



2004-05 Annual Report



NORTH CENTRAL
Catchment Management Authority



The North Central Regional Catchment Strategy vision is:

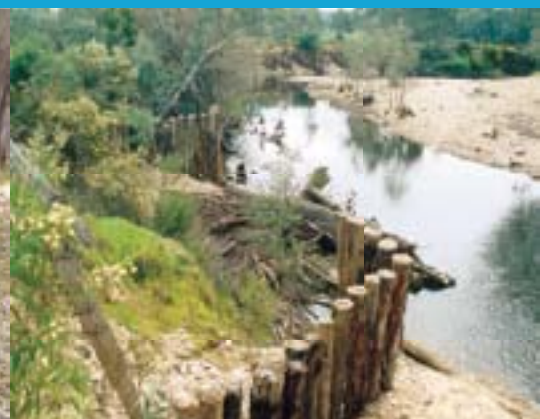
'A well informed, resourced and actively committed community, protecting and improving the natural resources for the environmental, social and economical benefit of our region.'

The North Central CMA Board's mission policy is:

'Leading, coordinating and integrating sustainable natural resource management.'

We will:

- Be accountable for improved natural resources through monitoring, evaluation, reporting and communicating to our community.
- Lead the development and implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy through sound planning and investment.
- Advocate the wise use and protection of our natural resources.
- Engage the community in achievement of our mission.
- Use information and knowledge to guide policy development.
- Acknowledge that partnerships are fundamental to our business.





Contents

The North Central region	2
Chair's report	4
Chief Executive Officer's report	5
About the North Central CMA	6
The region's assets	12
Avoca/Avon-Richardson area	22
Loddon/Campaspe Dryland area	28
Loddon/Campaspe Irrigation area	34
Regional	40
The Board	46
Committees	48
Statutory reporting compliance	50
Financials	59
Disclosure index	78



The North Central region

North Central Victoria is rich in natural assets of regional, national and international significance. It also faces some of the most complex environmental challenges in the state.

Located to the north of the Great Dividing Range, the region forms part of the Murray–Darling Basin. Within Victoria, it is one of ten catchment management regions.

The North Central region covers an area of around 30,000km² (13 per cent of Victoria), with a population of over 230,000 people.

Approximately 140,000 people live in urban areas, ranging in size from Marnoo with 100 people, to more than 90,000 in Bendigo. The region contains more than 50 urban centres including Swan Hill, Echuca, Donald, Maryborough, Castlemaine, Daylesford and St Arnaud.

Annual rainfall ranges between about 300mm in the north-west to over 1200mm in the south-east. The region has substantial groundwater and surface water resources. Groundwater is used extensively to irrigate horticultural crops and pastures in the south of the region.

Mineral springs in this area are also utilised and support both processing and tourist industries. Increasing use is also being made of deep lead aquifers in the lower reaches of the Loddon and Campaspe valleys.

There are several major water storages in the region. The two major storages are Lake Eppalock on the Campaspe River and Cairn Curran reservoir on the Loddon River. Storages provide water for domestic, commercial and agricultural uses throughout the region. Irrigation water supplies from the Murray and Goulburn systems, and stock and domestic supplies from the Wimmera system, supplement the region's surface water resources.

North Central Victoria is agriculturally diverse. Irrigation areas cover much of the lower Loddon and Campaspe riverine plains. Horticultural land uses and dairying are the main enterprises. Improved irrigation technology and tradeable water entitlements have encouraged the rapid expansion of horticulture outside traditional irrigation areas. Dryland agricultural areas are characterised by broadacre land uses, such as cropping and grazing. Land close to the major centres is increasingly developed for horticulture, new and emerging agricultural commodities and for 'lifestyle' farming. Intensive animal production industries are also represented in the region.

The ecological patterns of the landscape are represented by bioregions. North Central Victoria comprises parts of eight bioregions, each containing

distinct vegetation communities. The largest are the Goldfields and Riverina bioregions, which together encompass almost two million hectares.

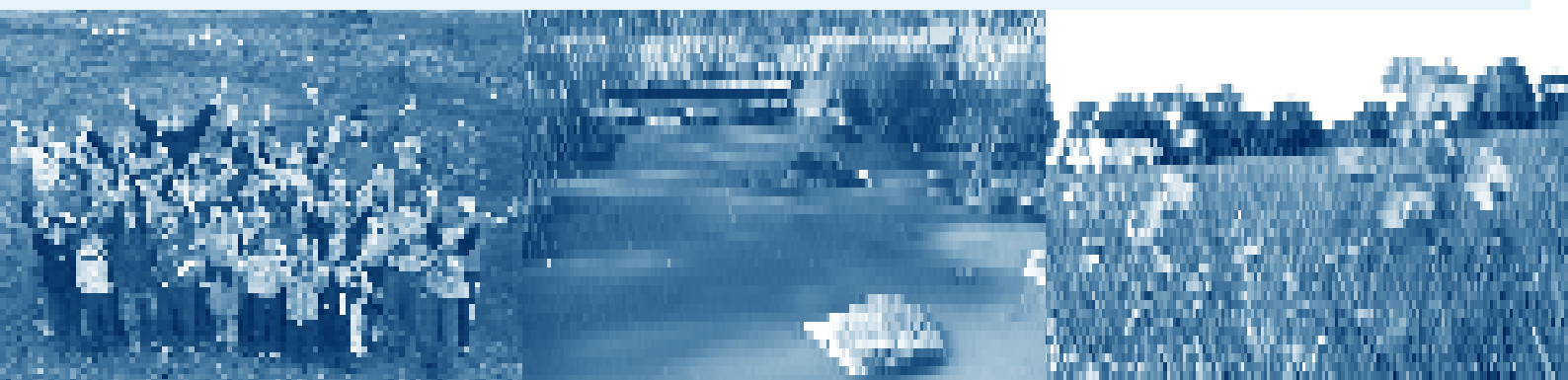
Approximately 13 per cent of the region is public land, with much of this reserved and managed for specific purposes, including national, state and regional parks, nature conservation reserves, reference areas and state forests.

The most intensive forest operations are concentrated in foothill forests and softwood plantations in the south. A range of products including firewood, posts and poles, furniture timbers, honey and eucalyptus oil are obtained from forests and woodlands in the north.

The region was once Australia's premier gold-mining region. Several gold-mining ventures are currently active in the region, mostly in the Bendigo area. Fossicking is widespread throughout the Box–Ironbark forests of the goldfields.

Significant changes in land use in recent times have seen the advent of new agricultural developments, including viticulture and olive growing. An influx of people onto small holdings that were previously used for dryland agriculture poses a challenge for conservation and protection of remnant vegetation. Most soil types in the region are fragile, have poor fertility and are shallow and prone to degradation.

Major threats facing the region include irrigation and dryland salinity, water quality decline, groundwater contamination, soil acidification, erosion and soil structural problems, fragmentation and destruction of wildlife habitat, and pest plant and animal infestations and proliferation. The viability of some agricultural industries is also threatened. The region has some of the most severely salt affected areas in Victoria directly impacting on the River Murray.



The population is concentrated mainly in the southern areas of the region, including the Calder corridor. There is also a high population concentration in the River Murray corridor. In these regions, population growth in non-urban areas is a dominant component of population change.

The region includes the four major river catchments of Campaspe, Loddon, Avoca and Avon–Richardson.

The Campaspe and Loddon rivers drain directly into the River Murray. The Avoca River drains into a series of terminal lakes and wetlands (the Avoca Marshes). During flood events, it may drain to the River Murray and via effluent stream channels to a further series of terminal lakes. The Avon–Richardson catchment is internally drained, with most surface water draining into Lake Buloke in the north of the catchment.

Chair's report



2004–05 was a good year for the North Central Catchment Management Authority.

The Board has continued to challenge itself and the fundamentals of how the North Central CMA does business, setting high standards for financial accountability, project reporting, community engagement and planning for effective natural resource management.

This framework has been strongly supported by the other core elements of the North Central CMA: the Implementation Committees and the management and staff.

Re-established in early 2004, the Implementation Committees have stepped up to the role asked of them and, drawing on their understanding of their respective parts of the region, have scrutinised existing programs and had significant influence on future priorities.

Senior management and staff have worked through a major restructure and put in place robust reporting systems that provide confidence and a sound basis for the effective management of natural resources.

While much of the year has had an emphasis on 'getting the North Central house in order', the ongoing planning, coordination and delivery of natural resource management has strengthened, with highlights including:

- finalising the draft North Central River Health Strategy
- developing policies to guide the operation and future of the Authority
- the Climate, Catchments and Communities conference

- the Gunbower Forest Site Environmental Management Plan
- Board endorsement of the Regional Native Vegetation Plan
- the regional Landcare Support Strategy
- a Memorandum of Understanding with the Department of Primary Industries for the delivery of services.

The Corporate Plan for 2005–06 was developed in the context of demographic change in the region. Priority initiatives include a critical review of the dryland salinity program, developing an advanced land care program in response to changing demographics and further attention to water quality issues. The North Central CMA is keen to address these and other big issues in the region.

On behalf of the Board, I want to thank and congratulate the Chairs and members of the Implementation Committees, the CEO, managers and staff for their sustained contributions to the success of the North Central CMA: together we have matured into a strong and effective leader in natural resource management.

I also acknowledge with appreciation the professional working relationships we enjoy with many partners in the agencies, government and the community.

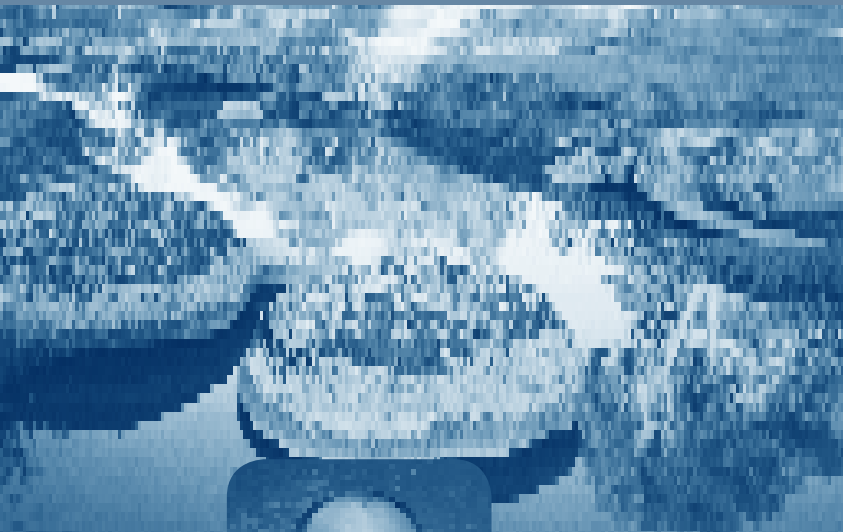
The Board has maintained its commitment to governance and achieving the best results for natural resource management in this region.

I thank my colleagues for their contributions during the past year, and look forward to working together to achieve some important natural resource management outcomes in the coming year.



Ian MacBean

Chief Executive Officer's report



During the 2004–05 financial year, the organisation focused on the challenges set by the Board, including planning for effective natural resource management,

community engagement and high standards of both environmental and financial reporting. In meeting these challenges, \$20.48 million was invested into improving the region's natural resources.

We have been able to capitalise on investment in systems and enable our community to genuinely engage in and scrutinise the natural resource management priorities of the region. This resulted in our Implementation Committees guiding investment of \$4.07 million in the Avoca/Avon–Richardson area with priority programs such as the Upper Avoca Multiple Outcome Project, \$6.13 million in the Loddon/Campaspe Dryland area in priority programs such as Protecting River Health and Water Quality, and \$4.74 million in the Loddon/Campaspe Irrigation area in programs such as implementing the Loddon Murray Land and Water Management Strategy. The balance was invested into regional projects, such as Monitoring and Evaluation, and Waterwatch.

This annual report has been formatted to reflect the importance that the North Central CMA has on accountability and communicating our business to the community. Each section outlines deliverables in a geographic context and also in a format that articulates progress towards stated targets.

The continued focus on community engagement through Implementation Committees has underpinned the North Central CMA's biggest year to date in terms of investment in natural resource management programs.

One of the specific highlights for the year was the Climate, Catchments and Communities conference held in Bendigo in September hosted by the North Central CMA. This conference attracted participants from all over Australia seeking to better understand how changes in our climate are likely to affect our land, water and biodiversity, and how communities can prepare for these possibilities. This initiative reflects the organisation's commitment to tackling the big issues.

Partnerships continue to underpin our business and their contribution to a successful year cannot be understated.

Importantly, I would like to acknowledge the continued outstanding contributions of the organisation's most important asset – its people. The level of enthusiasm, commitment and productivity of staff is an impressive reflection of our region's rich history in natural resource management.

Our largest challenge relates to targeting natural resource management projects to meet the needs of our region's changing demographics. With a strong Board committed to community engagement and professionalism, and the technical excellence of our staff, North Central CMA is well placed to address the priorities for the year ahead.



Gavin Hanlon

About the North Central CMA

The North Central CMA coordinates natural resource management in North Central Victoria.

In partnership with the community, it determines funding priorities to protect the health and sustainability of the region's natural resources.

Our function

The North Central CMA was established under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* and *Water Act 1989* and reports to the Minister for Environment and the Minister for Water the Hon. John Thwaites.

The core business of the North Central CMA is to coordinate the development and implementation of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy in partnership with the community.

Either directly or through our partnerships with the Department of Primary Industries, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Trust for Nature, local government, water authorities, research institutes and the private sector, the North Central CMA is responsible for projects relating to:

- waterway management
- water quality management
- biodiversity management
- environmental water reserve management
- Landcare support and funding coordination
- floodplain and regional drainage management
- regional responses to climate change
- salinity management
- threatened species recovery
- pest plant and pest animal management
- vegetation enhancement and restoration
- soil health
- cultural heritage.

For 2004–05, the North Central CMA secured funding for 58 regional projects from the following sources:

National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP)*

\$8,670,000

Natural Heritage Trust

\$2,311,856

Victorian Government (in addition to NAP)

\$7,067,150

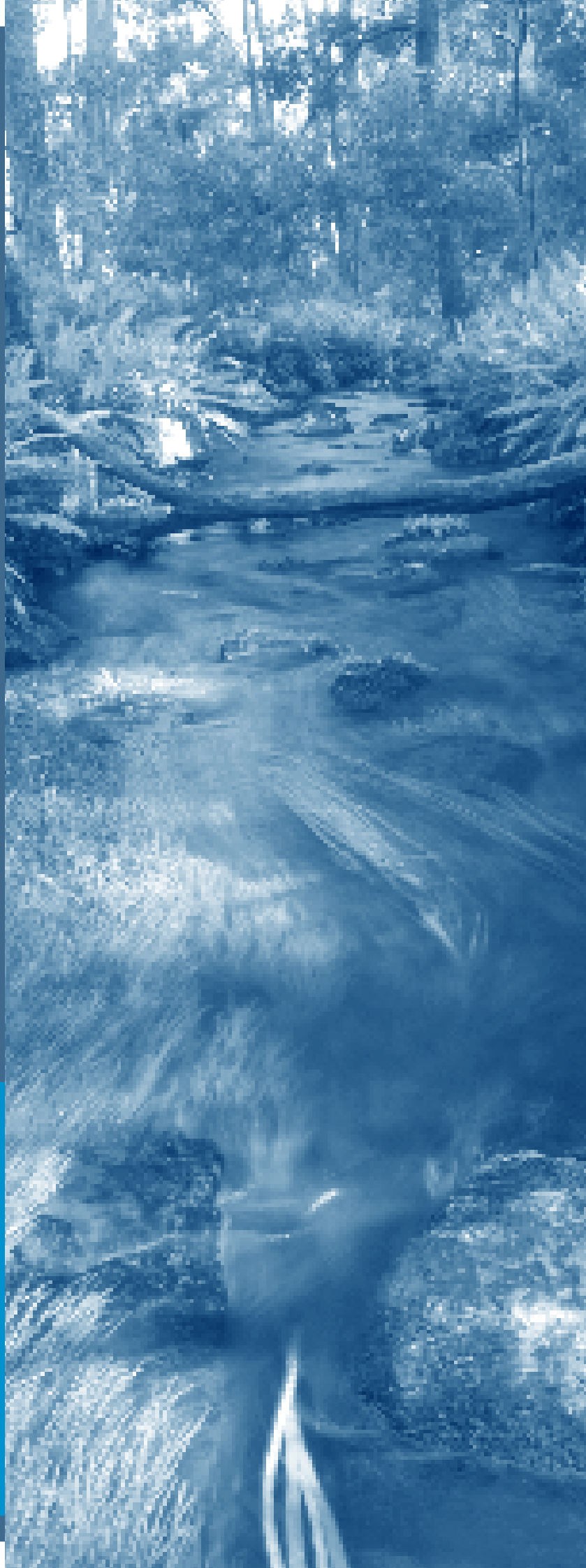
Other

\$2,437,752

Total

\$20,486,758

* The Australian and Victorian Governments funded 50% each.



Our objectives

The North Central Regional Catchment Strategy is the blueprint for managing North Central Victoria's natural resources. The North Central CMA Corporate Plan 2004–05 sets the direction for the North Central CMA business for the next five years. The corporate initiatives in this Plan and their progress are outlined below:

Key result area	Status
Leadership in Catchment Management	
Objective: Well-informed Board and Implementation Committees	
• Develop an annual strategic briefing program for Board Members, including key environmental issues and initiatives, site tours and North Central CMA business initiatives.	Complete
• Develop an Induction Program for the Implementation Committees.	Complete
• Endorse a Terms of Reference for Implementation Committees.	Complete
• Develop and implement a project management and reporting framework for the Board and Implementation Committees (IC) consistent with the standards of the Australian Business Excellence Framework.	Board complete and IC in progress
Objective: Performing partnerships	
• Conduct a partnership/customer satisfaction survey.	Complete
• Develop engagement protocols for partners.	In progress
• Scope opportunities for joint projects, particularly local government and water authorities.	Ongoing
Community engagement	
Objective: High level of awareness and understanding of the CMA's roles and responsibilities	
• Develop an external marketing and communication strategy for the North Central CMA.	Dec 2005
• Complete a report outlining demographic trends in the region.	Dec 2005
• Develop an internal communication strategy/policy that includes a mechanism for:	
- Feedback from ICs and Board	Dec 2005
- Client interaction.	Dec 2005
Objective: Improved customer confidence and trust	
• Implement quality management systems consistent with the Australian Business Excellence Framework.	Ongoing
• Implement the North Central CMA organisation restructure.	Complete
• Develop customer service charters that include minimum standards for response times.	Complete
• Improve responsiveness to customers and community through implementation of records management system.	Feb 2006
Delivering the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS)	
Objective: Development of the best value systems to support the delivery of the RCS	
• Implement the integrated business systems.	Complete
• Develop operational policies and procedures to support the North Central RCS.	Ongoing
• Develop a Values and Behaviours Statement.	Complete
• Develop a catchment condition reporting system.	Oct 2005
Objective: Maximising implementation of the RCS	
• Prepare a Regional Catchment Investment Plan and Regional Management Plan for 2005–06.	Complete
• Continue implementation of the four Regional Catchment Investment Plan programs: North Central Irrigation; Upper Loddon and Campaspe Dryland; Avoca and Avon-Richardson; Regional.	Complete
High standards of governance	
Objective: The North Central CMA is recognised for its high standard of governance	
• Review the instrument of delegation for CMA – CEO; CMA – Implementation Committees; CEO – staff.	Complete
• Develop policies and procedures for Board sign off on all external reports relating to projects and other issues for which it is ultimately responsible.	Complete
• Review of Board Sub Committee structure.	Complete
• Develop a Risk Management Strategy.	Nov 2005
• Develop an OH&S Policy Manual in accordance with the relevant Australian standard.	Complete
• Develop a protocols statement that outlines the relationship between Board, management and staff.	Complete
• Develop a Board member performance review and professional development program.	Complete

Overall outputs achieved

The North Central CMA Corporate Plan includes a Business Plan, also referred to as the Regional Management Plan, which details the projects, outputs and budgets to be delivered in the region in 2004–05.

The North Central Regional Management Plan comprises four programs, three of which are based on the Implementation Committee structure and the fourth on a regional program. The performance of these four programs measured against the target

outputs identified in the Regional Management Plan is detailed in the program section of this document.

The projects that the North Central CMA delivers fall into four main categories:

- Capacity building
- Ongoing works
- Planning
- Research and development.

The table below shows the North Central CMA's performance measured against the target outputs identified in the Regional Management Plan.

Outputs achieved (as per Regional Management Plan)	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	197	206.5	105%
Participants in skills & training events (No.)	1,288	1,320	102%
Key materials developed for skills & training events (e.g. workbooks, course notes etc.) (No.)	11	12	109%
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	344	1463	425%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	394	451.1	114%
Active community support positions (EFT) (e.g. Landcare facilitators, coordinators) (No.)	5.9	5.9	100%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	97	95.8	99%
Individuals filling active community support positions (No.)	6.9	6.9	100%
Landcare group priority setting/planning sessions (No.)	1	1	100%
Landcare groups/networks with Action Plans (No.)	22	25	114%
Coordinated projects with industry groups (No.)	1	2	200%
Ongoing works			
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (e.g. Bushtender) (No.)	175	178	102%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (No.)	198	161	81%
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (Ha)	640	790	123%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (Ha)	406	487.2	120%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation protected by fencing (Ha)	910	600	66%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protection) (Km) ¹	7	1	14%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protected (Km)	35	11.6	33%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation enhanced (Ha)	2,186	1,870	86%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhanced (Km) ²	117	7.4	6%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhancement) (Km)	125	69	55%
Revegetation with indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) species (Ha)	216	436.6	202%
Revegetation of riparian zone (Km)	0	2.5	100%
Seed collected (kg)	800	800	100%
Revegetation with non-indigenous terrestrial perennial pastures (Ha)	6,937	5,944	86%
Revegetation with non-indigenous terrestrial plantation (Ha) ³	176	8	5%
Significant species/ecological community habitat management (e.g. ecological burns/fire hazard removal) (Ha)	615	535	87%
Pest management – private land protected (where pest does not exist as a result of control activities) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	10,000	700	7%
Pest management – private land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits, etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	115,000	69,766	61%

These outputs are the Department of Sustainability and Environment's standard outputs.

Owing to the delay in funding for 2004–05 projects, some projects will be completed in the first half of 2005–06 when the target outputs will be achieved.

The North Central CMA summarises the achievements of target outputs into four categories:

0%–24%: Target not achieved
25%–69%: Target behind schedule
70%–100%: Target achieved / on track
100+%: Target exceeded or ahead of schedule

In 'The region's assets' section (from page 12), a comment has been provided against each target output that was not achieved, i.e. performance less than 25%.

Outputs achieved (as per Regional Management Plan)	Target	Achieved	%
Pest management – public land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	0	600	100%
Land treated for/protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (includes gully battering, stock containment areas etc.) (Ha)	122	211.5	173%
Gully treated for/protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (Km) ⁴	99	20.5	21%
Land treated for rising groundwater through surface drainage by type of drain (regional/community) (Ha)	170	310	182%
Irrigated land using improved management (soil moisture monitoring, laser-grading etc.) (Ha)	50	440.15	880%
Farm water saved from the installation of farm reuse system (ML)	1,243	1,913	154%
Animal effluent removal/containment systems installed (e.g. dairy, settlement ponds, urban dog) (No.)	3	8	267%
Stream bank stabilised (Km)	16	12	75%
Stream bed stabilised (Km)	16	14	88%
Off-stream (alternative) watering sites installed (No.)	67	28	42%
Instream habitat established (Km) ⁵	0.7	0	0%
Stream bed stabilisation structures (No.)	53	59	111%
Buffer strips/grassed waterways for water quality treatment (Km)	45	68	151%
Buffer strips/grassed waterways for water quality treatment (Ha)	135	125.8	93%
Landholders on priority properties complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	294	297	101%
Landholders on priority properties with priority weeds complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	285	294	103%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.)	45	11.95	27%
Communication plan developed (No.)	5	1	20%
Evaluation plan developed (No.)	2	1.8	90%
Endangered species action statements & recovery plans developed (No.)	7	7	100%
Property management plans developed by type (Whole Farm Plan etc.) by stage of development (surveyed or design stage) (Ha)	3,460	6,231	180%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	38	21.7	57%
Other statutory planning referrals (e.g. new irrigation development) (No.)	260	501	193%
Resource assessment			
Research & development studies undertaken (No.)	15	14	93%
Investigation area surveyed or mapped (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, inventory) (Ha)	39,467	11,665.02	30%
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	32	115.6	361%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	2,215	5,450	246%
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	12	6.1	51%
Decision support tools (No.)	11	11	100%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	38	131.7	347%

1 Remaining fencing negotiated with landholders, expected completion by end 2005.
2 Revegetation to be undertaken in Spring 2005 when environmental conditions allow.

3 This output will not be met. A variation has been requested.
4 Fencing activities to be completed post construction of erosion control structures.
5 Large woody debris reinstatement to be completed by end of July 2005.

North Central Catchment Condition Reporting

In accordance with the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994*, a CMA must prepare an annual report (Clause 14) which reports;

on the condition and management of land and water resources in its region and the carrying out of its functions.

While the management and implementation of CMA functions is captured within this annual report, the North Central CMA is currently preparing Catchment Condition Reports that addresses the condition of the North Central CMA's primary biophysical assets – land, water, biodiversity and atmosphere.

The primary objectives of North Central Catchment Condition Reporting are to:

- assess the baseline, condition and projected trend of key indicators relating to the land, water, biodiversity and atmosphere resources of North Central Victoria
- measure progress towards resource condition targets and other desired outcomes as set out in, or in accordance with, the Regional Catchment Strategy
- assess the quality and availability of data to report on catchment condition for each theme
- present information in a simple graphical form and openly communicate resource condition findings to regional stakeholders.

In future years, a summary of the findings from the Catchment Condition Reports will be included in the North Central CMA Annual Report.

case study: Recognising North Central Victoria's Environmental Achievers

In August 2004, an alliance of natural resource management agencies coordinated the region's first Natural Resource Management Recognition Event.

The event was dedicated to acknowledging the region's environmental achievers, who were treated to an inspirational tale of river restoration from Israel's Amos Brandeis – 2003's International Riverprize winner.



Participants at the North Central Natural Resource Management Recognition Event in August 2004.

A gathering of 300 people from all over North Central Victoria attended the event and witnessed 90 community members, groups and organisations being recognised for their voluntary efforts to improve the environment.

Rather than awarding exclusive individuals or groups, this event aimed to acknowledge a broad cross-section of the community who are making contributions at the 'grass roots' level. The list of people being recognised was based upon

nominations received from the community to identify the many important voluntary – and often unsung – environmental efforts in our region.

Environmental achievers come in all shapes and sizes – landholders who use their own resources to improve the health of their farms, schools that introduce environmental initiatives into their curriculum, individuals who spend their free time planting trees, and businesses who voluntarily introduce practices to reduce their impact on the environment.

Keynote speaker Amos Brandeis put the environmental challenges faced in this region into perspective as he shared the story of the Alexander River Restoration Project in Israel.

The Alexander River was described as a "small stream with big problems". It had been used as a sewer by the local community but has been transformed into a picture of river health thanks to a special partnership between Israelis and Palestinians.

"Ecology knows no political borders," stated Amos, who stressed that community involvement is the key to a healthy environment.

Amos was impressed at the magnitude of community involvement in Victoria through movements such as Landcare, and the willingness of community, government and industry to work in partnership for the health of our environment.

The Natural Resource Management Recognition Event was a partnership initiative of the North Central CMA, Landcare Victoria, National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, City of Greater Bendigo, Department of Primary Industries, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Coliban Water, Goulburn-Murray Water, Parks Victoria, EPA Victoria, Loddon Murray Land and Water Management Strategy, North Central Waterwatch and the Loddon Murray Community Leadership Program.

Environmental achievers come in all shapes and sizes – landholders who use their own resources to improve the health of their farms, schools that introduce environmental initiatives into their curriculum, individuals who spend their free time planting trees, and businesses who voluntarily introduce practices to reduce their impact on the environment.

Rochester Primary School students enjoy Waterwatch activities on the Campaspe River.





Photo: Eamon Dullard.

The region's assets

The environment is made up of natural resources (assets) that the community uses and values in a variety of ways.

The North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) was developed using an asset-based approach. This approach recognises that it is not possible to protect every natural resource asset in the region from the threats and challenges that they face. For this reason, the RCS identifies key natural resource assets with the greatest environmental, economic or cultural significance from which the community derives the greatest benefit and values the most. The asset-based approach means that, where possible, investment under the RCS will be directed towards protecting and enhancing those key assets.

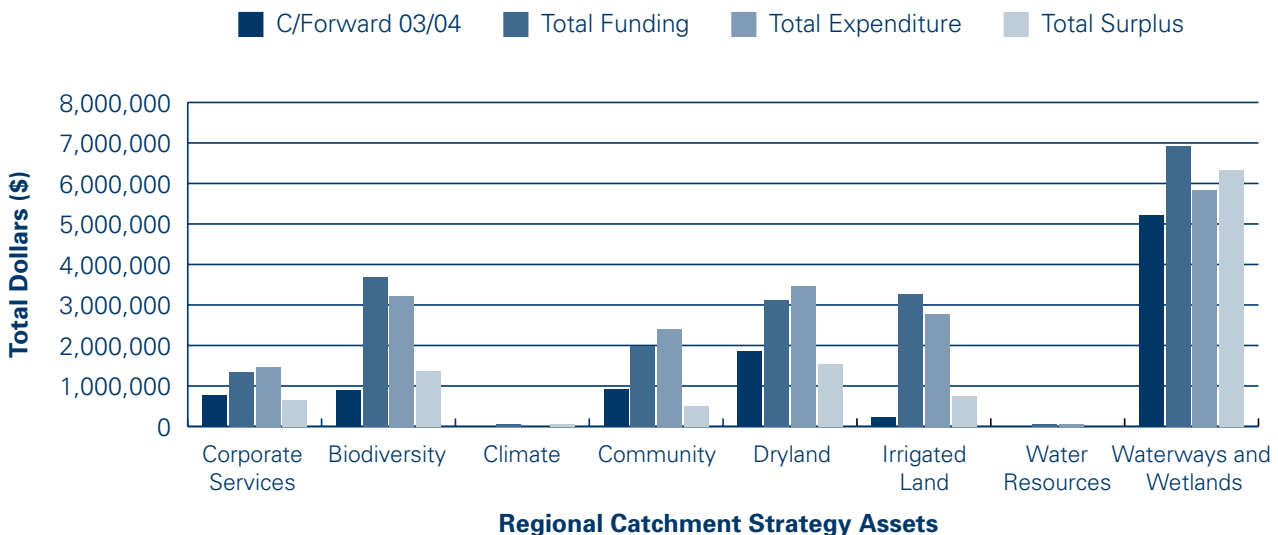
The region's assets as identified in the RCS are:

- Biodiversity
- Climate
- Community
- Cultural heritage
- Dryland
- Infrastructure
- Irrigated land
- Public land
- Water resources
- Waterways and wetlands

The figures below show the financial summary for those assets that secured funding in 2004–05.

Total Financial Position

RCS Asset Class	C/Forward 03/04 \$	Total Funding \$	Total Expenditure \$	Total Surplus \$
Corporate Services	776,032	1,352,387	1,478,494	649,925
Biodiversity	897,116	3,690,894	3,218,786	1,369,224
Climate	-	50,000	-	50,000
Community	915,391	1,990,063	2,402,073	503,380
Dryland	1,874,018	3,128,908	3,461,912	1,541,014
Irrigated Land	231,491	3,280,000	2,765,552	745,940
Water Resources	-	64,000	64,000	-
Waterways and Wetlands	5,228,793	6,930,506	5,830,829	6,328,470
Total	9,922,841	20,486,758	19,221,647	11,187,953



Community

The RCS goal for community is:

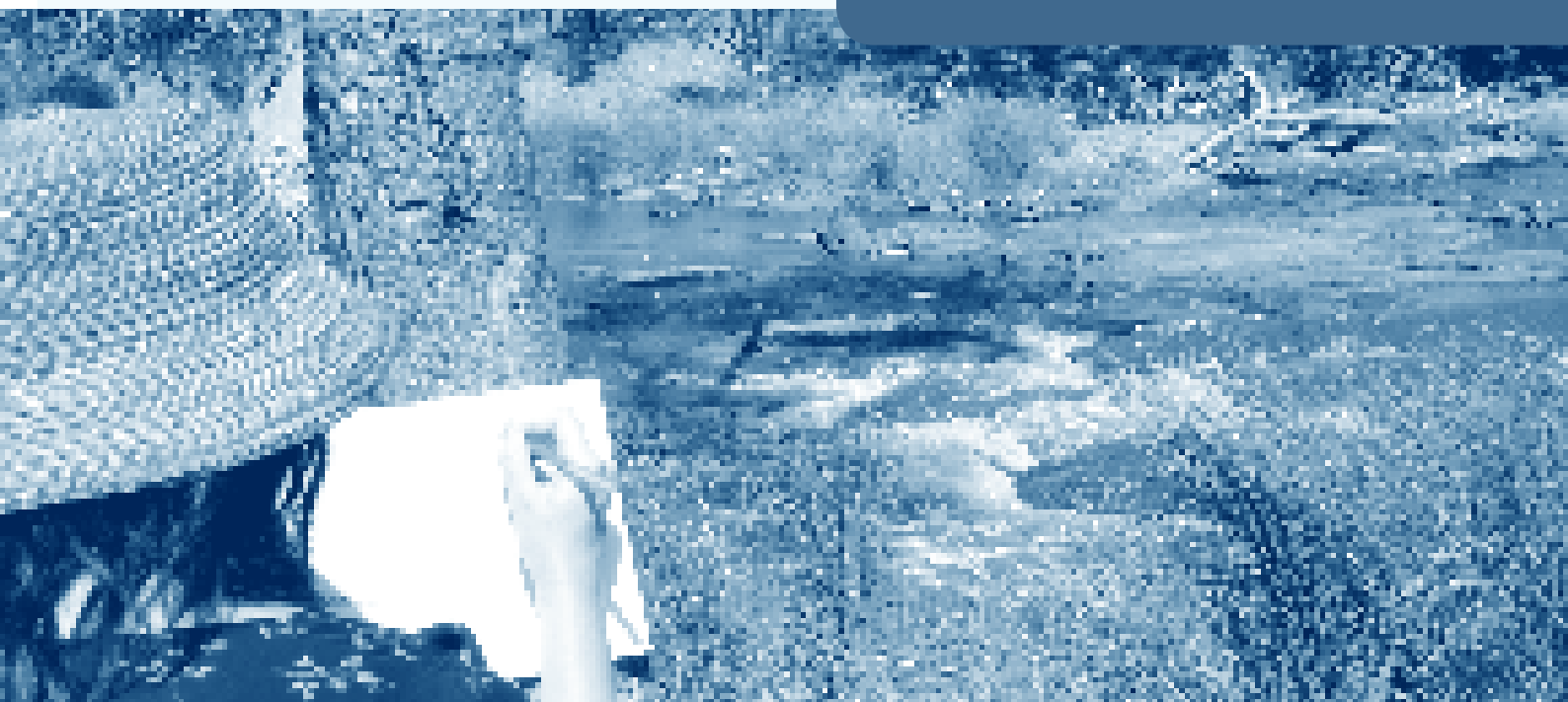
An informed and engaged community, managing natural resources sustainably.

Outputs achieved

The table below shows outputs achieved through the Regional Management Plan projects where community is the primary asset. These outputs may also indirectly address other assets.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

- North Central CMA Board endorsement of the North Central Landcare Support Strategy.
- Recognising 90 environmental achievers at the inaugural North Central Natural Resource Management Recognition Event.
- Conducting the organisation's first regional community awareness survey.
- Growing the Shire-based Landcare Team to eight positions (6.9 EFT).
- Engaging over 1,200 community members in National Water Week 2004.



Community outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	98	133	136%
Key materials developed for skills & training events (e.g. workbooks, course notes etc.) (No.)	6	7	117%
Awareness raising forums			
(e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	231	1,360	589%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	223	299	134%
Active community support positions (EFT)			
(e.g. Landcare facilitators, coordinators) (No.)	5.9	5.9	100%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	32	26	81%
Individuals filling active community support positions (No.)	6.9	6.9	100%
Landcare group priority setting/planning sessions (No.)	1	1	100%
Landcare groups/networks with Action Plans (No.)	22	25	114%
Onground works			
Revegetation with indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) species (Ha)	0	78	100%
Revegetation of riparian zone (Km)	0	2.5	100%
Pest management – private land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	61,000	44,268	73%
Planning			
Communication plan developed (No.)	3	1	33%
Resource assessment			
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	15	37	247%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.) ¹	1	0	0%

¹ Expected to be finalised by end 2005.

Biodiversity

The RCS goal for biodiversity is:

The ecological function of indigenous vegetation communities will be maintained and, where possible, improved. Populations of threatened native plant and animal species will be restored to viable levels. Threatened vegetation communities will increase in extent and improve in quality to achieve a net gain.

Key threats to biodiversity include habitat fragmentation, pest plants and pest animals, salinity, altered hydrology, water quality decline, population growth, inappropriate recreation, changed fire regime and climate change.

Outputs achieved

The table on the following page shows outputs achieved through the Regional Management Plan projects where biodiversity is the primary asset. These outputs may also indirectly address other assets.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

- Coordinating the Roadside Conservation Project to manage the conservation values of the 44,500 km road network that stretches across North Central Victoria. This project involves local government, state government departments and the community.
- Commencing the 'North Central Land Management Guide', a capacity building publication for both experienced and new small rural landholders. This project is a partnership with local government, Landcare, Parks Victoria, Goulburn–Murray Water, Coliban Water and EPA Victoria.
- Through the implementation of the Goldfields Biodiversity Action Plan, DSE has successfully recorded protocorms on slide baits for a number of inland orchid species to assist with species propagation. In addition, new populations of the nationally threatened *Pterostylis despectans* and *Caladenia concolor* have been recorded and their range extended.
- Through Trust for Nature's permanent protection project, 32 stewardship visits have been undertaken allowing 28 stewardship reports to be produced and over 290 ha of remnant vegetation permanently protected through legal conservation agreements. This exceeds the agreed target of 150 ha.

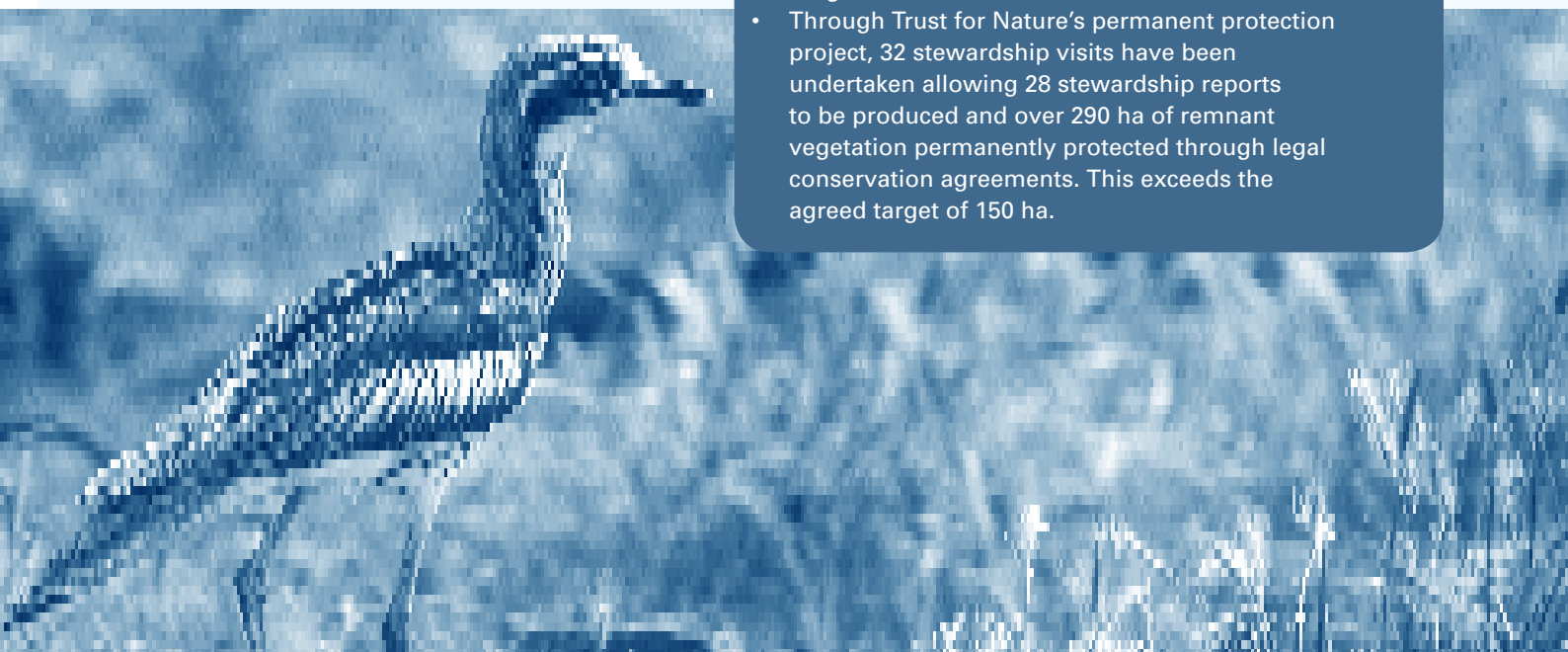


Photo: Peter Merritt.

Cultural heritage

The RCS goal for cultural heritage is:

Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural heritage is valued by the community and is protected and maintained.

Key threats to cultural heritage include:

- Inadequate engagement of Indigenous groups
- Damage to unregistered and registered sites
- Inappropriate access and recreation
- Altered flow regimes
- Impact of salinity upon heritage sites.

Outputs achieved

This asset was addressed as part of the Community asset in 2004–05 projects.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

- Appointing an Indigenous Facilitator.
- Providing Indigenous input into the development of the Coliban Catchment Action Plan.
- Initiating a partnership project between a landholder, the North Central CMA and the North West Regional Aboriginal Cultural Heritage program to protect an Aboriginal site at Durham Ox.
- Participating in regional NAIDOC week activities.
- Increasing the media profile of Indigenous involvement in natural resource management.
- Raising awareness of cultural heritage throughout the Australian Landcare Council's visit to North Central Victoria.

Biodiversity outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	55	34.5	63%
Key materials developed for skills & training events (e.g. workbooks, course notes etc.) (No.)	1	1	100%
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	23	23	100%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	29	25	86%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	40	40	100%
Onground works			
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (e.g. Bushtender) (No.)	175	178	102%
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (Ha)	640	790	123%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (Ha)	150	290	193%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation protected by fencing (Ha)	910	600	66%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protected (Km)	10	4	40%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation enhanced (Ha)	1,010	780	77%
Seed collected (kg)	800	800	100%
Significant species/ecological community habitat management (e.g. ecological burns/fire hazard removal) (Ha)	615	535	87%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.) ¹	13	2	15%
Communication plan developed (No.) ²	2	0	0%
Evaluation plan developed (No.)	2	1.8	90%
Endangered species action statements & recovery plans developed (No.)	7	7	100%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	8	7	88%
Other statutory planning referrals (e.g. new irrigation development) (No.)	260	501	193%
Resource assessment			
Research & development studies undertaken (No.)	1	1	100%
Investigation area surveyed or mapped (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, inventory) (Ha) ³	3,8967	8,000	21%
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	3	1	33%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	1,020	540	53%
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	7	3.9	56%
Decision support tools (No.)	5	5	100%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	8	8	100%

¹ A number of these plans drafted, expected to be finalised by end 2005.

² Currently in draft form, expected to be finalised by end 2005.

³ This output will not be met. A variation has been requested.

Climate

The RCS goal for climate is:

The North Central region will have zero net greenhouse emissions. It will introduce management practices that improve the resilience of natural ecosystems and agricultural and other land uses in the face of climate change.

Outputs achieved

This asset was addressed indirectly through other 2004–05 projects.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

- Coordinating the Climate, Catchments and Communities Conference held in Bendigo, which attracted over 150 participants.
- Completing the Carbon Investment Prospectus in collaboration with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance, Department of Primary Industries (DPI) and Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE).
- Initiating the Regional Climate Risk, Vulnerability and Adaptation project with the Australian Greenhouse Office and SKM.
- Receiving support from DSE Greenhouse Policy Unit to undertake a project on Climate Change Impacts and Adaptation in North Central Victoria.

Dryland



The RCS goal for dryland is:

The use and management of the land resource for agriculture, rural living and other purposes will be consistent with its capability, will be undertaken in an ecologically sustainable manner and provide economic and social benefits.

Key threats to dryland include salinity, flooding, soil health decline, pest plants and pest animals, land management practices, population growth/rural residential expansion, farm business viability and attitudes, fire and climate change.

Outputs achieved

The table on the following page shows outputs achieved through the Regional Management Plan projects where dryland is the primary asset. These outputs may also indirectly address other assets.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

Continuing delivery, by partner agency DPI, of onground works within ten targeted salinity areas, including:

- protection of 1,078 ha of remnant and riparian vegetation
- establishment of 5,944 ha of perennial pasture
- 358 hectares of native revegetation
- 190 hectares of gully rehabilitation.

Continuing the Environmental Management Systems (EMS) work, with a number of landholder groups progressing through the EMS process.

Continuing delivery, by partner agency DPI, of on-ground pest plant and animal control works.

Completion of Phase 1 of the statewide Noxious Weed Review, which is occurring in three phases:

1. Assessment of the currently declared weeds under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) by the ten Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) in their regions.
2. Assessment of the priority species identified in the Regional Weed Action Plans that are not currently declared (this phase commenced in July 2005).
3. Consideration of additional species for possible declaration.

Infrastructure

The RCS goal for infrastructure is:

Infrastructure assets will be protected by land and water management practices from the impacts of natural resource degradation. Infrastructure development will be carried out in ways that minimise and offset adverse environmental impact.

Key threats to infrastructure include salinity, flooding, soil erosion, plantation forestry development, water allocation and trade, fire and changed fire regime.

This asset was addressed indirectly through other 2004–05 projects.

Public land

The RCS goal for public land is:

The uses and management of public land will lead to improved environment condition and provide the services required and agreed to by government and the community.

Key threats to public land include salinity, ecological systems decline, pest plants and pest animals, inappropriate recreation, changed flow regime, fire and changed fire regimes, infrastructure development, land management practices and climate change.

This asset was addressed indirectly through other 2004–05 projects.

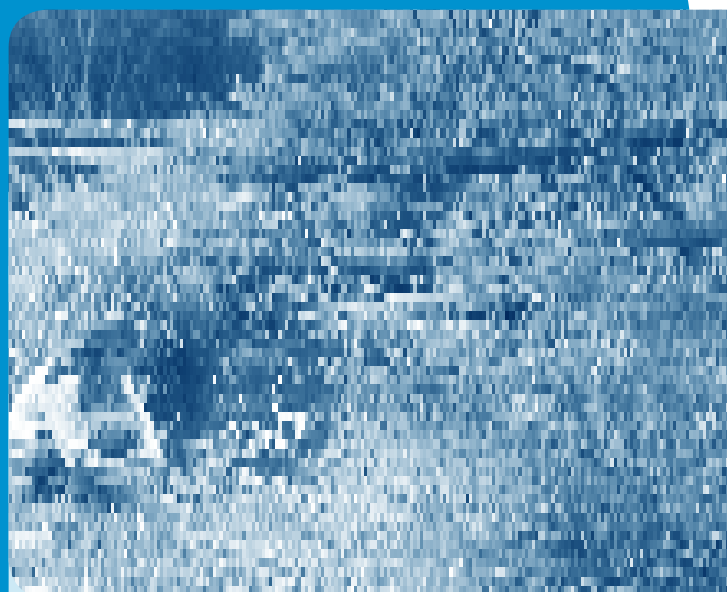
Dryland outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Key materials developed for skills & training events (e.g. workbooks, course notes etc.) (No.)	4	4	100%
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	48	49	102%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	24	24	100%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	8	8	100%
Onground works			
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation enhanced (Ha)	942	1,078	114%
Revegetation with indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) species (Ha)	216	358.6	166%
Revegetation with non-indigenous terrestrial perennial pastures (Ha)	6,937	5,944	86%
Revegetation with non-indigenous terrestrial plantation (Ha) ¹	176	8	5%
Pest management – private land protected (where pest does not exist as a result of control activities) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	10,000	700	7%
Pest management – private land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting, etc.) (Ha)	54,000	25,498	47%
Pest management – public land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	0	600	100%
Land treated for/or protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (includes gully battering, stock containment areas etc.) (Ha)	100	189.5	190%
Landholders on priority properties complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	294	297	101%
Landholders on priority properties with priority weeds complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	285	294	103%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.)	18	5	28%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	15	5	33%
Resource assessment			
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	22	109	495%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	135	3,828	2,836%
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	3	0	0%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	24	119	496%

¹ This output will not be met. A variation has been requested.

case study: Learning about Loddon River restoration

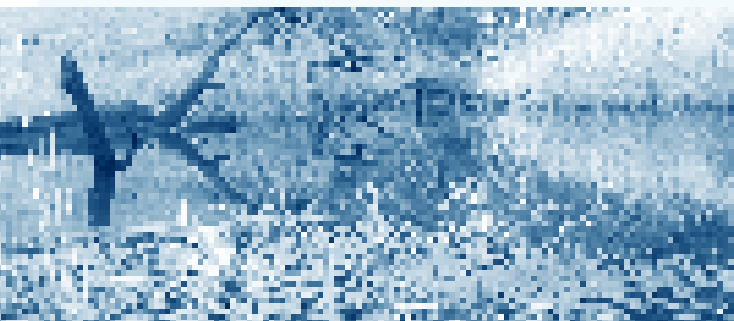
As part of the integrated activities undertaken along the Loddon River in 2004–05, a Demonstration Project was established to showcase best practice in river health management in North Central Victoria. Funded through the Victorian Government’s Stressed Rivers Initiative, one kilometre of the river upstream of Eddington was the site of an extensive willow removal, resnagging, fencing and revegetation project. The project was undertaken in partnership with Goulburn–Murray Water, DSE and adjacent landholders.

Community member Robert Roles commented “I was impressed with the presentation of information and the enthusiasm and passion of the presenters. The river work taking place at the Eddington site is to be commended, especially the in-stream placement of large tree logs, which will provide habitat improvement for all species aquatic”.



North Central CMA Riverine Officer Angela Gladman studies the health of the Loddon River.

Waterways and wetlands



The RCS goal for waterways and wetlands is:

Waterways and wetlands will be managed to enhance their environmental function and, where appropriate, provide opportunities for economic, recreational and amenity use.

Key threats to waterways and wetlands include salinity, altered hydrology, fragmentation and ecological systems decline, water quality decline, inappropriate recreation, inappropriate adjoining land management, population growth, pest plants and pest animals.

Outputs achieved

The table on the following page shows outputs achieved through the Regional Management Plan projects where waterways and wetlands are the primary asset. These outputs may also indirectly address other assets.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

- Environmental Flows Team established to manage the environmental water reserve and Our Water Our Future initiatives.
- Receiving North Central CMA Board endorsement of the North Central Wetlands Background Paper, including recommendation for the development of a Regional Wetlands Strategy.
- Working with DSE to deliver approximately 16,000 ML of environmental water to Gunbower Forest.
- Developing and receiving endorsement of the Site Environmental Water Management Plan for Gunbower Forest.
- Presenting a Gunbower Forest Paper at the International River Symposium.
- Finalising the North Central River Health Strategy, which was submitted for Victorian Government endorsement on 20 May 2005.
- Undertaking integrated river health management activities along the Loddon River in partnership with the Department of Primary Industries and Goulburn–Murray Water, such as 75 km of fencing, 1 km of resnagging, erosion control, floodplain management and river health awareness events.
- Entering into a partnership with Coliban Water and Greening Australia to develop a Catchment Action Plan for the Coliban Catchment.
- Developing the Lower Avoca Wetland and Salinity and Water Management Plan.
- Delivery of integrated river health projects across the region.
- Continuing effective community engagement via the Waterwatch program.

Water resources

The RCS goal for water resources is:

Water will be shared equitably between environmental and consumptive uses, water quality will match users' requirements and water will be used efficiently.

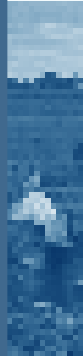
Key threats to water resources include water allocation and trade, salinity, water quality decline, population growth, and pest plants and pest animals.

Outputs achieved

The table on the following page shows outputs achieved through the Regional Management Plan projects where water resources are the primary asset. These outputs may also indirectly address other assets.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

- Finalising the Loddon Bulk Entitlement process.
- Implementing the Campaspe and Loddon Integrated River Health projects.
- Upper catchment projects targeting salinity and nutrient management through implementation of Dryland and Nutrient Management plans, including buffer strips and erosion control.
- Offering grants to five local governments to implement key actions in stormwater management plans.
- Undertaking an ecological risk assessment for the Lower Loddon in partnership with EPA Victoria.
- Undertaking a Kow Swamp investigation (water quality impact assessment).



Waterways and wetlands outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.) ¹	9	3	33%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	29	17	59%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	5	5	100%
Onground works			
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (No.)	198	161	81%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (Ha)	256	197.2	77%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protection) (Km) ²	7	1	14%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protected (Km) ²	25	7.6	30%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation enhanced (Ha) ³	234	12	5%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhanced (Km) ³	117	7.4	6%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhancement) (Km)	125	69	55%
Land treated for/or protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (includes gully battering, stock containment areas etc.) (Ha)	22	22	100%
Gully treated for/or protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (Km) ⁴	99	20.5	21%
Stream bank stabilised (Km)	16	12	75%
Stream bed stabilised (Km)	16	14	88%
Off-stream (alternative) watering sites installed (No.)	67	28	42%
Instream habitat established (Km) ⁵	0.7	0	0%
Stream bed stabilisation structures (No.)	53	59	111%
Buffer strips/grassed waterways for water quality treatment (Km)	45	68	151%
Buffer strips/grassed waterways for water quality treatment (Ha)	135	125.8	93%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.)	6	1.9	32%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	4	2.7	68%
Research assessment			
Research & development studies undertaken (No.)	1	1	100%
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	4	3	75%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	1	1	100%
Decision support tools (No.)	2	2	100%

1 Remaining field days to be held in Spring 2005.

2 Remaining fencing negotiated with landholders, expected completion by end 2005.

3 Revegetation to be undertaken in Spring 2005 when environmental conditions are conducive to a successful outcome.

4 Fencing activities to be completed post construction of erosion control structures.

5 Large woody debris reinstatement to be completed by end of July 2005.



Water resources outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	0	1.2	100%
Coordinated projects with industry groups (No.)	0	1	100%
Resource assessment			
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	2	2.2	110%



Irrigated land

The RCS goal for irrigated land is:

The use and management of land for irrigated agriculture, rural living and other purposes will be consistent with its capability to support those uses. The use and management of both land and water provides sustainable economic and social benefits and improves environmental values.

Key threats to irrigation include water trade, water allocation, salinity, flooding, land and irrigation management practices, pest plant and pest animals, soil health, farm business viability and attitudes, population growth, climate change and fragmentation of habitat.

Outputs achieved

The table on the following page shows outputs achieved through the Regional Management Plan projects where irrigated land is the primary asset. These outputs may also indirectly address other assets.

Key achievements in 2004–05:

- Exceeding many of the targeted outputs for the Sustainable Agriculture priority project. This indicates that the effect of drought and low water allocations has not impacted on the number of regional irrigators seeking to increase their knowledge and skills in land and water management.
- Using the learnings and experience gained from the Kerang–Swan Hill Future Land Use Pilot Project to better understand the research needs to adjust to water reform.
- Commencing the initial stages of major capital works under the Loddon Murray Surface Water Management Plan, beginning with planning approvals and environmental assessments for the Benwell and Wandella Primary Drains.
- Meeting the irrigation region's obligations towards salt disposal management, ensuring the long-term sustainability of irrigated land.
- Continuing progression towards a second generation land and water management plan that will ensure the ongoing sustainability of the region's natural resources and maintain the prosperity of our communities and the economic output.

Irrigated land outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	44	39	89%
Participants in skills & training events (No.)	1,288	1,320	102%
Awareness raising forums			
(e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	33	28	85%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	89	84.9	95%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	12	16.8	140%
Coordinated projects with industry groups (No.)	1	1	100%
Onground works			
Land treated for rising groundwater through surface drainage by type of drain (regional/community) (Ha)	170	310	182%
Irrigated land using improved management (soil moisture monitoring, laser-grading etc.) (Ha)	50	440.15	880%
Farm water saved from the installation of farm reuse system (ML)	1,243	1,913	154%
Animal effluent removal/containment systems installed (e.g. dairy, settlement ponds, urban dog) (No.)	3	8	267%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.)	8	3.05	38%
Property management plans developed by type (Whole Farm Plan etc.) by stage of development (surveyed or design stage) (Ha)	3,460	6,231	180%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	11	7	64%
Resource assessment			
Research & development studies undertaken (No.)	13	12	92%
Investigation area surveyed or mapped (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, inventory) (Ha)	500	3,665.02	733%
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	3	2.6	87%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	1,044	1,044	100%
Decision support tools (No.)	4	4	100%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	5	4.7	94%



Avoca/Avon–Richardson area

The Avoca/Avon–Richardson area covers over one million hectares (ha). Major towns include Avoca, Charlton, Donald, Quambatook and St Arnaud.

The majority of the region's GVP for the grains and mixed cropping industry and pastoral production is concentrated in the Buloke Shire.

The area occupies the western part of North Central Victoria and makes up approximately 40 per cent of the region. There are several high value wetlands within the area, including the Avoca Marshes, Lake Bael Bael and Lake Buloke.

Both the Avoca and Avon–Richardson catchments drain to largely unregulated streams.

Within the area, the major river health priorities include the protection and restoration of the Avoca River. Key river health actions include fencing, stock management, riparian protection and improvement, river health awareness, buffer strip development and sediment management.

Of the 32,407 ha of wetlands in the area, there are 1,613 ha of Ramsar-listed wetlands, 16,482 ha listed as nationally significant and 4,502 ha identified as bioregionally significant.

Current native vegetation cover is 131,670 ha, which represents 12.5 per cent of pre-1750 vegetation cover. Of the existing vegetation communities, 58,755 ha are endangered, 10,483 ha vulnerable and 59,317 ha depleted. Across the area there are 86 recorded threatened fauna species and 169 threatened flora species.

The primary land uses across the area are cropping (489,000 ha) and grazing (381,000 ha), with a relatively small area dedicated to conservation reserves (41,446 ha) and timber production (37,528 ha).

The major land tenure across the area is freehold (647,625 ha) with 39,199 ha of State forest and 11,088 ha of parks and reserves.

Funding

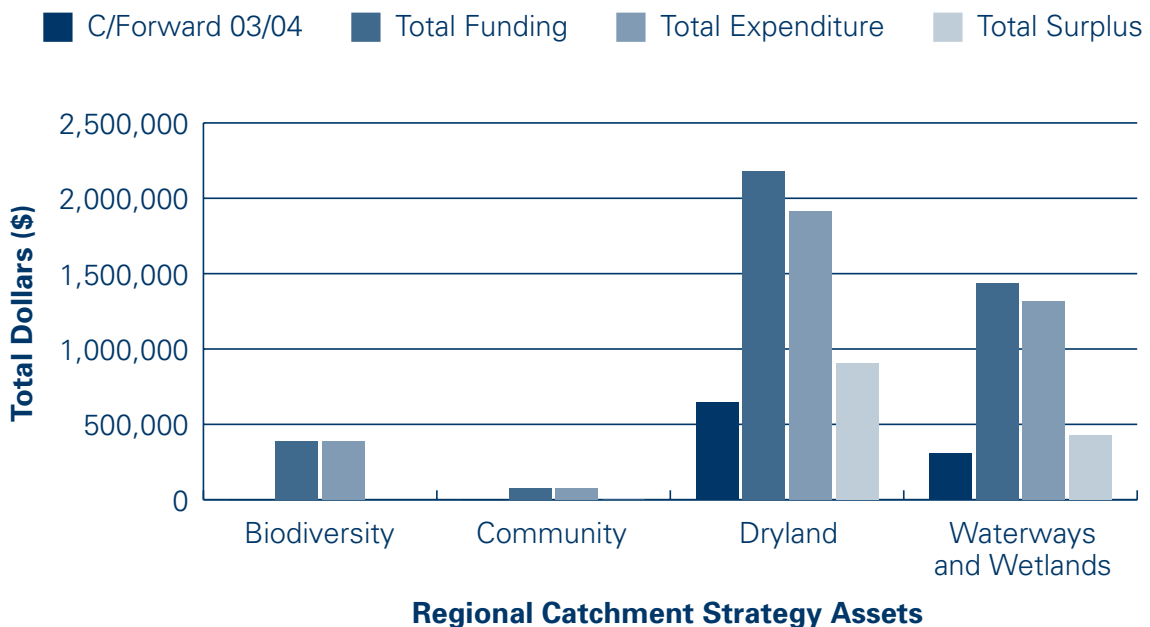
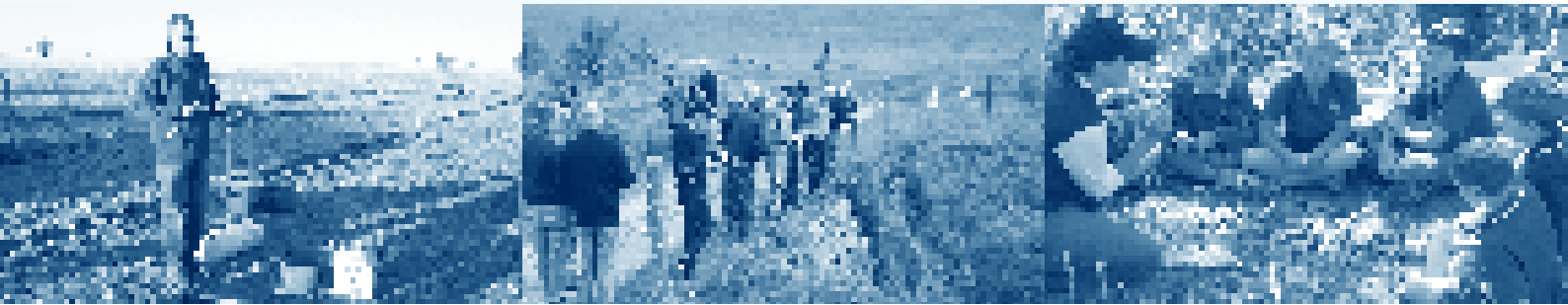
Funds for this area are received from both the Victorian and Australian governments.

In 2004–05, the area’s budget was more than \$5.70 million (including carry forward) comprising 68 per cent National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Natural Heritage Trust funds, 30 per cent Victorian Government funds and the remaining from regional sources. Most of this funding was invested in addressing the dryland, waterways and wetlands assets of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy.

The North Central CMA managed \$5.03 million of this funding, with \$0.67 million managed directly through the Department of Primary Industries. The financial summary below shows the project funding delivered directly in this area through the North Central CMA. The funding is grouped by Regional Catchment Strategy asset class.

Total Financial Position

RCS Asset Class	C/Forward 03/04 \$	Total Funding \$	Total Expenditure \$	Total Surplus \$
Biodiversity	-	389,000	387,133	1,867
Community	-	76,000	76,000	-
Dryland	643,733	2,176,596	1,911,795	908,534
Waterways and Wetlands	309,082	1,436,173	1,316,928	428,327
Total	952,815	4,077,769	3,691,855	1,338,729



2004–05 Program Delivery

Upper Avon–Richardson, Lower Avon–Richardson, Upper Avoca and Lower Avoca targeted salinity projects

The key components of these projects in 2004–05 were:

- building community commitment to the implementation program
- developing and providing specific recommendations on more sustainable land management practices, covering agronomic systems, protection and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity, farm forestry and improved waterway management
- achieving lasting, landscape-scale change in management practices of farming systems
- working with participants in the targeted salinity projects to identify and address the issues that are likely to limit the success of the project.

Shire-based Landcare coordination

This project involves building community capacity in natural resource management via a Landcare Support Program that encompasses:

- action planning
- training
- communication and networking
- publicity
- developing partnerships
- increasing Landcare groups' resources.

Tackling pests

Key components of this project in 2004–05, achieved through our partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, were:

- providing technical support to community group control programs
- undertaking compliance action on priority weeds in priority locations
- responding to new and emerging weed issues
- implementing recommendations of the North Central Rabbit Action Plan
- providing a bait supply service for community rabbit control programs
- undertaking compliance action on recalcitrant landholders in priority locations.

Avon–Richardson river health

The key components of these projects in 2004–05 were:

- improving the community's understanding of the threats to riparian function and river health, and how their involvement in this program can help to mitigate these issues
- undertaking erosion control works at priority sites
- installing protective buffer strip fencing along targeted waterways
- protecting and enhancing areas of remnant riparian vegetation

- achieving improvements in water quality and river health through reduced sedimentation/nutrient ingress to waterways.

Avoca/Avon–Richardson, Goldfields and Murray Mallee/Wimmera Biodiversity Action Plans

The Biodiversity Action Plans translate the statewide biodiversity strategy to the regional scale.

These Plans underpin landscape-scale biodiversity actions and direct onground works by private landholders, community groups, corporations and all levels of government.

These projects use a range of innovative and community focused mechanisms for accelerating the adoption of vegetation management and establishment techniques that will improve the condition of biodiversity, soil and water across the region. They take a bioregional and landscape scale approach to habitat and remnant vegetation management, conservation of threatened species and revegetation.

Lower Avoca river health

The key components of these projects in 2004–05 were:

- undertaking river health works including the protection and enhancement of high quality remnant riparian vegetation by fencing and supplementary revegetation
- undertaking the Avoca Hydrologic Study. This study used existing rainfall, flood mapping and aerial photography to develop a computer model of the floodplain. The model determines both existing and natural distribution of flows across the floodplain.

Upper Avoca river health

The key components of these projects in 2004–05 were:

- improving the community's understanding of the threats to riparian function and river health, and how their involvement in this program can help to mitigate these issues.
- undertaking erosion control works at priority sites
- installing protective buffer strip fencing along targeted waterways.
- protecting and enhancing areas of remnant riparian vegetation.
- achieving improvements in water quality and river health through reduced sedimentation/nutrient ingress to waterways and protecting and improving riparian vegetation.

case study: Donald teenagers plant and party

A group of teenagers in Donald has hit on an unbeatable way to have a good time – plant trees.

Working with the North Central CMA as part of the Buloke Biolink project, they learned they could earn good money and improve the environment by planting trees.

They put their money towards bringing a heavy metal band up from Melbourne for a five-hour concert.

Danielle Cullen and her friends from the Donald Youth Group wouldn't mind planting a forest if it meant more rock stars came to town.

"We had a good time. We got this heavy metal band called 28 Days to come here from Melbourne, and it cost \$9000, most of which we raised ourselves," she said.

They had run the usual fundraising ventures – chocolate drives, raffles to pay for the band – but last year they added tree planting, earning 40 cents for each of the 5000 trees they planted on local farms. Staging the concert tapped all the teenagers' skills, and about 500 people attended.

Rob O'Shannessy from the North Central CMA said restoring trees, shrubs and grasslands was essential for life and farming to continue in the region.

"We don't know what life span these remaining trees have left but once this generation of trees goes, and there's no regeneration, that's it," Rob said.

"We are down to less than one percent of organic carbon levels in our soils and in theory once you get to zero, that's it. Life can no longer be sustained in these soils."

Alicia Guild, now in her last year at Donald High School, was among the planters.

"We've learnt a lot doing this and if we can help protect and create places for the birds and animals to live then that's a bonus," she said.

"We've found out heaps more about the importance of keeping old trees and planting new ones, especially in relation to farmers affected by salinity. We realise if farmers are on a high it impacts on everyone in the whole district and if youth can help that, then that's a great thing."

The Buloke Biolink is a project attempting to plant corridors of trees across the mostly cleared Buloke Shire, to provide breeding havens and thoroughfares for birds, insects and wildlife.



Danielle Cullen, Alicia Guild, Ian Griffiths and his son Dean Griffiths among trees planted by Donald Youth Group.

With partners such as the Donald Youth Group who help do the planting, farmers, the Mallee and North Central Catchment Management Authorities, Landcare groups, Parks Victoria, the Birchip Cropping Group and the departments of Primary Industries and Sustainability and Environment have planted more than 500 hectares of trees and shrubs across private and public land. They have also protected hundreds of hectares of remaining vegetation and trees.

Rob O'Shannessy said the North Central CMA could provide trees and treeguards to farmers willing to turn parts of their farm over to trees.

Outputs achieved

The following table shows the North Central CMA's performance in the Avoca/Avon–Richardson area measured against the target outputs identified in the Regional Management Plan.

Outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	4	4	100%
Key materials developed for skills & training events (e.g. workbooks, course notes etc.) (No.)	3	3	100%
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	37	35	95%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	45	44	98%
Active community support positions (EFT) (e.g. Landcare facilitators, coordinators) (No.)	1	1	100%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	6	6	100%
Landcare groups/networks with Action Plans (No.)	3	9	300%
Onground works			
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (e.g. Bushtender) (No.)	6	8	133%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (No.)	62	78	126%
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (Ha)	320	200	63%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (Ha)	63	64.4	102%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation protected by fencing (Ha)	450	260	58%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protection) (Km)	1	1	100%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protected (Km)	5	3	60%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation enhanced (Ha)	1,205	1,094.4	91%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhanced (Km)	14	5.4	39%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhancement) (Km)	45	13	29%
Revegetation with indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) species (Ha)	119	230.6	194%
Revegetation with non-indigenous terrestrial perennial pastures (Ha)	5,629	4,996	89%
Revegetation with non-indigenous terrestrial plantation (Ha) ¹	176	8	5%
Significant species/ecological community habitat management (e.g. ecological burns/fire hazard removal) (Ha)	240	160	67%
Pest management – private land protected (where pest does not exist as a result of control activities) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	4,000	100	3%
Pest management – private land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	21,000	198	1%
Land treated for/or protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (includes gully battering, stock containment areas etc.) (Ha)	82	165.5	202%
Gully treated for/or protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (Km) ²	58	6	10%
Stream bank stabilised (Km)	9	9	100%
Stream bed stabilised (Km)	5	5	100%
Off-stream (alternative) watering sites installed (No.) ³	20	3	15%
Stream bed stabilisation structures (No.)	12	11	92%
Buffer strips/grassed waterways for water quality treatment (Km)	45	68	151%
Buffer strips/grassed waterways for water quality treatment (Ha)	45	68	151%
Landholders on priority properties complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	98	99	101%
Landholders on priority properties with priority weeds complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	95	98	103%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.) ⁴	17	4	24%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	11	4	36%
Resource assessment			
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	11	101	918%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	102	2,860	2804%
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	2	0	0%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	14	12	86%

1 This output will not be met. A variation has been requested.

2 Fencing activities to be completed post construction of erosion control structures.

3 Funding redirected to higher priority activities.

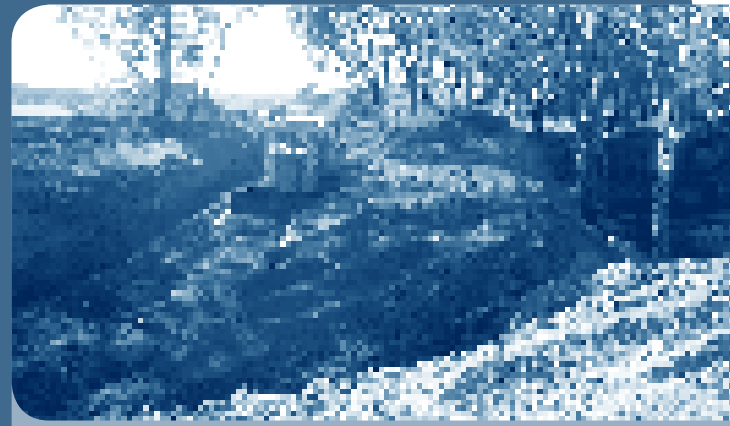
4 A number of these plans drafted, expected to be finalised by end 2005.

case study: Avon–Richardson river health action

River health and biodiversity works undertaken in the St Arnaud area were on display in May 2005 at a field trip involving North Central CMA, Landcare, local government and community representatives.

The group viewed a section of Racecourse Creek that has been successfully rehabilitated with funds from the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. Over 3,000 locally indigenous seedlings were planted through a partnership between the North Central CMA, St Arnaud Hills Landcare Group and a Conservation Volunteers Group sponsored by the local Rotary Club.

The Conservation Volunteers Group consisted of five young people from the California Conservation League who were amused to be planting acacias and eucalypts, which in their part of the world are considered weeds.



River health works on an Avon River tributary – the construction of a major rock chute will prevent 30,000 tonnes of sediment entering the waterway.

At the next site, North Central CMA Waterway Works Officers Terry Stevens and Peter Mulquinny discussed a major rock chute on the property of Simon and Carmel Briody, which will prevent the headward extension of a gully and 30,000 tonnes of sediment from entering the Avon River.

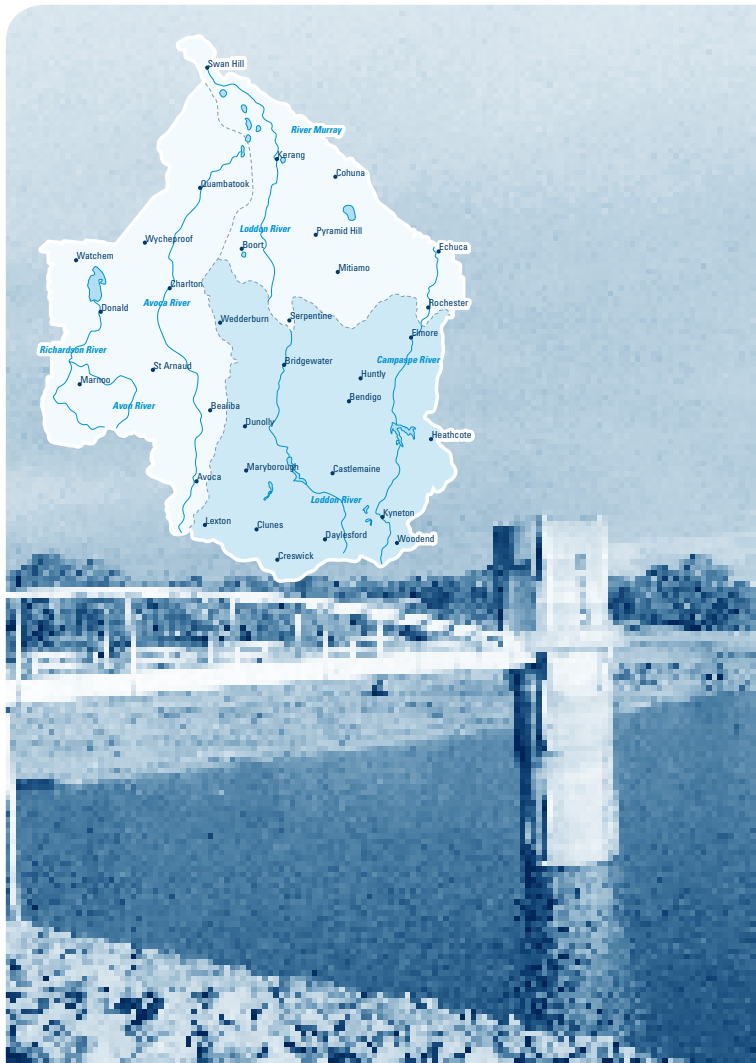
Matters for Target

The following table shows the projects undertaken within the Avoca/Avon–Richardson area, the Matters for Target they work to achieve, and their project type.

Matters for Target are standard national outcomes used to measure the achievements of natural resource management through programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the Natural Heritage Trust.

Project Type	Matters for Target													Project Type		
	Land Salinity	Soil Condition	Native Vegetation	Inland Aquatic Ecosystems	Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Habitat Integrity	Nutrients in Aquatic Environment	Turbidity/Suspended Particulate Matter in Aquatic Environments	Surface Water Salinity in Freshwater Aquatic Environments	Significant Native Species and Ecological Communities	Ecological Significant Invasive Species	On Ground Works	Planning	Resource Assessment	Capacity Building		
Upper Avoca Targeted Salinity	Primary Focus				X											
Lower Avoca Targeted Salinity					X											
Avon-Richardson Targeted Salinity					X											
Lower Avon-Richardson Targeted Salinity					X											
Shire-based Landcare Coordinators					X											
Tackling Pests					X											
Avon-Richardson				Secondary Focus	X	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus									
Murray Mallee/Wimmera BAP				Secondary Focus	X	Secondary Focus										
Lower Avoca				Secondary Focus	X	Secondary Focus										
Upper Avoca				Secondary Focus	X	Secondary Focus										
Avoca Avon-Richardson BAP				Secondary Focus	X											

Primary Focus Secondary Focus Tertiary Focus



Loddon/Campaspe Dryland area

The Loddon Campaspe Dryland area covers approximately 1.2 million hectares (ha). Major towns include Bendigo, Castlemaine, Daylesford, Elmore, Kyneton, Maryborough, Wedderburn and Woodend.

The majority of the region's urban land use, water storages, conservation reserves and crown land with licensed use are located within this area. The water storages provide North Central Victoria with water for domestic, commercial and agricultural use.

Major storages in the area include the Upper Cairn Curran, Coliban, Laanecoorie reservoirs, Lake Eppalock, Lauriston, Malmsbury and Tullaroop. In addition, the shallow aquifer system in the Daylesford, Hepburn Springs and surrounding area contains naturally occurring carbonated groundwater that supports a mineral springs industry and associated processing and tourist industry. This small part of the region accounts for 80 per cent of Australia's mineral springs.

The Loddon and Campaspe catchments make up approximately 42 per cent of North Central Victoria.

The waterways are of significant importance to the community through the environmental assets they support and the resources obtained from it.

Within this area, the major river health priorities include the protection and restoration of the Campaspe and Loddon rivers, as well as key tributaries.

There are 12,144 ha of wetlands in the area, with 215 ha listed as nationally significant and 7,580 ha identified as bioregionally significant.

Current native vegetation cover is 341,393 ha, which represents 27 per cent of pre-1750. Of the existing vegetation cover, 25 per cent is endangered, 7 per cent is vulnerable and 46 per cent is depleted. Across the area, there are 99 threatened fauna species and 242 threatened flora species.

Projects in this area aim to address a range of issues including salinity, flooding, soil health decline, habitat fragmentation, pest plants and pest animals, and inappropriate land management practices.

Funding

Funds for this area are received from both the Victorian and Australian governments.

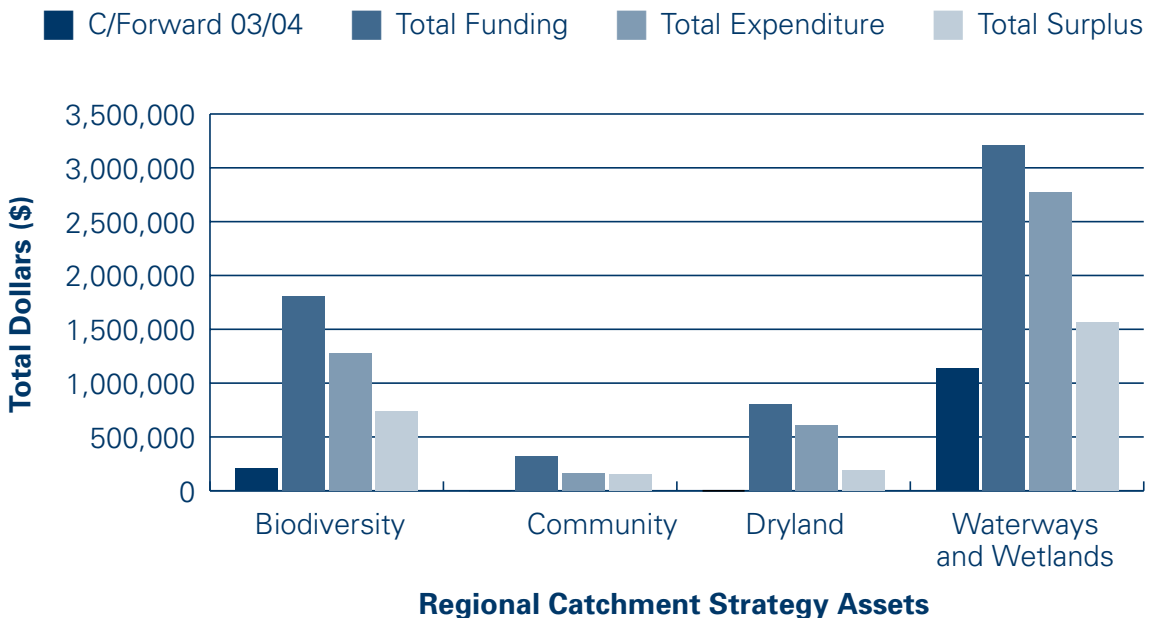
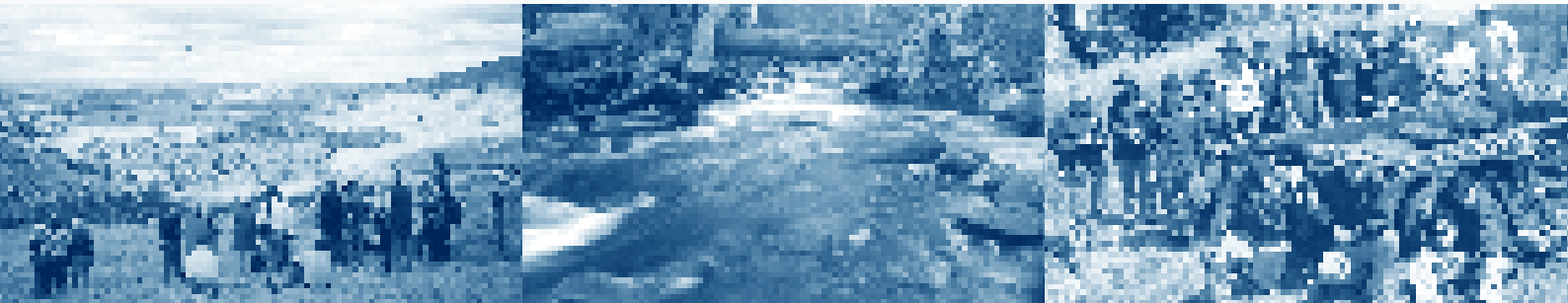
In 2004–05, the area’s budget was more than \$7.88 million (including carry forward) comprising 49 per cent Victorian Government funds (through the Our Water Our Future initiative), 47 per cent National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Natural Heritage Trust funds, and the remaining from regional sources. Most of this funding was

invested in addressing the waterways, wetlands and biodiversity assets of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy.

The North Central CMA managed \$7.47 million of this funding, with \$0.41 million managed directly through the Department of Primary Industries. The financial summary below shows the project funding delivered directly in this area through the North Central CMA. The funding is grouped by Regional Catchment Strategy asset class.

Total Financial Position

RCS Asset Class	C/Forward 03/04 \$	Total Funding \$	Total Expenditure \$	Total Surplus \$
Biodiversity	204,440	1,808,956	1,274,081	739,316
Community	-	320,214	167,003	153,211
Dryland	-	800,000	612,266	187,734
Waterways and Wetlands	1,135,027	3,205,000	2,773,947	1,566,079
Total	1,339,467	6,134,170	4,827,296	2,646,341



case study: Landmate scheme a community asset

For more than a decade, a program designed to help prisoners reintegrate into the community has provided valuable support to local environmental programs. The Landmate scheme operating from the Loddon Prison in Castlemaine has established itself as a significant education program for the prisoners who participate.

The scheme is funded by the Victorian Government through the state Landmate program and is jointly coordinated between of the North Central CMA and DPI.



North Central CMA Project Officer Tracey Harbridge and Landmate Supervisor Rod Phillips inspecting a fence constructed by the Landmate crew to prevent stock accessing Middle Creek at Turkey Hill, near Campbelltown.

According to the Landmate Coordinator, Darren Taylor, once prisoners' security rating is deemed suitable for them to work in the community, they can be selected to join a Landmate crew.

"The Landmate scheme works as an employment program for prisoners. It replicates a working day, where participants attend for set hours throughout a standard working week," said Darren. "It enables prisoners to be better prepared and equipped for reintegration into the community."

The Landmate crew operates on properties in the Castlemaine area to undertake works including weed control, revegetation fencing and tree planting.

The scheme was initiated by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment in Maryborough in the early 1990s.

"It took a while for the local community to warm to the idea of having prisoners undertake this kind of work in the area," said Darren. "However, the outcomes of the scheme spoke for themselves and negative perceptions were soon reversed."

Darren recalls that Moolort Landcare Group was one of the first in the region to embrace the Landmate concept.

"The Moolort Landcare Group understood the benefits of working with a Landmate crew. Those landholders who were involved achieved a level of onground works that they wouldn't have been able to undertake on their own.

"Word soon spread amongst other Landcare groups about the effectiveness of the Landmate crew to the point where a more coordinated approach was needed," said Darren.

The scheme current involves the North Central CMA, DPI, Mt Alexander Shire, City of Greater Bendigo and Landcare, who share its benefits with Loddon Prison.

"The Loddon Prison views the scheme as an opportunity to provide a service to the community and to enable the prisoners to begin their reintegration to the community," Darren continued.

"Prisoners can obtain qualifications such as their chainsaw operator and chemical users certificates. The scheme also runs a nursery that provides participants with seed collection and propagating skills.

"This initiative has proven to help build the prisoners' morale and self esteem, and their confidence to engage with the community. It also gives them a better chance of future employment and a feeling of being of value to society," said Darren.

Recent work undertaken by the Landmate crew includes the hand removal of African weed orchid at Lake Eppalock. They have worked with the North Central CMA buffer strip and remnant protection programs, and DPI on revegetation fencing in the Bulabul and Timor West areas targeted through the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

Throughout 2003 and 2004, over 200km fencing was constructed and almost 18,000 trees planted. A similar level of productivity is taking place in 2005.

"We are really supportive of this scheme, which will continue to play a valuable role in the implementation of North Central CMA and DPI projects in the area," said North Central CMA Works Coordinator, Kevin Moschetti.

2004–05 Program Delivery

Upper Loddon Targeted Salinity

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- building commitment to the implementation program and developing community capacity to address natural resource issues in the long term and at the landscape scale required
- actions that will achieve lasting and landscape-scale change in management practices and land use to provide improved natural resource condition, in biodiversity, water resources, river health and land condition
- developing and providing specific recommendations on more sustainable land management practices, covering agronomic systems, protection and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity, farm forestry and improved waterway management.

Assessing Salinity Interventions in the Fractured Basalts

The main objective of the project was to develop a hydrogeological, hydrological and hydrogeochemical model for the basalt system. The model outlines dominant groundwater flow directions, illustrating the interaction between groundwater and surface waters. The hydrogeological interaction between the basalt and deep lead aquifers, and mechanism of recharge and discharge, is also outlined.

The project also leads to recommendations about further investigations and opportunities for successful intervention in salinity and related processes. For example, areas of high salt contribution will be identified as priority areas. This project should provide insight into the contribution of this system to salt loads in the Loddon River system and the capacity to meet interim Murray Darling Basin Commission end-of-valley targets.

Shire-based Landcare Coordination

This project involves building community capacity in natural resource management via a Landcare Support Program which encompasses:

- action planning
- training
- communication and networking
- publicity
- developing partnerships
- increasing Landcare groups' resources.

Tackling Pests

Key components of this project in 2004–05, achieved through our partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, were:

- providing technical support to community group control programs
- undertaking compliance action on priority weeds in priority locations
- responding to new and emerging weed issues
- implementing recommendations of the North Central Rabbit Action Plan
- providing a bait supply service for community

- rabbit control programs
- undertaking compliance action on recalcitrant landholders in priority locations.

Loddon Stressed River

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- protecting and enhancing riparian vegetation through landholder incentives
- reinstating large woody debris to improve aquatic habitat
- erosion control to reduce sediment input
- investigating River Blackfish distribution in Tullaroop Creek
- developing an inventory and incentives to protect and enhance priority wetlands on private land
- developing Wetland Management Plans.

Upper Campaspe, Lower Campaspe, Coliban, Loddon (above Cairn Curran) and Loddon (western tributaries above Laanecoorie) River Health projects

Key components of these projects in 2004–05 were:

- improving the community's understanding of the threats to riparian functions and river health and how their involvement in this program can help to mitigate these issues
- undertaking erosion control works at priority sites
- installing protective buffer strip fencing along targeted waterways
- protecting and enhancing areas of remnant riparian vegetation
- achieving improvements in water quality and river health by reducing sedimentation/nutrients entering waterways
- developing a Catchment Action Plan for the Coliban catchment.

Mid Loddon Waterways

This project aims to improve water quality and river health by undertaking priority erosion control and vegetation protection works within the Bendigo Creek catchment.

The key components of the project in 2004–05 involved protecting and enhancing riparian vegetation and erosion control works.

A joint partnership initiative has been developed with the City of Greater Bendigo to establish a cooperative arrangement for the management of Bendigo's urban waterways.

Goldfields and Riverina Biodiversity Action Plan projects

The project aims to contribute to:

- reversing the long term decline in the quality and extent of native vegetation across the regional landscape
- maintaining and enhancing ecological processes across the region
- maintaining or improving the present diversity of species and ecological communities and their viability across each bioregion
- ensuring that there is no further preventable decline in the viability of rare or threatened species or ecological communities.

Outputs achieved

The following table shows the North Central CMA's performance in the Loddon/Campaspe Dryland area measured against the target outputs identified in the Regional Management Plan.

Outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	15	18	120%
Key materials developed for skills & training events (e.g. workbooks, course notes etc.) (No.)	1	1	100%
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	20	17	85%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	83	94	113%
Active community support positions (EFT) (e.g. Landcare facilitators, coordinators) (No.)	3.5	3.5	100%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	2	2	100%
Landcare groups/networks with Action Plans (No.)	12	9	75%
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (e.g. Bushtender) (No.)	6	8	133%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (No.)	136	83	61%
Capacity building			
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (Ha)	320	590	184%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (Ha)	193	132.8	69%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation protected by fencing (Ha)	360	280	78%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protection) (Km) ¹	6	0	0%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protected (Km) ²	20	4.6	23%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation enhanced (Ha)	781	525.6	67%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhanced (Km) ³	103	2	2%
Fencing (for indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation enhancement) (Km)	80	56	70%
Revegetation with indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) species (Ha)	97	128	132%
Revegetation with non-indigenous terrestrial perennial pastures (Ha)	1,308	948	72%
Significant species/ecological community habitat management (e.g. ecological burns/fire hazard removal) (Ha)	240	240	100%
Pest management – private land protected (where pest does not exist as a result of control activities) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	3,000	100	3%
Pest management – private land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	16,500	12,650	77%
Pest management – public land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	0	300	100%
Land treated for/or protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (includes gully battering, stock containment areas etc.) (Ha)	40	46	115%
Gully treated for/or protected from soil erosion through engineering works or fencing (Km)	41	14.5	35%
Stream bank stabilised (Km)	7	3	43%
Stream bed stabilised (Km)	11	9	82%
Off-stream (alternative) watering sites installed (No.)	47	25	53%
Instream habitat established (Km) ⁴	0.7	0	0%
Stream bed stabilisation structures (No.)	41	48	117%
Buffer strips/grassed waterways for water quality treatment (Ha)	90	57.8	64%
Landholders on priority properties complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	98	99	101%
Landholders on priority properties with priority weeds complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	95	98	103%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.) ⁵	11	2	18%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	4	1	25%
Resource assessment			
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	6	5	83%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	33	968	2933%
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	1	0	0%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	8	6	75%

1 Remaining fencing negotiated with landholders, expected completion by end 2005.

2 Remaining funds largely committed to sites.

3 Planting to take place in Spring 2005.

4 Large woody debris reinstatement to be completed by end of July 2005.

5 A number of these plans drafted, expected to be finalised by end 2005.

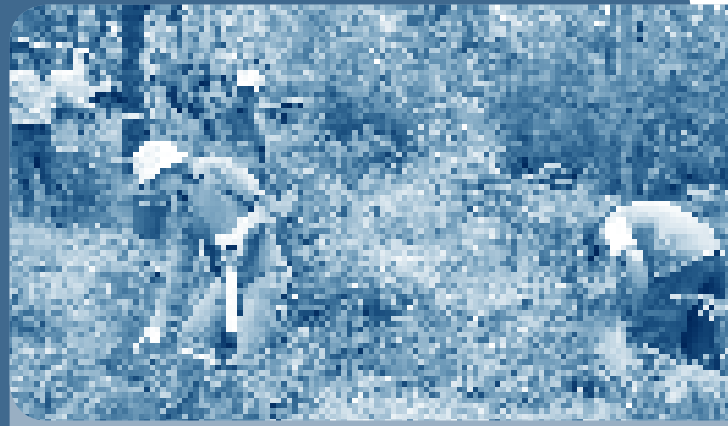
case study: Protecting our unique biodiversity

The small white flowers of the elegant *Ballantinia antipoda* are a sight to be seen, but are so rare that they can only be found growing on the granite rocks of Mount Alexander. This nationally threatened species flowers throughout winter amongst the mini rainforest of the fragile moss mats.

In December 2004, a host of local environmental groups including Green Corp, Conservation Volunteers Australia and the Regional Environmental Employment Program joined representatives from the North Central CMA and Parks Victoria to lend a hand to this threatened species.

According to North Central CMA Threatened Species Project Officer, Jenni Thomas, the main priority of this alliance was to remove threats to the *Ballantinia*.

"We began by removing some of the introduced species that have started to dominate the area. We also repaired fencing and erected gates to prevent vehicle access in areas where *Ballantinia* once grew in abundance.



An alliance of environmental groups taking action to protect the threatened *Ballantinia antipoda*.

"It was great to have so many people participating in this hands-on action to help protect a nationally threatened species in our own 'backyard'," said Jenni.

"Not only has this event been a success for the future of *Ballantinia*, but also a rewarding day for all those involved," Jenni concluded.

Matters for Target

The following table shows the projects undertaken within the Loddon/Campaspe Dryland area, the Matters for Target they work to achieve, and their project type.

Matters for Target are standard national outcomes used to measure the achievements of natural resource management through programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the Natural Heritage Trust.

Project Type	Matters for Target													Project Type			
	Land Salinity	Soil Condition	Native Vegetation	Inland Aquatic Ecosystems	Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Habitat Integrity	Nutrients in Aquatic Environment	Turbidity/Suspended Particulate Matter in Aquatic Environments	Surface Water Salinity in Freshwater Aquatic Environments	Significant Native Species and Ecological Communities	Ecological Significant Invasive Species	On Ground Works	Planning	Resource Assessment		Capacity Building		
Upper Loddon & Campaspe Targeted Salinity Projects					x												
Assessing Salinity Interventions in the Fractured Basalts					x												
Shire-based Landcare Coordinators Tackling Pests					x												
Loddon Stressed River					x												
Lower Campaspe					x												
Upper Campaspe					x												
Coliban					x												
Loddon (above Cairn Curran)					x												
Loddon (western tributaries above Laanecoorie)					x												
Mid Loddon Waterways Project					x												
Upper Loddon Campaspe Dryland BAP					x												
Riverina BAP					x												

Primary Focus Secondary Focus Tertiary Focus



Loddon/Campaspe Irrigation area

The Loddon / Campaspe Irrigation area includes the irrigated areas of the Loddon, Murray, Campaspe and Rochester areas. It also includes the dryland areas that are managed by irrigators.

The Loddon Murray region is approximately 650,000 hectares with about 30,000 residents. Major towns include Boort, Cohuna, Kerang, Pyramid Hill and Swan Hill.

North Central Victoria is one of Australia's most diverse and environmentally sensitive farming areas. As a result of these activities, the community has developed skills and methods needed to manage the complex and varied issues of the area. However, greater capacity and innovative methods are required to manage the issues of a rapidly changing region to achieve sustainable natural resource management. The community itself is acutely aware of and enthusiastic about that need.

The River Murray and its environment strongly influence activities undertaken in the area. The assets, threats and actions pertaining to the river have resulted in well-defined community planning structures being in place. The River Murray environment includes the high value wetlands and public forests of the Loddon and Campaspe areas.

A key focus in this area in 2004–05 and 2005–06 is the development of a Second-generation Loddon Campaspe Land and Water Management Plan, which evolves from the Loddon Murray Land and Water Strategy.

The approximate capital value of water entitlement and associated land is about \$1.6 billion. Agricultural production generates more than 70 per cent of the economic output from irrigation, which represents about half of the Region's GVAP. The remaining 30 per cent of economic output from irrigated areas is from feed and food processing, agricultural support industries, retail services, and community and business services.

Funding

Funds for this area are received from both the Victorian and Australian governments.

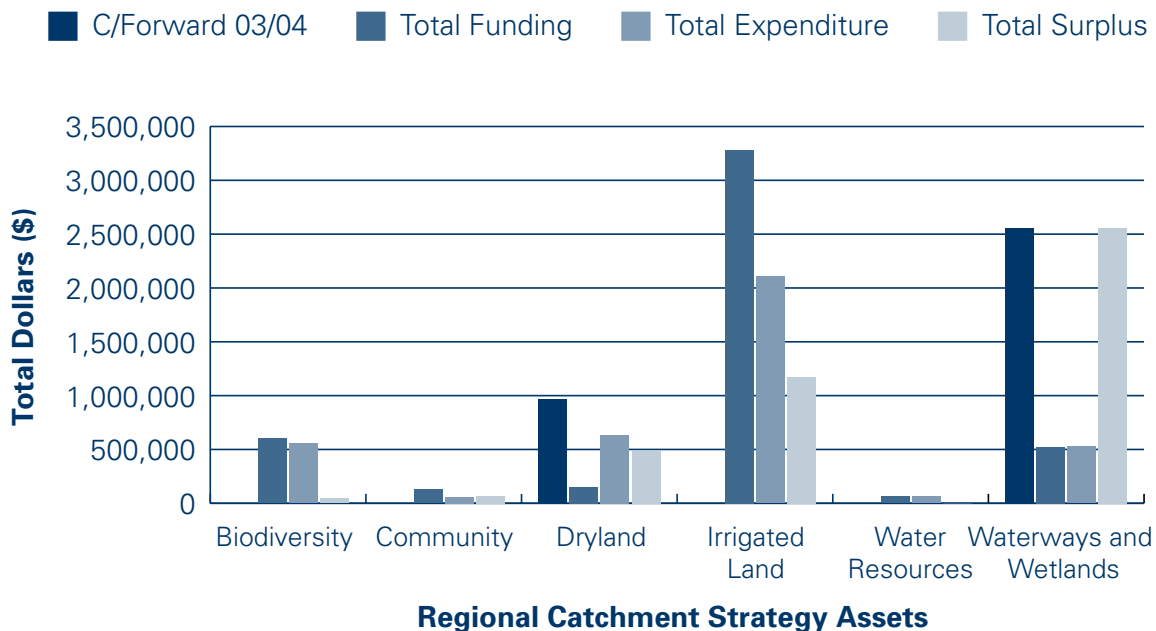
In 2004–05, the area’s budget was more than \$9.65 million (including carry forward) comprising 51 per cent Victorian Government funds (through the Our Water Our Future and Water Trust initiatives), 46 per cent National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Natural Heritage Trust funds, and

the remaining from regional sources. Most of this funding was invested in addressing the irrigated land, waterways and wetlands, and dryland assets of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy.

The North Central CMA managed \$8.27 million of this funding, with \$1.38 million managed directly through the Department of Primary Industries. The financial summary below shows the project funding delivered directly in this area through the North Central CMA. The funding is grouped by Regional Catchment Strategy asset class.

Total Financial Position

RCS Asset Class	C/Forward 03/04 \$	Total Funding \$	Total Expenditure \$	Total Surplus \$
Biodiversity	-	600,000	556,191	43,809
Community	-	126,000	59,500	66,500
Dryland	967,786	152,312	632,674	487,424
Irrigated Land	-	3,280,000	2,105,590	1,174,410
Water Resources	-	64,000	64,000	-
Waterways and Wetlands	2,558,990	525,000	528,439	2,555,551
Total	3,526,776	4,747,312	3,946,395	4,327,693



2004–05 Program Delivery

Sustainable Agriculture

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- Key incentive delivery of soil salinity surveys (3,665 ha)
- irrigation and drainage whole farm plans (6,231 ha)
- irrigation water reuse systems (eight)
- saving 1913 ML impacting off-farm
- 1,320 people provided with improved knowledge, skills and/or understanding for sustainable land and water management.

Future Land Use

The key component of this project in 2004–05 was:

- undertaking key research and development sub-projects identified in the KSH FLUPP to improve the community's ability to adjust to water reforms. Sub-projects include:
 - understanding the social implications of permanent water trading
 - benchmarking current values of targeted Kerang wetlands
 - and clarifying statutory roles and responsibilities of these wetlands
 - developing a data information system to inform irrigation reconfiguration.

Wetland Management

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- clarifying roles and responsibilities of regional wetland managers and stakeholders
- utilising the wetland prioritisation framework to develop a priority list of regional wetlands in the Loddon Murray region
- continuing to assess wetland based options in the KSHFLUPP Community Preferred Options Paper
- providing professional support to undertake relevant KSHFLUPP Community Preferred Options paper activities
- supported consolidation of Avoca Marshes investigations into an operational management plan
- engaging the community and commencing preparation of a Lake Meran Complex operational management plan
- determining down-basin impacts of proposed wetland operational management plans
- beginning negotiations with the Lake Elizabeth community to protect the Murray Hardyhead
- supporting new North Central CMA Implementation Committee arrangements and facilitating stakeholder engagement in wetland planning and management.

Biodiversity Enhancement

This project has contributed to an increase in the extent and quality of native vegetation, maintained ecological processes (including habitat for threatened species), and raised community understanding and awareness of biodiversity conservation.

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- developing a local area Biodiversity Action Plan
- protecting and managing existing priority remnants, as well as supporting the Northern Plains Grasslands Conservation Management Network
- protecting, improving and managing riparian vegetation along waterways
- improving the integrity, connectivity and viability of existing habitat and associated biota
- implementing Threatened Species Recovery Plans for the endangered Chariot Wheels, Small Scurf-pea, Winged Peppercross, Vulnerable Australian Painted Snipe, Growling Grass Frog, Murray Hardyhead and Plains Wanderer.

Surface Water Management

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- applying for relevant planning approvals for construction of Benwell Primary Drain
- refining community engagement arrangements under the revised North Central CMA Implementation Committee structure
- developing future management arrangements and operational management plans for specific drainage catchments, such as the 350km of North Central CMA drains and 650km of private community surface drains on Tragowel Plains
- preparing an environmental assessment of the Wandella Water Management Scheme.

Salt Interception

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- monitoring, preparing and maintaining the North Central SDE Register and preparing an Annual Report to the Murray Darling Basin Commission
- determining the impacts on the Kerang Lakes through-flow and SDE impacts of water sector restructuring
- utilising previous investigations into altering Lake Charm outfall operation guidelines and undertaking agreed alterations
- communicating with the local community about relevant SDE activities, reports and monitoring
- developing community engagement arrangements under the revised North Central CMA Implementation Committee structure
- managing construction of the Pyramid Creek salt harvesting facility.

Loddon Campaspe Land and Water Management Planning

The key focus for this project is to develop the Loddon Campaspe Land and Water Management Plan, encompassing key water reform issues as identified in the Victorian Government's Our Water Our Future initiative that will be managed by Catchment Management Authorities.

The Plan will further develop the Loddon Murray Land and Water Management Strategy and expand the geographic area covered to include relevant Campaspe/Rochester areas.

The project also included monitoring, evaluating and reporting on current land and water management activities, involving the local community in advising and deciding on land and water management and ensuring best practices are undertaken to lead towards a sustainable future.

Shire-based Landcare Coordination

This project involves building community capacity in natural resource management via a Landcare Support Program which encompasses:

- action planning
- training
- communication and networking
- publicity
- developing partnerships
- increasing Landcare groups' resources.

Tackling pests

Key components of this project in 2004–05, achieved through our partnership with the Department of Primary Industries, were:

- providing technical support to community group control programs
- undertaking compliance action on priority weeds in priority locations
- responding to new and emerging weed issues
- implementing recommendations of the North Central Rabbit Action Plan
- providing a bait supply service for community rabbit control programs
- undertaking compliance action on recalcitrant landholders in priority locations.

Serpentine to Boort Floodplain Management Plan

The key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- * working to achieve an equitable distribution of flows across the floodplain
- * providing environmental flows to several wetlands.

Kerang to Little Murray Floodplain Management Plan

The key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- * working to enable larger floods to pass through the area without undue hardship.
- * determining flood protection levels from the existing levees.

Flooding Enhancement of Gunbower Forest

The Living Murray initiative was established to address the decline in the health of the River Murray. In 2003, the Gunbower and Koondrook–Perricoota forests were identified as a Living Murray 'icon site'. As a Significant Ecological Asset of the River Murray, these floodplain systems have become a high priority for conservation and rehabilitation. Their conservation is supported by The Living Murray initiative through funding and water allocations.

The North Central CMA manages the Flooding Enhancement of Gunbower Forest Project, which aims to protect the ecological values of Gunbower through improved management of environmental water.



Neville Prince shares his expertise at a field day in Serpentine, as part of the community engagement component of the Loddon Stressed River project.

Through the project, strong partnerships have been developed with the community, including Indigenous groups, the Department of Sustainability and Environment, Goulburn–Murray Water and Parks Victoria.

Key components of the project in 2004–05 include:

- developing and receiving endorsement for the Gunbower Forest Site Environmental Management Plan
- building community relationships through local networks
- developing and implementing the Draft Community Engagement and Communication Strategy
- building Indigenous relationships through cultural heritage assessments
- completing final designs for the refurbishment of three regulators
- completing final designs for the construction of the Little Gunbower Creek Regulator
- applying for relevant planning approvals for the construction of Little Gunbower Creek Regulator
- implementing the Gunbower Forest monitoring program including; flood inundation mapping, fish surveys, vegetation surveys, groundwater monitoring and colonial water bird surveys.
- further investigations into five water management options
- providing environmental flows to the valuable wetlands and red gum communities of the forest
- providing environmental flows for the successful breeding of colonial waterbirds.

Outputs achieved

The following table shows the North Central CMA's performance in the Loddon/Campaspe Irrigation area measured against the target outputs identified in the Regional Management Plan.

Outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	50	45	90%
Participants in skills & training events (No.)	1,288	1,320	102%
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	42	41	98%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	118	120.1	102%
Active community support positions (EFT) (e.g. Landcare facilitators, coordinators) (No.)	1.4	1.4	100%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	17	21.8	128%
Landcare groups/networks with Action Plans (No.)	7	7	100%
Coordinated projects with industry groups (No.)	1	2	200%
Onground works			
Legal conservation covenants & other legal agreements (e.g. Bushtender) (No.)	163	162	99%
Voluntary conservation agreements or landholder agreements (Ha)	150	290	193%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation protected by fencing (Ha)	100	60	60%
Indigenous/local-origin riparian vegetation protected (Km)	10	4	40%
Indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) vegetation enhanced (Ha)	200	250	125%
Significant species/ecological community habitat management (e.g. ecological burns/fire hazard removal) (Ha)	120	120	100%
Pest management – private land protected (where pest does not exist as a result of control activities) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	3000	500	17%
Pest management – private land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	16,500	12,650	77%
Pest management – public land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	0	300	100%
Land treated for rising groundwater through surface drainage by type of drain (regional/community) (Ha)	170	310	182%
Irrigated land using improved management (soil moisture monitoring, laser-grading etc.) (Ha)	50	440.15	880%
Farm water saved from the installation of farm reuse system (ML)	1,243	1,913	154%
Animal effluent removal/containment systems installed (e.g. dairy, settlement ponds, urban dog) (No.)	3	8	267%
Landholders on priority properties complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	98	99	101%
Landholders on priority properties with priority weeds complying with requirements under CaLP Act (%)	95	98	103%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.)	11	4.95	45%
Endangered species action statements & recovery plans developed (No.)	7	7	100%
Property management plans developed by type (Whole Farm Plan etc.) by stage of development (surveyed or design stage) (Ha)	3,460	6,231	180%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	15	9.7	65%
Research assessment			
Research & development studies undertaken (No.)	14	13	93%
Investigation area surveyed or mapped (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, inventory) (Ha)	500	3,665.02	733%
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	11	7.6	69%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.)	1,065	1,060	100%
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	2	2.2	110%
Decision support tools (No.)	6	6	100%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	14	112.7	805%

case study: Gunbower Forest Birdwatch a winner

In March 2004, the North Central CMA announced the winner of its 'Birdwatch in Gunbower Forest' survey, which encouraged the local community to help identify water birds in the Forest.

Peter and Kylie Doyle from Cohuna were rewarded for their efforts recording bird species in the Forest. The Doyle family live on the edge of Gunbower Creek and have sighted many water birds over the years, including the threatened White-bellied Sea Eagle – the second largest bird of prey in Australia.

According to North Central CMA Project Officer, Heidi Wagner, the Birdwatch survey helped record valuable information about water birds visiting the Forest in response to the Spring 2004 artificial flooding.

"We'd like to thank all the community members who participated in the survey," said Heidi. "The most common water birds recorded in Gunbower Forest throughout the summer have been Great Egrets, Sacred Ibis, Royal Spoonbill and Pied Cormorants."

The North Central CMA manages the 'Flooding Enhancement of Gunbower Forest' project. One of the project's key ecological objectives is to reinstate permanent and semi-permanent wetlands to 50 per cent of their natural, pre-river regulation area, so that species normally found in the wetland are present.



North Central CMA Gunbower Forest Project Officer Heidi Wagner congratulates Peter and Tess Doyle for their efforts in the Gunbower Forest Birdwatch survey.

The project also aims to restore the breeding frequency of colony water birds to at least three in 10 years.

"Floodwaters are essential for successful water bird breeding in Gunbower Forest, as they provide suitable habitat for food supply and breeding," said Heidi.

"The Gunbower Forest wetlands support fish eating and wading birds such as Cormorants and Darters, and provide nesting sites for colony breeding species such as Egrets, Herons and Ibis," Heidi said.

Matters for Target

The following table shows the projects undertaken within the Loddon/Campaspe Irrigation area, the Matters for Target they work to achieve, and their project type.

Matters for Target are standard national outcomes used to measure the achievements of natural resource management through programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the Natural Heritage Trust.

Project Type	Matters for Target													Project Type
	Land Salinity	Soil Condition	Native Vegetation	Inland Aquatic Ecosystems	Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Habitat Integrity	Nutrients in Aquatic Environment	Turbidity/Suspended Particulate Matter in Aquatic Environments	Surface Water Salinity in Freshwater Aquatic Environments	Significant Native Species and Ecological Communities	Ecological Significant Invasive Species	On Ground Works	Planning	Resource Assessment	
Sustainable Agriculture	Primary Focus	Secondary Focus			X			Secondary Focus				Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus
Future Land Use					X			Secondary Focus	Primary Focus			Secondary Focus	Primary Focus	Secondary Focus
Wetland Management				Primary Focus	X			Secondary Focus				Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus
Biodiversity Enhancement					X							Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus
Surface Water Management					X							Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus
Salt Interception	Secondary Focus				X							Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus
Loddon Campaspe Land & Water Mgt Planning	Primary Focus				X			Secondary Focus				Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus
Shire-based Landcare Coordinators			Secondary Focus		X							Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus
Tackling Pests					X					Primary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus	Secondary Focus	Primary Focus

Primary Focus Secondary Focus Tertiary Focus



Regional

Regional projects encompass the whole North Central region and received funds from both the Victorian and Australian governments, and regional sources such as Murray–Darling Basin Commission and other Catchment Management Authorities.

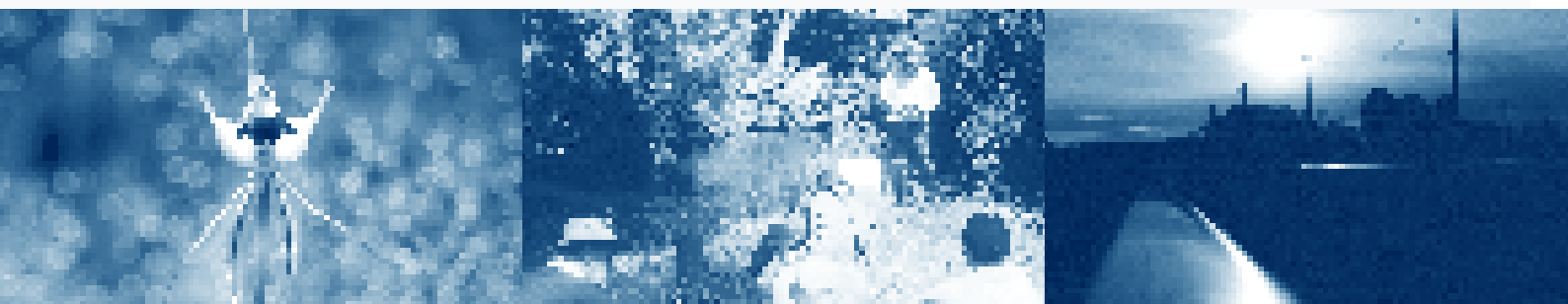
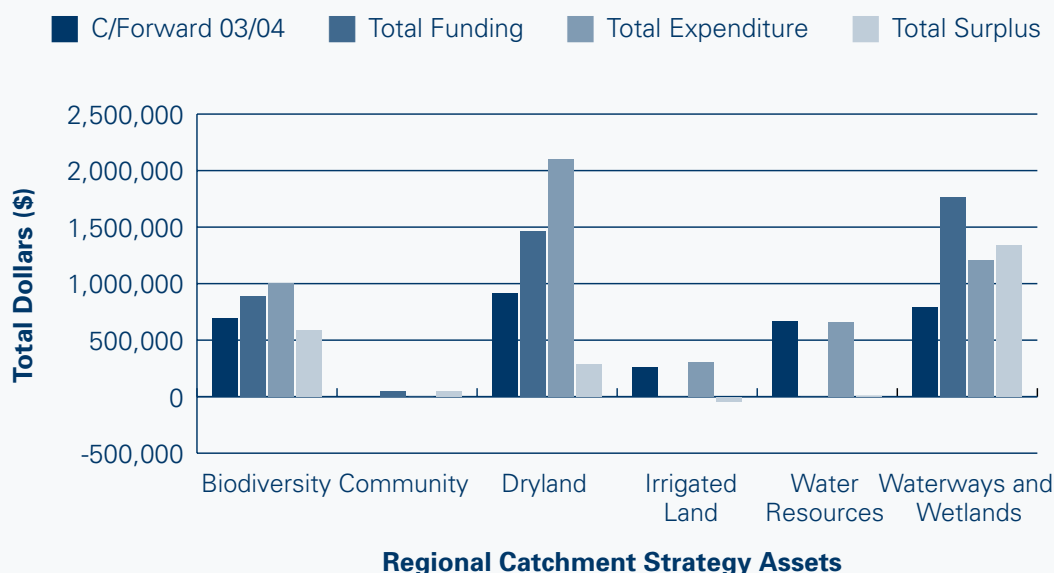
In 2004–05, the Regional budget was more than \$7.74 million (including carry forward) comprising 48 per cent National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, Natural Heritage Trust and National Landcare Program funds, 35 per cent Victorian Government funds and the remaining from regional sources. Most of this funding was invested in

addressing the waterways, wetlands, dryland and biodiversity assets of the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy.

The North Central CMA managed \$7.50 million of this funding, with \$0.24 million managed directly through the Department of Primary Industries. The financial summary on the following page shows the Regional project funding delivered directly through the North Central CMA. The funding is grouped by Regional Catchment Strategy asset class.

Total Financial Position

RCS Asset Class	C/Forward 03/04 \$	Total Funding \$	Total Expenditure \$	Total Surplus \$
Biodiversity	692,675	892,938	1,001,382	584,232
Community	-	50,000	-	50,000
Dryland	915,391	1,467,849	2,099,570	283,670
Irrigated Land	262,498	-	305,177	-42,679
Water Resources	667,314	-	659,962	7,352
Waterways and Wetlands	789,872	1,764,333	1,211,515	1,342,691
Total	3,327,751	4,175,120	5,277,606	2,225,265



2004–05 Program Delivery

Regional Landcare Coordination

This project involves building community capacity in natural resource management via a Landcare Support Program that encompasses:

- action planning
- training
- communication and networking
- publicity
- developing partnerships
- increasing Landcare groups' resources.

Natural Resource Management Coordination

The key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- providing leadership and support to increase the level and effectiveness of community and other stakeholder involvement in regional natural resource management processes, in particular

the delivery of the Natural Heritage Trust and National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

- supporting and communicating Australian and Victorian natural resource management initiatives at a regional scale with a view to forming partnerships and mutual understanding
- assisting in communicating North Central CMA natural resource management programs and issues to government.

Corporate Governance

This project identifies the main overhead costs of the North Central CMA. These are:

- Governance costs. This is the cost of supporting the Board and all directly attributable costs, such as employment costs, phone calls, conferences, training, insurances, meeting expenses and mileage reimbursement

- CEO and Support. This is the cost of the CEO and all directly attributable costs and support
- Business Manager and Support. This the cost of the Business Manager and support, and includes the general overhead costs of the organisation, such as stationery, photocopying, insurance, telephone calls and information technology.

Regional Communication and Community Engagement

The key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- coordinating media activity, including the organisation of media events, liaison with media networks, and preparation of feature material on specific programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Natural Heritage Trust programs and projects
- ensuring the dissemination of concise and accurate information to the community on the implementation and progress of projects under the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy
- coordinating community events, advertising, sponsorship and electronic communication
- working with the Implementation Committees to develop and implement communication activities and tools.



Vox Bandicoot captivate an audience in National Water Week

Waterwatch

The project involves implementing the Waterwatch program across North Central Victoria to raise school and community awareness and understanding of water quality and catchment health issues, and to further involve the community in natural resource management.

The key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- engaging members of the community through active school and community monitoring programs
- undertaking quality control of data collection
- integrating Waterwatch data into other waterways projects.

Second Generation Landcare Grants Program

The Second Generation Landcare Grants program makes Victorian government funding available for community projects by groups and in some cases individuals to address a range of issues.

Funding is provided for:

- project coordination
- community education, capacity building and group maintenance
- onground works including fencing, revegetation, protection and enhancement of remnant vegetation and habitat, and pest control.

Vegetation Best Management Practice

The project aims to contribute to:

- a reversal across the regional landscape of the long term decline in the quality and extent of native vegetation
- maintaining and enhancing ecological processes across the region
- maintaining or improving the present diversity of species and ecological communities and their viability across each bioregion
- ensuring that there is no further preventable decline in the viability of rare or threatened species or ecological communities.

Working with Local Government

This project seeks to ensure coordination between the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy and local government Municipal Strategic Statements to support integrated natural resource management and land use planning.

This project aims to integrate key natural resource management datasets and to develop user-friendly conceptual models that contribute to planning decisions that improve water quality and reduce salinity.

Regional Monitoring, Target-setting and Evaluation

Key components of this project in 2004–05 were:

- ensuring that appropriate benchmarking is available to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timeframed targets
- engaging communities to establish community acceptable targets
- documenting target setting methodology/ processes and sensitive assumptions (baseline, biophysical processes, social and economic aspects, funding and participation rates)
- reviewing and refining regional monitoring to enable progress towards targets to be measured
- developing a consistent approach to monitoring and evaluation at a project level
- establishing annual Catchment Condition Reporting
- providing professional technical support
- helping develop monitoring and evaluation skills of partner stakeholders in the region
- mapping, performing baseline assessments and recording the site condition, photopoint and onground activities of 1,000 implementation sites.

Biodiversity Research and Development

Key components of this project in 2004-05 were:

- obtaining quality assurance in project design, specification and evaluation

case study: Regional response to a global issue

Our climate is changing. According to the CSIRO, the 20th century was the warmest the world has seen in 1,800 years and the 1990s was the warmest decade on record.

In response to the global challenge of climate change, Bendigo hosted a two-day national conference in September 2004 on the challenges faced by North Central Victoria of climate change.

At the inaugural Climate, Catchments and Communities Conference, about 150 delegates heard from national and local speakers on the myriad of issues the region faces from a predicted warmer, drier climate.

The conference was an initiative of the North Central CMA in collaboration with the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance, the Australian Greenhouse Office and the Victorian Government.

North Central CMA Chairman Dr Ian MacBean said local organisations such as the CVGA and North Central CMA have an established track record of achievement in regional approaches to climate change and natural resource management that had paved the way for a regional response involving the regional community.

“One major highlight of the conference was the roundtable discussion on the implications of climate change, which aimed to identify and commit to the future steps required for an effective regional response to climate change,” said Dr MacBean.

Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance chairman Councillor Rod Fyffe said gaining a better understanding of how changes in our climate were likely to affect our land, water and biodiversity would enable communities to better prepare for these possibilities.

“While the Climate, Catchments and Communities Conference had a regional focus, it was also of national significance with a host of high calibre speakers outlining the practical steps our regional community can take to deal with the global issue of climate change,” Cr Fyffe said.

The conference was aimed at regional communities, government and non-government organisations and natural resource management bodies who all have a stake in being ‘climate ready.’

The Climate, Catchments and Communities Conference featured prominent speakers including CSIRO Atmospheric Research Division’s Dr Roger Jones, Greening Australia CEO Carl Binning, Land & Water Australia Executive Director Andrew Campbell and North Central CMA Board Member and RMIT University Professor Tony Norton as well as CVGA acting Executive Officer Terry White.

An important message from the conference is that an opportunity exists for North Central Victoria to become a national leader in its regional response to climate change.



A summer dust storm in Donald – according to CSIRO studies, global warming will make Donald’s climate more like that of Ouyen. Photo: Julia Walsh.

Action undertaken in this region to address the global issue of climate change includes:

- developing the 'Regional Response to Climate Change – Native Revegetation Action Plan'
- collaborating with the Australian Greenhouse Office on a project to assess the impact of climate change on catchment salt and water balances for selected catchments in Victoria
- developing an Investment Prospectus for Permanent Greenhouse Related Conservation Plantings with funding support from the Victorian Greenhouse Office
- coordinating a number of climate/natural resource management workshops and conferences to raise awareness and participation in Greenhouse activities.

- achieving peer review of the science underpinning the investigative effort
- transferring/communicating knowledge between key stakeholders
- fostering/brokering of additional collaborations
- developing investigation themes

Roadside Vegetation Plans

This project aims to improve the management of native vegetation on roadsides and other linear reserves. All 14 shires in North Central Victoria will work in partnership with the North Central CMA's Roadsides Taskforce to identify and assess ecological significance of roadside vegetation on the 44,500 km of roads in the region.

The project will run under the direction of the Regional Roadsides Coordinator and will develop

and revise Roadside Management Plans and implement their recommendations. The ultimate goal of this project is to improve the condition and extent of native vegetation on roadsides (and other linear reserves) by developing and implementing high quality RMPs for all roadsides in the North Central region.

Regionally Significant Wetlands

This project aims to ensure the conservation and wise-use of wetlands within the north central region through an integrated and coordinated approach to wetland management.

Key components of the project in 2004–05 include:

- establishing a regional wetlands project team consisting of key stakeholders and community

Outputs achieved

The following table shows the North Central CMA's performance through Regional projects measured against the target outputs identified in the Regional Management Plan.

Outputs achieved	Target	Achieved	%
Capacity building			
Skills & training events held (e.g. workshops, seminars etc.) (No.)	128	139.5	109%
Key materials developed for skills & training events (e.g. workbooks, course notes etc.) (No.)	7	8	114%
Awareness raising forums (e.g. demonstration sites, field days, field trips etc.) (No.)	245	1,370	559%
Key materials or products developed for awareness raising forums (e.g. brochures, media articles, webpages etc.) (No.)	148	193	130%
Community groups or community projects assisted (No.)	72	66	92%
Individuals filling active community support positions (No.)	6.9	6.9	100%
Landcare group priority setting/planning sessions (No.)	1	1	100%
Onground works			
Revegetation with indigenous/local-origin (riparian/terrestrial) species (Ha)	0	78	100%
Revegetation of riparian zone (Km)	0	2.5	100%
Seed collected (kg)	800	800	100%
Significant species/ecological community habitat management (e.g. ecological burns/fire hazard removal) (Ha)	15	15	100%
Pest management – private land enhanced (where pest already exists) from (weeds, rabbits etc.) through the implementation of pest control activities (spraying, baiting etc.) (Ha)	61,000	44,268	73%
Planning			
Catchment or subcatchment management/action plans developed (No.)	6	1	17%
Communication plan developed (No.) ¹	5	1	20%
Evaluation plan developed (No.)	2	1.8	90%
Best management practice guidelines developed (No.)	8	7	88%
Other statutory planning referrals (e.g. new irrigation development) (No.)	260	501	193%
Resource assessment			
Research & development studies undertaken (No.)	1	1	100%
Investigation area surveyed or mapped (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, inventory) (Ha)	3,8967	8,000	21%
Investigation studies or assessments undertaken (e.g. vegetation mapping, soil surveys, benchmarking) (No.)	4	2	50%
Baseline/trend/condition sites monitored (No.) ²	1,015	562	55%
Baseline/trend/condition reports produced (No.)	7	3.9	56%
Decision support tools (No.)	5	5	100%
Major reviews or evaluations (No.)	2	1	50%

¹ A number of these plans drafted, expected to be finalised by end 2005.

² This output will not be met. A variation has been requested.

- representatives
- finalising North Central CMA wetlands background paper
- completing inventory of regional wetlands
- completing desktop study on values, threats and condition of wetlands in the region
- commencing development of the North Central Regional Wetlands Strategy.

Stormwater Partnerships

This project continues the partnership between the North Central CMA and local government in implementing council Stormwater Management Plans. The North Central CMA sought proposals from councils to co-fund approved stormwater projects. Five stormwater infrastructure projects were selected for funding, one in each of the Northern Grampians, Loddon, Campaspe, Central Goldfields and Buloke Shires. A Memorandum of Understanding between the North Central CMA and each council will ensure funds are transferred to local government for implementation of the projects.

Administration of Statutory Functions (Water Act)

Under the *Water Act 1989*, the North Central CMA aims to reduce the impact of flood damage to new buildings, help conserve and preserve flora, fauna and habitat in designated waterways, reduce water quality decline by appropriate siting of buildings, and providing effluent disposal sites away from streams.

The functions include providing:

- permits to construct and operate works on a waterway, compliance and community education
- responses to planning permit referrals for developments within a flood prone area
- responses to applications for flood levels, flood risk reports and flood information before development
- flood planning information and advice to Councils, State Emergency Services, developers and others
- Flood Response Action Plans, including collection of flood information after a flood and assistance with emergency planning and flood warning
- flood data management.

Matters for Target

The following table shows the Regional projects, the Matters for Target they work to achieve, and their project type.

Matters for Target are standard national outcomes used to measure the achievements of natural resource management through programs such as the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, and the

Project Type	Land Salinity	Soil Condition	Native Vegetation	Inland Aquatic Ecosystems	Estuarine, Coastal and Marine Habitat Integrity	Nutrients in Aquatic Environment	Turbidity/Suspended Particulate Matter in Aquatic Environments	Surface Water Salinity in Freshwater Aquatic Environments	Significant Native Species and Ecological Communities	Ecological Significant Invasive Species	On Ground Works	Planning	Resource Assessment	Capacity Building
	Matters for Target											Project Type		
Regional Landcare Coordinator					x									
NRM Coordination	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Corporate Governance	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Regional Communication and Community Engagement	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x				
Waterwatch					x									
Second Generation Landcare Grants Program					x									
Vegetation Best Management Practice					x									
Native Vegetation Management					x									
Native Vegetation Framework					x									
Working with Local Government					x									
Regional Monitoring, Target-setting and Evaluation					x									
Biodiversity Research and Development					x									
Roadside Vegetation Plans					x									
Regionally Significant Wetlands					x									
Stormwater Partnerships					x									
Administration of Statutory Functions (Water Act)					x									

Primary Focus
 Secondary Focus
 Tertiary Focus

The Board

The North Central CMA Board is responsible for the strategic direction of land and water management in Victoria's North Central region. Board members provide leadership rather than operational management. They set the vision and direction for integrated natural resource management. In effect, they set priorities, evaluate results, monitor the external and internal environment and identify opportunities.

11 meetings held July 2004–June 2005

Board members	Meetings attended		
John Brooke	9	Yvonne Postlethwaite	8
Malcolm Fyffe	10	Jean Sutherland	8*
Noel Harvey	9	Alison Teese	11
Ian MacBean	11	Greg Toll	11
Jill McFarlane	9	Rob Price	9
Stuart McLean	10	Ken Ashton	11
Tony Norton	9		

* Including one meeting commitment endorsed by the Board.



Ian MacBean OAM (Chair)

Ian's interest in regional environmental issues developed as he grew up on a salt-affected farm in the Barr Creek catchment.

Ian has many current and previous involvements in education, regional development and natural resource management.

He is currently involved in the Regional Enterprise Network (Central Victoria), the Area Consultative Committee (Central Victoria), the Community Foundation for Bendigo and Central Victoria, the Loddon Murray Community Alliance and the Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance. Ian was awarded an OAM in 1993 for services to town and regional planning and the environment.



Alison Teese (Deputy Chair)

Alison is a partner in a mixed farming business at Carisbrook and has extensive experience in natural resource planning and management in Victoria.

Alison is currently a member of the Victorian Catchment Management Council and a Director of Central Highlands Water. She has recently retired from the Australian Landcare Council.



Ken Ashton

Ken has extensive experience in natural resource management over a 34-year period. He has worked in nine locations across Victoria and was the inaugural CEO with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

Ken's present role is Community Relationships Manager, North Central and Mallee CMA regions.



John Brooke OAM

John farms cattle and walnuts near Pyramid Hill. He is a member of the Loddon Shire Council and the Board of Goulburn–Murray Water as well as the Goldfields Library Corporation. He chairs the audit committees of North Central CMA and Goulburn–Murray Water.

In 2005 he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia for his services to local government, water resource management, the accounting profession and education.



Malcolm Fyffe

Malcolm operates a family sheep and wool farm south of Newstead. He is President of the Midlands branch of the Victorian Farmers Federation and is a member of the local Landcare group.

Malcolm empathises with the challenges faced by farmers in balancing farm profitability and environment management issues.



Noel Harvey OAM

Noel has a strong background in local government, including four years as Mayor of the Shires of Kyneton and Macedon Ranges. He is also the Deputy Chairman of the Coliban Regional Water Authority and Chairman of the Victorian Mineral Water Committee, and works as a business and resource management consultant.

Noel was awarded an OAM in 2004 for services to local government, regional Victoria and the Kyneton community.



Jill McFarlane

Jill has a farming family background in Western Victoria and South Australia and currently lives at Passing Clouds, a winery near Inglewood.

Now serving her second term on the North Central CMA Board, Jill strongly believes in the need to involve the community in natural resource management and is committed to developing positive links with a wide range of land managers and community groups.



Stuart McLean

Stuart is a primary producer from Wycheproof. He has valuable experience in local government and is a councillor and former Mayor of the Buloke Shire. Stuart has a strong interest in regional communities and development. He chairs the Northern Grampians Buloke Shire Landcare Network and is Chair of the Great Murray and Outback Touring Route.

Stuart is also the Vice President of the Livestock Saleyards Association of Victoria and a Board member of the Regional Enterprise Network.



Tony Norton

Tony is the Professor of Spatial Information Science and Head of Geospatial Science at RMIT University, residing in Bendigo. He has extensive experience in academia, government and business in Australia and overseas.

Tony's broad expertise encompasses ecology, resource and land management, resource economics and environmental policy. As a North Central CMA Board member, he has a strong commitment to community consultation and participation in public policy development.



Yvonne Postlethwaite

Yvonne is a business manager of a grain farm in St Arnaud. She is involved in a range of community groups including the Community Resource Centre, Development and Tourism Association, Community Capacity Building Initiative and was a former North Central CMA Implementation Committee member.

Yvonne has a strong commitment to natural resource management through sustainable agricultural practices. She was awarded a PhD in that field and is a past Victorian Rural Woman of the Year (for services to agriculture).



Rob Price

Rob is the Biodiversity Manager for the North West region of the Department of Sustainability and Environment. He has been working in a range of natural resource management roles with the Department for 25 years and recognises the importance of maintaining a strong partnership between DSE and the North Central CMA.



Jean Sutherland

Jean operates an accounting practice at Cohuna and Boort, and is married to a dairy farmer at Cohuna. She is also a director of Goulburn-Murray Water. Jean's interests include the effects of water trading, the drought and future land use, improving irrigation practices and linking the use of irrigated water to land use and the future of irrigation structures.



Greg Toll

Greg is a fourth generation farmer from Gunbower, where he has farmed for over 50 years. He is also a member of the Torrumbarry East of Loddon Board, a founding member of Gunbower Landcare, a member of the Waterwatch and Australian Sheep Breeders committees and a former North Central CMA Implementation Committee member.

Greg has been a Shire of Campaspe councillor for the past seven years and is a former Mayor.

Committees



The Avoca/Avon-Richardson Implementation Committee participates in a local field trip.

Audit Committee

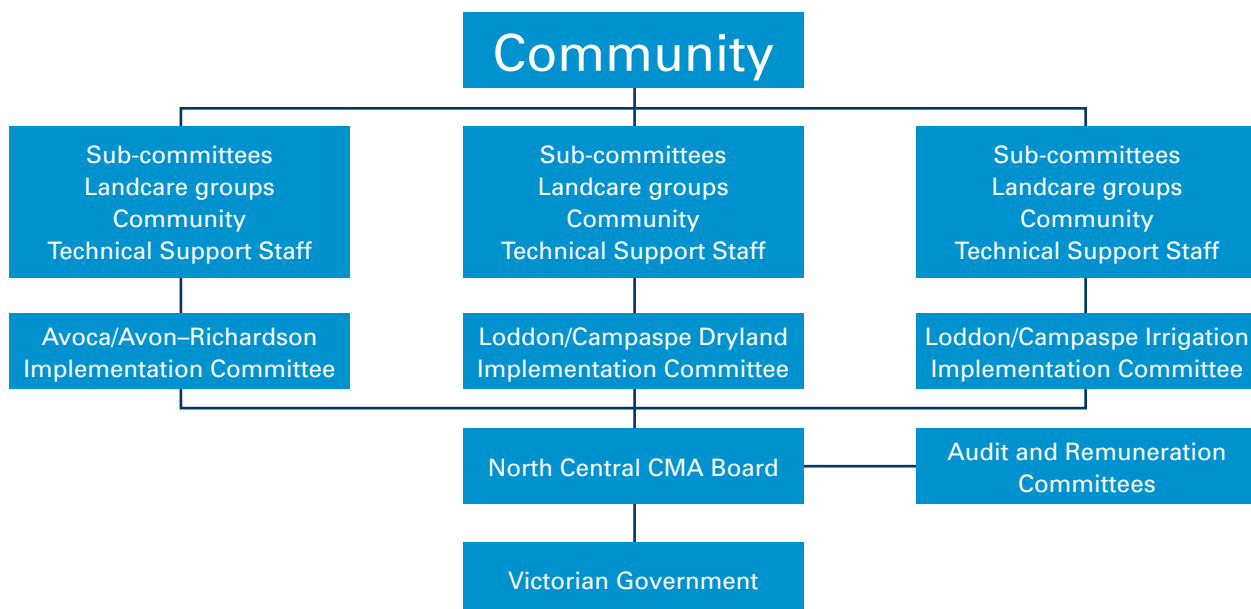
The Audit Committee coordinates the activities of management, internal audit and the role of the Auditor General. It includes members of the North Central CMA Board and has unlimited access to internal or external auditors and North Central CMA officers. The Committee's function is to assist the CEO in discharging his role in relation to the financial management of the North Central CMA. Committee members review monthly and quarterly financial reports and the Authority's annual accounts.

The Audit Committee comprises the following independent North Central CMA Board members:

	Meetings attended
John Brooke (Chair)	12
Yvonne Postlethwaite (Deputy Chair)	9
Ian MacBean	11
Jean Sutherland	11
Tony Norton	5*

* Tony Norton stood down from the Audit Committee in January 2005.

Consultative structure



Implementation Committees

The North Central CMA was established to give communities a strong role in managing natural resources. Community engagement and consultation is a priority and is undertaken through the Implementation Committees.

These Committees play a vital role in effective land and water management in the region.

They oversee the development and delivery of works programs and enable the community to provide input into these programs.

There are three Implementation Committees, representing the:

- Avoca/Avon–Richardson catchment area
- Loddon/Campaspe dryland area
- Loddon/Campaspe irrigation area.

Their role includes:

- providing advice to the North Central CMA on natural resource management objectives, targets, activities, priorities and budgets
- planning, developing and implementing plans for specific issues or sub-catchments
- acting as a communication link with relevant stakeholder groups and the community
- monitoring performance on activities and reporting to the North Central CMA Board on the achievement of objectives and targets.

Avoca/Avon–Richardson IC

- Ken Coates, Chair (Natte Yallock)
- Ann Dunstan (Swanwater West)
- John Knight (Quambatook)
- Rob Loats (Laen)
- Keith McPherson (Gre Gre South)
- Peter Russell (Donald)
- John Storey (Glenloth)
- Doug Streeter (Avoca)
- Peter Watts (Yeungroon)

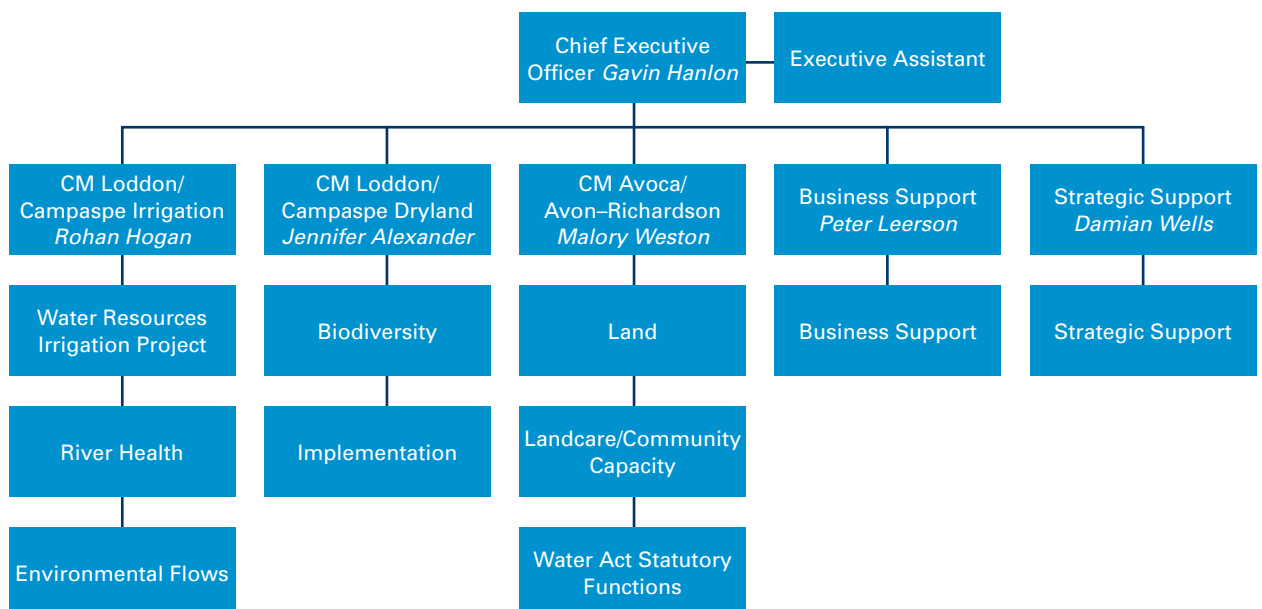
Loddon/Campaspe Irrigation IC

- Geoff Williams, Chair (Tyntynder)
- Christine Brooke (Pyramid Hill)
- Ron Brooks (Echuca East)
- Charlie Gillingham (Lake Charm)
- Neville Goulding (Cohuna)
- Bruce Macague (Rochester)
- John McNeil (Myall)
- Jenette Williams (Echuca)

Loddon/Campaspe Dryland IC

- Jock Leishman, Chair (Clunes)
- Diane Bunnett (Derby)
- Judy Crocker (Lockwood South)
- Tom James (Redesdale)
- Marie Jones (Golden Point)
- John McKinstry (Goornong)
- Shane O’Loughlin (Laanecoorie)
- Adam Poyser (Longlea)
- Peter Shea (Carlsruhe)

Organisational structure



Statutory Reporting Compliance

Objectives, functions and activities

The primary responsibility of the North Central CMA is to ensure that natural resources in the region are managed in an integrated and ecologically sustainable way. The North Central CMA is the peak advisory body on directions and priorities in catchment management in North Central Victoria. This requires coordination and consultation with all community stakeholders. The activities of the North Central CMA are guided by goals set for each of the ten major assets across North Central Victoria as outlined in the North Central Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS).

All projects managed by the North Central CMA are aligned to the RCS goals.

The North Central CMA is also responsible for providing advice to government on regional natural resource management issues. To achieve each resource condition outcome, the North Central CMA must deliver environmental projects directly, or through service providers, land and water managers (public and private) and contractors.

The North Central CMA has two types of business namely:

- (a) Direct Service Delivery involving:
- Waterway Management (River Health)
 - Water Quality and Biodiversity Co-ordination
 - Floodplain Management
 - Catchment Planning (corporate functions) and
- (b) Partnership Business involving:
- Sustainable Agriculture and Land Management (particularly with reference to irrigation and dryland salinity)
 - Water savings and water use efficiency
 - Biodiversity (including vegetation management and private forestry)
 - Landcare Support
 - Pest Plant and Animal Management

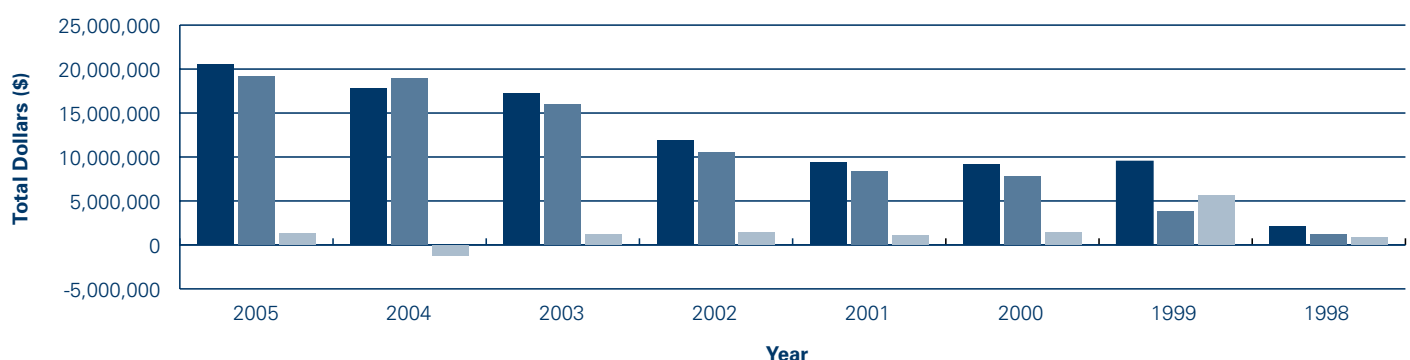
The responsibilities of the North Central CMA as they relate to the *Water Act 1989* are as follows:

- Statutory Planning
- Flood enquiries
- Flood response
- VCAT appeals
- Updates to flood database
- Flood education and advice

Summary of financial position

	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
Revenue from ordinary activities								
Government Contributions	18,471,332	16,392,316	14,426,062	10,840,238	8,656,871	8,485,179	5,064,841	1,732,269
Other Revenue	2,015,426	1,391,440	2,763,154	1,100,866	777,636	699,713	4,458,160	322,934
Total Revenue from Ordinary Activities	20,486,758	17,783,756	17,189,216	11,941,104	9,434,507	9,184,892	9,523,001	2,055,203
Expenditure from ordinary activities								
Corporate	3,033,691	2,439,459	2,294,101	2,230,638	949,578	505,542	902,501	448,945
Works Programs	16,187,955	16,514,523	13,707,424	8,331,404	7,382,637	7,232,985	2,942,158	769,753
Total Expenditure from Ordinary Activities	19,221,646	18,953,982	16,001,525	10,562,042	8,332,215	7,738,527	3,844,659	1,218,698
Surplus for the Year from Ordinary Activities	1,265,112	(1,170,226)	1,187,691	1,379,062	1,102,292	1,446,365	5,678,342	836,505
Total Assets	18,139,369	20,251,599	18,111,098	14,725,548	12,622,077	10,827,369	9,807,285	3,831,230
Total Liabilities	2,929,735	6,741,283	3,430,556	1,232,697	508,288	367,022	407,543	109,830

■ Total Revenue from Ordinary Activities ■ Total Expenditure from Ordinary Activities ■ Surplus for the Year from Ordinary Activities





In the financial year ending 30 June 2005, the North Central CMA's operating surplus from ordinary activities was significantly affected by:

- Government funding from the Victorian and Australian governments increasing by 13 per cent due to the Our Water Our Future initiatives. (Refer note 2 to the financial statements for further details).
- Interest received increasing by 17 per cent due to the greater funding received.
- Regional contributions increasing by 27 per cent due to additional funding from the Murray Darling Basin Commission.
- Corporate and administration expenditure increasing by 24 per cent due to the turnover of the whole car fleet and the \$273,703 loss on valuation of the building at Huntly.
- Works program expenditure increasing by 2 per cent mainly due to salaries increasing by 20 per cent as 25 new positions were created during the financial year.

In the financial year ending 30 June 2005, the North Central CMA's statement of financial position was significantly affected by:

- Decrease in total assets by 10 per cent due to the lower level of receivables at the end of the financial year (decrease by 74%) as all Government funding was received before the end of the financial year. There was, however, an increase in Property Plant and Equipment by 10 per cent due to a revaluation increment of \$434,206
- Decrease in total liabilities by 57 per cent due to a reduction in payables by \$3.8 million as a greater number of invoices were processed and paid before the end of the financial year.

In general, the delivery of major works program expenditure was within defined budgetary objectives. Exceptions were due to agreed changes in committed projects being delivered in the next financial year.

There is no event occurring after balance date that would have a material effect on accounts.

Consultants

There were 58 contracted projects for the 2004–05 financial year with a total cost of contracted engagements of \$6,368,080.

The contracted projects that exceeded \$100,000 are detailed in the following schedule:

Consultant Engaged	Description of Project	Fees Incurred 04/05	Future Commitments
Agriculture Victoria Services Pty Ltd	Catchment Analysis Tool	\$102,000	\$0
Agriculture Victoria Services Pty Ltd GHD Pty Ltd	Land Resource Assessment Stage 1 Lower Avoca River Hydrologic and Risk Management Study	\$100,000	\$0
DSE- Biodiversity URS Australia Pty Ltd	Implementation of Recovery Plans Further Investigations - Water Management Options (Gunbower)	\$216,500 \$295,864	\$5,443 \$0
SLA -DPI 2004-2005 RMP Mid-Loddon Sub-Catchment Management Group	04-05 RMP Projects 2004-05 NLP funded project	\$125,547 \$2,696,110	\$31,949 \$375,634
		\$182,304	\$32,760

Human resource management

The North Central CMA promotes the personal and professional development of its staff to create satisfying career paths for staff members. We actively promote safe work practices, career development, balanced lifestyles and a friendly non-discriminatory working environment.

Occupational health and safety

The North Central CMA adheres to safe work practices and ensures a safe working environment for all its employees. There were no Workcover incidents during the year which required reporting under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act 1985*.

Industrial relations

The North Central CMA enjoys a cooperative relationship with employee representative organisations, who have been involved in the development of the new Enterprise Bargaining Agreement.

The North Central CMA lost no time through industrial accidents or disputes in the 2004–05 financial year.

Workforce data

All new North Central CMA staff are appointed following a comprehensive selection process involving a multi-gender selection panel. All staff appointments are made on the basis of merit and committed to the principles of the *Equal Opportunity Employment Act 1985*. Thirty-four new staff were appointed during the 2004–05 financial year. This represented nine replacement appointments and 25 additional positions created.

Department	2005		2004	
	Part Time	Full Time	Part Time	Full Time
Number of Women	3	29	2	20
Number of Men	1	39	1	24
Total	4	68	3	44

Compliance with the *Building Act 1993*

All buildings under the control of the North Central CMA comply with the provisions of the *Building Act 1993*. No building approvals were sought or needed by the Authority during the 2004–05 financial year.

Cultural diversity, women, youth and Indigenous affairs

The North Central CMA continued to work with the local Indigenous groups following the Protocols, Principles and Strategies Agreement for Indigenous Involvement in Natural Resource Management. The North Central CMA employed an Indigenous facilitator during the financial year.

The North Central CMA Waterwatch program provides education and training opportunities for North Central youth on environmental issues that increase their ability to be involved in natural resource management.

Of the 14 North Central CMA's managers in 2004–05, five were women.

National Competition Policy

The North Central CMA complies with the objectives and aims of the National Competition Policy. No allegations of non-compliance with Government policy were lodged with the North Central CMA for the 2004–05 financial year.

Freedom of information

During the year under review there were no applications to the North Central CMA requesting information under the *Freedom of Information Act 1982*.

Statement of information

The North Central CMA has prepared and made available to the relevant Minister, Members of Parliament and the public on request, the following documents as specified in the *Financial Management Act 1994*.

- Declarations of pecuniary interests duly completed by relevant officers
- Board members' indemnity declarations
- Inwards and outwards correspondence
- Publications produced by the Authority and the places where the publications can be obtained
- Occupational Health & Safety Guidelines.

Statutory planning responsibilities

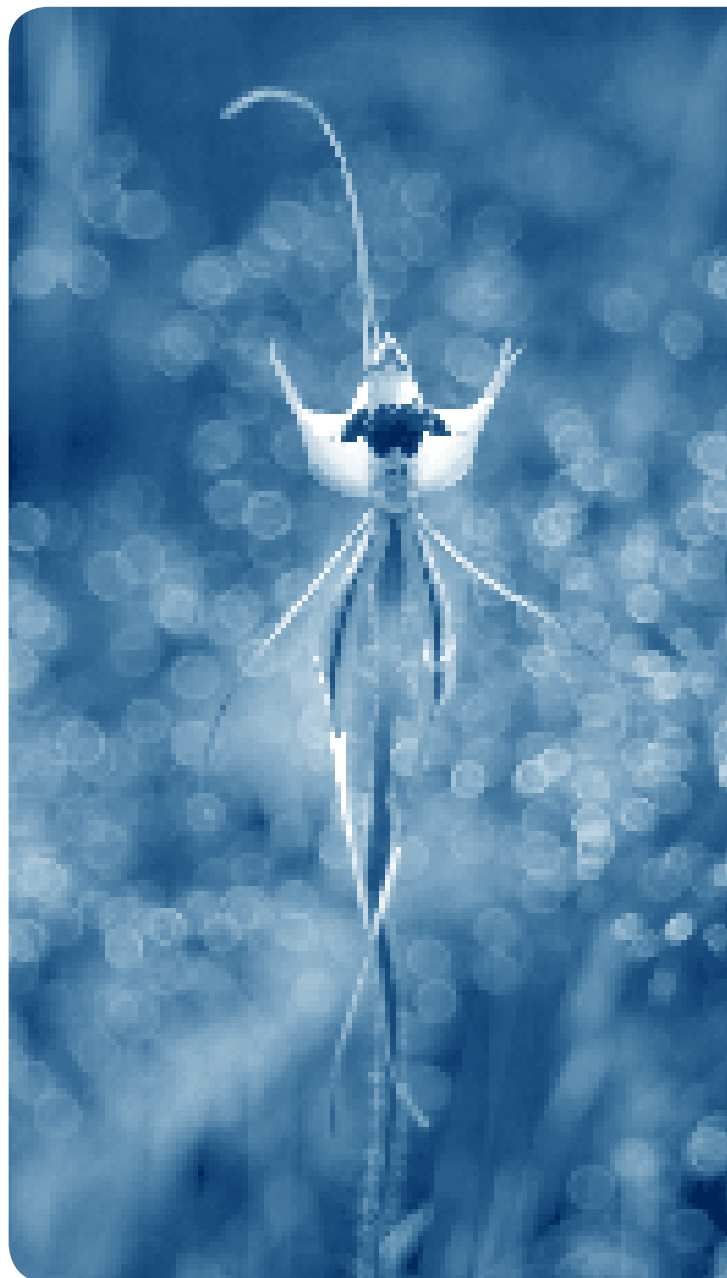
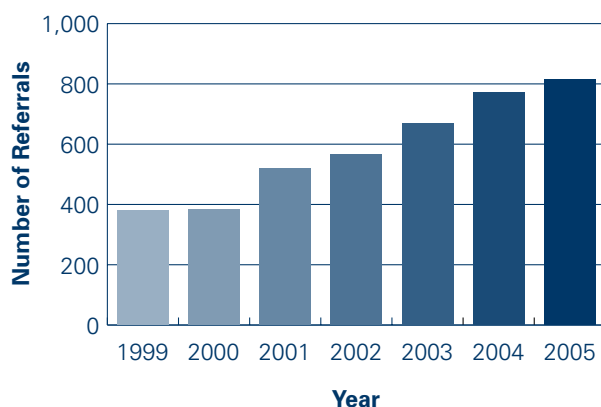
The North Central CMA seeks to manage floodplains, ensure their environmental values and, where appropriate, provide opportunities for sustainable development. The North Central CMA aims to reduce the long-term average losses caused by flood damage to new developments.

Town planning and flood level referrals

There were 816 referrals processed throughout 2004–05.

There were ten compliance issues throughout 2004–05 that warranted an official approach.

There were 1,091 telephone or counter enquiries throughout 2004–05.



Farm dams referrals

Three farm dam referrals were received from Rural Water Authorities in 2004–05. One received a grant of \$15,000. This is the first of the grants.

Works on waterways permit scheme

	2004–05
Enquiries and inspections	409
Complaints	61
Permits issued	68
Exemption approvals	15
Planning referrals	30
VCAT submissions	1

There have been 501 Works on Waterways issues addressed during this financial year, with numbers in each Implementation area as follows:

Loddon/ Campaspe Irrigation area	64
Loddon/ Campaspe Dryland area	376
Avoca/ Avon–Richardson area	61

Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001

Whistleblowers Protection Policy

1 Purpose of these procedures

These procedures establish a system for reporting disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the North Central Catchment Management Authority or its employees. The system enables such disclosures to be made to the protected disclosure coordinator or to one of the nominated Protected disclosure officers. Disclosures may be made by employees or by members of the public.

These procedures are designed to complement normal communication channels between supervisors and employees. Employees are encouraged to continue to raise appropriate matters at any time with their supervisors. As an alternative, employees may make a disclosure of improper conduct or detrimental action under the Act in accordance with these procedures.

2 Introduction and Objectives

The *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001* commenced operation on 1 January 2002. The main objective of the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001* (the Act) is to encourage and facilitate the making of disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by public officers and public bodies. The Act provides protection to whistleblowers who make disclosures in accordance with the Act, and establishes a system for the matters disclosed to be investigated and for rectifying action to be taken.

3 Statement of Support to Whistleblowers

The North Central Catchment Management Authority is committed to the aims and objectives of the *Whistleblowers Protection Act 2001* (the Act). It does not tolerate improper conduct by its employees, officers or members, nor the taking of reprisals against those who come forward to disclose such conduct.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority recognises the value of transparency and accountability in its administrative and management practices, and supports the making of disclosures that reveal corrupt conduct, conduct involving a substantial mismanagement of public resources, or conduct involving a substantial risk to public health and safety or the environment.

The Authority will take all reasonable steps to protect people who make such disclosures from any detrimental action in reprisal for making the disclosure. It will also take all necessary measures to afford natural justice to the person who is the subject of the disclosure.

4 Definitions of key terms

Three key concepts in the reporting system are improper conduct, corrupt conduct and detrimental action. Definitions of these terms are set out below.

Public Bodies include:

- All Government Departments and administrative offices; Statutory Authorities; Municipal Councils; Government appointed Boards and Committees; Government owned companies; Universities; TAFE Colleges; Public Hospitals; State funded Residential Care Services; Health Services contractors; and Correctional Services contractors.

Public Officers include:

- Members of Parliament; Councillors; Council employees; Public Servants; University employees; Police Officers; Protective Services Officers; Administrative Staff of the Chief Commissioner of Police; Teachers; and Office holders appointed by Governor in Council or a Minister.

4.1 Improper conduct

A disclosure may be made about improper conduct by a public body or public official.

Improper conduct means conduct that is corrupt, a substantial mismanagement of public resources, or conduct involving substantial risk to public health or safety or to the environment. The conduct must be serious enough to constitute, if proved, a criminal offence or reasonable grounds for dismissal.

Examples:

- To avoid closure of a towns only industry, an environmental health officer ignores or conceals evidence of illegal dumping of waste.
- An agricultural officer delays or declines imposing quarantine to allow a financially distressed farmer to sell diseased stock.
- A building inspector tolerates poor practices and structural defects in the work of a leading local builder.

See 4.2 below for specific examples of corrupt conduct.

4.2 Corrupt conduct

Corrupt conduct means:

- Conduct of any person (whether or not a public official) that adversely affects the honest performance of a public officer's or public body's functions;
- The performance of a public officer's functions dishonestly or with inappropriate partiality;
- Conduct of a public officer, former public officer or a public body that amounts to a breach of public trust;
- Conduct by a public officer, former public officer or a public body that amounts to the misuse of information or material acquired in the course of the performance of their official functions; or
- A conspiracy or attempt to engage in the above conduct.

Examples:

- A public officer takes a bribe or receives a payment other than his or her wages or salary in exchange for the discharge of a public duty.
- A public officer favours unmeritorious applications for jobs or permits by friends and relatives.
- A public officer sells confidential information.

4.3 Detrimental action

The Act makes it an offence for a person to take detrimental action against a person in reprisal for a protected disclosure.

Detrimental action includes:

- Action causing injury, loss or damage;
- Intimidation or harassment; and
- Discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to a person's employment, career, profession, trade or business, including the taking of disciplinary action.

Examples:

- A public body refuses a deserved promotion of a person who makes a disclosure.
- A public body demotes, transfers, isolates in the workplace or changes the duties of a whistleblower due to the making of a disclosure.
- A person threatens, abuses or carries out other forms of harassment directly or indirectly against the whistleblower, his or her family or friends.
- A public body discriminates against the whistleblower or his or her family and associates in subsequent applications for jobs, permits or tenders.

5 The reporting system

5.1 Contact persons within the North Central Catchment Management Authority.

Disclosures of improper conduct or detrimental action by the North Central Catchment Management Authority or its employees, may be made to the following officers:

The protected disclosure coordinator
03 5448 7124

A protected disclosure officer/s
03 5448 7124

All correspondence, phone calls and emails from internal or external whistleblowers will be referred to the protected disclosure coordinator.

Where a person is contemplating making a disclosure and is concerned about approaching the protected disclosure coordinator or a protected disclosure officer in the workplace, he or she can call the relevant officer and request a meeting in a discreet location away from the workplace.

5.2 Alternative contact persons

A disclosure about improper conduct or detrimental action by the North Central Catchment Management Authority or its employees, may also be made directly to the Ombudsman:

The Ombudsman Victoria
Level 3, 459 Collins Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
(DX 210174)
Internet: www.ombudsman.vic.gov.au
Email: ombudvic@ombudsman.vic.gov.au
Tel: 9613 6222
Toll Free: 1800 806 314
Ombudsman: George Brouwer
Tel: (03) 9613 6202 (As at 1/1/2002)

The following table sets out where disclosures about persons other than employees of North Central Catchment Management Authority should be made.

Person who is the subject of the disclosure	Person/body to whom the disclosure must be made
Employee of a Public Body	That Public Body or the Ombudsman
Member of Parliament (Legislative Assembly)	Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Member of Parliament (Legislative Council)	President of the Legislative Council
Councillor	The Ombudsman
Chief Commissioner of Police	The Ombudsman or Deputy Ombudsman
Member of the police force	The Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman or Chief Commissioner of Police

6 Roles and responsibilities

6.1 Employees

Employees are encouraged to report known or suspected incidences of improper conduct or detrimental action in accordance with these procedures.

All employees of the North Central Catchment Management Authority have an important role to play in supporting those who have made a legitimate disclosure. They must refrain from any activity that is, or could be perceived to be, victimisation or harassment of a person who makes a disclosure.

Furthermore, they should protect and maintain the confidentiality of a person they know or suspect to have made a disclosure.

6.2 Protected disclosure officers

Protected disclosure officers will:

- Be a contact point for general advice about the operation of the Act for any person wishing to make a disclosure about improper conduct or detrimental action;
- Make arrangements for a disclosure to be made privately and discreetly and, if necessary, away from the workplace;
- Receive any disclosure made orally or in writing (from internal and external whistleblowers);
- Commit to writing any disclosure made orally;
- Impartially assess the allegation and determine whether it is a disclosure made in accordance with Part 2 of the Act (that is, a protected disclosure);
- Take all necessary steps to ensure the identity of the whistleblower and the identity of the person who is the subject of the disclosure are kept confidential; and
- Forward all disclosures and supporting evidence to the protected disclosure coordinator.

6.3 Protected disclosure coordinator

The protected disclosure coordinator has a central clearinghouse role in the internal reporting system.

He or she will:

- Receive all disclosures forwarded from the protected disclosure officers;
- Receive all phone calls, emails and letters from members of the public or employees seeking to make a disclosure;
- Impartially assess each disclosure to determine whether it is a public interest disclosure;
- Refer all public interest disclosures to the Ombudsman;
- Be responsible for carrying out, or appointing an investigator to carry out, an investigation referred to the public body by the Ombudsman;
- Be responsible for overseeing and coordinating an investigation

where an investigator has been appointed;

- Appoint a welfare manager to support the whistleblower and to protect him or her from any reprisals;
- Advise the whistleblower of the progress of an investigation into the disclosed matter;
- Establish and manage a confidential filing system;
- Collate and publish statistics on disclosures made;
- Take all necessary steps to ensure the identity of the whistleblower and the identity of the person who is the subject of the disclosure are kept confidential; and
- Liaise with the Chief Executive Officer of the public body.

6.4 Investigator

The investigator will be responsible for carrying out an internal investigation into a disclosure where the Ombudsman has referred a matter to the public body. An investigator may be a person from within an organisation or a consultant engaged for that purpose.

6.5 Welfare manager

The welfare manager is responsible for looking after the general welfare of the whistleblower.

The welfare manager will:

- Examine the immediate welfare and protection needs of a whistleblower who has made a disclosure and seek to foster a supportive work environment;
- Advise the whistleblower of the legislative and administrative protections available to him or her;
- Listen and respond to any concerns of harassment, intimidation or victimisation in reprisal for making disclosure; and
- Ensure the expectations of the whistleblower are realistic.

7 Confidentiality

The North Central Catchment Management Authority will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of the whistleblower. Maintaining confidentiality is crucial in ensuring reprisals are not made against a whistleblower.

The Act requires any person who receives information due to the handling or investigation of a protected disclosure, not to disclose that information except in certain limited circumstances. Disclosure of information in breach of section 22 of the Act constitutes an offence that is punishable by a maximum fine of 60 penalty units (\$6000) or six months imprisonment or both.

The circumstances in which a person may disclose information obtained about a protected disclosure include:

- Where exercising the functions of the public body under the Act;
- When making a report or recommendation under the Act;
- When publishing statistics in the annual report of a public body; and
- In criminal proceedings for certain offences in the Act.

However, the Act prohibits the inclusion of particulars in any report or recommendation that is likely to lead to the identification of the whistleblower. The Act also prohibits the identification of the person who is the subject of the disclosure in any particulars included in an annual report.

The Authority will ensure all files, whether paper or electronic, are kept in a secure room and can only be accessed by the protected disclosure coordinator, protected disclosure officer, the investigator or welfare manager (in relation to welfare matters). All printed material will be kept in files that are clearly marked as a Whistleblower Protection Act matter, and warn of the criminal penalties that apply to any unauthorised divulging of information concerning a protected disclosure. All electronic files will be produced and stored on a stand-alone computer and be given password protection. Backup files will be kept on floppy disc or CDR. All materials relevant to an investigation, such as tapes from interviews, will also be stored securely with the whistleblower files.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority will not email documents relevant to a whistleblower matter and will ensure all phone calls and meetings are conducted in private.

8 Collating and publishing statistics

The protected disclosure coordinator will establish a secure register to record the information required to be published in the annual report, and to generally keep account of the status of whistleblower disclosures. The register will be confidential and will not record any information that may identify the whistleblower.

The register will contain the following information:

- The number and types of disclosures made to public bodies during the year;
- The number of disclosures referred to the Ombudsman for determination as to whether they are public interest disclosures;

- The number and types of disclosed matters referred to the public body by the Ombudsman for investigation;
- The number and types of disclosures referred by the public body to the Ombudsman for investigation;
- The number and types of investigations taken over from the public body by the Ombudsman;
- The number of requests made by a whistleblower to the Ombudsman to take over an investigation by the public body;
- The number and types of disclosed matters that the public body has declined to investigate;
- The number and types of disclosed matters that were substantiated upon investigation and the action taken on completion of the investigation; and
- Any recommendations made by the Ombudsman that relate to the public body.

9 Receiving and assessing disclosures

9.1 Has the disclosure been made in accordance with Part 2 of the Act?

Where a disclosure has been received by the protected disclosure officer or by the protected disclosure coordinator, he or she will assess whether the disclosure has been made in accordance with Part 2 of the Act and is, therefore, a protected disclosure.

9.1.1 Has the disclosure been made to the appropriate person?

For the disclosure to be responded to by the North Central Catchment Management Authority, it must concern an employee, member or officer of the North Central Catchment Management Authority. If the disclosure concerns an employee, officer or member of another public body, the person who has made the disclosure must be advised of the correct person or body to whom the disclosure should be directed. (See the table in 5.2). If the disclosure has been made anonymously, it should be referred to the Ombudsman.

9.1.2 Does the disclosure contain the essential elements of a protected disclosure?

To be a protected disclosure, a disclosure must satisfy the following criteria:

- Did a natural person (that is, an individual person rather than a corporation) make the disclosure?
- Does the disclosure relate to conduct of a public body or public officer acting in their official capacity?
- Is the alleged conduct either improper conduct or detrimental action taken against a person in reprisal for making a protected disclosure?
- Does the person making a disclosure have reasonable grounds for believing the alleged conduct has occurred?

Where a disclosure is assessed to be a protected disclosure, it is referred to the Protected Disclosure Coordinator. The Protected Disclosure Coordinator will determine whether the disclosure is a public interest disclosure.

Where a disclosure is assessed not to be a protected disclosure, the matter does not need to be dealt with under the Act. The protected disclosure officer will decide how the matter should be responded to in consultation with the protected disclosure coordinator.

9.2 Is the disclosure a public interest disclosure?

Where the protected disclosure officer or coordinator has received a disclosure that has been assessed to be a protected disclosure, the protected disclosure coordinator will determine whether the disclosure amounts to a public interest disclosure. This assessment will be made within 45 days of the receipt of the disclosure.

In reaching a conclusion as to whether a protected disclosure is a public interest disclosure, the protected disclosure coordinator will consider whether the disclosure shows, or tends to show, that the public officer to whom the disclosure relates:

- Has engaged, is engaging or proposes to engage in improper conduct in his or her capacity as a public officer; or
- Has taken, is taking or proposes to take detrimental action in reprisal for the making of the protected disclosure.

Where the protected disclosure coordinator concludes that the disclosure amounts to a public interest disclosure, he or she will:

1. Notify the person who made the disclosure of that conclusion; and
2. Refer the disclosure to the Ombudsman for formal determination as to whether it is indeed a public interest disclosure.

Where the protected disclosure coordinator concludes that the disclosure is not a public interest disclosure, he or she will:

1. Notify the person who made the disclosure of that conclusion; and

2. Advise that person that he or she may request the public body to refer the disclosure to the Ombudsman for a formal determination as to whether the disclosure is a public interest disclosure, and that this request must be made within 28 days of the notification.

In either case, the protected disclosure coordinator will make the notification and the referral within 14 days of the conclusion being reached by the public body. Notification to the whistleblower is not necessary where the disclosure has been made anonymously.

10 Investigations

10.1 Introduction

Where the Ombudsman refers a protected disclosure to the North Central Catchment Management Authority for investigation, the protected disclosure coordinator will appoint an investigator to carry out the investigation.

The objectives of an investigation will be:

- To collate information relating to the allegation as quickly as possible. This may involve taking steps to protect or preserve documents, materials and equipment;
- To consider the information collected and to draw conclusions objectively and impartially;
- To maintain procedural fairness in the treatment of witnesses and the person who is the subject of the disclosure; and
- To make recommendations arising from the conclusions drawn concerning remedial or other appropriate action.

10.2 Terms of reference

Before commencing an investigation, the protected disclosure coordinator will draw up terms of reference and obtain authorisation for those terms from the Chief Executive Officer. The terms of reference will set a date by which the investigation report is to be concluded, and will describe the resources available to the investigator to complete the investigation within the time set. The protected disclosure coordinator may approve, if reasonable, an extension of time requested by the investigator. The terms of reference will require the investigator to make regular reports to the protected disclosure coordinator who, in turn, is to keep the Ombudsman informed of general progress.

10.3 Investigation plan

The investigator will prepare an investigation plan for approval by the protected disclosure coordinator. The plan will list the issues to be substantiated and describe the avenue of inquiry.

It will address the following issues:

- What is being alleged?
- What are the possible findings or offences?
- What are the facts in issue?
- How is the inquiry to be conducted?
- What resources are required?

At the commencement of the investigation, the whistleblower should be:

- Notified by the investigator that he or she has been appointed to conduct the investigation;
- Asked to clarify any matters; and
- Provide any additional material he or she might have.

The investigator will be sensitive to the whistleblower's possible fear of reprisals and will be aware of the statutory protections provided to the whistleblower.

10.4 Natural Justice

The principles of natural justice will be followed in any investigation of a public interest disclosure. The principles of natural justice concern procedural fairness and ensure a fair decision is reached by an objective decision maker. Maintaining procedural fairness protects the rights of individuals and enhances public confidence in the process.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority will have regard to the following issues in ensuring procedural fairness:

- The person who is the subject of the disclosure is entitled to know the allegations made against him or her and must be given the right to respond. (This does not mean the person must be advised of the allegation as soon as the disclosure is received or the investigation has commenced);
- If the investigator is contemplating making a report adverse to the interests of any person, that person should be given the opportunity to put forward further material that may influence the outcome of the report and that person's defence should be fairly set out in the report;
- All relevant parties to a matter should be heard and all submissions should be considered;
- A decision should not be made until all reasonable inquiries

have been made;

- The investigator or any decision maker should not have a personal or direct interest in the matter being investigated;
- All proceedings must be carried out fairly and without bias. Care should be taken to exclude perceived bias from the process; and
- The investigator must be impartial in assessing the credibility of the whistleblowers and any witnesses. Where appropriate, conclusions as to credibility should be included in the investigation report.

10.5 Conduct of the investigation

The investigator will make contemporaneous notes of all discussions and phone calls, and all interviews with witnesses will be taped. All information gathered in an investigation will be stored securely. Interviews will be conducted in private and the investigator will take all reasonable steps to protect the identity of the whistleblower.

Where disclosure of the identity of the whistleblower cannot be avoided, due to the nature of the allegations, the investigator will warn the whistleblower and his or her welfare manager of this probability.

It is in the discretion of the investigator to allow any witness to have legal or other representation or support during an interview. If a witness has a special need for legal representation or support, permission should be granted.

10.6 Referral of an investigation to the Ombudsman

The protected disclosure coordinator will make a decision regarding the referral of an investigation to the Ombudsman where, on the advice of the investigator:

- The investigation is being obstructed by, for example, the non-cooperation of key witnesses; or
- The investigation has revealed conduct that may constitute a criminal offence.

10.7 Reporting requirements

The protected disclosure coordinator will ensure the whistleblower is kept regularly informed concerning the handling of a protected disclosure and an investigation.

The protected disclosure coordinator will report to the Ombudsman about the progress of an investigation.

Where the Ombudsman or the whistleblower requests information about the progress of an investigation, that information will be provided within 28 days of the date of the request.

11 Action Taken After An Investigation

11.1 Investigator's final report

At the conclusion of the investigation, the investigator will submit a written report of his or her findings to the protected disclosure coordinator. The report will contain:

The allegation/s:

- An account of all relevant information received and, if the investigator has rejected evidence as being unreliable, the reasons for this opinion being formed;
- The conclusions reached and the basis for them; and
- Any recommendations arising from the conclusions.

Where the investigator has found that the conduct disclosed by the whistleblower has occurred, recommendations made by the investigator will include:

- The steps that need to be taken by the North Central Catchment Management Authority to prevent the conduct from continuing or occurring in the future; and
- Any action that should be taken by the Authority to remedy any harm or loss arising from the conduct. This action may include bringing disciplinary proceedings against the person responsible for the conduct, and referring the matter to an appropriate authority for further consideration.

The report will be accompanied by:

- The transcript or other record of any oral evidence taken, including tape recordings; and
- All documents, statements or other exhibits received by the officer and accepted as evidence during the course of the investigation.

Where the investigator's report is to include an adverse comment against any person, that person will be given the opportunity to respond and his or her defence will be fairly included in the report.

The report will not disclose particulars likely to lead to the identification of the whistleblower.

11.2 Action to be taken

If the protected disclosure coordinator is satisfied that the investigation has found that the disclosed conduct has occurred, he or she will recommend to the Chief Executive Officer the action that must be taken to prevent the conduct from continuing or occurring in the future. The protected disclosure coordinator may also recommend that action be taken to remedy any harm or loss arising from the conduct.

The protected disclosure coordinator will provide a written report to the Minister for Environment and Conservation, the Ombudsman and the whistleblower setting out the findings of the investigation and any remedial steps taken.

Where the investigation concludes that the disclosed conduct did not occur, the protected disclosure coordinator will report these findings to the Ombudsman and to the whistleblower.

12 Managing the Welfare of the Whistleblower

12.1 Commitment to protecting whistleblowers

The North Central Catchment Management Authority is committed to the protection of genuine whistleblowers against detrimental action taken in reprisal for the making of protected disclosures.

The protected disclosure coordinator is responsible for ensuring whistleblowers are protected from direct and indirect detrimental action, and that the culture of the workplace is supportive of protected disclosures being made.

The protected disclosure coordinator will appoint a welfare manager to all whistleblowers who have made a protected disclosure. The welfare manager will:

- Examine the immediate welfare and protection needs of a whistleblower who has made a disclosure and, where the whistleblower is an employee, seek to foster a supportive work environment;
- Advise the whistleblower of the legislative and administrative protections available to him or her;
- Listen and respond to any concerns of harassment, intimidation or victimisation in reprisal for making disclosure;
- Keep a contemporaneous record of all aspects of the case management of the whistleblower including all contact and follow-up action; and
- Ensure the expectations of the whistleblower are realistic.

All employees will be advised that it is an offence for a person to take detrimental action in reprisal for a protected disclosure. The maximum penalty is a fine of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both. The taking of detrimental action in breach of this provision can also be grounds for making a disclosure under the Act and can result in an investigation.

Detrimental action includes:

- Causing injury, loss or damage;
- Intimidation or harassment; and
- Discrimination, disadvantage or adverse treatment in relation to a person's employment, career, profession, trade or business (including the taking of disciplinary action).

12.2 Keeping the whistleblower informed

The protected disclosure coordinator will ensure the whistleblower is kept informed of action taken in relation to his or her disclosure, and the time frames that apply. The whistleblower will be informed of the objectives of an investigation, the findings of an investigation, and the steps taken by the North Central Catchment Management Authority to address any improper conduct that has been found to have occurred. The whistleblower will be given reasons for decisions made by the North Central Catchment Management Authority in relation to a protected disclosure. All communication with the whistleblower will be in plain English.

12.3 Occurrence of detrimental action

If a whistleblower reports an incident of harassment, discrimination or adverse treatment that would amount to detrimental action taken in reprisal for the making of the disclosure, the welfare manager will:

- Record details of the incident;
- Advise the whistleblower of his or her rights under the Act; and
- Advise the protected disclosure coordinator or chief executive officer of the detrimental action.

The taking of detrimental action in reprisal for the making of a disclosure can be an offence against the Act as well as grounds for making a further disclosure. Where such detrimental action is reported, the protected disclosure coordinator will assess the report as a new disclosure under the Act. Where the protected disclosure coordinator is satisfied that the disclosure is a public interest disclosure, he or she will refer it to the Ombudsman. If the

Ombudsman subsequently determines the matter to be a public interest disclosure, the Ombudsman may investigate the matter or refer it to another body for investigation as outlined in the Act.

12.4 Whistleblowers implicated in improper conduct

Where a person who makes a disclosure is implicated in misconduct, the North Central Catchment Management Authority will handle the disclosure and protect the whistleblower from reprisals in accordance with the Act, the Ombudsman’s guidelines and these procedures. The Authority acknowledges that the act of whistleblowing should not shield whistleblowers from the reasonable consequences flowing from any involvement in improper conduct.

Section 17 of the Act specifically provides that a person’s liability for his or her own conduct is not affected by the person’s disclosure of that conduct under the Act. However, in some circumstances, an admission may be a mitigating factor when considering disciplinary or other action.

The Chief Executive Officer will make the final decision on the advice of the protected disclosure coordinator as to whether disciplinary or other action will be taken against a whistleblower. Where disciplinary or other action relates to conduct that is the subject of the whistleblower’s disclosure, the disciplinary or other action will only be taken after the disclosed matter has been appropriately dealt with.

In all cases where disciplinary or other action is being contemplated, the Chief Executive Officer must be satisfied that it has been clearly demonstrated that:

- The intention to proceed with disciplinary action is not causally connected to the making of the disclosure (as opposed to the content of the disclosure or other available information);
- There are good and sufficient grounds that would fully justify action against any non-whistleblower in the same circumstances; and
- There are good and sufficient grounds that justify exercising any discretion to institute disciplinary or other action.

The protected disclosure coordinator will thoroughly document the process including recording the reasons why the disciplinary or other action is being taken, and the reasons why the action is not in retribution for the making of the disclosure. The protected disclosure coordinator will clearly advise the whistleblower of the proposed action to be taken, and of any mitigating factors that have been taken into account.

13 Management of the Person Against Whom a Disclosure Has Been Made

The North Central Catchment Management Authority recognises that employees against whom disclosures are made must also be supported during the handling and investigation of disclosures.

The Authority will take all reasonable steps to ensure the confidentiality of the person who is the subject of the disclosure during the assessment and investigation process. Where investigations do not substantiate disclosures, the fact that the investigation has been carried out, the results of the investigation, and the identity of the person who is the subject of the disclosure will remain confidential.

The protected disclosure coordinator will ensure the person who is the subject of any disclosure investigated by or on behalf of a public body is:

- Informed as to the substance of the allegations;
- Given the opportunity to answer the allegations before a final decision is made;
- Informed as to the substance of any adverse comment that may be included in any report arising from the investigation; and has
- His or her defence set out fairly in any report.

Where the allegations in a disclosure have been investigated, and the person who is the subject of the disclosure is aware of the allegations or the fact of the investigation, the protected disclosure coordinator will formally advise the person who is the subject of the disclosure of the outcome of the investigation.

The North Central Catchment Management Authority will give its full support to a person who is the subject of a disclosure where the allegations contained in a disclosure are clearly wrong or unsubstantiated. If the matter has been publicly disclosed, the Chief Executive Officer of the Authority will consider any request by that person to issue a statement of support setting out that the allegations were clearly wrong or unsubstantiated.

14 Criminal Offences

The North Central Catchment Management Authority will ensure officers appointed to handle protected disclosures and all other employees are aware of the following offences created by the Act:

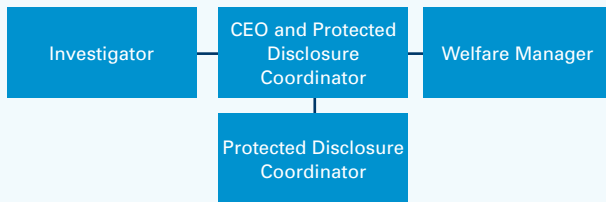
- 1 It is an offence for a person to take detrimental action against a person in reprisal for a protected disclosure being made. The Act provides a maximum penalty of a fine of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both.
- 2 It is an offence for a person to divulge information obtained as a result of the handling or investigation of a protected disclosure without legislative authority. The Act provides a maximum penalty of 60 penalty units (\$6,000) or six months imprisonment or both.
- 3 It is an offence for a person to obstruct the Ombudsman in performing his/her responsibilities under the Act. The Act provides a maximum penalty of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both.
- 4 It is an offence for a person to knowingly provide false information under the Act with the intention that it be acted on as a disclosed matter. The Act provides a maximum penalty of 240 penalty units (\$24,000) or two years imprisonment or both.

15 Review

These procedures will be reviewed annually to ensure they meet the objectives of the Act and accord with the Ombudsman’s guidelines.

Annexure A

Reporting structures for the North Central Catchment Management Authority



Annexure B

Model register

No disclosures have been made.