



2 July, 1999

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

The Secretary

### **LIVERPOOL PLAINS CATCHMENT - THE NEXT STEPS**

The Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee (LPLMC) originated out of community concerns regarding uncoordinated drainage on flood plains, and the threat of rising saline water tables. These issues remain, but comprehensive research results are providing informed solutions.

The original two-issue focus has been expanded to deal with a range of environmental, economic and social sustainability issues, such as soil erosion, soil structure decline, water quality and native vegetation decline.

With an area of approximately 12,000 square kms, the Liverpool Plains Catchment is one of the most agriculturally productive regional areas in Australia. In an average year, primary produce contributes approximately \$400 million to the national economy. Continued support for the Liverpool Plains Catchment community in the adoption of sustainable land management practices would be a good investment.

The LPLMC submits the following documents for your information, to be considered in relation to the inquiry into catchment management. Please find attached:

- ❖ The LPLMC's *Report to the Community* that details the committee's development, actions and achievements from 1996 to 1999,
- ❖ The *Cost Sharing* brochure

### **SUMMARY**

As the catchment's peak natural resources body, the LPLMC is at a defining stage. After eight years of leadership and support for natural resources research projects, community consultation and planning, the committee is on the brink of identifying a suite of Best

Management Options (BMOs) for resources management, focusing on profitable farming systems. By strengthening the catchment community-network and developing the BMOs to a usable (on-ground) form, the LPLMC aims to support and encourage the adoption of BMOs catchment wide. The LPLMC, as a community-based committee, has a broad range of community involvement and hence encourages ownership by the community of resource planning and implementation.

## **DISCUSSION**

The LPLMC was formed in February 1992 with a clear direction from the local community to integrate the issues and activities involved in research, development and extension of natural resource management in the Liverpool Plains Catchment. At its inception, LPLMC's primary goal was "to ensure that resource management of the Liverpool Plains Catchment is consistent with our economic, social and environmental needs". This primary goal has consolidated into a vision for the catchment community:

*"A Healthy Catchment for A Productive Future".*

The LPLMC is an independent community organisation involved in the integrated management of the natural resources in the Liverpool Plains Catchment from the Liverpool Ranges to Boggabri. The Liverpool Plains Catchment and its community has become one of the most proactive regions around Australia in its attempts to understand and deal with the productive, profitable and sustainable use of natural resources.

Armed with thorough and comprehensive research results, combined with local knowledge and experience, the LPLMC is currently developing the integrated catchment plan:

### ***Liverpool Plains Catchment Strategic Action Plan (LPCSAP)***

The plan is identifying *what needs to be done, where, when, why and by whom*, to effectively deal with catchment issues. Simultaneously, the committee is identifying and establishing *how* to make it happen through institutional and cost sharing arrangements. The identification of BMOs and their subsequent adoption by land managers of the Liverpool Plains catchment is at once both visionary and strategic, and fully endorsed by the Department of Land and Water Conservation, NSW Agriculture, local governments and the Murray Darling Basin Commission alike.

### **LPCSAP SCOPE OF WORK**

#### ***IDENTIFY BEST MANAGEMENT OPTIONS***

- Document landscape planning and farming system units
- Assess technical options for landuse, production and conservation
- Workshops of farmers and technologists to define BMOs
- Undertake preliminary feasibility and economic analysis
- Identify gaps and potential problems with technology
- Consider implementation and finance/marketing issues
- Report on effective technical options for best management options

*ANALYSE BMO & IMPLEMENTATION OPTIONS*

- Obtain feedback on BMO options and priorities from stakeholders
- Undertake socio-economic analysis of preferred options
- Develop simple interactive cost sharing model
- Workshops to select best mix of components, using this model
- Prepare with & without analysis of draft plan components
- Consider institutional options for plan implementation
- Develop investment, cost sharing, training, administrative, institutional and other arrangements for implementation
- Report on economic model and cost sharing framework
- Recommend priority actions and draft Catchment Action Plan

*DEVELOP ACTION PLAN*

- Consult stakeholders on draft sub-catchment plans and cost sharing
- Revise plan and implementation arrangements
- Reach consensus with LPLMC on integrated Action Plan
- Develop monitoring and evaluation framework
- Initiate negotiations with key implementation stakeholders
- Assist LPLMC obtain in-principle commitments to investment in plan
- Finalise Catchment Action Plan documentation

**Cost Sharing** (refer to the attached brochure)

In order to determine if and how the broader community can afford to pay for future on-ground works necessary for the conservation of our natural resources, LPLMC is co-ordinating a Land and Water Resources Research Development Corporation funded project titled "Cost Sharing". Partnered by the Murray Darling Basin Commission, the task is to find a solution to identify who should contribute to the costs of environmental conservation.

**THE NEXT STEPS**

To resource the implementation of the LPCSAP, the LPLMC has applied for Natural Heritage Trust funds for 1999-2001. The LPCSAP is our natural resources investment strategy that has been developed in partnership with the local community, industry and state & local governments. Coordinated at sub catchment level, the LPCSAP overcomes previous institutional failure to deliver coherent policy. The plan has identified creditable and auditable Best Management Options (BMO's) to be delivered as resource management outcomes through this project. The BMO's are statements of the best available management guidelines for on-ground actions.

Key initiatives for the LPLMC 1998-2008 are:

- Strengthening the Landcare/Rivercare structure in the catchment.

- In partnership with LPLMC, CB Alexander College to establish an education delivery in Gunnedah as an umbrella service, incorporating the delivery of on-ground actions from LPCSAP.
- In partnership with NSW State Forests, Greening Australia, Regional Plantation Committees and Shire Councils, the development and establishment of large-scale tree plantations.
- As part of New South Wales Water Reform, the implementation of water quality objectives for the Namoi River Management Committee in the Liverpool Plains Catchment.
- Support NSW Regional Vegetation Planning.
- Maintain partnerships with all levels of government, including strengthening links to the Murray Darling Basin Commission and the Commonwealth Government. LPLMC continues to work towards a stronger working relationship with local government, in particular through the development of Local Environment Plans with goals that complement those of LPLMC.

## **SUMMARY**

The LPLMC would never have formed if federal and state funds weren't allocated, and although farmers may have changed to more sustainable practices, the influence of the committee has made things happen more quickly. Although some people have had to leave their farm during tough times, committee support will ensure that those who do stay will operate with sufficient profits to function sustainably.

The LPLMC is keen to strengthen links with the Federal Government and believes that what we are doing is similar to the model of the Eyre Peninsula Regional Strategy which is resourced through the Rural Plan Strategy.

Of particular interest will be the response from; those local government's associated with the catchment boundary, and the NSW Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, as the committee continues to seek partnerships with these organisations in the implementation of the outcomes of the plan.

The LPLMC would welcome the opportunity of discussing opportunities and barriers to the catchment management process.

**DIANNE BENTLEY**  
**Chairman LPLMC**