



## **INQUIRY INTO NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

### **SUBMISSION**

**To**

**Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport**

**Prepared by:-**

**Organisation:                   The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc)**

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## Background

The Western Australian Farmers Federation (Inc) (WAFarmers) is WA's largest and most influential rural lobby and service organisation.

WAFarmers represents approximately 3,500 Western Australian farmers from a range of primary industries including grain growers, meat and wool producers, horticulturalists, dairy farmers, commercial egg producers and beekeepers.

It is estimated that collectively our members are major contributors to the \$5.9 billion gross value of production (2005/06 – ABS, WA Agri-Food Industry Outlook – December 2007) that agriculture in its various forms contributes to Western Australia's economy.

Additionally, through differing forms of land tenure, our members own, control and capably manage many millions of hectares of the State's land mass and as such are responsible for maintaining the productive capacity and environmental well being of that land.

## Introduction

WAFarmers welcomes the opportunity to provide comment to the Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport *Inquiry into Natural Resource Management*, however, strongly objects to the limited time given to provide a submission.

Due to time constraints, WAFarmers submission will be in dot point form.

***WAFarmers notes that there is no indication that the Standing Committee is proposing to hold public hearings as a component of this Inquiry. Given the limited timeline to prepare a submission, WAFarmers would appreciate the opportunity of appearing before the committee to expand on this submission in due course.***

## Terms of reference

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.

- Community acceptance of and participation in the programs has generally been very good
- Gaps in funding during bilateral negotiations has seen a drop off in community volunteerism
- A propensity to fund numerous small projects as opposed to several large scale projects has resulted in on ground outcomes being inconclusive
- The more recent establishment of Regional NRM groups has to a large extent bedded down claims that NHT/NAP funding was being manipulated within government agencies



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 land-holders

- Continuity of funding is fundamental to community engagement
- Recognition that volunteerism is a declining commodity in farming communities due to depopulation of rural areas over recent years

The overall costs and benefits of a regional approach to planning and management of Australia's catchments, coasts and other natural resources

- WAFarmers is not able to comment on the costs of a regional approach
- WAFarmers strongly supports the regional delivery of NRM activities

The need for a long-term strategic approach to natural resource management (NRM) at the national level

- As with all agricultural policy a long term strategic approach to NRM is essential

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

- Their capacity is only limited by their preparedness to engage. History has shown that regional based groups are more successful than city based groups.
- Historically WAFarmers has partnered with WWF in assisting with project proposals
- WAFarmers does not have adequate information on the new Caring for our Country program to comment further

The extent to which the Caring for our Country program represents a comprehensive approach to meeting Australia's future NRM needs

- WAFarmers is confident that the existing regional NRM model will be able to deliver the new program
- WAFarmers does not have adequate information on the new Caring for our Country program to comment further

## **Summary**

Whilst not directly relevant to this Inquiry, the Committee need to be aware of the broader challenges facing agricultural industries at the current time and the focus of WAFarmers lobbying activities in this regard whereby we have posed a simple question to both State and Federal governments to which we await responses.



“Does Australia want viable family farm driven agricultural industries and healthy rural communities?”

WAFarmers trusts that the response will be in the affirmative and if so looks forward to improved long term agricultural policies that drive agriculture forward rather than short term policies that are tinkered with after every election. The introduction of National Competition Policy and associated dry economic theory emanating from governments and their bureaucracies has torn agricultural industries apart over the past two decades.

With NCP having run its race, it is now time for governments to repair the damage it has caused to agriculture.

..... **END** .....