



Dr Robyn Clough
Senate Environment, Communications, Information Technology and the Arts Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

COMMENTS FOLLOWING QUESTIONS OF THE PARLIAMENTARY PANEL

Having now read the Salinity CRC submission (#18), we wish to provide further comment. We note that the CRC are fully supportive of the Regional Delivery Model and that they continue to produce information to assist investment and delivery for regional groups.

Two conclusions from post-war agriculture and its relationships with science and agency are that good and up-to-date science is not the main factor in improved natural resource management (NRM). Many of the components to improved NRM are already well-known but not undertaken by land managers. Also economic drivers for efficiency and increased production have not been responsive to arguments about effectiveness and long-term goals. Both these observations lead to arguments in support of the regional delivery model (RDM). Acceptability to users is a necessary component for take-up of a novel idea or expansion of a useful practice.

At an entirely different level of detail, we note that public comments we received on our strategy did not include comments regarding the level of science that our strategy proposed be applied.

Regional groups are balancing two aspects related to science: we need to weigh the technical advice as to what will make a difference to the natural resource against what will be productively useful; and we need to recognize when there is a need for a scientific answer rather than a desire to collect data for its own sake.

Not every improvement in NRM will be practically measurable. It is often more motivational to see the change that has occurred, than to have measured a number of outcomes that are then amalgamated into meaningless composite scores. Target setting is an important issue and regional groups look to state and Australian agencies for leadership on this issue, but this is insufficient at present.

We note the submitters interest in market based instruments (MBIs). We consider these as being more available in higher rainfall areas, and therefore less likely to need publicly funded support. Should governments decide it is not feasible to fund dryland industry development, we would be pleased to receive their advice on this. We recommend that some form of structural adjustment program be considered should this option be proceeded with.





We also note that the submission calls for greater control of regional groups through the accreditation process. It is easy to look at others, particularly where there is no developed working relationship, and comment adversely on their operations. The accreditation process focused on regional delivery of NRM. The main players in regional delivery are community, agency, and regions (which are the formal embodiment of the first two). The main aim is delivery, to make improvements to the natural resource. A lot of the science is known. What needs work is the delivery component. RDM rightly focuses on this aspect.

The CRC submission is also critical of 'capacity building' approaches. However, the level of funding does not provide for a direct intervention process and relies heavily on the volunteer process and assisting land managers to engage in cultural change. This process will not occur unless investment is made in 'capacity building'. Further, this often drives the science into the paddock.

Also, the question was asked of the panel regarding salinity funds being used for Biodiversity outcomes. A review of our investment program for the 05/06 year indicates that these outcomes are being funded via NHT investments.

Yours faithfully



Alan Bradley
NACC CEO

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