Natural Environment Policies, Planning and Decision Making

**Winner Division A**
Palerang / MDB Water Sustainability Snapshot and Adaptation Planning, Palerang Council

The project assessed the combined landscape impacts of water use, water quality risks, climate variability and population growth on the sustainable yield of key headwaters of the Murrumbidgee River. The analysis involved a wide range of data including more than 200 new maps of key parameters across the study area. The results were integrated into a policy discussion paper using future scenario assessments to help inform local and regional strategic planning and policy making. The project developed valuable innovative methodologies and policy options concerning sustainable water management in Western Palerang by using an integrated systems approach to reduce the uncertainties associated with this complex issue.

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**Winner Division B**
Development of a comprehensive koala plan for SE Lismore, Lismore City Council

First mooted in 1995, the completion of the koala plan for south-east Lismore is the culmination of a 17 year process. In order to develop this plan Council conducted: a scientific study that objectively informed plan development; mapping of vegetation classified as preferred koala habitat; comprehensive community consultation; and extensive consultation with an expert panel on effective plan implementation. This process produced a well-balanced practical plan which included a comprehensive range of management activities as well as a clear and transparent development assessment framework and habitat compensation policy which are a significant advance on the regulatory tools presented in other currently adopted koala plans in NSW.

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**Winner Division C and Overall Winner**
Coastal Zone Management Plan for the Wyong Shire, Wyong Shire Council

Wyong Shire’s Coastal Zone Management Plan (CZMP) was produced over several years but was adopted by Council in December 2011. The CZMP assessed the various hazards along the coast, and determined the risks to public and private infrastructure and the natural environment. The hazards were assessed for current and future risks with potential impacts from climate change over time. The Plan outlines planning and management actions to address these risks with their selection based on sustainability criteria. A strategic land use planning framework which encompasses the concept of “managed retreat” was adopted following significant community engagement. During this engagement the concept met with significant debate and opposition in favour of more coastal protection. However, the managed retreat concept was finally adopted as it was clearly the only sustainable option for Council and the community.

**Contact**
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Highly Commended Division B  
**Development and Implementation of a Water Sensitive Design Development Control Plan to protect the Wallis, Myall and Smiths Lakes, Great Lakes Council**

This project is an outcome of the development of a Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) for the Great Lakes region (adopted in 2009) which included a suite of actions to address the water quality stressors affecting the lakes. The Development Control Plan (DCP) was specifically aimed at ensuring the impacts from future urban development within the Council region were appropriately managed through the implementation of Water Sensitive Design principles and measures for both large and small scale development. The DCP included targets focussing on integrated water management, stormwater quality management and hydrologic management, especially for sensitive receiving environments such as coastal wetlands.

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Highly Commended Division B  
**Bushland Assets – Recognising Value of Improved Condition, Mosman Council**

In 2011 Mosman Council undertook a program to incorporate bushland areas into Councils Asset Management System. This required a complete review of its bushland management performance and the actual results that were being delivered. The outcome was clear. Over the past 10 years there has seen a marked improvement in the condition of bushland assets managed under Mosman’s 10 year Bushland Restoration Contracts. In overcoming difficulties in applying an engineering based ‘Asset Management Approach’ to natural areas Council staff were able to demonstrate clear and measurable condition and in turn evaluation of bushland assets. This warranted inclusion in Councils Asset Management Strategy. By doing so the ongoing sustainability of Mosman’s bushland assets is assured and the progression to restore bushland areas will continue through to 2022.

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Highly Commended Division C  
**The Electronic REF Template, Hunter & Central Coast Regional Environmental Management Strategy (HCCREMS)**

The Electronic Review of Environmental Factors Template (or REF Template) is a system designed to substantially reduce the risk to councils of non-compliance with key State and Federal pieces of environmental legislation. The template assists with the collation of information necessary to assess the environmental impact of activities and comply with Part 5 of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act). The electronic REF Template provides a comprehensive risk management tool that actively enables councils to effectively manage the risk inherent in conducting on-ground works (with respect to environmental protection legislation). The REF template is scalable, making it appropriate for evaluating the impact of small maintenance tasks and large scale construction projects. The electronic REF template’s simple, systematic process has broad scale application for all agencies captured by Part 5 of the EP&A Act and actively assist agencies to protect the environment.
**Natural Environment Policies, Planning and Decision Making**

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