



## **NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS**

**National Reports to be submitted to the 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting  
of the Conference of the Contracting Parties,  
Romania, June 2012**

Please submit the completed National Report, in electronic (Microsoft Word) format, and preferably by e-mail, to the Ramsar Secretariat by **15 September 2011**.

National Reports should be sent to: Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Secretariat ([dufour@ramsar.org](mailto:dufour@ramsar.org))

### **Introduction & background**

1. This National Report Format (NRF) has been approved by the Standing Committee in Decision SC41-24 for the Ramsar Convention's Contracting Parties to complete as their national reporting to the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties of the Convention (Bucharest, Romania, June 2012).
2. Following Standing Committee discussions at its 40<sup>th</sup> meeting in May 2009, and its Decision SC40-29, this COP11 National Report Format closely follows that used for the COP10 National Report Format, which in turn was a significantly revised and simplified format in comparison with the National Report Formats provided to previous recent COPs.
3. In addition to thus permitting continuity of reporting and implementation progress analyses by ensuring that indicator questions are as far as possible consistent with previous NRFs (and especially the COP10 NRF), this COP11 NRF is structured in terms of the Goals and Strategies of the 2009-2015 Ramsar Strategic Plan adopted at COP10 as Resolution X.1, and the indicators speak to relevant Key Result Areas (KRAs) for each Strategy in the Strategic Plan.
4. The COP11 NRF indicators include, with the agreement of the Standing Committee, certain indicators specifically requested to be included by the Convention's Scientific and Technical Review Panel (STRP) in light of its work on assessing effectiveness indicators, and by the CEPA Oversight Panel, in order to facilitate their information gathering and reporting on key aspects of scientific, technical and CEPA implementation under the Convention. The format also includes indicator questions concerning the use of the "Changwon Declaration on human well-being and wetlands", as requested in Resolution X.3 (2008).
5. This COP11 NRF includes 82 indicator questions. In addition, for each Strategy the option is provided for a Contracting Party, if it so wishes, to supply additional information concerning its implementation under each indicator and, more generally, on implementation of other aspects of each Strategy.
6. The COP11 Format also now includes an additional, optional, section (section 4) to permit a Contracting Party to provide additional information, if it wishes to, on indicators relevant to individual Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

### **The purposes and uses of national reporting to the Conference of the Contracting Parties**

7. National Reports from Contracting Parties are official documents of the Convention and are made publicly available through their posting on the Convention's website.
8. There are six main purposes for the Convention's National Reports. These are to:
  - i) provide data and information on how the Convention is being implemented;
  - ii) capture lessons and experience to help Parties develop future action;
  - iii) identify emerging issues and implementation challenges faced by Parties that may require further attention from the Conference of the Parties;
  - iv) provide a means for Parties to be accountable for their commitments under the Convention;

- v) provide each Party with a tool to help it assess and monitor its progress in implementation, and to plan its future priorities; and
  - vi) provide an opportunity for Parties to draw attention to their achievements during the triennium.
9. The data and information provided by Parties in their National Reports have another valuable purpose as well, since a number of the indicators in the National Reports on Parties' implementation provide key sources of information for the analysis and assessment of the "ecological outcome-oriented indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention" currently being further developed by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel for Standing Committee and COP11 consideration.
10. To facilitate the analysis and subsequent use of the data and information provided by Contracting Parties in their National Reports, once received and verified by the Ramsar Secretariat all information is entered and held by the Secretariat in a database, which then facilitates extraction and analysis of the information for a number of purposes.
11. The Convention's National Reports are used in a number of ways. These include:
- i) providing the basis for reporting by the Secretariat to each meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the global and regional implementation, and the progress in implementation, of the Convention. This is provided to Parties at the COP as a series of Information Papers, including:
    - the Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention at the global level (see, e.g., COP10 DOC. 6);
    - the Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 (b), (c), and (d) concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance (see, e.g., COP10 DOC. 7); and
    - the reports providing regional overviews of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in each Ramsar region (see, e.g., COP10 DOCs 8-13);
  - ii) providing information on specific implementation issues in support of the provision of advice and decisions by Parties at the COP. Examples at CO9 and COP10 included:
    - Resolution IX.15 and X.13, *The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance*, and
    - Information Papers on *Issues and scenarios concerning Ramsar Sites or parts of sites which cease to meet or never met the Ramsar Criteria* (COP9 DOC. 15), *Implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme for the period 2003-2005* (COP9 DOC. 25), *Overview of the implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme for the period 2006-2008* (COP10 DOC. 16, and *Background and rationale to the Framework for processes of detecting, reporting and responding to change in wetland ecological character* (COP10 DOC. 27);
  - iii) providing the source data for time-series assessments of progress on specific aspects in the implementation of the Convention included in other Convention products. An example is the summary of progress since COP3 (Regina, 1997) in the development

of National Wetland Policies, included as Table 1 in Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 2 (4<sup>th</sup> edition, 2010); and

- iv) providing information for reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on the national-level implementation of the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan and the Ramsar Convention's lead implementation role on wetlands for the CBD. In particular, the COP10 NRF indicators have been used extensively in 2009 in the preparation by the Ramsar Secretariat and STRP of contributions to the in-depth review of the CBD programme of work on the biological diversity of inland water ecosystems that was being considered by CBD SBSTTA14 and COP10 during 2010 (see UNEP/CBD/SBSTTA/14/3).

### The structure of the COP11 National Report Format

12. The COP11 National Report Format is in four sections.

**Section 1** provides the Institutional Information about the Administrative Authority and National Focal Points for the national implementation of the Convention.

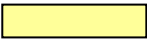

**Section 2** is a “free-text” section in which the Party is invited to provide a summary of various aspects of national implementation progress and recommendations for the future.

**Section 3** provides the 82 implementation indicator questions, grouped under each Convention implementation strategy in the Strategic Plan 2009-2015, and with an optional “free-text” section under each indicator question in which the Contracting Party may, if it wishes, add further information on national implementation of that activity; and a further “free-text” section for adding further information on other aspects of implementation of that Strategy.

**Section 4** is an optional Annex to the National Report Format to allow any Contracting Party that wishes to do so to provide additional information separately for any or all of its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites). This has been included at the request of a number of Parties.

### Guidance for filling in and submitting the COP11 National Report Format

**IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ THIS SECTION OF GUIDANCE BEFORE STARTING TO FILL IN THE NATIONAL REPORT FORMAT**

13. All of the first three Sections of the COP11 National Report Format should be completed in one of the Convention's official languages (English, French, Spanish).
14. The deadline for submission of the completed NRF is **15 September 2011**. It will not be possible to include information from National Reports received after that date in the analysis and reporting on Convention implementation to COP11.
15. All fields with a pale yellow background  must be filled in.
16. Fields with a pale green background  are optional free-text fields in which to provide additional information, if the Contracting Party so wishes. Although providing information in these fields in the NRF is optional, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide such additional information wherever possible and relevant, since experience

shows that such explanatory information is very valuable in ensuring a full understanding of implementation progress and activity, notably in informing the preparation of global and regional implementation reports to COP.

17. In order to assist Contracting Parties in providing such additional information, for a number of indicator questions some particularly helpful types of such information are suggested. However, of course, Parties are free to add any other relevant information they wish in any of the “Additional implementation information” fields.
18. The Format is created as a “Form” in Microsoft Word. You are only able to move to each of the yellow or green boxes to give your replies and information, as all other parts of the form are locked to ensure that the form and wording of indicators will remain uniform and comparable for all Parties. If you need to work with an unlocked version of the Format, please contact Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer (dufour@ramsar.org), who will advise on how that can be done.
19. To go to a yellow or green field you wish to fill in, move the cursor over the relevant part of the form and left-click the mouse. The cursor will automatically move to the next field available.
20. To move down the sequence of fields to fill in, you can also use the “Tab” key on the computer keyboard.
21. For a “free-text” field, you can type in whatever information you wish. If you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green or yellow “free-text” box, it is recommended that you cut-and-paste the existing text into a separate file, make the amendments, and then cut-and-paste the revised text back into the green box – this is because within the Microsoft “Form” format there is limited facility to make editorial changes in the “free-text” box once text has been entered.
22. Certain keyboard characters interfere with the automatic data entry into our database for handling and analysing National Reports. For that reason, please do not use the characters “ ”, [ ] ° ° ° ° in the “free text” fields.
23. For each of the “Indicator questions” in Section 3, a drop-down menu of answer options is provided. These vary between indicators, depending on the question, but are generally of the form: “Yes”, “No”, “Partly”, “In progress”, etc. This is necessary so that statistical comparisons can be made of the replies.
24. For each indicator question you can choose only one answer. If you wish to provide further information or clarifications concerning your answer, you can do so in the green additional information box below the relevant indicator question.
25. To select an answer to an indicator question, use the Tab key, or move the cursor over the relevant yellow box and left-click the mouse. The drop-down menu of answer options will appear. Left-click the mouse on the answer option you choose, and this will appear in the centre of the yellow box.
26. The NRF is not intended normally to be filled in by one person alone – for many indicators it would seem best for the principal compiler to consult with colleagues in the same and other agencies within the government who might have fuller knowledge of the Party’s overall implementation of the Convention. The principal compiler can save the

work at any point in the process and return to it subsequently to continue or to amend answers previously given. When filling in this form, it is also advised to refer back to the National Report submitted for COP10 for purposes of continuity and consistency.

27. After each session working on the NRF, remember to save the file! A recommended filename structure is: COP11NRF [Country] [date].
28. After the NRF has been completed, please send the completed National Report to the Ramsar Secretariat, preferably by e-mail, to Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Convention Secretariat, e-mail: [dufour@ramsar.org](mailto:dufour@ramsar.org). The Secretariat must receive your completed National Report in this electronic (Microsoft Word) format.
29. When the completed National Report is submitted by the Party, **it must be accompanied by a letter or e-mail message in the name of the Administrative Authority, confirming that this is that Contracting Party's official submission of its COP11 National Report.**
30. If you have any questions or problems concerning filling in the COP11 NRF, please contact the Ramsar Secretariat for advice (e-mail as above).

## SECTION 1: INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

<b>NAME OF CONTRACTING PARTY: AUSTRALIA</b>	
<b>DESIGNATED RAMSAR ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY</b>	
<b>Name of Administrative Authority:</b>	Water Reform Division Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
<b>Head of Administrative Authority - name and title:</b>	Mr Tony Slatyer First Assistant Secretary
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<b>Email:</b>	tony.slatyer@environment.gov.au
<b>DESIGNATED NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR RAMSAR CONVENTION MATTERS</b>	
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<b>DESIGNATED NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO STRP (SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL)</b>	
<b>Name and title of focal point:</b>	Mr John Foster Director
<b>Name of organisation:</b>	Wetlands Policy and Legislation Section Aquatic Systems Health Branch Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
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<b>DESIGNATED GOVERNMENT NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO THE CEPA PROGRAMME ON COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS</b>	
<b>Name and title of focal point:</b>	Ms Jenny Tomkins Assistant Director
<b>Name of organisation:</b>	Wetlands Policy and Legislation Section Aquatic Systems Health Branch Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
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DESIGNATED NON-GOVERNMENT NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO THE CEPA PROGRAMME ON COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND AWARENESS	
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## SECTION 2: GENERAL SUMMARY OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

**In your country, in the past triennium (i.e., since COP10 reporting):**

**A. What new steps have been taken to implement the Convention?**

Since COP10 there have been a number of new steps undertaken to implement the Convention. These range from initiatives that are directly related to Australia's implementation of the Convention to activities that contribute more broadly to the wise use of wetlands in Australia. Steps to implement the Convention have been undertaken at the national, regional, state/territory and site scales.

Responsibility for the on-ground management of wetlands and associated flora and fauna is vested in the appropriate landholders/land managers; this occurs in accordance with relevant national, state or territory legislative and policy frameworks. Further information on Australia's policy and regulatory framework is provided under question D.

### **Murray–Darling Basin – a continued focus**

As indicated in Australia's COP10 National Report, the *Water Act 2007* commenced on 3 March 2008. The Water Act has a number of objects including to enable the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the Murray–Darling Basin States, to manage the Murray–Darling Basin water resources in the national interest; to give effect to relevant international agreements (to the extent to which these are relevant to the use and management of the Murray–Darling Basin water resources); and to promote the use and management of the Murray–Darling Basin water resources in a way that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes.

The Water Act also established the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) and charged it with preparing a strategic plan to ensure the sustainable use of the Murray–Darling Basin's water resources to protect and restore the ecosystems, natural habitats and species that are reliant on the Murray–Darling Basin's water resources. In developing the plan (the Basin Plan), section 21 (3) of the Act requires the Authority to give effect to international agreements, including the Ramsar Convention, and to promote the wise use of all the Murray–Darling Basin water resources and the conservation of declared Ramsar wetlands.

While the Basin Plan is still under development, significant progress has been made on what is a complex, technical and challenging example of water reform being undertaken on a globally-unprecedented scale. A critical objective of the Act is to ensure the return to environmentally sustainable levels of extraction of the Basin's water resources to protect and, where required, restore key environmental assets and key ecosystem functions.

During the current triennium the Authority has undertaken a process to identify the key water-dependent ecosystems in the Murray–Darling Basin, identifying almost 2000 key environmental assets which will be used to inform the amount of water required to return to environmentally sustainable levels of take. The Authority is also developing an Environmental Watering Plan as the primary mechanism through which to: coordinate the effective management of environmental water; safeguard existing environmental water; and plan for the recovery of additional environmental water in order to protect and restore the wetlands and other environmental assets of the Murray–Darling Basin, and to protect biodiversity dependent on the Basin water resources and achieve other environmental outcomes for the Murray–Darling Basin. The Water Act requires the Environmental Watering Plan to specify overall environmental objectives for the Murray–Darling Basin's water-dependent ecosystems.

In order to stimulate discussion and debate and generate feedback to better inform the development of the Basin Plan, the Authority has devised a drafting process which provides several opportunities for stakeholder input, including through release of a proposed plan with 16 weeks of statutory consultation, and a final plan enacted as a legislative instrument in the Australian Parliament.

### **'Water for the Future'**

The Basin Plan is part of the Government's national plan on water, 'Water for the Future'. The 'Water for the Future' initiative is built on four key priorities: taking action on climate change, using water wisely, securing water supplies and supporting healthy rivers. It includes funds of AUD 5.8 billion over ten years to improve the efficiency and productivity of water use and management. A portion of the water savings from these investments will be retained by the Government and used for environmental purposes.

'Water for the Future' also includes immediate action to improve river health, with over AUD 3.1 billion committed to purchasing water for the Murray–Darling Basin waterways through the Restoring the Balance in the Murray–Darling Basin program. This will provide more water to protect and restore high value environmental assets in the Murray–Darling Basin.

### **Environmental water**

In addition to establishing the Authority, the Water Act established the independent statutory office of the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH). The Act requires the CEWH to manage the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings to protect or restore environmental assets, including wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention so as to give effect to the Ramsar Convention and other relevant international agreements. It also requires the CEWH to manage the holdings in accordance with the Environmental Watering Plan being prepared by the Authority, once it comes into effect. Information on the early results of 2009–10 watering actions is available in the 'Commonwealth Environmental Water 2009–10 Outcomes Report', available from [www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/action/cewh-outcomes-report-2009-10.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/action/cewh-outcomes-report-2009-10.html).

The Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) was established in July 2011 to streamline management of environmental water across Victoria thereby providing greater efficiency and transparency in the way water is used to maximise environmental benefits. More information is available online [www.water.vic.gov.au/environment/environmental-water-holder](http://www.water.vic.gov.au/environment/environmental-water-holder).

In addition to the CEWH and the VEW, there are a number of other environmental water activities including:

- The Living Murray (TLM) program, a partnership of the Australian and Murray–Darling Basin governments, aims to recover environmental water for use at six Ramsar sites [www.mdba.gov.au](http://www.mdba.gov.au).
- In New South Wales (NSW) water has been purchased for the environment through the RiverBank, Rivers Environmental Restoration Program (RERP), and NSW Wetlands Recovery Program. The 'Environmental Water Use in New South Wales: Annual Report 2009–10' provides a summary of how this environmental water was used [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/index.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/index.htm).
- The Victorian government is undertaking regional sustainable water strategies to plan for long-term water security across Victoria. Each water strategy outlines the planning and actions needed to respond to risks and ensure secure water for communities, business, industry and the environment in the future. The environmental

flow requirements of wetlands are considered in allocating water for a range of consumptive and environmental water uses. More information is available on the Department of Sustainability and Environment Office of Water website – [www.water.vic.gov.au/programs/sws](http://www.water.vic.gov.au/programs/sws).

The significant rainfall events experienced across the Murray–Darling Basin in the second half of 2010 delivered much needed respite to the key wetlands in the Basin, with significant flooding occurring throughout the system. These flooding events, which were supplemented by environmental water, led to large scale bird breeding events.

Since these rainfall events, significantly more water has also become available for environmental watering and ongoing water recoveries will continue to grow the holdings over coming years. This will increase the capacity of Australian and state governments to maintain and improve the health of wetlands across the Murray–Darling Basin.

### **‘Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030’**

The objectives of the Ramsar Convention are implemented in part through the revised national biodiversity strategy, ‘Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030’, which was released in October 2010. The strategy is a guiding framework for how Australians can protect and manage terrestrial, freshwater aquatic and marine biodiversity over the coming decades. All Australian governments have committed to implementing the strategy which sets 10 targets to be achieved by 2015. A number of these targets relate to wetlands, particularly those focused on building ecosystem resilience in a changing climate. The targets relevant to wetlands are:

Target 4: By 2015, achieve a national increase of 600,000 square kilometres of native habitat managed primarily for biodiversity conservation across terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments.

Target 5: By 2015, 1000 square kilometres of fragmented landscapes and aquatic systems are being restored to improve ecological connectivity.

Target 7: By 2015, reduce by at least 10 per cent the impacts of invasive species on threatened species and ecological communities in terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments.

### **Independent review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999***

The Australian Government's primary environmental legislation is the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act protects eight matters of national environmental significance including: listed threatened species and ecological communities; migratory species; wetlands of international importance; world heritage properties; national heritage places; Commonwealth marine areas; the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park; and nuclear actions. If an action has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance, it requires approval from the Australian Government Minister for the Environment.

In October 2008, the Australian Government commissioned an independent review of the EPBC Act. Section 522A of the EPBC Act requires it to be reviewed every 10 years from its commencement. The aim of the review was to assess the operation of the Act and the extent to which it is achieving its objects and to recommend reforms.

The final report of the independent review of the EPBC Act was tabled in the Australian Parliament on 21 December 2009. The final report included recommendations for reforms relevant to Ramsar listed wetlands and other aquatic ecosystems.

On 24 August 2011, the Australian Government announced a package of significant reforms to the EPBC Act, including its response to the independent review of the EPBC Act. The Australian Government's response contained several recommendations relevant to Ramsar listed wetlands. The full Australian Government response and related reform documents can be accessed at: [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/reform/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/reform/index.html).

Recommendation 6 of the independent review included recommendations for expanding and strengthening the roles of strategic assessments. The Australian Government has agreed in substance to this recommendation, which will lead to greater forward planning at a landscape scale, and better outcomes for the environment, including for Ramsar listed wetlands and other aquatic ecosystems. Recommendation 8 recommended adding a new matter of national environmental significance, 'ecosystems of national significance'. The Australian Government has agreed in substance to this recommendation, which will see an important policy shift towards protection of healthy and resilient ecosystems for their biodiversity values, rather than waiting until they are threatened before providing them with legislative protection.

### **Protection of Migratory Shorebirds**

Thirty-six international migratory shorebird species which regularly visit Australia are protected under the EPBC Act. Migratory species listed under the EPBC Act are a matter of national environmental significance.

To provide a guide for stakeholders when assessing the likelihood of a proposed action having a significant impact on one or more migratory shorebird species, the draft 'Significant Impact Guidelines for 36 Species of Migratory Shorebird' have been developed. This document will help determine the significance of the impacts of proposed development actions on migratory shorebird species, and provide mitigation strategies to reduce the level or extent of those impacts. The draft document is available online – [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/migratory-shorebirds.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/publications/migratory-shorebirds.html).

### **National collaboration**

To further Australia's implementation of the Convention, initiatives are being progressed by the Australian Government in collaboration with the state and territory governments, including the National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands and the Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar sites.

As indicated in the COP10 National Report, Australia is in the process of developing Australian National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands – Implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia. The aim of the guidelines is to facilitate improved management of Ramsar sites and maintenance of ecological character, in line with Australia's commitments under the Ramsar Convention and the requirements of the EPBC Act. The guidelines provide a coherent framework for Ramsar Convention implementation in Australia and provide jurisdictions and other interested parties with clear guidance on related policies and procedures. The guidelines are being developed as a series of modules on topics including: nominating Ramsar wetlands; developing ecological character descriptions (ECDs); requirements for mapping Ramsar wetlands; and management planning.

In 2008 the guidelines on developing ECDs and requirements for mapping Ramsar wetlands had been finalised. During the current triennium the 'National guidance on notifying change in ecological character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands (Article 3.2)' has been published. This guidance describes the process Australia takes for the notification, under Article 3.2, of change to the ecological character of Ramsar listed wetlands. It is available online – [www.environment.gov.au/water/topics/wetlands/ramsar-](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/topics/wetlands/ramsar-)

[convention/australian-guidelines.html](http://convention/australian-guidelines.html).

Work continues on the development of the remaining guidance modules; with the current focus on guidance for: nominating Ramsar wetlands; wise use of wetlands and management planning.

Since completion of the 'National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands' in 2008, Australian, state and territory governments have been working to ensure an ECD is available for all 64 Australian Ramsar sites. Completed ECDs are available from the Australian Wetlands Database – [www.environment.gov.au/wetlands](http://www.environment.gov.au/wetlands).

To assist Australia monitor the condition of its Ramsar wetlands, the Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar sites is being implemented. The Rolling Review provides information on the status of Ramsar sites allowing management actions to be targeted in response to emerging threats. Through the Rolling Review it is intended that all sites will be reviewed at least once every three years.

### **Caring for our Country**

The Caring for our Country initiative is the Australian Government's main environmental management initiative. It was launched in June 2008 and will invest AUD 2 billion over five years to achieve outcomes across six national priority areas, including coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats, in particular Ramsar wetlands, and sustainable farm practices. In 2008 a commitment was made to deliver actions to sustain the environmental values of priority sites in the Ramsar estate by 2013, particularly the Gippsland Lakes and sites in northern and remote Australia. Around AUD 23 million of Caring for our Country funds have been invested in Ramsar sites since 2008; with over AUD 3 million allocated to Ramsar sites in northern and remote Australia.

The Australian Government is also investing AUD 2.5 million to restore and protect 20 important wetlands in south-east Queensland and north-east New South Wales over the next two and a half years. Of the 20 sites, two Ramsar sites (Moreton Bay and Great Sandy Strait) fall within the broad geographic range of the project.

Reef Rescue, a key component of Caring for our Country, is helping agricultural land managers across the Great Barrier Reef's catchment to adopt improved land management practices that will reduce the amount of nutrients, sediments and chemicals being discharged into the Reef lagoon and improve the Reef's resilience to climate change. During the first three years of Reef Rescue, regional natural resource management organisations and industry partners have engaged farmers and graziers across the catchment to undertake training and adopt land management practices that improve water quality outcomes. Improvements in water quality management in the Great Barrier Reef catchment will also have significant benefits for the health of the Ramsar listed wetlands in the Reef catchment – Bowling Green Bay and the Shoalwater and Corio Bays Area.

Landcare is a voluntary community movement of about 4500 groups across Australia. From the AUD 2 billion over five years invested in Caring for our Country AUD 189 million is set aside for Landcare. This funding is for conservation activities on private land on farms, in water catchments and at the regional level. Caring for our Country – Landcare encourages collective action by landholders, businesses and communities. This partnership between government and the community is critical to sustainable management of our rural environment and natural resources.

### **Ramsar site boundary change – Kakadu National Park**

On 28 April 2010 the two Ramsar sites within Kakadu National Park (Stage I including wetland components of Stage III and Stage II) were combined to form a single Ramsar site. Approximately 600 000 hectares was added to the Ramsar site so that the Ramsar site matches the boundary of the National Park. The additional 600 000 hectares was added from the Stage III area of the Park and includes extensive escarpments and areas of cultural significance to the Traditional Owners. As a result of the boundary change, there are now 64 Ramsar sites in Australia.

B. What have been the most successful aspects of implementation of the Convention?



The environmental watering programs described under question A (CEWH, TLM, RERP) are important initiatives that contribute to the protection of environmental assets, including wetlands and have been highly successful in the reporting period. These initiatives are particularly important during periods of drought due to their role in providing refuges to maintain biodiversity.

The Australian National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands, described in question A above, are an important aspect of Australia's implementation of the Convention. Completion of the 'National guidance on notifying change in ecological character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands (Article 3.2)' is a significant achievement.

In February 2011, for the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention, Australia produced a school wetland education package, including curriculum activities, origami, school book subject stickers, factsheets on wetlands and a DVD. The package was well received by Australian schools and wetland education centres and the international Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness community. The kit is available online [www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/classroom-kit.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/classroom-kit.html).

Increased awareness of the values of wetlands and related water bodies in the Lake Eyre Basin and Great Artesian Basin has been achieved through the release of educational products and concerted efforts to engage more fully with key stakeholders (including Indigenous communities) in facilitating a whole-of-basin approach to management of these important basins.

The Queensland Wetlands Program (QWP) was established in 2003 by the Australian and Queensland Governments to protect wetlands in the Great Barrier Reef catchment and throughout Queensland. The Program continues to develop and implement a large number of tools and resources for the long-term conservation and management of wetlands. Further information on the outputs of QWP is provided throughout the National Report; refer in particular to questions 1.7.6 and 4.1.9.

In July 2010 much of the Central Murray State Forests Ramsar site was incorporated in the New South Wales (NSW) protected area network of national parks and reserves having long been used for timber production. The Millewa component of the site changed from State Forest to National Park (about 90 per cent of the area) and Regional Park (about 10 per cent of the area) under the NSW *National Park Estate (Riverina Red Gum Reservations) Act 2010*. The Werai component of the site is vested in the Minister administering the NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* for transfer to the Traditional Owners for conservation purposes.

These land tenure changes are complemented by the acquisition of other significant NSW wetland properties for inclusion in the National Reserve System. In January 2010 the NSW Government, with assistance from the Australian Government, purchased the 4292 hectare private property Old Dromana in the Gwydir Wetlands for inclusion in the National Reserve System. The purchase secured the protection of what was the largest (600 hectare) portion of the Gwydir Wetlands Ramsar Site. 2000 hectares of the property is wetland. The property has been gazetted as the Gwydir Wetlands State Conservation Area. In addition, part of Pillicawarrina (2436 hectares, Macquarie Marshes) was purchased.

The condition of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) was identified as an issue of considerable concern in Australia's COP10 National Report. At that time, the most immediate threat was the declining water levels and the resultant exposure of acid sulfate soils (ASS). The AUD 200 million CLLMM Recovery Project has been developed by the Australian and South Australian Governments as a response to concerns about changes occurring at the site, focusing on restoring the ecological character of the site and delivering a healthy and resilient wetland which is able to adapt to variable water levels. A further AUD 10 million has been provided for bioremediation and revegetation work within the site. The condition of the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert

Ramsar site has stabilised as a result of the activities under the Recovery Project and has now improved due to significant rainfall events experienced across the Murray–Darling Basin since the second half of 2010. The ongoing protection of this site should be achieved by the combination of the South Australian Government's 'Long-Term Plan for the CLLMM', water purchase and the establishment of the Basin Plan. These actions are supported by the 'Water for the Future' program.

**C. What have been the greatest difficulties in implementing the Convention?**

Australia's highly variable and unpredictable climate (both temporally and spatially), and resulting hydrological regimes, have driven the evolution of Australia's aquatic ecosystems and shaped the unique character of these systems. Having the capacity and flexibility to manage these systems in the context of high natural variability is critical for maintaining the ecological character of Australia's wetlands. This is particularly important when it comes to Australia's implementation of the Ramsar Convention, as much of the Convention's process and guidance are established on the more stationary or predictable hydrological systems of the northern hemisphere. Approaches based on such environmental conditions do not readily translate to the Australian context and therefore present a challenge in implementing the Convention.

Understanding, capturing and incorporating this range of natural variability has been a particular challenge during the development of limits of acceptable change (LAC) for components, processes and services. This is compounded by a lack of data and limited understanding of what would actually constitute a change in character (i.e. how much variability can the systems tolerate). Under Australia's 'National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands' LACs are required to be set, where possible, in ecological character descriptions.

Balancing conflicting demands for water is an ongoing challenge for Australia and the focus of many Australian, state and territory government's initiatives.

**D. What are the priorities for future implementation of the Convention?**

Continued implementation and development of initiatives discussed under questions A–C above remains a priority. Particular priorities include:

- Development of further guidance remains a priority for Australia; including finalising the nomination, wise use and management planning guidelines. The wise use guideline is being developed to describe and explain wise use of wetlands in the Australian context. It will consider the important ecosystem services that wetlands provide, such as supporting biodiversity, underpinning human wellbeing and supporting sustainable human uses, and will include case studies of wise use.

The Australian Government is currently developing wetland management planning guidelines, including a web-based toolkit that provides information on wetland management in Australia. The toolkit will be a dynamic resource with additional tools and information added over time. Australian environmental non-government organisations (NGOs) have emphasised the importance of Ramsar site management plans integrating with land use, conservation and water management plans. NGOs also identify the need for management plans to address mitigation of and adaptation to climate change. These issues will be considered during development of the management planning guidance.

- The Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar sites is being implemented to assist in the monitoring the condition of Australia's Ramsar sites. Following completion of the pilot phase of the Rolling Review, the outcomes and lessons from the pilot will be assessed and the longer-term design and implementation of the Review determined in conjunction with state and territory wetland agencies.
- As indicated under questions A and C above, balancing conflicting demands for



water and restoring an adequate share of water to environmental assets in the Murray–Darling Basin is a long-term challenge for Australia and the focus of many Australian, state and territory government initiatives. The Basin Plan and its associated Environmental Watering Plan, described under question A, will give effect to the Ramsar Convention and other relevant international agreements, and in doing so promote the use and management of the Basin water resources in a way that optimises, economic, social and environmental outcomes.

E. Does the Contracting Party have any proposals concerning adjustments to the 2009-2015 Strategic Plan?

To the extent possible and practicable the Ramsar Strategic Plan should align with the strategic plans of other biodiversity multilateral environment agreements (MEAs), particularly the revised Strategic Plan for the Convention on Biological Diversity. This would ensure reporting obligations are better harmonised. Any alignment with other biodiversity MEAs would need to be undertaken in such a way as to not increase the overall reporting burden of Contracting Parties.

There would be value in revisiting the concept of a numerical target for the Ramsar List (KRA 2.1.iii). While there is merit in growing the list of internationally important wetlands, it raises questions about quantity rather than quality and what this means for the capacity of contracting parties to appropriately manage wetlands on an expanded list. Ideally there should be references in the target to the criteria for identifying Wetlands of International Importance, the quality of the list or the importance of managing the existing estate adequately. We would be concerned that an overly large list may devalue the objectives of the Convention and that other mechanisms should be available that promote the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The need to amend the date for achievement of the target also raises questions about its value.

Given the breadth of the Strategic Plan and the limited resources contracting parties have to implement obligations under the Convention, guidance on prioritising actions to be taken under the Strategic Plan would be useful.

F. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat?

Australia receives regular and constructive implementation assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat. In the current triennium this assistance has included advice on draft guidance and feedback on ecological character descriptions and Ramsar Information Sheets.

Such requests are likely to increase in the short-term as Australia works towards finalising its nomination, wise use and management planning guidance. It would be useful to formalise the process for seeking implementation assistance, particularly in relation to requests of a technical nature.

In formalising this process it may be appropriate to consider the Scientific and Technical Review Panel's (STRP) role, particularly for technical requests. Australia notes that the STRP's work program was discussed at the forty-second meeting of the Standing Committee. Including that parties have ever expanding expectations of the STRP. Any review of the work of the STRP should take into account its role in providing implementation assistance to parties.

An issue identified in Australia's COP10 National Report was the need to review the Ramsar website with a view to enhancing its accessibility and performance. There remain opportunities to improve the functionality of the Ramsar website.

G. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Convention's International Organisation Partners (IOPs)?

No, Australia has established relationships with Australian based IOPs.

- H. How can national implementation of the Ramsar Convention be better linked with implementation of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), especially those in the “Biodiversity cluster” (Ramsar, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), CITES, and World Heritage Convention), and UNCCD and UNFCCC?

There are a number of existing mechanisms in place to facilitate domestic linkages between MEAs. For example in Australia linkages are made possible because the Administrative Authorities for MEAs in the biodiversity cluster are within one government department. As such, structural and process arrangements within the department allow for linking of implementation of these MEAs. There are also a number of Australian Government initiatives that respond to the objectives of multiple MEAs; Caring for our Country is one such example.

However, there remain opportunities to further explore synergies between the Ramsar Convention and work of other MEAs.

- I. How can Ramsar Convention implementation be better linked with the implementation of water policy/strategy and other strategies in the country (e.g., sustainable development, energy, extractive industries, poverty reduction, sanitation, food security, biodiversity)?

Australia has well established linkages between water policy/strategy and other strategies of relevance to implementation of the Convention.

Australia's federal system of government divides powers between the Australian Government and individual state and territory governments. Primary legislative and policy responsibility for natural resource management and the environment rests with respective state and territory governments, whereas the Australian Government is responsible for matters of national interest. The overarching policy and regulatory framework for wetlands derives from the Australian Constitution, international agreements, Commonwealth legislation, agreements of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and decisions of other ministerial councils, and from multiple legislative instruments in each state and territory.

Australian and state/territory government responsibilities for the environment have been agreed through the 1992 'Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment', and the 1997 'Heads of Agreement on Commonwealth/States Roles and Responsibilities for the Environment'. The latter states that 'the Commonwealth has a responsibility and an interest in relation to meeting the obligations of the 'Convention on Wetlands of International Importance' (the Ramsar Convention)'. The Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities (including wetlands) and heritage places.

The National Water Initiative (NWI) is Australia's enduring blueprint for water reform and has been agreed to by the Australian, state and territory governments. The NWI represents a shared commitment by governments to increase the efficiency of Australia's water use, leading to greater certainty for investment and productivity, for rural and urban communities, and for the environment. The overall objective of the NWI is to achieve a nationally compatible market, regulatory and planning based system of managing surface and groundwater resources for rural and urban use that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes. Through the NWI, governments have agreed on actions to achieve a more cohesive national approach to the way Australia manages, measures, plans for, prices, and trades water. Governments have agreed to:

- prepare water plans with provision for the environment
- deal with over-allocated or stressed water systems
- introduce registers of water rights and standards for water accounting
- expand the trade in water
- improve pricing for water storage and delivery
- meet and manage urban water demands.

The *Water Act 2007*, described under question A above, further integrates water policy with issues such as sustainable development, food security and biodiversity.


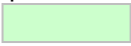
In addition to national policies and legislation, all state and territory governments have enacted comprehensive legislative and policy instruments to protect the environment and conserve natural resources. Some examples of these are provided under question 1.3.5. These instruments generally apply to all wetlands.

J. Does the Contracting Party have any other general comments on the implementation of the Convention?

No

## SECTION 3: INDICATOR QUESTIONS & FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION INFORMATION

### Guidance for filling in this section

1. For each “indicator question”, please select one answer from the “drop-down” list in the yellow box. 
2. If you wish to add any additional information on a specific indicator, please provide this information in the green “free-text” boxes below the indicator questions. 
3. If you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green “free-text” box, it is recommended that you cut-and-paste the existing text into a separate file, make the amendments, and then paste the revised text back into the green box.
4. Some characters used in the free text box prevent the automatic data entry into our database designed for handling and analysing National Reports. For that reason, please do not use the characters “ ”, [ ], °°°° in the free text box.
5. To assist Contracting Parties in referring to relevant information they provided in their National Report to COP10, for each indicator below (where appropriate) a cross-reference is provided to the equivalent indicator(s) in the COP10 NRF, shown thus: {x.x.x}
6. Where appropriate, a cross-reference is also provided to the relevant Key Result Area (KRA) relating to Contracting Parties in the Strategic Plan 2009-2015.
7. Only Strategic Plan 2009-2015 Strategies and KRAs for which there are significant implementation actions for Contracting Parties are included in this reporting format; those parts of the Strategic Plan that do not refer directly to Parties are omitted.

## GOAL 1. THE WISE USE OF WETLANDS

**STRATEGY 1.1 Wetland inventory and assessment.** *Describe, assess and monitor the extent and condition of all types of wetlands as defined by the Ramsar Convention and wetland resources at relevant scales, in order to inform and underpin implementation of the Convention, in particular in the application of its provisions concerning the wise use of all wetlands.*

1.1.1 Does your country have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory? {1.1.1} KRA 1.1.i

C - In progress

1.1.1 Additional information:

There is a large amount of information on wetlands in Australia, however, as yet, no single comprehensive inventory. At the national level, information on Australia's Ramsar wetlands and wetlands listed in 'A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia' (DIWA) is available through the Australian Wetlands Database.

The Australian Government's groundwater-dependent ecosystems (GDE) Atlas project will produce a national, comprehensive, geographic database of GDEs. The Atlas will be a web-based tool which displays ecological and hydrogeological information across Australia. The final product will be publicly accessible and completed in 2012.

The Australian Government and Murray–Darling Basin Authority are jointly developing a comprehensive database of the water-dependent ecosystems in the Murray–Darling Basin – the environmental assets database. The database will support improved understanding of environmental assets and their water requirements, and will assist in prioritising environmental water use in the Murray–Darling Basin.

A number of wetland inventory projects are also being progressed by state and territory governments, for example:

In the Northern Territory a number of relevant projects have been undertaken including mapping and inventory work in central Australia, wetland condition assessment and management in the Lake Eyre Basin, and a survey of spring fed wetlands in the west of the MacDonnell Ranges.

Wetland mapping and classification was released for Queensland (1 852 642 square kilometres) in 2009 based on 2005 data. In all, approximately 142 000 individual wetlands have been identified and this includes millions of individual wetland habitats. Detailed inventory work has also been conducted on wetlands in the Queensland section of the Murray–Darling Basin and surveys are presently underway for springs in the Surat basin and for several Ramsar sites.

A desktop inventory of Tasmania's wetlands was carried out as part of the Conservation of Freshwater Ecosystem Values (CFEV) program. The aim of the program was to ensure that priority freshwater values are appropriately considered in the development, management and conservation of the State's water resources. Further information on the program is available from the following site – [www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/ThemeNodes/CGRM-7JH6CM?open](http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/ThemeNodes/CGRM-7JH6CM?open).

The Western Australian Framework for Wetland Mapping, Classification and Evaluation has been developed to guide wetland mapping projects. The whole of Western Australia has been mapped for water bodies at the 1:250 000 scale (Geoscience Australia) and state-wide coverage exists for inundated wetlands captured at the 1:25 000 scale (Department of Environment and Conservation).

Other activities include:

- Mapping of peatlands (bogs and fens) in the Australian Capital Territory in 2009 for recovery planning and monitoring of climate change.
- New South Wales has recently undertaken LiDAR surveys of key wetlands.
- South Australia has completed a number of projects that contribute towards the development of a comprehensive state-wide wetland inventory.
- Detailed wetland mapping across Victoria is due for completion in 2012.

Australia is currently developing 'National Standards and Guidelines for the Mapping and Classification of Wetlands (Aquatic Ecosystems)' to help develop comparable baseline

datasets to support the development of a national wetland inventory. The guidelines will provide background information and set out principles and the minimum specifications for mapping wetland extent and classifying wetlands in Australia based on hydrological and ecological characteristics. The guidelines are complemented by the development of the Australian National Aquatic Ecosystem (ANAE) classification scheme which is establishing a consistent and systematic method of identifying and classifying all aquatic ecosystems across the Australian landscape.

The Australian Collaborative Rangeland Information System (ACRIS) is a coordinating mechanism that collates rangeland information from state, Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies and other sources. The data and information produced and interpreted by the ACRIS for the period 1992 to 2005, has been brought together in the report 'Rangelands 2008—Taking the Pulse', which documents change, as distinct from state, in the rangelands at a national and regional scale

1.1.2 Is wetland inventory data and information maintained and made accessible to all stakeholders? {1.1.2} KRA 1.1.ii

A - Yes

1.1.2 Additional information:

Information on Ramsar wetlands and wetlands listed on the DIWA is available on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) website – [www.environment.gov.au/wetlands](http://www.environment.gov.au/wetlands).

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) Protected Matters Search Tool can be used to generate a report that will help determine whether matters of national environmental significance, such as Ramsar wetlands, or other matters protected by the EPBC Act are likely to occur within an area of interest. The tool is available from [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/pmst/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/pmst/index.html).

In addition to information provided on the DSEWPaC website, all states and territories provide wetland data and information for use by stakeholders.

Mapping of the Australian Capital Territory peatlands (bogs and fens) – [www.tams.act.gov.au](http://www.tams.act.gov.au).

New South Wales wetland mapping – [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wetlands/DistributionOfWetlandsInNSWNew.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wetlands/DistributionOfWetlandsInNSWNew.htm).

A series of dossiers on sites of conservation significance in the Northern Territory were released in 2008 ([www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment/conservation/index.html](http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment/conservation/index.html)).

All of the information on Queensland's wetlands mapping and classification process is available on WetlandInfo at [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/). Similarly, the wetlands inventory data contained in government agency corporate databases is available to stakeholders via WetlandMaps and in summary form through WetlandInfo.

Tasmanian wetland inventory data is maintained and available through the Water Information System for Tasmania (WIST) [www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/JMUY-6UG7RF?open](http://www.dpipwe.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/JMUY-6UG7RF?open).

Victorian wetland mapping is available online through Spatial Datamart (<http://services.land.vic.gov.au/SpatialDatamart/search.html>). Wetland spatial information is also available via web based interactive mapping tools, for example the Biodiversity Interactive Map <http://mapshare2.dse.vic.gov.au/MapShare2EXT/imf.jsp?site=bim>.

Mapping of the wetlands of the south-west corner of Western Australia (WA) is available from [www2.landgate.wa.gov.au/web/guest/wa-atlas](http://www2.landgate.wa.gov.au/web/guest/wa-atlas). Wetland spatial and monitoring data for all of WA is maintained on the Wetland Base [www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/3574/1556/](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/3574/1556/).



1.1.3 Has the condition\* of wetlands in your country, overall, changed since the previous triennium?{1.1.3 & 1.1.4}

a) Ramsar Sites

b) wetlands generally

Please comment on the nature of the information on which your answer is based in the green free- text box below. If there is a difference between inland and coastal wetland situations, please describe. If you are able to, please comment on what are the principal driver(s) of the change(s).

\* "Condition" corresponds to ecological character, as defined by the Convention

P - Status improved

P - Status improved

1.1.3 a) Additional information:

Above average rainfall across much of central and eastern Australia during 2010 and 2011, due to the La Nina weather pattern, has had a favourable impact on many of Australia's wetlands. This followed an extended period of drought. In contrast, the south-west of Western Australia continued to experience well below average rainfall.

The only site for which an Article 3.2 notification was made during the current triennium was the Macquarie Marshes Ramsar site. The decline in the health of wetland vegetation and the decline in waterbird breeding led to the notification of change in 2009. The primary cause of this decline was identified as river regulation. A response strategy is being prepared in accordance with Australia's 3.2 guidance. Widespread flooding in New South Wales in 2010–2011 has resulted in a good response from semi-permanent wetland vegetation, filled lagoons in the southern section of the Macquarie Marshes Nature Reserve, supported a large colonial nesting waterbird breeding event and stimulated some recovery of the reedbeds in Monkeygar swamp in the southern section of the Nature Reserve, which were thought to have been lost.

As indicated under Section 2, question B above, the condition of the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site has improved as a result of activities under the Recovery Project and significant rainfall events experienced across the Murray–Darling Basin since the second half of 2010.

1.1.3 b) Additional information:

Some areas of northern Australia have received the highest ever recorded rainfalls in the 2010–2011 wet season, resulting in large flooding events. Unusually wet conditions in central Australia have inundated many wetlands in arid and semi-arid areas that have not been filled for many years. This has resulted in the extension of known ranges for wetland dependent species and unusual breeding aggregations. High rainfall has also resulted in weed growth with expansion in some areas (north and central). A severe fire season is anticipated in 2011.

Floods in late 2010 and early 2011 were widespread in Victoria, affecting most parts of the State except Gippsland. Flooding filled wetlands which had been dry or very low during the prolonged drought from 1997–2009.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.1 implementation:

To assist Australia monitor the condition of its Ramsar wetlands, the Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar sites is being implemented. The Rolling Review provides information on the status of Ramsar sites allowing management actions to be targetted in response to emerging threats. Through the Rolling Review, it is intended that all sites will be reviewed at least once every three years.

The Murray–Darling Basin Authority continues to lead the implementation of the Sustainable Rivers Audit (SRA), a long-term assessment of the condition and health of the Murray–Darling Basin's 23 river valleys. Assessments are based on indicators from five environmental themes – fish, macroinvertebrates, hydrology, vegetation and physical form – combined to provide a rating of ecosystem health for each river valley. Data collection is undertaken using scientific methods applied consistently across the Basin. An independent panel of scientists prepares the river health assessment every three years, with the second report under preparation at the time of writing.

State governments are also investing in research to allow them to better monitor the condition of wetlands:

New techniques for monitoring risk to and condition of freshwater wetlands in Queensland have been developed which are supported by detailed conceptual models that link pressures and impacts to condition. The models are available online [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/SupportTools/MonitoringExtentAndCondition/Stressormodeloverview.html](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/SupportTools/MonitoringExtentAndCondition/Stressormodeloverview.html).

In Victoria work has continued to develop, test and implement the Index of Wetland Condition. In late 2009 an assessment of almost 600 high value wetlands was undertaken across Victoria using the Index of Wetland Condition. The results of the assessment are being prepared for publication. The assessment results for an additional 300 wetlands will be used to model wetland condition state-wide, providing a benchmark for ongoing monitoring. Results from the project are due in late 2011.

In Western Australia the condition (physical, chemical and biological) of significant wetland sites has been monitored through the Inland Aquatic Integrity Resource Condition Monitoring project. Data from 30 permanent monitoring sites is uploaded onto a publicly accessible database – [www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/5309/1556/](http://www.dec.wa.gov.au/content/view/5309/1556/).

**STRATEGY 1.3 Policy, legislation and institutions.** *Develop and implement policies, legislation, and practices, including growth and development of appropriate institutions, in all Contracting Parties, to ensure that the wise use provisions of the Convention are being effectively applied.*

1.3.1 Is a National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) in place? {1.2.1} KRA 1.3.i  
(If "Yes", please give the title and date of the policy in the green text box)

A - Yes

1.3.1 Additional information:

The Commonwealth Wetland Policy was released in 1997. As indicated in the COP10 National Report, most jurisdictions in Australia also have wetland policies in place. For example, in March 2010 New South Wales (NSW) released a new 'NSW Wetlands Policy' which seeks to promote the sustainable conservation, management and wise use of wetlands in NSW.

1.3.2 Does the National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) incorporate any 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets and actions? {1.2.2}

B - No



## 1.3.2 Additional information:

The Commonwealth Wetland Policy predates the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation therefore does not reflect the targets and actions incorporated within these documents.

## 1.3.3 Have wetland issues been incorporated into other national strategies and planning processes, including:

- a) Poverty eradication strategies
- b) Water resource management and water efficiency plans
- c) Coastal and marine resource management plans
- d) National forest programmes
- e) National strategies for sustainable development
- f) National policies or measures on agriculture
- g) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans

{1.2.3} KRA 1.3.i

Z - Not applicable

A - Yes

A - Yes

A - Yes

A - Yes

A - Yes

A - Yes

## 1.3.3 Additional information:

## b) Water resource management and water efficiency plans

Wetland issues are comprehensively incorporated in Australia's national water resource management legislative and policy framework. As discussed under Section 2, questions A and I, the health of aquatic ecosystems was an important consideration in development of the National Water Initiative, *Water Act 2007*, and 'Water for the Future'. For example, the Water Act established the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) to ensure that Basin water resources are managed in an integrated and sustainable way. Under the Water Act, the Authority is required to prepare the Basin Plan; a strategic plan for the integrated and sustainable management of water resources in the Murray–Darling Basin. In developing the Basin Plan, the Water Act requires the Authority to give effect to international agreements, including the Ramsar Convention, and to promote the wise use of all the Basin water resources and the conservation of declared Ramsar wetlands.

In addition to establishing the Authority, the Water Act established the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH). The Water Act requires the CEWH to manage the Commonwealth's environmental water holdings to protect or restore environmental assets, including wetlands listed under the Ramsar Convention so as to give effect to the Ramsar Convention and other relevant international agreements.

Further information on the Water Act, the Authority and CEWH is included under Section 2, question A.

## c) Coastal and marine resource management plans

Australia's 'National Cooperative Approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management. Framework and Implementation Plan' (2006) recognises the importance of wetland components and functions such as freshwater flows in estuarine ecosystems, and water quality.

## d) National forest programmes

The 'National Forest Policy Statement' was signed by the Australian Government and all mainland state and territory governments in December 1992, and by the Tasmanian Government in April 1995. Two of the principal objectives of this Statement are the maintenance of an extensive and permanent native forest estate in Australia and the protection of nature conservation values in forests. According to the Statement, the protection of the forest ecosystems and other environmental values is fundamental to ecologically sustainable forest management. Aquatic habitats are explicitly identified in the Statement.

Native vegetation is managed nationally through Australia's Native Vegetation Framework ('National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia's Native Vegetation'), agreed by all Australian governments in 2001 and now under review by an intergovernmental Task Group after public consultation during 2010. The Framework sets national directions and priorities to guide actions across government strategies, policies, legislation and programs related to native vegetation management on the Australian continent and its islands. The Framework recognises the important ecological and other roles of wetlands, rivers and waterways.

## e) National strategies for sustainable development

All policies described under this question are relevant to the achievement of sustainable development. Other initiatives of relevance include:

- 'Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities: A Sustainable Population Strategy for Australia' released by the Australian Government in May 2011.
- Regional Development Australia (RDA) is an Australian Government initiative that brings together all levels of government to support the growth and development of

regional Australia. RDA is delivered through partnerships between governments, regional development organisations, local businesses, community groups and key regional stakeholders to provide strategic and targeted responses to social, economic and environmental issues affecting regional Australia.

- The 'Principles for Sustainable Resource Management in the Rangelands' (2010) is intended to encourage and guide the consideration of rangeland natural resource management issues in national strategies and other relevant work by Australian, state/territory governments. It outlines key principles underpinning sustainable resource management in the rangelands and provides sources of further information.

#### f) National policies or measures on agriculture

The Caring for our Country initiative (AUD 2 billion over five years from the 2008–09 financial year) is the Australian Government's main environmental management initiative. It aims to achieve outcomes across six national priority areas including sustainable farm practices. This national priority area aims to increase landholder adoption of management practices that continue to maintain and improve production, while delivering ecosystem services that benefit the whole community. Investment opportunities, in particular for Ramsar sites, are guided by existing regional planning processes, state and national policies.

Landcare is a voluntary community movement of about 4500 groups across Australia. From the AUD 2 billion over five years invested in Caring for our Country, AUD 189 million is set aside for Landcare. This funding is for conservation activities on private land on farms, in water catchments and at the regional level.

#### g) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans

'Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030' is a guiding framework for how Australians can protect and manage terrestrial, freshwater aquatic and marine biodiversity over the coming decades. The strategy provides a national policy umbrella for more specific policies including those relating to wetlands.

The Australian Government is also working with state and territory environment agencies to develop a number of regional recovery plans. These plans are essentially biodiversity management plans for defined regions, and while focusing on threatened species and ecological communities, include recovery actions that, when implemented, will also benefit wetlands and species covered by international migratory bird agreements.

A package of measures for biodiversity and natural resource management were announced in July 2011 as part of the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future Plan. The measures recognise the role biodiversity plays in maintaining the productive capacity of the landscape. The measures will improve the resilience of Australia's unique species to the impacts of climate change, improve the environmental outcomes of carbon farming projects and help landholders protect carbon and biodiversity values. The AUD 946 million Biodiversity Fund has been established to help build connectivity and resilience in the landscape by promoting biodiverse carbon plantings and revegetation, management of existing biodiverse carbon stores and managing pests in a connected landscape.

1.3.4 Are Strategic Environmental Assessment practices applied when reviewing policies, programmes and plans that may impact upon wetlands? {1.2.5} KRA 1.3.ii

C - Partly

1.3.4 Additional information:

As well as dealing with projects on a case-by-case basis (see question 1.3.5 for further information), the Australian Government Minister for the Environment can approve actions under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) which relate to an endorsed policy, plan or program. These are called strategic assessments. A strategic assessment happens early in the planning process and examines the potential impacts of actions which might stem from one or more policy, program or plan. These may include, but are not limited to: regional-scale development plans and policies; large-scale industrial development and associated infrastructure; fire, vegetation/resource or pest management policies, plans or programs; water extraction/use policies; infrastructure plans and policies; and industry sector policies.

Strategic assessments under the EPBC Act mainly involve individuals or agencies such as local councils, state ministers or government departments responsible for implementing the policy, plan or program. A strategic assessment can take into account:

- how the policy, plan or program gives effect to relevant national, state and local plans, policies or programs and the inherent environmental protection objectives and/or actions of those plans, policies or programs
- how, if appropriate, state and local plans, policies or programs can be modified/updated to achieve objectives in the area being assessed
- matters of national environmental significance (including Ramsar wetlands), biodiversity conservation, and ecologically sustainable development objectives
- how uncertainty is addressed and environmental risk managed
- adaptive implementation and environmental monitoring.

1.3.5 For any project development (new buildings, new roads, extractive industry, etc.) that may affect wetlands, are Environmental Impact Assessments made?

B - No

1.3.5 Additional information:

As indicated in Section 2, question I, under Australia's federal system of government, powers are divided between the Australian government and individual state and territory governments.

The EPBC Act is Australia's central piece of environmental legislation; under the EPBC Act an action will require approval from the Australian Government Minister for the Environment if the action has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance. Ramsar wetlands of international importance are one of the matters of national environmental significance listed under the EPBC Act. Therefore, any actions that are determined likely to have a significant impact upon the ecological character of a Ramsar wetland will require (assessment and) approval under the EPBC Act.

In addition to the above legislation, all state and territory governments have planning legislation that requires consideration of environmental factors. For example in New South Wales, 'State Environmental Planning Policy No. 14 – Coastal wetlands' identifies over 1300 wetlands of high natural value along the New South Wales coast and requires all developments that will clear, drain or fill these wetlands to undertake an environmental impact statement and to have development consent.

In Victoria, environment assessment of the potential environmental impacts or effects of a proposed development may be required under the *Environmental Effects Act 1978*. Certain proposed projects must be referred to the Minister for Planning who determines the need for an Environmental Effects Statement. These include projects with the potential for a long-term change to the ecological character of a Ramsar site or a wetland listed in 'A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia'.

In Australia a third tier of government, local government, has been established by state and territory governments to take responsibility for a number of local services, including town planning and local-level development approvals. In Victoria, for example, most higher value wetlands are covered by planning controls in local government planning schemes which regulate certain activities that potentially impact on wetlands.

1.3.6 Have any amendments to existing legislation been made to reflect Ramsar commitments?

A - Yes

1.3.6 Additional information:

In October 2008, the Australian Government commissioned an independent review of the EPBC Act. Section 522A of the EPBC Act requires it to be reviewed every 10 years from its commencement. The aim of the review was to assess the operation of the Act and the extent to which it is achieving its objects and to recommend reforms.

The final report of the independent review, tabled in the Australian Parliament on 21 December 2009, included recommendations for reforms relevant to Ramsar listed wetlands and other aquatic ecosystems.

On 24 August 2011, the Australian Government announced a package of significant reforms to the EPBC Act, including its response to the independent review of the EPBC Act. The Australian Government's response contained several recommendations relevant to Ramsar listed wetlands. The full Australian Government response and related reform documents can be accessed at: [www.environment.gov.au/epbc/reform/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/reform/index.html). Legislative amendments to the EPBC Act are currently being drafted in accordance with the Australian Government response.

Examples of jurisdiction legislative amendments include, during 2010 the Northern Territory Government conducted a review of the conservation status of all species. The conservation status of wildlife species is required under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 2000*. Several migratory waders have been added to the threatened species list.

From 1 July 2011, environmental water entitlements for Victoria's rivers and wetlands are managed by a new independent body, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. The Water Holder has been established under the *Victorian Water Amendment (Victorian Environmental Water Holder) Act 2010* to streamline management of environmental water across catchments, providing greater efficiency and transparency in the way water is used to maximise environmental benefits.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.3 implementation:

**STRATEGY 1.4: Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services.** *Increase recognition of and attention in decision-making to the significance of wetlands for reasons of biodiversity conservation, water supply, coastal protection, integrated coastal zone management, flood defence, climate change mitigation and/or adaptation, food security, poverty eradication, tourism, cultural heritage, and scientific research, by developing and disseminating methodologies to achieve wise use of wetlands.*

1.4.1 Has an assessment been conducted of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar Sites? {1.3.1} KRA 1.4.ii

A - Yes

## 1.4.1 Additional information:

In developing the Basin Plan, the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) has published research into the ecosystem services provided by the Basin's wetlands and water resources, including the extent to which these services will be provided for under the current approach to determining the environmentally sustainable level of take (for more information see Section 2, question A). This research identified 31 discrete ecosystem services provided by the Murray–Darling Basin across the categories of provisioning, cultural, supporting and regulating services. The Authority is also exploring the use of an ecosystem services framework to measure the environmental, social and economic benefit of the proposed sustainable diversion limits, where environmental benefit is translated into ecosystems services and then in turn quantified in terms of socio-economic benefit.

1.4.2 Have wetland programmes and/or projects that contribute to poverty alleviation objectives and/or food and water security plans been implemented? {1.3.2} KRA 1.4.i

A - Yes

## 1.4.2 Additional information:

Food and water security is a direct and indirect consideration in many of Australia's environment/wetland related policies and programs. Refer for example to question 1.3.3 – particularly to b) water resource management and water efficiency plans and f) national policies on agriculture.

1.4.3 Has national action been taken to apply the guiding principles on cultural values of wetlands (Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21)? {1.3.4} KRA 1.4.iii

A - Yes

## 1.4.3 Additional information:

As indicated in the COP10 National Report, the National Water Initiative (NWI) requires recognition of Indigenous needs in relation to water access and management. Through the NWI, governments across Australia have agreed on actions to achieve a more cohesive national approach to the way Australia manages, measures, plans for, prices, and trades water. Paragraph 25 of the NWI requires that all water access entitlements and planning frameworks recognise Indigenous needs in relation to water access and management. Assessment of the implementation of the NWI in the 2009 Biennial Assessment found that, 'Water to meet Indigenous social, spiritual and customary objectives is rarely clearly specified in water plans. It appears often to be implicitly assumed that these objectives, where considered at all, can be met by rules-based environmental water provisions'.

According to paragraph 1.03 of schedule 6, 'Managing wetlands of international importance' in the 'Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000', 'Wetland management should make special provision, if appropriate, for the involvement of people who: a) have a particular interest in the wetland and b) may be affected by the management of the wetland.'



1.4.4 Have socio-economic and cultural values of wetlands been included in the management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands? {4.1.5} KRA 1.4.iii

A - Yes

1.4.4 Additional information (if "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate, if known, how many Ramsar Sites and their names):

Australia's conservation estate includes World Heritage areas, National Heritage places, Commonwealth and state managed national parks, and state and locally managed nature reserves. This reserve system protects values of both aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems for multiple outcomes (i.e. biodiversity, heritage, etc). The EPBC Act sets out management requirements for Commonwealth national parks, World Heritage areas, National Heritage places and Ramsar listed wetlands.

In implementing Australia's obligations under the World Heritage Convention, the Australian Government recognises the strong link between wetland conservation and benefits to people. For example, cultural values are included in the Kakadu World Heritage Area (which is also Ramsar listed). Kakadu National Park is a living cultural landscape and there is a strong link between Traditional Owners and country, ongoing traditions, cultural practices, beliefs and knowledge. Maintaining healthy landscapes, including significant wetlands, will help to maintain the World Heritage recognised cultural and conservation values of the park, and the Ramsar recognised wetlands.

Under the EPBC Act the Minister for the Environment must make written plans to protect and manage the World and/or National Heritage values of places on the World Heritage List (WHL) and the National Heritage List (NHL) where these places are on Commonwealth land. Cultural values recognised in management plans for heritage places may be Indigenous and historic heritage values and, if linked to wetland values, are required to be specifically addressed in management planning for these places. Under the EPBC Act these plans are required to state what must be done to ensure the cultural heritage values of the property are protected, including rehabilitation if necessary. Under management principles that are prescribed in regulations to the EPBC Act, management planning for heritage places needs to include mechanisms for public consultation, helping to ensure that other socio-economic and cultural values are taken into account.

Also under the EPBC Act, management plans are required for all Commonwealth national parks, including a consideration of the cultural values. Plans also contain information on commercial operations (such as tourism or leases) within each park and, where relevant, benefits to the Traditional Owners. The Kakadu National Park management plan, Ramsar Information Sheet and Ecological Character Description all recognise the importance of the cultural values of the wetlands.

Information on the EPBC Act management provisions for Ramsar sites is provided under question 2.3.1.

State and territory governments also have provisions for recognising socio-economic and cultural values in management planning. For example, in New South Wales (NSW) Reserve Plans, required under the NSW *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* ensure that the cultural values associated with wetlands within reserves are protected and managed appropriately. Under the NSW Wetland Recovery Program archaeological surveys and oral histories were undertaken to document Aboriginal cultural values of the Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir Wetlands. 'Back to country' events were also conducted as part of the management planning for the wetlands. The Adaptive Environmental Management Plans for the two wetlands include documentation of the Aboriginal cultural values of the wetlands. Further information is available from [www.wetlandrecovery.nsw.gov.au/projectsAboriginal\\_values.htm](http://www.wetlandrecovery.nsw.gov.au/projectsAboriginal_values.htm).

In terms of Australia's national water policy framework, the National Water Initiative (NWI) encourages all parties to consider socio-economic and cultural values when developing



management plans for wetlands. Further information on the NWI is provided in Section 2, question I.

The development of the Murray–Darling Basin Plan has involved extensive consideration of socio-economic and cultural values. The Murray–Darling Basin has been home to Aboriginal people for at least 50 000 years, sustaining cultural, social, economic and spiritual life. The Basin is also of great importance in a broader socio-economic sense, with a population of 2.1 million people who are dependent on its water resources. Agricultural production in the Basin is worth AUD 15 billion annually, equating to around 39 per cent of Australia's total agricultural production.

A strategic objective of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) in developing the Basin Plan is to maintain and improve the ecological health of the Basin, and in doing so optimise the social, cultural, and economic wellbeing of Basin communities. The Plan must address the legacy of water management decisions that have led to over-development and over-allocation in some catchments. The requirement of the Water Act to return water to the environment to achieve an environmentally sustainable level of take will therefore, by definition, mean reductions in current diversion limits.

To better understand the implications of reducing diversion limits, the Authority has undertaken studies of the social and economic circumstances of Basin communities. These assessed the likely impacts of reduced water availability, especially in terms of community vulnerability and adaptive capacity, gathering information about regional community opportunities, risks, constraints and aspirations as well as an appreciation of how communities can transform and adapt in response to changed water availability in the context of developing the proposed Basin Plan. Economic valuation of environmental benefits in the Basin has also been undertaken, in particular non-market values likely to be associated with long-term average sustainable diversion limits in the Basin. In returning a larger proportion of flows to the environment, the Basin Plan is expected to enhance the health of Ramsar listed and other wetlands in the Basin.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.4 implementation:

**STRATEGY 1.5 Recognition of the role of the Convention.** *Raise the profile of the Convention by highlighting its capacity as a unique mechanism for wetland ecosystem management at all levels; promote the usefulness of the Convention as a possible implementation mechanism to meet the goals and targets of other global conventions and processes*

1.5.1 Have you taken steps to ensure that your national focal points for other environmental conventions are contributing to the application of Ramsar Convention implementation mechanisms? KRA 1.5.i

A - Yes

1.5.1 Additional information:

The extent to which MEA national focal points contribute to application of Ramsar Convention mechanisms varies between MEAs. The strongest relationships are with the national focal points for the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). For example, the CMS national focal point has permanent observer status on Australia's Ramsar Committee, the Wetlands and Waterbird Taskforce. The CBD national focal point is engaged through an active coordination process.

1.5.2 Have you brought the "Changwon Declaration"

(Resolution X.3) to the attention of your:	
a. head of state	B - No
b. parliament	B - No
c. private sector	A - Yes
d. civil society	A - Yes

## 1.5.2 Additional information:

Information on the Changwon Declaration was provided to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment. It was also forwarded to relevant Australian Government agencies and members of the Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce, Australia's Ramsar Committee. In addition, the declaration was circulated to the Australian Wetland Alliance, an association of non-government organisations working with wetlands, for circulation to its email list.

1.5.3 Has the "Changwon Declaration" been used to inform the positions of your national delegations to other external processes (such as the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, UN agencies, multilateral environmental agreements, and the World Water Forum)?

A - Yes

## 1.5.3 Additional information:

The Declaration informed Australian Government preparation for United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change COP15.

1.5.4 Have you translated and disseminated the "Changwon Declaration" into local languages relevant for your country?

Z - Not applicable

## 1.5.4 Additional information:

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.5 implementation:

**STRATEGY 1.6 Science-based management of wetlands.** *Promote successful implementation of the wise use concept by ensuring that national policies and wetland management plans are based on the best available scientific knowledge, including technical and traditional knowledge.*

1.6.1 Has research to inform wetland policies and plans been undertaken in your country on:

- a. agriculture-wetland interactions
- b. climate change
- c. valuation of ecosystem services

KRA 1.6.i

A - Yes

A - Yes

A - Yes

## 1.6.1 Additional information:

a. agriculture-wetland interaction

Under the Queensland Wetland Program a number of resources have been developed to inform wetland policies and plans in terms of agriculture-wetland interaction. Information on these resources is provided under question 1.7.6.

b. climate change

Research is currently being conducted in relation to climate change and coastal ecosystems, including wetlands. The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility is undertaking a project to provide a synthesis of current knowledge and experience, drawing on Australian and international sources, to assess the implications of climate change for Australia's coastal ecosystems. It is due for completion later in 2011. The project will define 'priority' ecosystems and species across Australia's coastal zones, based on vulnerability and the imminence and magnitude of the risk and consider responses to the impacts of climate change.

Another climate change research project, funded by the Australian Government and undertaken by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) is '*Investigating the tradeoffs of land use zoning as an adaptation response*'. The project aims to develop a robust framework and methodology, for use in coastal planning, to assess development trade-offs, when an environmental asset is involved.

The Australian Government has also examined the potential impacts of climate change and sea level rise on the South Alligator River system in Kakadu National Park. The report '*Kakadu: Vulnerability to climate change impacts*' sets out: the potential for increasing intrusion of saltwater to impact on freshwater flora and fauna, and cultural values; and adaptation options, potential barriers to adaptation and opportunities to improve future planning, and management and policy responses.

As part of the Australian Government funded Northern Australia Water Futures Assessment (NAWFA) a project is being undertaken to '*Assess the impacts facing aquatic ecological assets in northern Australia as a result of development and climate change*'.

The CSIRO has undertaken studies to provide robust estimates of current and future water yield in Northern Australia, Murray–Darling Basin, Tasmania and South-West Western Australia. Information on the Murray–Darling Basin Sustainable Yields project was provided in the COP10 National Report. The scenarios developed are based on current and projected future climate and possible water resource development.

The South Eastern Australian Climate Initiative (SEACI) was established in 2006 to improve understanding of the nature and causes of climate variability and change in south-eastern Australia. The SEACI has two phases, the second operating from June 2009 for three years. The findings of SEACI have many important implications for water governance and planning in the Murray–Darling Basin.

Under the Australian Government's Climate Change Plan, Securing a Clean Energy Future, funding will be provided for research into abatement technologies and practices that will assist landholders benefit from carbon farming. Further funding will also be available to convert research on abatement technologies into carbon estimation methodologies.

Examples of research focused on the impact of climate change on wetlands being conducted by the states and territories include:

ACT – A *Sphagnum* bog mapping and recovery plan to help manage the challenges from climate change mapped peatlands (bogs and fens) in detail. The plan provides a baseline assessment of condition against which future changes can be assessed.

South Australian Murray–Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board – recently completed a project '*Identifying climate change adaptation strategies to*

*inform wetland and floodplain management along the River Murray in South Australia'.*

c. valuation of ecosystem services

For information on research into the valuation of ecosystem services, see also responses to questions 1.4.1 and 1.4.4.

The Water Act requires that the Basin Plan be prepared on the basis of the best available scientific knowledge (section 21(4)(a)). The Murray–Darling Basin Authority is undertaking research relevant to aquatic ecosystem services, see questions 1.4.1 and 1.4.4 for further information.

The Australian Government's Commonwealth Environmental Research Facilities (CERF) program funded public good environmental research. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents of tropical river catchment areas have complex values for these river and wetland systems which can be challenging for decision-makers to accommodate. Aboriginal Australians are a large and growing proportion of the population and are also significant landowners, yet there is little information about the impacts of potential development scenarios on the welfare of Aboriginal Australians that can be used in benefit–cost analysis.

The Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge hub, established under the CERF program, undertook a project to identify the uses, values and benefits of three of Australia's tropical rivers and to quantify them in dollar terms so that the extent and importance of the rivers can be accounted for in decision-making. The project found that most respondents preferred healthy river systems that are managed under conservation schemes even if this comes at a private cost. The willingness-to-pay of Aboriginal Australians was significantly higher than that of non-Aboriginal Australians for some river attributes, particularly those related to cultural values. Aboriginal respondents were also indifferent towards the extraction of water for irrigated agriculture while non-Aboriginal respondents preferred moderate rather than large or small scale use.

1.6.2 Have all wetland management plans been based on sound scientific research, including on potential threats to the wetlands? KRA 1.6.ii

C - Partly

#### 1.6.2 Additional information:

The EPBC Act establishes a framework for managing Ramsar wetlands. Under Schedule 6 of the 'Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000' principles are outlined for the management of wetlands of international importance. The Australian Ramsar Management Principles cover matters relevant to the preparation of Ramsar site management plans, including providing guidance on content and consultation processes. According to the principles wetland management should provide for continuing community and technical input. The principles may also be used for the management of any wetland throughout Australia. Further information on the management provisions of the EPBC Act is provided under questions 1.4.4 and 2.3.1.

Wetland site managers are responsible for the development of management plans for the sites, therefore the application of the management principles varies throughout Australia. Examples of how state governments use science to inform management plans are provided below.

In New South Wales, Adaptive Environmental Management Plans (AEMP) for Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir wetlands were released in 2010 and 2011. These plans are based on integrated hydrological and ecological research projects and recommend actions and strategies to improve the condition of the wetlands. AEMPs are guides for adaptively managing highly modified ecosystems to achieve realistic objectives. The plans are available online – [www.wetlandrecovery.nsw.gov.au/Management\\_Framework.htm](http://www.wetlandrecovery.nsw.gov.au/Management_Framework.htm).

In Victoria, research projects have been completed or are underway to inform wetland risk assessment, prioritisation, investment and individual wetland planning. Examples include: research into climate change to assess the longer-term viability of possible management interventions, such as watering; research into wetland condition as the basis for monitoring condition for environmental reporting purposes and to identify wetland threats; and investigations into flow requirements and water regimes which are routinely used to inform environmental watering plans.

In Western Australia, the South West Waterway Health Strategy and Decision Support System was developed to prioritise and guide investment and management action in waterways, wetlands and estuaries. Surveys of vegetation, birds, water quality, benthos and macro-invertebrates (identified as critical actions in Ecological Character Descriptions) have also been undertaken to inform management.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.6 implementation:

In addition to the research identified against question 1.6.1, other projects have been undertaken that are relevant to wetland sustainability. Information on a selection of these is provided below.

The Australian Government's National Environment Research Project (NERP) provides around AUD 20 million a year for environmental research to improve Australia's capacity to understand, manage and conserve Australia's unique biodiversity and ecosystems. The NERP Northern Australia Hub will undertake wetland relevant research. The Hub's program of research will address gaps in understanding of patterns of biodiversity across the north and develop an integrated catchment to coast framework for conservation planning and management. The program will also develop effective methods for assessing and reporting ecosystem health to attain an environmentally sustainable tropical Australia.

Further investigation of hydrology (system driver) and fish (biological response) in the Lake Eyre Basin Rivers Assessment (LEBRA) will be undertaken in the 2011–12 financial year. The Northern Territory, Queensland, and South Australian agencies are working together to better understand how aquatic ecosystems function, as well as identifying threats.

The following projects have been funded by the Australian Government through the Raising National Water Standards (RNWS) program including:

- The 'Minimising environmental damage from water recovery in inland wetlands' project provides wetland managers with tools and guidelines for appropriate wetting and drying strategies in inland wetlands to minimise formation of sulfidic sediments and to remediate affected wetlands. This project contributed to the '*National guidance for the management of acid sulfate soils in inland aquatic ecosystems*', available from [www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/quality/guidance-for-management-of-acid-sulfate-soils.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/quality/guidance-for-management-of-acid-sulfate-soils.html).
- The AUD 1.2 million '*Ecological Outcomes of Flow Regimes in the Murray–Darling Basin Report*' tested assumptions about relationships between flows and ecological responses to provide site managers with scientifically tested outcomes and a predictive tool to map scenarios for floodplains in the Murray–Darling Basin. Outcomes from the project can be found at [www.nwc.gov.au](http://www.nwc.gov.au).
- The Framework for the Assessment of River and Wetland Health (FARWH) was developed to enable reporting of river and wetland condition in a nationally consistent manner. The wetlands component of the FARWH includes an assessment of extent/loss, and a method for broad scale risk assessment in data poor areas.

The Murray–Darling Basin Acid Sulfate Soils Risk Assessment Project substantially increased knowledge of the occurrence of acid sulfate soils, and the associated hazards and risks, throughout the Murray–Darling Basin. In all, over 19 000 wetlands were assessed, with techniques ranging from desktop assessment, to rapid on-ground appraisal and detailed physio-chemical analysis. These assessments included 14 of the 16 Ramsar wetlands in the Murray–Darling Basin. Further information can be found at [www.mdba.gov.au/programs/acid-sulfate-soils-risk-assessment](http://www.mdba.gov.au/programs/acid-sulfate-soils-risk-assessment).

As part of the New South Wales Rivers Environmental Restoration Program (RERP) decision support systems (DSS), and hydrologic and hydrodynamic models were developed for the Gwydir Valley, Macquarie Marshes, Lowbidgee floodplain and Narran Lakes (DSS only). These tools will assist in managing environmental flows by predicting duration, extent and depth of flows at various water volumes and the predicted ecological response of key species – [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/rerp.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/rerp.htm).

The Northern Territory is collaborating with Western Australia and Queensland to



establish monitoring sites in riverine waterholes, with a focus on fish and water dynamics. Projects specific to the Northern Territory include:

- A survey of aquatic fauna at a few waterholes north of Alice Springs in collaboration with Anmatyerre Traditional Owners.
- A collaborative study with Traditional Owners is combining western science with Indigenous ecological knowledge at two springs near Santa Teresa focussing on aquatic and terrestrial fauna.

Multiple projects in Queensland have provided information on the condition of wetlands. This information is accessible through the Queensland Waterway Monitoring Portal ([www.derm.qld.gov.au/water/health/portal/index.html](http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/water/health/portal/index.html)).

Conceptual models which summarise scientific information on the components and processes for each freshwater wetland type in Queensland are available via Wetland/Info [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/ScienceAndResearch/ConceptualModels.html](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/ScienceAndResearch/ConceptualModels.html).

Research on the identification of wetlands soils undertaken through the Queensland Wetlands Program is available via [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/factsfigures/Soils.html](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/factsfigures/Soils.html).

Tasmania conducted a state-wide survey of frogs as well as a threatened species survey for the green and gold frog, *Litoria raniformis*, and surveys for the chytrid fungus, an introduced pathogen threatening frog populations. In 2010 the 'Tasmanian Chytrid Management Plan' to assist in confining and preventing the spread of the fungus in frogs was released.

The Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment Arthur Rylah Institute for Environmental Research is undertaking a range of wetland research including projects on wetland connectivity, condition assessment, environmental watering for native fish and the health of freshwater turtles – [www.dse.vic.gov.au/arthur-rylah-institute/research-themes/wetland-ecology#connectivity](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/arthur-rylah-institute/research-themes/wetland-ecology#connectivity).

**STRATEGY 1.7 Integrated Water Resources Management.** *Ensure that policies and implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), applying an ecosystem-based approach, are included in the planning activities in all Contracting Parties and in their decision-making processes, particularly concerning groundwater management, catchment/river basin management, coastal and nearshore marine zone planning and climate change mitigation and/or adaptation activities.*

1.7.1 Has the Convention's water-related guidance (see Resolution IX.1. Annex C) been helpful in informing decision-making related to water resource planning and management? {1.4.1} KRA 1.7.i

A - Yes

## 1.7.1 Additional information:

The Convention's water-related guidance is informing development of Australia's wise use guidance. The wise use guidance is being developed to describe and explain wise use of wetlands in the Australian context. It will consider the role of wetlands in maintaining ecosystem services, supporting biodiversity, underpinning human wellbeing and supporting sustainable human uses. The guidance is expected to include case studies of wise use in Australia.

More broadly, while the Convention's water related guidance has not necessarily directly informed water resource planning and management, decision-making processes in Australia are generally consistent with it. For example, the Australian Government, in association with state and territory governments, has identified 56 regions, based on catchments or bioregions, covering all of Australia. Regional organisations covering each of the 56 regions, have formed a crucial partnership with the Australian Government to facilitate the integrated delivery of Caring for our Country at the regional level. Investment opportunities, in particular for Ramsar sites, are guided by existing regional planning processes, state and national policies.

Decision-making on the use of Commonwealth environmental water by the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH) is broadly compatible with the Convention's water-related guidance. For example, the CEWH's approach to setting priorities for water use aligns with the Convention's recommendation that the process be formalised, well-informed and participatory. A decision framework was finalised and published in 2009–2010 to guide the use of environmental water by the CEWH under different water resource availability scenarios. Proposed watering actions have been assessed and prioritised using a rigorous approach including: published criteria; the best available scientific information; and advice from the Environmental Water Scientific Advisory Committee as well as input from state governments and the local community.

1.7.2 Does your country's water governance and management treat wetlands as natural water infrastructure integral to water resource management at the scale of river basins?  
KRA 1.7.ii

A - Yes



## 1.7.2 Additional information:

In Australia there are a range of water governance and management arrangements that consider wetlands as natural assets integral to water resource management. Examples include the National Water Initiative (NWI), the *Water Act 2007* and the regional natural resource management model. Further information on Australia's governance arrangements is provided in Section 2, questions A and I, and question 1.7.1.

The Water Act recognises wetlands as being part of the Murray–Darling Basin's water resources, which are used and managed so as to give effect to the Ramsar Convention and other relevant international agreements and in doing so to optimise economic, social and environmental outcomes. The Basin Plan required by the Water Act provides for the protection and restoration of wetlands, including Ramsar sites, through the determination of an environmentally sustainable level of extraction for consumptive uses and the development of an Environmental Watering Plan and water quality and salinity management plans.

In Queensland, wetlands are considered as environmental assets in the water resource planning process under the Queensland *Water Act 2000*. In developing a water resource plan, the size and nature of the asset/resource is assessed to ensure that water is allocated within sustainable boundaries.

The Victorian *Water Act 1989* provides for the integrated management of water taking into account the protection and enhancement of environmental qualities of waterways and their in-stream uses and protection of catchment conditions.

1.7.3 Have Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) expertise and tools been incorporated into catchment/river basin planning and management (see Resolution X.19)? {1.4.2}

A - Yes

### 1.7.3 Additional information:

Regional natural resource management (NRM) organisations are responsible for delivery of CEPA expertise across the suite of NRM issues, including those affecting wetlands. These organisations typically develop promotional materials, run workshops and information sessions and act as conduits for information dissemination on NRM issues for the public. These areas receive funding from the Australian Government as well as from state and territory governments.

For example, under the Caring for Our Country program:

- the Border Rivers Gwydir Catchment Management Authority, New South Wales, is delivering education and awareness workshops to increase the capacity of landholders in the Ramsar listed Gwydir Wetlands to maintain and restore the ecological values of the area
- in the Burdekin Catchment, Queensland, coral reef monitoring, community engagement and education are being undertaken
- in the Burnett Mary Catchment, a project called Mangrove Watch is conserving the mangrove ecosystem through community engagement workshops and field days.

The Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Rivers Assessment is taking a strategic adaptive management approach to gaining understanding of the condition of watercourses and catchments in the LEB. The Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Water Resources Assessment is detailing key information about the GAB as a water resource.

The following activities are being undertaken by state and territory governments: The 'Glovebox Guide to plants of the Gwydir Wetlands and Macquarie Marshes' was released at a soils information day, linking soils, plants, and landscape management – [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/field/pastures-and-rangelands/management/guidelines-gwydir-macquarie](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/field/pastures-and-rangelands/management/guidelines-gwydir-macquarie).

The Queensland Wetlands Program (QWP) has developed a first stop shop for wetlands information which can be used by all stakeholders in natural resource planning – WetlandInfo – [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/index.html](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/index.html). Many of the tools developed through the QWP have a CEPA focus. Further information is provided under responses to questions 1.7.6 and 4.1.9.

The Water-dependent ecosystem Risk Assessment Tool (WaterRAT) has been developed as a decision support tool to assist planning and policy within the Mount Lofty Ranges and the south-east regions in South Australia. WaterRAT is accessible at the following website – [e-nrims.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/WaterRAT/](http://e-nrims.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/WaterRAT/).

Tasmania carried out a state-wide survey of acid sulphate soils (ASS) and developed guidelines for the management of potential ASS. These were published in 2009 – [www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/SWEN-83NVBG?open](http://www.dpiw.tas.gov.au/inter.nsf/WebPages/SWEN-83NVBG?open).

Community participation is a fundamental element of Victoria's integrated catchment management system. The community is represented on the Victorian Catchment Management Council and the boards of the regional Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) established under the Victorian *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*.

The CMAs are responsible for developing regional catchment strategies (RCSs) which provide the primary integrated strategic framework for managing land,

water and biodiversity in each catchment region. CMAs must involve the community in developing RCSs. Current RCSs are in the process of being renewed. The Victorian *Water Act 1989* was amended in 2010 to require CMAs to develop regional waterway strategies. These will be developed in 2012–2013 in partnership with regional communities and cover rivers, wetlands and estuaries. They will replace the current regional river health strategies.

1.7.4 Has the Convention's guidance on wetlands and coastal zone management (Annex to Resolution VIII.4) been used/applied in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) planning and decision-making? {1.4.3}

A - Yes

1.7.4 Additional information:

The Ramsar Convention's guidance has been captured in Australia's 'National Cooperative Approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management: Framework and Implementation Plan' (2006) which guides planning and decision-making in the coastal zone.

In Victoria the Victorian Coastal Strategy 2008 adopts ICZM principles. The strategy is available from [www.vcc.vic.gov.au/vcs.htm](http://www.vcc.vic.gov.au/vcs.htm).

1.7.5 Has your country established policies or guidelines for enhancing the role of wetlands in mitigation and/or adaptation to climate change? KRA 1.7.iii

A - Yes

1.7.5 Additional information:

'Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030' is a guiding framework for how Australians can protect and manage terrestrial, freshwater aquatic and marine biodiversity over the coming decades. The strategy sets 10 targets to be achieved by 2015, some of which relate to building ecosystem resilience in a changing climate. Further information on the wetland related targets is provided under Section 2, question A.

According to Australian environmental non-government organisations there are further opportunities to protect and restore coastal wetlands. Coastal wetlands such as saltmarshes, mangroves and seagrass meadows are significant stores of carbon. The role of these ecosystems in climate change adaptation and mitigation should be further considered.

1.7.6 Has your country formulated plans or projects to sustain and enhance the role of wetlands and water in supporting and maintaining viable farming systems? KRA 1.7.v

A - Yes

**1.7.6 Additional information:**

Caring for our Country is the key Australian Government initiative that works to improve the interaction between wetlands and agricultural systems. The sustainable farm practices national priority area aims to increase landholder adoption of management practices that maintain and improve production, while delivering ecosystem services that benefit the whole community. Projects addressing these multiple targets have the potential to deliver the dual outcomes of enhancing wetlands and agricultural production.

Through the QWP, the Queensland Government with support from the Australian Government, has developed a series of tools and resources to assist in the management of wetlands in agricultural landscapes in Queensland. These include material to assist with wetland management, stock and grazing, pest species, economic support tools, and buffer zones. Further information can be found at [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/).

Western Australia has developed 'Guidelines for the determination of wetland buffer requirements', to assist planning to ensure wetlands and values are protected from the threats posed by adjacent land uses.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.7 implementation:

**STRATEGY 1.8 Wetland restoration.** *Identify priority wetlands and wetland systems where restoration or rehabilitation would be beneficial and yield long-term environmental, social or economic benefits, and implement the necessary measures to recover these sites and systems.*

1.8.1 Have priority sites for wetland restoration been identified?

{1.5.1} KRA 1.8.i

A - Yes

## 1.8.1 Additional information:

Information from the Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar sites, ecological character descriptions and assessments of potential change in ecological character of sites informs priorities for Caring for our Country investment in wetlands. The information provided enables identification of those sites under imminent threat and/or priority threats to be targeted under the Caring for our Country initiative.

Restoring the condition of wetlands in the Murray–Darling Basin has been identified as a priority by the Australian Government. This is reflected by the introduction of the Water Act, its establishment of the Murray–Darling Basin Authority and requirement to prepare a Basin Plan. See Section 2, question A for further information.

In addition to identification of priority sites at the national level, state and territory governments have separate processes.

In New South Wales (NSW) the Rivers Environmental Restoration Program (RERP) focused on five of the most important wetland areas in the NSW Murray–Darling Basin, with selection based on conservation and cultural significance, and magnitude of the water supply risks posed to the values of the wetlands. The areas selected were: Gwydir Wetlands; Lachlan Wetlands; Lowbidgee Floodplain; Macquarie Marshes; and Narran Lakes. Further information on the RERP is provided under question 1.8.2.

In Victoria, CMA regional river health strategies (see Section 1.7.3) identify the priority actions for the protection or restoration of Victoria's rivers, floodplain wetlands and estuaries. Priorities are developed through consultation with local communities and consider environmental, social and economic values.

1.8.2 Have wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects been implemented? {1.5.1} KRA 1.8.i

A - Yes

#### 1.8.2 Additional information:

A number of restoration/rehabilitation programs are being implemented by Australian, state and territory governments.

In the 2008–09 financial year a total of 14 Caring for our Country projects commenced that are contributing to the protection of Ramsar wetlands. These projects are protecting over 9000 hectares of Ramsar wetlands through on-ground activities, research and information gathering, and community engagement. Actions such as riparian rehabilitation, weed and pest animal management and changing land management practices are assisting to improve water quality entering Ramsar wetlands. Areas where projects have been undertaken include the Burdekin billabongs and Bowling Green Bay in Queensland, the Ord River floodplain in Western Australia and the Fivebough and Tuckerbil wetlands in New South Wales. Major projects are also well underway to improve water quality management in the Gippsland Lakes in Victoria.

There remained a strong focus on restoration and rehabilitation of wetlands in the Murray–Darling Basin during the current triennium.

The condition of the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) was identified as an issue of considerable concern in Australia's COP10 National Report. At that time, the most immediate threat was the declining water levels and the resultant exposure of acid sulfate soils. The CLLMM Recovery Project has been developed by the Australian and South Australian Governments as a response to concerns about changes occurring at the site. The project is an AUD 200 million commitment that focuses on restoring the ecological character of the site and delivering a healthy and resilient wetland which is able to adapt to variable water levels. A further AUD 10 million has been provided for bioremediation and revegetation work within the site. The condition of the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site has improved as a result of the activities under the Recovery Project and significant rainfall events experienced across the Murray–Darling Basin in the second half of 2010.

In addition to initiatives undertaken by the Australian Government, state and territory governments have implemented a range of restoration/rehabilitation programs; including in collaboration with the Australian Government.

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Ginini Flats Ramsar Wetlands and other significant bogs affected by the 2003 bushfires are subject to a major ongoing rehabilitation program to prevent stream channelisation and encourage the spreading of water across the bogs. In addition, over the past two decades, populations of the Northern Corroboree Frogs have declined to precariously low numbers largely due to the introduced pathogen amphibian chytrid fungus. The species is being successfully bred in captivity in the ACT and releases of captive bred individuals to the wild (to bolster the declining populations) are planned to commence later in 2011.

The New South Wales (NSW) Rivers Environmental Restoration Program (RERP) was an AUD 181 million program funded by the NSW and Australian Governments. The program objective was 'to arrest the decline of the most stressed and iconic rivers and wetlands in NSW through market-based water recovery focused on the voluntary acquisition and effective, active management of environmental water'.

Highlights include:

- To end June 2011, 129 991 megalitres of water entitlement holdings across the Murrumbidgee, Lachlan, Macquarie and Gwydir valleys, which are also targeted by RERP, were purchased. This water was used in conjunction with other sources of environmental water to undertake environmental waterings to targeted wetlands.

- Feasibility studies and structural works have been undertaken to optimise the environmental benefits gained through environmental watering.

Further information on the program is available from [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/rerp.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/rerp.htm).

A 'Drought Action Plan' for threatened small-bodied native freshwater fish in the South Australian Murray–Darling Basin was initiated under the project 'Protecting Critical Environmental Assets (PCEA)'.

In Victoria, priority restoration activities are identified in regional strategies and implemented through an integrated State investment program. An example is the Mallee Catchment Management Authority's Wetland Restoration Program for the Margooya Lagoon in the Beggs Bend State Forest which has been restored to a more natural watering regime. The Wetland Restoration Program aims to reinstate wet and dry cycles to wetlands that have been permanently inundated since regulation of the Murray River. The drying out of Margooya is crucial to improving the health and productivity of the wetland.

The Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation manages the Healthy Wetland Habitats Program, a voluntary program that provides technical and financial assistance to private land managers of wetlands of high conservation value on the Swan Coastal Plain. Under a Voluntary Management Agreement, a management action plan and funding is offered to eligible landholders for assistance with, for example, fencing, weed control, revegetation, dieback management and managing wetland habitats.

1.8.3 Has Ramsar guidance (Annex to Resolution VIII.16) or equivalent guidance on wetland restoration been used in designing and implementing wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects? {1.5.2}

A - Yes

1.8.3 Additional information:

State governments have used the Ramsar guidance to develop the following:

The 'Rehabilitation Guidelines for the Great Barrier Reef catchment' provide a practical guide to rehabilitating wetlands and managing threats such as pests, weeds and fire.

These guidelines are available online at

[www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/ManagementTools/ConstructionandRehabilitation.html](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/ManagementTools/ConstructionandRehabilitation.html).

The 'Wetland Management Handbook: Farm Management Systems (FMS) guidelines for managing wetlands in intensive agriculture' contains information and guidelines to help producers and extension officers protect the functions of Queensland's wetlands in intensive agricultural production systems. The Handbook is available online at [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/resources/static/pdf/FinalReports/EPA08\\_025\\_Handbook\\_web\\_new.pdf](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/resources/static/pdf/FinalReports/EPA08_025_Handbook_web_new.pdf).

The Western Australian Government is developing 'A guide to managing and restoring wetlands in Western Australia', which covers wetland functions, values, degrading processes, rehabilitation planning, techniques, protection and management and legal aspects.



Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.8 implementation:

**STRATEGY 1.9 Invasive alien species.** *Encourage Contracting Parties to develop a national inventory of invasive alien species that currently and/or potentially impact the ecological character of wetlands, especially Ramsar Sites, and ensure mutual supportiveness between the national inventory and IUCN's Global Register on Invasive Species (GRIS); develop guidance and promote procedures and actions to prevent, control or eradicate such species in wetland systems.*

1.9.1 Does your country have a comprehensive national inventory of invasive alien species that currently or potentially impact the ecological character of wetlands?  
KRA 1.9.i

B - No

#### 1.9.1 Additional information:

Australia does not have a national inventory of invasive species developed specifically for the protection of wetlands. However, Australian agencies and authorities responsible for biosecurity, biodiversity and invasive species policies have national lists of invasive weeds and pest animals to inform surveillance and management to reduce the threat to agriculture and/or the environment (in some cases including wetlands). The national lists are complemented by other national initiatives:

- The Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) and Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities regulate the importation of exotic vertebrates. All imported animals must be accompanied by an AQIS permit that sets out conditions under which the quarantine risk posed by the species can be managed. The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) sets out the conditions for importation of live animals and lists species permitted for import.
- National strategies including, the 'Australian Pest Animals Strategy', 'Australian Weeds Strategy', National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions and 'Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030' identify significant invasive species to inform Australia's response and management.
- Under the 'Australian Weeds Strategy', 20 weeds of national significance have been identified for priority management, including some aquatic weeds that are a significant threat to wetlands, particularly mimosa and salvinia. In 2011 more weeds are being considered as potential weeds of national significance.
- Under the National System for the Prevention and Management of Marine Pest Incursions a list of marine species has been developed comprising species that are likely to have a nationally significant impact if introduced to Australia's marine environment.
- Australia is also developing a comprehensive Freshwater Pest Fish Strategy under the 'Australian Pest Animal Strategy' that will drive surveillance, control plans, research, and species prioritisation.
- There are a number of plans and agreements on biosecurity between the Australian and state and territory governments that enhance collaboration and consistency in the management of established invasive species and improve national emergency response arrangements for new invasive species between all jurisdictions. The key plans for managing established invasive species are referred to above. The agreements in place for emergency responses are:
  - the Emergency Plant Pest Response Deed
  - the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement
  - the Australian Emergency Marine Pest Plan
  - the draft National Environmental Biosecurity Response Agreement (nearing finalisation).
- The Australian, state and territory governments have also developed a formal arrangement – the Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity – that sets out roles and responsibilities to create a stronger working partnership to improve the national biosecurity system. The Intergovernmental Agreement will assist Australian governments operate together to address Australia's biosecurity issues and outline priority areas for collaboration. The Intergovernmental Agreement on Biosecurity is expected to come into effect in late 2011.
- In 2011 Australia is finalising a 'National Categorisation System for Invasive Species' for weeds and pest animals that will contribute to maintenance of nationally agreed lists of high-risk species for surveillance and national response.

Further information on Australian Government management of invasive species is

available from [www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/index.html).

State and territory governments also have in place policies and programs to manage invasive species, including those that threaten wetlands. Information on some of these programs is provided under question 1.9.2.

1.9.2 Have national invasive species control and management policies or guidelines been established for wetlands?  
{1.6.1} KRa 1.9.iii

B - No

**1.9.2 Additional information:**

As described under question 1.9.1, the Australian Government has a number of policies in place for the purposes of invasive species management and control. In addition, the Australian Government:

- develops Threat Abatement Plans – existing plans of relevance to wetlands include those for feral cats, foxes and the infection of amphibians with chytrid fungus
- works with all jurisdictions to implement the ‘Australian Pest Animal Strategy’ and ‘Australian Weeds Strategy’
- prepares Pest Alerts to raise awareness of particularly aggressive invasive species threatening to establish in Australia, such as the Red-eared Slider Turtle
- develops National Control Plans for marine pests already established in Australia and works with all jurisdictions to encourage implementation of the Plans.

To complement Australian Government programs, the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) undertakes integrated research into invasive animals. The CRC creates new technologies and integrated strategies to reduce the impact of invasive animals on Australia’s economy, environment, and people. It concentrates on developing tools to prevent and detect new invasions, including the development of tactical tools to strengthen integrated management strategies of carp and other pest fish.

The control of weeds and pest animals is primarily undertaken by state and territory governments, therefore management policies and guidelines, including for wetlands, are also developed by state governments responsible for the geographic areas where wetlands occur. For example in New South Wales management guidelines have been developed for aquatic weeds such as salvinia, alligator weed and cabomba.

The Northern Territory is undertaking feral camel control and assessing amelioration of the impacts of camels. This includes monitoring impacts on aquatic ecosystems. Through Caring for our Country a project to reduce the impacts of feral herbivores (pigs and banteng) on the wetland values of the Cobourg Peninsula Ramsar site is being undertaken.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.9 implementation:

**STRATEGY 1.10 Private sector.** *Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

<p>1.10.1 Is the private sector encouraged to apply the Ramsar wise use principle and guidance (Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands) in its activities and investments concerning wetlands? {4.2.1} KRA 1.10.i</p>	<p>A - Yes</p>
<p>1.10.1 Additional information:</p> <p>At the national level, legislation and regulations applying to the private sector (including the EPBC Act and Water Act), provide for wetland protection, management and wise use. In all states and territories there is legislation that requires environmental impact assessment for certain types of development, land use change or in relation to ecosystems of particular conservation concern. Further information on relevant legislation is provided under question 1.3.5.</p> <p>The wise use guidance document for Australia currently being developed will identify and explain wise use principles and concepts to assist all stakeholders, including the private sector, to apply wise use in planning and management decisions that affect wetlands.</p> <p>Partnerships for the management of environmental water on private land were established under the New South Wales Rivers Environmental Restoration Program (see question 1.8.2). This included Wetland Conservation Officers working with landholders to support management and wise use of wetlands on private land.</p> <p>In Queensland the Ramsar wise use principle is recognised in the 'Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Queensland's wetlands'. <a href="http://www.derm.qld.gov.au/services_resources/item_details.php?item_id=203260">www.derm.qld.gov.au/services_resources/item_details.php?item_id=203260</a>. The principle and guidance are also promoted in the tools developed through the Queensland Wetlands Program.</p>	
<p>1.10.2 Has the private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise and management of:</p> <p>a. Wetlands in general</p> <p>b. Ramsar Sites</p> <p>KRA 1.10.ii</p>	<p>A - Yes</p> <p>A - Yes</p>

#### 1.10.2 Additional information:

The response to this question should be read in conjunction with information provided for question 1.8.2. Some programs/projects described under question 1.8.2 involve private sector management of wetlands/Ramsar sites. In Australia private sector actions/activities occur both in collaboration with government and independently; being undertaken by private landowners or non-profit organisations.

Recently published results from the 2007–2008 Agricultural Resource Management Survey, conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, estimate that about 10 per cent of Australia's agricultural businesses have wetlands on their holdings, including Ramsar listed sites. Of businesses with wetlands, 45 per cent are protecting wetlands for conservation purposes, accounting for around 1.7 million hectares or roughly 35 per cent of the total area of wetlands estimated. Of those businesses protecting wetlands, retaining existing native vegetation is the most common form of protection; other activities are managing weeds (52 per cent), controlling or excluding livestock access (a similar per cent), managing pests or feral animals (38 per cent), planting and seeding native vegetation (25 per cent), and managing water in wetlands (30 per cent).

In 2010, the Australian Conservation Foundation's 'Just Add Water' campaign received public donations sufficient to purchase 400 megalitres of environmental water for delivery to the Ramsar listed Hattah Lakes. In a coordinated effort by the Australian Conservation Foundation, the Australian Government, The Living Murray program, the Victorian Government and the local community, since March 2009, almost 30 000 megalitres of environmental water has been supplied to Hattah Lakes.

The New South Wales (NSW) Wetland Recovery Program undertook activities on a mix of public and private land in the Gwydir Wetlands and Macquarie Marshes. The program was jointly funded by the NSW and Australian Governments and was substantially complete by June 2009, with a total of AUD 26.8 million expended. Activities undertaken as part of the Program included the construction of the Gingham Pipeline to provide water savings, which will be used to restore ecological assets in the Gwydir Wetlands and the Gradgery Lane upgrade, upstream of the Macquarie Marshes, to allow passage of increased volumes of environmental water and therefore remove this choke from the system.

A wetland management plan for Wilgara (Industry & Investment NSW 2009), within the Macquarie Marshes Ramsar site, identifies land types and capability, soil resources, hydrology and threats, and is being implemented by the owners to improve stock management.

Lake Woods, a large ephemeral wetland located 220 kilometres north of Tennant Creek in the Northern Territory (NT), is located on pastoral leasehold land and encompasses two pastoral properties (Powell Creek and Newcastle Waters). The main land use within the site is pastoral operations, but a fenced enclosure on the northern part of the lake is managed as the Longreach Waterhole Protected Area (approximately 7 per cent of the site) by Parks and Wildlife Service NT, in cooperation with the pastoral lease managers.

In Tasmania, development of some management planning documents has occurred concurrently with development of Ecological Character Descriptions (ECDs). For the privately managed areas of the Flood Plain Lower Ringarooma River Ramsar site an effluent management plan and a whole of farm

management plan were written at the same time the ECD was being prepared. The management plan includes numerous landholder actions such as grazing management, dairy effluent management, pest management and weed management.

The Heart Morass is a 1800 hectare wetland system located at the mouth of the Latrobe River near Sale, Victoria. Part of the wetland (400 hectares) is a publicly owned State Game Reserve and included in the Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site. The remaining area, adjacent to the Ramsar site, was in private ownership and had been drained, cleared and managed for beef and dairy production for over a century. In 2006 a working group appointed by Field and Game Australia, Watermark Incorporated and the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority purchased 785 hectares of the private land component under the Wetland Environmental Task Force Trust established by Field and Game Australia. In 2009, a further 286 hectares were purchased. A memorandum of understanding guides the management and rehabilitation of the site which is managed for education, environmental improvement and appropriate recreation.

The Western Australian Department of Environment and Conservation manages the Healthy Wetland Habitats (HWH) Program. Further information on the HWH Program is provided at question 1.8.2.

1.10.3 Have awareness-raising materials been made available to enable wetland-friendly consumer choices? KRA 1.10.iii

A - Yes

1.10.3 Additional information:

The Australian Government provides fact sheets, guides and classroom resources to educational facilities (e.g. primary and secondary schools and wetland information centres) and through its website promotes conservation and wise use of wetlands. For World Wetlands Day the Australian Government also raises public awareness through the 'Wetlands Australia' magazine, posters, press releases and advertising. The Administrative Authority also contributes funds to awareness raising campaigns such as those run through the Queensland Wetlands Program.

Governments and businesses strongly promote the use of cotton or paper bags over disposable plastic bags, with the objective of reducing plastic pollution of waterways and coasts.

Ecotourism Australia promotes environmentally-friendly consumer choices with regard to tourism. It runs an ECO Certification Program which enables consumers to identify that businesses are operating in an environmentally sustainable manner and offer a quality ecotourism experience. Further information on this program is available from [www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au).

Banrock Station Ramsar site is an operational winery. Every bottle produced by the winery includes the message 'Good Earth-Fine Wine'. A percentage of the sale from each bottle of wine contributes to conservation of wetlands globally.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.10 implementation:



**STRATEGY 1.11: Incentive measures.** *Promote incentive measures that encourage the application of the wise use provisions of the Convention.*

1.11.1 Have actions been taken to implement incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands? {4.3.1} KRA 1.11.i	A - Yes
<p>1.11.1 Additional information:</p> <p>Tax concessions have been introduced by the Australian Government as an incentive to encourage land owners to enter into conservation covenants to protect areas of high conservation value, including wetlands, on private land. To be eligible for tax concessions, the conservation covenant must be approved by the Minister for the Environment or entered into under an approved conservation covenanting program.</p> <p>The Queensland Nature Refuges Program assists landholders to formally protect significant natural or cultural values. A nature refuge is a voluntary agreement between a landholder and the Queensland Government, which acknowledges a commitment to preserve land with significant conservation values. It is recognised as a class of protected area under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>. Many Nature Refuges have been established on private properties to cover the sustainable management of wetlands. Landholders with a nature refuge agreement in place are able to tender for financial assistance with on-ground management through the NatureAssist program. Under a similar program in Tasmania, a number of wetlands on private property are protected by covenants.</p> <p>The Conservation Revolving Funds Program has been set up by the Australian Government to promote the use of revolving funds for conservation purposes. A revolving fund is a mechanism whereby funds are used to purchase properties with natural or cultural values. A covenant is then placed on the property's title and it is on-sold to conservation-minded people. The proceeds from the sale of properties are used again to buy more properties and sell them with a conservation covenant in place. The Australian Government has provided funding under the Bush for Wildlife initiative to four not-for-profit organisations to operate revolving funds: Trust for Nature in Victoria; the National Trust of Australia in Western Australia; the South Australian Nature Foundation; and the Nature Conservation Trust of New South Wales.</p> <p>The Victorian EcoTender program involves landholders submitting tenders that set out the cost to them of undertaking various land and vegetation management actions. A number of tender programs for wetlands have successfully been run in the Glenelg-Hopkins, West Gippsland, Wimmera, Goulburn Broken and Corangamite CMAs funded by the Victorian Government. The programs offer financial incentives to land managers to look after wetlands on private land through a competitive tender program. Following assessment of the conservation values of a landowner's wetland a management plan is prepared. The landowner subsequently submits a bid to fulfil the management actions over a period of four years. Successful bids are determined on the basis of best value for money based on the conservation value of the wetland, the management actions, and the costs involved. The wetland tender programs provide successful landholders with additional income for wetland conservation efforts.</p>	
1.11.2 Have actions been taken to remove perverse incentive measures which discourage conservation and wise use	A - Yes



of wetlands? {4.3.2} KRA 1.11.i

1.11.2 Additional information:

As per the COP10 National Report the National Water Initiative, Water for the Future and *Water Act 2007* were developed to address perverse incentives in the context of water management. These initiatives will have flow on impacts to the condition of wetlands. Further information on the NWI, Water Act and Water for the Future is included in Section 2.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 1.11 implementation:

## GOAL 2. WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

**Note.** An optional Annex (Section 4) to this COP11 National Report Format is provided so that a Contracting Party, if it so wishes, can also provide additional information separately on any of its designated Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

**STRATEGY 2.1 Ramsar Site designation.** Apply the “Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance” (Handbook 14, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition ).

2.1.1 Have a national strategy and priorities been established for the further designation of Ramsar Sites, using the <i>Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List</i> ? {2.1.1} KRA 2.1.i	B - No
<p>2.1.1 Additional information:</p> <p>The Australian Ramsar site nomination guidelines are intended to facilitate more effective, efficient, and timely Ramsar nominations, and to provide greater transparency and certainty to site managers, governments and the community about the nomination process. The guidelines will describe the practical requirements for proposing a Ramsar site nomination including the minimum information required to support a nomination and seek to encourage high quality nominations.</p> <p>According to Australian environmental non-government organisations (NGOs), there is a need for greater collaboration between Australian, state and territory government water management and fisheries agencies, environmental NGOs and community stakeholders in development of an approach to designation of Ramsar sites.</p>	
2.1.2 Have all required updates of the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands been submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat? {2.2.1} KRA 2.1.ii	B - No
<p>2.1.2 Additional information:</p> <p>There are currently 28 Ramsar Information Sheets (RIS) due to be updated. A number of RISs are currently being updated in conjunction with the development of Ecological Character Descriptions (ECDs). These are expected to be formally endorsed by relevant land managers/government agencies by December 2011. Once complete the updated RIS and ECDs will be provided to the Secretariat and available from <a href="http://www.environment.gov.au/wetlands">www.environment.gov.au/wetlands</a>.</p> <p>The Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar sites is being implemented to assist Australia monitor the status of its Ramsar wetlands. The Review includes information on whether a site's RIS requires updating.</p>	
2.1.3 How many Ramsar Site designations in your country have been submitted to the Secretariat but are not yet placed on the List of Wetlands of International Importance? KRA 2.1.iii	0 sites
<p>2.1.3 Additional information:</p> <p>No sites have been designated by Australia in the current triennium.</p>	
2.1.4 If further Ramsar Site designations are planned for the next triennium (2012-2015), please indicate how many sites (otherwise indicate 0) KRA 2.1.iii	1 sites

2.1.4 Additional information (please indicate the anticipated year of designation):

Designation of the Piccaninnie Ponds Karst Wetlands, South Australia is planned for the next triennium.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 2.1 implementation:

**STRATEGY 2.2 Ramsar Site information.** *Ensure that the Ramsar Sites Information Service . . . is available and enhanced as a tool for guiding the further designation of wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance and for research and assessment, and is effectively managed by the Secretariat.*

2.2.1 Are the Ramsar Sites Information Service and its tools being used in national identification of further Ramsar Sites to designate? {2.2.2} KRA 2.2.ii

B - No

2.2.1 Additional information:

As indicated in the COP10 National Report and under question 1.1.1, Australia has an Australian Wetlands Database which holds information on Australia's Ramsar sites. This database is generally accessed instead of the Ramsar Sites Information Service. There continue to be discrepancies in information in the Australian database and that included in the Information Service. The Administrative Authority will continue to work with the Secretariat to address these discrepancies.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 2.2 implementation:

**STRATEGY 2.3 Management planning - new Ramsar Sites.** *While recognizing that Ramsar Site designation can act as a stimulus for development of effective site management plans, generally encourage the philosophy that all new Ramsar Sites should have effective management planning in place before designation, as well as resources for implementing such management.*

2.3.1 Have all sites being prepared for Ramsar designation (2.1.2 above) had adequate management planning processes established? KRA 2.3.i

A - Yes

## 2.3.1 Additional information:

The Piccaninnie Ponds Conservation Park Management Plan was prepared in 1992. A Ramsar management plan for the proposed Piccaninnie Ponds Karst Wetland Ramsar Site, South Australia is currently being finalised.

Primary legislative and policy responsibility for natural resource management, including wetlands, rests with respective state and territory governments, whereas the Australian Government is responsible for matters of national interest. The Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), provides a legal framework to protect and manage nationally and internationally important flora, fauna, ecological communities (including wetlands) and heritage places. The EPBC Act also specifies management requirements for World Heritage areas, Commonwealth national parks and national marine reserves. Further information on management planning for World Heritage Areas and Commonwealth national parks is provided under questions 1.4.4, 2.4.5, and 2.5.1.

Schedule 6 of the 'Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000' identifies principles for the management of wetlands of international importance. The Australian Ramsar Management Principles (ARMP) cover matters relevant to the preparation of Ramsar site management plans, including that the plans should describe ecological character, state what must be done to maintain ecological character, and promote conservation and sustainable use in a way that is compatible with maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem. Management plans are to be reviewed at least every seven years.

All state and territory governments have enacted comprehensive legislative and policy instruments to protect the environment and conserve natural resources. These instruments generally apply to all wetlands. For example, in New South Wales, plans of management are required under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Management of the wetland values of a particular site may be captured within an existing or more comprehensive plan, such as a plan of management for a national park or nature reserve which includes a Ramsar wetland.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 2.3 implementation:

**STRATEGY 2.4 Ramsar Site ecological character.** *Maintain the ecological character of all designated Ramsar Sites, through planning and management.*

2.4.1 How many Ramsar Sites have a management plan? {2.3.2} KRA 2.4.i	57 sites
2.4.2 For those Ramsar Sites with a management plan, for how many is the management plan being implemented? KRA 2.4.i	57 sites
2.4.3 How many Ramsar Sites have a management plan in preparation? KRA 2.4.i	7 sites
2.4.4 For those Ramsar Sites with a management plan, for how many is the management plan being revised or updated? KRA 2.4.i	17 sites

## 2.4.1 – 2.4.4 Additional information:

There are 57 Ramsar sites with a final management plan in place, a further seven sites have a plan in preparation.

Management plans for two of the four Ramsar sites within Commonwealth national parks are currently under review; the Christmas Island and Pulu Keeling National Park management plans. Draft plans are due to be released for public consultation during 2011. The Kakadu National Park Management Plan is due to expire at the end of 2013 and the process of developing the next plan will commence during 2011.

There are three marine reserves, listed as Ramsar sites, managed by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities; Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs, Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reefs and Ashmore Reef. The management plans for the Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reefs and Ashmore Reef sites expired in 2009. The sites are currently managed under interim management arrangements that are consistent with previous management plans, and take into account Ramsar wetlands. The Australian Government is currently undertaking an extensive Marine Bioregional planning process that will result in new management plans being developed for all of these reserves.

The Toolibin Lake Recovery Plan (1994) is currently being updated as a management plan for the Toolibin Lake Ramsar site.

2.4.5 Do the Ramsar Site management plans establish the maintenance of the ecological character as a management objective? KRA 2.4.ii

A - Yes

## 2.4.5 Additional information:

As indicated under question 2.3.1 the framework for managing wetlands in Australia is set by the EPBC Act and its associated regulations. The ARMP state that management plans should describe ecological character and include actions to maintain ecological character.

The importance of ecological character in management planning is recognised in existing plans, for example:

- The draft management plan for Christmas Island National Park includes monitoring and maintaining the ecological character of the two Ramsar wetlands within the park (Hosnies Spring and The Dales).
- The draft management plan for Pulu Keeling National Park includes an objective relating to the maintenance of the ecological character of the site, recognising natural processes are impacting the lagoon.
- The current Kakadu National Park Management Plan includes the aim of protecting the landscapes, soils and water systems of the park.
- The South Australia Ramsar management plans have an objective or specific action to maintain the ecological character of each site.

2.4.6 How many sites have a cross-sectoral management committee? {2.3.3} KRA 2.4.iv

sites

**2.4.6 Additional information** (If at least "1 site", please name the site(s)):

Ramsar sites have in place a range of different management structures. For example, Kakadu National Park is jointly managed by the Director of National Parks and the Board of Management. The Board of Management is made up of ten Traditional Owners representing the geographic spread of Aboriginal people within the Kakadu region, the Director of National Parks, the Assistant Secretary of Parks Operations and Tourism Branch, a person prominent in nature conservation, a person employed in the tourism industry in the Northern Territory, and a Northern Territory Government nominee.

In South Australia some Ramsar sites have a cross-sectoral management committee (Riverland, Banrock Station) whilst others are managed by the government without a committee (Bool Lagoon, Coongie Lakes).

Comprehensive information on the management arrangements for all Australian Ramsar sites is not available.

**2.4.7 For how many sites has an ecological character description been prepared? KRA 2.4.v**

64 sites

**2.4.7 Additional information** (If at least "1 site", please give the site(s) name and official number):

Ecological Character Descriptions (ECDs) are finalised for 37 sites. A further 27 are currently in the process of being endorsed by relevant land managers/government agencies. Once complete the ECDs will be available from the Australian Wetlands Database – [www.environment.gov.au/wetlands](http://www.environment.gov.au/wetlands).

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 2.4 implementation:

**STRATEGY 2.5 Ramsar Site management effectiveness.** *Review all existing Ramsar Sites to determine the effectiveness of management arrangements, in line with the "Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance".*

**2.5.1 Have any assessments of Ramsar Site management effectiveness been carried out? {2.3.4} KRA 2.5.i**

A - Yes

2.5.1 Additional information (if "Yes" or "Some sites", please indicate the year of assessment and from whom, or from where, the information is available):

As indicated under question 2.3.1, management plans for Ramsar sites are to be reviewed every seven years.

Management plans for Commonwealth managed marine reserves are also reviewed every seven years to inform the development of the next plan. The review considers the management effectiveness of the policies and actions in the plan. The management plans for Coringa-Herald and Lihou Reef National Nature Reserves and Ashmore Reef and Cartier Island Marine Reserve expired in 2009 and were reviewed at that time.

Park management plans for Commonwealth national parks are effective for 10 years. Towards the end of the life of each management plan a technical audit of the plan is conducted to inform the development of the next plan. These audits consider each prescribed management policy and action and whether or not it was successfully implemented. The recent technical audits of Christmas Island National Park and Pulu Keeling National Park management plans have been based on the IUCN management effectiveness framework.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 2.5 implementation:

**STRATEGY 2.6 Ramsar Site status.** *Monitor the condition of Ramsar Sites and address negative changes in their ecological character, notify the Ramsar Secretariat of changes affecting Ramsar Sites, and apply the Montreux Record, if appropriate, and Ramsar Advisory Mission as tools to address problems.*

2.6.1 Are arrangements in place for the Administrative Authority to be informed of negative human-induced changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites, pursuant to Article 3.2? {2.4.1} KRA 2.6.i

A - Yes

2.6.1 Additional information (if "Yes" or "Some sites", please summarise the mechanism(s) established):

The 'National Guidelines for Notifying Change in Ecological Character of Australian Ramsar Sites (Article 3.2)' describe the process and arrangements for the Administrative Authority to be informed of changes in ecological character. These guidelines were endorsed at the national level and published in 2009.

The Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar sites will provide information on the status of Ramsar sites allowing management actions to be targeted in response to emerging threats. The Review will also support the timely identification of possible changes in ecological character of sites.

During the current triennium the focus on developing ECDs and RIS updates has also contributed information on the character of sites.



2.6.2 Have all cases of negative human-induced change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat, pursuant to Article 3.2,? {2.4.2} KRA 2.6.i

A - Yes

2.6.2 Additional information (if "Yes" or "Some cases", please indicate for which Ramsar Sites Article 3.2 reports have been made by the Administrative Authority to the Secretariat, and for which sites such reports of change or likely change have not yet been made):

All cases of likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites that occurred during this triennium have been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat. Updates on the status of sites for which notifications have previously been reported are also regularly provided to the Secretariat.

An Article 3.2 notification of 'likely change in ecological character' for the Macquarie Marshes Ramsar site, New South Wales (NSW) was made in August 2009. The key driver of change was identified to be water management. Site inspections of the Ramsar site were made in October 2009 by the Secretary of the then Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, the Director General of the then NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water and the Ramsar Secretary General. A Response Strategy is being prepared by the NSW Government.

2.6.3 If applicable, have actions been taken to address the issues for which Ramsar Sites have been listed on the Montreux Record, including requesting a Ramsar Advisory Mission? {2.4.3} KRA 2.6.ii

Z - Not applicable

2.6.3 Additional information (if "Yes", please indicate the actions taken):

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 2.6 implementation:

**STRATEGY 2.7 Management of other internationally important wetlands.** *Appropriate management and wise use achieved for those internationally important wetlands that have not yet been formally designated as Ramsar Sites but have been identified through domestic application of the Strategic Framework or an equivalent process.*

2.7.1 Has the ecological character of internationally important wetlands not yet designated as Ramsar Sites been maintained? KRA 2.7.i

A - Yes

2.7.1 Additional information:

As indicated under question 2.3.1, a management plan for the Piccaninnie Ponds Karst Wetland is in place.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 2.7 implementation:

### GOAL 3. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

**STRATEGY 3.1 Synergies and partnerships with MEAs and IGOs.** *Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other intergovernmental agencies (IGOs).*

3.1.1 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)? {3.1.1} KRAs 3.1.i & 3.1.ii

A - Yes

3.1.1 Additional information:

In the Australian context linkages between MEAs are made possible by the fact that the focal points for MEAs in the biodiversity cluster are within one Australian Government agency (with the exception of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC); the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC). As such, structural and process arrangements allow for coordinated implementation of these MEAs. The Australian Government Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency is the lead agency for the UNFCCC. There are systems and processes in place to ensure that there are adequate linkages on relevant issues between the UNFCCC and other MEAs, including the Ramsar Convention.

The Ramsar Administrative Authority works particularly closely with the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) focal point, due to the strong synergies between the work programs of these conventions. Coordination of notifications and participation in departmental meetings assists in fostering collaboration. There has recently been collaboration to provide support to the Expert Group on Biodiversity and Water established under the CBD.

3.1.2 Are the national focal points of other MEAs invited to participate in the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee? {3.1.2} KRA KRAs 3.1.i & 3.1.iv

C - Partly

3.1.2 Additional information:

The national focal point for the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS) is invited to provide input to meetings of the Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce (WWTF), Australia's National Ramsar Committee. Input from other MEA national focal points is sought as required. Further information on the WWTF is provided under question 4.1.6.

3.1.3 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of UN and other global and regional bodies and agencies (e.g. UNEP, UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNECE, ITTO, etc)? KRA 3.1.iv

C - Partly

3.1.3 Additional information:

Focal points for UN and other global and regional bodies are located within a number of Australian Government agencies, including DSEWPaC, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Formal processes exist to facilitate communication between these agencies. The UNEP focal point within the DSEWPaC regularly seeks input from the Ramsar Administrative Authority.

3.1.4 [For African Contracting Parties only] Has the Contracting Party participated in the implementation of the wetland programme under NEPAD? {3.1.3} KRA 3.1.iii	Z - Not applicable
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3.1.4 Additional information:
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Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 3.1 implementation:

For KRA 3.1.v, see information provided under question 3.2.1. Australia funded a project to streamline reporting by Pacific Island countries to the biodiversity-related MEAs.

<b>STRATEGY 3.2 Regional initiatives.</b> <i>Support existing regional arrangements under the Convention and promote additional arrangements.</i>
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3.2.1 Has the Contracting Party been involved in the development and implementation of a Regional Initiative under the framework of the Convention? {2.6.1} KRA 3.2.i	A - Yes
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3.2.1 Additional information (If "Yes" or "Planned", please indicate the regional initiative(s) and the collaborating countries of each initiative):
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The Australian Government, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), completed a project that aimed to streamline reporting by Pacific Island countries to the biodiversity-related MEAs. The project resulted in the development and trial of a consolidated reporting template for Pacific Island countries to the following biodiversity-related MEAs: CBD; Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species; CMS; Ramsar Convention; and World Heritage Convention.

The Ramsar Convention Secretariat was consulted on the project and provided formal comments on the new template in 2010. In general, the Secretariats of the biodiversity-related MEAs, including the Ramsar Secretariat, have been supportive of the concept.

While the template has not been formally endorsed for use by the biodiversity MEA governing bodies, it provides a valuable case study of a regional approach to streamline reporting and could facilitate reporting by countries in other regions with similar staffing and resource constraints. Further information on the project can be found at: [www.environment.gov.au/about/international/reporting/](http://www.environment.gov.au/about/international/reporting/).

For information on regional initiatives for wetland-dependent migratory species refer question 3.5.3.

3.2.2 Has your country provided support to, or participated in, the development of other regional (i.e., covering more than one country) wetland training and research centres? {4.10.1}	A - Yes
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**3.2.2 Additional information** (If “Yes”, please indicate the name(s) of the centre(s):

The Australian Government provided AUD 20 000 to SPREP for the Pacific Wetlands Action Plan Workshop in August 2010. The workshop was to review implementation of the ‘Regional Wetlands Action Plan for the Pacific Islands’. The Action Plan outlines activities, responsibilities and targets that seek to promote and strengthen the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the Pacific region. The workshop was organised by SPREP, the Ramsar Convention Secretariat and the Government of New Caledonia.

Further information on networks that support wetland training and research is provided under question 3.4.1.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 3.2 implementation:

**STRATEGY 3.3 International assistance.** *Promote international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands, while ensuring that environmental safeguards and assessments are an integral component of all development projects that affect wetlands, including foreign and domestic investments.*

3.3.1 [For Contracting Parties with development assistance agencies only (“donor countries”): Has funding support been provided from the development assistance agency for wetland conservation and management in other countries? {4.5.1} KRA 3.3.i

A - Yes

**3.3.1 Additional information** (If “Yes”, please indicate the countries supported since COP10):

The Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) is the Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia's overseas aid program.

As described under question 3.2.1, the Australian Government through AusAID, in collaboration with SPREP, completed a project on streamlining reporting to multilateral environment agreements. The project resulted in the development of a consolidated reporting template, which was trialled in several Pacific Island countries. Further information on this project is provided under question 3.2.1.

The Australia China Environment Development Partnership (ACEDP), an AusAID initiative, includes the 'Wetland Policy, Guidelines and Capacity Building' project. The project aims to improve institutional coordination mechanisms for wetland management in China, assisting in the development of guidelines and national policy for wetland management. Further information on the project is provided under question 3.4.1.

3.3.2 [For Contracting Parties with development assistance agencies only ("donor countries")]: Have environmental safeguards and assessments been included in development proposals proposed by your development assistance agency? KRA 3.3.ii

A - Yes

3.3.2 Additional information:

AusAID supports a range of programs that address climate and environmental change and is working to integrate these issues throughout the aid program. This includes seeking to protect or improve the environment at each stage of the design and implementation of activities. AusAID must ensure that all activities it implements comply with relevant environmental legislation such as the EPBC Act. AusAID's internal environment management system (EMS) has been updated to better respond to the requirements of the EPBC Act in the context of an increasing aid program.

3.3.3 [For Contracting Parties that have received development assistance only ("recipient countries")]: Has funding support been received from development assistance agencies specifically for in-country wetland conservation and management? {4.5.2}

Z - Not applicable

3.3.3 Additional information (If "Yes", please indicate from which countries/agencies since COP10):

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 3.3 implementation:

**STRATEGY 3.4 Sharing information and expertise.** *Promote the sharing of expertise and information concerning the conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

3.4.1 Have networks, including twinning arrangements, been established, nationally or internationally, for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands that share common features? {3.2.1}

A - Yes

3.4.1 Additional information (If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate the networks and wetlands involved):

National and international networks for knowledge sharing and training exist in Australia. The Australian Government engages with a number of countries on water management issues. Some of this engagement includes information and knowledge sharing and capacity building on wetland management. These projects include:

1. The Australia China Environment Development Partnership (ACEDP), an Australian Government initiative, is funding the following projects:

- The 'Wetland Policy, Guidelines and Capacity Building' project aims to improve institutional coordination mechanisms for wetland management in China, assisting in the development of guidelines and national policy for wetland management. Wetlands International is a key contributor to the project, coordinating study tours to Australia by three Chinese delegations (experts, policy makers and site managers), and reviewing draft guidelines at Ramsar sites in

China.

- The 'River Health and Environmental Flows' project which involves developing methodologies for river health assessment and reporting, and for determining environmental flow requirements. The methodologies will assist in the development of guidelines and national policy for water management.

2. Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Indian Ministry of Water Resources, Australia is sharing technical and policy expertise regarding integrated water resource management, including approaches for managing the ecological health of water environments including wetlands.

The Australian Wetland Alliance (AWA) is an association of non-government organisations working with wetlands, which operates nationally and internationally. AWA is driven by a Technical Reference Group and is currently hosted by WetlandCare Australia. AWA provides a networking tool for people working in non-government organisations (NGOs) via an email list and through regular forums. The AWA is the Oceania representative for the World Wetlands Network (a global network of wetland NGOs) and is a member of Wetland Link International (an international support network for wetland education centres). Further information on the AWA is available online [www.awa.wetlandcare.com.au](http://www.awa.wetlandcare.com.au).

Wetland Link International Oceania is coordinated by the Hunter Wetland Centre and brings together wetland/environmental education centres from across Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island Countries.

The Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) contributes to training and information gathering in the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. Once a year the AWSG coordinates a field trip to north-west Australia to catch, band and flag migratory shorebirds to learn about species' movements and survival rates.

The City of Narashino in Japan and Brisbane City Council have signed an Affiliation Agreement in relation to the Yatsu Higata Tidelands in Japan and Boondall Wetlands (Moreton Bay Ramsar site) Queensland and have a program of activities under this agreement for the period 2009–2014 to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of migratory shorebirds and wetlands in order to encourage environmentally aware behaviours.

3.4.2 Has information about your country's wetlands and/or Ramsar Sites and their status been made publicly available (e.g., through publications or a website)? {3.2.2}

A - Yes

3.4.2 Additional information:

Information on Australian wetlands, including Ramsar sites, is made publicly available through a range of mechanisms. In particular, websites of relevant Australian and state/territory agencies are useful sources of information. These include:

- Australian Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, [www.environment.gov.au/wetlands](http://www.environment.gov.au/wetlands)
- New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage, [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wetlands/RamsarWetlands.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wetlands/RamsarWetlands.htm)
- Queensland Department of Environment and Resource Management, in partnership with the Australian Government, has developed WetlandInfo, a first-stop shop for Queensland wetland information, [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/)
- Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, [www.dse.vic.gov.au/conservation-and-environment/biodiversity/wetlands](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/conservation-and-environment/biodiversity/wetlands)

Refer to questions 4.1.8 and 4.1.9 for information on other activities/mechanisms



through which information on wetlands is made publicly available.

3.4.3 Has information about your country's wetlands and/or Ramsar Sites been transmitted to the Ramsar Secretariat for dissemination? KRA 3.4.ii

A - Yes

3.4.3 Additional information:

Australia's national focal point (NFP) communicates regularly with the Ramsar Secretariat. This communication generally involves providing updated Ramsar Information Sheets, completed Ecological Character Descriptions, information on the status of Australia's Ramsar sites, and information related to Australia's CEPA activities including information on Australia's World Wetlands Day activities.

In addition to communication from the NFP, some state/territory agencies provide information directly to the Secretariat for dissemination. For example, the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage released the 'Watering the world's largest river red gum reserves' video for World Wetlands Day 2011 to celebrate the values and beauty of forested wetlands in New South Wales. This was sent to the Ramsar Secretariat for dissemination.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 3.4 implementation:

In addition to providing information on Australian wetlands (question 3.4.2), the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities website provides general information on implementation of the Convention in Australia. For example information on wetland management and Australia's National Guidelines for Ramsar wetlands is provided – [www.environment.gov.au/wetlands](http://www.environment.gov.au/wetlands).

**STRATEGY 3.5 Shared wetlands, river basins and migratory species.** *Promote inventory and cooperation for the management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species.*

3.5.1 Have all transboundary/shared wetland systems been identified? {2.5.1} KRA 3.5.i

Z - Not applicable

3.5.1 Additional information:

Australia has no wetlands that extend across national borders. Australia does participate in regional migratory bird agreements. See question 3.5.3 for further information.

3.5.2 Is effective cooperative management in place for shared wetland systems (for example, in shared river basins and coastal zones)? {2.5.2} KRA 3.5.ii

A - Yes

3.5.2 Additional information (if "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate for which wetland systems such management is in place):

The Australian Government, in association with state and territory governments, has identified 56 natural resource management (NRM) regions covering all of Australia. These NRM regions are based on catchments or bioregions and have an important role in wetland conservation in Australia. See question 1.7.3 for further information on Victoria's regional bodies, as an example.

In addition to the regional organisations referred to above, there are a number of cooperative management arrangements in place for shared river basins in Australia. Examples include the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) which has responsibility for planning the integrated management of the water



resources of the Murray–Darling Basin. Further information on the Authority is provided under Section 2, question A.

The Living Murray program has identified six icon sites, two of which straddle the Murray River (Barmah–Millewa Forest and Gunbower–Koondrook–Perricoota Forest). To coordinate implementation of the Environmental Management Plans for these sites, cross border Coordinating Committees have been established.

The Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Intergovernmental Agreement is a joint undertaking of the Australian, Queensland, South Australian and Northern Territory Governments, in close communication with the LEB community and with the assistance of scientific and technical advice. The LEB covers about 1.2 million square kilometres, almost one-sixth of Australia, and is one of the world's largest internally draining river systems. The purpose of the Agreement is to ensure the sustainability of the LEB river systems, in particular to avoid or eliminate cross-border impacts.

3.5.3 Does your country participate in regional networks or initiatives for wetland-dependent migratory species? KRA 3.5.iii

A - Yes

3.5.3 Additional information:

Australia has in place three bilateral migratory bird agreements which contribute to the conservation of migratory birds of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway. The agreements are:

- Japan–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA)
- China–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA)
- Republic of Korea–Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (ROKAMBA).

Multilateral cooperation for migratory bird conservation is also encouraged through the 'Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway' (East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership). Further information on the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership is available online [www.eaaflyway.net](http://www.eaaflyway.net).

The Australian Government, Wetlands International, Birds Australia and the Australasian Wader Studies Group (AWSG) are active partners in the Flyway Partnership; conducting activities with governments and communities at key sites in Asia and Australia. Initiatives that support Ramsar objectives include the establishment and management of waterbird network sites throughout the Flyway and taskforces on waterbird monitoring, colour-marking of birds and the Yellow Sea.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 3.5 implementation:

## GOAL 4. IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

**STRATEGY 4.1 CEPA.** *Support, and assist in implementing at all levels, where appropriate, the Convention's Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme (Resolution X.8) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through communication, education, participation awareness (CEPA) and work towards wider awareness of the Convention's goals, mechanisms, and key findings.*

4.1.1 Has/have an Action Plan/Plans for wetland CEPA been established? {4.4.2} KRA 4.1.i

- a) At the national level
- b) Sub-national level
- c) Catchment/basin level
- d) Local/site level

A - Yes

B - No

A - Yes

A - Yes

(Even if no CEPA plans have been developed, if broad CEPA objectives for CEPA actions have been established, please indicate this below in the Additional information section below)

4.1.1 Additional information (if "Yes" or "In progress" to one of the four questions above, please describe the mechanism, and identify if it has involved CEPA NFPs):

a) At the national level

The CEPA National Action Plan 2001–2005 was developed in 2001. The guiding principles of the National Action Plan are still relevant. Key non-government organisation (NGO) stakeholders consider a national level CEPA Action Plan to be important in providing direction to NGO wetland activities in Australia.

c) Catchment/basin level

In Victoria, for example, CEPA activities are incorporated in catchment and river basin planning and management through development of regional catchment strategies and regional river health strategies.

d) local/site level

The 'National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands' requires that ECDs include important communication, education and public awareness messages identified during the preparation of the description.

The Hunter Wetlands Centre and co-located Wetland Environmental Education Centre have a formal curriculum based CEPA plan. A CEPA plan is also built into the Hunter Wetlands Centre's Strategic Plan.

4.1.2 How many centres (visitor/interpretation/education) have been established at Ramsar Sites and other wetlands? {4.4.6} KRA 4.1.ii

30 centres

4.1.2 Additional information (If centres are part of a national or international network, please describe the network(s)):

There are at least 30 environmental education centres at wetland sites in Australia, with 12 located at Ramsar sites. These centres offer facilities including class rooms, libraries, bird viewing sites, walking tracks, boardwalks and interpretive signs.

A number of new centres have been established since 2008.

The Hunter Wetlands Centre, at the Shortland Wetlands Ramsar Site, Newcastle, New South Wales, has been operating as a wetland visitors centre since 1988. In February 2011 an expanded education centre was opened – [www.wetlands.eec.education.nsw.gov.au](http://www.wetlands.eec.education.nsw.gov.au).

The Lower Lakes Bioremediation and Revegetation project has two Lake Hubs that overlook the Ramsar site at Milang and Meningie. The centres provide educational and interpretative material to visitors and community members – <http://lakeshub.com/>.

Under the New South Wales Wetland Recovery Program the Gwydir Wetlands Education Centre was constructed to improve the accessibility and awareness of the wetlands to the general public.

There is also a new wetlands discovery centre being constructed at Victoria's Edithvale–Seaford Wetlands Ramsar Site. The Discovery Centre will provide school students, special interest groups and the general community with the opportunity to participate in practical, fun and hands-on activities that will show: how the wetlands work; the plants and animals that live in a wetland; and the area's Indigenous and European history.

#### 4.1.3 Does the Contracting Party:

- a) promote public participation in decision-making with respect to wetland planning and management
- b) specifically involve local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management?

A - Yes

A - Yes

{4.1.3} KRA 4.1.iii

#### 4.1.3 Additional information (if "Yes" or "Partly", please provide information about the ways in which local communities are involved):

- a) promote public participation in decision-making with respect to wetland planning and management

The Australian Government as well as the state and territory governments have environmental legislation in place which provides for public participation in decision-making processes. For example, under the national *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act), an action will require (assessment and) approval from the Australian Government Minister for the Environment if the action has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance (including Ramsar wetlands). At various stages of the referral/assessment and approval process there are opportunities for the proponent and members of the public to comment on documentation on proposed actions.

In addition to the above, Schedule 6 of the 'Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000' sets out principles for the management of wetlands of international importance, including the need for consultation, considerations in preparing a plan, management and review requirements. The development of park management plans for Commonwealth national parks is also guided by the EPBC Act and requires public consultation processes.

Under the *Water Act 2007* (the Water Act) the Murray–Darling Basin Authority (the Authority) is required to prepare a Basin Plan that provides for sustainable management of the water resources of the Murray–Darling Basin. The Water Act sets out mandatory requirements including a minimum 16 week period of public consultation on a draft of the Basin Plan.

The Water Act also establishes the Basin Community Committee, which includes

community members with interest or expertise in the areas of community, Indigenous matters, local government, irrigation or the environment. The role of this Committee is to advise the Authority on community matters, including how to best engage with the community in preparing the Basin Plan.

Public participation in planning and management also occurs at individual Ramsar sites. For example, at the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site the community focussed Long-Term Planning Reference Group provided guidance on the long-term plan, enabling them to be part of the decision-making process for managing the Ramsar site into the future. Public participation in decision-making is also promoted through the 'Kungun Ngarrindjeri Yunnan Agreement' (KNYA), a consultation agreement to ensure the site's Traditional Owners and the government work together.

Further information relevant to this question is included under question 1.7.3.

b) specifically involve local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management?

In Australia, the process of nominating new Ramsar sites requires demonstration that key stakeholders have been adequately and appropriately consulted. In accordance with the Commonwealth's environmental legislation (EPBC Act), the Commonwealth may designate a wetland for inclusion as a Ramsar site only after using its best endeavours to reach agreement with the relevant landowners and state government about the designation and enduring management arrangements for the wetland.

4.1.4 Has an assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention been made? {4.10.2} KRAs 4.1.iv & 4.1.viii

B - No

4.1.4 Additional information:

A comprehensive assessment of wetland-management training needs was conducted in 2006–2007, however an update to this assessment has not been carried out in the current triennium.

Key wetland NGOs have indicated that, community groups continue to require information to improve their general knowledge/understanding of the Convention and its implications. Once general knowledge of the Ramsar Convention has improved, more specific training needs will become apparent.

In addition, NGOs believe additional resources should be invested in building community capacity, knowledge and skills to allow them to engage in ocean and coastal planning. The skills and knowledge of volunteers and communities in the protection and restoration of estuarine and coastal environmental should also be a focus for improvement.

4.1.5 How many opportunities for wetland site manager training have been provided since COP10? {4.10.3} KRA 4.1.iv

7 opportunities

4.1.5 Additional information (including whether the Ramsar Wise Use Handbooks were used in the training):

Australia provides regular opportunities for training wetland site managers. Over the past 2 years WetlandCare Australia has been training site managers in best management practices at the Bowling Green Bay Ramsar site in Queensland.

There are a number of Australian tertiary institutions which offer courses in river and wetland management including courses in Catchment and Aquatic Ecosystem Health (University of Queensland), River Restoration and Management (Charles Sturt University) and Freshwater Ecology and Management (University of New England).

A number of organisations also provide short courses. The Sydney Olympic Park Authority runs an ongoing program of Wetland Education and Training (WET) which is designed to share scientific research and build skills in assessment, planning, restoration, monitoring and management of wetland ecosystems and resources.

A course on wetland hydrology for wetland managers and government staff was run at the Hunter Wetlands Centre in February 2011 by the University of New South Wales Water Research Laboratory.

Training is also provided by and to community organisations. Under the Australian and South Australian Government funded Murray Futures – Coorong and Lower Lakes Recovery program a range of training programs have been provided.

These include: training Ngarrindjeri students in Certificate III Conservation and Land Management; providing training to community volunteers in water and acid sulfate soil monitoring; and training in identifying and propagating native plants to provide community organisations with the skills to assist with revegetation activities across the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site.

4.1.6 Do you have an operational National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee (or equivalent body)? {4.8.2}

A - Yes

4.1.6 Additional information (If "Yes", indicate a) its membership; b) its frequency of meetings; and c) what responsibilities the Committee has):

The Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce (WWTF) is the national committee that advises governments on actions to implement the Ramsar Convention. The WWTF is comprised of representatives from the Administrative Authority and state/territory government agencies with a role in wetland policy and management. The WWTF generally meets at least twice a year.

4.1.7 Are other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and

- a. Ramsar Sites managers?
  - b. other MEA national focal points?
  - c. relevant ministries, departments and agencies?
- {4.4.3} KRA 4.1.vi

A - Yes

A - Yes

A - Yes

4.1.7 Additional information (If "Yes" or "Partly", please describe what types of mechanism are in place):

a. A newsletter was circulated by the Administrative Authority to site managers in December 2009 and June 2010, providing them with information on national guidelines, relevant legislation, policies and programs, and topical issues. Detailed information is also included on the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities website. Further information on communication mechanisms used by the Australian Government to communicate with site managers is provided under questions 4.1.8 and 4.1.9.

In 2003 the New South Wales (NSW) Government established the NSW Ramsar Managers Network, a group of private and government wetland managers. The network continues to meet twice a year primarily to support private landholders managing Ramsar wetlands in NSW. The Administrative Authority is an active participant in the network.



b. Information on communication between MEA focal points is provided under question 3.1.1.

c. The Administrative Authority works collaboratively with a number of Australian Government departments. The nature and frequency of this interaction is issue dependent. For example in the lead up to a COP the Administrative Authority consults widely on the implications of draft resolutions to the business of other government agencies.

4.1.8 Have World Wetlands Day activities, either government and NGO-led or both, been carried out in the country since COP10? {4.4.5}

A - Yes

4.1.8 Additional information:

Each year in Australia World Wetlands Day (WWD) activities are carried out by Australian and state/territory governments and community organisations. A calendar of events is provided on the Administrative Authority's website – [www.environment.gov.au/water/topics/wetlands/world-wetlands-day/index.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/topics/wetlands/world-wetlands-day/index.html).

The Australian Government produces the 'Wetlands Australia' magazine which provides an update on wetland research, management, education and activities across Australia. See: [www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/index.html#newsletters](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/index.html#newsletters).

For the 40th Anniversary of the Ramsar Convention, the Australian Government produced a school wetland education package, including curriculum activities, origami, school book subject stickers, factsheets on wetlands and a DVD. Copies are available at: [www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/classroom-kit.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/classroom-kit.html).

Each year WetlandCare Australia runs a National Wetland Art and Photography Competition. This event has run every year since 2006. The competition attracts an average of over 600 entries and a good number of sponsors. The artworks and photos then form a twelve month travelling exhibition to inform Australians about the importance of wetlands.

In 2010 the Australian Wetland Alliance increased its support for members holding local wetland events for World Wetlands Day. Over 500 people across Australia received wetland information kits, including Ramsar information.

Information on a selection of site based WWD activities undertaken during the triennium is provided below:

The New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage released 'Watering the world's largest river red gum reserves' video on World Wetlands Day 2011, to celebrate the values and beauty of forested wetlands – [www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/watergallery.htm](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/watergallery.htm).

A number of activities were run in Kakadu National Park including: a free Yellow Waters cruise for the local community; a display in the town centre; school activities and talks; and a traditional art activity where local Indigenous artists worked together with Indigenous children to paint wetland themed paintings to enter into the WetlandCare Australia art competition.

South Australian WWD activities in 2011 included educational 'field-days' at the Bool and Hacks Lagoon Ramsar Site and the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site. Jointly these were attended by more than 750 people.

The Tamar Island Wetlands Centre in Tasmania organised a number of activities to support WWD, including bird watching, an animal treasure hunt and guided tours of Tamar Island.

Each year WWD activities are undertaken throughout Victoria. For example in 2010, the Mallee Catchment Management Authority (CMA) invited local residents to take part in a field trip to the popular Margooya Lagoon in the Beggs Bend State Forest. Social research

undertaken by Wimmera CMA in Victoria has revealed that women are often the driving force behind environmental conservation activities on farms. In response, Wimmera CMA has sought to harness this interest, build knowledge and capacity and empower farm wives to undertake wetland conservation by organising an annual WWD 'Chicks in the Sticks' event. The events, held each summer from 2008, bring local women together at a wetland to enjoy refreshments and learn more about wetland conservation.

An annual WWD event is the Western Australia Wetland Management Conference run by the Cockburn Wetlands Centre. The aim of the one-day event is to raise awareness about the vast amount of work that is going on in Western Australia to conserve, manage and restore wetland heritage.

4.1.9 Have campaigns, programmes, and projects (other than for World Wetlands Day) been carried out since COP10 to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands to people and wildlife and the ecosystem benefits/services provided by wetlands? {4.4.4}

A - Yes

4.1.9 Additional information (including, if support has been provided for the delivery of these and other CEPA activities by other organisations, please indicate this):

Australia has undertaken a number of activities to raise the awareness of wetlands across the country including:

In 2010, the Australian Government produced an educational fact sheet on 'Wetlands and the Ramsar Convention'. See:

[www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/wetlands-ramsar-convention.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/wetlands-ramsar-convention.html). A fact sheet on our Ramsar sites, including a map, was also published. See:

[www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/ramsar.html](http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/ramsar.html)

The Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Government has developed a primary school curriculum program on Understanding Canberra's Wetlands. Further information is available online [www.sustainableschools.act.gov.au/curriculum](http://www.sustainableschools.act.gov.au/curriculum). Also in the ACT, a number of wetland education programs have been developed by Birrigai, an outdoor school, using the Jerrabomberra Wetlands close to the centre of Canberra, the national capital. These programs aim to promote the understanding and care of wetlands.

The Queensland Wetlands Program has carried out a range of programs & projects since 2008. Publications include the 'Queensland's wonderful wetlands' poster and brochure (2010)

([www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/factsfigures/qldwetlands.html](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/factsfigures/qldwetlands.html)), and release of the Wetland Buffer Guidelines. In 2009 a wetlands-based educational curriculum for Great Barrier Reef schools was created and pilot tested.

WetlandInfo is a first-stop shop for Queensland wetland information, [www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/).

The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) program runs many campaigns, programmes, and projects to raise awareness about wetlands in the community. Some of these include a Native Fish Awareness Week event within the site, informative displays at the Wooden Boat Festival and educational trips and presentations with various groups from South Australia, Australia and across the world.

The Victorian Departments of Sustainability and Environment and Primary Industries have launched the Wetland Education online resource for teachers and students – [www.dse.vic.gov.au/conservation-and-environment/biodiversity/wetlands/victorian-wetlands-resources-for-teachers-and-students](http://www.dse.vic.gov.au/conservation-and-environment/biodiversity/wetlands/victorian-wetlands-resources-for-teachers-and-students).

The 'Starting In Your Backyard' program run by WetlandCare Australia targets



people who live near a wetland but are not involved in a wetland community group to raise awareness and encourage behaviour change for the benefit of the local environment. WetlandCare Australia also provides training in monitoring techniques to community groups working with wetlands; this training is raising awareness of the importance of wetlands.

The Australasian Wader Study Group (AWSG) and Birds Australia have been active in raising awareness, within Australia and internationally, of shorebirds issues.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 4.1 implementation:

**STRATEGY 4.2 Convention financial capacity.** *Provide the financial resources necessary for the Convention's governance, mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expectations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, within the availability of existing resources and by the effective use of such resources; explore and enable options and mechanism for mobilization of new and additional resources for implementation of the Convention.*

4.2.1

a) Have Ramsar contributions been paid in full for 2009, 2010, 2011? {4.6.1} KRA 4.2.i

A - Yes

b) If "No" in 4.2.1 a), please clarify what plan is in place to ensure future prompt payment:

4.2.2 Has any additional financial support been provided through voluntary contributions to non-core funded Convention activities? {4.6.2} KRA 4.2.i

A - Yes

4.2.2 Additional information (If "Yes" please state the amounts, and for which activities):

In the current triennium, the Australian Government has provided voluntary contributions to the Ramsar Secretariat to support the following activities:

- the work of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Administrative Reform (AUD 100 000)
- the Oceania Regional Meeting, March 2012 (AUD 50 000)
- the Expert Working Group on Biodiversity and Water (AUD 20 000).

In 2009–10, funding of AUD 160 000 (plus GST) was provided under AusAID's Pacific Public Sector Linkages Program to implement the streamlined reporting project. Further information on this project is provided under question 3.2.1.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 4.2 implementation:

**STRATEGY 4.3 Convention bodies' effectiveness.** *Ensure that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Secretariat are operating at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness to support the implementation of the Convention.*

4.3.1 Has the Contracting Party used its previous Ramsar National Reports in monitoring its implementation of the Convention? {4.7.1} KRA 4.3.ii □	B - No
4.3.1 Additional information (If "Yes", please indicate how the Reports have been used for monitoring):	

4.3.2 Has the Secretariat been updated on any appointments and changes in Administrative Authority focal points and daily contacts (including CEPA and STRP National Focal Points)? KRA 4.3.i	A - Yes
4.3.2 Additional information:	

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 4.3 implementation:

**STRATEGY 4.4 Working with IOPs and others.** *Maximize the benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs\*) and others.*

\* The IOPs are: BirdLife International, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), Wetlands International, and WWF International.

4.4.1 Has your country received assistance from one or more of the Convention's IOPs in its implementation of the Convention? {4.9.1} KRA 4.4.iii	A - Yes
4.4.1 Additional information (If "Yes" please provide the name(s) of the IOP(s) and the type of assistance provided): The Administrative Authority participates in regular discussions with Wetlands International–Oceania on wetland-related issues. Wetlands International–Oceania has been contracted to provide a number of wetland-related projects for state and Australian government agencies. For example, Wetlands International is a key contributor to the AusAID funded project to develop wetland management and monitoring guidelines for Ramsar wetlands in China. This project involved training tours to Australia by three Chinese delegations (experts, policy makers and site managers), and reviews of the draft guidelines at Ramsar sites in China. The project is designed to also create opportunities for further exchange between Australia and China in wetland and environment management.  Input and assistance from Australian IOPs is sought in the lead up to and during each COP.	

4.4.2 Has your country provided assistance to one or more of the Convention's IOPs? {4.9.2} KRA 4.4.iii	A - Yes
4.4.2 Additional information (If "Yes" please provide the name(s) of the IOP(s) and the type of	

assistance provided):

See response to question 4.4.1.

Additional information on any other aspects of Strategy 4.4 implementation: