

6 September 1999

Richmond Catchment Management Committee
Department of Land & Water Conservation
PO Box 664
Alstonville NSW 2477

The Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**Re: Inquiry into Catchment Management by the House of Representatives Standing
Committee on Environment and Heritage**

In NSW, the Total Catchment Management (TCM) Act 1989 established Catchment Management Committees (CMC's) and a 'partnership' between the community and government across the state. The Richmond Catchment Management Committee (RCMC) was established in 1990 and has met regularly to discuss, guide and be active in the area of Natural Resource and Environmental Management (NREM) within the Richmond catchment.

The RCMC maintains that it is essential to ensure a holistic approach to NREM, and planning in NSW. The RCMC has developed its own planning document; *the Richmond Catchment Management Strategy*, to facilitate its proactive role in NREM.

Natural resources management plans and strategies generated from Local, Regional, State and Commonwealth agencies should refer to, and where appropriate, integrate the existing Catchment Management Committee (CMC) strategies across NSW. Currently, natural resources management plans and strategies do not integrate fully across TCM and natural resources management by the different government agencies.

The RCMC propose to facilitate and act upon better integration NREM through involvement at three levels, ie. at the Local government, Regional and State levels. RCMC encourage government agencies to involve the community, and through community representation develop an appreciation of a 'bottom up approach' contribution to the planning process.

The RCMC would encourage the House of Representatives Standing Committee to hold a hearing in the Richmond catchment to allow an opportunity for the committee, and other NREM stakeholders, to fully express their views on Catchment Management.

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CMC involvement in community and agency activities

CMC's are currently reassessing their role through a review process driven by Department of Land and Water Conservation. The RCMC identify the following strategic areas where they are proactive:

- CMC develop natural resources strategies, which should be appended to Local Environmental Plans (LEPs), and Development Control Plans (DCPs).
- CMC's assist local government in State of Environment (SOE) reporting, and DLWC in State of the Catchment Reports.
- CMC's aid local government in improving community consultation at the sub catchment and catchment level.
- CMC's engage community support by networking between community groups, eg. Bushcare, Landcare, Dunecare, Rivercare and Waterwatch groups, and other NREM committees such as Water Management Committees and Regional Vegetation Management Committees.
- CMC's assist and rank community group project applications for NHT funding.
- CMC's promote the development of community projects to address high priority NREM issues
- CMC's, through local community networks, will draw necessary information together in partnership with the Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC) to develop State of the Catchment Reports.

Subcatchment Plans

Planning on a subcatchment basis has great merit and ties into existing NREM planning, specifically the Water Management Committees (the Far North Coast Water Management committee addresses Richmond catchment issues). CMC's will support and develop the Subcatchment Planning approach by involving landowners, community groups ie. Landcare, progress associations, etc., local government and industry groups.

Subcatchment Planning will parallel a process proposed by the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP) in their discussion paper 'Plan Making in NSW ' where Local Area Management Plans (LAMPs) are encouraged.

Farm Property Plans (FPP) for individual landholdings should be encouraged, and form part of a Subcatchment Plan. In addition, FPP can be used to streamline the application process for a range of vegetation and land management activities. A Subcatchment Plan should be incorporated as an addendum to local government LEP's.

These mechanisms will enhance sustainable natural resources and landuse management, and support ESD principles. FPP's should be integrated with DLWC Property Agreements for the conservation and management of native vegetation in NSW

The levels of natural resource and environmental management planning

Local government

CMC's work in partnership with local government;

- to achieve better community consultation in developing DCP's & LEP's
- ensure local government incorporates and make reference to Catchment Management Strategies, when writing LEP's / DCP's and other relevant policies and plans
- include Farm Property Plans in local government plans and databases
- ensure local government is a major player in developing and registering Subcatchment Plans

Regional

The RCMC fully support the submission to your committee from the North Coast Catchment Consultative Committee (NCCCC) . In addition the document: *A Framework for Integrated Natural Resource and Environmental Management* produced by NCCCC serves as the regional catchment strategic plan. It provides a range of natural resources management options and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding priorities for the north coast region.

However the RCMC strongly disagrees with the numerical ranking of priority issues in the strategy, and urges the Commonwealth to drop this requirement which was imposed on the NCCCC

State

RCMC supports establishing a new peak NREM planning organisation in order to achieve a whole of government approach to planning. Integration of Natural Resources Management and Statutory Planning processes will be the focus of this new peak organisation. This new proposed peak body must be linked to the Premier's Department both at State and Regional levels.

Commonwealth

The RCMC support the NHT initiatives of the Commonwealth Government.

The RCMC and other CMC's have a very good understanding of local issues, any regional approach to catchment management should not jeopardise the wealth of knowledge and assistance the RCMC can provide at the catchment level.

Yours sincerely

JEFF SPASH
Chair - Richmond CMC