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*Waterways for Life*

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Catchment



CORANGAMITE CMA



NORTH CENTRAL  
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Catchment Management  
Authority Chairs' Group

c/o Mallee Catchment  
Management Authority  
PO Box 5017, Mildura 3502

Phone (03) 5051 4377  
Facsimile (03) 5051 4379

[info@malleecma.vic.gov.au](mailto:info@malleecma.vic.gov.au)

Our Ref: DO (CMA Chairs LBWP)  
Contact:  
Date: 22 June 2007

Ms Jo McCoy  
Project Director  
Land and Biodiversity White Paper Project Team  
Department of Sustainability and Environment  
PO Box 500  
East Melbourne 3002

Dear Ms McCoy,

**Response to the Draft Discussion Paper *Land and Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change White Paper – call for submission***

The Chairs of the Victoria's Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) have asked me to forward the following submission in relation to the discussion paper. In addition to these comments, individual CMAs and a number of State-wide CMA groups will also be contributing to the process.

**The key policy questions outlined in the terms of reference are very broad and arguably encompass anything that fits under the heading of "environment". The CMA Chairs suggest that the White Paper process should concentrate on the following key issues:**

- Compelling Vision for the Future.
  - The White Paper presents an excellent opportunity for the Victorian Government to demonstrate national leadership in the protection of land and biodiversity assets. To achieve this, the Government will need to develop a State strategy for natural resource management.
  - The White Paper process should develop a compelling vision and clearly articulate the priorities and targets for Victoria at a State scale to provide guidance to the development of the strategy. The complexities of sustaining land and biodiversity, which are central to the responsibilities of the CMAs, are not readily defined. Therefore it is important to acknowledge that the process of developing, agreeing and achieving state-wide 'ownership' of a vision for ecological sustainability is as important as the vision statement itself.
  - There are several potential starting points for developing such a vision, for example the Victorian Catchment Management Council in its 2002 report, *The Health of Our Catchments – a Victorian Report Card*, proposed a comprehensive vision for 2020. Or, the recent paper prepared for the Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability (*Strategy of Green Innovations* by Philip Sutton) which reviewed sustainability concepts as the basis for understanding environmental sustainability
  
- Climate Change
  - understanding the likely impacts of climate on the natural environment.
  - establishing a mechanism to guide offsets (or revenue from a carbon tax) to enable multiple benefits and minimise disbenefits.
  - development of a package of measures that could be incorporated into the current farm planning process to enable landholders to manage climate variability better.

- Clarifying the roles of different stakeholders in the delivery of the Government's climate change policy, particularly with respect to offsets.
- Catchment Yield  
Tree planting for carbon offsets and forestry plantations will need to be established as new customers in the water market to minimise impacts on catchment water yields.
- Soil Health
  - While recognising that soils are dispersed natural assets, it is appropriate for the White Paper to identify potential mechanisms to link land capability to local government planning.
  - Measuring soil health and maintaining soil carbon levels need to be important aspects of future programs.
- Pest Plants and Animals
  - Development of an approach that enables preventative measures to address new and emerging weeds.
  - Reaffirm the responsibilities for land managers as outlined in the current CaLP Act
- Native Vegetation and Remnant Protection  
The present arrangements for managing native vegetation are creating inconsistency across municipalities and consequently within CMA regions. A key concern is the inadequate level of resources available to Local Government to adequately deliver on their responsibilities.
- Duty of Care  
The White Paper process presents an opportunity to explore the relationship between a landholder's Duty of Care and the protection of community assets as identified and defined in a Regional Catchment Strategy.

**CMA Chairs believe there is a need for dedicated sources of revenue to implement the White Paper, for example a catchment or carbon levy:**

The White Paper cannot rely on the current mixture of volunteerism of landholders and initiative funding to truly deliver its programs. While the voluntary effort will remain important (in addition to the intrinsic importance of the voluntary effort leading to direct engagement of the community in NRM, CMAs identify a 3-to-1 ratio of landholder to government investment in NRM) the White Paper must scope all possible mechanisms to enable a dedicated stream of revenue and identify a course of action.

**The discussion paper asks are the current institutional arrangements working and could they be improved:**

The institutional arrangements could be improved. However:

- It will be important to understand the future responsibilities of CMAs to enable a full exploration of possibilities for improving the current institutional arrangements.
- Simply addressing existing constraints on CMAs is fixing problems of the past rather than creating what is needed for the future. The White Paper will need to set the future direction for NRM to deliver on the Government's vision for Land and Biodiversity and

within this context outline the role of CMAs and the regional model as well as the regional role of DSE.

Central to any consideration of the institutional arrangements is the Government's view of the role of the region in developing and implementing NRM priorities, programs and policy. Is it to develop, with the community, local solutions to local problems or is to deliver government programs and initiatives to the region? While CMAs accept that they must cover both aspects, there are times when the roles can conflict and guidance on how this is addressed is fundamental to determining future arrangements.

- The Australian Government recently undertook extensive reviews of the NRM regional delivery model and explored a range of topics, including:
  - An evaluation of the Natural Resource Management facilitator network - 2007
  - Evaluation of coastal, estuarine and marine outcomes of regional investment - 2006
  - Evaluation of salinity outcomes of regional investment - 2006
  - Evaluation of significant invasive species (weeds) outcomes of regional investment - 2005
  - Evaluation of the biodiversity outcomes of regional investment - 2006
  - Evaluation of the current governance arrangements to support regional investment - 2005
  - Evaluation of the effectiveness of bilateral agreements between the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments for the regional component of the extension of the Natural Heritage Trust - 2006
  - Evaluation of the National Investment Stream of the Natural Heritage Trust - 2006
  - Evaluation of the sustainable agriculture outcomes of regional investment - 2006
- The overall conclusion is best summarised by the findings of the Keogh Review (2006):

*The Reference Group believe that the regional delivery of NRM programmes is progressing well, and represents a very important and worthwhile investment for the Australian Government. Any changes to the programmes should be minimal and focussed on improving the existing arrangements, that is, an 'evolution rather than a revolution' approach.*

In addition to these studies we draw your attention to the work of Allan Curtis, of the Charles Sturt University (who has examined the CMA and Landcare relationship across the State and for individual CMAs) and Mike Lockwood from the University of Tasmania (and others who have been looking at regional Governance, including CMAs).

- The benefit to the State Government of the NRM "regional model" is in ensuring the integrated delivery (across technical disciplines and across State and Australian Government programs) of NRM programs and the engagement of regional communities. For this to be effective State Government agencies need to devolve appropriate responsibilities to CMAs. The current arrangements do not do this. CMAs have limited autonomy with regards to investment of funds in response to regional priorities.

**The CMA Chairs draw your attention to the potential for private sector investment in tree planting and other revegetation programs as offsets to carbon emissions and as contributions to biodiversity outcomes and ask how CMAs can contribute to this:**

Currently a number of CMAs are actively guiding private investments in offsets to achieve complementary objectives in the RCS in the absence of a State-wide framework. The White Paper should explore the development of such a framework.

**CMA Chairs recognise the essential role of Landcare in meeting NRM and community engagement outcomes. There is a need to strengthen links between Landcare and CMAs, but the Chairs note that that the rural socio-economic landscape is changing and programs must be informed by good data on the extent of this change and of the emergence of corporate investment in agriculture:**

The White Paper should recognise and strengthen the importance of community volunteers. While Landcare will continue to be a major partner in regional NRM, other groups also contribute and their efforts need to be supported. It is increasingly important to understand the changing structure of the agriculture sector and to explore options for engaging with the emerging corporate sector.

We also note the impact of changing demographics in some parts of Victoria – particularly declining and ageing regions – which constrain the capacity of those communities to implement NRM action.

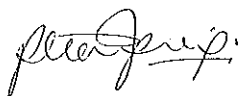
**The CMA Chairs propose the concepts of integration, adaptation, alignment and capacity building should be central to the White Paper:**

Victoria has demonstrated national leadership in Integrated Catchment Management. While there is much to be proud of in terms of our achievements, one key message emerges from the last 10 years: natural resource management is a dynamic concept. Environmental, economic and social factors, overlaid by changes in Government priorities and emergence of new Government initiatives, presents a challenging operating environment.

The key is building the capacity of the community and regions. NRM programs need to continually adapt to changing circumstances and new knowledge and this adaptation will require realignment of various policy instruments, including the application of local government planning provisions. The challenge for Victoria is the establishment of arrangements for the on-going management of our natural resource base.

While there are no easy or simple solutions to the challenges ahead, we commend government for proposing the *Land & Biodiversity at a time of Climate Change White Paper* as a timely and important initiative. We emphasise the importance of the process for engaging the community as well as the subject focus, both of which are central to the role of CMAs. We offer our strong support to the process and look forward to involvement in the further development of the White Paper.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Peter Greig  
Chair, Corangamite CMA  
on behalf of the CMA Chairs' Forum**