

# Chapter One

## Introduction

### Conduct of the inquiry

1.1 On 26 June 2008, the Senate referred the following matters to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport for inquiry and report by 27 November 2008:

- (i) the lessons learned from the successes and failures of three decades of Commonwealth investment in resource management including Landcare, the National Heritage Trust, the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality, and other national programs;
- (ii) how we can best build on the knowledge and experience gained from these programs to capitalise on existing networks and projects, and maintain commitment and momentum among landholders;
- (iii) the overall costs and benefits of a regional approach to planning and management of Australia's catchments, coasts and other natural resources;
- (iv) the need for a long-term strategic approach to natural resource management (NRM) at the national level;
- (v) the capacity of regional NRM groups, catchment management organisations and other national conservation networks to engage land managers, resource users and the wider community to deliver on-the-ground NRM outcomes as a result of the recent changes to funding arrangements under the new Caring for our Country program; and
- (vi) the extent to which the Caring for our Country program represents a comprehensive approach to meeting Australia's future NRM needs.

1.2 The Committee advertised the inquiry in *The Australian* on 2 July 2008. The Committee also wrote directly to the relevant government agencies and departments, a number of natural resource management groups, catchment management groups, industry organisations, peak bodies, and a number of interested individuals, inviting written submissions.

1.3 On 27 November 2008, the Senate agreed to extend the time for presentation of the report until 19 March 2009. Further extensions were subsequently agreed to by the Senate, with the final reporting date being 4 February 2010.

