can mean reporting against agreed outcomes can be delayed. A key issue for the future is the development of a simple and robust set of performance measures, which provide information at several levels, from project level to the national level, but which do not place an unfair burden on community participants.

Coordinators and Facilitators

The review identified that issues to be addressed for the Trust's 1000 facilitators and coordinators include clarification of roles and accountability structures, competency skills needed and employment conditions, including length of tenure. Consultants' proposals to address these issues include providing clearer definitions of coordinator and facilitator roles, supporting facilitator networks and providing technical advice. Formation of a single Trust human resources program was also suggested, as were improvements to training and cooperation between facilitators employed by individual programs, for example Bushcare or Landcare.

Ministerial Board Response

The Board agreed that greater opportunity for the Trust's facilitators and coordinators to participate in training and skills development would increase the success of Trust projects.

This is already taking place in the form of the existing Building Regional Capacity – Trust short course, currently being piloted around the country.

Administration Issues

Administration issues noted in the mid-term review include reducing the cost of administration, introducing best management practices in administration, improving management information systems, simplifying the procedures for small grants and synchronising the Trust budget cycle with those of the States.

Ministerial Board Response

The Board noted that administration costs are well below the benchmarks of other comparable programs. It is agreed that, given that the Trust is due to finish by 30 June 2002, it was preferable to fine tune existing administrative arrangements than to introduce wholesale changes.

Significantly, no evidence of fraud or misappropriation was found by the mid-term review - a reflection on the quality and dedication of Trust participants.

Synchronisation of the Trust budget cycle with those of the States is not seen as practical as it would require major changes to the Trust yearly cycle (dates for application, assessment and commencement of projects) for the 2001-02 funding round.

One-Stop-Shop Assessment Process

Recommendations related to introducing a single application form for projects regardless of program funding, simplifying the assessment of small projects and improving the skills and capacity of Regional Assessment Panels.

Participants currently outside this process were surveyed about the adequacy of the current arrangements, which they indicated were working well. Given this, the

remaining community grants programs outside the One-Stop-Shop were not likely to benefit from moving to a single application form for the remaining funding round.

Ministerial Board Response

The Board noted that a single guide and application form is already in place for the ten One-Stop-Shop grant programs which represent nearly 75 per cent of overall Trust expenditure and agreed not to include programs currently outside the One-Stop-Shop.

Indigenous Participation

Two consultants' evaluations found that funds allocated to Aboriginal landowners were much less than expected given the proportion of Australia they own or manage. It was suggested that this might be due to the complexity of the application process, insufficient understanding of the link between culture and environment, difficulties in raising matching contributions and lack of documentation of priorities for the management of many Aboriginal lands.

Ministerial Board Response

The National Landcare and Bushcare Programs now jointly support a group of Indigenous Land Management Facilitators. This initiative is aiming to break down some of the barriers identified in the mid-term review. The February 2000 meeting of Natural Heritage Trust stakeholders considered this issue and recommended that the State and Territory governments develop a more appropriate mechanism for indigenous groups to access funds from the Trust. The representation of indigenous interests in the RAP/SAP process has increased through greater participation by the Indigenous Land Management facilitators.

Thematic Issues

Dryland Salinity and Associated Vegetation Management

The Dryland Salinity and Associated Vegetation report noted that the Trust aimed to achieve long-term improvements in the management of the problem. It was noted that the scale of dryland salinity issues means that the problem cannot be addressed by the Trust alone and needs to be complemented by other programs and policies.

Ministerial Board Response

Dryland salinity is one of the major problems facing the Australian continent and the issue is now prominent in the developing national policy for natural resource management.

A high level Ministerial taskforce is addressing these issues for development of a post-Trust agenda.

Inland Waterways

Improving the health and management of Australia's inland waterways is a significant national issue. The Inland Waterways report found it difficult to determine if the Trust and other investments are adequate, or the extent to which they could have had any impact on the processes driving the decline in many of Australia's aquatic systems, given the short time that has elapsed since the commencement of the Trust.

Ministerial Board Response

It is noted that a number of these recommendations refer to issues that are outside the responsibility of the Trust and are being addressed in other fora or through the national policy for natural resource management. For example, the report noted that:

There are many complex social, economic and ecological issues that are central to river health, and that appear to be beyond the capacity of the existing Trust programs to resolve.

The Urban Environment

The report concluded that most of the larger environmental initiatives supported by the Trust had already been planned or were operational at State level before the Trust commenced and would continue without Trust funding. However, the Trust was found to have brought the implementation of projects forward. The report found that the Trust had been particularly strong in the areas of innovation in relation to urban bush and coastal dunes and headlands; national standards and integrated policies for urban air quality; and market approaches to waste management and management of urban river systems.

Ministerial Board Response

It is noted that a number of these recommendations raise broad urban policy and planning issues that are beyond the scope of the Trust, for example “[that] the NHT develop and promote a national set of environmental codes of conduct for the business sector”.

The Way Forward

The mid-term review produced over 600 recommendations. Many recommendations will require further consultation with community and State government stakeholders in the context of developing the national policy for natural resource management. A few recommendations were judged not to have practical or theoretical merit. Many recommendations are being implemented. These relate to setting clearer strategic directions, improving planning processes, promoting regional approaches, developing a stronger investment focus for the Trust, and improving communications. Other recommendations, however, have been judged to require extensive administrative and policy changes, which, at this stage in the life of the Trust, would impose significant cost and disruption. These recommendations are being used to inform the development of the natural resource management strategy.

Appendix A

Natural Heritage Trust Funding 1996-2002 ^(a)

This table shows approved funding from the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board and excludes corporate overheads.

Description	1996-97 \$m Actual	1997-98 \$m Actual	1998-99 \$m Actual	1999-00 \$m Allocan	2000-01 \$m Allocan	2001-02 \$m Allocan	Total \$m
Vegetation							
Bushcare	3.7	22.2	50.2	99.5	87.1	83.8	346.5
Farm Forestry Prog.	–	2.8	6.5	14.1	14.6	9.2	47.2
Inland Waters							
Murray-Darling Basin 2001	3.8	27.5	34.9	51.6	45.2	32.6	195.6
National Rivercare Prog	–	6.4	14.3	24.6	23.5	14.9	82.9
Riverworks Tasmania	1.8	2.6	0.3	4.2	–	–	8.8
National River Health Prog.	0.1	1.6	1.7	6.2	4.5	1.8	15.8
Waterwatch	0.2	2.2	2.4	3.0	2.6	2.6	13.0
National Wetlands Prog	0.5	1.6	1.6	5.8	3.8	3.8	17.1
Biodiversity							
National Reserve System	0.4	2.9	11.2	30.5	20.0	20.0	85.0
Endangered Species Prog	2.0	2.1	6.9	5.1	5.5	5.5	27.0
Land Resources							
National Land and Water Resources Audit	1.3	2.4	11.3	12.0	115	5.4	42.6
National Feral Animals Control Prog.	3.7	3.1	1.6	4.9	3.0	2.7	18.9
National Weeds Prog	2.1	1.3	1.6	12.7	5.9	4.8	28.5
National Landcare Prog. (including Landcare tax measures)	10.2	30.1	49.0	81.4	77.5	78.5	326.7
FarmBis: Advanced Property Mgmt Planning	0.4	0.3	2.6	6.7	4.9	–	15.0
Coasts and Oceans							
Oceans Policy	–	–	–	4.1	7.4	8.5	20.0
Coasts and Clean Seas	–	8.6	20.2	36.3	27.2	24.4	116.8
Fisheries Action Prog	–	1.2	2.2	3.8	2.7	2.1	12.7
Environment Protection							
Waste Management Awareness Prog.	0.2	0.6	0.7	2.0	1.3	1.1	6.0
Atmosphere							
Air Pollution in Major Cities Prog	1.3	1.5	2.4	5.1	4.1	4.1	18.5
Australian Heritage							
World Heritage Area management & upkeep	4.7	10.7	10.0	9.4	8.9	8.9	52.5
	36.3	131.4	232.1(b)	423.1	361.3	314.7	1499.0

– denotes nil.

(a) The Natural Heritage Trust estimates may vary in the future within overall totals. Due to rounding, some columns and rows may not add exactly to totals.

(b) Includes \$39.8 million carryover from 1997-98.

1. Review of Administrative arrangements

No	Recommendations
<u>1.1</u>	The Natural Heritage Ministerial Board establish an Implementation Team to plan for the implementation of the recommendations contained in this Report after decisions have been made to implement (or not implement) specific recommendations.
<u>1.2</u>	State Governments be invited to nominate one Natural Heritage Trust Coordinator to be a member of the Implementation Team.
1.3	The purpose of the Natural Heritage Trust as a “program for investment in Australia’s natural capital” be clearly communicated to all stakeholders and participants involved in Natural Heritage Trust Programs.
1.4	Commonwealth guidelines for all Natural Heritage Trust Programs should wherever possible refer to “investment” (rather than “funding” or “grants”) to identify the distinctive purpose of the Natural Heritage Trust.
1.5	The purpose, objectives, outcomes, and the means to achieve those outcomes be clearly and consistently stated in all Natural Heritage Trust documentation. The appropriateness and relevance of the Key Results Areas to the Trust purpose and objectives be reviewed with a view to establishing a clearer linkage.
<u>1.6</u>	The contribution of Landcare to the creation of the social capital that supports investment in natural capital not be overlooked in assessing the contribution of the Landcare Program to achieving the purposes of the Natural Heritage Trust.
1.7	In the development of the Strategic Plan for the Natural Heritage Trust explicit recognition be given to the role of the private sector in marshalling resources to deal with Australia’s conservation and resource management problems.
1.8	The Natural Heritage Trust contribution to departmental expenses be reduced from the present five percent to two percent from 1 July 2000.
<u>1.9</u>	The budget for each program be reviewed as to time frame and commitment and if necessary, the life of the Trust investment program be extended to reflect a more realistic time frame to enable projects to be supported that are based on sound investment criteria.

<u>1.10</u>	Budgeting and financial management of the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Reserve incorporate capital works budgeting principles that set a balance between works in progress and new works for each year.
<u>1.11</u>	The Coasts and Clean Seas Program be brought within the One Stop Shop Structure.
<u>1.12</u>	Program managers be required to prepare Annual Strategic Plans that constitute the “business case” for allocation of resources to the Program. As well as containing information that would justify resource allocation decisions, the Plans should meet information and accountability requirements.
<u>1.13</u>	The number of programs financed by the Natural Heritage Trust be reduced. Desirably, there should be one investment program for each of the “strategic environmental packages” defined in Natural Heritage Trust documentation.
<u>1.14</u>	Environment Australia and Agriculture, Fisheries Forestry Australia commit to preparing and widely disseminating a Natural Heritage Trust Strategic Plan based on the five strategic environmental packages identified for the Natural Heritage Trust Reserve; Biodiversity; Coasts Oceans; Land; National Vegetation Initiative (Bushcare); Rivers.
<u>1.15</u>	The Strategic Plans of the Programs that constitute the Natural Heritage Trust contain clear statements about how the program links and contributes to the over-arching purpose, goals, objectives and investment strategies of the Natural Heritage Trust.
<u>1.16</u>	The Natural Heritage Ministerial Board operate on the basis of accepted principles of corporate governance, covering matters concerned with the review of overall strategy and policy, a focus on review of proposals (with management having the primary duty to formulate and then implement proposals) and ensuring that corporate management is continuously and effectively striving for above-average performance, taking account of risk.

<u>1.17</u>	A Chief Executive Officer be appointed to manage the “core” activities of the Natural Heritage Trust. The main role of the CEO should be to convey the sense of purpose of the Natural Heritage Trust and ensure that the strategies of individual programs are mutually consistent and support the objectives and strategies of the Natural Heritage Trust. The corporate “core” should also include the Natural Heritage Trust communications and awareness strategy.
<u>1.18</u>	The membership of the Natural Heritage Trust Advisory Committee be extended to include the Chairs of Sustainable Land and Water Resources Management Committee and the Standing Committee on Conservation and representatives of the Australian Local Government Association and Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
<u>1.19</u>	The Committee take a responsibility for advising the Natural Heritage Trust Board on development of integrated strategies in the five Natural Heritage Trust strategic environmental areas.
<u>1.20</u>	The Natural Heritage Trust administrative support units in Environment Australia and, Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia be integrated into a single Natural Heritage Trust Management Unit under a single management structure.
<u>1.21</u>	The Support Unit adopt a strategic role in advising the proposed Chief Executive and the Board on the consistency of Program Strategies in delivering Natural Heritage Trust purpose and outcomes
<u>1.22</u>	The Support Unit have a responsibility for managing Natural Heritage Trust communications and awareness strategy in collaboration with Program managers.
<u>1.23</u>	Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia and Environment Australia work towards adopting a consistent approach to the assessment of project proposals.
<u>1.24</u>	Program managers have a clear responsibility for creating internal and external awareness within the framework of the Natural Heritage Trust communications strategy.

1.25	A central unit be established to handle all aspects of Natural Heritage Trust processing, including payments, acquittals and reporting of transactions.
1.26	The interfaces between the approvals and monitoring system in Program Administrator and the Natural Heritage Trust financial management system be integrated.
1.27	A commitment be made in renegotiation of Partnership Agreements to establish interfaces between Commonwealth and State approvals and project monitoring systems.
1.28	State Lead Agencies pressure State Treasuries to provide the required level of resources to support the administration of Natural Heritage Trust capital programs.
1.29	States and Territories include in their Annual Reports on the Natural Heritage Trust information on State funded outlays on natural resource management, environment protection and sustainable agriculture.
<u>1.30</u>	The Natural Heritage Trust, through Environment Australia and Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Australia, in cooperation with the States and Local Government, undertake a comprehensive review directed towards improving the leadership, planning and professional capacities and capabilities of local government in natural resource management planning and delivery.
<u>1.31</u>	In the development of regional approaches to Natural Heritage Trust investment, the Natural Heritage Ministerial Board require a spread of investment ranging from those involving immediately realisable conservation benefits (eg fencing of remnant vegetation) to those that address longer-term repair and replenishment

1.32	<p>The roles of facilitators and coordinators engaged under Natural Heritage Trust programs be defined to mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Heritage Trust Facilitators: Fostering and promoting community based, integrated, natural resource management planning, strategies and actions. • Program Coordinators: To build and sustain community based networks that aim to educate, and change management practices that will lead to practical on ground solutions natural resource management, sustainable agriculture and environmental protection issues. <p>Project Officers: Technical advice and assistance on specific project initiatives within one or more Natural Heritage Trust programs.</p>
1.33	<p>A Human Resource Program be established under the Natural Heritage Trust to provide funding and a focus for facilitators engaged in fostering and promoting community based, integrated, natural resource management planning, strategies and actions.</p>
1.34	<p>The Natural Heritage Trust Human Resources Program Manager be responsible and accountable for developing and implementing a strategy for competency standards, training, knowledge management and professional development.</p>
1.35	<p>The Human Resources Program be funded on a three year rolling basis through the One-Stop-Shop framework.</p>
1.36	<p>The existing Guidelines for the Natural Heritage Trust Programs be consolidated and incorporated into a Register that can be accessed and referenced by people involved in providing advice and assistance in the application process and in the assessment process.</p>
1.37	<p>A simplified Information Booklet be provided to prospective applicants, advising where more detailed information can be obtained and how to obtain assistance.</p>
1.38	<p>The Information Booklet not be used to convey detailed information and material about individual program purpose – such material to be included in other communication material.</p>
1.39	<p>The Natural Heritage Trust support the preparation and regular updating of a compendium of natural resource management, environmental protection and sustainable agriculture publications.</p>

1.40	A Natural Heritage Trust Publications Strategy be developed with a view to ensuring that all Natural Heritage Trust publications can be effectively targeted and accessed and impact monitored.
1.41	The Natural Heritage Trust formulate an integrated communications strategy that targets particular segments of the Australian community based on an understanding of their needs. The strategy should involve a comprehensive public relations program that builds on the already high levels of awareness of individual programs. Natural Heritage Trust facilitators, team leaders and liaison staff should play a key role in the strategy. Regular briefing sessions should be provided to journalists to ensure they have a thorough understanding of the issues, objectives and role of the Trust. Advertising should be well targeted and strongly supported by events and activities.
1.42	The One Stop Shop application form be developed in a way that clearly links resource inputs (budget) to project outputs and a project plan to a defined outcome.
1.43	Environment Australia and Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Australia, in conjunction with the States, commit to an ongoing program of education and training for Regional Assessment Panel members to ensure that they are conversant with Natural Heritage Trust objectives, components and what constitutes an eligible investment project.
1.44	The State Natural Heritage Trust Coordinators and State Coastcare Coordinators and the proposed Commonwealth Natural Heritage Trust Unit work collaboratively to develop a nationally consistent framework for the evaluation of Natural Heritage Trust investment proposals.
1.45	For large, regional projects, the application should be accompanied by a “business plan” that sets out the case for investment that is assessed on a proactive basis by members of the Regional Assessment Panel.
1.46	The application process for small projects be fundamentally changed to provide for a “seamless” electronic process from application through to contract signing.
1.47	There should be one Natural Heritage Trust application form regardless of the “funding program”.

1.48	<p>The Natural Heritage Trust application and assessment process should follow the principles of investment appraisal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects should only be ranked in accordance with the extent to which they meet investment criteria. • The application and assessment process should be on going, with four, quarterly, cut-off dates. • Projects should be submitted as a proposed investment portfolio that balances innovation, risk and assurance of outcome. • The assessment for large projects should be based on a “due diligence” appraisal of investment proposals by the Regional Assessment Panels. • Once approved, projects should be funded on the condition that they meet milestones. <p>Projects should be terminated if milestones are not achieved.</p>
1.49	<p>Members of State and Regional Assessment Panels be provided with training in appraisal methods and techniques relevant to appraisal of “investments in natural capital”.</p>
1.50	<p>The Strategic Plans developed in the five key investment areas should each identify Key Results Areas and form the basis for the identification and definition of outcome statements and performance indicators relating to progress in achieving Natural Heritage Trust purposes and objectives.</p>
1.51	<p>Where possible, evaluation of program performance be based on science based benchmarks established through investigation, measurement, and research.</p>
1.52	<p>The Annual Report be prepared and presented as an Annual Review and constitute one of the Natural Heritage Trust’s major marketing and promotional vehicles. A separate report be prepared to meet specific accountability requirements.</p>

1.53

A “Natural Resource Conservation Service” be established, headed by the CEO position recommended in Chapter 5, to take responsibility for the delivery and support responsibilities of Natural Heritage Trust. These responsibilities should include:

- Development and maintaining administrative relationships with State Natural Heritage Trust Units and lead agencies – covering the organization of the application and assessment process, payments, acquittals and reporting;
 - The Human Resources Program for facilitators and coordinators as recommended in Chapter 10;
 - Communications and awareness strategies for the Natural Heritage Trust – in collaboration with communications and awareness officers in individual program areas;
 - Natural Heritage Trust monitoring, evaluation and reporting;
 - Arrangements for administrative coordination between Environment Australia and Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Australia; and
- The roles and function of the Team Leader and Liaison positions insofar as they involve working collaboratively with State officers in the application and regional and state assessment process.

2. Regional Reviews- Integrated

No	Recommendations
2.1	The NHT work with mature groups to develop, and commit a share of investment to, regional natural resource management investment prospectuses.
2.2	The NHT commit to support a defined spectrum certain activities that map out a path for regional community groups to grow.
<u>2.3</u>	The NHT foster the development and implementation of integrated projects either by a process of funding components of integrated projects from different NHT programs, or by integrating NHT programs themselves.
2.4	The NHT develop and adopt a certification process for regional plans and negotiate compliance based or output-base investment agreements associated with each certified plan.
2.5	The NHT invest in administrative and coordination support only at the regional-scale and that this be done through established regional organisations.
<u>2.6</u>	NHT, in consultation with regional organisations and state agencies, actively encourage consistent and widespread use of devolved grants for the implementation of small, local projects that implement on-ground works consistent with a regional strategy.
2.7	The NHT include and enforce rigorous cost sharing requirements in partnership agreements and all project specific contracts relating to extensive on-ground works.
2.8	The NHT assess the practicality of an output-based cost sharing or contracting approach.
2.9	The NHT encourage the development and publicising of specific northern Australian components of key programs such as Bushcare, NLP and Rivercare.

2.10	The NHT share the cost of technical support to implementation investments, and actively lobby other portfolios such as DEETYA to encourage whole of government support for education and training of natural resource management professionals.
<u>2.11</u>	The NHT require regional organisations to negotiate a cost sharing arrangement with local government as a condition of receiving on-going support for major regional initiatives.
2.12	The NHT re-design the project validation process to account for the lessons learned during the mid-term review.
2.13	The NHT Evaluation be redesigned and simplified by going back to basics and using a series of logical frameworks designed for national, state, regional and local project scales.

3. Regional Reviews- Goulburn Broken Region

No	Recommendations
3.1	Agree and fund a partnership agreement with the state aimed at providing an effective monitoring and evaluation process to meet local, regional, state and Commonwealth purposes.
3.2	Consult with users to effectively revise the reporting proforma to reflect output types and objectives from the range of NHT projects – get it right and avoid constant changes in data collection and reporting requirements.
<u>3.3</u>	Implement a sliding scale of cost share which reflects actual costs and pays more for actions that provide multiple benefits, and for actions in priority areas.
<u>3.4</u>	Accelerate the funding cycle, either by facilitating the CMA to fund projects on a letter of intent from NHT to proceed, or by funding RAP approved whole of region projects and allow sub-regional project applications to the CMA for funding of Local Action Plans.
<u>3.5</u>	Foster the development and implementation of integrated projects either by a process of funding components of integrated projects from different NHT programs or by combining specialist NHT programs into larger more integrated programs.
3.6	Move away from stop start programs, by funding longer term agreed action plans (maybe local area plans) that have the capacity to: investigate the problem, determine how to fix it, develop an achievable work plan and implement it.
3.7	Balance sustainable production and environmental priorities by ensuring that NHT programs do not have conflicting guidelines and that guidelines clearly allow for projects that have both economic and environmental benefits.
<u>3.8</u>	Look at developing an alternative approach or program that can take the opportunity to invest in landscape change not just marginal change. Address major landuse change for public benefit differently than marginal change for private benefits.

3.9	Recognise that on-ground works will not be effectively delivered without coordination support - ensure that coordinator resources are available to projects or are funded as part of all on-ground and community projects.
3.10	Facilitate an improved partnership approach that includes evaluation and review support for community projects as part of their project activities and funding – have community projects report into the regional framework as well as that of the funding body.
3.11	Develop a partnership agreement to align different funding cycles, reporting cycles, reporting mechanisms and budget periods and enable the reporting processes of state and federal agencies to be combined and reported on a regional basis.
3.12	Facilitate CMA or local government to provide administrative assistance to Landcare groups/networks on the basis of cost recovery. These costs should be seen as a legitimate expense to be included in the project application.
<u>3.13</u>	Develop partnerships with local government to improve the use of landuse planning, with emphasis on development and integration of roadside management plans into broader NRM plans.

4. Regional Reviews- Central Region QLD

No	Recommendations
<u>4.1</u>	NHT should undertake to renegotiate the Partnership Agreement with state agencies and local government to ensure that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 measurable goals and outcomes for NHT are defined and a ‘suite’ of associated biophysical, economic and social performance indicators are specified; 2 a clear and well-defined process of roles and responsibilities for management between agencies are agreed and adhered to; 3 roles and responsibilities are defined for how the State agencies will support regional processes and groups such as the FBA; 4 simple measurement tools are developed to monitor commitment by all parties to process; and a genuine and transparent partnership is agreed.
4.2	NHT needs to recognise the different capacity of regional communities and provide different and appropriate types of support for each step along the evolutionary path towards capable regional communities.
4.3	NHT should work with regional communities, industry groups, state agencies and local governments to agree on priority natural resource management issues relevant to the region and then widely communicate these and the reasons for these decisions.
4.4	NHT needs to provide a separate allocation for funding strategic planning including developing capacity and facilitating strategy development within and between regions, in contrast to providing funding for on-ground activities. It should continue to provide NHT funding on the basis of a regional strategic planning document with feedback for improving and managing the planning processes.
4.5	NHT should recognise the need to facilitate sub-regional strategies and action plans through appropriate resource and funding support, as an important element of developing understanding and ownership of the local and regional issues and the larger, regional strategic plan (CQSS).
4.6	An emphasis on capacity-building activities is required to enable stakeholders to understand the need for and usefulness of cost-sharing/investment frameworks. These should then be negotiated on a regional basis as part of the NHT partnership arrangement.

<u>4.7</u>	NHT needs to work in collaboration with structural adjustment program resources available in other areas of Government to provide a more targeted and integrated package of options for regional communities that are in crisis.
4.8	NHT needs to actively encourage strategic links with research agencies and other funding partners for large-scale regional projects to ensure coordination and maximum leverage of NHT funds that will generate positive landscape change.
4.9	In consultation with regional groups, NHT needs to actively encourage consistent and widespread use of devolved grants for the implementation of local projects consistent with a regional strategy.
<u>4.10</u>	NHT should integrate its individual program activities to present a single integrated package of resources at the regional level in order to encourage integration of NHT objectives and improve understanding about natural resource management.
4.11	As a component of the renegotiation of partnership arrangements, specific attention needs to be devoted to developing application and reporting procedures that ‘streamline’ the current process.
<u>4.12</u>	NHT should include cost sharing requirements relating to the participation of local government in those project actions that require local government inputs to ensure success. This principle should be a requirement for all members of the partnership agreement.

5. Regional Reviews- North West Region NSW

No	Recommendations
5.1	It is as important to publicise the goal of NHT and the reason for this, as it is to publicise the funding and achievements of individual projects.
5.2	Large multiple catchment regions should be divided into more coherent and manageable sizes and adequately resourced to increase the effectiveness of NHT planning, delivery and success.
<u>5.3</u>	Regional strategies and investment frameworks for natural resource management should be common to and impact on all sources of public investment across the three levels of government.
5.4	NHT should develop guidelines and other support mechanisms, such as training, for catchments to develop natural resource management strategies and investment frameworks and that the cost of these be provided by NHT.
5.5	Well-developed natural resource management investment strategies based on regional priorities should be funded by NHT through partnership agreements and these would form the basis of all cost sharing and monitoring by all parties in the region.
5.6	Awareness and education projects should continue to be funded in line with regional needs and priorities to implement best management practices.
<u>5.7</u>	NHT should be a single program fund and the current boundaries for programs such as Bushcare, Farm Forestry and NLP should be removed to facilitate integrated projects and increase administrative efficiency.

5.8	Provide regions with a single indicative budget to address the NHT goal based on their investment framework (plus state and national resource condition information such as the National Land and Water Resources Audit) and then approve projects recommended against the regional strategy for integrated natural resource management.
5.9	Devolve to the RAP the responsibility for approving the majority of funds consistent with their strategy, their indicative NHT budget and an audit requirement. This arrangement would include the ability of the RAP/CMC to commission projects and negotiate funding for groups on the basis of an integrated sub-catchment plan.
5.10	Support with skills training and finances the creation of appropriate institutional arrangements involving all relevant stakeholders and including measures to monitor the partnership operation.
5.11	NHT undertake an evaluation (against its three objectives) of the advantages and disadvantages of outcome based funding as an alternative to the current input based program.
5.12	NHT requires skilled program delivery staff dedicated to the assessment and audit coordination functions (at the regional and state level) and that the cost of this is recognised as a direct charge on the partnership program.
5.13	Greater emphasis should be placed on technical support in the planning, assessment and implementation of projects and that this should be an identified cost to the project which is funded, either directly or through the partnership cost sharing arrangements.
<u>5.14</u>	Local governments need to be full partners in the NHT program as contributors and beneficiaries through institutional and investment arrangements.

6. Regional Reviews- Gascoyne/Murchison Region WA

No	Recommendations
<u>6.1</u>	The NHT facilitate the development of a framework that links and relates the array of strategies relevant to NRM in the region.
6.2	The NHT recognise the needs of Aboriginal stakeholders with specific program components in NLP and Bushcare programs.
6.3	The NHT use its influence to facilitate increased industry involvement (eg fishing, tourism) in natural resource management, particularly for biodiversity conservation.
<u>6.4</u>	The NHT support the development of ‘post-NHT’ capacity in Government, industry and the community.
6.5	The NHT support the opportunity to develop the Shark Bay WHP as a marketing opportunity for the region.
<u>6.6</u>	Facilitate increased integration in achieving NRM objectives as a means of securing conservation objectives.
6.7	Increase investment in human capacity building where regions are not yet fully capable of operating at regional scale.
6.8	The NHT improve its profile in the region through better program identification and more integrated administration at Commonwealth and State levels.
<u>6.9</u>	The explicate roles and responsibilities be negotiated with local government to encourage greater involvement by Local Government Authorities (LGAs) in NHT investment and NRM generally.

7. Regional Reviews- Blackwood Catchment WA

No	Recommendations
<u>7.1</u>	A new model for NRM delivery needs to be developed, which more effectively links the various key players, and concentrates planning and responsibility for action in fewer hands. The model should ensure a more effective and acceptable regional planning process.
<u>7.2</u>	The Commonwealth should abandon its program and sub-program structure and develop one over-arching set of outcomes and priorities to guide NHT investment
7.3	The NHT should re-commit to its support of the BBG and designate it as a key agent for delivery of NRM and environmental repair/management in the Blackwood region, along with the State agencies of CALM, AgWA and WRC.
7.4	NHT investment in the region should be directed from one national secretariat in Canberra, not from individual agencies with different philosophies, protocols and structures. The State should develop a WA NRM leadership group, which will oversee the development of state-level NRM strategies, which are designed (as required), to deliver NHT outcomes, and which in turn will provide policy guidance to the Blackwood region. All parties should cooperate to develop and implement more streamlined and user-friendly administrative processes.
7.5	NHT should continue to support the BBG through its funding policies, but in the context of an agreed Strategic Plan which is signed off by the State NRM agencies, and which is (as far as possible) designed to deliver NHT outcomes and priorities in the local scene.
7.6	The NHT, in conjunction with state agencies and the BBG, should develop a clear statement of priority information needs in the Blackwood catchment, and should develop funded projects to address these needs. A key information need is for new systems of farm and land management, which integrate environmental and commercial needs. As part of this process, the NHT should help to produce professional information providers for landcare and environmental repair, and create good career positions for them. This will also have the side-benefit of lifting some of the burden from volunteers.

7.7	Additional NHT investment should be directed to the training and coordination of CLCs and bushcare officers; this can be most appropriately handled through the BBG.
7.8	The NHT should initiate a review of data management and record-keeping with respect to NHT-funded work in the region and promote the development of a new Management Information System which can be applied to landcare and environmental management work across the region.
<u>7.9</u>	The NHT should give high priority to setting out and communicating the following: (i) what NHT really wants to achieve, expressed as outcomes; (ii) what time frame must be applied; and (iii) what should the region and agencies start on and in what order should they tackle the task. If the new model for NHT delivery includes SAP and RAP, these bodies must be provided with a clear set of integrated outcomes on which to base their decision-making.
7.10	NHT should work with Landcare Australia Ltd to more effectively identify the sources of corporate funds which can be accessed for landcare, the most practical way of accessing the dollars, and who should be responsible for managing it. NHT, in conjunction with States, should look at the introduction of measures for levying urban beneficiaries for environmental repair in the region.
7.11	NHT should provide clear incentives for stakeholders to prepare and submit for funding, projects, which integrate across NRM outcomes. The region's strategy, which already recognises the need for integrated outcomes, should be taken to a higher level of credibility, by ensuring State and Commonwealth "sign-off". Regional priorities would then be funded according to an agreed ranking of needs, unrelated to program imperatives.
<u>7.12</u>	The NHT should encourage the BBG to continue its policy of engaging and encouraging local government in NRM in the region and should consider proactive encouragement of LGA by identifying and funding projects LGA can undertake and which are designed to meet NHT and regional objectives.

8. Regional Reviews- Upper South East Region SA

No	Recommendations
8.1	The NHT ensure that major plans in which it invests have been prepared with comprehensive and informed local knowledge and that local stakeholders fully own the plans and relevant policies.
8.2	The NHT delay investing in Plans where key conditions have not been met such as to threaten the NHT's potential investment until these conditions have been met.
8.3	The NHT fund any activities, including R&D, needed to safeguard its investments or which overcome a bottleneck in implementing the agreed NRM strategy.
8.4	A useable, outcomes-focussed monitoring and evaluation framework needs to be developed, perhaps by adopting World Bank models (logframes, project investment cycle); it should include monitoring the long-term consequences of on-ground work.
8.5	A consistent operating environment be adopted for all NHT programs to ensure seamless management of natural resource management investments and consistent employment conditions for project officers.
8.6	Project applications should be screened to ensure that integration occurs consistently between environmental protection, sustainable agriculture and natural resource management outcomes.
8.7	A common, national, user-friendly database be developed for NHT program data.
8.8	A system be developed for maintaining NHT program and technical data in an accessible and quality-assured form on a long-term basis.
8.9	The NHT actively facilitate networking between kindred projects.

8.10	The NHT promote and encourage the adoption of proven successful models, including the CFIG, for regional program delivery.
<u>8.11</u>	The NHT investigate the reasons for the poor performance of individual local governments in NRM and consider including as part of this a case study of the contrast between the councils in the USE with that in the Coorong and Districts.

9. Dryland Salinity and Associated Vegetation Management

No	Recommendations
Overall Recommendations	
<u>9.1</u>	The scale and magnitude of the threat that dryland salinity poses to the environment and the economy warrants a response on a similar scale. This response needs to mobilise and apply resources from industry, the three tiers of government and from the wider community. NHT needs to be part of this response but its role should be supportive rather than leading.
<u>9.2</u>	The NHT inputs will only be effective if there is an improved over-arching operating environment that encourages and supports appropriate responses from individuals and communities to the management of dryland salinity. This will need to include: supportive policies at each level of government; implementation planning and technical support from various agencies; support for new and existing institutions such as investment sharing partnerships, taxation incentives, carbon credits, cross compliance arrangements and duty of care; information and opportunities to learn about and understand dryland salinity; and support for action on-the-ground.
<u>9.3</u>	In view of the magnitude of the impact of dryland salinity on the whole economy and the need to find long term funding as part of an investment sharing partnership to address the externality problems, the NHT or its equivalent should be developed as an on-going long term source of funding and ideally established as a genuine trust.
<u>9.4</u>	NHT should be delivered through a single program (e.g. Sustainable Landscapes and Communities Program) that would link sustainable use of natural resources with regional economic development.
<u>9.5</u>	The proposed Sustainable Landscapes and Communities Program should have four Key Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainable Production; • Biodiversity; • Water Balance and Quality; and • Sustainable Communities. If considered desirable, separate sources of funding could be preserved to support each of these four Key Objectives.

<u>9.6</u>	A proportion of NHT funding, perhaps 50%, should be designated specifically to support efforts to address Water Balance and Water Quality (and thus dryland salinity) and the guidelines for projects addressing this Key Objective should be re-written to ensure the funds are used effectively and efficiently. A Taskforce including AFFA, EA, CSIRO, NDSP, MDBC and the state agencies should develop those guidelines.
<u>9.7</u>	The Taskforce and NHT administrators should clarify the NHT strategy in relation to dryland salinity. It is recommended that this strategy should be consistent with and nested within an overall national natural resource management strategy. Efforts should be made to achieve a whole-of-government approach and to ensure that, where appropriate, other government initiatives should complement the NHT strategy.
<u>9.8</u>	The goal for NHT in relation to dryland salinity should be to provide targeted support for the implementation of an agreed national approach to deal with dryland salinity in accordance with the national interest.
<u>9.9</u>	The primary objective for NHT in relation to dryland salinity for the next three years should be to provide support for activities or actions that will bring about a fundamental change in attitudes, understanding, institutions and practices in support of the need for massive change to manage dryland salinity. Such support should include on-ground works as part of farm plans linked to a community-driven and ‘approved’ regional strategic NRM plan
<u>9.10</u>	The guidelines for NHT should recognise the need to find new solutions to deal with dryland salinity by encouraging farmers to move more of their efforts from the less productive discharge areas to the more strategically important and much more extensive and productive recharge areas. The level of encouragement would need to be limited to the ‘public benefit’ to be in the national interest. The encouragement should be consistent with and supported by institutions such as 'duty of care' which encourage farmers to take actions that minimise off-site effects. The guidelines should have the effect of reorienting the focus of associated vegetation management towards commercial vegetation as well as non-commercial native vegetation.
<u>9.11</u>	In relation to salinity, the NHT guidelines should encourage strategic approaches to management of vegetation nationally, regionally and on-farm. At these three scales there should be explicit priorities for the location of activities for maximum effect and efficiency.

9.12	The NHT should combine elements of top-down and bottom-up approaches in order to encourage change in support of the national interest. The top-down elements should comprise support for regionally-based, community-driven technically, ecologically and economically sound planning down to and including the farm level. Such plans should be developed by communities at the regional and catchment level based on socially desirable and quantifiable goals such as salt loads or salinity levels in streams and/or recharge reductions in catchments. All bottom-up projects should be consistent with these plans.
9.13	Encouragement should be provided through NHT for progressive devolution of support for planning and implementation to the region or catchment level, ideally with some community-based body having responsibility for delivery of salinity management outcomes. These bodies should have adequate funding to be able to purchase technical support services from state or other agencies that would be delivered down to the farm level. Funds should be provided under NHT to enable additional capacity to be established at this level.
9.14	Following devolution of responsibility to the regional level, both state and federal agencies should agree on outcomes to be achieved and standards to be met and should leave priority setting to community-based bodies at the regional level.
9.15	The community-based regional body should be accountable for its funding and have responsibility for monitoring and reporting on outputs and outcomes.
9.16	In order to influence the nature of the projects supported under NHT there will need to be a large-scale communication program in support of a Water Balance and Quality Key Objective.
9.17	NHT administrators should respond to the commonly expressed view that improvements need to be made in the administration of NHT projects to reduce unnecessary administration and to improve the efficiency of the process.
9.18	There should be an improved system of monitoring, evaluation and reporting. Commonwealth NHT administrators should monitor the integrity of the monitoring and evaluation processes followed by the regional body with devolved responsibility rather than the detail of the project performances. Monitoring and evaluation systems need to be kept simple and relevant to those managing the projects as well as meeting accountability needs.

Specific Recommendation	
9.19	NHT should ensure that all projects have adequate management support and, over time, should aim to build the local capacity of community-based groups to manage effective projects.
9.20	Future NHT activities should support community groups so that they have the capacity to re-design their activities if necessary to ensure that longer-term objectives can be achieved.
9.21	The NHT should conduct a review of various approaches to the management of projects and to the development of local implementation capacity and publicise the findings so that future projects can benefit from the lessons learned.
<u>9.22</u>	The NHT should combine elements of top-down and bottom-up approaches in order to encourage change in the national interest. The top-down elements would comprise support for regionally-based, community-driven technically, ecologically and economically sound planning down to and including the farm level. Such plans should be developed by communities at the regional and catchment level based on socially desirable and quantifiable goals such as salt loads or salinity levels in streams and/or recharge reductions in catchments. All bottom-up projects should be consistent with these plans. All plans should clearly indicate whether the objective in each target location was to prevent recharge and salinisation, to rehabilitate affected areas or to make the most productive and sustainable use of affected areas.
9.23	NHT should give priority to projects that have the scope to have a significant impact at the landscape scale, to make full use of existing information and to provide a high level of technical support.
9.24	The NHT process should be designed to build a deeper understanding of the fundamental issues associated with dryland salinity amongst project proponents.
<u>9.25</u>	NHT should support activities that can deliver desired dryland salinity outcomes by addressing a larger proportion of the landscape including measures that are directly productive. The level of public funding for productive activities should not exceed the public benefits associated with the activity.
9.26	NHT projects should provide retrospective payment for project works except in cases where this places unreasonable burdens on the landholders participating.
<u>9.27</u>	NHT should focus on larger, well integrated, strategic projects while providing opportunity for a high degree of community ownership within the overall agreed strategic framework.
9.28	NHT should ensure that all projects have an adequate technical basis and, if that requires further research, planning or evaluation, such activities should be included.

<u>9.29</u>	It should be a requirement that NHT projects are clearly consistent with and supportive of endorsed local, regional and state salinity strategies and action plans and that if such plans have not been prepared then any projects dealing with dryland salinity are deferred (with resources set aside for the proponents) until the plans are available.
9.30	NHT should be delivered through a single program (eg. Sustainable Landscapes and Communities Program) with a limited number of Key Outcomes such as: Sustainable Production; Biodiversity; Water Balance and Quality; and Sustainable Communities. The single program would retain separate funding sources to allow funding agencies to influence the balance of activities but would pool all investments for implementation purposes. Decisions about the level of investment should be made by the funding sources operating through regional bodies. After determining total funding available for an Expression of Interest, the proponents should develop detailed Implementation Plans and these should serve as the basis for project management, monitoring and evaluation.
<u>9.31</u>	The proportion of NHT funding allocated to dryland salinity needs to be substantially increased based on the importance of the issue to the environment and to the economy. It is suggested that perhaps 50% of funding should be allocated to deal with the issue of Water Balance and Water Quality.
9.32	Dryland salinity projects would be most effective if they were designed and implemented at the catchment or regional level. NHT support should be directed to appropriate agencies operating at this level with devolution of funding and accountability to these agencies.
9.33	NHT should provide support for large-scale commercial activities if they offer scope to address water balance at a landscape scale.
<u>9.34</u>	All NHT projects seeking to improve Water Balance and Water Quality should ensure that investment sharing frameworks are in place as part of efforts to deal equitably with externalities and to help encourage change in behaviour.
9.35	NHT should ensure that all projects include measures to improve the community's understanding of the scale and nature of the problem and that all projects have objectives consistent with the ultimate need to bring about landscape scale changes.
9.36	Clear objectives are needed to guide investment of public funds (including NHT) in dryland salinity management and criteria need to be agreed and implemented as quickly as possible. The National Land and Water Resources Audit will eventually provide a basis for such guidelines. In the interim, a Taskforce including AFFA, EA, CSIRO, NDSP, MDBC and the state agencies should be established under ARMCANZ to develop criteria and guidelines for NHT projects.
9.37	Future support for dryland salinity projects under NHT should favour projects that have the capacity to lead to large-scale practice change.
<u>9.38</u>	Further support for NHT is warranted in its own right and also because it has the capacity to improve the effectiveness of past expenditures. Future investment should complement a broader, more comprehensive and strategic national initiative dealing with dryland salinity.

<u>9.39</u>	In view of the fundamental importance of externalities related to dryland salinity and the consequent need to find alternative sources of funding, further NHT support for initiatives to address dryland salinity should be conditional on there being adequate mechanisms in place to address these externalities.
<u>9.40</u>	Provided that governments at all levels are willing to take the necessary supporting action, NHT needs to provide signals and guidelines that will encourage proponents to implement much larger scale measures to tackle the problems of dryland salinity. An important part of this change of scale will involve setting of targets in outcome terms such as water balance, salt load and salinity level reductions, and productivity and biodiversity improvements on salinised land.
<u>9.41</u>	NHT should revise its criteria for determining whether to support projects aimed at dryland salinity and require that all accepted projects meet the test that they are able to directly or indirectly lead to a change in water balance at a landscape scale.
<u>9.42</u>	Allocation of NHT funds for dryland salinity should be influenced by a comprehensive national assessment of the economic, environmental and social importance of dryland salinity and the national benefit that would be derived by investing in its improved management.
<u>9.43</u>	Future NHT guidelines should acknowledge that attitudinal, educational and institutional change are a necessary part of the process needed to deal with dryland salinity and should provide the means to support projects which include such elements.
<u>9.45</u>	NHT should provide support for projects or elements of projects that encourage fundamental shifts in practices and behaviour leading to desired dryland salinity outcomes.
<u>9.46</u>	The federal, state and local governments should develop a clear view on the nature of the framework for strategic investment in natural resource management that might be appropriate if and when NHT ceases to operate.
<u>9.47</u>	Future NHT support for efforts to manage dryland salinity should embrace a whole-of-landscape approach which will include productive land. It should be informed by and supportive of nationally agreed strategies to deal with the problem.

9.48	There should be a re-examination of the roles and responsibilities of federal, state and regional agencies and their interactions with community groups and individuals in relation to natural resource management in general and dryland salinity in particular. The results of this should be used to develop stronger cooperative partnerships amongst all stakeholders.
9.49	The quality of the project performance monitoring information on NHT dryland salinity projects needs to be substantially improved.

10. Urban Environment

No	Recommendations
10.1	The level of Commonwealth funding to the set of NHT activities covered by this Review need to be increased in order to cement the gains that have been made since the inception of the NHT, and to extend the range of Commonwealth initiatives on behalf of the urban environment.
10.2	The average project size be increased in order to better resource the smaller community projects and to allow them to develop better management and performance monitoring practices.
<u>10.3</u>	The corporate sector be encouraged to become a much stronger NHT partner than it is at present. This could be achieved by widening tax deductibility provisions for work or actions undertaken for prescribed environmental purposes.
10.4	The timing of payments relative to project scheduling need to be improved.
10.5	The Commonwealth develop a systemic view of urban environmental change in the context of a market economy. This will enable it to take a stronger leadership and innovation role in relation to natural resources and environment in urban regions.
10.6	A greater emphasis on the strategic planning of urban form and transport systems and the scope of alternative institutional arrangements, including markets, to contribute to resource and environmental objectives in urban regions. There is scope for the NHT to commission projects that address these systemic issues.
<u>10.7</u>	The NHT become involved in supporting policies and practices which influence the currently unsustainable growth of resource utilisation in urban areas.

10.8	The NHT continue to strengthen its involvement in integrated urban water management projects, including stormwater catchment management and water re-use. “End of pipe” solutions may still be required to correct pollution discharges to coastal environments, but there is a need to develop whole-of catchment approaches for the long term.
10.9	A greater emphasis on the protection of remnant natural or semi-natural environments in urban regions as opposed to revegetation, which is perhaps more appropriate for rural objectives. The NHT should ensure that its Bushcare program covers protection of remnant vegetation in urban regions, as well as revegetation of degraded bushland, and should become more involved in urban bushland corridor development.
10.10	The NHT make it clearer to applicants that weed eradication is a legitimate component of projects, which are primarily oriented to bushland protection or rehabilitation.
10.11	A greater investment in analysis and investigations that will deliver better designed, more strategic and properly resourced projects, rather than relying on proponent responses.
<u>10.12</u>	The Commonwealth “core fund” environmental activities in order to provide a more stable platform on which to build the environmental effectiveness of projects.
10.13	The NHT improve the scientific basis for project selection by obtaining better reviews of proposals at the inception stage.
10.14	The NHT make greater use of improved contractual arrangements with milestone payments and exception reporting. A shift towards payments for project outputs rather than the current approach of funding for project inputs would provide greater incentive for delivery of the desired outputs.
10.15	The NHT seek to ascertain the key directions of regional environmental plans in urban areas, as a means of informing the project approval process.

10.16	The NHT budgeting cycle be better synchronised with those of State governments.
10.17	The NHT become involved directly in some projects which set out to examine institutional forms and roles for urban environmental protection and improvement.
<u>10.18</u>	The NHT guidelines be modified to give local government greater incentive and flexibility in responding to the Commonwealth, in order to allow local governments to become a greater environmental resource for their communities. Less reliance on “in-kind” matching contributions, and greater direct funding of supportive resources within local government would help considerably.
10.19	The NHT guidelines be modified to include and encourage the development of proposals which demonstrate Best Practice urban design and planning for the preservation of ecological functions. This would apply at a municipal or catchment basis for matters such as urban form and transport, resource utilisation, vegetation management and integrated urban water cycle management.
<u>10.20</u>	The NHT consider the findings of this Review in conjunction with those of the Administration Review to secure greater homogeneity in individual program composition within urban areas, considering the organisational context, project types and ecological linkages between some of the programs. This should result in a less reactive and less administration-bound NHT.
<u>10.21</u>	The NHT strengthen the capacity of Commonwealth departments to analytically examine strategic regional economic and planning arrangements along ESD lines, to clarify their resource and environmental outcomes, and to develop strategies that lead to improved outcomes. This would be a means of developing improved leadership in terms of project prioritisation, and ensuring better integration and resource allocation across projects.
10.22	The NHT emphasise cultural change in urban areas.
10.23	The NHT encourage a wider spread of socio-economic groups to join community groups, including those from indigenous and non-English speaking backgrounds.

10.24	The NHT give greater emphasis to community education as related to community environmental activity.
10.25	The NHT develop and promote a national set of environmental codes of conduct for the business sector.
10.26	The NHT encourage the strengthening of community and agency networks, particularly between rural and urban groups.
10.27	The performance information generally is more management-oriented and related to the scale of activity and type of organisation.
10.28	The NHT increase emphasis on recording baseline conditions and measuring environmental responses. This could be achieved by increasing the average project size, particularly amongst the smaller projects and using some of the additional money for this purpose. This would also help to make performance indicators more meaningful for project managers, instead of being a bureaucratic chore.
10.29	The NHT institute a system of payment by results. This would lessen the NHT's reliance on currently inadequate approaches to performance monitoring.
10.30	The NHT measure progress at the appropriate spatial and temporal scales, and that progress is related to outputs against clear project objectives, rather than inputs. For example, a tree planted as an input to a catchment strategy should not be monitored as the output of a project at a sub-catchment scale.
10.31	The NHT simplify access, administration and accountability for smaller projects.

11. Inland Waterways

No	Recommendations
<u>11.1</u>	The cost of the declining functional health of Australia's aquatic ecosystems could justify expenditure many times the current NHT budget. Thus, it is recommended that for both efficiency and cost effectiveness the NHT efforts are accompanied by coherent policy reform from all spheres of government.
11.2	The Commonwealth, through the NHT or other funding sources, invests more in national ecological risk analysis and bio-economic modelling because further valuation of the ecosystems and ecosystem services that support the Australian economy are required. This analysis would be valuable in its own right and would assist in determining whether the NHT and other NREM investments are adequate to reverse the large-scale processes driving ecosystem decline.
<u>11.3</u>	The Commonwealth renegotiate the NHT Partnership Agreements with the State governments so that these specify implementation of policy incentive and regulatory regimes that will assist in achieving stated outcomes and the NHT goals.
11.4	The Commonwealth's NHT programs should explicitly acknowledge that there is still significant variation between regions in conditions, and in the skills and capacity to plan and implement NREM programs. It is recommended that the Commonwealth vary NHT regional approaches in accord with regional differences in institutional and biophysical environments and community capacities.
11.5	The Commonwealth develop a clearer and more transparent investment framework in order to target funds and maximise returns on NHT investments. This is required to develop a better understanding of the regional ecosystems that are most at risk or responsive to NHT investments, and the management arrangements that are most effective in delivering NREM outcomes.
<u>11.6</u>	The NHT programs invest in more strategic assessments, needs and risk analysis at a state or national scale to balance the predominance of the 'bottom-up' approach. NHT programs should be prepared to be more involved in national assessments via projects or processes that aim to identify and protect wild rivers; develop integrated, multi-objective groundwater management regimes; and to develop more rigorous assessment methods for new irrigation developments and determining environmental flow requirements.

11.7	The NHT invest in further assessment of Australia's wild rivers and the opportunities for protecting them.
<u>11.8</u>	The Commonwealth undertake a national assessment of threats and options for protecting or enhancing the management of water resources, rivers and aquatic ecosystems at a bio-geographic scale.
11.9	The Commonwealth ensure that the NHT projects addressing the Great Artesian Basin (GAB) and other groundwater systems have clear multiple objectives including the protection of biodiversity and ecosystems, sustainable pastoralism and natural resources management. These objectives should be targeting both location specific issues (such as the protection of mound springs), and more extensive regional scale goals (such as ensuring that some landscapes are de-watered so they return to a more natural cycle akin to water-limited ecosystems, or that surface water linkages are retained).
11.10	The NHT, through the NRP or the NRHP, invest in developing generic assessment methodologies and design principles suitable for water resource infrastructure. These should include economic and investment analysis and assessment of ecological impacts. Formal consideration should be given to adopting the assessment methods that will be recommended by the World Bank's World Commission on Dams.
11.11	The Commonwealth initiate an independent review into the NHT investment in irrigation drainage infrastructure. The review should assess the merits, cost sharing and environmental impacts of irrigation drainage works funded by the NHT and recommend ways to overcome any potential negative impacts on riverine ecosystems. Due to the documented risks, further NHT investment should be contingent on drainage proposals satisfying formal EIA processes and, if they proceed, their licensing by the relevant EPA in the States involved. The Commonwealth should require detailed EIA before any further NHT investment so that it can be satisfied that the environmental benefits outweigh any costs or risks to the receiving waters.
11.12	The Commonwealth commissions the Productivity Commission to undertake an independent inquiry into the ecological and economic aspects of water allocation and environmental flow regimes. Environmental flows and water allocation regimes are fundamentally important to the future health of Australia's rivers and the sustainability of irrigated agriculture. There are many complex social, economic and ecological issues that are central to river health, and that appear to be beyond the capacity of the existing NHT programs to resolve.
11.13	The Commonwealth undertake a national assessment and review of progress in integrated approaches to catchment management. The review should develop more rigorous performance indicators for catchment management processes, and include an analysis of the effectiveness of catchment/regional management regimes adopted by each State. The review should also include an investigation of cost sharing arrangements used for catchment management.

<u>11.14</u>	NHT programs should be focusing more on stimulating changes in the way business is done. It is recommended that the NHT do more towards stimulating markets to make "additional investment in the natural environment" and to enhance the capacity of markets to sponsor and reward long-term environmental responsibility.
<u>11.15</u>	To realise the NHT objective of stimulating "additional investment in the natural environment" governments must establish more effective incentive and regulatory regimes. To generate investment on the scale necessary, governments need to ensure that legal and market dynamics are driving activities that contribute to the NHT goals.
11.16	To establish the best possible incentive and regulatory regimes it is recommended that the NHT increase investment in analysis and design of incentive systems.
11.17	The NHT invest more in the developing and trialing of prototype projects. These would aim to develop BMP prototypes of the kinds of policy, planning, incentive and regulatory systems needed. Prototypes should be developed in conjunction with the implementing agency for example local or State governments, or industry associations. Prototype projects would aim to embed ESD in an organisation's charter and its operating rules.
11.18	It is recommended that in Northern and arid Australia the NHT invest more in preventative, pre-emptive understanding, appropriate development and improved management systems. This will require a refocusing away from the "on-ground works" of restoration or rehabilitation toward assessment, planning and prevention.
11.19	The NHT programs develop a set of clear criteria for determining the likely cost effectiveness of project investments.
11.20	In keeping with the principles of openness and good public consultation it is recommended that Commonwealth consider publishing the results of all the NHT Mid-Term Reviews (unedited) and a government response to the recommendations.
<u>11.21</u>	The Commonwealth establish minimum standards and benchmarks for the kinds of robust and transparent processes used to allocate funds or reject projects.
11.22	The Commonwealth insist on best practice in public program administration and attempt where possible to minimise conflicts of interest, or perceptions of conflict of interest. RAPs and SAPs should be constituted of highly skilled and knowledgeable people who are independent of any of the proponent organisations.

<u>11.23</u>	The NHT develop and implement a BMP for the administration of a public program.
<u>11.24</u>	The NHT Partnership Agreements specify a charter of community government partnership as well as State-Commonwealth partnerships.
<u>11.25</u>	The Commonwealth improve access while minimising the administration and accountability workload for small grants used by volunteer groups.
<u>11.26</u>	The NHT reform management arrangements for larger projects in order to increase accountability and contractual obligations. Larger projects should be based on clearer contracts with targets, milestones and milestone reporting and payments.
<u>11.27</u>	The Commonwealth should devolve grants to competent umbrella organisations as one way of increasing accessibility and reducing the administrative load on voluntary groups that are recipients of small grants.
<u>11.28</u>	The accountability, monitoring and performance reporting requirements of NHT funding recipients should be proportional to the size of the project grant.
<u>11.29</u>	The Commonwealth instigate a longer and more considered process for determining the preferred number, structure and mix of programs that aim to address the various interrelated aspects of NREM.
<u>11.30</u>	In the short term, NHT programs remain separate, and better mechanisms be installed to make joint funding of projects from two or more programs easier. Adoption of other recommendations that support better regional delivery pathways may overcome some concerns that programs are not sufficiently integrated.
<u>11.31</u>	The Commonwealth put more resources into program management, including investing in better database and project management systems. There is also a need to adopt a clearer project management cycle so that the programs and major projects are all progressively evolving and improving.
<u>11.32</u>	The NHT invest more in developing and trialing processes that assist in clarifying and articulating the management goals and targets for catchments, water resources and riverine ecosystems. Clearer objectives and targets for river management are required for effective riverine and catchment planning.

11.33	The Commonwealth explicitly acknowledge the importance of sound management structures at a regional scale and works to stimulate further institutional evolution. To support this evolution the NHT programs should focus more on accelerating the transition to more effective management structures and frameworks.
11.34	The Commonwealth advance institutional evolution by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and documentation of successful models; and • Funding support to trial transfers of successful models in new regions, and across State boundaries.
11.35	NHT programs fund projects that aim to benchmark and develop BMP's for integrated NREM strategies and management frameworks.
11.36	In recognition of the inherent ecosystem linkages, it is recommended that the NHT programs assist in developing better ways of linking efforts at improving the management and health of catchments, riverine systems, estuaries and coastal waters.
11.37	The Commonwealth be prepared to specify criteria for institutional capacity to handle devolution of local action grants.
11.38	The Devolved Grant Schemes (DGS) be used to provide targeted incentives and grants to achieve targets already identified as a priority within an endorsed regional plan.
11.39	Where possible, DGS be organised to ensure a greater use of outcome payments to focus attention on management to achieve outcomes, rather than the management of inputs. These outcome payments should be determined using rigorous and transparent formula based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental and geographic priority; • An assessment of the most cost effective methods; eg. direct seeding versus hand planting; and • The balance of public and private benefits.
11.40	The NHT support the advancement of ecological management and restoration as a discipline by working more closely with educational and R&D institutions at both the national and regional scale. It is important that "the body of knowledge" develops out of a synergy between practice and theory.
11.41	In conjunction with the research and education institutions, the NHT programs invest more in national (and other) projects that satisfy the need for training and information dissemination that will support improved capacity for ecological management or restoration.
11.42	The NHT programs actively explore collaboration with R&D organisations as an avenue for improving understanding and information exchange in water cycle management and restoration ecology.
11.43	The NHT encourage more partnerships between the NHT programs and research organisations like the proposed National Rivers Consortium
11.44	The NHT should invest directly in projects that support improved national information networks to enhance the exchange and dissemination of information relevant to water cycle management and restoration ecology.

11.45	The NHT do more to provide generic support and professional capacity building that is pitched at meeting the unfulfilled demand for technical and professional support for ecological management and restoration including catchment and riverine assessment, planning and management.
11.46	The NHT invest in projects that will improve the quality of the NREM plans, and the professional and technical capacity required to develop and implement effective riverine plans.
11.47	The NHT water programs investigate the opportunities for establishing a post graduate training course in river management and health modelled on the successful Post Graduate Diploma in Agroforestry.
11.48	Waterwatch represents a very good value investment by the NHT. It is recommended that community environmental monitoring programs are expanded and investment in community education and capacity building projects and programs is continued.
11.49	The NHT conduct an audit of the personnel currently funded in technical, co-ordination and facilitation roles by the full range of NHT programs, and consideration be given as to how to best use the skills base employed by NHT programs.
11.50	Performance information be linked to outcomes at a regional scale. Small projects should only report on outputs whereas the collective outcomes of all investment in NREM should be measurable regionally by applying a clear monitoring for management logic based around SoE reporting and adaptive management theory.
11.51	Regional NREM authorities or strategies consortia adopt clearer benchmarks, targets and goals as well as nominated performance indicators for actions and outcomes. Monitoring strategies should be based on regionally appropriate indicators measured at the right temporal and spatial scales. Larger projects should report performance against milestones specified in contracts. Endorsed regional strategies (or their implementing agency) and regional NREM authorities should report annually accounting for all inputs, outputs and outcomes.

12. National Landcare Program

No	Recommendations
<u>12.1</u>	<p>Linkages</p> <p>There is a need to develop a stronger focus on identifying and monitoring outcomes and relevant linkages for NLP projects. The development of an agreed NLP logical framework including performance indicators would assist this.</p> <p>More economic analysis of projects would help in identifying linkages with key economic drivers for change.</p> <p>There is a need for more strategic approaches to investments in coordinators.</p> <p>Large scale infrastructure projects should be separated from the NLP.</p>
<u>12.2</u>	<p>People outcomes</p> <p>A clear set of indicators of continuing change stemming from awareness raising and community education activities should be developed as part of ensuring the NHT maintains the momentum generated by the preceding decade of landcare. These could be included in development of a logical framework for the NLP.</p> <p>As part of demonstrated commitment to open and transparent processes, some formal feedback on this mid-term review should be provided to participants and the community more generally.</p>

<p>12.3</p>	<p>Institutions and Integration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NLP should more explicitly target building institutional capacity and institutional innovation in project expenditures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – This could include some funding for promoting integrated natural resources management in local governments including through direct funding of appropriate natural resource management activities. – Further promotion of institutional innovation including through competition for the right to deliver devolved grants could also assist in speeding up institutional change. • Expanding the use of devolved grants to appropriate institutions should be used to encourage development of more effective regional frameworks for integrated natural resource management. • The NLP should focus greater attention on ensuring policy consistency. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – One way this could be achieved is through more comprehensive and consistent annual reports from States on operation of the partnership agreements. – It could also be achieved through more explicit links between project activities and policy change. –
<p>12.4</p>	<p>Research and Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NLP could more directly drive information exchange eg, by focussing expenditure on coordinators to more strategic roles or by ensuring new developments are included in PMP workshops. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – In implementing more strategic roles for coordinators the Commonwealth should consider greater sharing of the costs of coordinators. • The Commonwealth should develop a user-friendly database of NLP/NHT information on R&D outputs and factors influencing adoption available to the whole global Landcare community via the Internet.
<p><u>12.5</u></p>	<p>Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Commonwealth should prepare a review of strategies funded by the NLP to identify best management practices for strategy development. • Only strategies aiming for endorsement by all relevant parties should be funded by the NLP and endorsement of strategies should become a key performance indicator for projects which aim to develop strategies with support from the NLP.

12.6	<p>Adoption</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NLP should strengthen the linkages between farm business planning and integrated natural resource management. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It should also support efforts to develop a more effective monitoring and evaluation framework PMP emphasising the importance of adoption of relevant practices as an outcome measure. • NLP projects targeting adoption should have clearly identified indicators of success including adoption within and outside project boundaries and relevant linkages which should be a key performance indicator for PMP. • Demonstration of the economic costs and benefits should be a prerequisite for all projects aiming to promote adoption of new technologies.
12.7	<p style="text-align: center;">Measurable Improvements in On- and Off-Farm Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The NLP should seek to minimise the level of administration and reporting requirements at the small project level. For small projects, the most important component of monitoring and evaluation is the development of simple participatory evaluation frameworks so that groups can measure their success and share lessons about what they did achieve, and why they did or did not achieve objectives. Evaluation should not be abandoned, but used as a ‘stepping stone’ to develop peoples understanding and ability to create and use suitable frameworks to monitor and adjust project performance. • Large projects should be expected to provide clear and concise reporting frameworks that identify the links between objectives, inputs, outputs and outcomes. Project applicants should demonstrate an understanding of how they could ‘fit’ into the broader environmental frameworks at the regional, State and National level (eg SoE, regional strategy, NHT outcomes) by developing complementary or lower order performance indicators.
12.8	<p>Environmental objectives and Sustainable Production</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration should be given to reducing the number of separate programs within the NHT and recognising the NLP more formally as the driver of integrated approaches across the NHT. • The NLP needs to recognise economic linkages relevant to environmental factors and ensure these are addressed through PMP and associated landcare work.

<u>12.9</u>	<p>Unintended consequences of the NLP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for cost shifting should be addressed and minimised in the proposed new program structure together with an increased focus on linkages between project activities and outcomes. • The proliferation of coordinators should be addressed through more strategic approaches.
<u>12.10</u>	<p>Appropriateness of program objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agreed logical framework should be prepared for the NLP. This should incorporate an investment strategy and performance indicators. • A new four-tiered program structure matching administration loads to the different scales of the NLP projects should be implemented.
12.11	There is scope for NLP projects to be more explicitly linked to implementation of policy and economic change
12.12	The NLP should more explicitly target building institutional capacity and promoting institutional innovation. A competitive environment for funding and devolved grants can help achieve this.
12.13	The NLP should more directly drive information exchange issues. This could be achieved by focussing expenditure on coordinators and by ensuring new technological developments from R&D programs in PMP workshops. A summary of projects and their experiences in promoting the adoption of best management practices could also help accelerate rates of change.
12.14	The NLP should identify regions where a centralised coordinator base may be appropriate.
<u>12.15</u>	The Commonwealth should prepare a review of strategies funded by the NLP to identify best management practices for strategy development.
<u>12.16</u>	Only strategies aiming for endorsement by all relevant parties should be funded by the NLP and endorsement of strategies should become a key performance indicator for these types of projects supported by NLP.
12.17	Demonstration of economic costs and benefits should be a prerequisite for all projects aiming to promote the adoption of new technologies.

12.18	The PMP component of the NLP should strengthen linkages between farm business planning and integrated natural resource management in line with the NLP and its goals.
12.19	Adoption both within and outside project boundaries should be a key performance indicator for PMP.
12.20	Monitoring systems should be established which reflect project scales with more simple systems for smaller projects and more comprehensive frameworks for larger projects.
<u>12.21</u>	The NLP should pay more attention to better integration of environment issues with sustainable production goals.
<u>12.22</u>	Consideration should be given to reducing the number of separate programs within the NHT, or as an alternative, recognising the NLP more formally as the driver of integrated approaches.
12.23	The NLP needs to recognise economic linkages and ensure these are addressed through the PMP program and associated landcare work.
12.24	Opportunities for cost shifting should be addressed and minimised in the proposed new program structure together with an increased focus on linkages between project activities and outcomes.
12.25	The proliferation of coordinators should be addressed through more strategic approaches.
<u>12.26</u>	An agreed logical framework should be prepared for the NLP. This should incorporate an investment strategy (p.27) and performance indicators.
12.27	A new four tiered program structure matching administration loads to the different scales of the NLP projects should be implemented.

13. Murray Darling 2001

No	Recommendations
<u>13.1</u>	There is an urgent need to develop a clearer picture of the magnitude of the Natural Resource and Environmental Management (NREM) challenges and the options for addressing them within the MDB. There is now so much "institutional reputation" invested in the MDB initiative to which the MD2001 is major investor that an independent assessment of progress is required.
13.2	A failure to reduce the scale of the decline of natural resources and ecosystems within the MDB will be of immense national economic significance. The Commonwealth should commission a Productivity Commission inquiry into the benefits generated from Commonwealth investment in the MDB initiative via the MD2001 Program and to recommend future options for large scale and cost effective intervention in the MDB.
13.3	The Commonwealth should initiate an independent review into NHT investment into irrigation drainage infrastructure. The review should assess the merits, cost sharing and environmental impacts of irrigation drainage works funded by the NHT and recommend ways to overcome any potential negative impacts on riverine ecosystems. Further NHT investment should be contingent on drainage proposals satisfying formal EIA processes and if they proceed the licensing of irrigation drains by the relevant EPA in the States involved. The Commonwealth should require detailed EIA before any further NHT investment so that it can be satisfied that the environmental benefits outweigh any costs or risks to the receiving waters.
13.4	MD2001 investment should be used strategically on projects that help to identify critical barriers to sustainable management of the MDB and the options to address them.
13.5	It is recommended that MD2001 invest in developing and trialing processes that help clarify and articulate management goals and targets for rivers, in conjunction with relevant State agencies and authorities.
13.6	MD2001 should develop criteria for assessing cost effectiveness of river restoration investments. Projects focused on restoration and rehabilitation should be directed to developing skills and understanding in river restoration processes, including developing an understanding of the most cost-effective methods to achieve the desired outcomes.
13.7	It is recommended that MD2001 actively supports the development of 'the body of knowledge' by working more closely with educational and research and development (R&D) institutions at both the national and regional scale.
13.8	In conjunction with the research and education institutions, the MD2001 should invest more in national (and other) projects that satisfy the need for river management training and information dissemination.

13.8.1	It is recommended that the MD2001 becomes full partner in the National Rivers Consortium should it proceed. In the event that it does not proceed the MD2001 should explore other avenues for improving understanding and information exchange in collaboration with R&D organisations.
13.8.2	MD2001 should do more to provide generic support and professional capacity building that is specifically pitched at improving riverine and catchment assessment, planning and management skills throughout the MDB.
13.8.3	MD2001 should invest directly in projects that support improved information networks and the development and dissemination of information relevant to ecosystem management in the MDB.
13.8.4	The MD2001 should support projects that actively disseminate tools, methods, advice, support and information on river processes and management.
13.9	It is recommended that the limited investment in projects that address environmental flows and flow management strategies should be rectified.
13.10	The roles and relationships between MD2001, NLP, Bushcare and the NRHP should be better defined.
13.11	The MD2001 Program should invest in independent reviews of catchment plans and action plans to provide greater certainty that planned project outputs will lead to desired long term outcomes.
13.12	The MD2001 continue its investment in community education and capacity building projects and programs.
13.13	The MD2001 explicitly acknowledge the importance of sound management structures at a regional scale, work to stimulate further institutional evolution where necessary, and to support increased capacity amongst these institutions to deliver integrated natural resources management.
13.14	The MD2001 advance institutional evolution, by investing in targeted capacity building projects, along with reviews and documentation of successful models, and by linking funding of regional strategies to formalised management and regulatory frameworks.
13.15	The MD2001 invest more in the assessment and review of regional NRM or catchment plans to ensure a sound ecological underpinning to the plans and provide confidence that planned outputs will lead to outcomes. Where it is not certain that outputs will lead to outcomes in a cost effective fashion, projects should be independently reviewed and/or develop a hypothesis that can be tested in the early phases of the project.
13.16	All large projects that have MD2001 investment in implementation should have independent analysis or assessments built in as an early milestone.
13.17	The Commonwealth should establish minimum standards and benchmarks for the feedback required by RAPS and SAPS to project proponents.

13.18	The MD2001 in conjunction with other NHT Programs should improve access to small grants by volunteer groups, while minimising the administration and accountability workload without compromising good practice.
13.19	The MD2001 in conjunction with other NHT Programs should increase accountability and contractual obligations for larger grants moving to more defined contract management arrangements with milestone reporting and progress payments.
13.20	The NHT Program funds should be delivered through 4 separate processes that have different geographic scale and clarify the level of contractual obligations re accountability, contractual obligations and implementation responsibilities.
13.21	MD2001 in conjunction with other NHT Programs should further develop the use of devolved grant schemes. Devolved grants are one opportunity to streamline the access, accountability and administration AAA of small grants to let the volunteers get on with doing the job and move the AAA to a higher level, umbrella organisation.
13.22	MB2001 should invest in an improved project management system capable of managing the larger projects on a milestone reporting and payment basis.
13.23	MD2001 should move to milestone reporting to improve the capacity to collate project outputs, collect finer quality performance information and enable improved assessment of project or Program performance.
13.24	The current MD2001 performance indicators are replaced with those contained Table 4.7.
13.25	The roles of different parties (Commonwealth, State, Community and Project Proponents) be clarified for the collation of Performance Information.
13.26	The performance indicators be used where baseline data is available.
13.27	Targets be set for each performance indicator.
13.28	Performance information should be linked to outcomes at a regional scale. Small projects should only report on outputs whereas the collective outcomes of all investment/activities should be measurable regionally by applying a clear monitoring for management logic based around SoE reporting and adaptive management theory.
13.29	Regional NRM consortia, ICM committees, catchment authorities should adopt clearer benchmarks, targets and goals as well as nominated performance indicators for actions and outcomes. Monitoring strategies should be based on regionally appropriate indicators measured at the right temporal and spatial scales. Larger projects should report performance against milestones specified in contracts.

14. National Rivercare Program

No	Recommendations
14.1	The NRP should invest in projects that aim to identify options for overcoming critical barriers to river health at a range of scales.
14.2	The NRP, in conjunction with river management agencies, should invest more in developing and trailing processes that assist in clarifying and articulating the management goals and targets for rivers.
14.3	The NRP should invest in projects that assist in developing a clearer understanding of the magnitude of the river restoration and management challenges facing Australia, and the options for addressing these in a cost effective manner.
14.4	The NRP should develop criteria for assessing the cost effectiveness of river restoration investments. Projects focused on restoration and rehabilitation should be directed to developing skills and understanding in river restoration processes, including developing an understanding of the most cost-effective methods to achieve the desired outcomes.
14.5	The NRP needs to actively support the development of ‘the body of knowledge’ by working more closely with educational and research and development (R&D) institutions at both the national and regional scale.
14.6	In conjunction with the research and education institutions, the NRP should invests more in national (and other) projects that satisfy the need for river management training and information dissemination.
14.6.1	It is recommended that the NRP become full partner in the National Rivers Consortium (NRC) should this proceed. In the event that the NRC proposal fails, the NRP should explore other avenues for improving understanding and information exchange in collaboration with R&D organisations.

14.6.2	There is an unfulfilled demand for technical and professional support for river management and restoration. NRP should do more to provide generic support and professional capacity building that is pitched at improving riverine assessment, planning and management.
14.6.3	The NRP should invest directly in projects that support improved information networks and the development and dissemination of information relevant to river care.
14.6.4	The NRP should support projects that actively disseminate tools, methods, advice, support and information on river processes and management.
<u>14.7</u>	The roles and relationships between NRP, NLP, Bushcare, WWA and the NRHP should be better defined.
<u>14.8</u>	Due to the limited NRP funds and the high cost of river restoration activities, the future focus of the program should be on strategic support for river care – strategic planning and assessment, integration of riverine issues and capacity building for improved river management. Increased funding would be required if the NRP is to make a major contribution nationally to environmental outcomes by funding “on-ground works” with a river restoration focus.
<u>14.9</u>	The NRP objectives and intended outcomes should be revised to reflect its role and current investment more. The new objectives should be based on some simple modification of the current objectives with the addition of one new objective. The commended objectives and intended outcomes are listed in Table 4.4 compared against the current objectives.
14.10	It is recommended that most projects concentrate on measuring activities and outputs. They should rely on project design, and predictions based on ecological theory, to determine likely improvements in ecological health, rather than attempting to measure actual changes in the environment (outcomes) in the short term or at the project scale.
14.11	The NRP support the development of robust conceptual models of riverine ecosystem health, in order to improve predictive capacity and target Program investments.

14.12	Attempts to monitor achievement of environmental outcomes of NHT projects are best undertaken within a wider regional framework of water quality monitoring and SoE.
14.13	The NRP should determine whether it is necessary to commission a review of progress on the achievement of river management consistent with ‘COAG and NWQMS’, as stated in the partnership agreements, or whether the other assessments will suffice.
14.14	NRP should invest in projects that ensure co-ordinated delivery of information that provides technical support for river care to both NRP funded projects and others.
14.15	It is recommended that the NRP supports the development of a national investment framework for river management.
14.16	The NRP should facilitate larger scale community education and awareness projects.
14.17	The Review recommends that NRP support projects which address cultural aspects of river management and achieve community education.
14.18	NRP should explicitly acknowledge the importance of sound management structures at a regional scale and aim to catalyse the development of excellence in institutional arrangements for river management.
14.19	NRP should fund projects that attempt to benchmark and develop best management practices (BMPs) for NRM strategies and management frameworks.
14.20	The NRP should assist in developing better regional frameworks for improving the management and health of catchments, riverine systems, estuaries and coastal waters.
14.21	NRP should invest in projects that improve the quality of the plans, and the professional and technical capacity to develop and implement effective riverine plans.

14.22	The NRP should investigate the opportunities for facilitating the establishment of a post-graduate training course in river management and health, modelled on the successful Post Graduate Diploma in Agroforestry.
14.23	The NRP should make a greater level of investment in the assessment of regional riverine or catchment plans. This assessment should aim to ensure a sound ecological basis to the plans and provide confidence that planned outputs will lead to outcomes.
14.24	Where there are high degrees of uncertainty that project outputs will lead to intended project outcomes, projects should be required to be independently reviewed and/or develop a hypothesis that can be tested in the early phases of the project.
14.25	All large projects (>\$50,000) which request funding by the NRP in the implementation phase should have an independent analysis or assessment.
14.26	The NRP should be willing to invest more effort in negotiating and enforcing project contracts.
14.27	The NRP should redefine its outcomes that address the NHT goals of sustainable production to focus on the forms of sustainable production generated by healthy rivers overall, rather than the production derived only from agriculture.
14.28	It is considered desirable that the Commonwealth establishes minimum standards and benchmarks for feedback from RAPs and SAPs to project proponents, however this should be cross-referenced with the findings of the Administrative Review.
<u>14.29</u>	It is considered that the NRP, in conjunction with other NHT Programs, should improve access to small grants by community groups, by minimising the administration and accountability workload without compromising good practice. This should, however, be cross-referenced with the findings of the Administrative Review.
14.30	NRP, in conjunction with other NHT Programs, should increase accountability and contractual obligations for larger grants, moving towards more defined contract management arrangements with milestone reporting and progress payments. This should, however, be cross-referenced with the findings of the Administrative Review.

14.31	NRP, in conjunction with other NHT Programs, should further develop criteria for the use of devolved grants schemes. Devolved grants are an opportunity to streamline the access, accountability and administration (AAA) for small grants, by letting the volunteers get on with doing the job, and moving the AAA to high level, umbrella organisations. This should, however, be cross-referenced with the findings of the Administrative Review.
14.32	The current NRP performance indicators are replaced with those contained in Table 4.11.
14.33	The roles of different parties (Commonwealth, State, Community and Project Proponents) with regard to the collation of Performance Information are clarified.
14.34	The performance indicators be used where baseline data is available.
<u>14.35</u>	Targets be set for each performance indicator.
14.36	Performance information should be linked to outcomes at a regional scale. Monitoring strategies should be based on regionally appropriate indicators measured at the right temporal and spatial scales. The collective outcomes of all investment/activities should be measurable regionally by applying a clear monitoring for management logic based around SoE reporting and adaptive management theory. (Note several states are already applying SoE reporting to catchments).
14.37	Regional NRM consortia, ICM committees, catchment authorities etc should adopt clearer benchmarks, targets and goals as well as nominated performance indicators for projects which the NRP funds.
14.38	Larger projects (>\$50,000) should report performance against milestones specified in contracts. Small projects should only be required to report on project outputs.

15. Farm Forestry Program

No	Recommendations
15.1	To ensure that project focus is consistent with NHT / FFP objectives, the project application form should be modified to include a requirement for the applicant to explain how the project will meet / satisfy NHT / FFP objectives. At present, there is no requirement within the form for the applicant to address these objectives. Such a requirement would force consideration of the objectives by the applicants and provide useful information to the assessment panels.
15.2	There is general recognition that farm forestry is a long-term enterprise when compared with most other agricultural activities. However, as the report indicates, NHT funding is for a limited time in comparison with the rotation length of even a short rotation. The funding time frame allows demonstration plantings to address issues related to species selection, site preparation, planting and post-planting management. However, there are many more silvicultural and management lessons for landowners to become skilled at all aspects of farm forestry. These include matters such as pruning regimes and practices, management of harvesting operations and on-going management requirements. Demonstration of skills for these issues requires time beyond current NHT / FFP funding availability. However, if the lessons from the first years of FFP funding are not to be wasted the demonstration sites need to extend to the end of the first rotation. It is therefore recommended that applications for demonstration plantings should be required to demonstrate how the plantings would be maintained beyond the cessation of FFP funding.
15.3	A significant inducement for landholders to invest in farm forestry is provided by the likelihood of the enterprise returning a profit. Accordingly, the FFP needs to have a strong market orientation. It is recommended that the FFP be supported by regular updates on markets and market developments. It is envisaged that this information would be compiled from existing data sources and additional surveys would not be required. RIRDC project ANU 32A provides an example of how this might be done.
15.4	There are a wide variety of information sources available about farm forestry including magazines, journal articles, newspapers and AFFA / EA publications. The information provided by print media can become out of date and it is not always certain what constitutes current best practice. In addition, many of the information sources are beyond the influence of AFFA and EA. The AFFA and EA websites represent an information source that can reach an increasing audience and can be readily updated. It is therefore recommended that the FFP be supported by a regularly updated website that provides current information on all issues relevant to farm forestry.

15.5	<p>The delays in funding approvals that have been experienced by many project proponents have caused significant difficulties and delays for a number of projects. Demonstration site projects, in particular, have been adversely affected since the establishment operations are seasonally dependent. Ideally, the assessment and approvals process should proceed efficiently for all project applications. As discussed in the Chapter 4 of the report, recent experience indicated that this process is now improving. However, a fallback provision is required if unexpected delays are encountered in the assessment process. In that event, it is recommended that applications for demonstration site projects receive priority consideration in the assessment process.</p>
15.6	<p>It was noted that many projects experience on-going delays beyond the granting of approvals. Some of these delays are due to the lack of project management skills and experience among project managers and proponents. The question of project management skills is not one that is assessed at RAPs or TAPs. The following recommendations are made on this issue:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Training for participants in project evaluation include an element of project management. b. Application forms be modified to require project proponents to demonstrate appropriate project management skills. c. Consideration be given to the development of project management skills among project managers and proponents.
15.7	<p>There is a substantial consensus within the farm forestry community that low rainfall forestry offers great potential to achieve several of the FFP objectives. In particular, it can contribute to environmental objectives such as salinity and water quality management, increased biological diversity and increased carbon sequestration in regions that have suffered significant disturbance and degradation. It also offers the opportunity for alternative incomes in areas where traditional agriculture is facing reduced commodity prices.</p> <p>Many of these areas are on the inland slopes of Victoria and NSW and within economic haulage distance of large integrated wood using industries. It is noted that the FFP Strategy has recognised a need for investigation of low rainfall forestry as a priority issue for funding under the Commonwealth component. However, there is no indication that it has higher priority than other issues. Accordingly, It is recommended that low rainfall forestry be given higher priority for funding within the Commonwealth funding component of the Program.</p>
15.8	<p>The incorporation of farm forestry into Regional Planning systems has been inconsistent on a national basis. However, widespread development of farm forestry will require recognition of the activity as a legitimate land use in local government and regional planning systems. It is therefore recommended that FFP support incorporation of farm forestry into planning systems by providing support for project proposals that involve analysis and identification of costs and benefits of regional farm forestry. This could include a requirement that the issue is addressed within the current activities of the Commonwealth component relating to regional and strategic planning activities.</p>

15.9	There is some concern that farmer organisations have not been adequately involved in the consultation processes for the development and implementation of the FFP. Since widespread adoption of farm forestry will require significant farmer participation and cultural change, it is important that the farming community be comprehensively engaged in the consultation process. It is therefore recommended that the AFFA program managers introduce additional opportunities for consultation with farming community representatives at national and State level.
15.10	Given the short-term nature of FFP / NHT, it is important that the continued viability of the farm forestry support groups is not threatened or compromised by the FFP. It is noted that some of these groups are represented on the Farm Forestry Reference Panel. However, the role of the panel is restricted to the identification and provision of advice on national funding needs and priorities and advice and recommendations on the Commonwealth component of the FFP. The groups need to be further engaged in consultation on issues of concern. Accordingly, it is recommended that AFFA consider the establishment of formal consultative mechanisms with farm forestry support groups and grower organisations.
15.11	The Regional Plantation Committees have the potential to play a significant role in many aspects of the FFP and to continue regional support for farm forestry when the FFP ceases. The Program therefore needs to ensure that RPCs are adequately supported. It is recommended that the FFP formally recognise the current and future key role for RPCs in farm forestry and that priority consideration be given to project proposals that involve support for RPCs.
<u>15.12</u>	<p>The potential environmental outcomes from farm forestry are often seen as costs rather than benefits. This is because there is generally no financial return to the landholder from investment in environmental outcomes and any benefits accrue to landholders and/or the community beyond the farm gate.</p> <p>The study concluded that direct investigations into the development of systems for trading environmental benefits were not within the scope of the FFP. However, it could be addressed as an aspect of investigations or studies within the theme - Quantifying Multibenefits of Farm Forestry. It is therefore recommended that FFP support proposals to address this issue as part of studies within the theme.</p>
15.13	At this stage the employment benefits of the program are largely restricted to engagement of staff directly into approved projects. However, the wider employment impacts of the Program are expected to increase over time. It is therefore recommended that regular monitoring of employment outcomes is undertaken.

16. Fisheries Action Program

No	Recommendations
16.1	Community and stakeholder involvement needs to be integrated into the core of the projects and not be a supplementary component of an existing project.
16.2	The assessment of the progress and outputs, in relation to community and stakeholder involvement, should be measured through the use of performance indicators, where possible.
<u>16.3</u>	The FAP remain an independent component of the NHT, as the current relative size of the program does not impair its efficiency or its effectiveness.
16.4	Appropriate Research and Development (R&D) should be allowed as components of projects as appropriate. R&D in this form would add value to FAP projects and improve efficiency of on-ground works, actions and collection of baseline data.
16.5	The FAP ensure a higher level of performance monitoring from projects.
16.6	New projects be selected on the basis that they can provide adequate information for performance monitoring.
16.7	Where possible, FAP Coordinators should maintain autonomy from the direct management of projects in that state and act as independent support across the program.
16.8	The role of the FAP Coordinator needs to be transparent and accountable to the commonwealth.
16.9	The production and timely delivery of the project progress reports should be made a priority for the FAP.
16.10	The set of performance indicators in Table 10. be used for the Fisheries Action Program.

16.11	It is recommended that baseline data need to be collected where appropriate.
<u>16.12</u>	It is recommended that targets be set for each performance indicator.
16.13	It is recommended that FAP Coordinators need to check on the performance indicators nominated for the Program.

17. National Wetlands Program

No	Recommendations
<u>17.1</u>	The practice of preparing an annual strategic plan, submitted for Ministerial approval early in the financial year, should be continued.
17.2	Any further Program developments and work requirements must be supported with adequate Wetland Unit staff support to maintain the current level of efficiency.
<u>17.3</u>	Community based activities identified to direct funds under the NHT One-Stop-Shop require revision and strategic focus. Sustainable wetlands management on private land is one activity requiring support through the NHT One-Stop-Shop.
<u>17.4</u>	Support for local government should be formalised through one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • creation of formal networks (database of contacts) and communication support with local government Environment Officers; • support offered through the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) and state local government associations; and • provision of workshops, capacity building programs, education and training through existing local government structures and communication channels.
17.5	The establishment of formal links with AusAID should be investigated.
17.6	The Wetlands Unit should adopt the policy reflected in the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> in its negotiations with the States and Territories on the preparation of management plans for Ramsar sites.
17.7	Finalisation of the colour leg flagging protocol requires continued action as implementation of the system will significantly improve understanding of migratory patterns.

17.8	An approach, similar to that undertaken in Western Australia, should be encouraged for all States and Territories to make the Ramsar List more representative as per the COP7 decision. Further consideration is required to include wetlands on private land and other areas not included in the Directory. Active and strategic work to develop the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Site Network should be incorporated as part of the process of adding new sites to the Ramsar List. An analysis of the most cost-efficient way of achieving this action is required.
17.9	The process of adding new sites to the Ramsar List should continue to be based strictly on objective criteria and sites should not be added to assist in reaching an arbitrary figure determined by the Conference of Parties which may be directed primarily to countries less active than Australia in designating sites to the Ramsar List.
17.10	The costs and benefits associated with establishing the National Inventory should be fully investigated.
17.11	Support for the development of monitoring systems should proceed with due consideration given to: the cost of any potential monitoring system considered against the benefits to the Program and the Program's priority actions; the practical application of any potential monitoring; and the opportunity to coordinate community monitoring schemes with existing monitoring activities (where appropriate), such as Waterwatch.
17.12	The NWP should continue to support, through the NHT One-Stop-Shop process, the integration of wetlands conservation objectives into State, Territory and regional/catchment strategies, plans and policies.
17.13	The mailing list for publications such as <i>Wetlands Australia</i> should include local government environmental officers or other suitable contacts within local government and local government authorities should be provided with information from the Directory to help facilitate their interest in and promote understanding of wetlands within their jurisdiction.
17.14	The implementation of the shorebird colour flagging process should be integrated under the umbrella of the Waterwatch program.
17.15	In May 1999 the National Wetlands R&D Program Committee recommended that a review of the R&D Program be conducted to determine possible future directions. It is recommended that this review be given high priority.
17.16	Additional sources of funds to resource Asia-Pacific activities be considered through cooperative arrangements with other organizations such as AusAID.

18. Waterwatch program

No	Recommendations
18.1	Develop a charter that encompasses the character, ethos and core values of Waterwatch. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate the Waterwatch Australia Strategy into this charter. • Explore and define the meaning of the word ‘action’ in this charter.
18.2	Continue to allocate the funding against the major components in accordance with past years. Any new funding should receive similar allocations.
18.3	Continue to support the regional coordination model with appropriate allocation of funding to ensure more successful models can continue and begin.
18.4	Maximise effectiveness in the national office by ensuring adequate staff levels are available to carry out key national projects that are integral to achieving Waterwatch objectives.
18.5	Combine all Waterwatch funding including the Murray Darling component and deliver to the States through State Assessment panels with endorsement from State Waterwatch Steering Committees.
18.6	Maintain the current membership of the WASC and seek community perspective from the State Facilitators via their State Steering Committees.
18.7	Use the WASC as a forum to develop guidelines to ensure the effectiveness and appropriateness of the State Waterwatch Steering Committees in facilitating community ownership of the Waterwatch program.
18.8	Introduce a naming policy that links Waterwatch funding with the acknowledgment of the Waterwatch name.
18.9	Continue to hold the National Waterwatch Conference at least every two years.
18.10	Explore ways of developing a national product from the annual Snapshot event.
18.11	Provide national training opportunities such as induction for new Regional Coordinators and State Facilitators.
18.12	Change the wording in the Waterwatch Australia Strategy to emphasise that part of the national approach is accepting the diversity of the Waterwatch program
18.13	Accelerate the use of the National Database by providing ongoing technical support including targeting training where it is required.
18.14	Identify different models of Waterwatch data interpretation and reporting techniques and distribute through the Waterwatch network.

18.15	Target all proponents and prospective proponents with an education/information campaign that outlines the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Coordinator and ways the proponent can support the position. Provide guidelines for minimum standards for resources, administrative support, training and networking. Link to Waterwatch charter.
18.16	Link funding for employment of Regional Coordinators to the ability of the proponent to demonstrate commitment to the Waterwatch Program as well as their ability to adequately resource the position. Proponents should demonstrate that Waterwatch is an integral part of their organisation's activities.
18.17	Develop a strategic approach for locating the full time Regional Coordinators within catchment boundaries across Australia.
18.18	Conduct a feasibility study into securing substantial corporate sponsorship.
18.19	Identify funds for securing high profile community people to act as ambassadors for the program.
18.20	Identify and develop a suite of Waterwatch projects that could be funded through the private sector.
18.21	Waterwatch Australia to facilitate an audit of all regional projects to document how and where community data is being used. This information can then be used as a future performance indicator for the Waterwatch program.
18.22	Waterwatch Australia to document the regional and state initiatives and strategies that have incorporated the Waterwatch Program as a community education component.
18.23	Formalise Waterwatch links with the scientific community by inviting a scientific water quality expert onto the Waterwatch Australia Steering Committee (WASC)
18.24	Review the use of Waterwatch data management tools by Regional Coordinators and facilitate training and ongoing technical support to maximise the use of the National Database.
18.25	Encourage the employment of technical coordinators for each State program to undertake aspects of technical training and seek scientific advice.
18.26	Continue to ensure that Waterwatch funding is directed at community water quality monitoring and is not sidetracked into onground works.
18.27	Ensure groups that wish to have an action focus have avenues open to them through formal and informal links with Bushcare, Coastcare and Landcare.
18.28	Suggest appropriate "action" projects for Waterwatch groups that also encompass the broader concepts of action.
18.29	Investigate strategies for involving the retiree section of the population.
18.30	Continue to provide framework for involving schools in the program through curriculum support, teacher training, special events and monitoring activities.

19. National River Health Program

No	Recommendations
19.1	To ensure an effective and appropriate reporting process Environment Australia should provide lead agencies in each State or Territory with a standard milestone report template addressing National River Health Program objectives.
19.2	The Environment Australia implement an effective communications program for the National River Health Program as soon as possible.
19.3	The results of the Toolbox projects be incorporated, as is currently planned, into future versions of the AusRivAS model.
19.4	The current emphasis on macroinvertebrates in the assessment of river health is important However, the assessment of river health based on fish communities requires further method development and should be addressed by future Toolbox projects.
19.5	It is recommended that Environment Australia proceed to open tender for the supply of future services for the National River Health Program.
19.6	The National River Health Program should be continued beyond the current phase to consolidate AusRivAS and to further develop the Environmental Flows Initiative.
19.7	Environment Australia must adopt an effective process of gauging the performance of the National River Health Program against the objectives of the NHT.

20. National Reserve System Program

No	Recommendations
Program Overview	
20.1	Maintain and extend the operation of the National Reserve System Program (NRSP).
20.2	Increase funding available to the program for land acquisition at least to the level recommended by House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment, Recreation and Arts (HoRSCERA)
20.3	Refine and release the Strategic Plan for the NRSP.
20.4	The NRSP should identify and promote the economic and social benefits of protecting areas under the National Reserve System (NRS).
20.5	The Commonwealth should encourage State governments to make a defined commitment to land acquisition funding for the life of the NRSP.
20.6	The current partnership arrangement that stipulates a 2:1 funding share should be maintained. Other financial arrangements should be explored (including enhanced management costs) to improve the capacity of conservation agencies to commit to NRSP projects.
20.7	Applicants' commitment to start-up costs and costs associated with developing interim management arrangements for new reserves should be considered as part of the contribution where it can be demonstrated that these costs are essential to control threats to the site.
20.8	Land acquisition should be maintained as the major priority for funding under the Program.
Land Acquisition	
20.9	The NRSP should, in cooperation with the States and Territories, initiate a major structured program of protection and acquisition in high priority IBRA (Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia) regions where threats to biodiversity values are high.
20.10	The NRSP should investigate and develop a more flexible approach to providing funding to the States including provision of funding based on an agreed annual program, funding for a class of sites and funding to identify and acquire specific values.
20.11	In addition to the above measures, the NRSP and States should develop and implement procedures to ensure that applications are developed, assessed and approved in a timely manner to reduce lost purchase opportunities.
20.12	Minimum standards should be developed for statutory covenants and other legal mechanisms in order to ensure that private land is protected and managed in perpetuity for identified conservation values.
20.13	The NRSP should utilise the conservation provisions of the Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> to develop private land protected areas within the NRS where there are no suitable State level mechanisms.
20.14	The concept of Protected Area Networks should be further developed and promoted as a means of achieving NRS goals in fragmented ecosystems.

20.15	The NRSP should develop and support initiatives that facilitate the achievement of its biodiversity objectives in the broader landscape including support for regional planning strategies and catchment plans.
20.16	The NRSP should continue its community program including actively sponsoring the protection of high priority areas through private groups, revolving funds and land trusts.
Change in Comprehensiveness, Adequateness and Representativeness of Ecosystems in Reserve Systems and Protected Areas	
20.17	The NRSP should give priority to land acquisition proposals that add unrepresented, poorly represented and threatened ecosystems to the national and regional reserve system.
20.18	The NRSP should seek to pro-actively target threatened ecosystems especially where the risk of irreversible loss is high.
20.19	The Commonwealth should encourage the introduction by all States of controls over land clearing as a matter of urgency, especially in regions that are a high priority for the NRS.
20.20	The NRSP should provide support for projects that specifically address the protection of public land supporting poorly represented and threatened ecosystems through the inclusion of such land in the reserve system or the development of management agreements.
20.21	Develop strategies to ensure that Commonwealth land with significant values for the NRS is protected either through transfer to the states or other management organisation or through binding management agreements.
Improvement in Knowledge of Conservation Status of Ecosystems and Representation in the Reserve System	
20.22	The IBRA (Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia) should be further refined and its level of resolution increased to include provinces and ecosystems.
20.23	The Commonwealth should regularly review priorities for protection in the light of additions to the reserve system and changes to threats and other factors.
20.24	The NRSP should encourage and support investigative or planning projects that identify major gaps in national and regional reserve systems.
20.25	Information regarding the distribution and status of regional ecosystems should be developed in a consistent manner by the States with Commonwealth support.
20.26	The NRS Guidelines should be sole basis for assessing the merit of proposals for the development of the NRS.
Management of protected areas in accordance with IUCN (World Conservation Union) categories and best practice	
20.27	State Governments should provide adequate resources for the effective management of conservation reserves.
20.28	The NRSP should develop incentives to assist States and other parties to ensure that land acquired under the Program receives adequate management resources.

20.29	The NRSP should ensure that management plans are being produced for new reserves by the States and Territories. Systems for reporting and monitoring of the development of management plans should be improved.
20.30	The NRSP should encourage the systematic implementation of best practice management.
20.31	The development and implementation of ANZECC (Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council) best management practices should be integrated into the program.
Interest by Landholders and Others to Contribute to the National Reserve System	
20.32	The NRSP should seek to participate in the development of appropriate incentives for long-term nature conservation on private land.
20.33	State and Commonwealth Governments should conduct community awareness programs for the NRS, including information programs specifically directed at community groups, landholders and local Government.
20.34	The importance of community involvement to the success of the program should be highlighted and promoted.
20.35	Involve Local Government by explaining relevance of programs, availability of funding and opportunities for involvement.
Quality of Performance Information and Required Monitoring	
20.36	The States should provide the required performance information to the Commonwealth on an annual basis to enable accurate and efficient evaluation of progress towards goals.
20.37	NRSP should ensure that Program Administrator is able to readily provide appropriate data to monitor projects.
20.38	CAPAD should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis using information provided by the States.
20.39	Regional targets for achieving NRS objectives should be developed and applied where appropriate.
Barriers & Other Issues	
20.40	Projects should only be funded where they clearly meet the guidelines for the Program.

<u>20.41</u>	The Commonwealth should develop a strategic framework for the integration of biodiversity programs within Environment Australia.
20.42	The NRSP should provide more information to State Assessment Panels about the achievements and guidelines of the program.
20.43	The NRSP should improve mechanisms for providing advice and information to proponents on successful and unsuccessful project applications.

21. Indigenous Protected Areas Program

No	Recommendations
21.1	Maintain the general direction of the Indigenous Protected Areas Program (IPAP), with enhancements according to other recommendations below, and extend its geographic coverage.
21.2	Continue to interpret Program objectives broadly to provide opportunities for addressing a variety of social and economic issues within the context of biodiversity conservation.
<u>21.3</u>	Increase funding from government sources and develop initiatives to attract additional funding, and provide a long-term commitment to continue funding where there is an ongoing management obligation.
21.4	Undertake an analysis of the economic benefits of the IPAP.
21.5	Ensure that the funding process is tailored to Aboriginal values and understanding, and provide for involvement of Indigenous people in all project assessment processes.
21.6	Establish criteria for funding which give consideration and recognition to cultural values as well as environmental values, recognising that the two are often difficult to separate.
<u>21.7</u>	Develop compensation provisions, such as financial or other incentives, for any loss of income involved in achieving conservation goals.
21.8	Foster greater public recognition, through education and publicity, of the value of Aboriginal lands to the conservation reserve system and biodiversity conservation, recognising traditional Aboriginal links between land and cultural values.
21.9	Extend the IPAP, focusing on achieving protection for priority areas and ecosystems for the National Reserve System (NRS) based on the Australian Guidelines for Establishing the National Reserve System (Commonwealth of Australia 1999).

21.10	Continue and extend initiatives to facilitate sound management planning according to IUCN (International Union for the Conservation of Nature) categories for protected area management and adoption of best practice management standards to improve biodiversity conservation, in collaboration with the other NHT programs.
21.11	Ensure that Indigenous peoples have access to the full range of environmental programs and initiatives, including regional conservation planning, by providing appropriate information, advice and assistance.
21.12	Foster greater support for cooperative management of protected areas from State and Territory governments through appropriate incentives and by helping to remove any barriers.
21.13	Improve communication, understanding and relationships between Indigenous communities, the public and all levels of government. Workshops, education programs and publicity of achievements under the IPAP could facilitate this
21.14	Investigate measures to remove barriers to cooperative management of protected areas, particularly limited Aboriginal resources and training, which IPAP does not directly provide.
21.15	Publicise achievements in cooperative management arrangements to gain further public and government support and cooperation.
21.16	Develop and implement appropriate land management training programs for Indigenous communities.
21.17	Provide further incentives for biodiversity conservation which may be available through legislation (eg. Native Title process, self determination of IPAs), staffing (eg. employment, exchange schemes) and funding, and develop training programs for baseline cultural and biodiversity studies.
21.18	Instigate pilot studies in existing IPAs to develop a model approach for the provision and execution of enforcement powers.
21.19	Continue to facilitate appropriate Indigenous use of traditional resources and other sustainable commercial activities within protected areas. This could be achieved through increased technical and financial assistance to develop new ventures.
21.20	Develop information programs for conservation groups and the general community to promote greater understanding of how conservation values can be maintained on lands as a consequence of Indigenous management and use.
21.21	Maintain, as far as possible, continuity in policy and administrative staff within the IPAP.
21.22	Increase the level of extension and facilitation activities in the Program, and provide a forum for information sharing between participants through the development of an IPA network and newsheet.
21.23	Undertake major education and publicity programs to raise community awareness of the Program's benefits and achievements.
21.24	Maintain and support the IPA Advisory Group.

21.25	Develop comprehensive Program performance criteria that more closely reflect the objectives of the IPAP.
21.26	Maintain and refine performance measures used to evaluate individual projects at the administrative level.
21.27	Develop monitoring systems in the field for all projects regarding on-going site management (eg. photographic record and field measurements) and include these monitoring systems within management plans together with appropriate targets.
21.28	Develop a formal consultative mechanism to involve State agencies in the IPA process and establish the roles and obligations of Indigenous landowners and all levels of government.
21.29	Encourage all States to have legislation that allows for title of National Parks to be returned to Indigenous communities.
21.30	Develop minimum standards for IPA agreements in relation to the protection mechanisms used. This may include utilising the provisions of the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> .
21.31	Maintain close association with the NRSP and develop formal effective links to other related NHT programs.

22. World Heritage Management Program

No	Recommendations
Meeting Obligations under World Heritage Convention	
22.1	Continue and strengthen the operation of the Program, ensuring a balance in attention to identification, protection, enhancement and presentation of World Heritage values.
22.2	Provide opportunities for greater involvement of Aboriginal communities in the Program to give better consideration of Aboriginal values in the listing and management of World Heritage properties.
Management Arrangements & Planning	
22.3	Undertake a detailed review of the framework for property management, including involvement of all levels of government and the community, with a view to streamlining decision making and management outcomes.
Advisory Committees	
22.4	Establish advisory committees for all properties, including Aboriginal representation where appropriate, to provide community input and advice by seeking their input in planning, management and funding initiatives.
Protection	
22.5	Enhance protection of World Heritage values by assessing future threats and developing appropriate strategies for management of these threats, providing adequate resourcing of environmental projects, and increasing the involvement of Aboriginal communities in relation to cultural values.
22.6	Management plans and strategies should aim to protect all significant natural and cultural values on World Heritage properties, regardless of whether they were the basis for listing, through a coordinated approach with other Government programs and compatible management of adjacent lands.
Public Awareness & Appreciation of World Heritage Values	
22.7	Investigate opportunities to improve presentation, particularly through use of new technology.
22.8	Continue and where appropriate increase research into visitor experience and impacts to maintain and improve presentation to visitors.
Community Awareness of the NHT Program	
22.9	Publicise the nature and purpose of the WHMP (World Heritage Management Program) more effectively.
Quality of Performance Information, Performance Criteria and Required Monitoring	

22.10	Develop more precise performance measures, in terms of defining, protecting and presenting World Heritage values and improve site specific monitoring as a basis for improving property management. This is a demanding and time consuming task, based on trials and best undertaken as a special project or study.
22.11	Consider the development of a consistent, collaborative approach to monitoring across all properties.
Process for funding	
22.12	Streamline the funding processes and provide grants against annual programs. Such programs should reflect the WHMP priorities of identification, protection, enhancement and presentation of World Heritage values.
Criteria and Priorities for Funding	
22.13	Review funding criteria and modify these as necessary to reflect changing requirements for best meeting program objectives; and maintain a close match between criteria and projects funded.
Relationship to Other Programs	
22.14	Develop formal effective links to related NHT programs including National Reserve System Program and Indigenous Protected Area Program, to ensure they are complementary.

23. Bushcare Program

No	Recommendations
<u>23.1</u>	The principle that native vegetation management and enhancement is a long term issue requiring concerted long term or continuous effort by all levels of management should be accepted by governments. Commitments by government to this principle, and in particular, commitments on funding after the life of NHT should be adopted at an early stage.
23.2	Extensive tree clearing in Queensland and New South Wales continue at alarming rates. The Commonwealth should now move to apply additional pressure on Queensland and New South Wales to reduce rates of tree clearing significantly. NHT funds should be scaled back in these states, particularly in Queensland, until there is greater compliance with the spirit of provisions on tree clearing in the Partnership Agreements.
23.3	The allocation of Bushcare funds should be made such that conservation priorities are clearly targeted. This can be achieved by the Commonwealth reaching agreement with the states and territories or priority IBRA regions environmental issues and following through with guidelines to regional and state assessment panels.
23.4	Bushcare should raise awareness of the need for management of remnant vegetation as a continuing activity and provide appropriate information and support to project managers to encourage continuous management. This can be done through appropriate training of facilitators and through greater direct communication and provision of information to stakeholder (see also recommendation 12).
23.5	Bushcare should continue to raise awareness of the importance of direct seeding and to foster the establishment of nurseries for producing seed of local provenance in every local government area needing revegetation to provide the seed necessary for the large scale revegetation necessary to address environmental problems.
23.6	The replacement of aged or dying paddock trees in ‘parkland cleared’ landscapes should be an additional focus for Bushcare. One way to do this would be through devolved grants.

23.7	<p>Bushcare should investigate the relative merits of developing alliances with business and other organisations with the aim of further leveraging Bushcare funds to enhance revegetation and conserve native vegetation.</p> <p>Greater efforts could also be put into forming partnerships with philanthropic organisations and corporations interested in conservation and public recognition for their funding efforts.</p>
23.8	<p>Natural resource management planning should be given greater emphasis and priority. At a state level, state governments and the Commonwealth should agree on priority regions for Bushcare funding and allocation of funding should take into account the agreed priority regions. A holistic approach to regional planning should be encouraged and rewarded, with funding allocations from Bushcare made in the context of regional priorities from an overall natural resource management perspective. Bushcare administrators should strive for a better balance of project funding between a ‘tops down’ state and regional planning approach and an approach which is driven by communities.</p>
23.9	<p>While recognising recent Bushcare initiatives in promoting incentives for bushland conservation, Bushcare, in partnership with other relevant organisations, should put more effort into researching and promoting incentive based schemes that will have long lasting effects on conservation of native vegetation. Practical research could focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the potential for market based incentive schemes such as credit trading relating to dryland salinity, carbon sequestration; • greater commercial utilisation of feral animals such as wild pigs, and commercial products of native bushland; and • socioeconomic barriers to greater conservation and the most appropriate ways to overcome them.
23.10	<p>As a means of allowing greater access to Bushcare funding for projects in high priority regions and as a way of reducing the high costs of administering small projects through the NHT on-stop-shop process, a greater proportion of Bushcare funds should be for devolved grants which are part of regional or catchment management plans or involve preparation of such plans as part of the project — provided adequate accountability safeguards are incorporated.</p>
23.11	<p>The Bushcare network in providing community support for capacity building should give priority to communities in high priority IBRA regions that are less well organised and have lower capacities to develop good projects. There should be no relaxation on the standard of projects which receive funding.</p>

23.12	Bushcare should expedite development of its web site and use it more strategically to gauge the level of understanding of vegetation management issues as well as a source of valuable information on regional technical issues. The web site should also be used to more widely disseminate the results of research findings as they come to hand.
<u>23.13</u>	Bushcare should aim for and be seen to be presenting a more balanced approach to major environmental issues, with somewhat less emphasis on biodiversity issues and more emphasis on addressing other key environmental issues such as dryland salinity and sustainable production issues.
23.14	The general approach should be that all Bushcare projects are potentially good demonstration projects. Much greater use of interpretive signage should be made and funded as part of the project.
23.15	Environment Australia, in conjunction with other NHT program administrators, the states and territories, should put more effort into improving the efficiency of monitoring and evaluation and streamlining the data collection and recording processes. The quality of national performance indicators needs to be greatly improved. This may mean collecting less information, but ensuring greater accuracy in what is collected and what performance indicators are finally chosen.
23.16	<p>Bushcare funding should be re-targeted by scaling back funding of small one stop shop projects and enhancing allocation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sustainable production; • regional and catchment management planning; • devolved grants; • targeted research and development; • facilitation and communication; and • monitoring and evaluation.

24. Cape York Plan

No	Recommendations
24.1	An effective communication strategy for the whole of Cape York NHT Program (CYNHTP) should be finalised and implemented as soon as possible. This should be coordinated, where appropriate, with CYP2010 communication activities.
24.2	The highest priority should be given to resolving property right issues through the property management planning process in concert with the Tenure Resolution Group.
24.3	Structural reform of institutions responsible for governance and administration of the CYPNHTP as suggested in this report should be executed as soon as possible.
24.4	Small community projects should be part of comprehensive regional or sub-regional strategic plans where possible and should mostly be funded as devolved grants.
24.5	Delays in funding should be avoided and the application process streamlined. Applications for small amounts could be approved at a local level or through devolved grants provided adequate but simplified accountability measures are put in place.
<u>24.6</u>	Consideration should be given now to issues arising as a result of possible cessation of NHT funding after June 2002 and to transition arrangements.

25. Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement

No	Recommendations
25.1	The use of any statutory power for land acquisition or restriction of use in the context of the program must be appropriately restricted and its role well communicated to stakeholders.
25.2	The Executive of DPIWE (Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment) and the Advisory Committee should jointly review their governance responsibilities for the program and put in place efficient review procedures and reporting mechanisms for performance and financial management including a budget for administration costs.
25.3	Liaison with other NHT programs, other government funded programs and private initiatives should be improved through regular communications.
25.4	The communication of the program must be improved if it is to meet reserve targets. The Communication Strategy should be completed reflecting critical success factors and addressing how to bring the necessary number and area of potential reserves to the attention of the Program Unit.
25.5	Greater emphasis needs to be placed on proactively targeting reserves based on the identified priorities rather than reliance on trigger mechanisms.
25.6	Criteria should be developed for the use of management agreements without covenant.
25.7	Key operational guidance documents, processes and reporting must be improved in order that operations are better managed and more focussed on performance against targeted outcomes.
25.8	Arrangements for a revolving land fund should be put in place to improve the profile and available funds of the program.
25.9	A business risk analysis is required to focus the attention and efforts of the Program Unit, the Department and Minister and the Advisory Committee on those prerequisites for a successful program.
25.10	The focus on reserve boundaries versus property boundaries must be recognised, managed and integrated into processes.
25.11	On the basis of further consideration of the additional cost and the benefits to the program from increasing participation, the program should consider completing agreements to place covenants on the title of land now, potentially at a higher cost for some landowners and the program, rather than waiting for legislative change to facilitate lower landowner taxation impacts that is not guaranteed to occur.
25.12	The program should review the impact of GST and proposals in the Ralph Review on its activities.

25.13	Arrangements for monitoring, review and other ongoing activities after the four year life of the program should be reviewed, documented, agreed and budgeted.
25.14	The potential for and impact of the introduction of broadscale land clearing controls should be monitored closely by the program.

26. Riverworks Tasmania Program

No	Recommendations
26.1	The Riverworks program continues under its present management and administrative arrangements
26.2	Milestone reporting for projects should contain specific questions that will enable ongoing performance to be easily evaluated in future reviews.
26.3	The responsibility for and the mechanism for the broadcast of new technologies be clearly outlined for future Riverworks projects.
26.4	The environmental monitoring programs associated with future Riverworks projects undergo independent review, similar to the current engineering reviews.

27. Waste Management Awareness Program

No	Recommendations
27.1	That WMAP institutes procedures, which enable it to consult more widely with and receive input from groups representing industry and the non-government sector, as well as government.
<u>27.2</u>	That WMAP develop a program specific strategy document, which will involve input from all stakeholders, and then be published and distributed.
27.3	That WMAP develop practical and measurable key performance indicators for all projects, and undertake regular project reviews of performance. The KPIs should include timelines for delivery.
27.4	That WMAP develop a stakeholder database, possibly using Environet, the stakeholders identified as part of this review and its own sources, and regularly update it.
27.5	That WMAP develop an email list from the above data base, and send out regular one page bulletins about WMAP projects, and what WMAP is doing, as part of the marketing strategy to raise awareness.
27.6	That WMAP develop a marketing strategy for the program and include in the strategy the development of a pamphlet or similar on its achievements and programs. This pamphlet should be widely disseminated to stakeholders.
27.7	Consultation specific to industry, non-government organisations and government agencies should take the form of regular visits to each state and territory.
<u>27.9</u>	WMAP should request that ANZECC review the national 50% waste reduction target by 2000, to better reflect the waste management hierarchy: minimisation, followed by reuse and recycling.
<u>27.10</u>	WMAP should review its funding priorities for the remainder of the funding period. This should be incorporated into a Strategic Plan.
27.11	WMAP should reprioritise its objectives as outlined in this review namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective 1 should be objective 3 • Objective 2 should be objective 2 • Objective 3 should be objective 4 • Objective 4 should be objective 1
27.12	That WMAP focus more on developing markets for recycled products consistent with objective 2. This should be complemented with work on the setting of standards for these products.

27.13	Given that WMAP is not a grants program, that it is careful to ensure its funding is not used for ad hoc funding arrangements that give the appearance of grants.
27.14	That WMAP avoid duplication with State and Local Government Agencies, wherever possible.
27.15	That WMAP increase its influence and penetration to the more regional and remote areas of Australia, particularly Western Australia, South Australia and the Northern Territory.
27.16	That WMAP ensure greater accountability is evident with regards to funding decisions, and the process is open, transparent and consultative.
27.17	That WMAP undertake a performance review of all remaining projects for the next financial year.
27.18	That WMAP projects include an assessment of their impact on the ESD process, and environmental protection (see suggested KPIs in this document).
27.19	That WMAP administration undergo regular external reviews or audits from the NHT evaluation section.
27.20	That the delivery and management of WMAP projects be improved and adequately resourced within Environment Australia.

28. Air Pollution in Major Cities Program

No	Recommendations
28.1	The five key areas of the Air Pollution in Major Cities Program (APMCP) (transport, industry, residential, monitoring and coordination) be retained as an appropriate focus for national coordination of air quality management issues in Australia.
28.2	Increased focus be allocated to industry projects (ie. working in conjunction with industry groups to address relevant issues).
28.3	The important community awareness projects be continued but more attention be given to developing and evaluating measurable outcomes from such projects.
28.4	EA initiate a study to investigate the contribution that lawnmowers make to particulate matter emissions in urban airsheds (emission inventories show that particulate emissions from lawnmowers are a surprisingly large component of the inventory).
28.5	The important collaboration and cooperation role of the <i>Air Managers Forum</i> be retained but a number of improvements should be implemented to facilitate increased two-way communications with State governments.
<u>28.6</u>	Local councils be increasingly involved in both the consultation/coordination process and the actual implementation of relevant projects (particularly the community awareness projects where local councils can play an important role)
28.7	An update booklet on the progress and achievements of the APMCP be prepared and distributed before June 2000.
28.8	The already close collaboration with industry be retained as an important aspect of the APMCP.

28.9	The initially proposed Industry related projects be implemented as a priority and that increased emphasis be given to working with small and medium industrial and processing sectors to achieve tangible outcomes (joint industry projects should not necessarily be allocated a lower priority than the higher profile community awareness projects).
28.10	Every effort should be made to ensure that the potential commercialisation and export-of-technology benefits of relevant projects are exploited (this will result in a number of efficiency and best practice benefits).
28.11	Funding for the <i>AirWatch</i> project in 1999/2000 include allocations for State coordinators and this be linked to a sample evaluation process across a representative cross-section of schools.
28.12	The <i>National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM)</i> for diesel include a review to assess the validity of concerns that low sulphur diesel fuels will result in greater quantities of ultrafine particles being emitted and, if so, to determine the related health consequences.
28.13	The <i>Breathe The Benefits</i> project be more targeted in the next stage (ie. more research is required on the factors that impact on woodheater owners' actions, so that the project can target these issues in order to maximise the prospects for tangible outcomes).
28.14	The ambiguities in the <i>National Environment Protection Measure (NEPM) for Ambient Air Quality</i> be resolved through mechanisms to allow for great stakeholder input (the NEPM is difficult to interpret and it is therefore crucial to ensure that the stakeholders' objections/comments be considered objectively).

29 Coasts & Clean Seas

No	Recommendations
<u>29.1</u>	<p><i>Program delivery framework</i> Continue delivery of Coasts & Clean Seas (CCS) through the tripartite Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) as a means of continuing effective cooperation between the three spheres of government to achieve the conservation, sustainable use and repair of Australia's coastal and marine environment.</p>
29.2	<p><i>Continuous Improvement</i> For each CCS program, the Commonwealth in consultation with ICRG continues to identify further improvements in program management and delivery.</p>
29.3	<p><i>Risk Management Strategy to Streamline Administration</i> Commonwealth and State/Northern Territory managers develop a risk management strategy for project administration in order to streamline processes without reducing accountability.</p>
29.4	<p><i>Short Reporting format</i> As part of the risk management strategy for project administration. Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies develop a short reporting format for small projects (less than \$5,000 funding).</p>
29.5	<p><i>Critical Administrative Tasks</i> Commonwealth and State/Northern Territory managers identify the critical administrative tasks required over the next two years to ensure that intended project outcomes can be delivered; agree on what tasks will be covered by the available Commonwealth funding and by State/Northern Territory agencies; assess the need for further resources to ensure successful program delivery and implementation.</p>

29.6	<p><i>Consultation on Publicity</i> The Commonwealth ensure that lead State/Northern Territory agencies and Local Government Associations are advised and consulted in advance of all funding announcements and launches in their jurisdiction.</p>
29.7	<p><i>Project Validation</i> The Commonwealth, in consultation with State/Territory lead agencies, develop a policy approach to validation of projects nationally. The policy should identify who is primarily responsible for validation, collection of data and the resource requirements necessary to implement the policy.</p>
29.8	<p><i>Monitoring Program Performance</i></p> <p>The MOU participants cooperate in the implementation of the Performance Reporting Framework for the remainder of <i>CCS</i>.</p>
29.9	<p><i>National Data Base</i> The Commonwealth continue to develop the national database (Program Administrator) consistent with the Performance Reporting Framework: States/Northern Territory to provide existing Coastcare reports to the Commonwealth who will enter information contained in them into the database; the Commonwealth and States/Northern Territory to agree on roles, responsibilities and resourcing for future collation and data entry of <i>CCS</i> performance information.</p>
29.10	<p><i>Informing Clients</i> The Commonwealth and State/Territory agencies work together to: develop protocols to inform applicants of the progress of their application, including any delays; continue to monitor the assessment and approval process for each program in order to identify and act on potential blockages and delays.</p>

29.11	<p><i>State/Northern Territory Priorities</i></p> <p>The States/Northern Territory provide documented advice for proponents, SAPs and the Commonwealth on State/Northern Territory priorities in relation to <i>Coasts and Clean Seas</i> Programs.</p>
29.12	<p><i>Feedback to SAPs</i></p> <p>Commonwealth and States/Northern Territory agencies to work together to develop a process for providing timely advice to SAPs on the Minister’s decisions, including reasons for the success or failure of recommendations.</p>
29.13	<p><i>Conflict of Interest</i></p> <p>ICRG develop a model conflict of interest protocol to assist SAP, RAP and TAP members.</p>
29.14	<p><i>Links with One Stop Shop</i></p> <p>ICRG members consider the Commonwealth protocol for transferring projects between <i>Coasts and Clean Seas</i> and One Stop Shop processes as the basis for similar and complementary protocols for use at State/Northern Territory level.</p>
29.15	<p><i>Estuarine Gap</i></p> <p>Environment Australia to seek clarification of and direction on the eligibility criteria and scope for funding under <i>CCS</i> and the National Rivercare Program to ensure that worthwhile projects in estuaries are funded under appropriate programs (Recommendation 5.2).</p>
29.16	<p><i>ICRG - Involvement of Local Government</i></p> <p>Recognising the importance of the role of Local Government in <i>CCS</i>, ICRG to investigate the underlying reasons for Local Government’s limited participation in ICRG and identify strategies to address this. If funding is an issue, consideration should be given to the Commonwealth providing assistance through <i>CCS</i> program funds for 50% of the travel costs for State/Northern Territory LGA representatives to attend ICRG meetings.</p>

29.17

ICRG - Strategic Directions

ICRG, as part of its work plan, develop a strategic response to current and emerging issues for the remainder of CCS.