

**National Conservation Incentives Forum La Trobe University Bundoora
Melbourne 5-8 July 2005**

Workshop Report

Working together: Collaborate now – avoid the rush

Workshops TH5 & TH6 Thursday 7 July 2005

Workshop designed and facilitated by Jane Elix & Judy Lambert, Community Solutions - Sydney NSW and Mike Williams, Michael Williams & Associates Pty Ltd – Sydney NSW.
Note-takers: Neil Riches, NRM Facilitator DEH, WA and Judy Lambert.

Introduction

As part of a series of workshops held during the **National Conservation Incentives Forum**, 53 participants (see Appendix 1) from a diversity of sectoral backgrounds and interests came together to explore and share knowledge and understanding of the principles, ideals and challenges of working together to achieve conservation outcomes, with an emphasis on private land. Both in bringing together different sectors originally assigned to separate workshop sessions, and throughout the workshop, some emphasis was placed on the need to work not only with those who share a common value set, but also with those whose value sets might differ.

Because of the large numbers in the workshop, the desire to make it an interactive learning experience, and the broad range of expertise among the participants, much of the workshop was conducted in mixed table groups of six to seven people, each of whom brought different professional experiences and training to the process. A 30-page Workshop Training Manual supplied to all workshop participants and to the Australian Government Department of the Environment and Heritage, provided background material and points of reference for the various elements of the workshop.

Partnerships that participants would like to forge

After a brief introductory presentation (see Appendix 2) highlighting the opportunities and challenges of working together, participants were asked to identify and discuss briefly with their neighbour, an NRM or conservation incentives partnership that they dearly would like to form.

Workshop participants offered the following generic partnerships:

- Industry <-> NGO
- Industry (one type) <-> Industry (another type)
- NGO <-> NGO
- Local Govt <-> State Govt
- State Govt (Env) <-> State Govt (Ag)
- Regional NRM Group <-> Other NRM Regional Group
- Regional NRM Group <-> Local Government
- Within organisations
- State Govt <-> Industry advocacy group

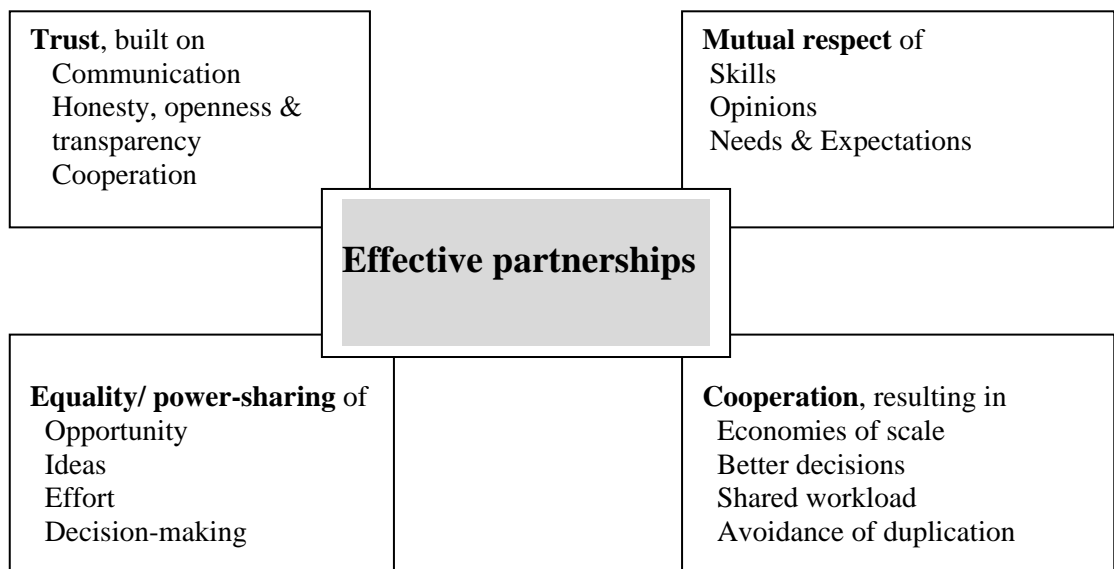
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Examples given of specific partnerships participants would like to forge included:

- the key national dairy industry body and the national rice industry body to learn lessons from each other of recent industry changes and approaches to industry-led Environmental Management Systems
- Nature Refuge Program in QLD (EPA) would like to develop formal/informal partnership with AgForce (Qld farmers' advocacy group)
- Strengthening an existing partnership that helps local government engage with NRM regional bodies and promoting the good news stories to other regions
- Extending a project across to other regional NRM bodies
- Extending the partnerships within organisations.
- Trust for Nature (Victoria) and Grand Ridge Plantations Pty Ltd (Hancock Timber Holdings) and The Nature Conservancy have formed a partnership MOU). The nature of the partnership and the benefits and challenges were explained by a specially invited representative from Hancock

The intent of the MOU is to provide a framework for the parties to work together to manage agreed forests for their biodiversity values in the Strzelecki Ranges of South Gippsland Victoria, especially areas with recognised high conservation value especially to preserve values included in the 'cores and links' areas as identified in a consultancy (Biosis Pty Ltd) Report (see www.tfn.org.au for further details).

Key factors for success were then outlined briefly, using a diagram included in the Training Manual (see below) and brief illustration by way of reference to partnership projects in which the facilitators had had personal experience.



The importance of operating protocols, and of establishing them at the beginning of the project were then discussed, together with brief discussion of the need to **assess the social/human risks** of entering a partnership arrangement and the need to put in place risk management strategies.

In this context, the importance of being aware of **organisational/cultural “badging”** as an influence on the perceptions and expectations of others was also highlighted. Several participants provided amusing, but at the same time strongly illustrative examples of their own experiences of cultural badging impacts on partnership formation .

Ground rules, protocols for operating together and mechanisms for planning to manage both risks and problems were highlighted.

The issues identified by participant were summarised as follows.

Protocols of Engagement

Micro protocols

- Listen well
- Learn to put yourself in the other person’s shoes
- Avoid assumptions
- Share knowledge
- Manage expectations early
- Go through a process that constantly clarifies the roles in the partnerships and the stakes for each partner
- Maintain continuity of the negotiator and bring in expertise where needed
- Do risk assessments – what are the risks/benefits of forming a partnership

Macro protocols

- Use principles of adaptive management (constant review of content and process)
- Have common objectives – must be honest about objectives and re-clarify regularly – be ambitious
- Allow enough time – it can take a long time
- There *will* be tension – put in place ways of managing it.

The next session in the workshop identified key steps in the formation of enduring and efficacious partnerships.

A stepped process to developing partnerships

1. Do your homework
 - Audit of what/who’s out there
 - Risk assessment (social as well as physical)
 - Existing models
 - Existing networks
 - Avoid duplicating effort
2. Getting started
 - Develop the protocols of engagement
 - Involve as many partners as is desirable
 - Work out the best initial approaches
 - Decide on a “top down” or “bottom up” approach or a mix
 - Work out what’s in it for each of the parties
 - Take some time for reflection
 - Refrain from patch protection

3. Do it!
 - Build rapport/use the right approach, break down barriers
 - Develop some documents about agreed expectations
 - Define boundaries of the partnership
 - Make sure you have the support from your institution
 - Do a pilot first
4. Review
 - Regularly
 - Often
5. Celebrate together

Developing a desired partnership

Participants were then asked to discuss in more detail their desired NRM or conservation incentive partnerships that they had discussed at the opening of the workshop. Each small group of about 6-7 participants selected one of their small group's desired partnerships and developed it into a preliminary strategic plan.

Key themes that emerged across most of the partnership strategies included:

- Developing trust
- Understand what both parties want from a partnership
- Need to work to develop partnerships outside our comfort zones
- Develop a protocol for engagement very early on to manage future potential tensions

These strategic partnerships were documented onto overhead transparencies and collected by workshop facilitators.

Given the limited time, each small group was asked to report to the participants on the **more innovative or challenging aspects of the strategic partnerships they had chosen and developed into a strategic partnership plan**. The following were discussed:

* Avon Wheatbelt – WWF Woodland Conservation Program working with WA Farmers' Federation

Was it more fruitful to employ someone to do the public relations work or have someone within the partnership do it. Doing it within the partnership was considered to be the option.

* Nature Conservation Trust of NSW and Namoi CMA – The small group reported on a real partnership that had been forged during the workshop. The parties had established the contact, discussed what each party could bring to the partnership, shared a vision, agreed on a framework to formalise the relationship. The serendipity was enjoyed by participants.

* One small group reported on the need to build up the rapport and understanding between local government and NRM regions. A suggestion was made to second CMA officers into local governments and vice versa as well as the need to break

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some existing tensions or the barrier by applying the “protocol for engagement” approach that had been discussed at the workshop.

The need institutional support before going into negotiations to develop a partnership.

The need to determine the common goals and benefits that both parties want to achieve.

The need to be mindful to make sure the organisation being courted into a partnership is not being railroaded.

* South West Australian Ecoregion Initiative – need to bring the NRM regions on board. Need to identify what is in it for them as well as what is in it for the existing members.

* Partnership between wool growers and native grasses conservation organisation. Want to develop a list of who to contact to develop an “ecolabel” and approach established organisations in the retail industry. Keep the lines of communication open.

* Greening Australia developing a vegetation forum with CMAs – Establish the objectives and the benefits to all parties involved. Get everyone together and improve each others understanding.

* Western NSW/Vic and NE SA – ‘Wild Country’ project – explore who already does what, know who is doing what where. Then develop the combined vision of the parties at the table. Need to understand at what level you go in first (top down versus bottom up).

The case study partnerships discussed and documented by each of the small groups is presented below. Given the time available these were not presented to the workshop participants but illustrate the strategic approach taken by the workshop participants to collaboration and partnership development. The small groups selected a partnership that they wished to forge and developed into a strategic plan. Below is what was provided on overhead transparency.

Table 1 – Nature Conservation Trust NSW and Namoi CMA

1. Make first contact
2. Introductions
 - What, how, why
 - Who Nature Conservation Trust and Namoi CMA are
3. Establish a range of contacts
 - What's in it for each of the parties WIN/WIN
4. Awareness of:
 - Respective information
 - Respective skills
 - What each party brings to the partnership
5. Development of shared vision
6. How can we best:
 - Complement
 - Assist
 - Provide different tools
 - Work together
 - Fund
7. Formalise relationship
 - MOUs
8. Develop a worthy mutual program
 - Using partnership to build partnerships
 - NGO -> CMA

Table 2 – Trust for Nature (Vic) with ‘a cast of thousands’ – Yarra Valley Vic

Aim: To improve biodiversity outcomes by working across tenure/across landscape for improved management (beyond ‘isolated’ private covenants).

- Helmeted honeyeater – need to ‘extend horizon’ of activity for recovery actions.
 - Overcome habitat degradation inside and outside reserve
- Bring together all the major partners, building on existing networks, coordinating efforts over broader landscape scale.

Table 2 – WWF and WA Farmers Federation and/or Pastoral Graziers Association of WA

- To extend the reach into, and influence with, rural landholders by partnering with landholder organisations, networks and structures
- Improved outcomes on private land – stewardship, ecosystem services, covenants (more and faster uptake, less resistance)
- Start/entry points
 - Check with current partners if they agree
 - (If OK) Work with WAFF portfolio officer first to test pathways/options
 - Build a new ‘joint venture’ into a tender (options for level of commitment)
 - But first, run a risk check for each party and landholders already in the system

Table 3 – South West Australian Ecoregion Initiative

Objectives

- Biodiversity conservation plan for SW Aust. Ecoregion
- Refine the objectives with stakeholders and regional NRM Groups
 - Meet stakeholder needs
 - Meet eco-region needs
- Find common ground between current regional NRM plans
- Understand differences between current regional NRM plans
- Ensure coordinated on-ground work

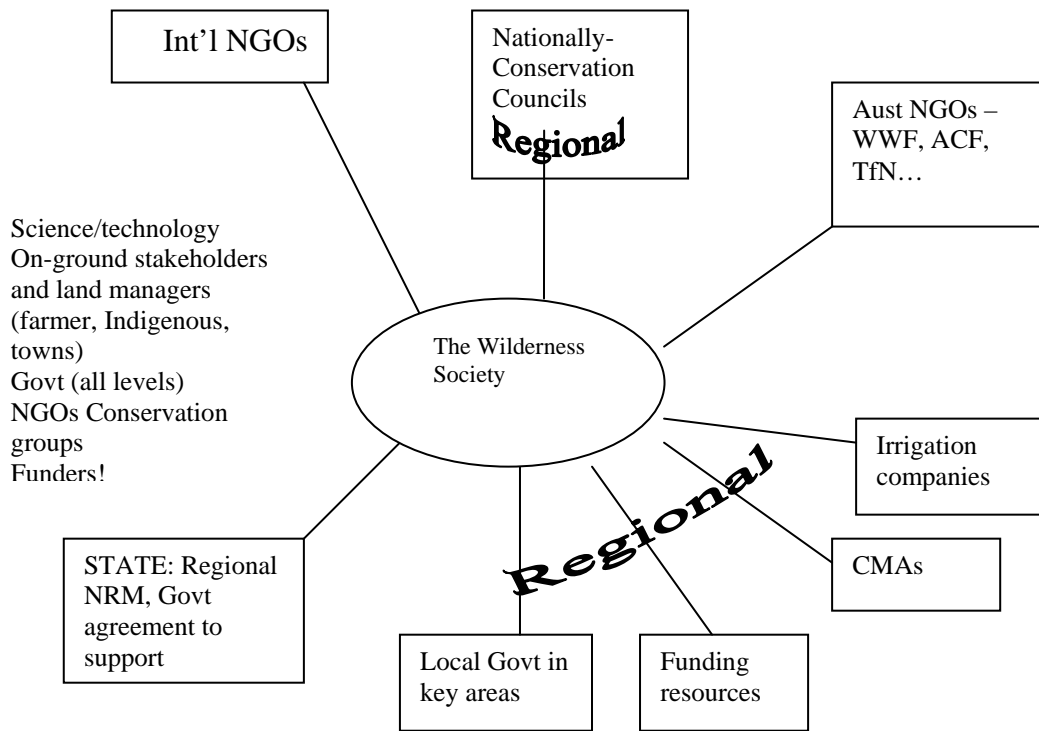
Partners

- State Govt NRM agencies
- WWF
- Consortium of Environmental NGOs, local government groups
- Farmer groups

Strategy

- Identify key people in stakeholder groups
- Develop common information base for stakeholders
- Identify and acknowledge stakeholders’ perceptions of current successes and failures.

Table 4 – Landscape conservation in the Mallee country and beyond (NSW, Vic, SA) “WildCountry”



Drivers:

- Wildlands project USA
- Need for common direction amongst NGOs
- Need to serve broad change in paradigm to consider conservation at landscape level
- Need to align resources

Steps

1. Initial/preliminary exploration of how NGOs fit together – matrix
2. NGO working group/support team
3. Audit of players who might be interested – establish bond
4. Draft vision statement from first level collaboration
5. On-ground research (what’s happening?)

Risks	Response
TWS – cultural badging and perceived baggage	Use personal skills (chat, language, dress)
Others feel territorial	Check / audit everyone’s interests and aspirations

Forming partnerships from scratch vs integrating into existing partnerships

Time – allowing time eg rural communities over three states (NSW, Vic and SA)

Table 5 –Greening Australia’s Native Vegetation Forum (to be held in March 2006 in Albury NSW) in collaboration with NRM regional bodies

1. Research and identify partners
2. Establish objectives
3. Explore benefits to all parties
4. Make initial contact
5. Arrange meeting
6. Clarify expectations and roles
 - Identify common interests, goals, understanding, background, visions and situations
 - Identify risks of partnership and of not partnering
 - Discuss an agreement and determine contacts and timelines
7. Stakeholder workshop
 - Participation, planning and input
8. Consistent correspondence and communication
9. Review, evaluate and celebrate together

Table 6 – Melbourne Water and Greening Australia

1. Recognise within Melbourne Water that the need is there
 - What do we need and what can Greening Australia provide?
2. Decide who should make the initial contact
3. Know your partner – do research
4. Explore introductory options (joint contact)
5. Determine common goals and benefits to each
6. Clearly identify what you want – ask what they want
7. Identify potential synergies
8. Listen to each other
9. Allow time to consider/reflect
10. Evaluate relationship
11. Feedback and clarify and modify
12. Draft an agreement
 - who, what, when, where and how
13. Keep it simple and honest
14. Be sure that it’s reportable
15. Ongoing review

Table 7 – Partnership between NRM regional process and Local Government

Partnership to reflect and integrate State and Regional NRM targets as priorities in Local Government planning

Ideas

- Roundtable (icebreaker) → Listening
- Cultural exchange
- Interest – not positions
 - Identifying resources and sharing opportunities
- An outsider's point of view (what do the disengaged think?)
- Formal/Informal – different protocols for different groups
- Identifying roles for Local Government. Place staff in LGAs
- Using champions
- Are we using the same tools (eg GIS)?
- Language – aligning our understanding
- Identifying common goals
- Ongoing commitment vs endpoint

Table 8 – Strategic plan for partnership with Industry (woolgrowers) and Government to develop an ecolabel which will provide conservation outcomes

Preparation

1. Initial contact to sow the seeds of the idea (gauge receptiveness)
2. Establish the benefits of a partnership i.e. getting ahead of the game
3. Establish mutual needs (i.e. economic benefit for industry and better access to markets, healthier industry; conservation of native grasses while still harnessing industry)
4. Use the right language to get the right outcomes (i.e. native pastures)

Contact

5. Approach representatives in the industry
 - Established organisations eg Farmers Federation
 - Influential individuals
 - Buyers of product
 - Environmentally conscious farmers
6. Discuss marketing strategies
 - Being honest and open on both parties' objectives
7. Develop pilot project
 - Real life examples
8. Identify other partners with similar objectives (government and independent)
9. Keep communications open
 - Review and re-do if necessary
10. Seek investment and support (incentives in the short term)
11. Formalise the agreement

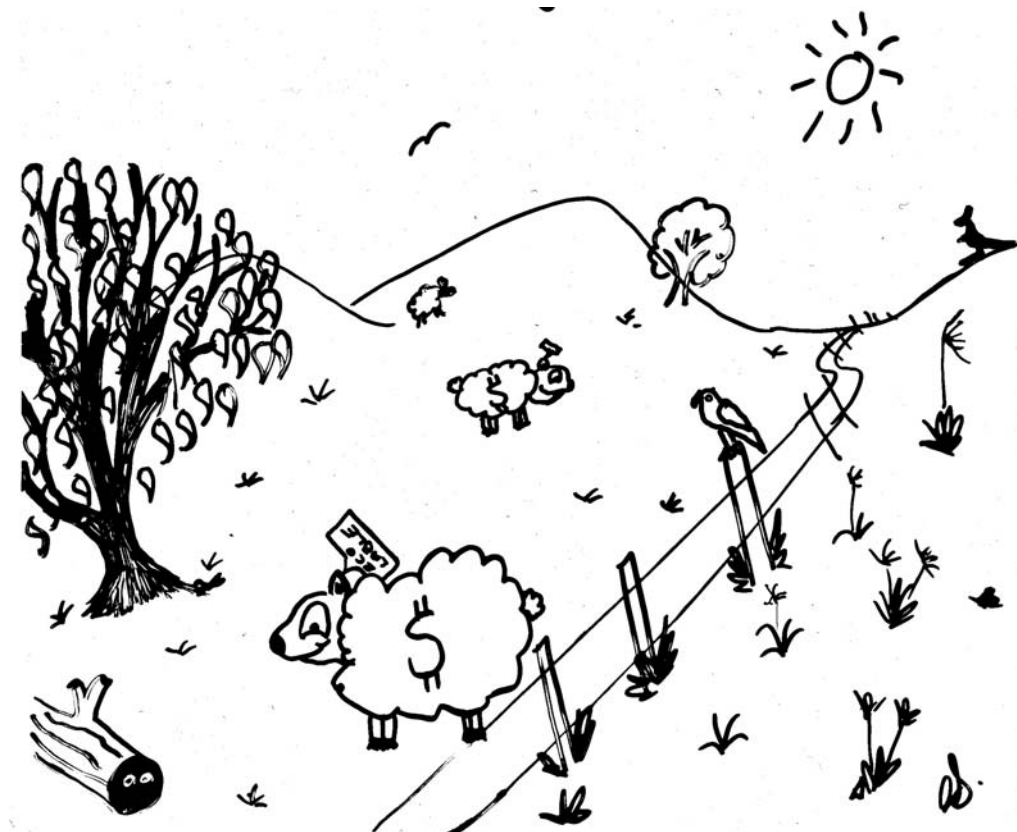


Table 9 – Partnership to source funding

- What the proposal is
- Research potential sources of funds
 - Personal approach
 - Ask about the business
 - Their vision
 - Needs/wants
 - Opportunities
- Tailor the package
- Review results

Workshop wrap-up/Plenary presentation

Addressed, as recorded in the workshop were:

1. the different types of partnership identified
2. protocols for engagement
3. a 5-step process for successful partnerships

Facilitators' comments

Bringing together all conference participants who had expressed an interest in the 'Working together' sessions of the conference, rather than separating them according to sectoral interests and values, resulted in a large group. However, the degree of cross-sectoral interaction and the extent to which participants used the workshop to begin to forge real working partnerships appeared to fully justify the decision to merge the sessions.

Case studies, based on practical experiences of both the facilitators and workshop participants, made a strong positive contribution to practical 'grounding' of the session.

Although conducted at a fast pace, the workshop clearly achieved its objective of "providing participants with the opportunity to discuss issues and opportunities for developing cooperative working relationships within the Regional Natural Resource Management Framework". A need and support for more detailed and in-depth, interactive training sessions on Collaboration and Building partnerships was clearly identified from this session. Given similar identified needs in the Ongoing stewardship sessions run by Community Solutions, it is suggested that further consideration be given to the development of a series of such training workshops.

Evaluation Summary

At the conclusion of the workshop participants were asked to provide Post It Note 'Brickbats' and 'Bouquets' summarising what they perceived as the strengths and weaknesses of the workshop.

The results can be summarised as follows.

Most participants provided some comment, with Bouquets (44) slightly outnumbering Brickbats (37).

Bouquets were varied in the themes emerging. Key among recurring themes were the structure, pace and facilitation of the workshop, the extent to which it was interactive and involved everyone in group work enabling good networking, sharing of knowledge and reinforcing of ideas, and the prepared notes provided. The inclusion of case studies and practical working examples also received favourable mention. Others merely commented either that it was very positive or that they could not think of anything negative to include.

Among the Brickbats, the shortness of time available to address the amount of material covered was a major focus, with 22 participants commenting on this in some way. A sense of being rushed, lack of time to do justice to the topics, to

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explore in more detail and to explore downsides of partnerships, as well as lack of time for reflection were all mentioned. A need for more information prior to the workshop and the amount of information to be picked up and carried along during the fast-moving process was also mentioned. While some wanted more case studies, others questioned the value of the case studies. A small number of individual comments ranging across widely divergent issues were also included.

**Appendix 1 - People who confirmed as attending the Session TH5&6:
Working together - Collaborate now: Avoid the Rush
Thursday, 7 July 2005 1:15pm**

Name	Organisation
Dr Francesca Andreoni	The Wilderness Society
Mr Don Arnold	Glenelg Hopkins CMA
Mr Glenn Bailey	Namoi Catchment Management Authority
Miss Lisa Blake	Adelaide & Mount Lofty Ranges
Ms Christie Boyle	Department of Sustainability and Environment
Ms Anne Buchan	Corangamite CMA
Mr Sebastian Burgess	Greening Australia
Ms Jacinta Cain	Lower Murray Darling CMA
Mr David Carr	Greening Australia
Mr Chris Curnow	WWF-Australia
Ms Penelope Figgis AM	World Commission on Protected Areas
Mr Grant Flanagan	Kangaroo Island Natural Resources Board
Mr Stephen Gartland	Department of Sustainability and Environment
Dr Loise Gilfedder	Dept. Primary Industries, Water and Environment
Ms Merrill Halley	Department of Sustainability & Environment
Ms Mary-Anne Healy	Department for Environment & Heritage SA
Ms Leonie Hodsdon	Department of the Environment and Heritage
Mrs Natalie Holland	Trust for Nature
Mr Jarrad Holmes	WWF-Australia
Mr David Hudson	Conservation Volunteers Australia
Mr Ben Hyde	Aust Govt Dept of Environment & Heritage
Ms Alison Jeavons	Department Of Primary Industries
Ms Jessica Kenway	Roberts Evaluation
Mr Mark Kesby	Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee
Ms Annie Keys	DEH/DAFF
Ms Julie Kirkwood	Threatened Species Network
Dr Geoff Lipsett-Moore	Nature Conservation Trust of NSW
Dr Michael Looker	Trust for Nature
Ms Catriona Jane MacDiarmid	EcoProperty Pty Ltd
Mr Neil Marriott	Trust for Nature
Ms Ann McGregor	Context Pty Ltd
Mr Craig McGregor	Environmental Protection Agenc
Ms Clare McInnes	Trust for Nature
Mr Richard McLellan	WWF-Australia
Ms Carla Miles	Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
Dr Tim Milne	Nature Conservation Society of South Australia
Ms Lisa Moore	Trust for Nature
Mr. Warwick Moss	WWF-Australia
Mr Luke Murphy	Municipal Association of Victoria
Mrs Chantelle Noack	Avon Catchment Council
Mr Eris O'Brien	Trust for Nature
Mr Jim O'May	Centre for Environmental Management, University of Ballarat
Ms Amber Parkinson	Australian Government
Miss Lyn Pullen	Queensland Murray Darling Committee
Miss Greta Quinlivan	North East Catchment Management Authority
Miss Linda Raynor	Blackwood Basin Group
Ms Melanie Rees	Rural Solutions SA
Ms Penny Richards	PPW CMA
Mr Neil Riches	Department of the Environment and Heritage

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Name	Organisation
Mr. Mark Sheahan	Dept of Sustainability & Environment (Nth East Region)
Ms Rebecca Sheldon	Corangamite CMA
Mr Ian Smith	Conservation Volunteers Australia
Miss Caren St John - Sweeting	Berri Barmera Local Action Planning Committee
Mr Malcolm Tonkin	Hancock Victorian Plantations Pty Ltd
Mr David Walker	Liverpool Plains Land Management Committee
Mr Peter Wilcock	Australian Government
Mr Darren Willis	Dept of Water, Land and biodiversity Conservation
Miss Alanna Wright	Desert Uplands
Ms Jora Young	The Nature Conservancy

58 People Listed

Appendix 2 – Introductory presentation

Powerpoint presentation provided as separate file attached.