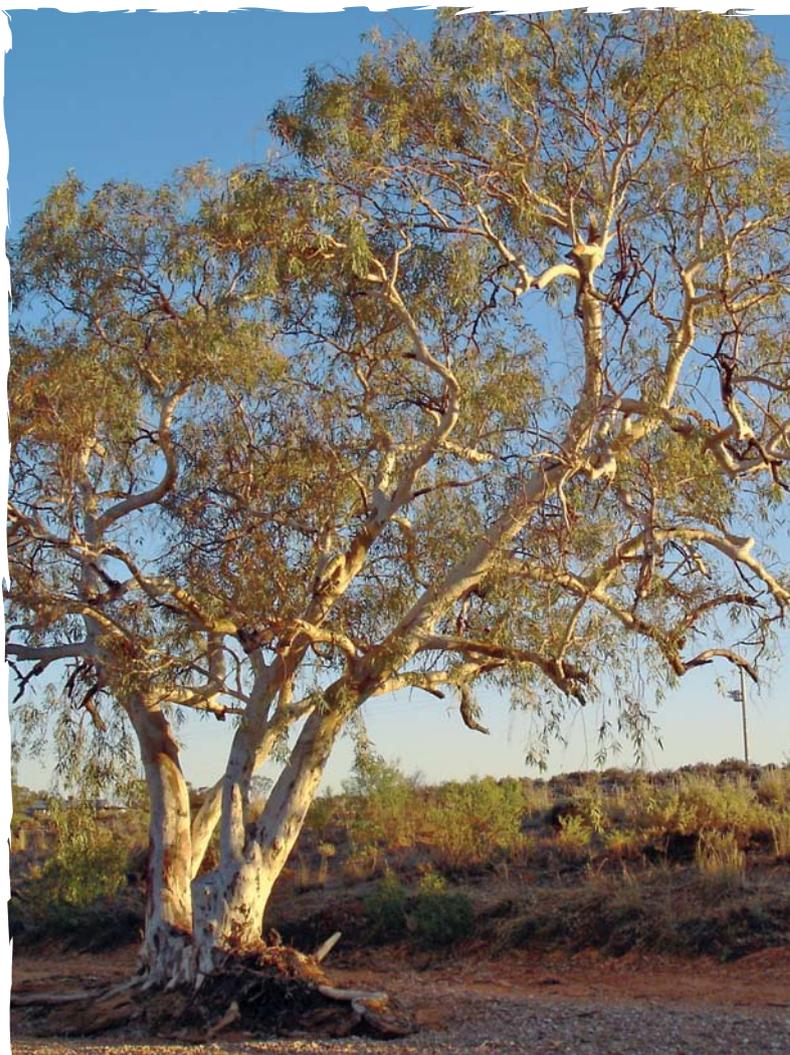


# Healthy landscapes and communities

## *Managing natural resources in NSW*

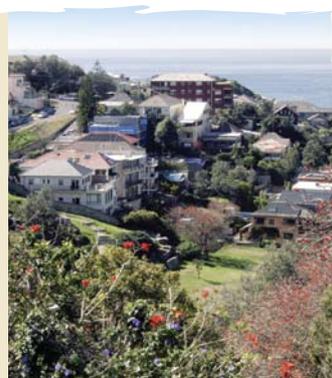


Our environment sustains us. We must care for our natural systems so they can support thriving rural and urban communities. In NSW we have a vision for a healthy and sustainable future.

We are all aware of the pressures on our environment, such as climate change, population growth and drought. The NSW Government is taking a visionary long-term approach so that we can adapt to and mitigate the effects of those pressures, ensuring that our landscapes continue to sustain and support us.

The NSW Government set down its vision for this sustainable future in thirteen state-wide targets for natural resource management, and the Natural Resources Commission developed a consistent standard that describes how we should do business to achieve them.

The Natural Resources Commission's independent advice will help the NSW Government achieve its vision for healthy, functioning landscapes and a better NSW for everyone. This brochure showcases the government's state-wide targets and the *Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management*.



# The Standard and targets

**One goal** Landscapes that are ecologically sustainable, function effectively and support the environmental, economic, social and cultural values of our communities.

## Thirteen targets

The NSW Government has adopted thirteen state-wide targets for natural resource management. The targets set out what we need to achieve if we are to enjoy healthy, functioning landscapes and communities in the future.

These targets are embedded in the *State Plan: A new direction for NSW*. The State Plan sets out clear targets for the NSW Government to deliver across all its areas of responsibility. The state-wide targets for natural resource management make up Priority E4 of the plan. This means that the whole of the NSW Government is committed to improving the condition of our natural resources—and will be held accountable for it.

## The targets

**Provide a common focus and guide investment:** State-wide targets are critical to connect and coordinate the actions of individuals and groups. Natural resources used to be managed in an ad hoc manner, resulting in patchy, inconsistent results. State-wide targets provide a clear, consistent focus for all natural resource managers and help to make the most of available resources.

**Support accountability:** Millions of government dollars are being invested to manage our natural resources in the best interests of the state. The targets provide a yardstick for tracking and measuring progress.

**Allow for local input:** Requirements and issues vary greatly across regions, so the targets are flexible enough to be customised to suit the needs of many different environments and communities. Prioritisation and decision-making can be guided by local knowledge and expertise, increasing the chances of success.



PHOTO: NICHOLAS SHIELDS

## State-wide targets for natural resource management

Biodiversity	
1	By 2015 there is an increase in native vegetation extent and an improvement in native vegetation condition.
2	By 2015 there is an increase in the number of sustainable populations of a range of native fauna species.
3	By 2015 there is an increase in the recovery of threatened species, populations and ecological communities.
4	By 2015 there is a reduction in the impact of invasive species.
Water	
5	By 2015 there is an improvement in the condition of riverine ecosystems.
6	By 2015 there is an improvement in the ability of groundwater systems to support groundwater-dependent ecosystems and designated beneficial uses.
7	By 2015 there is no decline in the condition of marine waters and ecosystems.
8	By 2015 there is an improvement in the condition of important wetlands, and the extent of those wetlands is maintained.
9	By 2015 there is an improvement in the condition of estuaries and coastal lake ecosystems.
Land	
10	By 2015 there is an improvement in soil condition.
11	By 2015 there is an increase in the area of land that is managed within its capability.
Community	
12	Natural resource decisions contribute to improving or maintaining economic sustainability and social wellbeing.
13	There is an increase in the capacity of natural resource managers to contribute to regionally relevant natural resource management.

## One standard

How should natural resource management be undertaken to give us the best possible chance of reaching our targets? How can we ensure that natural resource management is rigorous and systematic? How can we give investors and our communities confidence that the best decisions are being made?

The NSW *Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management* (the Standard) underpins high-quality natural resource management practice in NSW. While the targets define what we want to achieve, the Standard defines how we should go about the business of natural resource management to deliver them. With so many people involved and so much at stake, it is important that decisions support investment where it is most needed, aim for the highest quality results and stand up to public scrutiny.

The Standard defines required levels of quality for seven components of natural resource management:

- collection and use of knowledge
- determination of scale
- opportunities for collaboration
- community engagement
- risk management
- monitoring and evaluation
- information management.

These seven components support high-quality decision-making in all four phases of adaptive management: planning, implementation, audit and response.

The state's Catchment Management Authorities have led the way by using the Standard to improve the way they do business. While the Standard is mandatory for Catchment Management Authorities, it provides a benchmark for everyone involved in natural resource management. Widespread use of the Standard will result in taxpayers' money being spent on the right things at the right time. It will also promote innovation and sustainable development by encouraging appropriate trade-offs between environmental, economic and social considerations.

# Reaching the targets

## Investing in regional planning and implementation

**Catchment Management Authorities** work with their local communities to translate the priorities of the NSW and Australian governments into locally relevant priorities. They do this by developing and implementing a Catchment Action Plan for their region.

**Catchment Action Plans** are ten-year strategic plans for natural resource management in each region. They define regional targets that contribute to reaching the state-wide targets. The Catchment Action Plans will evolve and improve over time as regional priorities change and the natural resource management community acquires more knowledge, skills and experience. It is vital that all of government and the whole community embrace these plans as the primary vehicle for public and private investment in natural resource management.



## Working together

The Department of Environment and Climate Change is coordinating the NSW Government's efforts to meet the targets in the State Plan. However, a wide range of individuals and organisations manage our natural resources, from state government agencies, industry groups and scientists to Landcare volunteers, land managers, Catchment Management Authorities and local government. All have important roles to play.

All natural resource managers need to work together to focus their combined efforts on achieving the targets.

## Monitoring progress

The NSW Government is conducting monitoring and evaluation to track the state's progress in meeting the targets. Government agencies and Catchment Management Authorities are working together to collect the information we need to be able to track our progress.

Good monitoring and evaluation is crucial. It will ensure public money is spent where it is most needed and will steer resource allocation and policy decisions into the future.

## An independent Commission

The Natural Resources Commission (NRC) gives the NSW Government independent advice on a range of natural resource management issues. Our vision is for all natural resource management decisions to be based on sound science and best practice management and made in the environmental, social and economic interests of NSW.

The NRC reviews the state's Catchment Action Plans and will audit how effectively they are implemented. These audits will give confidence to investors and the community that Catchment Management Authorities are delivering on the targets in their plans. The audits will also support adaptive management and help assess the overall progress NSW is making towards reaching its targets.

After recommending the state-wide targets and the Standard to the NSW Government in 2005, we are now focusing on facilitating use of the Standard and promoting the targets. We will also review and revise the Standard and targets as we learn more about their implementation.

Together, the Standard and targets and the NRC's ongoing audits of Catchment Action Plans provide the checks and balances in the state's regional model for natural resource management.



**The NRC's leadership team is (left to right): Di Bentley, David Leece, Alex McMillan, Ronnie Harding, Peter Egger and John Williams.**