

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

8.48 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government and the state/territory governments extend the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality for a further 10 years, with matched funding at least commensurate (on a per year average basis) with the first stage NAP funding. It is recommended that negotiations over the future of the NAP be expedited to provide certainty to regional bodies and other stakeholders. It is recommended that any further consideration of the prioritisation of NAP funds include consultation with the states/territories and the wider community.

Recommendation 2

8.49 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government extend the Natural Heritage Trust for a further 10 years with funding at least commensurate (on a per year average basis) with existing funding levels.

Recommendation 3

8.51 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government in cooperation with the states and territories continues to give priority to longer-term funding cycles and measures to ensure the continuity of funding so that where existing staff are likely to be continuing in a role there is no break in wages and the organisation's intellectual capital is not lost.

Recommendation 4

8.56 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with the state/territory governments and local government peak bodies to ensure that all local governments are adequately educated in, and have access to, salinity management information relevant to their locality. This will include the development of mechanisms to help local governments build and share capacity, knowledge and experience.

Recommendation 5

8.57 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government work with the state/territory governments to encourage reform of local government legislation to place a requirement on all local municipalities to align planning decisions with natural resource management principles and priorities.

Recommendation 6

8.59 The Committee recommends that, where applicable, the Australian and relevant state/territory governments examine the issue of statutory powers for regional bodies to address the current level of confusion between local government and regional bodies.

Recommendation 7

8.63 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, seek greater assurance from the states/territories that land-clearing is being effectively regulated. It is recommended that extensions to the NAP funding be conditional on the states/territories meeting more rigorous accountability measures.

Recommendation 8

8.69 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, as a matter of urgency, work in cooperation with the states/territories to implement the Australian National Audit Office's recommendation to develop corporate governance templates and core training.

Recommendation 9

8.71 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government, in cooperation with the states and territories, strengthen the accreditation process for regional bodies. The improved process will ensure that funding is conditional on rigorous investment planning, where decisions are:

Recommendation 10

8.82 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish an independent body to coordinate salinity research. This body will:

- **Maintain a focus on dryland, irrigation and urban salinity**
- **Identify and prioritise gaps in research across all research scales**
- **Leverage research from existing providers where priority gaps are identified**
- **Provide a 'one-stop-shop' for salinity research and information**
- **Develop and maintain a website that provides a gateway to all relevant research, policy and practice**
- **Ensure that research is able to be connected up and used at different scales**

Recommendation 11

8.83 The Committee recommends that the newly established coordinating body undertake, as one of its first pieces of work, a comprehensive audit of all salinity research and development activities in which the Australian Government invests. This will include:

- **National programs**
- **Agencies within government departments**
- **Cooperative Research Centres**
- **Research and Development Corporations**
- **National science agencies**
- **Universities**

- **Independent research centres**
- **Industry initiatives**
- **R&D needs for the development of new large-scale sustainable industries**

Recommendation 12

8.85 The Committee recommends that discrete funding be allocated in the new (post-2008) NAP funding for regional bodies to partner in regional scale research to deliver R&D outcomes that are more relevant to their regional priorities and needs. It is recommended that all research proposals be assessed by the newly created coordination body to avoid duplication of research efforts.

Recommendation 13

8.87 The Committee recommends, as a matter of urgency, that specific funds be allocated by the Australian Government for the promotion and distribution of the NDSP products – in particular, to regional bodies across Australia. It is further recommended that the newly established coordination body (see recommendation 10) take on the role of updating these products.

Recommendation 14

8.94 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a working group to identify extension service issues and options for addressing these. Particular attention should be paid to:

- **The relationship between state, regional and private extension services**
- **The employment conditions, professional development and career pathways of regional extension staff**
- **Achieving nationally consistent and relevant training of extension staff, including the development of accredited courses for private extension staff that provide knowledge and skills in NRM and increase their awareness of, and engagement with, relevant regional plans**
- **Ensuring that extension services meet the needs of regional groups**

Recommendation 15

8.99 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government review existing policy mechanisms (tax incentives, MBIs etc) in order to provide a policy environment that encourages and supports the development of new, large-scale sustainable industries that meet NRM priorities.

Recommendation 16

8.102 The Committee recommends that updated assessments of salinity risks be undertaken across the states/territories, followed by detailed mapping of high risk areas with particular attention paid to urban environments. It is recommended that priority areas under the NAP be re-assessed in light of the updated assessments.

Recommendation 17

8.103 The Committee recommends that mapping is conducted in areas in which salinity is known to be a potential hazard before further urban development is approved in those areas.

Recommendation 18

8.108 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government give greater emphasis to urban salinity at a national level by:

- building links between the administering departments and relevant agencies such as the Department of Transport and Regional Services and the Australian Transport Council
- supporting research into the development of technologies for managing urban salinity
- allocating funding to urban salinity in the next salinity program

Recommendation 19

8.109 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government in cooperation with the state/territory governments use the accreditation process to ensure that urban salinity is adequately accommodated in regional investment strategies.

Recommendation 20

8.110 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a pool of special grants to be made available for local governments to address urban salinity issues. Access to grants will be contingent on a demonstrated willingness to align planning policies and decisions with sustainable natural resource management principles.

Recommendation 21

8.111 The Committee recommends that a suitable body such as the Productivity Commission or the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) undertakes a study into the future impacts and costs of salinity on infrastructure in urban and rural environments, and develop a long-term strategy that includes consideration of federal, state and local government funding levels.

Recommendation 22

8.114 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government in cooperation with the states and territories keep a watching brief on the development of the Salinity Investment Framework 3 (SIF3), with a view to potentially implementing it (or a modified version of it) across the country. It is recommended that the framework be applied within the context of the new (post-2008) program(s).

Recommendation 23

8.117 The Committee recommends that the Australian Government develops a national policy package to leverage large-scale private sector investment in new, sustainable and profitable solutions.

