

# Are We There Yet?

## A Review of CALM's Engagement in Regional Natural Resource Management and its Implications for Biodiversity

A Report to the Executive Director  
By Neil Blake

October 2004

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank the following for making time available to be interviewed for this review:

John Bailey, Conservation Commission of WA  
Kel Baldock, Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group  
Brett Beecham, CALM Wheatbelt Region  
Bruce Bone, CALM Wheatbelt Region  
John Braid, Northern Agricultural Catchments Council  
Neil Burrows, CALM Science  
Keith Claymore, CALM Nature Conservation Division  
Damian Crilly, Swan Catchments Council  
Chris Curnow, World Wide Fund for Nature  
Alan Danks, CALM South Coast Region  
Robert Edkins, Avon Catchment Council  
Rex Edmondson, NRM Council  
Garry English, NRM Council  
Kelly Gillen, CALM Mid West Region  
David Hartley, Department of Agriculture  
Robert Lambeck, Greening WA  
Don MacFarlane, Department of the Environment  
Keiran McNamara, Executive Director CALM  
Sue Metcalf, Swan Catchments Council  
Bill Mitchell, Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group  
Dave Mitchell, CALM Swan Region  
Barbara Morrell, Avon Catchment Council  
Charlie Nicholson, CALM Natural Resources Branch  
Debra Pearce, South West Catchments Council  
Nigel Sercombe, CALM Nature Conservation Division  
Rachel Siewert, Conservation Council of WA  
Chris Simpson, CALM Marine Branch  
John Simpson, South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team  
Ken Wallace, CALM Natural Resources Branch  
Alan Walker, CALM Regional Services Division  
John Watson, CALM South Coast Region  
Gordon Wyre, CALM Nature Conservation Division

I would also like to acknowledge the support, assistance and patience of Ken Wallace, Keith Claymore, Keiran McNamara and Gordon Wyre during the design and drafting of this review.

Lastly I would like to thank Gay, Alex, Laura and Angus for their help in getting the job done!

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# CALM's Engagement in Regional NRM

## Preface

Natural Resource Management (NRM) is defined in the Western Australian Government NRM framework document (2002) as "the ecologically sustainable management of the land, water and biodiversity resources of the State for the benefit of existing and future generations, and for the maintenance of the life support capability of the biosphere. It does not include mineral or marine resources".

The past few years has seen a move to a greater regional delivery of NRM funding programs across Australia. The primary vehicle for the planning and delivery of these funds has been through accredited regional NRM strategies which are being developed by regional NRM groups. In WA there are six regional NRM groups identified in the funding Bilateral agreements for the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. These are the Avon Catchment Council (ACC), the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC), the Swan Catchments Council (SCC), the South Coast Regional Initiative Planning Team (SCRIPT), the South West Catchments Council (SWCC) and the Rangelands NRM Coordinating Group (RNRMCG).

As regional NRM strategies have taken shape over the past 2 years the Department of Conservation and Land Management has, along with the other WA Government agencies working in NRM, become increasingly involved in the processes surrounding the strategies' development. The call on CALM staff time and expertise has taxed both the resources of the Department and the capacity of its staff to effectively engage with regional NRM groups to ensure optimal biodiversity input to the strategies.

During 2003 in response to these increased demands and following some continuing difficult relationships with a number of regional NRM groups, the Executive Director of CALM, Keiran McNamara sought a review of the way in which CALM engaged with the regional NRM groups. The review was carried out by the then Regional NRM Coordinator for the South Coast Region of CALM, Neil Blake.

The review used a structured questionnaire to gather information from key players (internal and external to the Department) in regional NRM (see Appendix 1). Consultations were held with all regional NRM Chairs and/or Executive Officers, selected non-government organisations involved in regional NRM, NRM government agencies and key stakeholders in NRM at a State level. In all a total of 32 people were interviewed, including 15 CALM staff ranging from regional staff involved with NRM groups through to the Executive Director.

Broadly speaking, questions asked of participants sought to explore current levels of CALM engagement in regional NRM, ways to build on existing relationships, and means of achieving better biodiversity outcomes within regional NRM.

The review report provides discussion and recommendations in three broad parts:

- Communication, which examines communicating CALM's role in NRM, communication within CALM, and communicating the concept of biodiversity;
- Relationships, which examines the state of existing relationships between CALM and regional NRM groups, other NRM agencies, NGOs and the wider community, and how to build on those relationships; and
- Integration of biodiversity into regional NRM group processes

In summary, if CALM is to be successful in its goal of protecting and managing biodiversity within the regional NRM framework it needs to:

- Develop and communicate a clear understanding within CALM of its role in NRM and how this relates to wider State Government positions and policy on NRM;
- Improve community understanding of CALM's role in NRM through increased attention to and funding for communication and extension activities and training;
- Adequately support and resource CALM's continued engagement in regional NRM processes;
- Communicate the concept of biodiversity such that it makes biodiversity relevant to the lives of people in the wider community;
- Build better relationships with other stakeholders in NRM by improving communication, extension and interpersonal skills among key CALM staff; and
- Improve the integration of biodiversity into regional NRM group processes by better disseminating CALM Science research and by supporting the employment of biodiversity professionals within regional NRM group structures.

This review makes some broad-ranging recommendations for action to improve the way CALM engages in regional NRM. To be successfully implemented the recommendations should be managed as a discrete project over at least two years, with adequate resourcing and dedicated direction from a senior level within CALM. It would also be beneficial to the outcomes of the project for the Executive Director of CALM to convene an NRM Reference Group of key players in regional NRM to act as 'sounding board' on NRM matters as they affect CALM's operations.

Finally, CALM is fortunate to have many dedicated professionals working in natural resource management who provide great service to the Government and people of Western Australia. The effectiveness of their contribution and the stature of their agency will be greatly enhanced by giving them the tools, understanding and confidence to better engage with the NRM community.

Neil Blake  
October 2004

# CALM's Engagement in Regional NRM

## Discussion and Recommendations

### **Part 1: Communication**

#### **Communicating CALM's role**

CALM is unlike many other natural resource management agencies in that it is expected to fulfil a number of different and demanding roles under its legislative responsibilities. The Department is simultaneously a land and water manager, a manager of all the State's biodiversity (with special responsibility for threatened species), the main repository of knowledge on Western Australia's biodiversity and an advocate for biodiversity. In Western Australia, no other natural resource management agencies have a similar, high level of on-ground management responsibilities. It would appear from interviews that there is a generally poor appreciation of CALM's multiple roles - not only among the NRM community, other NRM agencies and the broader community - but also in some instances within CALM itself. The lack of clear understanding of the Department's role among some of its own staff is of concern, as the inability of CALM to speak with organisational clarity worsens external confusion about its role.

This confusion in understanding of CALM's role has been exacerbated by recent controversy in the media and politics over the Department's prosecution processes. While this confusion exists, CALM is an easy target for those with divisive motives and the Department is constantly having to communicate in a reactive and defensive manner. While there have been some attempts to improve levels of understanding about aspects of the Department's work (for example press advertisements providing information on access to nature reserves, CALM website information on the Department's role), there is an urgent need for CALM to clarify its role both internally and externally. This will require well coordinated internal and external communication strategies.

It is important that this communication effort is not viewed as simply an exercise in glossy self-promotion, but is a program that genuinely seeks to engage people and change attitudes. For this reason, a range of strategies, communication media and public involvement methods should be employed, which can cater for the needs of different stakeholder groups.

#### **Recommendation 1**

*In order to improve levels of understanding of CALM's work and responsibilities, the Department should develop and implement internal and external communication strategies that clearly and positively identify and explain CALM's multiple roles.*

*The external communication strategy should target all relevant stakeholder groups, identify a range of strategies and employ appropriate methods that maximise communication opportunities to change attitudes in different stakeholder groups. The internal communication strategy should clearly explain CALM's different roles and corporate goals and take advantage of material developed in the external communication strategy.*

*Both communication strategies should be developed and in place by early 2005.*

Needless to say, any campaign to improve understanding of the Department's role will be most effective if there are talented communicators within CALM to carry the message beyond mere advertising. For this reason the Department needs to foster, value and reward good communicators at all levels in the organisation. This should be done by proactive recruitment, well targeted training and development and a recognition program that rewards effective communication.

### **Recommendation 2**

*The Department underpin the delivery of proposed internal and external communication strategies with a program of communication skills training for all staff in the organisation. Initial priority for training should go to those staff who have significant contact with external stakeholders in the course of their work for CALM.*

### **Recommendation 3**

*A series of awards acknowledging outstanding contributions to the communication of CALM's work both internally and externally be made on an annual basis. Awards should be presented across a number of categories to reflect the breadth of the Department's activities.*

From discussions with external stakeholders it would appear that some of the confusion over CALM's roles and the community's responsibilities with regard to reserves and biodiversity may stem from some arcane language contained in the Wildlife Conservation Act (eg the offence of 'taking' protected flora, when someone has damaged, but not removed the plant). It is important that issues of language and definition be cleared up in the proposed Biodiversity Bill

### **Recommendation 4**

*The proposed Biodiversity Bill should be written in contemporary English to minimise the opportunities for confusion or misinterpretation of the legislation.*

A consistent comment raised both by CALM staff and external stakeholders was the belief that CALM could improve levels of external engagement in its core functions and hence better communicate its role through an increased extension program. The Land for Wildlife and Urban Nature/Ecoplan programs were often cited (especially by external stakeholders) as excellent examples of extension/outreach programs which promoted CALM's goals in a practical manner, actively involved people in the Department's work and generated a very positive image for the Department.

An increased emphasis on extension is seen by most stakeholders as one of the most important tools in raising levels of understanding about the importance of biodiversity in the broader community. A number of stakeholders, both internal and external expressed some frustration that even though CALM's science and research work is well respected, it fails to be well delivered to a practical, community level. This sentiment is well summed up in a comment from one regional NRM group Executive Officer - "*CALM's science is well respected – just not well explained*". Extension was also put forward as a critical means of improving the integration of biodiversity into regional NRM group processes and priorities.

### **Recommendation 5**

*The Department review its extension program with a view to consolidating existing programs and expanding its scope to improve community understanding, appreciation and commitment to biodiversity conservation. Consideration should be given to creating an Community Involvement Branch with a new biodiversity extension program that operates across the Department, focusing on providing the broader community with quality information, improving skills and understanding in practical biodiversity conservation, and developing values sympathetic to the Department's goals. A key task should be to improve the practical dissemination of Science Division research.*

## **Communication within CALM**

### *General*

As with many large organisations (usually regardless of structure), different functional arms of CALM have tended to develop into 'silos' often based on specific work programs, expertise or location. While there are sometimes good reasons for the development of these 'silos', communication within, across and between these functional arms of the organisation is often problematic. As a relative newcomer, NRM has needed to work across most of CALM's more established functional arms, and interviews with CALM staff in different parts of the organisation indicate that the communication of NRM information has been patchy – particularly within the Science and Sustainable Forest Management Divisions.

It should be pointed out that the NRM process has been something of a 'moveable feast' over the past 18 months, and with resources limited there has not been a concerted effort to embark on a whole-of-Department information campaign. Rather, those parts of the organisation with a more direct involvement in NRM have been pulled into a semi-formal telephone communication network via an NRM Focus Group. The NRM Focus Group has been greatly appreciated by most staff, and in particular has provided an important source of communication, information, peer support and mentoring for CALM regional officers involved in regional NRM strategy work.

While the Department has generally done well to respond to the challenges presented by the evolving NRM process in the State, it has been hampered by a lack of clarity related to what NRM means for CALM and its work. The Department does not have any clear 'guiding principles' for NRM nor any explanation of how NRM fits with CALM's functional and statutory roles, or how these in turn fit within State NRM policy. This potentially exposes the Department to internal division, and continued external confusion as to CALM's role within NRM. While some foundation work to better define NRM and the Department's place in NRM has been carried out by Ken Wallace, Keith Claymore and others in the NRM Focus group, this needs to be formalised and presented for discussion within the broader organisation.

At a Corporate level the Department has started to integrate NRM priorities into the Strategic Planning and Forward Estimates process for 2004-05, which will have important flow-on effects in terms of overall Corporate direction on the issue. Although these initiatives are predominantly identified in Nature Conservation outputs for 2004-05, it is encouraging to note that in review interviews with CALM Directors there was support for the continued mainstreaming of NRM as a central theme for the organisation.

With most regions entering the final six months of NRM strategy development and accreditation it is important that details of CALM's involvement in and commitment to NRM be widely communicated across the Department.

**Recommendation 6**

*As a matter of urgency, the Natural Resources Branch coordinate the development of a set of Departmental 'Guiding Principles' for NRM. This should include a clear definition of NRM as it applies to the Department's functions and statutory responsibilities, and how this relates to broader State Government positions and policy on NRM.*



**Recommendation 7**

*An internal communication strategy be developed by the Natural Resources Branch to enable NRM to become well understood across CALM. The strategy should include a variety of tools, including the development of good briefing material, extension activities and mechanisms such as short term work exchange programs between researchers and project managers.*

**Recommendation 8**

*Building on the identification of NRM priorities in the Strategic Planning and Forward Estimates process for 2004-05, continue to encourage the incorporation of NRM priorities across all Departmental outputs at a Corporate level.*

**Recommendation 9**

*Through the Natural Resources Branch continue to facilitate the regular operation of the NRM Focus Group as forum for communication, information and peer support among those in the Department working in NRM.*

**Recommendation 10**

*Consider holding a one-to-two day NRM Forum every six months for all CALM staff involved in NRM work, facilitated by the Natural Resources Branch. This would supplement the telephone-based NRM Focus Group contact with a face-to-face opportunity to network, receive information updates, receive training in data interpretation, communication skills, monitoring and evaluation etc.*

**Communicating Biodiversity**

Most contemporary research indicates the concept of biodiversity is understood to a very limited degree in the broader community (Synapse Research 2003, Read and Bessen 2003). This assessment is generally no different in regional NRM communities, although interviews for this review showed a heightened level of awareness of biodiversity conservation principles among Regional NRM Group executive staff (most likely due to regional strategy development processes). The lack of understanding and valuing of biodiversity is more worrying in the regional context however, as with farmers in WA regions managing up to 70% of the land, this is the interface with actual biodiversity conservation.

Responses to interviews for this review shows that many land managers do not view biodiversity in the multi-faceted way most biodiversity professionals do. At best they are aware of some of the singular dimensions of biodiversity conservation such as habitat needs and the management of threatened species, and at worst they believe that biodiversity conservation restricts their management options and should only happen on reserves. This effectively leads to a marginalisation of biodiversity conservation in many regional areas, especially when it is viewed by some as an impediment to farm profitability. There are of course exceptions to this situation where farmers with a wider view of biodiversity conservation have successfully integrated its management into their operations.

The mismatch in understanding between biodiversity professionals and many regional NRM communities about the complexity of biodiversity and its management lies at the heart of most difficulties in adequately communicating biodiversity conservation. Much of the literature on attitudes to biodiversity conservation attributes this mismatch to fundamental differences in values and 'world view' (Burbidge and Wallace 1995, Synapse Research 2003, Read and Bessen 2003). There is clearly a need for CALM to embark on a biodiversity education and awareness campaign

to change attitudes and land management practices. Such a campaign will need to recognise that changing community attitudes is a long-term commitment and must be matched with adequate resources, innovative approaches to education and extension, and the use of different communication tools. Successfully changing community 'world view' usually requires some collaboration and compromise, and attitudes to community values held by some in CALM will also need to change.

Within the regional NRM context, the mismatch of biodiversity conservation and community values is often exacerbated by differences in the organisational cultures, values and missions of the key NRM agencies (Wallace 1992). Relationships with other NRM agencies is covered in the next section of this report, but it is important to note that divergent views on biodiversity conservation between government agencies is highly counter productive to changing community views on biodiversity.

Evidence from interviews with CALM staff shows that there is also a range in understanding of the complexity of biodiversity conservation, and some variance in opinion as to its primacy as the main function of the organisation. This suggests a need to also undertake some internal education and awareness.

#### **Recommendation 11**

*Undertake a biodiversity education and awareness campaign (for internal and external audiences) coordinated by communications staff at Cygnet Hall, but guided by an interdisciplinary reference group to give support, provide biodiversity expertise, ensure local and regional relevance and cross divisional support.*

#### **Recommendation 12**

*Provide communication training opportunities for CALM staff (particularly research and nature conservation staff) to encourage more effective communication of the Department's work.*

#### **Recommendation 13**

*Develop biodiversity communication material that:*

- *links biodiversity conservation to quality of life and human values;*
- *makes biodiversity more relevant to everyday life*
- *encourages changes in behaviour and a more biodiversity sympathetic belief structure;*
- *is usable, useful, hands on and which encourages active involvement.*

#### **Recommendation 14**

*Explore opportunities for joint communication campaigns with NGOs to help spread the biodiversity message via other sources*

#### **Recommendation 15**

*Via the NRM Senior Officer's Group, ensure the development and dissemination of a clear whole-of-government view on biodiversity conservation and its role in NRM.*

## **Part 2: Relationships**

### **Building relationships**

Through interviews with the NRM government agencies, NRM Regional Groups, the main NRM Non-Government Organisations and key people in NRM at a State level, this review has been able to gain some useful insights into the way CALM is perceived by the main stakeholders in Natural Resource Management. Without exception the review was very well received by all those that participated, and was taken as a genuine effort by the Department to seek opinions to enable positive change.

The Department is well respected in all NRM regions for its knowledge and expertise in biodiversity conservation and reserve management, praised for the commitment and skills of staff members involved in regional NRM strategy development and seen as a vital player in the NRM scene. CALM's commitment of full time officers and resources to the south coast and rangelands NRM regions has been highly valued by the respective regional NRM groups, as has the contribution of the Department's GIS section in the preparation and delivery of NRM datasets to all regions.

Despite this, and while acknowledging that CALM has made great strides in this area over the past 12 - 18 months, many players in regional NRM (internal and external to CALM) expressed frustration at the Department's patchy ability to *fully* engage with others in regional NRM. Notwithstanding its acknowledged good work, the Department is still described as being a bit aloof and removed from the process, often perceived as:

- generally poor at establishing, maintaining and promoting partnerships – the “join us, but on our terms” approach;
- reluctant to acknowledge and engage other partners in biodiversity conservation, for example Greening Australia (WA) and WWF;
- having an arrogance based on an assumption of being the only experts in biodiversity and land management matters;
- resistant to fully sharing information and data of mutual benefit;
- overly defensive and at times inflexible;
- hesitant to commit early to collaborative projects, and when it does join in often wants to control the agenda, make changes;
- reluctant to share credit on joint projects – often wants to hog limelight
- looking after the interests of the Department first in any partnership, rather than having a commitment to shared interest
- less willing to share the resourcing of regional groups

It must be said that the vast majority of people did not make these criticisms gratuitously, but in the context of genuinely seeking solutions. Most acknowledged the difficulties CALM faces building partnerships in NRM, including:

- biodiversity being effectively seen as the ‘new kid on the block’ in NRM, thus having a lot of ground to make up;
- the other key NRM agencies (Agriculture Department and Water and Rivers Commission) having historically enjoyed much stronger partnerships with regional NRM groups;
- Departmental resourcing and expertise tailored predominantly to nature conservation and reserve management with a relative lack of experience and skills in extension, off-reserve partnership and community involvement;
- the lack of community engagement expertise across the Department has led to uncertainty as to what level of engagement is required and how best to engage – puts the Department on the back foot in comparison to other agencies, and leads to ad hoc planning and delivery;

- an organisational structure and culture with a past history of command and control that is often at odds with community-based processes;
- high quality science research which struggles to communicate its work effectively and make itself relevant to the broader community – and in some cases to parts of CALM and other agencies;
- restricted resources, sometimes resulting in a fear of not being able to deliver, resulting in a reluctance to become involved in partnerships;
- poor community perceptions from bad press related to prosecutions, local land management disputes and fires are an impediment to building regional NRM partnerships

The ability of the Department to build partnerships based on trust and mutual respect is critical to successful biodiversity outcomes in regional NRM. At a broad level it seems clear that CALM needs to improve the skills base of its current employees in the area of community involvement, extension and communications, whilst ensuring new recruits have these skills. It is worth noting here that very similar comments and recommendations regarding the need to improve skills have been made by Wallace (2001) in his review of the Department's salinity programs, and Claymore (2003) in his review of Nature Conservation program outputs.

Regrettably, there appears to be a culture of arrogance within CALM that undermines many of the Department's good efforts to build alliances and partnerships to help conserve biodiversity across the landscape. This issue appeared consistently during interviews with key stakeholders, and arrogant views about external and community expertise were evident in responses from a number of CALM staff during the review. It is difficult to determine whether such hubris is borne out of defensiveness in the face of criticism of CALM expertise, a result of overconfidence, or genuine ignorance of the existence of equally valid biodiversity expertise that may reside outside the Department. Regardless of the reason, instead of being dismissive of external expertise, values and views, the Department needs to foster a greater tolerance of different views and actively seek partnerships to build the capacity of external stakeholders where it believes it is lacking.

#### **Recommendation 16**

*As a matter of urgency, CALM develop an active training program to increase the community involvement, extension and communication skills of current employees. Priority should be given to assisting the skill development of staff directly involved in regional NRM activities and in liaison with regional NRM groups.*

#### **Recommendation 17**

*Reward CALM staff who demonstrate in their work the Department's Values of Honesty, Respect, Openness and Commitment (as stated within CALM's 2002-2005 Corporate Plan).*

#### **Recommendation 18**

*The Department*

- *review its current selection processes to ensure adequate weighting is given to selecting new employees with strong community involvement, extension and communication skills, particularly where the position is working within the regional NRM sphere;*
- *undertake a needs assessment to determine where to place staff skilled in community involvement, extension and communication to gain maximum improvement in relationships with regional communities; and*
- *provide incentives (attractive salaries, conditions, long contracts) to attract skilled people to regional locations*

## **CALM – Regional NRM Group Relationships**

During the course of this review it has become obvious that relationships between CALM and the Regional NRM Groups improved markedly during 2003, and there is a strongly expressed desire among all regional groups for closer partnerships with CALM. This appears to be due to a combination of increased resourcing and focus on regional NRM issues by the Department, and the regional NRM strategy development process providing a platform for more cooperative working relationships. During interviews all regional NRM groups commented warmly on the positive contribution of CALM staff to the strategy development, their increased appreciation of the depth of biodiversity knowledge within the Department and the improved access to CALM data.

The provision of additional staff and resources to the south coast and rangelands NRM regions to assist the regional strategy process and help build relationships with the regional groups has been greatly appreciated by both the regional CALM staff and the NRM group. From a regional CALM perspective having a dedicated liaison and coordination position has had a number of benefits:

- the Department has been able to maintain a constant contact with the regional NRM group during the strategy development process, which has ensured that biodiversity elements are much better incorporated in the draft than previously. Having a dedicated liaison point has also enabled the efficient coordination of regional CALM expert input to the strategy, which has relieved over-stretched regional staff and financial resources;
- during several periods of tension between the Department and the regional NRM groups during 2003, there was a familiar and trusted 'go-between' able to troubleshoot and facilitate resolution;
- it has been possible to gain much better and easier regional access to many of the CALM corporate datasets, and interpretation from data custodians and analysts;
- it has been possible to pursue proactive relationship building activities between regional CALM staff and NRM group staff and members which has not been possible previously due to lack of resources and CALM staff time;
- the position has been able to act as a central point of contact in the CALM region for all NRM matters, hence improving communication and levels of understanding in CALM staff across the region;
- on the south coast the position was able to provide advice and training to regional CALM staff in communication related to biodiversity conservation and NRM.

The regional NRM groups in the south coast and rangelands regions have benefited from the dedicated CALM positions for many of the previously stated reasons, but have particularly appreciated having an improved conduit to senior officers within CALM and a greatly enhanced ability to get access to and interpretation of CALM held data. During interviews, all of the regional NRM groups expressed a desire to see a continuation of the increased levels of contact with CALM staff that they have enjoyed during the regional NRM strategy development process.

While all regional NRM groups felt there had been substantial improvements in relationships with CALM staff at a regional level, concern was raised at the gap in understanding and communication between themselves and senior officers within CALM. It is also interesting to note that many senior CALM staff felt that regional NRM group officers had little understanding of the constraints the Department works under in its NRM work. It would appear there are clear opportunities to improve levels of understanding and liaison between senior levels of the two groups that could provide significant mutual benefit.

**Recommendation 19**

*The Department create permanent regional NRM Coordinator/Liaison Officer positions in each NRM region, based on the positions created in the rangelands and south coast NRM regions during 2002/03. Such positions would manage all Departmental regional NRM liaison, regional NRM strategy coordination, communication and extension responsibilities. (note: Claymore (2003) in his review of Nature Conservation program outputs has made a similar recommendation, albeit without the communication and extension duties.)*

*In order to ease the immediate cost burden of this recommendation, it is suggested that the creation of such positions be staggered over a number of financial years with immediate priority given to the NRM region with highest biodiversity values.*

**Recommendation 20**

*In order to improve levels of mutual understanding and respect between regional NRM groups and CALM senior officers involved in NRM:*

- *facilitate regular meetings between CALM senior officers and senior representatives of each regional NRM group, possibly in conjunction with a regional NRM group meeting; and*
- *identify one Departmental senior officer with good communication and public involvement skills as the CALM/regional NRM group liaison officer. This officer can act as a single point of contact for regional NRM groups when dealing with State level NRM issues that involve CALM;*

**CALM – other NRM agencies relationships**

Relationships between CALM and other NRM agencies vary between NRM regions, and like any relationship is often dependent on factors such as the personalities of key personnel, agency corporate priorities and mode of operation, and even budget. An unfortunate reality of inter-agency relationships, especially when agencies often compete for scarce government funding, is that issues of ‘patch protection’ often create barriers to good working relationships.

In its multiple land and water management roles, CALM encounters issues of ‘patch protection’ with all the major NRM agencies: overlap with Water and Rivers Commission and Department of Environment over some wetlands and environmental protection matters; overlap with Department of Fisheries over marine species protection and marine reserve management; and overlap with Department of Agriculture on land management issues such as weeds, feral animals and fire. In some instances other agencies with legitimate biodiversity management responsibilities feel frustrated at CALM’s reluctance to acknowledge their role in the area.

Despite these areas of occasional conflict, there is much evidence of strong cooperation with other NRM agencies on a day to day basis. More recently the development of NRM regional strategies has required the agencies to work closely to identify regional NRM assets and threats and strategies to manage them. This cooperative manner of working towards regional NRM goals should be built on in relationships and future joint NRM work between CALM and other agencies. As mentioned in the previous section, every effort should be made to ensure that differences between the values, culture and objectives of key NRM agencies are minimised through good communication and clear whole-of-government policy direction.

**Recommendation 21**

*CALM should seek to build on examples of cooperative NRM work with other agencies, especially in the incorporation of biodiversity conservation into other agencies’ work.*

## **CALM – Non Government Organisation relationships**

CALM has a patchy relationship with the main NGOs that work in the biodiversity and NRM arena (Greening Australia, World Wide Fund for Nature, the Conservation Council of WA and the Gondwana Link Partnership). There are clear areas of common ground that present opportunities for collaborative work, and in most cases working relationships are cordial, though there is a clear lack of trust between the parties. On the NGO's part this appears to be due to a combination of a poor understanding of CALM's role in biodiversity and NRM, an impatience with the structures and *modus operandi* of the Department, competition for diminishing grants to do biodiversity work, and a competitive desire to build alternative biodiversity and land management processes that do not include CALM.

For its part, CALM appears to feel threatened by the increasing political and social influence of the NGOs, their success at attracting biodiversity funding (dollars CALM feels it has the expertise and programs to more effectively spend), often at CALM's expense, doubts as to whether the NGOs are in the biodiversity business for the long haul, and a feeling that NGOs have to jump through fewer bureaucratic 'hoops' before getting down to the business of biodiversity conservation.

There are undoubted advantages for biodiversity management in the approaches of both CALM and the NGOs, and it would seem constructive to concentrate more on the strengths of each instead of dwelling on the differences. There may be great benefit in exploring more collaborative working arrangements on biodiversity projects - perhaps combining some of CALM's strengths (experienced and committed staff, organisational stability, regional presence and data resources) with the flexibility, political influence and ability to act quickly of the NGOs.

### **Recommendation 22**

*Explore cooperative working arrangements with biodiversity NGOs (eg WWF, GAWA) to ensure a more concerted biodiversity conservation effort in work with regional groups*

## **CALM – wider community relationships**

Many of the points raised in earlier parts of this 'Relationships' section are pertinent to discussion of the Department's relationship with the wider community. It is this part of the NRM community - which probably has less first hand experience of working with CALM - that is most easily influenced by poor media coverage of CALM activities and has least access to informed opinion able to rebut rumour and innuendo.

Experience from the Land for Wildlife program would suggest that CALM could achieve more positive opinions and perceptions within the wider community, and increase understanding of biodiversity conservation through improved extension and education activities.

### **Recommendation 23**

*Explore ways to better engage urban communities in NRM through:*

- *using extension programs such as Urban Nature;*
- *identifying potential joint projects with urban biodiversity and peri-urban NRM groups*

### **Recommendation 24**

*Develop and implement a good neighbour campaign to build better relationships between CALM and neighbours adjoining CALM reserves*

### ***Part 3: Integration of Biodiversity into Regional Group Processes***

Much of the ground covered in the Communicating Biodiversity and Relationships section earlier in this report is pertinent to recommendations as to how CALM can be most effective in promoting genuine biodiversity conservation in regional NRM.

One of the key questions asked of participants in this review was the extent to which they thought biodiversity conservation is integrated with regional NRM group priorities and processes. Virtually all respondents acknowledged that the processes associated with developing regional NRM strategies had been a major impetus for the elevation of biodiversity conservation in regional NRM. While this is a positive example of government policy instruments and funding programs effectively influencing NRM group behaviour, it is apparent from analysis of interview responses that this is largely imposed change rather than 'change from the heart'. That said, the process of regional groups working closely with CALM and biodiversity NGOs in the development of NRM strategies has resulted in some genuine advances in understanding of the value and complexity of biodiversity within regional groups and other NRM agencies. Most have found working in NRM Strategy subcommittees and Technical Working Groups has forged stronger relationships and a created a better understanding of NRM at a regional scale.

In the end, biodiversity conservation will feature adequately in all regional NRM strategies – although in large part because without it strategies will not be accredited. Thus the challenge becomes ensuring that biodiversity conservation is genuinely incorporated in regional group processes and planning post accreditation of regional NRM strategies.

In addition to this review there have been two recent national studies that have examined the integration of biodiversity conservation in regional NRM planning (Synapse Research 2003, Read and Bessen 2003). While both reports have a broader remit than this review, they have made recommendations that provide some useful insights for the Department in its goal of conserving biodiversity within a regional NRM context.

Read and Bessen (2003) suggest a series of critical motivational, financial and regulatory success factors in achieving improved integration of biodiversity conservation in regional NRM planning.

Key success factors included:

- leadership;
- the provision of consistent and appropriate support;
- providing information that is relevant and available;
- the appropriate application of scientific practice and knowledge;
- establishing effective partnership arrangements;
- acknowledging different values and local knowledge;
- identifying biodiversity values;
- encouraging private investment;
- linking biodiversity to other NRM investment;
- perpetual benefit through management agreements

Key limiting factors were also identified by Read and Bessen, and included:

- limited understanding of values and threats
- limited understanding of landscape-scale management
- support staff that have short-term contracts and limited capacity or local knowledge
- local understanding or initiative is undervalued
- emphasis on visual amenity outcomes rather than addressing the threatening processes



- uncertainty about what to do to manage for biodiversity outcomes
- ineffective communications, particularly of scientific information
- statutory costs, including land tax, rates, audit costs and other charges that are imposed on private initiative for biodiversity conservation
- policies and protocols can restrict access to information

Most of the issues covered by Read and Bessen (2003) and Synapse Research (2003) corroborate the findings of this review and are highly consistent with the review recommendations. In essence, improved integration of biodiversity conservation into regional group processes will be dependent on providing adequate resourcing and support for it to happen and making a long-term commitment to facilitating a change in community values to a more biodiversity sympathetic ethic.

#### **Recommendation 25**

*Make use of Regional and State NRM Facilitator positions and groups such as the Association of Landcare Professionals to*

- *promote biodiversity better through local coordinator networks*
- *improve biodiversity skills at a coordinator level*
- *provide mentoring to local coordinators in biodiversity skills*

#### **Recommendation 26**

*Acknowledge other non-CALM players in biodiversity and build partnerships to aim for better incorporation of biodiversity in regional group priorities:*

- *Through joint CALM/NGO or CALM/other agency biodiversity projects*
- *Through joint communication campaigns*
- *Develop MoUs with biodiversity NGOs and NRMRGs*

#### **Recommendation 27**

*Develop targeted communication planning within each NRM region to engage a range of opinion leaders within Regional NRM Groups*

#### **Recommendation 28**

*Encourage regional NRM groups and other NRM agencies to maintain the Technical Working Group/Regional Strategy Working Group team as a permanent committee to support further policy development. Support the continued involvement of CALM TWG expertise in regional group planning processes*

#### **Recommendation 29**

*Continue to improve access to biodiversity data and continue to encourage the development of off-reserve datasets*

#### **Recommendation 30**

*Develop communication material that:*

- *links biodiversity conservation to quality of life and human values;*
- *encourages changes in behaviour and a more biodiversity sympathetic belief structure;*
- *uses communication methods and language appropriate for regional NRM communities*

#### **Recommendation 31**

*Improve planning tools (GIS data and interpretation, extension material) for biodiversity work on all land tenures.*

**Recommendation 32**

*Encourage the use of planning and extension tools like EMU, Land for Wildlife and Urban Nature to improve a practical appreciation of biodiversity*

**Recommendation 33**

*Better engage Science Division with the NRM community to:*

- *encourage the partnering of scientific rigour and community knowledge*
- *ensure better matching of CALM scientific research and NRM priorities*
- *facilitate improved dissemination of CALM scientific research*

**Recommendation 34**

*Enhance CALM region/NRM group driven research priorities by encouraging research partnerships with NRM groups and communities*

**Recommendation 35**

*Encourage more joint project development between CALM and regional NRM groups*

**Recommendation 36**

*In partnership with regional NRM groups, support the employment of biodiversity professionals within regional NRM group structures*

***Implementation of Recommendations***

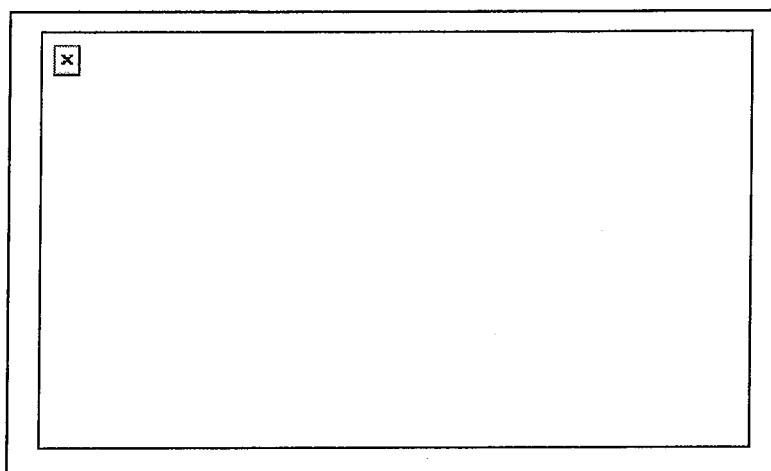
This review makes some broad-ranging recommendations for action to improve the way CALM engages in regional NRM. To be successfully implemented the recommendations should be managed as a discrete project over at least two years, with adequate resourcing and dedicated direction from a senior level within CALM. It would also be beneficial to the outcomes of the project for the Executive Director of CALM to convene an NRM Reference Group of key players in regional NRM to act as 'sounding board' on NRM matters as they affect CALM's operations.

## ***Analysis of Interview Responses***

Participants in this review were asked a total of seven questions (see Appendix 1) during interviews that lasted between 45 and 90 minutes. All but two of the questions had a quantitative aspect to them, attempting to shed some light on levels of understanding on the concept of biodiversity and different aspects of CALM's role in NRM. Questions 4 and 5 were more qualitative, dealing with the identification of barriers and solutions to CALM's effective engagement in regional NRM, and have provided much of the meat for the discussion and recommendations in this report. While the sample size of 32 is small, it is worth remembering that all respondents were chosen for their active involvement and high standing in regional NRM, and with the questions being carefully targeted, the responses show a high degree of reliability. A brief analysis of those questions that provided some quantifiable response is provided below.

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### **Q 1\* Can you describe for me your role in regional NRM?**



Local	4
Regional	24
State	18
National	5

\*note - some interviewees play a role at more than one level

This question was posed partly as a scene setter, to make interviewees comfortable by asking them something about themselves, but also to help identify their place (or places) within the NRM community. This was important to ensure that the reviewer was targeting the right people for response. It should be noted that nearly half the respondents (44%) played a role at more than one level in NRM, with 34% of respondents having a role in both State and Regional NRM matters.

**Q 2 Can you tell me who you think are the key players in regional NRM?  
(Level of understanding)**

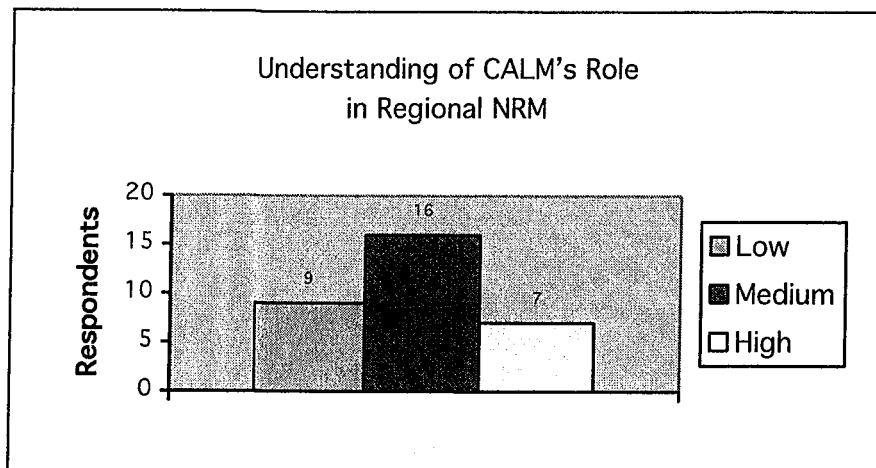
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Low understanding	7 (inc 4 CALM staff)
Medium understanding	12 (inc 4 CALM staff)
High understanding	13 (inc 7 CALM staff)

This question tested the respondents understanding of the key players in regional NRM and provided some insights for recommendations about communication and relationship building between CALM and other players in regional NRM. Responses were ranked low, medium or high depending on the number of key players identified by those interviewed. Respondents received a high ranking if they identified Regional NRM groups, NRM government agencies, Local Government Authorities, NGOs like Greening WA and WWF, the WA and Australian Governments (as partners in the NHT and NAP), Regional Development Commissions, the business sector and the conservation movement as the key players in regional NRM.

It is of concern that some CALM staff already involved in regional NRM do not have a high level of understanding of the key players – two thirds of CALM respondents worked at a regional level, and yet over half of all CALM staff interviewed had either a low or medium understanding of which parties make regional NRM work. It is also telling that 3 of the 4 CALM staff with a low understanding of key players in regional NRM hold senior positions within CALM. Both of these statements point to the need for a concerted effort to ensure CALM staff have a better understanding of NRM and what role CALM plays within NRM (see Part 1 of the Review Discussion, particularly Recommendations 6 to 10).

**Q 3 What do you see as CALM's role in regional NRM? (Level of understanding)**

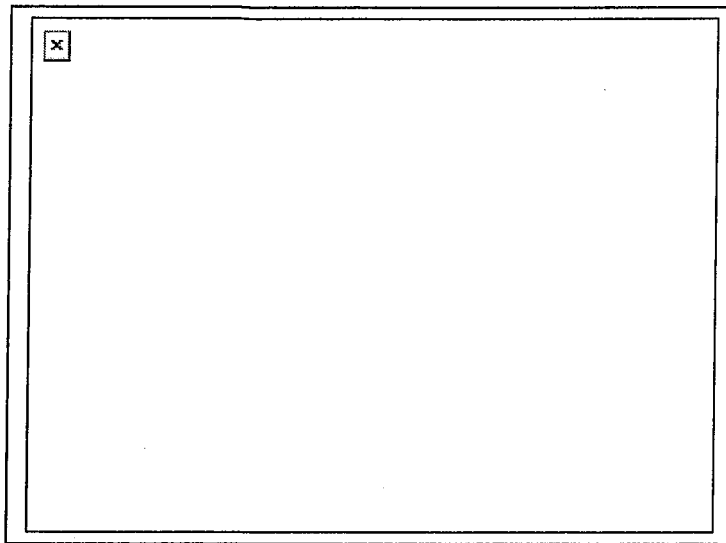


Low understanding	9 (inc 1 CALM staff)
Medium understanding	16 (inc 8 CALM staff)
High understanding	7 (inc 6 CALM staff)

This question was framed to try and provide some clarity of how well the interviewees understood the multiple role that CALM plays within regional NRM. A high level of understanding showed that the respondent appreciated that CALM is simultaneously a land and water manager, a manager of all the State's biodiversity (with special responsibility for threatened species), the main repository of knowledge on Western Australia's biodiversity and an advocate for biodiversity. The responses clearly show that the breadth of CALM's involvement in NRM is generally poorly understood, with only 22% of those interviewed having a high understanding of the agency's multiple roles – and the majority of those people are CALM staff. It is significant that only one non-CALM respondent has a high understanding of the extent of the Department's involvement in NRM, while over 40% of non-CALM staff have a very limited understanding. What is perhaps more disturbing is that only 40% of CALM staff interviewed have a complete grasp of their agency's role in regional NRM.

These statistics points to the need for CALM to urgently improve understanding both inside the agency and in the wider community of the full span of the Department's activities in regional NRM. This could have a significant impact on how well accepted CALM is as a partner in regional NRM, and improve the Department's image in the community at large (see Part 1 of the Review Discussion, particularly Recommendations 1 to 5).

**Q 6\* Can you explain to me your understanding of biodiversity?  
(Level of understanding)**



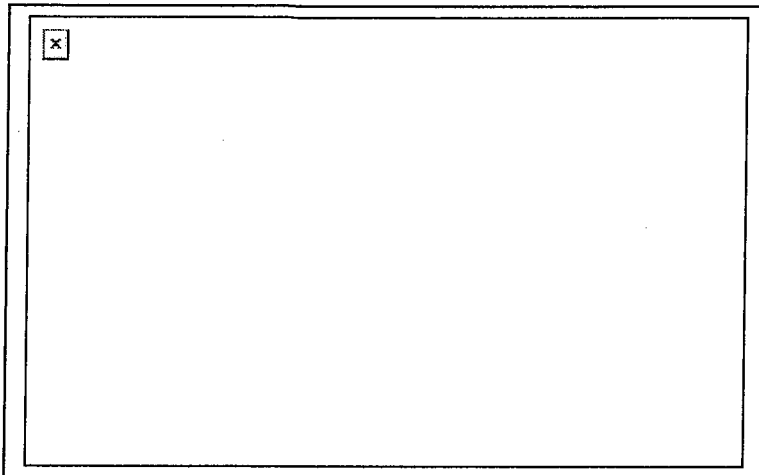
Low understanding	5
Practical understanding	3
Medium understanding	13(inc 8 CALM staff)
High understanding	10(inc 7 CALM staff)

\*note - one interviewee did not complete this question

Identifying how well those in the NRM community understand the concept of biodiversity is crucial to CALM achieving its primary goal of biodiversity protection and conservation. This question sought to determine how well participants in the review understood the complexity of biodiversity, and ranked their responses against a comprehensive definition of biodiversity that recognised its different components (genes, species, populations, communities and ecosystems) and the importance of ecological processes and function. In this question a ranking of Practical Understanding was used to acknowledge that there is a section of the NRM community who have a functional experience of biodiversity from years of working with and observing it, and while they did not express this in strict conservation biology terms, clearly have a sound understanding of the complexity of biodiversity.

Analysis of this question shows that while there is a reasonable degree of understanding of the concept of biodiversity among those interviewed, it could be expected that the levels of understanding among CALM staff should be higher, given biodiversity conservation is the agency's primary objective. From CALM's perspective, it would obviously also be of benefit to have more of the key players in NRM with a highly developed understanding of biodiversity, and this suggests that CALM (and ultimately biodiversity) would benefit from improved communication of the concept and complexity of biodiversity (see Part 1 of the Review Discussion, particularly Recommendations 11 to 15).

**Q 7\* How is biodiversity conservation incorporated into regional NRM group processes and priorities at the moment?**



Imposed	26
Incorporated	2

\*note - 4 interviewees did not complete this question

This question was posed to gain some understanding of the level to which biodiversity conservation is actively incorporated into regional NRM Group processes and priorities at the moment. The overwhelming response from interviews was that at present biodiversity conservation is imposed on regional group processes and priorities rather than being genuinely integrated. It was acknowledged frequently during interviews that regional NRM groups have been evolving from predominantly agriculture production based organisations, and were 'still coming up to speed' with biodiversity. The development of regional NRM strategies has seen a considerable shift of emphasis towards better inclusion of biodiversity in the workings of regional NRM groups (largely because it is an important accreditation criterion for regional NRM strategies), but it will still take some time before it 'comes naturally'. It should also be remembered that the non-CALM cohort of the NRM community that took part in this review are at the vanguard of changes in attitudes to biodiversity. Experience and studies in this area suggest that levels of understanding and acceptance of biodiversity being an integral part of NRM among the broader community is more poorly developed. Part 3 of the Review Discussion and Recommendations 25 to 36 deal with this aspect of the Review.

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## ***Appendix 1 – NRM Review Questions***

- Q 1** Can you describe for me your role in regional NRM?
- Q 2** Can you tell me who you think are the key players in regional NRM?
- Q 3** What do you see as CALM's role in regional NRM?
- Q 4** What do you see as the barriers to CALM being effective in its work? Can you provide examples to illustrate your comments?
- Q 5** What could CALM do to be more effective in regional NRM?
- Q 6** Can you explain to me your understanding of biodiversity?
- Q 7** How is biodiversity conservation incorporated into regional NRM group processes and priorities at the moment? Can you suggest ways to improve this aspect in the future?