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This Report

This Chapter

This chapter introduces the report and provides a description of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and the regional component of the Natural Heritage Trust (the Trust). In particular, the chapter provides a summary of the assessments of natural resource issues that indicate the extent of issues of concern to these two regional programs. The chapter also describes the key characteristics of the two regional programs, which include resource condition targets and funding arrangements. It concludes with a section reporting on progress, which describes the content of the report and the common reporting categories used in the report.

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Glossary

1.1 THIS REPORT

This is the first combined report to the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council on the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and the regional component of the Natural Heritage Trust (the Trust). Its structure is based on the format agreed by the Ministerial Council to provide a national assessment of these two regional natural resource management programs for the 2003-04 operational year.

1.2 NATURAL RESOURCE ISSUES

One of the greatest challenges facing Australia is how to manage the nation's natural resources to sustain economic use and a healthy environment. Much of the landscape has critical issues that need urgent action. Problems resulting from these issues affect individuals and communities right across Australia.

The core issues of concern include:

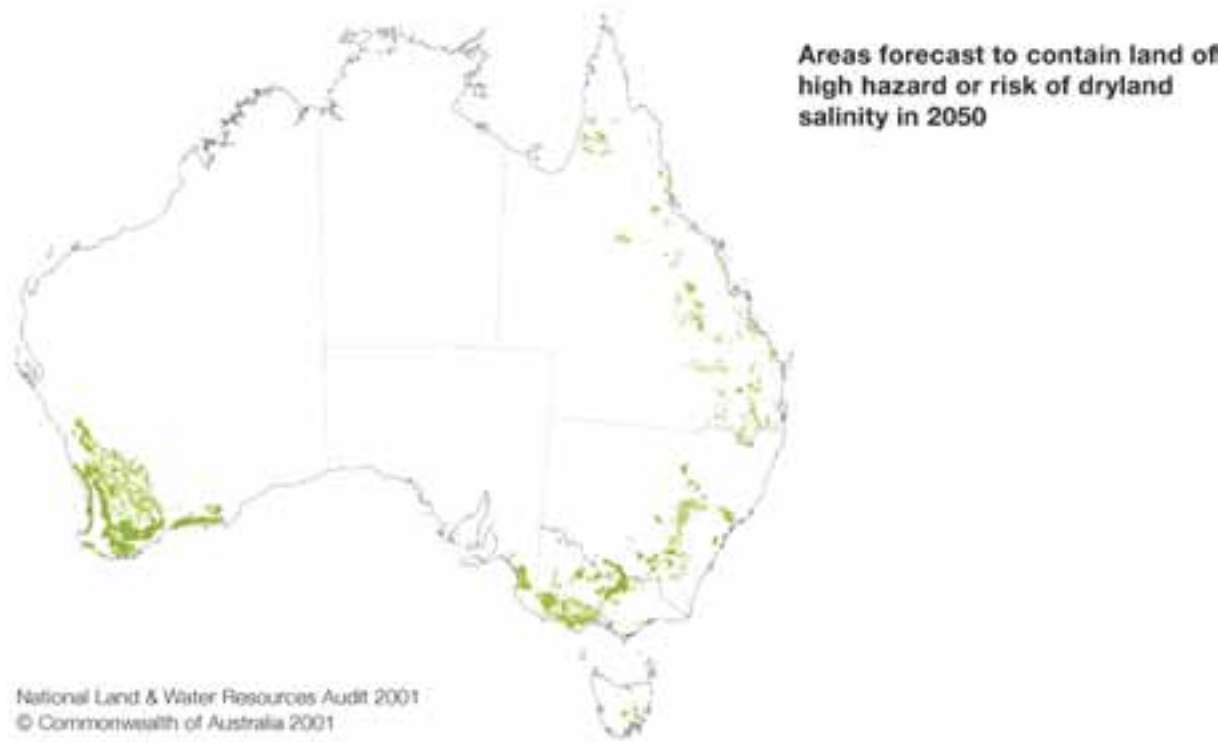
- Land salinity
- Soil condition
- Rivers and wetlands
- Nutrients in aquatic environments
- Turbidity in aquatic environments
- Surface water salinity
- Native vegetation
- Significant native species
- Significant invasive species
- Estuarine, coastal and marine

Land salinity

The National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA) produced the *Australian Dryland Salinity Assessment in 2000*. It found that approximately 5.7 million hectares of Australia's agricultural and pastoral zone had a high potential for developing dryland salinity through shallow watertables.

Predictions based on groundwater trends, field surveys and landscape characteristics indicated that, without effective solutions, this area could increase to 17 million hectares by 2050. This increase is illustrated in Figure 1.2.1.

Figure 1.2.1 Prediction of salinity hazard risk in 2050



The main impact of increasing salinity at the farm level is the loss of production and income. Other off-farm effects include the decline in capital value of land, damage to infrastructure, salinisation of water storages, loss of farm flora and fauna, and loss of shelter and shade. These effects are magnified at the regional level where they have a substantial impact on public resources such as biodiversity, water supplies and infrastructure. Some of the assets at risk, as a consequence of shallow watertables are listed in Table 1.2.1, with estimates of their impact predicted to 2050.

Table 1.2.1 Estimated value of assets at high risk from shallow watertables, or with a high salinity hazard (Source: Australian Dryland Salinity Assessment, 2000)

Asset	2000	2020	2050
Agricultural land (ha) ¹	4 650 000	6 371 000	13 660 000
Remnant and planted perennial vegetation ^{2, 5}	631 000	777 000	2 020 000
Length of streams and lake perimeter ²	11 800	20 000	41 300
Rail (km) ²	1 600	2 060	5 100
Roads (km) ²	19 900	26 600	67 400
Towns (number) ³	68	125	219
Important wetlands (number) ^{1, 4}	80	81	130

¹ Data from all states, Queensland only for 2050
² Data from WA, SA, Victoria and NSW
³ Data from WA, SA, Victoria and NSW
⁴ Including Ramsar wetlands
⁵ Much of the remnant and perennial vegetation

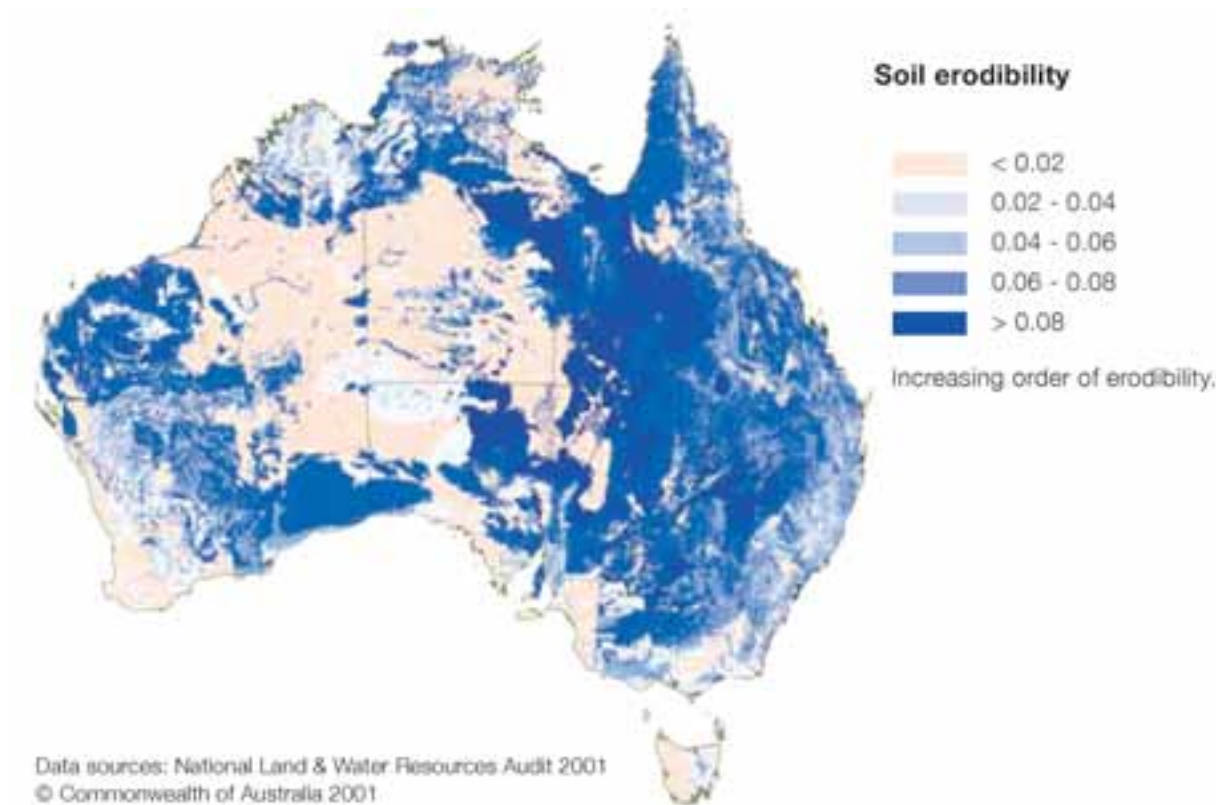
Soil condition

The maintenance of soil condition is fundamental to agricultural production and to underpinning processes in the natural environment. Large areas of soils are affected by salt and nutrient and physical limitations. The forms of degradation evident in Australian soils, which have the potential to impact upon agricultural production and natural processes, are:

- wind and water erosion
- reduced fertility through nutrient loss
- breakdown in soil structure
- soil acidification
- salinisation

Figure 1.2.2 identifies soil erodibility, a contributing factor to wind and water erosion.

Figure 1.2.2 Erodibility classes for Australian soils

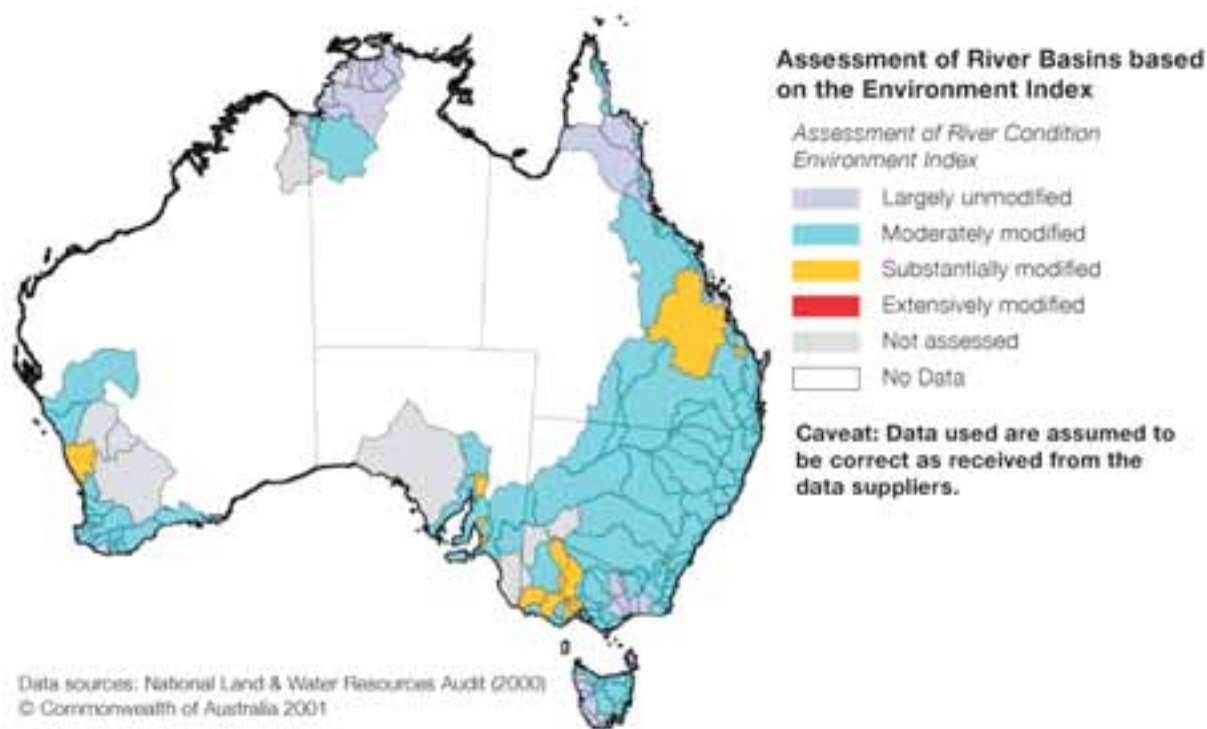


Rivers and wetlands

Healthy rivers provide important ecosystem services as they provide the fundamentals for the water supply and irrigation needs, and are vital for aquatic biodiversity.

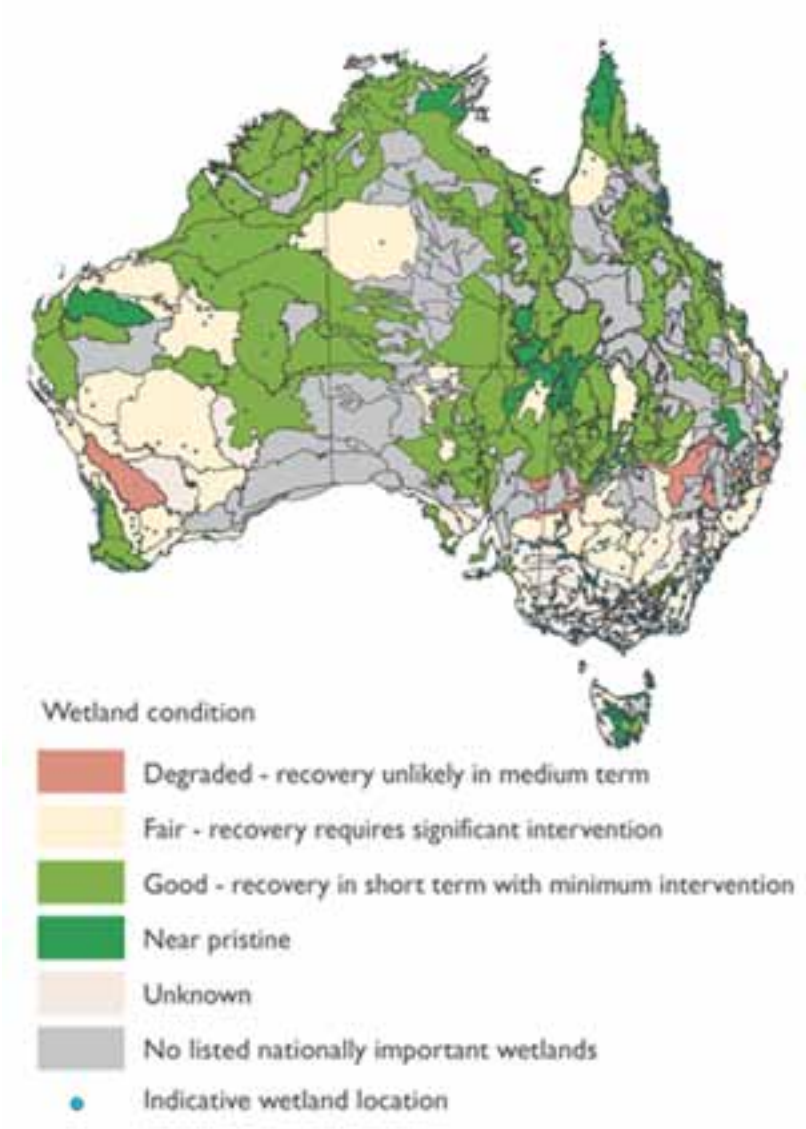
The NLWRA's *Australian Catchment, River and Estuary Assessment 2002*, found that 85% of Australian river lengths are now classified as substantially or moderately modified from their natural condition. These changes are the result of the increase in nutrients and turbidity, and reduction in native vegetation. The integrity of some river systems has been badly affected, and Figure 1.2.3 shows the comparative condition of assessed rivers basins, showing the majority of river basins have been moderately modified.

Figure 1.2.3 Condition of river basins



The NLWRA's *Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment 2002*, found that the majority of nationally important wetlands were classified as requiring minimum management intervention to aid their recovery. Figure 1.2.4 shows the condition of nationally important wetlands.

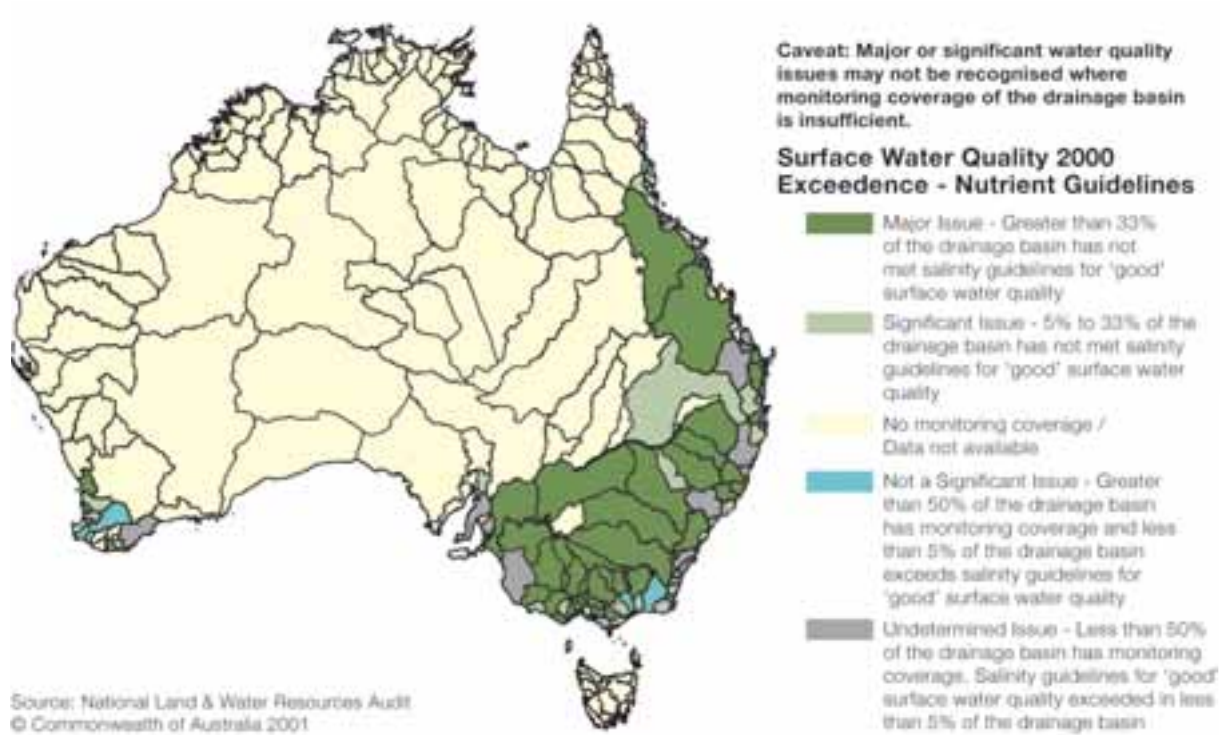
Figure 1.2.4 Condition of nationally important wetlands



Nutrients in aquatic environments

The increase in nutrient levels in rivers systems, through agricultural and urban runoff, can lead to increases in the occurrence of algal blooms. Figure 1.2.5 identifies the nutrient exceedance levels in surface water.

Figure 1.2.5 Nutrient exceedance levels in surface water salinity

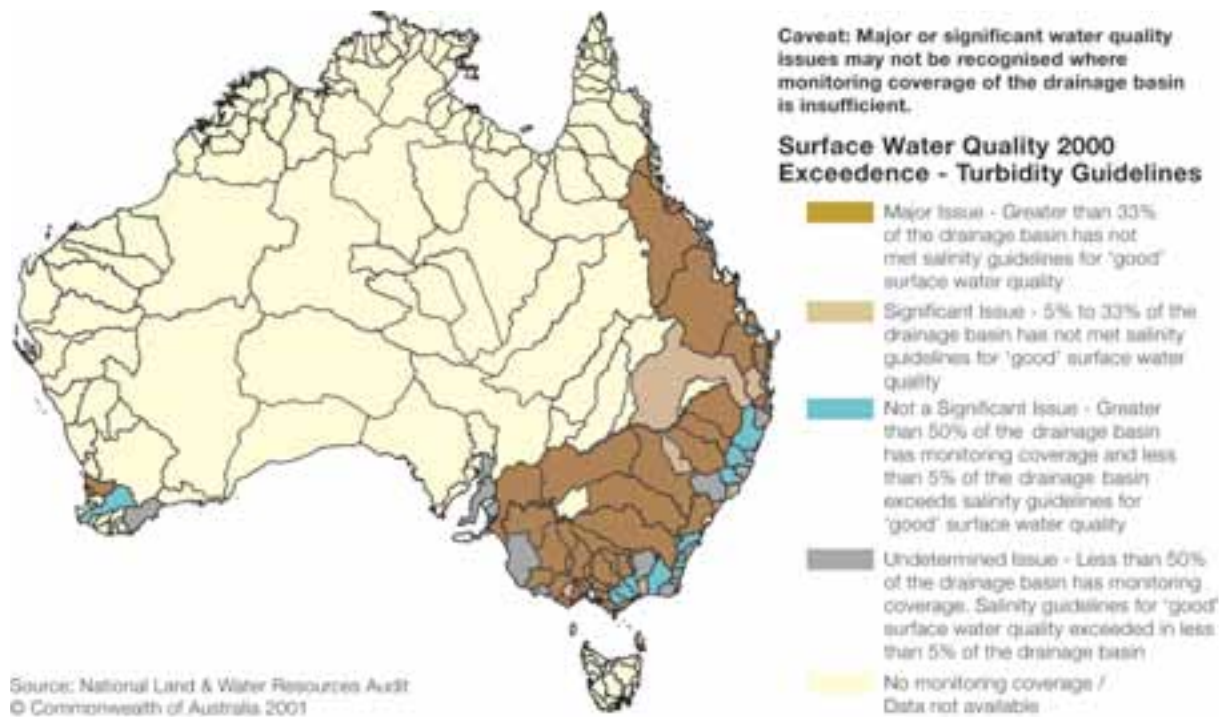


Turbidity in aquatic environments

The highly erodible nature of Australian soils and Australia's variable rainfall and stream flows combine to create naturally high levels of turbidity in surface waters. Turbidity can increase the cost of treating water for industrial and urban use, and can impact upon agricultural production by affecting irrigation infrastructure, including pumps, irrigation channels and water storages. Turbid waters generated within a catchment can also be transported to estuarine and coastal marine environments, impacting upon coral reefs and sea grass beds. Figure 1.2.6 shows areas where the NLWRA's *Australian Catchment, River and Estuary Assessment 2002* identified turbidity exceeding Surface Water Quality 2000 guidelines.

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Figure 1.2.6 Exceedence of surface water quality turbidity guidelines

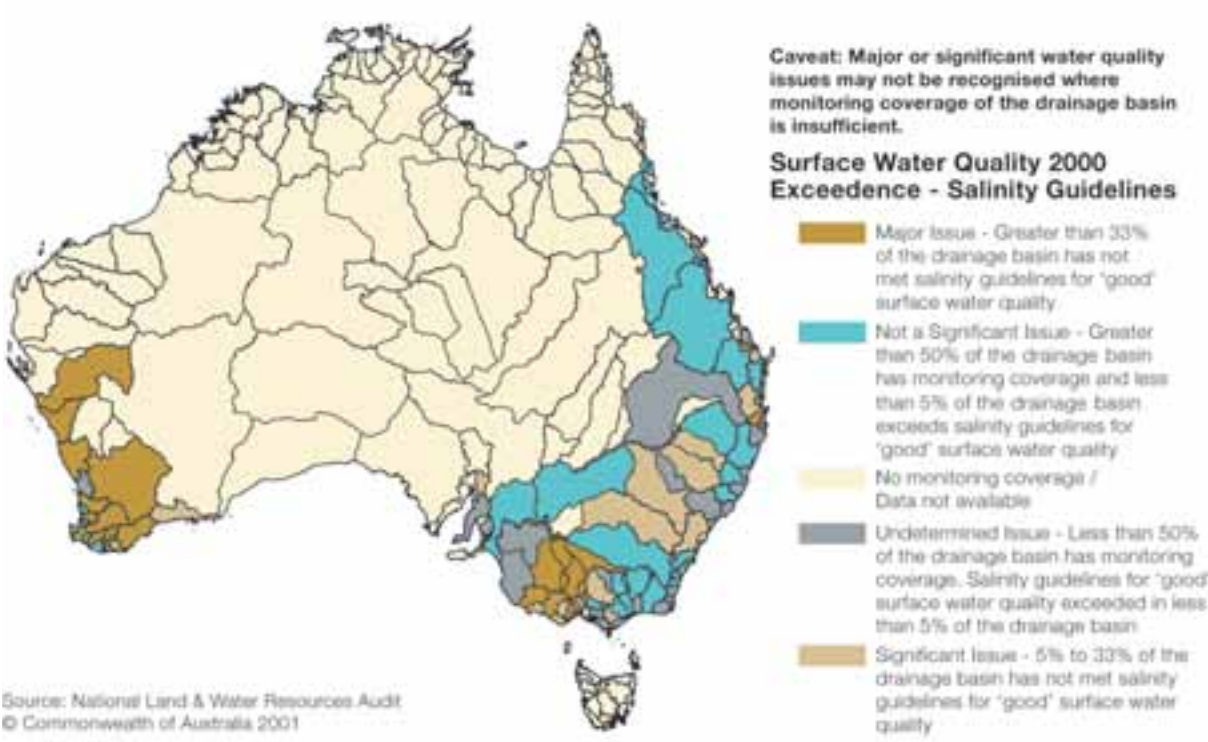


Surface water salinity

High surface water salinity also has economic and social impacts. Salinity increases the cost of treating water for drinking, reduces the suitability and/or availability of water for irrigation and other industrial applications, and impacts on public infrastructure. Salinity is a major surface water quality issue, impacting across much of temperate southern Australia. It particularly affects areas in southwest Western Australia and the southern part of the Murray-Darling drainage area. There is also an increasing problem in parts of western New South Wales and southern Western Australia.

Figure 1.2.7 identifies the areas in Australia where the NLWRA's *Australian Catchment, River and Estuary Assessment 2002* found salinity levels exceeded Surface Water Quality 2000 guidelines.

Figure 1.2.7 Exceedence of surface water quality guidelines

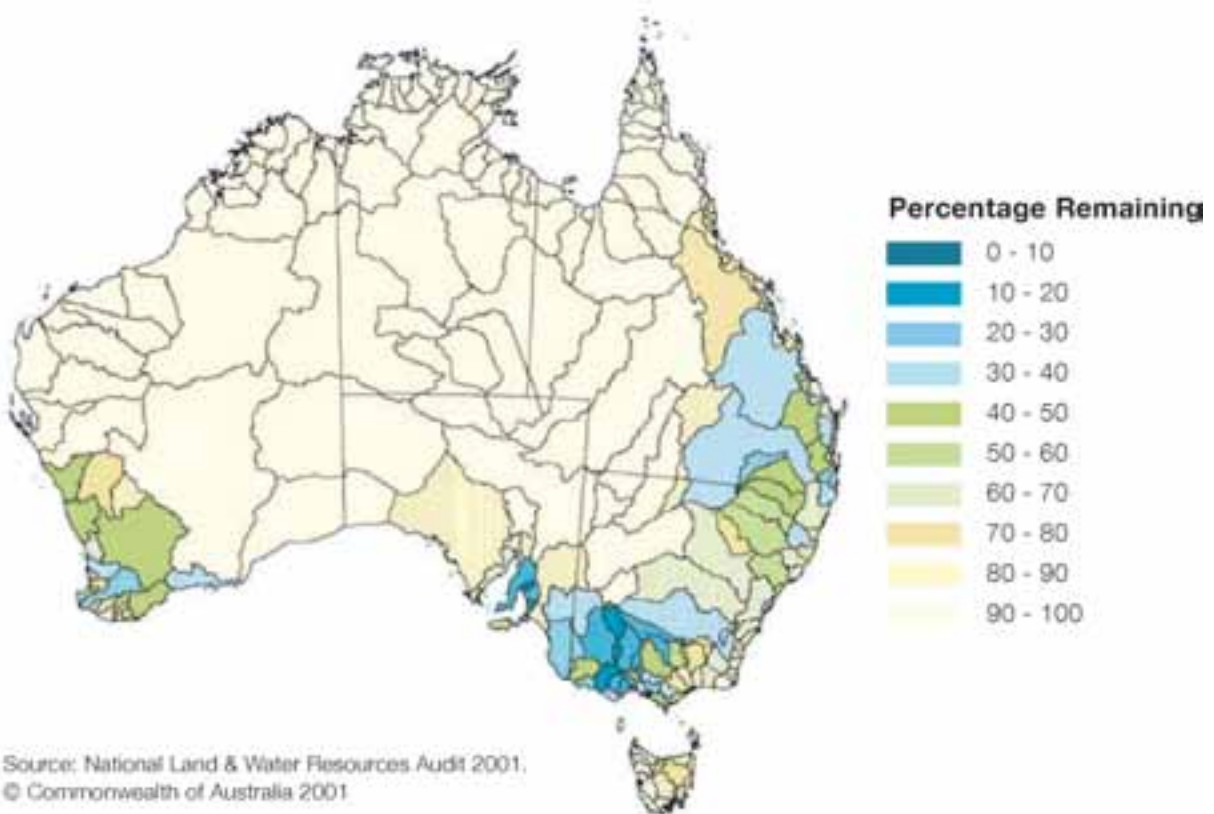


Native vegetation

Depletion and destruction of Australia's native vegetation is a primary driver of land degradation, salinity and declining water quality, and is a major cause of biodiversity loss. Remnant bush areas are further degraded through unsustainable grazing pressure, insect attack, disease, weeds, rising water tables, salinity, inappropriate fire management, unsustainable firewood gathering and neglect. Figure 1.2.8 identifies the area of native vegetation remaining across regions.

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Figure 1.2.8 Percentage of remaining native vegetation

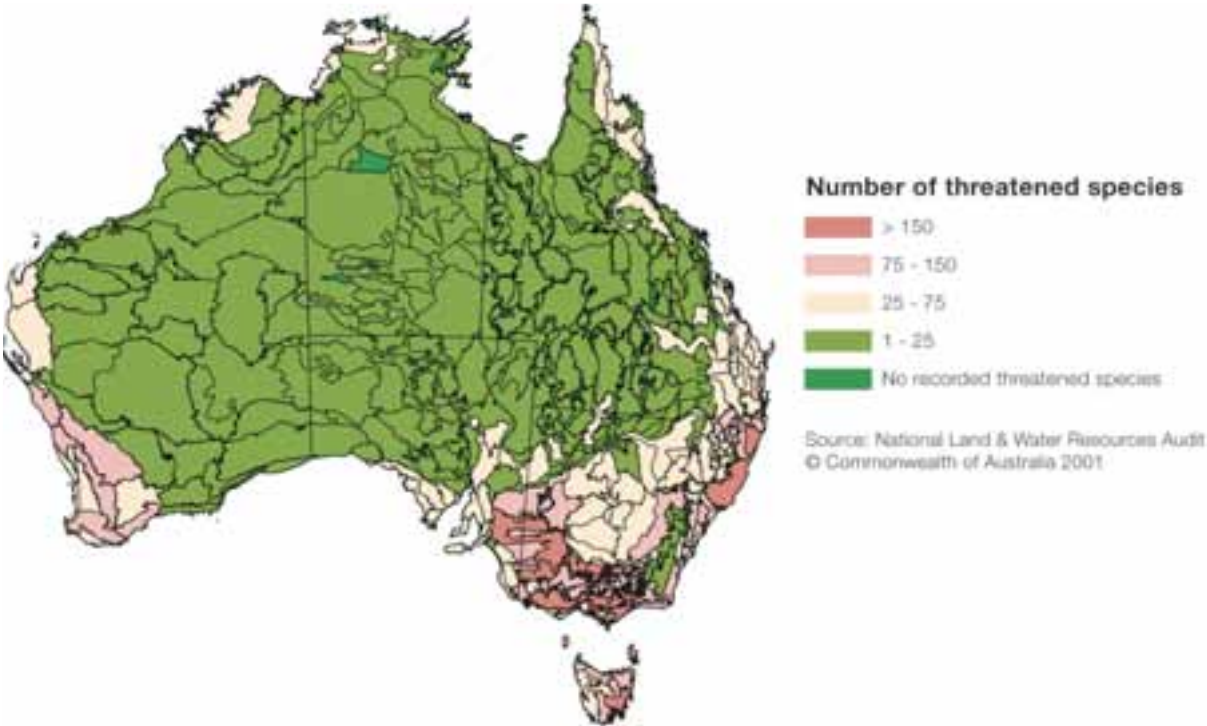


Significant native species

Changes to the landscape and native habitat as a result of human activity have put many of Australia's native species at risk. Significant native species occur across much of Australia and include threatened species and ecosystems and migratory species. These species and communities are under pressure from competition and predation from invasive plants and feral animals, and from activities such as land clearing and overgrazing.

The NLWRA's *Australian Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment 2002* identified that 94% of bioregions have one or more threatened ecosystems. The highest numbers of threatened species and ecosystems occur in parts of the Murray-Darling Basin, the developed coastal parts of eastern and southern Australia, parts of Tasmania and in southwest Western Australia. Figure 1.2.9 shows the total number of threatened species by bioregion.

Figure 1.2.9 Number of threatened species across bioregions

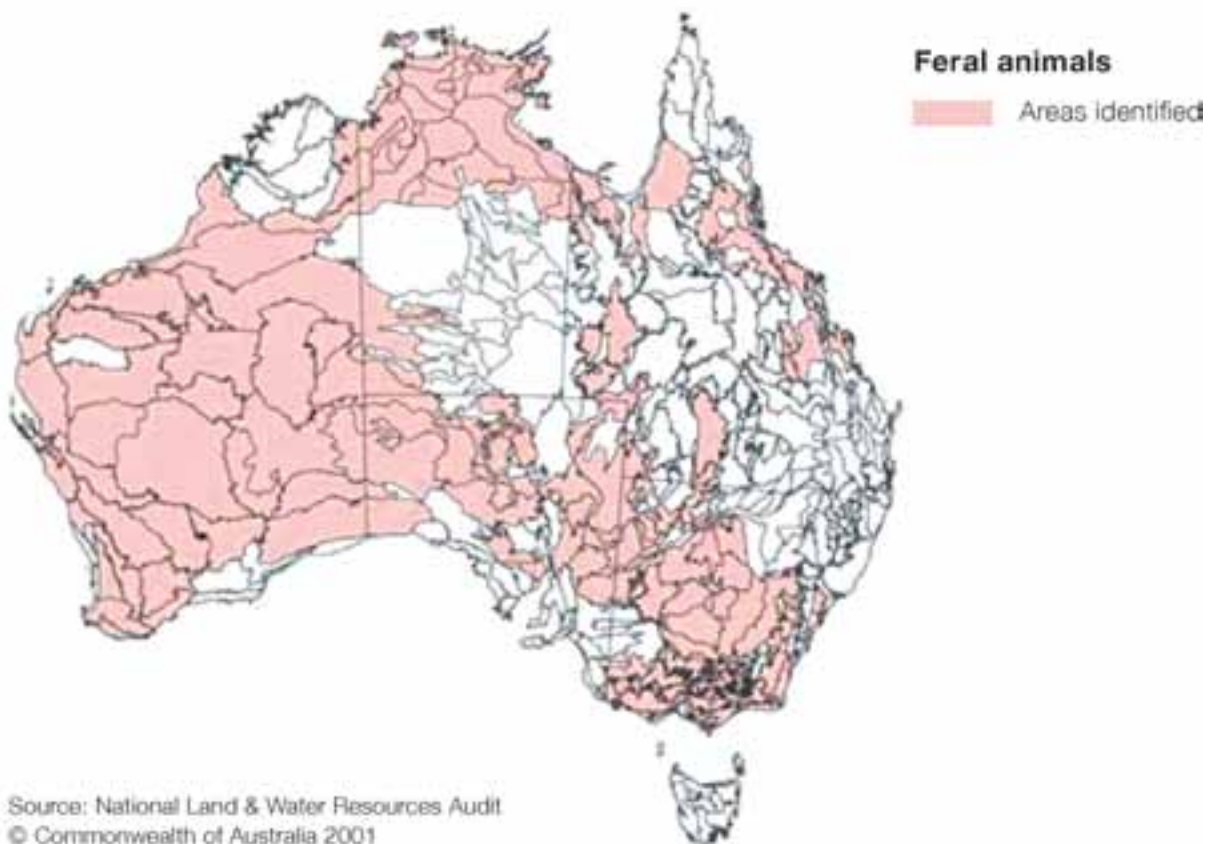


Significant invasive species

There are at least 30 species of feral animals in Australia and all areas of Australia have at least one pest animal. The major vertebrate pests cause economic losses of at least \$500 million annually in lost agricultural production, and in addition, feral animals are recognised as major threats to many endangered native species and communities.

Weeds also affect the natural environment and primary production. They displace native species, contribute significantly to land degradation, and reduce farm and forest productivity. The annual cost of weeds to agriculture in Australia, in terms of decreased productivity and management costs, is conservatively estimated at \$4 billion. Figure 1.2.10 shows the areas where feral animals have been identified as a threatening process.

Figure 1.2.10 Areas where feral animals are identified as a threatening process



Estuarine, coastal and marine

With 85% of Australians living on or near the coast, there are immediate pressures from urbanisation and economic growth on estuarine, coastal and marine ecosystems. As these ecosystems are located at the 'bottom' of the catchment, they reflect changes in land and water management issues across the catchment as a whole.

Nutrients, contaminants and sediments flow into estuaries and through to marine environments during flood events. By altering flow regimes in rivers, water quality and tidal influence is also affected. The NLWRA's *Australian Terrestrial Estuary Assessment 2000* found that of the assessed estuaries, 50% were found to be pristine, 22% largely unmodified, 17% modified and 11% extensively modified. Figure 1.2.11 shows the assessed condition of Australia's estuaries.

Figure 1.2.11 Estuarine, coastal and marine



1.3 THE PROGRAMS

The Australian Government and State/Territory Governments are jointly providing support to regional natural resource management groups through two funding programs:

- the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
- the regional component of the Natural Heritage Trust

The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) provides for the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments to jointly invest \$1.4 billion over seven years. These funds support the actions of communities and land managers across Australia, to manage salinity and improve water quality through integrated Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) Plans and investment strategies. In essence, the NAP is designed to achieve national objectives through regional solutions to regional problems.

The goal of the NAP is to motivate and enable regional communities to use coordinated and targeted action to:

- prevent, stabilise and reverse trends in dryland salinity affecting the sustainability of production, the conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure.
- improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment.

The Natural Heritage Trust

The Natural Heritage Trust (the Trust) was established by the Australian Government in 1997 to help restore and conserve Australia's environment and natural resources. In 2001, the Trust was extended through the provision of an additional \$1 billion over five years to 2006-07, including a fundamental shift towards a more targeted approach to environmental and natural resource management in Australia. In the 2004 federal budget, the Australian Government committed a further \$300 million to extend the Trust to 2007-08.

The Trust is delivering important resource condition outcomes including improved water quality, reduced extent of erosion, improved estuarine health, improved vegetation management and improved soil condition. Associated benefits will include skilled resource managers, communities playing a key role in their future direction, improved productivity and profitability, enhanced protection and restoration of biodiversity, and more people taking an active role in improving the management of natural resources, including those who are not directly involved in natural resource management activities. These outcomes will deliver upon three overarching objectives:

Biodiversity conservation - the conservation of Australia's biodiversity through the protection and restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems and habitat for native plants and animals.

Sustainable use of natural resources - the sustainable use and management of Australia's land, water and marine resources to maintain and improve the productivity and profitability of resource based industries.

Community capacity building and institutional change - support for individuals, landholders, industry and communities with skills, knowledge, information and institutional frameworks to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use and management.

1.4 KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships between all levels of government, community groups and individuals are essential to the success of the initiatives under the NAP and the Trust programs.

National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

At the November 2000 meeting of the Council of Australian Governments, the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments agreed to a National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. This, the first program of its kind, tackles two of Australia's most serious environmental threats, salinity and water quality. Under an Intergovernmental Agreement, the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments have negotiated the framework for the administration and delivery of the NAP.

Bilateral Agreements between the Australian Government and each jurisdiction set out details about State/Territory specific arrangements for regional bodies, accountability and administrative arrangements. Table 1.4.1 shows the progress in signing these bilateral agreements.

Table 1.4.1 Progress in signing National Action Plan Bilateral Agreements

State / Territory	Bilateral Signing
Australian Capital Territory	Not yet concluded
New South Wales	17 May 2002
Northern Territory	7 February 2003
Queensland	1 March 2002
South Australia	8 June 2001
Tasmania	13 February 2002
Victoria	2 October 2001
Western Australia	11 September 2003

Under the bilateral agreements, the NAP will be delivered through regions that suit State and Territory regional arrangements. Regional NRM bodies have been established in all States and Territories, representing a major development in natural resource management in Australia. These regional bodies support the effective delivery of the NAP by developing regional natural resource management plans and investment strategies, which are approved by the Australian Government and the respective State/Territory Governments leading to investment (funding) for these regions. As of June 2004, 33 regional bodies administer 36 NAP regions as shown in Table 1.4.2 and Figure 1.4.1.

Table 1.4.2 The National Action Plan Regions

NAP Region/s	NRM Region
Australian Capital Territory	
Part of Murrumbidgee	Australian Capital Territory
New South Wales	
Border Rivers – Gwydir	Border Rivers - Gwydir
Central West	Central West
Lachlan	Lachlan
Lower Murray Darling	Lower Murray
Murray	Murray
Murrumbidgee	Murrumbidgee
Namoi	Namoi
Western	Western
Northern Territory	
Darwin - Katherine and part of Ord	Northern Territory
Queensland	

NAP Region/s	NRM Region
Border Rivers Balonne - Maranoa	Border Rivers - Balonne Maranoa
Burdekin	Burdekin
Burnett Mary	Burnett Mary
Condamine	Condamine
Fitzroy	Fitzroy
Lockyer - Bremer - Upper Brisbane	South East Queensland
South Australia	
Kangaroo Island	Kangaroo Island
Mount Lofty Ranges	Mount Lofty Ranges
Northern and Yorke Agricultural District	Northern and Yorke Agricultural District
SA Murray Darling Basin	SA Murray Darling Basin
South East	South East
Tasmania	
Tasmanian NAP Region	Tasmanian NAP Region
Victoria	
Corangamite	Corangamite
Glenelg Hopkins	Glenelg Hopkins
Goulburn Broken	Goulburn Broken
Mallee	Mallee
North Central	North Central
Wimmera	Wimmera
Western Australia	
Avon	Avon
Northern Agricultural Region	Northern Agricultural Region
South Coast	South Coast
South West	South West

Figure 1.4.1 The National Action Plan Regions



The Natural Heritage Trust

At the October 2002 Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council, State/Territory and Australian Government Ministers endorsed the Framework for the Implementation of the Natural Heritage Trust extension. The framework provides the strategic basis for investment against the Trust's objectives at national, regional and local levels and includes the basis for matching contributions from the States and Territories. The endorsement paved the way for finalising bilateral negotiations for the delivery of the regional component of the Trust with each State and Territory and the commencement of regional activities.

Bilateral Agreements for the regional component of the Trust between the Australian Government and each jurisdiction set out details about State/Territory specific arrangements for regional bodies, accountability and administrative arrangements. Table 1.4.3 shows the progress in signing these bilateral agreements.

Table 1.4.3 Progress in signing Trust Bilateral Agreements

State / Territory	Bilateral Signing
Australian Capital Territory	27 March 2003
New South Wales	14 August 2003
Northern Territory	5 June 2003
Queensland	Interim Financial Agreement
South Australia	17 April 2003
Tasmania	5 June 2003
Victoria	12 December 2002
Western Australia	17 December 2002

Under the bilateral agreements, the Trust will be delivered through regions that suit State and Territory regional arrangements. Regional natural resource management bodies have been established in all States and Territories, to support the effective delivery of the Trust by developing regional natural resource management plans and investment strategies, which are approved by the Australian Government and the respective State/Territory Governments leading to investment (funding) for these regions. As of June 2004, 56 regional bodies administer 57 Trust regions as shown in Table 1.4.4 and Figure 1.4.2.

Table 1.4.4 The Natural Heritage Trust Regions

Trust Region/s	NRM Region
Australian Capital Territory	
Australian Capital Territory	Australian Capital Territory
New South Wales	
Border Rivers - Gwydir	Border Rivers - Gwydir
Central West	Central West
Hawkesbury-Nepean	Hawkesbury-Nepean
Hunter - Central Rivers	Hunter - Central Rivers
Lachlan	Lachlan
Lower Murray Darling	Lower Murray
Murray	Murray
Murrumbidgee	Murrumbidgee
Namoi	Namoi
Northern Rivers	Northern Rivers
Southern Rivers	Southern Rivers
Sydney Metro	Sydney Metro
Western	Western
Northern Territory	
Northern Territory	Northern Territory

Trust Region/s	NRM Region
Queensland	
Border Rivers Maranoa - Balonne	Border Rivers - Balonne Maranoa
Burdekin	Burdekin
Burnett Mary	Burnett Mary
Cape York	Cape York
Condamine	Condamine
Desert Channels	Desert Channels
Fitzroy	Fitzroy
Mackay Whitsunday	Mackay Whitsunday
Northern Gulf	Northern Gulf
South East Queensland	South East Queensland
South West	South West
Southern Gulf	Southern Gulf
Torres Strait	Torres Strait
Wet Tropics	Wet Tropics
South Australia	
Aboriginal Lands	Aboriginal Lands
Eyre Peninsula	Eyre Peninsula
Kangaroo Island	Kangaroo Island
Mount Lofty Ranges and Greater Adelaide	Mount Lofty Ranges
Northern and Yorke Agricultural District	Northern and Yorke Agricultural District
Rangelands	Rangelands
SA Murray Darling Basin	SA Murray Darling Basin
South East	South East
Tasmania	
North Tasmania	North Tasmania
North West	North West
South Tasmania	South Tasmania
North and South Coast	Tasmanian NAP Region
Victoria	
Corangamite	Corangamite
East Gippsland	East Gippsland
Glenelg Hopkins	Glenelg Hopkins
Goulburn Broken	Goulburn Broken
Mallee	Mallee
North Central	North Central
North East	North East
Port Phillip and Westernport	Port Phillip and Westernport
West Gippsland	West Gippsland
Wimmera	Wimmera
Western Australia	
Avon	Avon
Northern Agricultural Region	Northern Agricultural Region
Rangelands	Rangelands
South Coast	South Coast
South West	South West
Swan	Swan

1.5 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

Joint Steering Committees

Within each State/Territory, representatives of both the Australian Government and the relevant State/Territory administer implementation of the requirements of the bilateral agreements for the NAP and the Trust, through a Joint Steering Committee. This committee is the main vehicle for bilateral decision-making and development of recommendations to the Australian and State/Territory Ministers regarding the delivery of the regional programs.

Regional plans

Regional investments are the principal delivery mechanism for the Trust and will follow, where appropriate, the model developed for the NAP. Under this model, investment is made on the basis of a regional NRM plan, incorporating the major natural resource management issues in the area. Under this structure, regional communities comprising landowners, industries, non-government organisations, local and State or Territory governments and other interested parties, participate in putting together regional plans and deciding what are the most important issues for action and funding.

Regional investment

These plans are assessed against a set of criteria agreed to by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and when these criteria are met, the plan is accredited for investment. Once a plan has been accredited, a regional investment strategy is developed detailing what funds are needed to implement the plan. These investment strategies will be used for the purposes of investment under the Trust and the NAP. The Australian Government and State/Territory Governments jointly agree on activities that meet the main objectives of the regional programs and provide funding at the regional level. Regional bodies are encouraged to pursue other sources of funding and to implement their Regional Investment Strategies and Regional Plans.

Natural Resource Management Regions

Arrangements for regional boundaries and regional administrative bodies will be different around Australia, often depending on local geography and existing State or Territory arrangements. There are also differences between those regions that are identified as suitable for investment through the NAP and the Trust.

This report uses natural resource management regions based mainly on the administrative bodies that manage the Trust regions because these regions provide a complete national coverage. In some cases, these administrative bodies also manage NAP funds for an area additional to the Trust region. In one case, the Queensland Murray Darling Committee is an administrative body that manages two Trust regions and an additional area identified for NAP investment in South West Queensland. Maps detailing the area managed by the administrative body are included in the Regional Summaries of this report. Where relevant, the additional NAP area managed by the administrative body is clearly identified within each regional map. Information about NAP investments is provided as part of the joint investment for each region.

Table 1.5.1 and Figure 1.5.1 details the relationship between the natural resource management regions managed by the administrative bodies used by this report and the NAP and Trust regions.

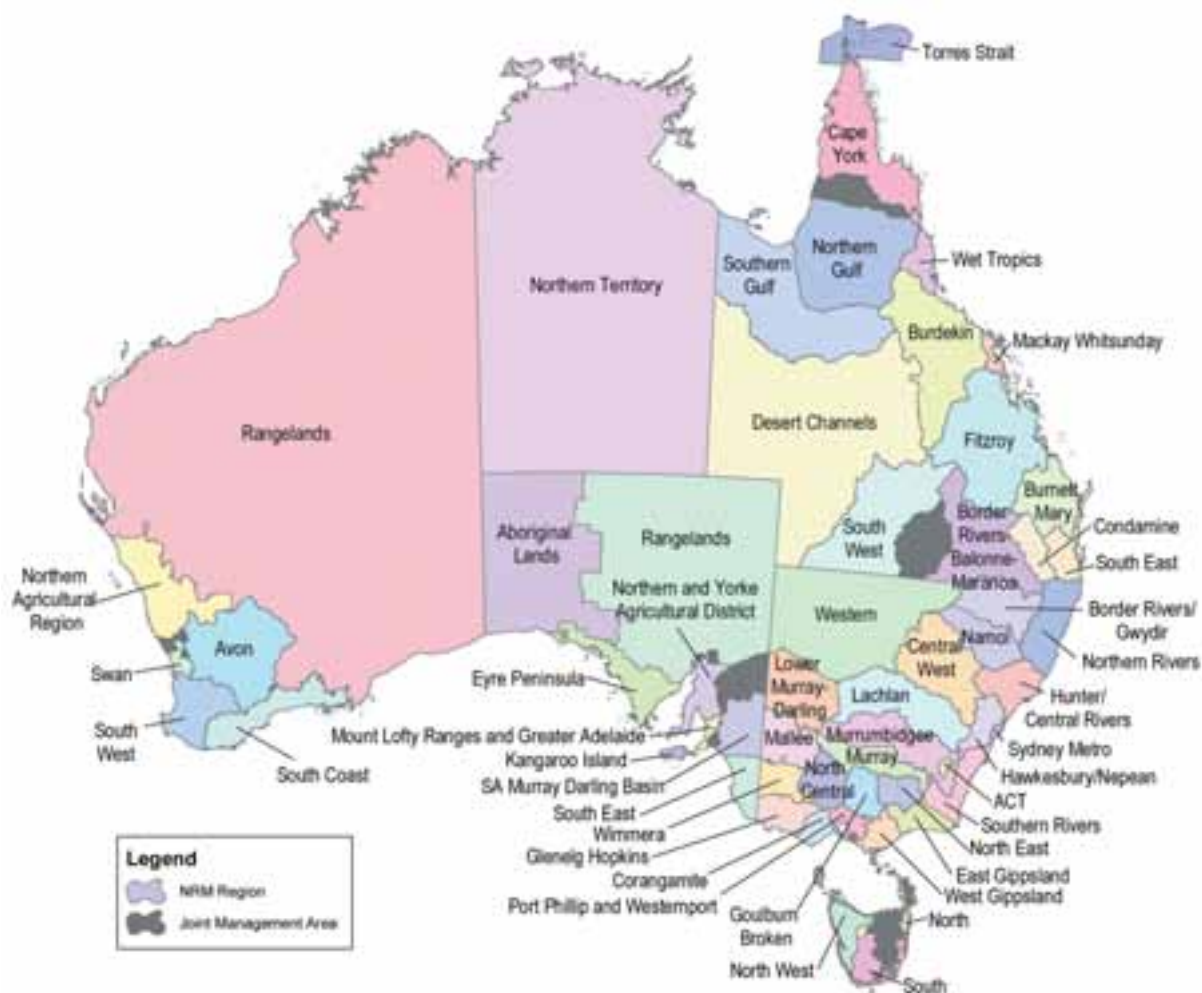
Table 1.5.1 Natural Resource Management Regions

NRM Region	Administrative Body	NAP Region/s	Trust Region/s
Australian Capital Territory			
Australian Capital Territory	ACT Natural Resource Management Board	Murrumbidgee	Australian Capital Territory
New South Wales			
Border Rivers - Gwydir	Border Rivers - Gwydir Catchment Management Authority	Border Rivers - Gwydir	Border Rivers - Gwydir
Central West	Central West Catchment Management Authority	Central West	Central West
Hawkesbury Nepean	Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	Hawkesbury Nepean
Hunter - Central Rivers	Hunter - Central Rivers Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	Hunter - Central Rivers
Lachlan	Lachlan Catchment Management Authority	Lachlan	Lachlan
Lower Murray	Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority	Lower Murray Darling	Lower Murray Darling
Murray	Murray Catchment Management Authority	Murray	Murray
Murrumbidgee	Murrumbidgee Catchment Management Authority	Murrumbidgee	Murrumbidgee
Namoi	Namoi Catchment Management Authority	Namoi	Namoi
Northern Rivers	Northern Rivers Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	Northern Rivers
Southern Rivers	Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	Southern Rivers
Sydney Metro	Sydney Metro Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	Sydney Metro
Western	Western Catchment Management Authority	Western	Western
Northern Territory			
Northern Territory	Landcare Council of the Northern Territory	Darwin - Katherine and part of Ord	Northern Territory
Queensland			
Border Rivers - Balonne Maranoa	Queensland Murray Darling Committee Incorporated	Border Rivers	Border Rivers
		Balonne - Maranoa	Maranoa - Balonne
Burdekin	Burdekin Dry Tropics Group Inc	Burdekin	Burdekin
Burnett Mary	Burnett Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management Incorporated	Burnett Mary	Burnett Mary
Cape York	Cape York Regional Advisory Group and Cape York - Northern Gulf Regional Implementation Group	Not applicable	Cape York
Condamine	Condamine Catchment Natural Resource Management Corporation Ltd	Condamine	Condamine
Desert Channels	Desert Channels Group	Not applicable	Desert Channels
Fitzroy	Fitzroy Basin Association Incorporated	Fitzroy	Fitzroy
Mackay Whitsunday	Mackay Whitsunday Regional Strategy Group	Not applicable	Mackay Whitsunday
Northern Gulf	Northern Gulf Resource Management Group and Cape York - Northern Gulf Regional Implementation Group	Not applicable	Northern Gulf
South East Queensland	South East Queensland Western Catchments Group and Natural Resource Management South East Queensland Incorporated	Lockyer - Bremer - Upper Brisbane	South East Queensland
South West	South West Natural Resource Management Group and Queensland Murray Darling Committee Incorporated	Part of Balonne - Maranoa	South West

NRM Region	Administrative Body	NAP Region/s	Trust Region/s
Southern Gulf	Southern Gulf Regional Strategy Group	Not applicable	Southern Gulf
Torres Strait	Torres Strait Group	Not applicable	Torres Strait
Wet Tropics	Wet Tropics Natural Resource Management Board	Not applicable	Wet Tropics
South Australia			
Aboriginal Lands	Aboriginal Lands Integrated Natural Resource Management Group	Not applicable	Aboriginal Lands
Eyre Peninsula	Eyre Peninsula Integrated Natural Resource Management Group	Not applicable	Eyre Peninsula
Kangaroo Island	Kangaroo Island Natural Resource Management Board	Kangaroo Island	Kangaroo Island
Mount Lofty Ranges	Mount Lofty and Greater Adelaide Integrated Natural Resource Management Group	Mount Lofty Ranges	Mount Lofty Ranges and Greater Adelaide
Northern and Yorke Agricultural District	Northern and Yorke Agricultural District Integrated Natural Resource Management Committee Incorporated	Northern and Yorke Agricultural District	Northern and Yorke Agricultural District
Rangelands	Rangelands Integrated Natural Resource Management Group	Part of SA Murray Darling Basin	Rangelands
SA Murray Darling Basin	SA Murray Darling Basin Integrated Natural Resource Management Group	SA Murray Darling Basin	SA Murray Darling Basin
South East	South East Natural Resource Consultative Committee	South East	South East
Tasmania			
North Tasmania	Northern Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Regional Committee	Tasmanian NAP Region	North Tasmania
North West	Cradle Coast Natural Resource Management Committee	Not applicable	North West
South Tasmania	Southern Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Regional Committee	Tasmanian NAP Region	South Tasmania
Tasmanian NAP Region	Northern Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Regional Committee and Southern Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Regional Committee (both acting through and with advice from the Joint NAP Working Group)	Tasmanian NAP Region	North and South Coast
Victoria			
Corangamite	Corangamite Catchment Management Authority	Corangamite	Corangamite
East Gippsland	East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	East Gippsland
Glenelg-Hopkins	Glenelg-Hopkins Catchment Management Authority	Glenelg Hopkins	Glenelg Hopkins
Goulburn Broken	Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority	Goulburn Broken	Goulburn Broken
Mallee	Mallee Catchment Management Authority	Mallee	Mallee
North Central	North Central Catchment Management Authority	North Central	North Central
North East	North East Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	North East
Port Phillip and Westernport	Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	Port Phillip and Westernport
West Gippsland	West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority	Not applicable	West Gippsland
Wimmera	Wimmera Catchment Management Authority	Wimmera	Wimmera

NRM Region	Administrative Body	NAP Region/s	Trust Region/s
Western Australia			
Avon	Avon Catchments Council	Avon	Avon
Northern Agricultural Region	Northern Agricultural Region Catchments Council	Northern Agricultural Region	Northern Agricultural Region
Rangelands	Rangelands Natural Resource Management Board	Parts of Avon, Northern Agricultural Region, South Coast and part of Ord	Rangelands
South Coast	South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team	South Coast	South Coast
South West	South West Catchments Council	South West	South West
Swan	Swan Catchments Council	Parts of Avon, Northern Agricultural Region and South West	Swan

Figure 1.5.1 Natural Resource Management Regions



1.6 KEY CHARACTERISTICS

The joint delivery of the NAP and the Trust by the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments through regional natural resource management bodies has a number of common key characteristics, which include:

- resource condition targets
- management action targets
- activity types
- standard outputs

Resource Condition Targets

In May 2002, the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council endorsed the Standards and Targets Framework, which established a core set of resource condition matters for which targets may be set. The matters for target that are particularly relevant to the outcomes of the NAP and the Trust and are used as the basis for more detailed reporting in Chapters 3 to 12 of this report, are:

- Land salinity
- Soil condition
- Rivers and wetlands
- Nutrients in aquatic environments
- Turbidity in aquatic environments
- Surface water salinity
- Native vegetation
- Significant native species
- Significant invasive species
- Estuarine, coastal and marine

Resource condition targets focus investments on significant resource condition outcomes. Targets set by regional bodies are a core element of integrated regional NRM plans and investment strategies. These targets are to be pragmatic, achievable and expressed in measurable terms within a 10 to 20 year timeframe.

In developing their regional plans, regional bodies have established targets for regionally relevant issues. Regional bodies have established the actual target levels through the regional consultation and planning processes according to each region's circumstances.

Examples of these targets drawn from accredited plans and investment strategies include:

By 2015, reduce salinity in the surface storages of the river system from an average 1000 $\mu\text{s}/\text{cm}/\text{yr}$ to an average of 700 $\mu\text{s}/\text{cm}/\text{yr}$

By 2020 nitrogen, phosphorous and sediment loads at the end of valley target sites in the four river basins will be 30% less than 2003 levels

By 2015, increase the cover of all endangered and applicable vulnerable Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVC's) to at least 15% of their pre-European vegetation cover

By 2020, improve the quality of 90% of existing (2003) native vegetation by 10%

The full set of actual targets set by the regions through their investment strategies is provided in the Regional Summaries.

In many cases, there is insufficient data for the region to establish a measurable target in which the region can be sufficiently confident. Under the national frameworks, regions have three years from the signing of the relevant Bilateral Agreement to gather sufficient data to set a target. This allows regions to commence activities to address resource condition issues while an appropriate measurement and monitoring program is established. Where appropriate, funding to undertake baseline studies to establish these targets is provided in the investment strategy.

Management action targets

Management action targets are also established in regional plans and investment strategies. These intermediate targets are established for periods from two to five years to provide an early indication of whether the strategy is achieving the desired natural resource outcomes, or whether a change of approach is required. Activities are funded to bring about particular achievements according to their expected outcomes.

These targets are particularly relevant to the outcomes of the NAP and the Trust and are used as the basis for more detailed reporting in Chapters 3 to 12. The full set of actual targets set by the regions through their investment strategies is provided in the Regional Summaries.

Activity Type

At its October 2003 meeting, the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council agreed to trial a set of standard reporting categories for outputs from activities. To be able to provide a meaningful description of the focus of activities supported through NAP and Trust investments, four types of activities have been identified. Activities have been categorised by the type of outputs that they primarily achieve. Table 1.6.1 provides a description of these activity types.

Table 1.6.1 Description of activity types

Activity types	Activities which:
Resource assessment	Inform capacity and decision making through applied science, data collection, analysis and modeling
Planning	Structure and sequence priorities and actions through plan development using resource assessment data and minor studies, and expert and community inputs
Capacity building	Develop people's decision making capabilities and motivate their involvement through the dissemination of information and knowledge to all levels
On-ground activities	Conduct works or actions to achieve resource condition outcomes

Standard outputs

The agreement by the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group to trial a set of standard reporting categories supports common reporting and aggregation of achievements at regional, state and national levels. These categories provide a standard description of products and services purchased through activities supported by NAP and Trust investments. The standard outputs are shown in Table 1.6.2.

Table 1.6.2 Standard outputs grouped by activity type

Activity Type	Standard outputs
Resource assessment	Baseline, trend and condition for targets Decision support tools Investigations (surveys, inventories, mapping and data analysis) Research and development studies
Planning	Improved practice codes or guidelines Integrated catchment or sub-catchment plans Property management plans Species Recovery Plans and Action Statements
Capacity building	Awareness raising activities Facilitation, motivation and support activities Skills and training activities

Activity Type	Standard outputs
On-ground activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conservation by agreements Indigenous vegetation protected by fencing Indigenous vegetation enhanced/rehabilitated Revegetation with indigenous vegetation Revegetation with exotic vegetation Riparian and waterway health Wetlands' health protected or enhanced. Management of significant species or ecological communities Significant pest plant control Significant pest vertebrate control Soil management Salinity control measures Water contaminant management Water use efficiency Bore capping

The standard outputs are used in this report to describe the products and services purchased through activities supported by NAP and Trust investments. Outputs that contribute to the resource condition outcomes of the NAP and the Trust are detailed in Chapters 3 to 12. The full set of actual outputs achieved by each region through its investment strategy is provided in the Regional Summaries.

1.7 FUNDING FOR THE REGIONAL PROGRAMS

NAP funding

The NAP Bilateral Agreements establish funding arrangements for the Australian Government and the State/Territory Governments to provide matching funding in each of the years for which the NAP is operational. In this report, unless specifically stated, all NAP expenditure including approved amounts, budgeted activity expenditure and reported activity expenditure is joint government expenditure.

Trust funding

The bilateral agreements signed by the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments provide the framework under which each party will contribute matching levels of investment. Under these agreements, the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments can contribute differentially to jointly agreed activities within the investment strategy, provided their total contributions are equal. The Australian Government's contribution will be in cash, while matching investment agreed by the States and Territories may include both cash and appropriately costed and audited in kind contributions. In this report, all Trust expenditure including approved amounts, budgeted activity expenditure and reported activity expenditure is for cash contributions made by the Australian Government. Aggregation of the in-kind contributions made by each State and Territory will commence in 2004-05.

Funding Streams

Funding is drawn from the following investment streams within the NAP and the Trust:

Foundation funding is provided by both regional programs to support the development of accredited regional plans, which will be used as the base from which the Australian Government and State/Territory Governments will make investments.

Priority action funding is provided by both the NAP and the Trust for regional bodies to address pressing NRM issues through strategic and urgent actions, prior to the accreditation and implementation of a regional plan.

Regional investment strategy funding is provided by both regional programs to implement an accredited regional plan and is determined on the basis of the investment strategy developed by the regional body, in consultation with the Australian Government and relevant State and Territory Governments, key stakeholders and other potential investors. Investment strategies identify funding required to implement an indicative work or action program, based on the assessment and prioritisation of actions as outlined in the accredited regional plan.

Additional investments include state-wide and multi-regional projects, competitive regional projects and multi-lateral activities. Both the NAP and the Trust support state-wide and multi-regional projects while only the Trust supports regional competitive projects. Multi-lateral activities, such as the National Market Based Instruments Pilot Program are supported by the NAP.

1.8 REPORTING PROGRESS

About this report

This is the first combined report to the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council on the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and the regional component of the Natural Heritage Trust. Both the NAP and the Trust aim to bring about resource condition change through regional investments in activities targeted on regional resource condition issues. Consequently, the on-going theme of this report will be to show the progress towards achieving resource condition targets, particularly through investments based on accredited regional plans.

Information in this report is drawn from performance reports provided by regions and proponents and agreed through the joint management arrangements between the representatives of the Australian and jurisdictional governments of each State or Territory.

Since most investments by the regional programs will take longer than one year to complete, tracking and reporting on the achievements of each of these investments will take longer than one financial year. Reporting on the performance of an activity for any particular year will be provided within the context of the cumulative achievements of the activity since its commencement.

As the first programs of this type, the NAP and the Trust have required significant effort to establish partnerships as a foundation to the development and implementation of integrated regional plans. Consequently, investments through the regional programs to date have primarily supported regional bodies in the preparation of regional plans, investment strategies, and priority actions to address urgent issues. With regional program investments mainly focused on foundation activities and priority activities, the current report will not report on resource condition change.

Reporting timeframes

During the 2003-04 financial year, it was agreed to modify the performance reporting year to enable the report to be presented to the October meeting of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council and to support better management decision-making. Under these arrangements, reporting on the performance of the investments made by the regional programs is for the period from 1 July 2003 to 31 March 2004. To set this performance within the context of all investments to date, summaries of approved investments for the 2003-04 financial year and cumulatively up to 30 June 2004 are also provided.

General structure of this report

Chapters 2 to 12 provide aggregated summary information about the performance of the investments by the NAP and the Trust. Chapter 2 provides a summary of the performance of the NAP and the Trust for the period up to 31 March 2004. It also summarises progress in the development of partnerships that underpin each program, an overall investment summary and specific investment summaries for foundation funding, priority actions, regional investments and for other additional investments. Chapters 3 to 12 provide a summary of the regional programs investments in each resource condition matter for target. Each chapter provides details of the priority funding and investments based on accredited regional plans provided to each region for that particular resource condition matter for target. In addition, each chapter details the resource condition targets set by regions, the related management action targets and a summary of activities that have a major focus on the relevant matter for target funded through these investments. Each chapter also summarises the standard outputs primarily related to the particular resource condition matter for target achieved through these investments.

The Regional Summaries group the regions by State /Territory and details the investments provided to each region by the NAP and the Trust. These Regional Summaries provide an overall summary of approved investments and expenditure against each investment. Each regional summary also details expenditure and activities related to priority funding and regional investments based on accredited regional plans where relevant. As well, each regional summary

details the resource condition targets set by the region, the related management action targets and a summary of activities that have a major focus on the relevant matter for target funded through these investments. Each regional summary also details the standard outputs primarily related to the particular resource condition matter for target achieved through these investments.

Reporting investment by funding stream

Funding streams previously described in this chapter are reported throughout the 12 chapters and the Regional Summaries.

An overall summary of **foundation funding** and achievements is provided in Chapter 2, while a summary of regional foundation funding is included in each regional section in the Regional Summaries.

An overall summary of **priority action funding** and achievements is provided in Chapter 2. Chapters 3 to 12 provide a summary of priority action funding and achievements relevant to that particular matter for target. A summary of regional priority action funding and achievements is included in the each regional section in the Regional Summaries.

An overall summary of **regional investment strategy funding** and achievements is provided in Chapter 2. Chapters 3 to 12 provide a summary of regional investment strategy funding and achievements relevant to that particular matter for target. A summary of regional investment strategy funding and achievements is included in the each regional section in the Regional Summaries, where relevant.

Additional funding included state-wide and multi-regional projects, competitive regional projects and multi-lateral activities. **State-wide** and **multi-regional project** funding and achievements are summarised in Chapter 2. A summary of **regional competitive funding** is provided in Chapter 2. A summary of regional competitive funding is also included in each regional section in the Regional Summaries, where relevant. **Multi-lateral project funding** and achievements are summarised in Chapter 2.

Reporting investment by program

Within this report, investments and their associated performance have been reported separately for the NAP and the Trust where the activity has been supported by that particular regional program. Where appropriate, the NAP and the Trust may have invested in the same activity. Where this joint investment occurs, investment and achievements are jointly reported. Achievement has not been apportioned according to the investment contribution.

It should be noted that this report provides information on investments and performance of the NAP and the Trust. In some cases, other investments may have contributed to particular activities.

Reporting investment by type of activity

Funding for investments supported through the NAP and the Trust is provided at an activity level. To be able to provide a meaningful description of the focus of these investments, activities have been grouped by the type of outputs that they primarily achieve. The total investment related to these activities provides an indication of the value for money achieved by the investments.

Progress reporting on outputs

For this report, regional bodies have provided information using the standard reporting categories that were agreed for trial by the Monitoring and Evaluation Working Group. The standard outputs establish consistent units of measure for reporting progress on particular outputs allowing aggregation over the life of the programs.

This is the first year that regional bodies have reported achievements using standard outputs. This report describes actual achievements funded by the investment. Each section describes outputs that are actually achieved during

the 2003-04 year to 31 March 2004. Since this report describes the performance of an activity for any particular year within the context of the cumulative achievements of the activity since its commencement, each section will also provide the total achieved to 31 March 2004. Since achievements of activities during the 2002-03 year were not collected as standard outputs, the reported totals achieved to 31 March 2004 may not completely represent the overall performance of the regions. It is expected that complete accounts of the performance of each activity will be provided in future reports.

Progress reporting on Management Action Targets

Regional bodies have identified management action targets related to the achievement of the resource condition matters for target of major focus. These targets are supported by their regional investment strategy based on their approved regional plan. These regional management action targets have been included in the relevant chapter describing achievements related to particular matters for target (Chapter 3-12). The management action targets have also been included in each regional section in the Regional Summaries. This report does not provide a description of progress in achieving these targets. This reporting will commence in the 2004-05 report.

Progress reporting on Resource Condition Targets

Priority action funding is provided to regional bodies to address pressing issues through strategic and urgent actions prior to the accreditation of a regional plan. Consequently, no resource condition targets are provided for priority action funding. This funding has been linked to the matters for target as generic resource condition issues.

Regional bodies have identified resource condition targets related to the achievement of the resource condition matters for target supported by their approved regional investment strategy based on their accredited regional plan. These regional resource condition targets have been included in the relevant chapter describing achievements related to particular matters for target (Chapter 3 to 12). The resource condition targets have also been included in each regional section in the Regional Summaries. This report does not provide a description of progress in achieving these targets. This reporting will commence in the 2004-05 report.