

What does Natural Resource Management mean for Local Government?



Photo courtesy of Dubbo City Council



What is Natural Resource Management?

Natural resources are everywhere – in our bush, around our coast, along our rivers, on our farms and in our cities and towns. In essence, natural resources are our land, soil, water, plants, animals, minerals and air.

Natural Resource Management (NRM) is about managing our natural resources to ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability for both present and future generations in accordance with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD).

In NSW, NRM is implemented by a range of stakeholders including all spheres of government, Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare, Bushcare and Coastcare networks, landholders and the general community.



Why should Local Government participate in NRM?

Councils have a wide range of responsibilities in relation to NRM, including those defined in the Charter of the *Local Government Act* 1993. The Charter requires all councils to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development. Further, councils must also have regard to the long term and cumulative effects of its decisions.

NRM provides a range of benefits that contribute to achieving the goals of ESD and ensuring that the **four key principles** of Ecologically Sustainable Development are met. The principles include:

- **Valuing Biodiversity**
Which means decision makers and the community in general place an appropriate value on the variety of plants and animals in an area
- **Precautionary principle**
Which requires decision makers and the community to err on the side of caution when assessing the potential environmental impact of any development
- **Intergenerational equity**
Which requires decision makers and the community to consider the needs of future generations in relation to maintaining their quality of life
- **User pays**
Which requires decision makers and the community to make sure the users of particular resources pay an appropriate price for those resources



How can Local Government contribute to NRM Outcomes?

Local Government is playing an increasingly important role and has a range of functions, powers and responsibilities at its disposal to influence natural resource management on both private and public land. This includes both statutory and non-statutory responsibilities.

Funded by



Australian Government



Local Government & Shires Associations of NSW
Level 8, 28 Margaret Street Sydney NSW 2000
Phone 02 9242 4000 Fax 02 9242 4111



The following table outlines the framework for the delivery of NRM across all three levels of government. It begins with the responsibility of the Australian Government in setting national priorities (www.nrm.gov.au/nrm), includes the responsibilities of the NSW Government as identified in the NSW State Plan (www.nsw.gov.au/stateplan), and their regional approach to managing natural resources through 13 Catchment Management Authorities. (www.cma.nsw.gov.au). The table also details the activities of local councils.

Councils are encouraged to understand the framework within which they deliver their NRM activities and the different responsibilities of all stakeholders involved. This is necessary in determining how to effectively plan for, and manage their natural environment. By their very nature, natural resources must be managed in a coordinated way, across jurisdictions, to achieve long term outcomes.

The table below provides a summary of the various responsibilities of the three different levels of government.

Commonwealth	
International Agreements & Trade	World Heritage Listing, Migratory bird agreements
Funding	Grants – Caring for Our Country; Strategic Investment Priorities; other grant programs
Policies, agreements & frameworks	Native Vegetation Policy; National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets, Capacity Building, and Monitoring & Evaluation; National Biodiversity Strategy; Water For the Future strategic policies, including Council of Australian Government Reforms; Water Act 2007, and the National Water Initiative.
Legislation and planning	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> . See Factsheet 6.
State	
Policy, agreements and frameworks	NSW State Plan including 13 NRM targets; NSW Standard for Quality NRM (Natural Resources Commission)
Funding	NSW Environmental Trust
Legislation and planning	<i>Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, Protection of the Environment Operations Act 1999, Rural Fires Act 1997, Fisheries Management Act 1994, Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995</i> etc; State wide planning instruments (SEPPs, REPs). See Factsheet 6.
Land Manager	Crown Land, National Parks
Agencies involved in NRM	Natural Resources Commission (NRC); Dept of Environment and Climate Change; Dept of Primary Industries (Fisheries, Mines, Forests, Agriculture); Dept of Water and Energy; Dept of Planning; Rural Fires Services; NSW Department of Lands
Regional responsibilities	Creation of 13 Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) & associated Catchment Action Plans (CAP) designed to co-ordinate regional planning and meet state wide and catchment targets for NRM
Local Government	
Strategic & Statutory planning	Land use strategies; land use zonings; provisions/clauses in Local Environment Plan / Development Control Plan
Development Control	Conditions of consent; development contributions
Land Management	Managing council lands (Plans of Management), water and sewer, waste, flood, pest and animals, local open space management
On-ground Works	Rehabilitation and restoration, noxious and environmental weed control; water quality monitoring; stormwater management and control
Incentive Programs	Rate rebates; free tree giveaways; acquisition program for environmentally significant lands
Community programs	Bushcare or Landcare groups; environmental education; community advisory committees; partnerships with the local community groups.