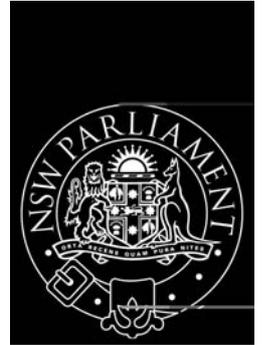


LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY



# Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF PARLIAMENTARY  
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEES

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Melbourne & Lorne, 11 - 14 July 2004



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## Membership & Staff

<b>Chairman</b>	Hon Pam Allan MP, Member for Wentworthville
<b>Members</b>	Hon. Richard Amery MP, Member for Mount Druitt Gregory Aplin MP, Member for Albury Hon. Ian Armstrong MP, Member for Lachlan (from 1 September 2004) Anthony McGrane MP, Member for Dubbo (deceased 15 September 2004) Gerard Martin MP, Member for Bathurst Donald Page MP, Member for Ballina (to 1 September 2004)
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## Terms of Reference

- (a) current disincentives that exist for ecologically sustainable land and water use in New South Wales;
- (b) options for the removal of such disincentives and any consequences in doing so;
- (c) approaches to land use management on farms which both reduce salinity and mitigate the effects of drought;
- (d) ways of increasing the up-take of such land use management practices;
- (e) the effectiveness of management systems for ensuring that sustainability measures for the management of natural resources in New South Wales are achieved;
- (f) the impact of water management arrangements on the management of salinity in NSW.



## Chapter One - Overview

- 1.1 The Hon. Pam Allan MP, Gerard Martin MP and Tony McGrane MP of the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management accompanied by an officer of the committee secretariat attended the National Conference of Parliamentary Environment and Public Works Committees. The conference was held in Melbourne and Lorne, Victoria from Sunday 11 to Wednesday 14 July 2004.
- 1.2 The conference was attended by 67 delegates and 20 speakers and guests from state and commonwealth governments (see appendix 2). The conference also attracted overseas visitors from New Zealand, Sweden and Samoa.
- 1.3 The theme for the conference was *Emerging Challenges and Future Directions for Environment and Public Works Committees*.
- 1.4 The conference had two streams, the public works stream and the environment stream. The environment stream focussed “visions for the future” on adopting new approaches to natural resource management and sustainability.



## Chapter Two - Papers Presented

### **DR IAN MCPHAIL, VICTORIAN COMMISSIONER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY**

2.1 Dr McPhail is the newly appointed Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability. He is also a member of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission.

#### **Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability**

2.2 The *Commissioner of Environmental Sustainability Act 2003*, passed in May 2003, provides for a Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability.

2.3 The Commissioner measures, audits and reports on the environment and ecologically sustainable development. Responsibilities of the commissioner are:

- preparing state of the environment reports;
- annual audits of government departments' implementation of environmental management; and
- auditing public education programs on ecologically sustainable development.

2.4 A key objective of establishing the Commissioner was to ensure there was no duplication of functions with existing agencies.

2.5 Any reports made by the Commissioner to the minister must be placed before Parliament within ten sitting days. The major advantage in this is that the minister is closely tied into anything that goes into parliament and is required to respond.

2.6 Under the Act the Commissioner is required to provide:

- a state of the environment report (five year time frame);
- a strategic audit of the environmental management systems of government agencies;
- an audit of public environmental education programs; and,
- an advisory function to the minister based on reference.

### **CHRISTINE FORSTER, CHAIRPERSON, VICTORIAN CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

2.7 Christine Forster is Chairperson of the Victorian Catchment Management Council and chairs the Independent Advisory Panel for the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the Natural Heritage Trust. Ms Forster presented a paper on *Improving Catchment Health*.

#### **Victorian Catchment Management Council [VCMC]**

2.8 The goal of the catchment management framework is for ecological sustainable development of natural resource-based industries, the protection of land and water resources and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

2.9 The VCMC is an independent advisory body to the minister and reports on the operation of the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (Vic) to the minister and to

Papers Presented

parliament. The VCMC produces a report on the condition of Victoria's catchments every five years.

2.10 The report produced by the VCMC has three separate sections:

- report against the data collected in relation to 32 separate indicators that include economic, environmental and social facts;
- identify major issues highlighted by the assessment; and,
- provide a response to this information.

2.11 The report is tabled in parliament (the last report tabled being October 2002).

2.12 Themes covered by these reports include changing socio-economic landscapes, biodiversity, rivers, wetlands, estuaries, managing water and land resources. In providing a response to these findings the VCMC takes into consideration:

- Is there a state plan?
- Are there performance targets?
- Is the money committed to in-state programs or regional programs to address the issues?

### **Role of the Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)**

2.13 Victoria is divided into ten catchments. The CMAs are responsible for coordinating and advising on strategic resource management priorities at a regional level [and] ... have direct responsibility for waterway management, floodplain management and rural drainage.

2.14 There are six principles governing the way catchment management is implemented throughout Victoria:

- ecologically sustainable development;
- community empowerment;
- integrated management;
- targeted investment;
- accountability; and,
- administrative efficiency.

### **DR RICHARD PRICE, MANAGING DIRECTOR, KIRI-GANAI RESEARCH**

2.15 Dr Price is the Managing Director for Kiri-ganai Research. Kiri-ganai Research is a research management and coordination company with interests in Australia's agricultural and environmental programs. Dr Price has also managed the national dryland salinity program and has also managed national programs on soil acidification, climate, sustainable farming and natural resource policy.

2.16 Dr Price's paper, *A new agricultural landscape in Australia – is land use change the answer to environmental degradation?*, focussed on the issues and challenges posed in making decisions about land use change.

## **MARIA ATKINSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA**

2.17 Maria Atkinson is an Environmental Scientist and the Executive Director of the Green Building Council of Australia and a member of the NSW Government Sustainability Advisory Council. Ms Atkinson presented a paper on the vision for a sustainable property industry and the challenges of improving the performance of buildings whilst reducing their environmental impacts.

### **Green Building Council of Australia**

2.18 The Green Building Council of Australia is a not-for-profit organisation launched at the end of 2002. It resulted from a need for a national approach for environmental rating system for buildings in Australia based on international schemes, called "Green Star".

2.19 In 2003 the Council launched the first of a series of green building rating tools, *Green Star – Office Design*. Since then, the Council has also released *Green Star – Office as Built* (construction initiatives for office buildings) and *Green Star – Office Interiors* (for tenants to rate their fit-outs). By end of 2004, the Council aims to release *Green Star – Office Existing* for owners to rate their assets performance.

2.20 Benefits for sustainable, or green, buildings include:

- creating a healthier work, learning and living environment – natural light and cleaner air; and,
- they are cost effective – savings in energy and water consumption.

## **DR KEVIN TOLHURST, FIRE ECOLOGIST, MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY**

2.21 Dr Tolhurst is a senior lecturer in fire ecology and management at Melbourne University's Institute of Land and Food Resources.

2.22 In his paper, *Changing our perception of fire in the environment: the future impact of climate change on fire regimes and how to effectively adapt to this change*, Dr Tolhurst outlined the importance of learning to live in a fire-prone environment and the need to restore appropriate fire regimes across Australia. He also stated that the changed fire patterns combined with climate change are threatening native fauna and flora, and water catchments.

2.23 Other issues raised include:

- a concentration of fire suppression and prevention detracts from proper fire management;
- fire exclusion is not a viable long-term option;
- the need for education and trained planners and operators to meet new demands of fire management;
- fire is both a critical part of Australia's unique ecosystems, and *a social, economic and environmental hazard*; and,

Papers Presented

- need to find a way of living in a fire-prone environment that ensures the wellbeing of our citizens including the sustainable management of our environment.

### **Balancing Prescribed and Wildfire**

2.24 In northern Australia, traditional Aboriginal burning was widespread up until the 1950s. With fewer ‘traditional’ fires being burnt, the wildfires became more intense. In the 1980s traditional burning was reintroduced.

2.25 With “urban dwellers” moving into semi-rural environments, bushfires can have a direct impact. There is a need to balance suppressing wildfires and applying fire across the landscape in a planned and measured way. The two main objectives for using prescribed fire are:

1. as a protection from wildfires; and,
2. to maintain ecosystem processes.

2.26 Dr Tolhurst concluded his paper by stating that we must increase our efforts to relearn the skills of prescribed burning to maintain biodiversity and water yields.

### **AMENA YAVOLI, SENIOR POLICY ADVISER, SOUTH PACIFIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM [SPREP]**

2.27 Amenatave Yauvoli is the Sustainable Development Policy Adviser with SPREP. In his paper, Environmental Challenges in the Pacific Region – Emerging Environmental Issues in the Region and SPREP’s Vision for Sustainability, Mr Yauvoli outlined the chief concerns for Pacific Island countries and challenges faced by them, such as:

- natural/environmental – such as earthquakes, tsunamis;
- social/economic – poor infrastructure, limited human resource capacity, food and water insecurity;
- cultural – challenging of traditional community values and structures.

### **Role of the SPREP**

2.28 The SPREP’s mandate is to:

... promote cooperation in the Pacific islands region and to provide assistance in order to protect and improve the environment and to ensure sustainable development for present and future generations.

2.29 The main aim of the SPREP is:

... to sustain the integrity of the ecosystems of the Pacific islands region to support life and livelihoods today and tomorrow.

2.30 The SPREP works towards sustainability through:

- natural resource management – sustainable management (terrestrial, coastal and marine ecosystems);
- pollution prevention;
- climate change, climate variability and sea level rise – undertake research, assess vulnerabilities and impacts;

- sustainable management – integrated legal, planning and management mechanisms;
- multilateral environment agreements and processes;
- training, education, human resource development and public awareness; and,
- the *Barbados Program of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*.

## **JAN BERGQVIST, CHAIRMAN, SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES COUNCIL AND, INGRID OIKARI, SWEDISH ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES COUNCIL**

2.31 Jan Bergquis is the Chairman of the Environmental Objectives Council. He was also a member of parliament between 1969 and 2002. Ingrid Oikari commenced with the Environmental Objectives Council in 2002.

2.32 Mr Bergquis and Ms Oikari's presented a paper, *Achieving sustainability – how well are we doing?* outlining Sweden's 15 environmental quality objectives. The objectives describe the quality and state of the environment for future generations. It is intended that 14 of the objectives be attained by the year 2020. They are:

- clean air;
- natural acidification only;
- non-toxic environment;
- protective ozone layer;
- safe radiation environment;
- zero eutrophication;
- flourishing lakes and streams;
- good quality groundwater;
- balanced marine environment, flourishing coastal areas and archipelagos;
- thriving wetlands;
- sustainable forests;
- varied agricultural landscape;
- magnificent mountain landscape; and,
- a good built environment.

2.33 The other objective is “reduced climate impact” – for the stabilisation of concentrations of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This objective requiring international cooperation thus has a longer timeframe for achievement by 2050.

2.34 The Environmental Objectives Council reports each year with its appraisal of progress towards the objectives – will the targets be met in the interim and within the timeframes? and, what are the prospects for the main environmental quality objectives to be achieved in due time?

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

2.35 Committee reports were presented at the conference from the Victorian, Commonwealth, South Australian (x2), Tasmanian, Northern Territory, Western Australian, the ACT and New Zealand parliaments. The Chairman for the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management, Hon. Pam Allan, also presented a paper on the at the conference (appendix 3). These reports outlined current committee activities being undertaken in each jurisdiction.

## **CONCLUSION**

2.36 A copy of the transcript and papers are available from the committee secretariat.



Hon. Pam Allan MP  
Chairman

## Appendix 1 – Conference Program

Sunday 11 July 2004

PM Welcome Reception

Monday 12 July 2004

AM Conference opening

**Session A** Adopting new approaches to natural resource management and sustainability – visions for the future

**Session B** Committee reports

PM Visit to Angahook – Otways region hosted by the Victorian Environmental Assessment Council

Tuesday 13 July 2004

AM **Session C** Adopting new approaches to natural resource management and sustainability – visions for the future (cont.)

**Session D** Committee reports (cont.)

PM Guided walk at Otway Fly

Official Dinner

Wednesday 14 July 2004

AM Presentation and discussion of paper by Commonwealth House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment and Heritage on formalising the annual conference and international Parliamentary Committee involvement.

2005 Conference

PM Close



## Appendix 2 – Conference Delegates & Speakers

### **Victoria**

#### Environment and Natural Resources Committee

Ms Jenny Lindell MP, Chair  
Hon Andrea Coote MLC, Deputy Chair  
Hon Damian Drum MLC  
Js Joanne Duncan MP  
Hon Geoff Hilton MLC  
Hon Wendy Lovell MLC  
Mr George Seitz MP  
Dr Caroline Williams, Executive Officer  
Mr David Fairbridge, Research Officer  
Ms Dene Elsegood, (Acting) Office Manager  
Ms Andrea Agosta, Office Manager, Economic Development Committee

#### Outer Suburban Interface Services & Development Committee

Ms Rosy Buchanan MP  
Mr Sean Coley, Executive Officer  
Ms Chantel Churchus, Research Office

#### Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Hon Christine Campbell MLC, Chair

### **Australian Capital Territory**

#### Standing Committee on Planning and Environments

Ms Roslyn Dundas MLA, Chair  
Mr John Hargreaves, MLA  
Ms Robina Jaffray, Manager of Committees  
Ms Stephanie Mikac, Committee Secretary

### **Commonwealth**

#### House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment & Heritage

Mr Bruce Billson MP, Chair  
Mr Phillip Barresi MP  
Mr Harry Jenkins MP  
Mr Stewart McArthur MP  
Mr Ian Dundas, Committee Secretary  
Dr Anna Dacre, Inquiry Secretary

Appendix 2 – Conference Delegates & Speakers

Joint Standing Committee on Public Works

Hon Judi Moylan MP, Chair  
Mr Brendan O'Connor MP, Deputy Chair  
Ms Vivienne Courto, Inquiry Secretary

**New South Wales**

Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management

Hon Pam Allan MP, Chair  
Mr Gerard Martin MP  
Mr Tony McGrane MP  
Ms Cassandra Adams, Assistant Committee Officer

Standing Committee on Public Works

Mr Kevin Greene MP, Chair  
Ms Angela D'Amore MP  
Mrs Karyn Paluzzano MP  
Ms Carolynne James, Committee Manager

**Northern Territory**

Environment and Sustainable Development Committee

Ms Delia Lawrie MLA, Chair

**Queensland**

Public Works Committee

Hon Kev Lingard MP, Deputy Chairman  
Mr Robert Poole MP  
Mr Rob McBride, Research Director

**South Australia**

Environment, Resources and Development Committee

Ms Lyn Breuer MP, Chair  
Hon David Ridgway MLC  
Mr Philip Frensham, Secretary

Economic and Finance Committee

Ms Gay Thompson MP, Presiding Member  
Dr Paul Lobban, Secretary

### Natural Resources Committee

Mrs Karlene Maywald MP, Chair  
Ms Vincenzia Ciccarello MP  
Mr Mitch Williams MP  
Mr Knut Cudarans, Secretary

### Public Works Committee

Mr Paul Caica, Presiding Member  
Mr Ivan Venning MP  
Mr Keith Barrie, Secretary

## **Tasmania**

### Joint Standing Committee on Environment, Resources and Development

Hon Doug Parkinson MLC, Chair  
Hon Sue Smith MLC  
Mrs Sue McLeod, Clerk of the Committees

### Joint Standing Committee on Public Works

Hon Paul Harriss MLC, Chairman  
Hon Greg Hall MLC  
Mr Charles Casimaty, (Acting) Committee Secretary

## **Western Australia**

### Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs

Hon Dr Christine Sharp MLC, Chair  
Hon Louise Pratt MLC  
Miss Lisa Hanna, Advisory Officer – Legislative Council Committee Officer

### Economics and Industry Standing Committee

Mr Tony McRae MLA, Chair  
Mr Bernie Masters MLA  
Mr Mick Murray MLA  
Ms Jovita Hogan, Research Officer

## **New Zealand**

### Local Government and Environment Select Committee

Mr Jim Peters MP  
Ms Beth Watson, Clerk of Committee

## **Speakers and Guests**

Hon John Thwaites MP, Deputy Premier of Victoria

Ms Judy Maddigan MP, Speaker of the Legislative Assembly

Hon Monica Gould MLC, President of the Legislative Council

Ms Doreen Garvey Wandin, Wurundjeri Elder

Mr Tim Cave, Director, Major Projects Delivery Services, Department of Justice

Prof. Graeme Hodge, Director of the Privatisation and Public Accountability Centre, Monash University

Mr Tony Jolly, Project Director, Spencer Street Station Authority

Mr Doug Jones, National President, Engineers Australia

Dr Ian McPhail, Victorian Commissioner for Environmental Sustainability

Ms Christine Forster, Chairperson, Victorian Catchment Management

Dr Richard Price, Managing Director, Kiri-ganai Research

Ms Maria Atkinson, Executive Director, Green Building Council of Australia

Hon Judi Moyland MP, Chair, Commonwealth Joint Standing Committee on Public Works

Mr Kevin Greene MP, Chair, NSW Public Works Committee

Mr Russell Walker, Assistant Auditor-General, Victorian Auditor-General's Officer

Hon Christine Campbell MP, Chair, Public Accounts and Estimates Committee

Dr Kevin Tolhurst, Fire Ecologist, Melbourne University

Mr Amena Yauvoli, Senior Policy Advisor, South Pacific Regional Environment Program

Mr Jan Bergquist, Chairman, Swedish Environmental Objectives Council

Ms Ingrid Oikari, Principal Administrative Officer, Swedish Environmental Objectives Council

## Appendix 3 – Report of the Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management

Report by the Hon. Pam Allan MP

The Standing Committee on Natural Resource Management was appointed in May 2003. The Committee comprises of six members - myself as the Chairman and Mr Richard Amery MP from Sydney and with four rural and regional members: Mr Greg Aplin, Mr Tony McGrane, Mr Gerard Martin MP and Mr Don Page MP.

The Committee is currently calling for submissions on ***farm practices for the reduction of salinity and drought mitigation***. Over the past year, the Committee has heard evidence for the Term of Reference f, ***the impact of water management arrangements on the management of salinity in NSW***.

Our terms of reference specifically cover water management arrangements and salinity; land use management on farms to reduce salinity and mitigate the effect of drought; and, identifying disincentives that exist for ecologically sustainable land and water use.

- **Report on the impact of water management arrangements on the management of salinity in NSW**

The report on this inquiry is currently being finalised will be tabled in Parliament in the Spring sittings.

The inquiry has delivered some interesting information about the way in which natural resources are managed - not only in NSW, but at the national level.

In very general terms, the Committee has found there appears to be underlying support for the protection of water resources. Given concerns from eminent scientist's that Australia is now "entering into a period of water scarcity" we need to be mindful of how best to protect the resources that will continue to support economic and social needs of this country.

We are all interested in how the CoAG reforms and the National Water Initiative is progressing and it is clear we need to readjust the way we view and deal with water, our most precious resource. According to Professor Cullen (formerly the Chief Executive of the CRC for Freshwater Ecology) the decisions we make now, have the "potential to liberate another burst of wealth production for rural Australia, or to destroy much of the land on which rural communities presently depend."

Indeed, NSW is currently in the process of amending legislation that governs and administers water resource management. It is anticipated that the new Act will reflect the underlying principles of National Water Initiative.

One of the key issues in the debate is that of water trading and potential impacts it has on a number of variables, including salinity. Our inquiry has found that water trading is generally supported and that there maybe benefits at the environmental, economic and social levels.

However, it is clear that issues about ‘administration and management’ need to be resolved, in order to mitigate any potential detrimental effects that trading may have on salinity.

The challenge for our committee is to consider the best approaches and practices that benefit both the environment that needs to be supported if we expect agriculture to continue to thrive and our economic needs. In fact the answer may lie in how clever we are with market forces. Indeed, appropriately designed institutional arrangements that facilitate more efficient market forces, maybe the answer to many problems.

- **Report on Conferences**

The Committee has also been busy obtaining relevant and up to date information, by attending significant international conferences in both water and salinity management. Over the past year we have attended two conferences: the 9<sup>th</sup> National PUR\$L Conference and the 21<sup>st</sup> Commonwealth Agricultural Conference.

The theme of the 9<sup>th</sup> National PUR\$L Conference was *Salinity under the sun – investing in the prevention and rehabilitation of saline lands in Australia*.

The conference focussed on investment in the science, the planning, the policies and the community partnerships behind preventing and rehabilitating the effects of dryland salinity.

2.37 The theme of the Commonwealth Agricultural Conference was “The Power of Water” - which provided a Commonwealth perspective on water availability, access and it’s management and considered environmental and economic issues related to water management facing agricultural communities. 220 delegates from 18 Commonwealth countries explored what they have in common and the differences that they have to face. Australian and international speakers presented on topics that ranged from water management; river health and environmental sustainability; water partnerships; and, the private sector and water rights and trade.

Both conferences were timely and pertinent for the committee, especially in light of the National Water Initiative and the National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality Management. Clearly, a number of challenges for legislators remain – in particular, to provide efficient land and water management frameworks that drive best-practice in assessment and adaptive management.

- **New Inquiry**

The new inquiry (which is just commencing) will invite the public to make submissions on approaches to land use management on farms - which they consider both reduce salinity and mitigate the effects of drought. The Committee would like to encourage people with practical experience of the problems of salinity and those with any special knowledge or qualifications in the subject to give the Committee the benefit of their advice. Submissions on the ways of increasing the up-take of such use management practices are also being encouraged.

I’d like to thank delegates for the opportunity to outline these issues and I look forward to presenting the relevant reports at next year’s meeting.