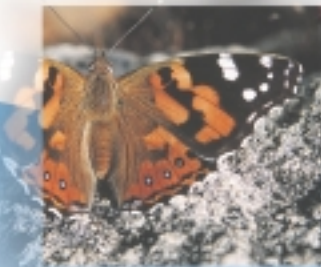




swan catchment
council



2002

in focus



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Welcome to the first edition of "In Focus" by the Swan Catchment Council.

The Council is in the midst of a period of significant change. Originally formed in 1996 as the Swan Working Group, it was comprised of community representatives and did not have direct financial responsibilities.

Renamed the Swan Catchment Council in 1998, the Council now finds itself as the peak NRM body in the Swan Region and one of six regional groups in the state.

The delivery of integrated catchment management activities is now firmly entrenched within a regional framework. This significant governmental shift has important implications for the way the Council conducts its business. Now, more than ever, transparent processes and accountability will be reflected in every aspect of our business.

With this in mind, the Council felt this document provided a vehicle for us to reflect on what has been, what is, and what might lie before us.

Before embracing the future, we must duly acknowledge the past. Undoubtedly we all owe a debt of gratitude to the many individuals, volunteers and organisations that have contributed to furthering our shared NRM objectives.

The last six years have also been a time of significant achievement. These have included the development of *The Swan Region – a Natural Resource Management Strategy*, the creation of region-wide bids for NHT funding, the development of a new more representative membership model and the signing of agreements with corporate, community and government partners.

There is no doubt that the business we are in is a challenging one, that is frequently buffeted by diverse political and social agendas. In spite of those challenges, the Council is now in the strongest position of its short history and we are preparing for an exciting new phase in its development.

I invite you to read on and take up the challenge that lies before all who cherish our environment.

Peter Pearson

Interim Chairperson Swan Catchment Council



*the council is preparing
for an exciting new period*





The Swan Catchment Council commenced a review of its membership in December 2001. The reasons for the review were twofold. Firstly, to broaden the membership base to make the Council more representative of community needs and interests. Secondly, to build a management structure that would enable the Council to assume its future role as a regional NRM group.

Following consideration by the Council and comment by stakeholders, the Council endorsed the revised model in June 2002. Appointment of new members has recently been undertaken.

The thirteen members of the Swan Catchment Council are drawn from the community, state government and landcare professionals as defined below:

*members are
drawn from
community
government and
landcare
professionals*

1. Community – nine positions

- Six active community members of community NRM groups – chosen through a sub regional election process
- One elected member of a local government authority within the Swan Region
- One member who has a sound working knowledge of natural ecosystems, biodiversity and current environmental issues
- One member to represent indigenous issues in the Swan Region

2. State Government – three positions

Council representatives are drawn from the Departments of Environment, Water and Catchment Protection, Conservation and Land Management and Agriculture. A representative from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure is a key member of the Land Use and Planning working group and may be called upon to attend Council meetings in an advisory capacity.

3. Community Landcare Professional

This person operates within the Swan Region and has been selected by the Catchment Officers Support Network.

With a new membership comes a new structure. The Council is now reliant on the members of five working groups to initiate and manage strategic projects in line with the Regional Strategy. The five working groups focus on issues of:

1. Natural diversity
2. Landuse and planning
3. Local government
4. Water issues
5. Education, awareness raising and communication

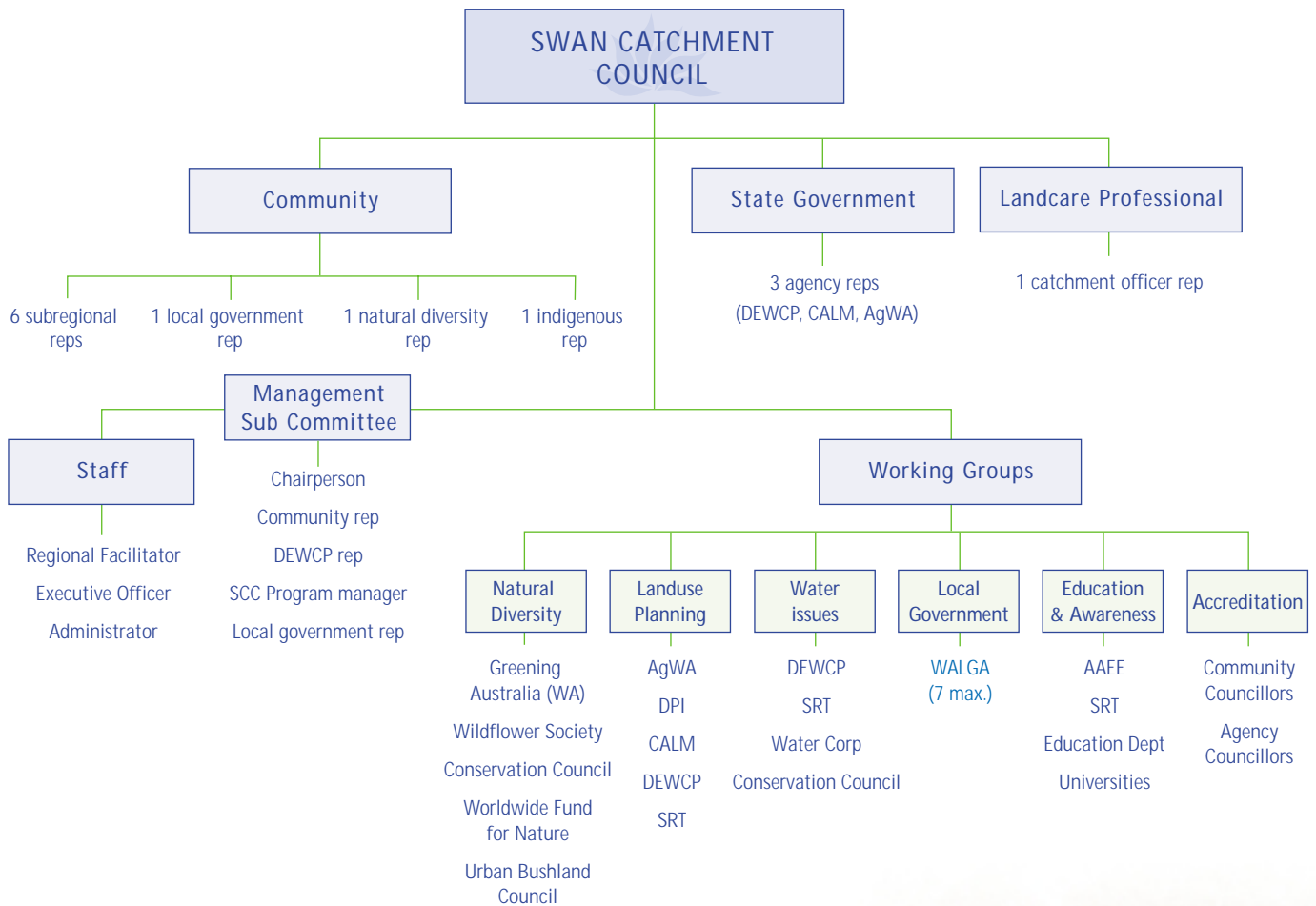




The Swan Catchment Council meets a minimum of six times per year in addition to the annual general meeting. The working groups are also required to meet a minimum of six times per year as well as reporting progress to the Council to coincide with their meetings.

The current membership arrangements will be subject to further review in twelve months time.

SWAN CATCHMENT COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP/ORGANISATION CHART



*membership arrangements will
be reviewed in
twelve months time*





SWAN CATCHMENT COUNCIL INC.

Profit & Loss (Detail)

Jul '01 - Jun '02

	\$	\$	\$
Ordinary Income/Expense			
Income			
Council Salaries & Op. Income			
Agriculture WA		16,500.00	
Dept Commerce & Trade		19,800.00	
NHT savings (WRC)		61,600.00	
Total Council Salaries & Op. Income			97,900.00
Sitting Fees & Mileage Income			
Dept Ag		22,086.45	
WRC		13,200.00	
Total Sitting Fees & Mileage Income			35,286.45
Grants Income - Other			
Canning Plain Coordinator Grant		61,421.00	
CPCG Catchment MGT Plan		69,000.01	
IYV		4,900.00	
NHT		283,690.00	
SCCP PCF		27,500.00	
Total Grants Income - Other			446,511.01
Interest Received			1,922.84
Miscellaneous Income			17.00
Total Income			581,637.30
Gross Profit			581,637.30
Expense			
Council Salaries & Op. Expense			
Insurance Payable		235.00	
Superannuation Payable		3,944.85	
Training		44.00	
Travel Allowance		436.30	
Wages (Gross)		82,515.04	
Workers Compensation		1,137.00	
Advertising		151.07	
Bank Fees		395.20	
Postage		133.00	
Professional Fees			
Accounting	937.50		
Other	39.00		
Total Professional Fees		976.50	
Reimbursed Expenses		63.90	
Total Council Salaries & Op. Expense			90,031.86



Profit & Loss (continued)

Jul '01 - Jun '02

	\$	\$	\$
Sitting Fees & Mileage Expense			
Sitting Fees		16,952.60	
Mileage		2,066.41	
Total Sitting Fees & Mileage Expense			19,019.01
Grant Expense - Other			
CPCG Coordinator			
CPCG Wages	23,527.20		
Insurance CPCG	235.00		
Miscellaneous	563.64		
Reimbursed Expenses	247.20		
Training	559.90		
Travel Allowance	451.56		
Workers Compensation	342.66		
Total CPCG Coordinator		25,927.16	
IYV Grant		4,528.45	
Lotteries		1,388.20	
NHT Project grants		283,690.00	
Total Grant Expense - Other			315,533.81
Miscellaneous Expense			69.22
Total Expense			424,653.90
Net Ordinary Income			156,983.40
Net Income			156,983.40





The last eighteen months have been a time of significant progress and achievement. Some of those achievements are highlighted below and can best be defined as strategic position, partnerships and management.

Strategic position

- The Council is taking a leading role in the development of an NHT funding proposal on behalf of the region. These funds will be used to deliver regional priorities identified in the draft strategy. Priority projects will be identified throughout the region by a range of proponents. The procurement of these funds will have a significant impact on the employment of catchment support officers and the work they are able to undertake in the region. It will also ensure that the Council is positioned to deliver funds of this magnitude.
- The development of *The Swan Strategy – A Natural Resource Management Strategy*. This document was intended to provide a 30 year blue print to guide environmental activity in the region. Since its development, the strategy has obtained even greater importance with a Commonwealth shift toward the regional delivery of NRM. Accredited regional strategic plans have been identified as the preferred delivery mechanism for all investment under the second version of the Natural Heritage Trust. Work continues to bring the strategy in line with accreditation guidelines – a move that will secure the position of the Swan Catchment Council as the peak NRM body in the Swan Region.

Partnerships

- Draft agreements are currently being negotiated between the Swan Catchment Council and the Department of Environment Water and Catchment Protection (DEWCP). This agreement will be used to form the basis of other such agreements with other agencies.
- A memorandum of understanding has been reached between the Swan and Avon Catchment Councils regarding the National Action Plan salinity funding. This understanding will help to ensure the Council is represented in this significant Commonwealth initiative.
- The Swan Catchment Urban Landcare Program (SCULP) is now in its fifth year. The program is a collaborative partnership between the Swan Catchment Council, Alcoa World Alumina Australia and the Swan River Trust. In the past five years the program has delivered approximately \$1.2 million dollars to more than 180 project recipients. Alcoa's significant support and commitment has been integral to the success of the program.

Management

- The Swan Catchment Council has recently completed a total revision of its membership structure. The new model is now more heavily weighted towards community-based membership rather than state agency employees. This places greater emphasis on local issues with members selected for their skills and experience. The altered membership has also resulted in a greater reliance on a subcommittee structure to process business issues more effectively.

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Natural Heritage Trust Funding (NHT) – history

NHT was first developed in 1997 to address the need for on-ground funding by community, local government and agencies involved in NRM.

It was based on a concept of project support with funding provided directly to each state, distributed across twenty-three programs. However, the centralised model made it difficult to address specific local priorities and obtain funds. Further, the Commonwealth perceived both cost shifting and a lack of strategic coordination by the states.

In designing NHT2, the Commonwealth have reflected on the lessons of the first NHT and have moved to a devolved funding structure with a greater emphasis on strategic regional delivery using an investment framework.

Natural Heritage Trust Funding (NHT2) – interim year

NHT2 interim funding is significantly different to the first in both organisation and delivery. The intention is that NHT2 will be more strategic in its delivery of funding assistance, with significant emphasis on regional delivery through accredited regional NRM plans. This regional focus will necessitate considerable revision of existing NRM plans which will have to be adapted to cover all of the expanded areas of NHT2. Clear priorities and actions will be essential across these very broad areas NRM of activity.

A key feature of NHT2, is the need for a State and Commonwealth bilateral agreement. The bilateral agreement will play a significant role in guiding the delivery of NHT2 in Western Australia. Signing of the bilateral agreement has been delayed which in turn, will impact on when the money is actually available on the ground.

In the immediate short term it is evident that there will be greatly reduced dollars available in the 2002/2003 interim year. The Swan Catchment Council recognises the potential negative impact these delays and funding reductions may have on community and program momentum. Council representatives have endeavoured to make Commonwealth representatives aware of these issues at all stages of the negotiation process.

*NHT2 is significantly different
to the first in
organisation and delivery*





Objectives

There are three key objectives guiding the NHT2 process.

1. **Biodiversity conservation** - the conservation of Australia's biodiversity through the protection and restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems and habitat for native plants and animals
2. **Sustainable use of natural resources** – the sustainable use and management of Australia's land, water and marine resources to maintain and improve the productivity and profitability of resource based industries.
3. **Community capacity building and institutional change** – support for individuals, landholders, industry and communities with skills, knowledge, information and institutional frameworks to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use and management.

investment through NHT2 will occur at national/state, regional and local levels

Programs

From these three objectives, four programs and ten areas of activity have been developed. It is of significance that the 23 programs in the original NHT have been condensed into four programs only. It is therefore essential that all activity is undertaken within the context of the four key program areas, which are defined as follows:

1. **The Landcare Program** – will invest in activities that contribute to reversing land degradation and promoting sustainable agriculture.
2. **The Bushcare Program** – will invest in activities that contribute to conserving and restoring habitat for our unique native flora and fauna which underpins the health of our landscapes.
3. **The Rivercare Program** – will invest in activities that contribute to improved water quality and environmental condition in our river systems and wetlands.
4. **The Coastcare Program** – will invest in activities that contribute to protecting our coastal catchments, ecosystems and the marine environment.

Levels of investment

Investment through NHT will occur at three levels: national/state, regional and local. The second level of investment will be applied within the Swan Region, through an accredited, integrated NRM plan and investment strategy developed by the region.

Future investment whether by the Commonwealth, industry or private sponsorship will be guided by the accredited strategy.





Accreditation

In order to gain accreditation, plans must identify all locally relevant NRM issues based on available scientific and technical information, develop actions to address these issues, and prioritise the most important issues for action. National standards will be used in the setting of resource condition and management action targets.

There is a clear requirement for plans to be based on rigorous scientific and technical information and that achievable natural resource condition targets be set.

Benefits of the new structure

The change in focus and delivery of NHT2 will guarantee that the experience of the Swan Catchment Council and all of its key stakeholders will be entirely different to previous years. However, there are also significant benefits that will flow from the new delivery mechanism.

- Higher profile of the Swan Catchment Council as a key regional NRM body will improve its credibility and power as a lobbying group. In turn there will be a flow-on effect for all those community stakeholder groups that are associated with such a powerful regional group.
- Focusing on the concept of "environmental investment" will enable more strategic, long-term planning of environmental activity. The investment framework also allows for financial participation by organisations other than just the Commonwealth.
- Better use of existing limited resources and less room for duplication of services.
- Greater empowerment of local groups and the ability to better address local issues.
- Potential strengthening of partnerships for mutual benefit.

*environmental
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of environmental
activity*

The Swan Catchment Centre

The Swan Catchment Centre will play a vital role in the accreditation and delivery of the Swan Catchment Council's regional plan.

Currently the Swan Catchment Centre supports over 250 community conservation groups involved in natural resource management. The Centre provides training, resources, advice and information. It creates opportunities for members of the community to work with businesses and local and state government agencies on common environmental projects.

The Centre, through its staff and programs, will provide a link between the Council and its stakeholders. It will also play a significant role in the communication and delivery of Council and Commonwealth requirements.





To the future

The future of NRM in the Swan Region is certain to look and operate very differently to what we have all become accustomed to.

The need for open and accountable reporting processes will assume an even greater importance when the Council's regional plan is accredited.

Recipients of funds will have an obligation to report against agreed targets and milestones throughout the life of their project. This mechanism will play a vital role in achieving ongoing financial support for the project and its associated staff.

At the time of this publication there are no clear guidelines as to what these reporting requirements will entail.

The Swan Catchment Council is committed to ensuring that all stakeholders understand what is required of them, while advocating for the relevant, appropriate and straightforward administration of projects wherever possible.

If we are willing to embrace the changes that lie before us, the future of NRM in the Swan Region will be a promising one.



*embracing change will ensure a
bright future for NRM in
the Swan*



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