

Building a More Resilient NRM Community

A Position Paper proposing

1. Australian Government capacity building investment priorities for future NRM programmes and
2. Enhancements to the facilitator/coordinator network funded under the Natural Heritage Trust and National Landcare Programme.

This paper has been developed by the
Australian Government Natural Resource Management Team

Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to seek comments on proposed Australian Government priorities for investing in capacity building and on enhancements to the Australian Government facilitator/coordinator network structure and function for the next generation of Natural Resource Management (NRM) programmes.

Consideration of a national approach to capacity building is timely and important. National evaluations of NRM programmes have been completed, the *Framework for Future NRM Programmes* (November 2006) has been agreed by all jurisdictions and the Australian Government has announced continuation of its support of NRM programmes beyond June 2008.

The *Framework for Future NRM Programmes* identifies capacity building and institutional change as one of three programme objectives. It is also one of five themes that provide a broad focus for investment decisions under new programme arrangements agreed with the states and territories. The States and Territories have agreed a *National NRM Capacity Building Framework* (2002) that continues to provide broad guidance for partners in NRM capacity building.

Substantial progress has been made in building NRM capacity. The 56 NRM regions have evolved at different rates and in different ways as has the capacity of individuals, groups and organisations to achieve sustainable natural resource management on a whole-of-landscape scale. It is critical, however, that governments, regional bodies and industry continue to invest in individuals, groups and organisations to improve their capacity to achieve sustainable NRM. The proposals in this Paper, which are subject to Australian Government Ministerial consideration, are intended to provide a focus for Australian Government investment in capacity building activities post June 2008.

Three key areas have been identified for Australian Government investment under the next generation of NRM programmes drawing from various consultations and evaluations. The priorities are broad in nature and will be further developed to incorporate feedback received on this paper. The proposed priorities are:

- Business Improvement and Governance;
- Knowledge, Communication and Learning; and
- Participation and Partnerships across the NRM Community.

There are several mechanisms to pursue these priorities including funding, provision of information systems, statements of expectations and through facilitators. This paper has a particular focus on the facilitator/coordinator network.

The facilitator/coordinator network (The Network), funded under the Natural Heritage Trust (the Trust) and National Landcare Programme (NLP), is a key capacity building tool that has been established under the current programme arrangements and endorsed through various evaluations. The Network has been reviewed and the following enhancements are proposed:

- fostering a culture of leadership and self-reliance;

- integrated state teams of facilitators (Trust and NLP);
- a team leadership function within each state team;
- clearer role descriptions and active promotion of the role of the Network;
- Strategic State Network Plans to guide the work of facilitators;
- a formal national representative advisory group of facilitators; and
- a more strategic role for the Australian Government NRM Capacity Building team.

Your feedback on the proposed investment priorities and the enhancements to the Trust and NLP funded facilitator/coordinator networks is welcome. Please respond to Suzanne Yates by email Suzanne.yates@nrm.gov.au by 23 August 2007.

Background

Capacity Building is central to future NRM Programmes

In May 2007, the Australian Government announced continuation of its support of NRM beyond June 2008 with additional funding of nearly \$2 billion over 5 years for the successor programme to the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality: Phase Three of the Natural Heritage Trust. This delivers on the Australian Government's announcement made in October 2006 for a long-term commitment to NRM. This is complemented by a range of related initiatives, such as the National Landcare Programme - \$147.9 million from 2007-08 to 2010-11 (including \$35.8 million previously announced for 2007-08) and the new Environmental Stewardship Programme - \$50 million from 2007-08 to 2010-11.

Agreement by Australian, State and Territory governments to the *Framework for Future NRM Programmes* in November 2006 highlights community capacity building and institutional change as a key objective of NRM programmes. It has also been identified as one of five investment themes for future programme delivery:

- Biodiversity decline;
- Salinity and water quality;
- Coastal and peri-urban areas;
- Productive and sustainable landscapes; and
- Capacity building and institutional change.

A key assumption here is that developing the skills, knowledge and institutional frameworks that support on-ground action is essential to sustain natural resource assets and that achievement of the key biophysical themes will require investments in communities and the tools they need to contribute effectively.

What do we mean by Capacity Building and how does it relate to Sustainable NRM?

In 2002, the *Natural Resource Management Capacity Building Framework* was agreed by all governments ([National Natural Resource Management Capacity Building Framework](#)). This framework provides a common, consistent and complementary approach to building human and social capital and is a guide for all NRM partners in planning and implementing capacity building investments under the various NRM programmes. It recognises that investments in people are as critical as investments in on-ground works in order to achieve long-term environmental outcomes.

In essence, long-term sustainable NRM depends largely on building human and social capacity. Capacity in this context includes awareness, skills, knowledge, motivation, commitment and confidence. It focuses on enhancing genuine community engagement in all aspects of NRM from planning to on-ground actions. Therefore, in addition to the transfer of technology and technical capability, capacity building should foster social cohesion within communities, and build both human and social capital.

Ultimately, capacity building will also help land managers and communities to develop and refine practices so that good or best practice management becomes the norm.

What progress has been made?

Reviews of NRM undertaken between 2004 and 2007 have shown that substantial financial and human resources have gone into capacity building and that substantial progress is being made toward sustainable management of our natural resources through the regional delivery approach. It is estimated that the Australian Government has invested about 30% of its total funding on capacity building through its current NRM programmes. The reviews have indicated that investment in NRM has secured significant on-ground outcomes and change is beginning to take effect at a whole-of-landscape scale.

The partnership between the Australian Government and State and Territory governments has been instrumental in leading regional delivery of NRM. This partnership has resulted in the establishment of an infrastructure for 56 regional bodies, an integrated approach to planning and investment, agreed priorities and community stakeholder participation. Partnerships at other levels have also played a significant part in the delivery of NRM outcomes and a number of tools and capacity building mechanisms have assisted in the achievement of these outcomes, including a network of facilitators and coordinators. Evaluations have concluded that facilitators and coordinators:

- have made significant progress towards engaging stakeholders and have been instrumental in encouraging and supporting adaption and change;
- continue to build capacity of local communities and organisations, providing a vital link between landowners and regions and are often sources of information about NRM practice and processes; and
- are highly valued by the community and represent an important investment for engaging and assisting the community to deliver outcomes.

The shift to a regional NRM delivery approach has encountered many challenges. Establishing organisations/businesses, governance arrangements and processes, facilitating information flows between many diverse and widely dispersed participants, working with the community to progress the new model and engaging them in it in a meaningful and sustained way across the nation is no small task. As regional delivery has matured, NRM regions have evolved at different rates and in different ways as has the capacity of individuals, groups and organisations to achieve sustainable natural resource management on a whole-of-landscape scale.

While recognising the achievements made across all levels of NRM in establishing a regional model, there are significant opportunities for refining the approach for more effective delivery in the future and for greater clarification of Australian Government investment priorities in capacity building. In the context of capacity building, the evaluations have highlighted that there is a need for:

- improved programme linkages between Australian Government NRM, state, territory and local governments;

- institutional arrangements and mechanisms to support regions and communities towards operating to achieve greater self-reliance;
- design of structures for better coordination of regional governance and accountability processes recognising the variable capacity of regional groups;
- knowledge systems that include mechanisms to maintain research and development (R&D) networks to ensure input to research projects and access to research findings that can inform capacity building policy and practice and development of better processes for knowledge and solution brokering;
- demonstrating links between capacity building and NRM outcomes through monitoring and evaluation framework/indicators for capacity building;
- a more coordinated and strategic facilitator/coordinator network with more clearly defined roles and responsibilities;
- guiding principles and priorities for the work of facilitators, regional bodies, state and national governments;
- further development of the roles of Indigenous Land Management Facilitators (ILMFs) and ascertaining appropriate funding levels, support mechanisms and integration into broader NRM indigenous programmes;
- reporting formats and procedures for facilitators and regional bodies; and
- any change should be based on the principle of ‘evolution rather than revolution’.

How will future progress be measured?

Australian, State and Territory governments, along with the NRM community are investing significant resources to address natural resource management issues across Australia. Effective monitoring, evaluation, reporting and programme improvement (MERI) arrangements are therefore required to measure progress toward the achievement of desired outcomes.

In this context, the Australian Government is implementing monitoring and evaluation strategies to assess the impact, appropriateness, effectiveness and efficiency of our investment. In addition, it will encourage and build capacity for the application of a ‘programme logic’ approach in building investment strategies, plans and programmes at all scales to improve programme design, evaluation and adaptive management activities.

In addition to this, work is currently being undertaken on the development of outcomes statements for the Network and linkages to MERI.

These issues discussed above provide the context for development of a capacity building strategy and enhancements to the facilitator and coordinator networks under future programme arrangements which are outlined in the following sections.

1. Proposed Australian Government Capacity Building Investment Priorities

NRM investment in capacity building under future NRM programmes will continue to be at the national, state and territory, regional and local delivery scales. Australian Government priorities proposed here are designed to be complementary to capacity building at other levels and consistent with developing national cohesion. They are intended to inform Australian Government investment decisions and negotiations with NRM partners. These investments would occur either directly through national funding or in partnership with NRM stakeholders through regional priority setting.

The 2002 *Natural Resource Management Capacity Building Framework* sets out four Strategic Activity Areas; ***awareness, information and knowledge, skills and training*** and ***facilitation and support***, by which the goal ‘*informed and improved decision-making, and the implementation of these decisions resulting in the sustainable management of natural resources*’ can be achieved. The Australian Government has further refined within these activity areas and identified three key priorities for Australian Government investment for the next generation of NRM programmes. The proposed priorities are based on findings from the range of NRM evaluations and other consultations undertaken to date. They are broad in nature and will be further developed based on feedback received on this paper. The proposed priorities are:

- Business Improvement and Governance;
- Knowledge, Communication and Learning; and
- Participation and Partnerships across the NRM Community.

These proposed investment priorities are informed by the principles identified under the Capacity Building Framework which suggests that effective NRM should:

- ensure that the key stakeholders and priority issues are targeted to meet the priority NRM outcomes of the region;
- encourage partnerships between stakeholders;
- value and build on existing capacity, local expertise and knowledge;
- be based on learning from each other through sharing resources, experience and expertise;
- be based on principles of trust, mutual reciprocity and norms of action;
- encompass ‘learning by doing’ and other appropriate learning styles;
- value and utilise indigenous expertise and knowledge;
- be accessible to the entire community, including people of non-English speaking backgrounds;
- be based on access to accurate, scientific and technical information; and
- contribute to building human and social capital.

Consistent with the evolving nature of the regional NRM approach, these principles are supplemented with the statement that effective NRM needs to be supported by robust business systems and sound decision-making.

Priority: Business Improvement and Governance

Activities undertaken within this priority include those that focus on business improvement, national and regional governance and that increase the capacity of NRM decision-makers to meet their responsibilities.

Evaluations of NRM delivery have drawn attention to the need to recognise the different rates at which regions are implementing regional NRM and the importance of adaptive management approaches and sound governance arrangements to support this. In this regard, the evaluations showed that governance arrangements vary considerably across jurisdictions.

Some regions, in particular, highlighted a need for information and guidance on a range of corporate governance matters such as better practice board processes and performance, strategic and business planning, ethical behaviour, HR and financial management policies and procedures, risk management, fraud control, project and contract management while others identified broader governance matters to improve the way the regional body undertook their business with the community and to make effective decisions in an uncertain business environment such as IT, decision making tools and knowledge management.

In this context, the Australian Government recognises that considerable work has been done by States, Territories and regions in improving business systems and governance. It is proposed that the Australian Government give priority to investment in capacity building activities that continues to support this work and that assists in raising the standard in other regions through the consideration of activities such as:

- supporting and implementing business improvement models and tools that help regions to implement ‘good practice’ governance
 - a business model should address corporate governance as well as broader governance or good business practices such as information management, reporting, adaptive management, communication, monitoring and evaluation and community engagement including culturally appropriate arrangements that lead to increased engagement of Indigenous people in NRM; and
- developing streamlined monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements that will provide the necessary accountability while allowing one set of information to be used for many purposes.

Priority: Knowledge, Communication and Learning

Activities undertaken within this priority include those that focus on knowledge systems that ensure that NRM decision making is informed by science that is accessible, applicable and translated into usable information and that knowledge and lessons learnt through active participation in NRM is shared across the NRM community.

This is an ongoing commitment that requires considerable focus and was given particular emphasis in the *Framework for Future NRM Programmes*. Landholders and other NRM decision-makers will need access to science that has been ‘value-added’

and that is applicable to specific circumstances. In this context, the Australian Government will invest in activities that:

- support improved data, information and knowledge flows between government, regions and community;
- promote the application, development and understanding of science and research outcomes, including indigenous ecological knowledge, in programme and project design and delivery;
- value and build on existing capacity involving local expertise and knowledge;
- generate and encourage innovative methods for information exchange and knowledge brokering;
- provide opportunities to recognise and celebrate achievements;
- support Industry–government partnerships as an important part of the research effort;
- support tools for natural resource condition monitoring; and
- improve and maintain the skills and knowledge of those involved in regional NRM delivery.

Suggested activities for consideration include:

- the development of programme logic which links immediate practice change and longer term outcomes;
- documentation of scientific assessment of management practices to demonstrate how these deliver desired outcomes – including plain English versions;
- encouraging the sharing of knowledge and experience across bioregional zones, across states and between regions in particular through the work undertaken under the Knowledge for Regional NRM Programme which aims to facilitate better linkages between regional NRM bodies and knowledge providers, and to assist regional NRM bodies to better manage their knowledge;
- facilitating cross-regional sharing of approaches and experiences within and across States on mechanisms and structures for NRM in particular through fora such as the Regional Chairs Forum, the National NRM Workshop and the QLD Regional Groups Collective;
- the development and delivery of a Leadership Programme for NRM regional bodies;
- encouraging regional bodies to ‘pair up’ to take advantage of co-learning opportunities; and
- further develop the Australian Government NRM website (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/>) including the development of a photo library, video material and case studies under the MOSAIC project.

Priority: Participation and Partnerships across the NRM Community

Activities undertaken within this priority include those that focus on a shared NRM vision and ownership at the regional level supported by NRM partnerships between governments, between governments and regions and within regions. These are partnerships that are underpinned with trust and confidence and with an increased focus on investing in partnerships with primary industry, Indigenous land managers, coastal and marine communities and local government.

Evaluations have confirmed the importance of community ownership of regional plans and involvement in investment activities. Evaluations have shown varying degrees of participation by stakeholders in NRM and that key land managers, primary industry, landcare and other volunteers, Indigenous land managers, coastal and marine communities and local government are yet to be fully engaged. In addition, there may be other stakeholders who are yet to be identified and engaged such as potential corporate investors.

Establishing and maintaining partnerships across the whole NRM community has been highlighted in the evaluations as a key element for achieving success through regional delivery. Partnerships include those between governments, between governments and regions, through community engagement processes, encouragement of local government in regional NRM planning and implementation and engagement of local industry as co-implementers and investors.

In this context, it is proposed that the Australian Government give priority to investment in capacity building activities that:

- bring together relevant players in NRM planning and delivery;
- further develop regional bodies' capacity to identify common themes and activities that would benefit from partnership approaches;
- engage community and industry groups through grant programmes such as the Envirofund, Community Water Grants and the National Landcare Programme; and
- further develop regional bodies' capacity to engage with and build partnerships with stakeholder and co-investors, including with Indigenous communities, state and local government, Industry, landholders, volunteers, NGOs, agribusiness and R&D organisations.

Suggested activities for consideration include:

- extending regional modelling work to develop shared understanding of issues;
- working with local government to identify priority investment areas for applying Business Management Plans;
- development of principles/models for effective group action;
- facilitating cross-regional partnerships for implementing NRM activities;
- increased focus on partnerships between regional bodies and primary industries; and
- development of engagement strategies for example for landcare support and Indigenous engagement.

2. NRM Facilitator and Coordinator Network

Background

For the purposes of this Paper, the NRM Facilitator and Coordinator network refers to the two networks of facilitators and coordinators that have been operating under the auspices of Australian Government NRM Programmes since 2003. These are the NRM Facilitator Network and the NLP Coordinators.

The National NRM Facilitator Network was established in 2003 to support the introduction and implementation of regional delivery of NRM and the delivery of national policies and programmes. The Network's role is to enhance direct on-ground support to enable the flow of information between regional communities, NRM bodies and government. The Network was established as a priority project under the Capacity Building Framework and is funded through the Natural Heritage Trust. The Network comprises 34 Australian Government NRM Facilitators; 65 Regional NRM Facilitators; 13 Indigenous Land Management Facilitators and eight Local Government NRM Facilitators.

The NLP Coordinator network was established in 2003 to directly deliver the National Landcare Programme objectives to promote sustainable profitable production and engage and support land managers, industry and the volunteer community (focusing on primary producers) in sustainable production and NRM activities. There are seven Landcare Coordinators operating at a State/Territory level and approximately 60 Community Landcare Coordinators operating at the regional level.

Through its NRM programmes, the Australian Government also funds other facilitator/coordinators operating at regional and local levels and these along with those funded by State, Territory and other NRM and related agencies form part of a larger national network. These roles are not specifically subject to the review proposed in this Paper.

Table1. Facilitators and Coordinators within the scope of this Paper – current roles.

Australian Government NRM Facilitators (34 NHT funded) – work at a state or territory level, and have a detailed understanding of NRM policy and programs. Their role is to help governments, regional bodies and regional facilitators understand key Australian Government NRM policies, and to act as a voice back to policy makers.

State Landcare Coordinators (7 NLP funded) – provide information and support to industry and resource users, including farming groups and community landcare groups, to assist them in becoming involved in sustainable agricultural and NRM activities.

Indigenous Land Management Facilitators (13 NHT funded) – provide a two way link between Indigenous land managers and other stakeholders involved in sustainable land management and conservation. They provide information to Indigenous communities about the support, funding and technical advice available to assist with managing their land, and provide feedback to government on indigenous land management issues.

Local Government NRM Facilitators (8 NHT funded) - Local government facilitators engage local governments in regional NRM planning and implementation. Their focus is on building relationships between local governments and regional bodies, working to help both groups deliver the NRM priorities for the region.

Community Landcare Coordinators (~60 NLP funded) – help ensure local-level community and Landcare group participation in NRM and sustainable agriculture practices.

Regional NRM Facilitators (up to 65 NHT funded) - operate at the regional level to assist the delivery of the NHT/NAP. They work with regional bodies to help them take advantage of investment opportunities, and to assist them plan, implement and monitor their natural resource management (NRM) plans. In addition, regional facilitators help stakeholders and the community to access government and community NRM initiatives and participate in activities that tackle NRM issues.

Enhancing the facilitator/coordinator network

The Australian Government is committed to investment in a network of facilitators and coordinators and supports the key role they play in engaging and supporting regional communities' participation in NRM planning and investment. Evaluations have consistently shown that facilitators and coordinators:

- have made significant progress towards engaging stakeholders and were instrumental in encouraging and supporting adaptation to change;
- have continued to build capacity of local communities and organisations, creating a key connection between the community and the regional NRM model; and
- are highly valued by the NRM community and represent an important investment for engaging and assisting the community to deliver outcomes.

Evaluations have also shown there are issues that need to be addressed. Broadly, these are associated with:

- leadership and coordination of the network both at a national and state/territory scale;
- better integration of programmes including the need to better integrate the NRM Facilitator Network with the Indigenous Land Management Facilitators (ILMFs) and the NLP Landcare Coordinators;
- confusion surrounding the roles and responsibilities of facilitators at various levels both within the network and amongst stakeholders;
- flow of information between the Australian Government and the facilitators;
- the provision of guidance, support and information to regional bodies on effective approaches towards engagement of stakeholders; and
- flexibility to adapt to continuously evolving issues and NRM arrangements.

To address the issues raised above the following enhancements are proposed:

- a) fostering a culture of leadership and self-reliance;
- b) integrated State Teams of Facilitators (Trust and NLP);
- c) a Team Leadership function within each State Team;
- d) clearer role descriptions and active promotion of the Network;
- e) Strategic State Network Plans to guide the work of facilitators;
- f) a formal national representative facilitator group; and
- g) a more strategic role for the Australian Government NRM Capacity Building team.

A culture of leadership and self-reliance

The Network, established in 2003, and the individuals that form it, have matured professionally and developed a valued role in the regional delivery of NRM. The Network is a collective face representing the leadership of the Australian Government in the establishment and development of a nationally cohesive NRM community.

Leadership within the Network is equally essential for the evolution of internal structures and processes, to promote effective partnerships and integration of their roles within the NRM community. This culture of leadership will build the potential of rural leaders in general to influence policy and effect practice change.

Promoting a culture of leadership and self-reliance for the Network, underpins the concept of a broader, resilient and self-sustaining NRM community capable of ongoing and adaptive land and sea management practices into the future. The capacity of regional bodies to attract an increasing number of non-government investment partners, with a long-term aim of being less reliant on government funding, is also an important component of this culture.

State/Territory based facilitator teams

At a State/Territory level it is proposed that the management of NRM themes and cross cutting issues identified in the *Framework for Future NRM Programmes 2006* will be delivered through an integrated team structure. Establishing State teams forms part of a structural evolution of the Network that will enable a more nationally cohesive framework to assist with planning, coordination and liaison. Greater coordination focus at the State/Territory level will also develop further self-reliance and a culture of leadership consistent with maturation of the regional delivery arrangements.

State Network Plans

Network plans would be the responsibility of a joint management team representative of the Trust, NLP programmes and the Australian Government NRM Capacity Building Team and would be developed in conjunction with a State/Territory network team leader and the network team. Plans would be guided by a programme logic framework (consistent across states and territories) and a revised network monitoring and evaluation framework. Investment partners would be involved in the development of the Network Plans for their jurisdiction.

The Network Plan will identify what State-wide and Regional Facilitators are expected to deliver on under each of the three key objectives identified in the *Framework for Future NRM Programmes 2006*. Consistent with the focus for future NRM programmes, the plans would have particular emphasis on and provide support to land managers and NRM decision-makers in liaising with facilitators to develop adaption responses to the major cross-cutting themes of climate change, enhanced Indigenous engagement, greater participation by local government and improved monitoring and evaluation systems. In addition, the plans will specify actions to address emerging NRM issues and identify how facilitator activity contributes to overall regional NRM arrangements.

The plans would reflect the need to achieve integrated landscape management and strategic landscape scale outcomes and link with other capacity building partners and activities to maximise impact. They would provide clarity of roles and responsibilities of the network specific to State/Territory needs and circumstances, a clear foundation for coordination with Australian Government management structures, a sound basis for monitoring and evaluation of the network and would maximise key features of success delivered through current NRM programmes.

Support structures and strategic links would be formed, through the plans, with the Regional NRM Facilitator role, the NLP Community Landcare Coordinator role and the national level positions supported by NRM programmes including the NLP National Landcare Facilitator and the NHT Waterwatch National Facilitator.

State Team Leader

It is proposed that leadership direction be built into the new State Team arrangements. This role would report directly to the Canberra-based Director of each State/Territory team within the Australian Government NRM Team and would broadly undertake the following:

- focus on implementation of Australian Government strategic priorities for capacity building;
- coordinate the development, monitoring and evaluation of a state/territory strategic plan in conjunction with the proposed joint management team and the network team;
- provide leadership to the Australian Government state-based team of facilitators and coordinators;
- provide strategic support to the Regional NRM Facilitators;
- work to achieve agreed outcomes under the Australian Government capacity building investment priorities proposed in this paper;
- represent the State/Territory network at a national level and facilitate state and territory coordination across states; and
- work with State/Territory colleagues to build strong partnership approaches to NRM delivery.

National representative facilitator group

The national representative facilitator group would provide an opportunity for two-way communication between Australian Government policy and management areas and the network. This would enable the network to identify and address issues and opportunities. It acts as a formal mechanism by which feedback could be provided to the Australian Government NRM team.

The group would operate under agreed terms of reference and operating procedures to promote a more streamlined and robust evolution of the network. It would proactively focus on systems for continuous business improvement for the Network including:

- a) developing and implementing processes for promoting the work of the Network and improving relationships with stakeholders;
- b) promoting communication and linkages with departmental policy areas and the Australian Government NRM team; and
- c) co-ordinating the evolution and improving state strategic planning processes.

A more strategic role for the Australian Government NRM Capacity Building team

As the NRM Facilitator Network develops more robust structures and self-reliance, the role of the Australian Government NRM Capacity Building Team will shift from a support function to promoting network development and coordination and to assume the policy 'lead' on capacity building. The team has been responsible for the establishment phase of the network and its operations. This has limited progress in the area of providing leadership for other NRM capacity building priorities and initiatives. It is envisaged that the proposed enhancements to the Facilitator Network will enable the team to return focus to this more strategic function for future NRM programmes.

Adopting a more integrated approach to NLP and the Trust

The reviews highlighted the need for a more coordinated approach to the delivery of sustainable production outcomes at the regional level and for better engagement of primary producers and producer groups in sustainable land management practices. To help redress this, it is proposed that the state based facilitator teams include both NHT NRM facilitators and NLP State Landcare Coordinators.

This Team approach will also enhance the continued success of the National Landcare Programme and its achievements in engaging landholders, landholders groups (such as production systems groups) and Landcare groups and in facilitating successful behavioural change techniques while operating in a 'regional priority' framework that enables a greater focus on sustainable production outcomes through closer synergies and partnerships with the NHT's regional delivery infrastructure.

Indigenous Land Management Facilitators

The ILMF network continues to face many challenges in facilitating Indigenous engagement and consultation to deliver NRM outcomes within the broader indigenous policy environment. Consistent feedback from within the Facilitator Network as well as from various evaluations supports closer integration of ILMFs with the National NRM Facilitator Network to improve Indigenous engagement across themes by all facilitators.

Integration of the ILMF functions in a State Team approach would support both targeted engagement of Indigenous communities and strategic integration of indigenous NRM outcomes in regional planning and investment. It would allow greater leveraging of processes and mechanisms to align the NRM regional approach with Australian Government programmes to achieve multiple outcomes for Indigenous communities. Even though some of these facilitators may not be physically co-located with the State Team their inclusion in state team planning and processes will be a significant step forward in engaging other facilitators to participate in improving Indigenous participation in NRM.

The complex policy environment that Indigenous communities encounter through Indigenous Coordination Centres presents challenges and opportunities for ILMFs in delivering better Indigenous engagement and NRM outcomes. Various solution brokering approaches for NRM are currently being trialled in various States/Territories and facilitator interaction with these processes will need to be considered in future NRM programmes and Network activities.

Local Government Facilitators

Integration of LGFs functions in this team approach would maximise the opportunities to better engage local government in regional NRM activities and build improved partnerships between councils and regional NRM bodies, and provide greater recognition of local government's role in achieving NRM outcomes.

Hosting arrangements

Hosting arrangements for some functions, which may include Indigenous Land Management Facilitators and Local Government Facilitators, would be decided on a case by case basis with consideration given to functions that benefit from being located in remote areas or being co-located with key stakeholders.

Regional facilitation

There are currently two groups of facilitators/coordinators funded by the Trust and NLP but who are employed directly by regional organisations although not always housed with them. The Trust funded Regional NRM Facilitator Network and the NLP funded Community Landcare Coordinator Network.

Evaluations have shown that these functions are achieving Australian Government outcomes to varying degrees. While both groups have made a significant contribution to the achievement of NHT and NLP objectives there remains some concerns regarding unclear objectives, achieving a balance between regional body and Australian Government expectations, under-utilisation of coordinators by the Australian Government, lack of strategic connection to other coordinators and facilitators lack of communication with Australian Government policy areas.

In light of this, the Australian Government is currently reviewing its arrangements for these regional based positions. Establishing strategic linkages to the proposed state team structure, and with each other, so that the functions are operating in the context of integrated NRM delivery will also be an important consideration.

Australia's environmental and productive natural resources are among its most precious assets and building resilient NRM communities is an integral component in ensuring these assets remain sustainable. The approach outlined in this paper has been developed with this in mind and our NRM partners are encouraged to work with us to develop complementary approaches to ensure these assets are available for future generations.