



December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011

Attention: Mr Andrew Inglis  
Presiding Member  
NRM Council  
GPO Box 1047  
Adelaide, SA 5001

Dear Mr Inglis,

**RE: Draft State NRM Plan**

The Advisory Board of Agriculture (ABA) is the governing body of the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia Inc, an organisation of some 1500 members. Our key aims are 'to encourage excellence in agriculture, business management and sustainable natural resource management.'

Our Board believes there is real opportunity, through joint projects, for strengthening the relationship that the Ag Bureau movement has with NRM Landcare Facilitators and other NRM staff in several regions. This will provide real connections and improved NRM traction in the community as well as on-ground natural resource management activities.

On behalf of our membership several Board members took the opportunity to attend some of the workshops regarding the Draft NRM plan.

While we expressed our views on these occasions we also wish to forward our collective comments pertinent to our membership.

**THE PLAN**

Generally ABA members were pleased that the plan was relatively simple and therefore more likely to be read and used for guidance.

We do question the time lines for implementing the Plan and feel it would be appropriate to include a time frame on the cover.

Members are very concerned that there is not sufficient importance given to having production levels that allow for sustainable resources and economic viability and development.

We also feel that there is not sufficient emphasis on who the plan is for despite it being mentioned under Definitions and Section 1, and that Figure 1 (The Relationship between



Plans) does not accurately reflect that the community has input into the State Strategic Plan and State NRM Plan.

## **VISION & GOALS**

**Vision;** It is felt that the concept of 'stewardship' or 'management' is preferable to 'caring' so that the Vision reflects action and making a positive difference.

**Goals;** One of the key points of clarification requested was "what defines sustainable"? And what are "sustainable limits" for the use of natural resources?

Goal 1 – 'sound decision' could be worded more effectively perhaps as 'informed and balanced decisions'.

Goal 2 -

- What is 'long term'? – Maybe this could be replaced with 'future generations' for clearer definition.
- 'Within limits' is considered unnecessary as sustainable infers that it is within limits.
- This is a great Goal however where does sustainable production / economical production fit in the targets and priorities? The current targets are very conservation orientated. We believe the role of agricultural land should also be better reflected in care of biodiversity.
- Economic measures are lacking so there possibly needs to be some included either within this Goal or the targets within the Goal.

## **OUR ASSETS**

While people are mentioned in the introduction to this section, the resilience of people, a very important component of successful natural resource management, is not. This resilience also plays a role in keeping landowners on the land during tougher times to manage the natural resources, pests, weeds etc. It could be noted under Pressures on our Social Capacity.

The air/atmosphere should be included in the sphere of natural resources. It is recognised that the current NRM Act excludes air however ABA believes this should be reviewed.

### **Targets;**

These need more emphasis on partnerships / collaboration / connections and a measure of these partnerships, including those with lead agencies and the private sector.

To support this emphasis another column should be added to the Targets table for Potential Partners/Collaborators so that those not currently listed are encouraged and inspired to be involved and to share their knowledge and research. Not listing them may suggest their knowledge and contribution is not valued and does not encourage broad "ownership".

This would help NRM improve links in communities and with other agencies. Perhaps a Target around links with all of community (eg producer groups, fisheries and seafood, individuals, 3 levels of government and agencies, corporate) would assist this.

The Targets lack a "what's in it for me" component and this could be addressed by inclusion of targets with investment figures and more measurements of on-ground outcomes.

We are also wondering how often targets will be monitored and reported against.

The tone is a bit condescending. In the Targets and Priorities everything is to 'improve' or 'increase' as if the "community" is lacking knowledge. Words like strengthen, build on, working with, expand, advance, and enhance would be more appropriate where referring to people's levels of knowledge. While the words mean the same they may be seen as being more supportive rather than coming over as if NRM bodies know all.

#### Target 6

Dot point 2 – "in greater Adelaide" should be deleted as storm water capture and reuse is happening in other areas.

Dot point 4 - dryland farming should be added to allow inclusion of water use efficiency in dryland operations.

#### Target 14

It was felt that this target should include emergency response measures & proactive strategies.

The Target itself should include a reference to weeds as we generally refer to pests (fauna) and weeds (flora).

Dot point 4 - should include over abundant native species (which also have detrimental natural resource impacts)

### **THE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

It is felt that the Regional Development Australia needs to be included under the listings of Who Does What in NRM in SA.

ABA also questions the Peak bodies included on the NRM Council and believes it is time for this to be reviewed.

#### **Priority Actions;**

We are concerned that the landowners, who manage 68% of the non-arid regions of South Australia, are not mentioned and should be a priority for successful on-ground NRM.

If they fit under Priority 8 then this should read "recognise and increase the use of traditional *and local* knowledge in NRM". This would also include fishing community members.

If Priority 8 is to recognise Aboriginal knowledge then there is a strong need for a separate priority to recognise "local" knowledge and history held by "time experienced" landowners and community members.

#### **The NRM Standard;**

Members questioned how the NRM Standard fitted with the plan. Some saw it as valuable perhaps in an audit process, while others couldn't see the link to the actual vision, goals, targets, and priorities. This could be added as a second appendix.

### **SUMMARY REPORT**

One of our members expressed concern that the colours and coding used to report the state, condition and pressures of natural resource assets was not suited to those who are colour blind and were not simple and easily read.

### **THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

It has been the experience of a few of our Board members over recent years that the consulting process in some regions is often very limited in who is invited to the NRM

workshops/consulting sessions as far as numbers and “who” they represent. Much broader inclusion through consultation processes would improve the engagement and buy-in of the community.

In closing we thank the NRM Council for the opportunity to present feedback on the Draft State NRM Plan.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Richard G. Murdoch".

(Richard Murdoch)  
**Chairperson, SA Advisory Board of Agriculture (ABA)**  
**President, Agricultural Bureau of SA Inc**