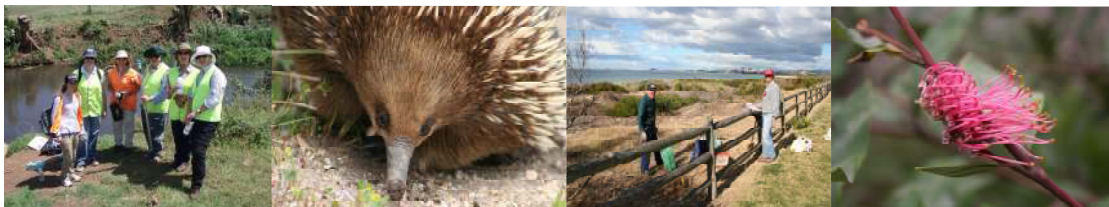




Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority

Engagement and Partnership Strategy

2008 – 2011



Revision History

Revision date	Nature of change	Approved

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1. Purpose

Natural resource management in the Southern Rivers region has been characterised by the development over time of vibrant partnerships with a range of groups. These include State and Local Governments, industry groups, Landcare associations, Aboriginal groups, and other community or special interest groups.

This strategy will outline the ways in which SRCMA will build on existing engagement and partnership processes to involve more people in natural resource management (NRM). Engagement for Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (SRCMA) goes further than people simply being informed and consulted. It includes people participating and being involved but strives for a more active attention, focus and commitment on individual and organisational relationships to make improvements in NRM possible.

The Strategy establishes an overarching framework for engagement processes and sets strategic priorities for action for the period 2008 – 2011. It will be responsive to the engagement and partnering imperatives in the SRCMA CAP and the SRCMA Strategic Plan. A quality focus will be pursued within the guiding framework of the Natural Resources Commission's (NRC's) *Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management*.

2. Directions

2.1 SRCMA's Catchment Action Plan

SRCMA has prepared a Catchment Action Plan (CAP) for the region in accordance with its obligations under the *Catchment Management Authorities Act 2003*. The CAP which has a ten year timeframe from 2006, sets out actions to manage the region's natural resources. It provides a focus for the efforts of the SRCMA and its many partners to better manage the natural resources of the Southern Rivers region.

The SRCMA CAP comprises five programs:

The **Community and Partnerships** program recognises the interdependence of all communities in the Southern Rivers region and aims to promote collaborative arrangements to improve catchment health.

Biodiversity is the cornerstone of ecosystem health. The CAP recognises the range of ecosystem services that underpin human activities and the role of ecosystem health in maintaining these services.

Soils and Land Capability focuses on the need to preserve the foundation of our existence and to protect areas of high productive capacity to ensure their on-going contribution to sustaining the Australian population.

The **Water** program aims to protect all water sources from contamination, over-extraction and interruption of natural processes. The CAP aims to maintain or improve riverine, wetland, groundwater and estuarine ecosystem health to protect biodiversity and support sustainable use of these resources.

The **Coast and Marine** program extends the scope of SRCMA's responsibility to include a whole of catchment perspective on impacts from the catchment on receiving waters and the coastal zone. Partnerships with industries and recreational users to address issues of concern will be a feature of this program.

The CAP states: "Solid partnerships, based on full and open engagement with stakeholder groups are fundamental to the aim of delivering improved natural resource outcomes over the life of the SRCMA CAP."

Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities in implementing actions to achieve the CAP targets will be identified in sub-regional plans for the six sub-regions within the Southern Rivers area.

2.2 SRCMA's Strategic Plan

SRCMA's Corporate Plan (2006) establishes three key result areas for the work of the organisation. Key Result Area 2 is focused on community involvement:

Ensuring that local communities and partners are involved in natural resource management

A number of strategies will be pursued in this area such that SRCMA will involve local

communities and partners in natural resource management by:

1. developing and brokering partnerships
2. advocating good NRM practices and outcomes
3. mediating strategic natural resource management issues
4. facilitating community, industry and government input into the development and implementation of natural resource management plans and programs
5. encouraging close interaction between community and SRCMA
6. investing in and supporting Aboriginal involvement in NRM

Service measures have been established to measure performance including the quality, scale and effectiveness of engagement processes.

2.3 NRC Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management

SRCMA will apply the Natural Resources Commission's (NRC's) *Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management* to engagement and partnering activities.

The standard comprises of seven key aspects of NRM, which are:

1. collection and use of knowledge
2. determination of scale
3. opportunities for collaboration
4. community engagement
5. risk management
6. monitoring and evaluation
7. information management

SRCMA applies planning and implementation guidelines and tools at the corporate, program and project level to ensure the application of these standards.

2.4 Australian Government Protocols and Frameworks

Protocol for community engagement in regional natural resource management planning and implementation

In preparing the CAP, SRCMA undertook an extensive period of community engagement to ensure that the plan was "community-endorsed". Effective involvement of all the key stakeholders is a requirement of both Australian and NSW governments to ensure CAPs are accurate and comprehensive. Likewise implementing the CAP in a coordinated and effective way will require ongoing engagement with Local Government, State agencies, industry and communities, Indigenous people, academic/scientific community and environmental groups.

National NRM Capacity Building Framework

The Australian Government has established a framework to guide capacity building activities in the delivery of their major NRM investment programs, the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan for Water Quality and Salinity. It encourages enhancing genuine community engagement in all aspects of NRM, from planning to on-ground actions.

SRCMA supports a range of capacity building activities across our CAP programs and sees that

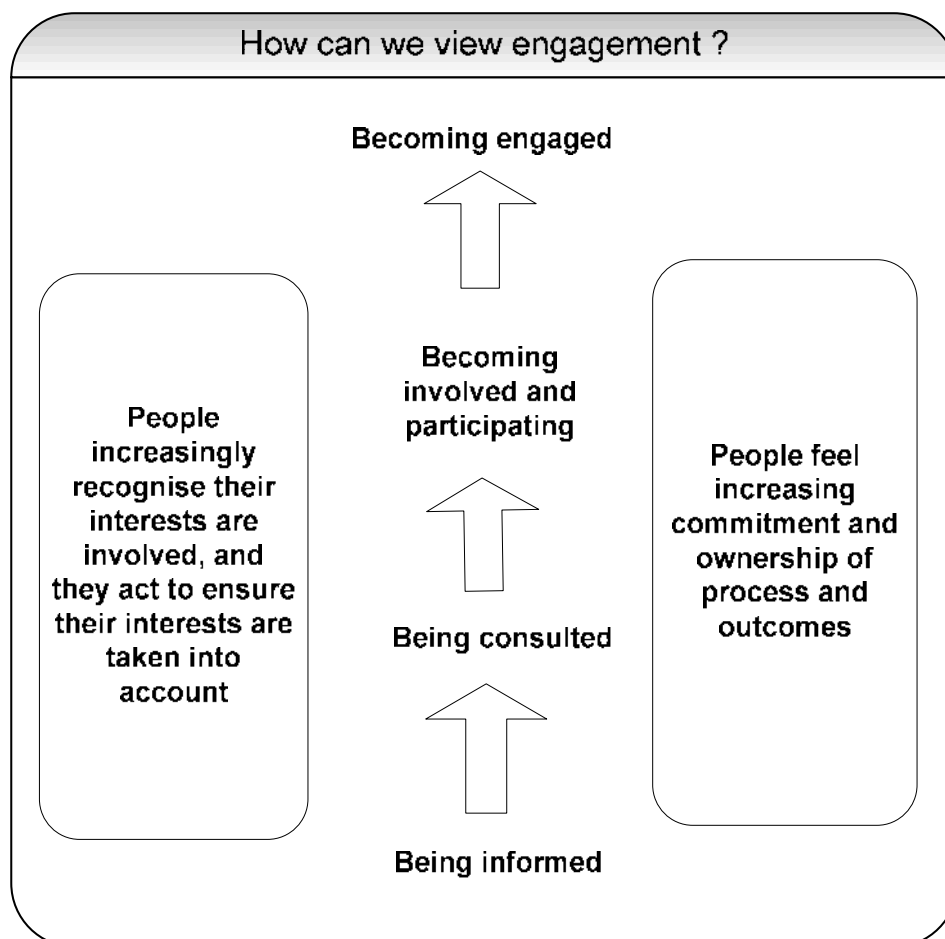
quality engagement processes should be designed and delivered to incorporate capacity building opportunities for both parties.

Our vision of “Healthy Landscapes – Local People Leading” applies both at the SRCMA Board level, demonstrating regional leadership in NRM as well as assisting local people, groups and communities to make better decisions for themselves. This will involve redesigning processes in which public, private and civil society agencies become partners – in effect, capacity building.

2.5 A community engagement model

Public involvement in government policies, programs and decision-making can be viewed along a continuum as depicted in the diagram below. At the lowest level “information” is simply provided to the public whilst at the highest level of “engagement”, the public feels that they share decision-making power.

SRCMA operates along this continuum using a wide range of tools and techniques, informing, consulting, involving and engaging a wide range of community, industry and government organisations and individuals.



(Diagram by V. Brown and H.J Aslin, 2004)

SRCMA seeks to be a learning organisation, building its own capacity to work in collaboration and partnership with others. This means that SRCMA's engagement preference is to adopt a co-learning approach, fostering collective action and the empowerment of local communities to address their natural resource priorities. This preference is reflected in the organisational values of SRCMA and in the principles it has adopted to guide engagement and partnership processes.

Fundamental to this approach is the formation of long term partnerships with natural resource management organisations and groups that have a stake in the region or could otherwise support the achievement of regional natural resource targets. Developing vibrant and functional partnerships will require a long term commitment to relationship building.

3. Foundations

3.1 SRCMA Values

The CMA's core organisational values provide a strong foundation for the way we intend to work with others in and beyond our region.

These core values are:

- ◆ Respecting Aboriginal culture and involvement in NRM
- ◆ Demonstrating credibility through reliability, honesty, transparency, accountability
- ◆ Recognising the connection between healthy communities and the environment
- ◆ Acting responsively to community needs
- ◆ Encouraging open and regular dialogue
- ◆ Promoting the sustainable use of natural resources
- ◆ Seeking real, lasting and meaningful relationships with the community and our partners
- ◆ Respecting and building on the work of our partners

3.2 Principles for engagement and partnering

SRCMA's values provide the context within which principles for engagement and partnering have been developed. SRCMA will apply these principles to our work with stakeholders and local communities. We have adopted Aslin and Brown's (2004) principles developed for the Murray Darling Basin Commission.

In doing this we recognise that practical constraints, the imposition of timeframes beyond our control and individual failure to respect these principles, will mean we do not live up to our own and other peoples expectations at all times.

OUR PRINCIPLES

COURAGE, LEADERSHIP and a MANDATE FOR CHANGE: We recognise and will act on a mandate for change, lead where appropriate and will involve ourselves in transformation not just transactions

AGREED VALUES: We will apply SRCMA values in all our internal and external engagement – 'walk the talk'

INCLUSIVE and EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION: We recognise that communication patterns need to take the form of a network or web – neither top-down nor bottom up, nor within closed circles, but to and from many sources within a system

COMMITMENT TO A SHARED VISION: Our commitment to a vision for a more sustainable Southern Rivers region will be made explicit in each engagement process – reality, as well as rhetoric

REPRESENTATIVENESS: We will give as many interests as possible a voice and all “voices” will be respected

HONESTY & RESPECT: interests respected and acknowledged— whole system approaches, not fragmentation and division

FLEXIBILITY and MUTUAL LEARNING: We will generate fresh ideas and solutions through the mutual exchange of ideas — dialogue as well as discussion and debate

LONG-TERM GOALS: We accept that engagement goals are both here-and-now and future-oriented – they have both ‘roots’ and ‘wings’

MUTUAL NEGOTIATION, COLLABORATION AND COOPERATION: Engagement processes will be based on partners’ shared responsibility and accountability – collaboration and cooperation, not competition and division

3.3 Current engagement and partnering practices

At present, engagement of partners and the wider community in NRM by SRCMA occurs at varied levels and through a variety of methods across the region. The box below captures a summary of the main engagement mechanisms that have been put in place by SRCMA.

Higher level

- Board members with geographic and interest portfolios
- SRCMA Chair and GM with Local Government Mayors and GMs
- Chair with Australian Government
- Chair and GM with State Government
- Service Level Agreements with State NRM Agencies
- Production of CAP, Investment Strategy and Annual Implementation Plan

Corporate level

- Decentralised team of skilled staff including community support officers, project officers and “partnership” focused staff
- Staff roles and culture established to support quality engagement processes
- Local management teams established in Eurobodalla, Bega and Snowy/Monaro sub regions
- Communication strategy, including targeted information sessions
- Consultation on draft NRM plans and strategies
- Partnership Agreement with Conservation Volunteers Australia
- MOUs with local councils

Program and project level

- Multi-stakeholder groups
- Program teams
- Consultation on project proposals
- Interest and Area-based Networks
- Interstate and Multi-CMA initiatives
- Participation at local and regional events (field days, conferences, shows)
- Community Partnership Fund in place to foster partnership formation and capacity building
- Reference or Advisory groups
- Project Steering Committees

Individual level

- SRCMA officers with high degree of personal contact with individual landholders & stakeholders

A systematic approach to capturing stakeholder information has also been initiated, with a stakeholder analysis undertaken by CAP program teams to ensure that the key stakeholders are identified. SRCMA program teams have also prepared "engagement plans" to document their approach to stakeholder engagement and will update these annually.

An internal review of the existing NRM structures within the region was initiated in 2006 - this review has informed the development and refinement of SRCMA's engagement and partnership strategy.

SRCMA is undertaking a major social monitoring project to provide baseline information on engagement processes, community support systems, opportunities to Care for Country and initiatives to build capacity for the adoption of good NRM practices. This project will yield a quantum of data from SRCMA staff, NRM stakeholders and rural landholders from across the region and will be used to refine the strategy. The project is due for completion in mid 2008.

3.4 Practice Change Project Learnings

SRCMA was one of four case study regions, in an Australian Government project that sought to track progress towards engaging regional stakeholders in NRM practice change. The methodology included interviews and concurrent or 'live' projects in each region. The 'live' projects examined the drivers and barriers to practice change in each region, and conducted a stakeholder analysis to learn more about how each region was engaging stakeholders.

The key learnings from our participation in this project around engagement were:

- Judging the appropriate level of engagement and who should be involved is critical and needs to be guided by purpose.
- The development of multiple-benefit projects that engage stakeholder self-interest is critical. The more NRM change is embedded with other priority community issues, the more likely (and easy to deliver) is the desired change.
- Opportunity to lever the relationships and knowledge of the partnering organisations in each region is critical. The degree of change the regional NRM bodies are looking to effect is extremely high and they have a relatively low resource base, in contrast to other regional organisations/business networks.
- Regional bodies need to learn to look for and engage the strategic network hubs or leaders in communities.
- All regions outlined the need to shift to group learning environments to provide face-to-face engagement cost-effectively. All regions have immediate learning needs in generating effective group participatory processes.
- All of these learnings have significant implications for where regional NRM groups place their resources. The maximum amount of long-term change may be engineered by investing in key strategic partnerships and resources that enable or broker a greater degree of practice change from the desired group of stakeholders.

SRCMA has sought to respond to most of these learnings since our participation in this project during 2005, with many responses reflected in this strategy document.

3.5 The 2007 Partnerships Conference

In August 2007 SRCMA staged a major regional conference that brought together 190 people to share partnership success stories and learnings and celebrate our collective achievements in NRM. This event served as a platform to “workshop” regional priorities around creating and sustaining vibrant NRM partnerships. The four areas of priority that were identified are:

- ◆ Integrating NRM into local environmental planning – a stronger focus on engaging with local councils to embed NRM outcomes into land use planning and building the NRM capacity of the local government sector was identified.
- ◆ Telling our stories – more opportunities to tell local and personalised stories of the “people and partnerships” that are achieving NRM change are needed.
- ◆ Engaging the “disengaged” – reaching out to those not yet involved (or less involved) by providing a variety of ways to participate.
- ◆ Keeping on learning - creating and supporting an NRM learning culture was seen as critical to achieving NRM improvements

Actions to address these priorities have been incorporated into this strategy, and will be included in SRCMA’s Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Strategy and it’s Communication Strategy (both forthcoming).

Pam Green (SRCMA Chair) after calling for feedback from the Conference floor, announced that a second regional conference and awards event would be run in 2009, with a one day NRM Partnerships Forum scheduled for mid 2008.

4. Strategies

4.1 Place-based planning and implementation

SRCMA recognises that within our region people relate most strongly to the landscape at a local or at least subregional level (say the Illawarra or Wollongong) reflecting perhaps a long personal history or more recent connection to a particular place and its environment. The former Catchment Management Committees were established on these smaller sub regional scales by the NSW government to mobilise “communities of common concern” around NRM issues. They operated throughout much of the 1990s and left a strong legacy for SRCMA to build on. They were also a place where government, community and stakeholder groups built relationships and trust through developing shared goals and plans.

In recognition of this foremost human connection to “places” SRCMA will now establish engagement structures at a sub-regional level that both fulfil the needs of the SCRMA in implementing the CAP and address the needs of our many partners in government, industry and the community.

Landscape and social diversity across the region means we will be flexible in establishing these structures, in terms of timing, form, roles and interactions. Additionally, this document does not attempt to outline all existing structures within a region, nor does it attempt to ‘pigeon-hole’ the role and aspirations of individual groups. These are important recognitions in this document.

The following provides a proposed model for “place-based community engagement” within the Southern Rivers region.

4.1.1 Sub-regional groups

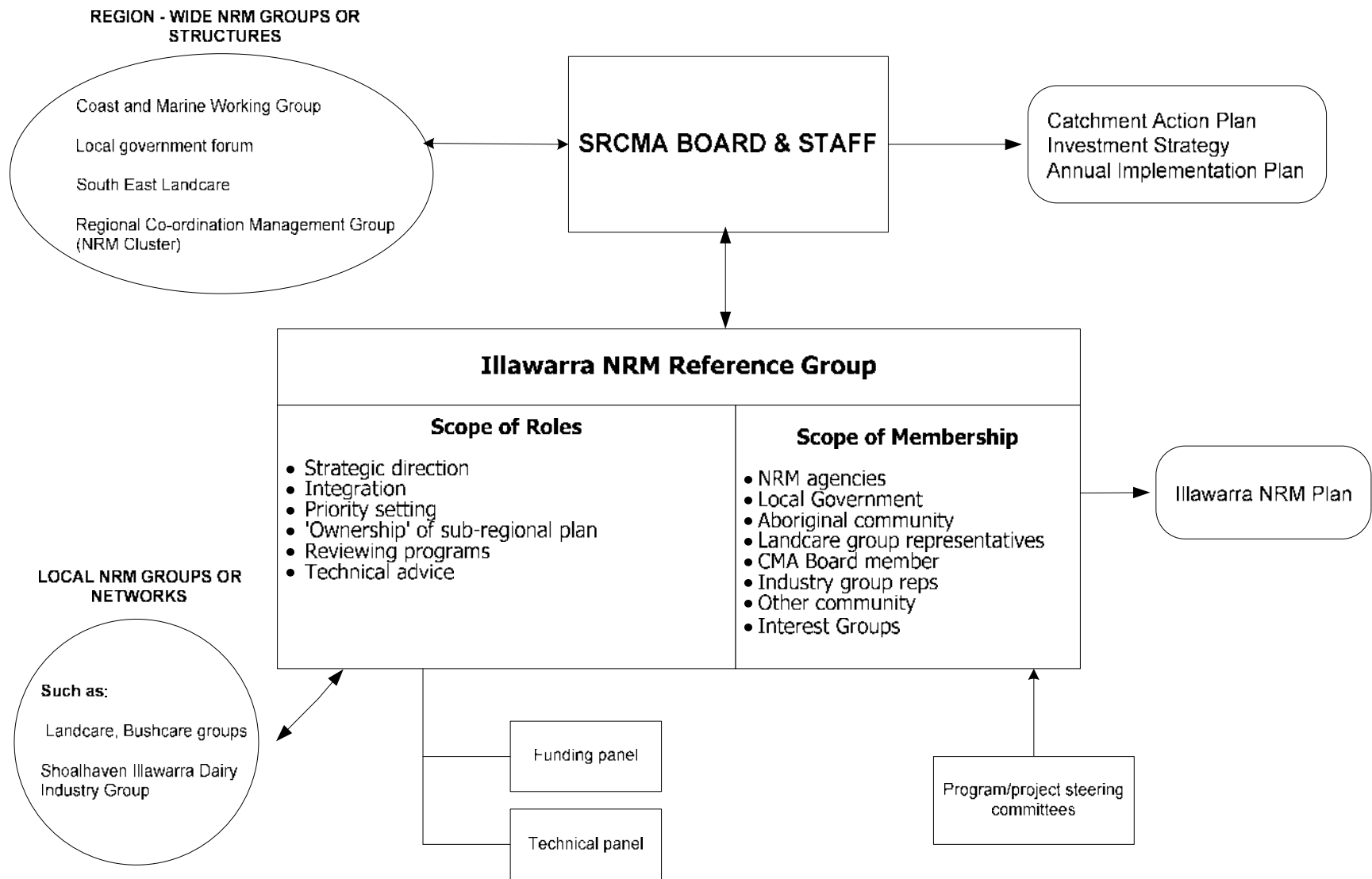
The proposed structure is based around the concept that “a sub-regional NRM group” will form a central plank in place-based planning and implementation of the Southern Rivers Catchment Action Plan.

There will be six groups across the region, one each representing the following areas:

- Monaro
- Bega
- Eurobodalla
- Shoalhaven
- Upper Shoalhaven
- Illawarra

The first three groups are essentially established, as the existing “Local Management Teams”. The latter three will be called “NRM Reference Groups” and are currently in the process of being established.

The groups will meet quarterly and consist of approximately 20 members. While the aim is for each group is to be made up of government / community in the ratio of approximately 50:50, it is recognised that this may be closer to 60:40 or 70:30. The term ‘Community’ represents everyone who is not State or Local Government. The diagram in Figure 1 describes how a structure might look for the Illawarra sub-region.



4.1.2 Terms of Reference

The role of each group will be to:

- Guide strategic direction for NRM in the sub-region
- Assist in priority setting for sub-regional investments
- Foster collaboration across government, industry and community sector
- Have 'ownership' of sub-regional NRM plans
- Reflect on and review NRM program and project delivery
- Provide technical advice where appropriate
- Enhance communication, co-learning and capacity building opportunities between government, industry and community sectors

The group is a higher level body which does not oversee program implementation. This detail will be addressed by a technical panel, program (or project) steering committees, Local NRM group or other mechanisms as appropriate. Overviews of program implementation including the results of any internal or external evaluations will be tabled at meetings to enable effective review of delivery. It may be appropriate for a more detailed overview of a particular project to be provided occasionally.

While the group is a major means of enabling SRCMA to engage its community and integrate with other agencies, it is recognised that engagement and empowerment would not be effective without facilitating healthy, pro-active local NRM Groups and networks. SRCMA has an established a team of Community Support Officers is in place at the sub-regional level to engage and support local groups and networks.

4.1.3 Appointment

Community appointments may be made to the group on a representative basis (ie. representative of a certain stakeholder group) or on a skills basis. Representation from the local Aboriginal community, District Landcare Associations, agricultural industry groups and other local NGOs with an environmental focus will be sought. An open call for community members may also be held in some sub-regions to provide a broader cross section of community skills and interests in NRM.

Government appointees will be made on the basis of there being a representative (not limited to one) from the following government organisations:

- Department of Environment and Climate Change
- Department of Primary Industries
- Department of Water and Energy
- Rural Lands Protection Board
- Local Councils
- SRCMA Board

In the case of some sub-regions other government organisations will be added to this core group for example the Sydney Catchment Authority in the Upper Shoalhaven and the Lake Illawarra Authority for the Illawarra sub-region.

Attendance at quarterly meetings would be on an as required basis, for example, a representative from the RLPB might only attend when the agenda is relevant to them.

Other members of the community, industry or government representatives may be invited as the need arises, for example, commercial fishing representatives, a Roads and Traffic Authority officer etc.

A range of guest speakers may be invited to attend meetings and field trips could also be undertaken to focus on specific catchment issues or view works undertaken.

4.1.4 Out-of-pocket expenses

Community members will be reimbursed for travel expenses to attend meetings and any other events in the conduct of group business.

4.1.5 Roles of sub panels

Funding Reference Panel

A funding reference panel may be convened to review and provide advice to the SRCMA Board in regard to particular incentive or other programs. This panel will be a small group drawn from the membership with relevant experience and expertise.

Technical Panel

A technical panel may meet at the conclusion of the group meetings or at other times, to discuss operational level issues for NRM programs and projects for the subregion. This panel will include SRCMA staff and staff/volunteers from other organisations involved in implementing any decisions made at the RG.

4.1.6 Relationship to Local NRM Groups

This model recognises that a range of local NRM groups and networks are operating within sub-regions, such as Landcare groups and sub-catchment based groups. It may also be appropriate for sub-catchment or locally based groups to attend RG meetings on an occasional basis.

The attendance of Community Support Officers at meetings would allow an easy flow of information on the work of these local groups and the ability to raise issues regarding local support needs.

4.1.7 Relationship to sub-regional plans

SRCMA's sub-regional NRM plans will be a focal point for the groups such that the plans will be owned, debated and reviewed by each group. Once a year, SRCMA will facilitate a one day session with each group on landscape priority setting. Documents like the Annual Implementation Plan would be made available to the group.

4.1.8 Support for the groups

Each group will be Chaired by a SRCMA Board member. A SRCMA staff member will provide executive and facilitation support to the group and Landscape Managers and/or Catchment Coordinators will attend meetings as representatives of SRCMA's Executive Management team. Other SRCMA staff will attend as appropriate to the needs of the group.

4.2 Strengthening existing partnerships

SRCMA has initiated partnerships with major stakeholders groups who have a clear NRM agenda. Our approach over the period 2008-2011 is to consolidate and extend the partnerships we

already have with local government, Aboriginal communities, Landcare Associations, State Agencies, and the dairy, oyster and grazing industries.

4.2.1 Landcare

There are 170 Landcare groups, seven District Landcare Associations (DLAs) and a Regional Landcare body active and engaged in protecting and repairing Southern Rivers landscapes. New Landcare groups are still forming, although at a much slower rate than the 1990s.

As the regional Landcare body South East Landcare was formed in 2000 and is managed by the 7 DLAs of the Southern Rivers region. South East Landcare hosts forums which brought together DLAs and other NRM interest groups and individuals (community and government) from across the region. SEL has been active in establishing a working relationship with the Catchment Management Authority to represent the aspirations of landcarers within the new regional delivery model for NRM. Annual forums have been held between SEL and the SRCMA Chair, GM and other senior SRCMA staff to examine opportunities for the SRCMA- Landcare partnership.

At the regional level SRCMA will continue to develop the higher level partnership with Landcare through six-monthly review and planning meetings with SEL members. This will explore opportunities to work together on regional scale NRM project development, addressing the capacity building needs of Landcare groups, recognition and promotion of Landcare volunteers (through regional awards and other means), improved communication flows between Landcare groups and other priorities as mutually identified.

At the subregional and local levels, DLAs are a key point of interaction between SRCMA and "Landcare", with a high degree of personal contact between CMA Board members/CMA Executive staff and the executive of each Association. Our seven associations are - Snowy River Interstate Landcare Council, Upper Snowy Landcare, Upper Shoalhaven Landcare Council, Shoalhaven Landcare, Landcare Illawarra, Eurobodalla Landcare and the Far South Coast Landcare Association.

SRCMA will continue to broker large-scale investment funding for the DLAs to address local Landcare priorities and support local capacity building initiatives. DLAs are key members of project steering committees for Landcare Community Support Officer positions and SRCMA will continue to support DLAs in holding an annual Landcare celebration, whether it be a local awards night, annual dinner, tour of sites or similar.

Landcarers will also be members of some Working Groups and project steering committees established by SRCMA. This provides an avenue for Landcarers to ensure local Landcare priorities are considered in project implementation. Landcare will also have two representatives on each of the RGs to be established.

4.2.2. Local Government

Local implementation plans (LIP) have been developed between SRCMA and 6 councils. These plans allow the alignment of the CAP with council policies, plans and programs. LIPs also identify priorities for investment with local government. Our priority is to continue to work with all Councils, developing and updating LIPs with those councils that wish to do so and looking for ways to better co-ordinate and focus our combined NRM investments toward meeting CAP targets.

Local Governments are active participants on Local Management Teams established in the south of the region, and are expected to have similar interest in the Reference Groups being established in the Illawarra and Shoalhaven areas.

A Local Government Forum has been established in partnership with the Southern Councils Group. This enables the 12 local councils in the region to meet annually to discuss NRM priorities and issue for local government. It is supported by the ALGA and the NSW Local Government and Shires Association through the Australian Government Local Government NRM Facilitator.

SRCMA will continue to support the Southern Councils Group in their agricultural extension program (Small Farms Network) that provides NRM and sustainable agricultural advice to small area landholders in the Illawarra, Shoalhaven, Eurobodalla and the Southern Highlands areas.

An MOU has been developed in partnership with the Southern Councils Group and signed by all councils within the region. A protocol for information sharing in relation to the Native Vegetation Act implementation has also been developed and signed by several councils. As other issues arise SRCMA will work co-operatively with local government to develop operational level protocols (or the like) to stream-line processes.

Within SRCMA, a dedicated Local Government Partnerships Officer is in place to provide impetus and support to local government partnering. A focus over the next few years will be to support greater NRM capacity within local government through education and training opportunities for Councillors and staff; support for and involvement in local government networks (eg Southern Bushcare Network, Illawarra Sustainability Education Network) and working with Councils to achieve CAP targets through land use planning that better incorporates NRM objectives.

4.2.3 Aboriginal communities

A team of four full-time Aboriginal staff is in place to work with local Aboriginal communities to provide more NRM training and employment opportunities, to promote cultural awareness and the protection of cultural heritage items and places and to foster NRM enterprise development.

Aboriginal staff have been developing one-on-one relationships with Aboriginal organisations, engaging key individuals (including elders and traditional owners) within communities and forging partnerships between Aboriginal groups to care for Country.

A number of local and regional scale projects have now been initiated including the Ngarara-baan Educational Trail in Wollongong, a project to assist Local Aboriginal Land Councils incorporate NRM into the management of their land holdings and support for Koori "work crews" to gain training and sustainable employment in NRM by working on Country. The latter initiative is involving SRCMA staff working closely with Local Aboriginal Land Councils and other organisations to help them to find funding to deliver on ground NRM projects with local Aboriginal people providing the work force. This support has helped to build closer working relationships with Land Councils and is an important engagement exercise.

Building on and extending the current localised engagement with Aboriginal communities is a key priority. A key principle is to start off by asking local communities how they would like to be engaged, so that community needs are addressed, rather than set up a 'top down' framework for engagement that only meets agency needs. A series of community workshops and information days are being held across the region to begin this process with events already held for the Clyde catchment and lower Shoalhaven. A community NRM forum for the Illawarra is being planned under the direction of the Community Based Working Group to take place in early 2008 and similar events will be held in the Bega and Eden areas.

At a regional level SRCMA and Department of Aboriginal Affairs has initiated an NRM inter-agency process, auspiced by the Regional Co-ordination Management Group (RCMG). The RCMG is a group that is convened by the Office of the Premier and Cabinet to foster whole-of-government service delivery. The aims of the process are to:

- ◆ Share information and knowledge on current and past Aboriginal community engagement processes and consultation efforts;
- ◆ Collectively work through the requirements, challenges and implications of the NSW State Plan and the Two Ways Together policy and the Southern Rivers Catchment Action Plan for Aboriginal community engagement programs;
- ◆ Develop an agreed interagency approach and strategy outlining directions, methods and priorities for Aboriginal community engagement on NRM objectives in the region;
- ◆ Explore potential for an agreed model for interagency coordination on engagement, where appropriate. This model could spread risk and avoid division of effort.
- ◆ Agree on lead and support agency roles and potentially to realign current agency resources to support a new model.
- ◆ Explore potential for a coordinated approach to inter-agency collaboration on employment of Koori NRM work crews as a key engagement strategy

This workshop and what follows from it's deliberations will provide impetus to the NSW Governments "Two Ways Together" initiative. The "Two Ways Together" strategy requires inter-agency collaboration to ensure that government agencies are meeting Aboriginal community needs in the region. A Regional Engagement Group, coordinated by the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, has the lead role in this. To date the priority focus for this engagement has centred on human services.

Protocols for engagement with Aboriginal communities have been developed at the State level and are incorporated into SRCMA engagement activities.

4.2.4 NSW Government Agencies

It is critical to the success of SRCMA that NSW Government agencies and authorities are proactive "partners" in NRM. To this end a range of mechanisms will be undertaken including:

- Regular one-on-one agency meetings at a regional level
- The development of Service Level or Partnership Agreements with Department of Environment and Climate Change, Department of Primary Industries, Department of Water and Energy, Department of Planning, Department of Lands and others as needed.
- The Regional Co-ordination Management Group, is the peak whole of government forum for South East NSW. It draws together Regional Directors of all NSW Agencies including natural resources, human services and infrastructure and economic development. SRCMA is an active member of this group and the Economic Development and NRM Cluster that operates to set whole of government direction and priorities for NRM service delivery
- Involvement of agency staff on Reference Groups to promote NRM co-ordination and integration at a sub-regional/local level
- Program and project level involvement of agency staff in planning and implementation of individual programs/project across the region.

4.2.5 Dairy industry

Illawarra/Shoalhaven Dairy Partnership

The South Coast and Southern Highlands Dairy Industry Group (DIG) have been working with SRCMA and the NSW Department Primary Industry (DPI) to engage the dairy industry in NRM. This is facilitated through the DIG NRM steering committee, an industry driven forum involving dairy farmers in the development and promotion of environmental actions in the dairy industry.

This committee has a major role in directing the the Shoalhaven/Illawarra Dairy Partnership project and operates as a reference committee for any initiatives or projects in NRM and provides assistance with selection of projects for on ground works.

The SRCMA Landscape Manager and Project Officer are members of the NRM committee and this enables ongoing contact and an opportunity to address any issues relating to NRM in the dairy industry. The DIG NRM committee has representatives from dairy processing companies and NSW DPI that further enhance partnerships between dairy farmers, processors, other government departments and SRCMA.

The Project Officer is located in the NSW DPI office which enables a strong link between current extension work with the dairy industry through the livestock officer and the district agronomist which further strengthens the dairy partnership.

This model for dairy industry engagement is yielding results with 50% of the dairy farmers in the Shoalhaven/Illawarra having taken up incentive funding. Over the next three years the strategy is to sustain support to dairy farmers through this model with a target of 70% take-up of incentives and support for the preparation of comprehensive farm plans. A project evaluation will be undertaken which will include surveys of all dairy farmers to determine the effectiveness of current dairy engagement activities and to fine-tune realistic adoption targets given the dairy industry environment. The involvement of local councils and DPI Fisheries staff in the partnership will be sought to support activities underway including effluent system upgrades.

Bega Cheese Partnership

SRCMA has been actively working with Bega Cooperative Society Ltd (Bega Cheese) since 2004 to improve the long term sustainability of a primary industry that is very important to the Bega economy. Significant technical support and financial support has been made available to farmers from SRCMA to achieve improved environmental management across a diverse range of activities including effluent management, fertiliser and nutrient budgeting, river and wetland management, dairy laneways, stream crossings and erosion control.

Two SRCMA project officers assist farmers in project design, with initial project merit assessed by a technical review panel. Final project approval is decided by a steering committee with majority farmer membership (>50%) and representatives from local government, DPI, DWE, Bega Cheese and SRCMA. Farmers have been directly empowered in the development of incentives and identification of priority funding areas and the industry partner (Bega Cheese) is responsible for funds management and contract delivery.

The partnership has achieved 90% engagement of dairy farmers in the Bega Cheese milk supply area, and a target of 80% for effluent system upgrade has been established. Over the next three years the Bega Cheese partnership will continue to support dairy farmers to adopt comprehensive NRM improvements on their properties.

A new focus for engagement activities will be to build more resilience in the coastal dairy industry to climate change, particularly around water management and access issues. This will involve working with Department of Water and Energy and other stakeholders at the policy setting level. Work will also be undertaken to develop a market based instrument that the industry can implement to provide a flow of funds to support continuous NRM improvements.

4.2.6 Oyster industry

A partnership with oyster growers who farm in South Coast estuaries has now been established to enhance environmental management, either by supporting best management practices for the oyster industry, or by addressing threats and practices within the catchment that impact on estuarine water quality.

An initial project in the Shoalhaven / Crookhaven Rivers that linked up local oyster growers and dairy farmers to address the impact of cattle on water quality, paved the way for SRCMA to extend the program to the whole industry.

Over the next three years growers will be supported in the Clyde River, Moruya River, Shoalhaven / Crookhaven Rivers, Tuross Lake, Wagonga Inlet, Bermagui River, Wapengo Lagoon, Nelson Lagoon, Merimbula Lake, Pambula Lake and Wonboyn Lake.

Coast and Marine Program staff will be working with farmers in each oyster-producing estuary to determine their priorities for improving estuary health and to develop a work program for investment funding bids.

A range of projects (depending on the needs of the grower group) such as fencing, removal of rubbish from land-based depots and/or derelict water-based leases and the development of an estuary-wide EMS will be pursued. Where possible, projects will work in partnership with other industries, government agencies, local councils and community groups to enhance outcomes.

4.2.7 Monaro grazing industry

SRCMA has a major program in place to support Monaro wool and cattle graziers to adopt sustainable grazing practices – the Monaro Grasslands Project. Unlike the coast there was no grazing industry organisation to engage directly with to develop this program, such that SRCMA has individual graziers on the Monaro LMT that acts as the program-steering committee for the program. This program was developed by the former South East Catchment Management Board and is a partnership between SRCMA, Department of Primary Industries the former Department of Environment and Conservation, three local Shire Councils, landholders, a local agronomist, a technical grassland specialist and conservation groups.

The Monaro Grasslands Project is clearly a successful program. The level of participation is good and there is already evidence that it is meeting its objectives of improving the biodiversity of native grasslands, improving productivity and reducing weeds. The initial incentive component of the program was offered to graziers in a pilot area (near Dalgety), but this has now been expanded to offer opportunities for all Monaro graziers managing high conservation grasslands. A dedicated newsletter has also been produced to keep participating graziers informed of progress and to spread the word to others across the Monaro.

SRCMA's approach over the next few years is to continue implementing this program, working directly to engage graziers in the various aspects of the project. A social survey of graziers landholders will be undertaken in 2008 to examine adoption issues and to further refine engagement processes.

4.2.8 Community Partnership Fund

A specific fund has been established to deliver education, training and other capacity building initiatives to local communities. Projects must involve a partnership of at least two or more groups including community groups, Aboriginal organisations, incorporated associations, local government, State Government organisations, universities, TAFE colleges, DET Environmental Education Centres and industry groups.

The partnership requirement is designed to encourage maximum community participation and to build cooperation and relationships across different sectors of the community. To date investment of \$400,000 (Natural Heritage Trust) has supported 43 organisations to partner in the delivery of thirty, mainly local scale projects.

The Fund is currently being evaluated before recommendations are developed on its continuance.

4.3. Emerging and new partnerships

SRCMA has identified a number of emerging and new partnership initiatives that it will pursue over the 2008-11 period.

4.3.1 Research institutions

A number of biophysical and social research projects have been initiated with universities predominantly UOW and ANU. A scoping paper exploring opportunities for collaboration between SRCMA and UOWs Science Faculty was developed in late 2006 with a focus on social research around landscape change and expanding regional knowledge in responding to climate change.

Partnerships with research institutions will be further developed through the development and implementation of a research strategy to be completed by SRCMA, working with Department of Environment and Climate Change, universities, CSIRO, Co-operative Research Centre's and other regional and local stakeholders with an interest in establishing and driving a regional NRM knowledge and research agenda. This may include seeking the support of Land and Water Australia through their "Knowledge for Regional NRM" program.

4.3.2 Arts and environment

The visual and performing arts have great potential for assisting in the development of an environmental ethic in the community and in promoting environmental sustainability. Art events can aid participation of a broad cross section of the community, can strengthen a community's ability to promote inclusion and can be powerful vehicles for community mobilisation, empowerment and information transfer (Curtis 2007). The region has a vibrant arts community who are keen to explore the way their participation can contribute to the achievement of NRM goals.

An art and environment working group was initiated in 2007 with a workshop held in Wollongong (attended by 100 people) to explore a partnership with the arts. A list of potential projects was developed on the day and has now been refined into an investment proposal.

4.3.3 Youth engagement

Developing strong environmental values and behaviours in young people is critical for our future sustainability. The school sector has an important role to play here and “sustainability education” is now a major thrust in many regional schools.

SRCMA has a role is supporting and adding value to the work of teachers and other educators across the region and will do so with a particular focus on youth leadership development in line with our vision of “Healthy landscapes – local people leading”.

A pilot youth leadership project is being implemented as a partnership between the Pathways Foundation, The Crossing Land Education Trust, Bournda Environmental Education Centre, Far South Coast Landcare Association and SRCMA.

Initiatives to engage and build the leadership capacities of Aboriginal youth will also be supported by SRCMA’s Koori staff team, in partnership with Aboriginal organisations.

4.3.4 Coastal and Marine stakeholders

SRCMA has established a Coast and Marine Working Group to provide advice on coastal and marine issues. Membership of this group includes State agencies, local councils, Oceanwatch and other coastal and marine interest groups.

A Marine Forum was held in mid 2007 and represented the first of its kind for individuals and groups directly involved in marine issues in the SRCMA region. It generated significant interest from a broad range of stakeholders including recreational and commercial fishers, the marine tourism industry, ports corporations, universities and other research institutions, community groups, non-government organisations and government agencies.

Priority actions were developed for improving ecological knowledge of the marine environment, managing marine pollution and pests and how to respond to the challenge that climate change issues pose for the marine environment. This will involve SRCMA’s ongoing engagement with a range of marine stakeholder groups to progress these actions.

A partnership project between Jervis Bay marine tourism operators and the Jervis Bay Marine Parks Authority to deliver environmental education training to the tourism operators has been successful. SRCMA will support the Batemans Marine Park Authority and the Far South Coast marine tourism industry to develop and implement sustainability initiatives to meet their particular needs. The Sapphire Coast Marine Discovery Centre is a key partner for SRCMA’s work in engaging community and tourist interests in learning about the marine and coastal environment. Future partnership efforts with the Marine Discovery Centre will support the development of a research strategy and collaboration on marine habitat management and monitoring programs.

SRCMA will engage and support the commercial fishing industry to implement actions within the Fisheries Management Strategies developed by government to put the industry on a more sustainable footing. This will most likely entail a partnership with the Department of Primary Industries to assist the uptake of gear modifications through an industry incentive program.

4.5 Planning for program and project level engagement

Engagement plans have been developed for the four biophysical program areas within the SRCMA CAP (biodiversity, coast and marine, water, soils and land capability) and specific plans have also been developed for particular stakeholder groups (Local government, Aboriginal communities). Program teams working across the region will continue to implement and refine these plans toward meeting CAP targets.

At the project level opportunities for collaboration and partnership are scoped out in an initial project proposal stage and then once funding is allocated detailed project plans are developed for each project indicating key stakeholders, engagement aims and actions.

A number of Issues-based groups, such as the Coast and Marine Working Group, are also in place and play a role in program planning including identifying stakeholders and engagement processes that will be needed to achieve CAP targets.

4.6 Informing and consulting local communities

Consultation

SRCMA's preference is to form long term and meaningful relationships with organisations and groups from across the region to tackle our NRM challenges. At times SRCMA will consult more broadly with communities, organisations and individuals on particular issues or to gather community views, gauge support for particular NRM strategies or gain feedback on draft plans.

SRCMA is developing a number of NRM strategies (including threatened species, feral pests and weeds) and will place drafts of these on its website and circulate to stakeholders with a known interest in the issue.

The SRCMA CAP will be reviewed and updated from 2008 and there will be an extensive community consultation process to refine and update the current plan.

SRCMA also has a role in supporting the Department of Water and Energy (DWE) in the preparation of five macro water sharing plans. This will involve working with DWE to design and implement an effective community consultation process for these plans.

NRM Information

SRCMA produces a range of information products – case studies, posters, brochures, an annual report – and produces an electronic newsletter "Catch up ", that is circulated broadly through the region.

The SRCMA website will be upgraded in 2008 to provide easier community access and more information on the range of NRM programs, incentive products and support available.

Public information events or meetings will be also held depending on the NRM issue and needs of the local community.

SRCMA regularly attends local district shows, environmental expos and other community events to promote its role and the support available to landholders and the community. An annual calendar of events for each sub-region will be prepared by SRCMA to ensure the best

opportunities to promote SRCMA and its services are resourced effectively.

4.7 Capacity building for engagement and partnering

Training

Skilled and capable staff and Board members are critical to the long-term success of SRCMA in mobilising the inherent capacity within the region for sustained change. Paramount to this is a program of professional development for staff and Board members including foundational training such as:

- ◆ Enabling NRM Change
- ◆ Technology of Participation (TOP) Facilitation Methods
- ◆ Team Management Systems
- ◆ Aboriginal Cultural Awareness

A team of in-house facilitators has now been developed and over future years ongoing mentoring by TOP accredited trainers can further strengthen and reinforce skills.

Other training that would also build staff capacity to support engagement activities includes media skills, and negotiation and conflict resolution skills. A comprehensive staff survey will be conducted to identify current skills (and a skills register created) and to identify what types of training or supporting initiatives could assist staff build their capacity for engagement and partnering.

Involvement in professional and other networks

SRCMA staff should be supported and encouraged to participate in regional networks that have engagement practice as at least one focus of the network's activities.

SRCMA should also support staff attending relevant Conferences and seminars hosted by other organisations. Some of relevance would include the conferences of the:

- Australian Association of Environmental Education
- Australasia Pacific Extension Network
- International Association for Public Participation

5. Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement

Monitoring and evaluation of engagement

In 2006 SRCMA initiated a scoping exercise to design a project that would establish baseline information for the CAP Community Targets and allow for monitoring over time. In 2007 the social consultancy firm EBC were contracted to implement the project working with SRCMA staff and stakeholders to refine and implement the project design.

The five targets to be assessed include:

C1: Engagement

From 2006 the willingness of communities to engage in natural resource management and the quality of that engagement will be enhanced, with the number of people working collaboratively maintained or increased.

C2: Community Support

From 2006 the support system that resources local communities to contribute to natural resource management will be improved.

C3: Caring for Country

From 2006 indigenous communities will be better engaged in natural resource management planning and resources and opportunities to "Care for Country" are increased.

C4: Capacity and Practices

By 2016 there will be an increase in community awareness, knowledge and skills in relation to natural resource management and an increase in the adoption of practices that improve natural resource outcomes.

C5: CMA Capacity

From 2006 the Southern Rivers CMA will be an effective NRM organisation, with the appropriate management, program capacity and external relationships to deliver NRM outcomes.

Assessment of indicators will involve structured telephone interviews with more detailed face-to-face interviews with landholders, stakeholder organisations (including Landcare, Aboriginal groups, government agencies, local councils) and SRCMA staff. A series of survey instruments will be utilised that can be re-deployed in 3-5 years to track progress over time. This project will be completed in mid 2008 with any recommendations on engagement practices and priorities to be incorporated into the Strategy.

Program evaluations of SRCMA's projects will be undertaken at various stages of implementation and will include an assessment of the quality and effectiveness of engagement processes. Indicators and measures developed in the baseline project can be incorporated into these evaluations as appropriate.

Reporting

Reporting of engagement and partnership activities and outcomes are a feature of SRCMA's Annual Report. Program teams should include information on engagement activities, including any achievements and challenges in reports to the SRCMA Executive, Board and at NRM Reference Group meetings.

Improvement

There are many opportunities for the SRCMA Board and staff to learn from each other around our work in engagement and partnership building. Action learning reflective questions should be utilised at SRCMA team meetings – program teams, landscape teams, local teams – to periodically reflect on the engagement processes being utilised by staff.

SRCMA's regional staff workshops are also an opportune time for whole group reflection and learning activities to be scheduled.

6. References

Aslin H.J and Brown V.A (2004). *Towards Whole of Community Engagement*, Murray Darling Basin Commission, 2004.

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