

3.8 Regional Capacity

As all the clan groups gathered at katanyiny this is the Bibulmun name for the place where the spirit man's head was cut of as I mentioned earlier. And as they all stood there the spirit children were still lifting up the sky, by this time they had lifted the sky so high that it burst open, and there sitting on the horizon was the sun. The bright stabbing light caused the Coolbardi's to break out in song, and spread out their wings to absorb the vivid bright light as they attempted to protect the eyes of the little children.

Aspirational Target: Build regional capacity to promote attitudinal, behavioural and institutional change to achieve sustainable natural management outcomes

3.8.1 Resource Description

Achieving long-term change for regional sustainability requires an holistic approach that includes investment in people, regional communities and structures as well as on-ground responses. Communities and stakeholders that understand, support, participate actively and have a sense of influence over programs, policy and legislation that shape landscapes, is the most powerful tool for change. Capacity building and engagement are critical elements for the regional communities and stakeholders to implement the cultural change necessary for sustainable NRM.

Capacity building is defined within the National Framework for Community Engagement and Capacity Building as:

"a range of activities by which individuals, groups and organisations improve their capacity to achieve sustainable natural resource management. Capacity in this context includes awareness, skills, knowledge, motivation, commitment and confidence."

Within the planning process, regional capacity has also included:

- Technical know-how, knowledge and innovation
- Human resources
- Degree of community and stakeholder involvement and commitment
- Financial resources
- Time
- Effectiveness of organisation and coordination
- Ability to change policies and legislation

There is a need for continued and diverse investment in regional capacity to meet the challenge of maintaining and building on the momentum in the Region. The organisational and structural arrangements that enable the Council to lead as the Region's key NRM group for implementation of this Strategy are vital.

Individual and community group involvement continues to be a key resource for NRM in the Region. The ongoing commitment, motivation and skills need to be underpinned with the resources for facilitation and support, such as catchment and regional coordinators. A major function of these community support roles is directly related to capacity building through awareness, information and knowledge building, skills development, education, commitment and the confidence for the wider regional community to participate in NRM. This is in addition to on-ground outcomes achieved at the regional and sub-regional level.

The process of developing this Strategy has clearly identified a need for capacity building for State agencies and Local Governments. This is particularly in relation to the NRM regional delivery model, and the relationship to the statutory functions of Government and regional NRM outcomes. Many parts of State Government have contributed and been engaged in the processes of assets, values and threats identification, provision of information, developing a monitoring and evaluation framework and target setting. However, the lack of a statutory NRM framework makes a coordination or integration across agencies very difficult.

The capacity of Local Government in NRM ranges widely within the Region. Many of the activities and statutory processes of Local Government have positive NRM outcomes. There is a clear sense though that landscape scale outcomes and broader behavioural change will require clearer linkages between Local Governments.

Distinct from regional capacity, but related through the social context, is wider regional community and stakeholder engagement. Engaging both urban and rural communities and stakeholder groups is essential

to achieve sustainable NRM in the Region. A range of mechanisms and actions will be implemented to build on the momentum over the past decade, and to further engage the wider regional community and stakeholders for the implementation of the Strategy.

A summary of the regional capacity asset values derived from the community consultation and stakeholder engagement process is outlined in Table 16. These are defined under the three main categories of environmental, economic and social values.

Table 16: Regional capacity asset values

Values		
Environmental	Economic	Social
Indigenous communities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide current and historical knowledge and understanding of environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential for tourism opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protects culture and knowledge, history Promotes understanding and acceptance of indigenous values
Local community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of on-ground activities Application of local knowledge and skills Encourages awareness, understanding and appreciation of the environment due to personal interest and close proximity to issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective, efficient and unpaid technical/professional implementation of on-ground works through volunteer labour Free advice Create employment and business opportunities by accessing grants Provides tourism opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enables a sense of ownership and belonging to community, a sense of place and of diversity, sense of pride As a group, there is potential for greater lobbying power Provides forums for the development of social networks and friendships, mental and physical well being Provides opportunities for personal development Builds a community Builds community aesthetics
Local Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for research Provides management of environmental areas, policy development, regulation and planning. Source of technical advice and on-ground support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides employment in environmental services, funding and in kind support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops networks on-ground encouraging and supporting local groups and building capacity in volunteers Provides political connection to the community
State Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for research Provides management of environmental areas Sets State direction, environmental policies and regulations, laws and their implementation and enforcement Source of technical advice and on-ground support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides employment and funds for on-ground works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops networks on-ground encouraging and support local groups. Provides capacity building opportunities and coordinates community involvement. Provides technical expertise
Australian Government <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides research, eg global warming issue Coordinates National and international policy and protocols, eg. COAG and Kyoto Provides resources for on-ground environmental works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides employment and funds for on-ground works Enables protection via fiscal policy. Dictates priorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develops networks on-ground encouraging and support local groups Empowers community action with funding support and provision of resources Connects with global community
Industry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can make changes that would have impacts on environmental quality Provide sponsorship for environmental projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide support to local communities with funding and resources eg Corporate Care Days Triple bottom line accounting. Shareholder responsibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Corporate stewardship Encourage change to take place in industries – social responsibility
Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides avenues for awareness raising and education on natural resource management issues, developing an appreciation for the environment and increasing skills and knowledge on how to protect it. Research promotes and encourages new innovations. Inspiration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes the importance of the environment for the health of the population, thus reducing costs spent on health services Businesses may also save costs by use of cleaner production and eco-efficient technologies Provides employment, training and research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promotes attitude and values change, which in the long-term could affect the health and well being of a population Assists in building the capacity of a community, increasing technical expertise and voluntary support Empowering the community to participate Provides inter-generational connection

3.8.2 Resource Condition

The pressures being placed on the natural resources of the Region as a result of urban and semi-rural landuses provide the clear direction for a cultural change toward more sustainable living.

The Region has had an active NRM community for many decades, and there is an increasing level of involvement at the local, sub-regional and regional level. There is now a comprehensive network of support organisations for coordinating on-ground activities and providing capacity building activities.

In preparation for the shift towards regional delivery of NRM, the Council led a review of the regional and sub-regional structures. This review led to the adoption of broader membership model, which has ensured the Council meets the principles of democratic and accountable representation. The Council's constitution has been amended to reflect this democratic model.

At the sub-regional level, the Council led a review of existing community support arrangements. This process was based on the principles of change management, maintaining momentum, and having the wider regional community guide the changes. The process is documented in Appendix 18.

The Region comprises six sub-regions that are defined as:

- Ellen Brockman
- Eastern Hills
- South East
- Urban North
- North Coastal Plain
- South Coastal Plain

Each sub-region has a defined structure, which is supported at a regional level by a NRM Subregional Coordinator and locally by Natural Resource Management Officers. This structure is supported through a range of partners and sponsors (eg Alcoa), including Australian, State (eg Swan River Trust) and Local Governments. Capacity within this regional structure is a key element for delivery of NRM outcomes in the Region. The concept of building and maintaining partnerships with all stakeholders is critical.

There are over 450 groups active in environmental protection, bushland management, catchment management, weed and pest eradication, waterways and wetland rehabilitation, coastal rehabilitation, marine habitat monitoring, and land use planning. The groups include:

- Local, regional and Statewide interest groups
- Peak environment groups
- Sub-regional and catchment groups
- Land Conservation District Committees and other catchment groups, special interest community groups working with Local Governments and the NRM agencies
- 'Friends' groups managing parts of the Region's natural resources
- Local Government Council Advisory Committees

The direct involvement of the wider regional community in NRM represents a voluntary investment of time and skills valued at millions of dollars. Their contribution is vital in achieving the Strategy's goals and meeting targets. Individual and community groups are supported by individual contributions, Local Government assistance, Australian and State Government funds and expertise and corporate and industry group sponsorship.

Individual and community groups are involved in a very wide range of activities that include:

- educating and motivating the wider regional community, industry and Government about NRM issues and how all people and sectors can contribute
- preparing strategic action plans for specific areas in association with State and Local Governments
- monitoring trends in the condition of vegetation, water bodies and fauna
- on-ground management of bushland, wetlands, streams and riparian areas through 'friends' groups
- volunteering support to Government research programs
- attracting investment into NRM at local levels
- negotiating and management projects with Local and State Government authorities and agencies;
- making direct representations to Local and State Governments and agencies, and

- Involvement, as key stakeholders, in preparation of Australian, State and Local Government strategic plans and action plans

Natural resources are managed across many dimensions such as by area, type of human activity and across time. There is a continuum evident between actions taken by individuals and those taken by Government. Broadly the roles include the following:

- **Individual** – applying knowledge, skills and networks in day-to-day activities, providing technical assistance, helping with group coordination and local action planning
- **Local area community groups** – coordinating and supporting group activities, providing leadership, supporting local and regional activities, promoting, negotiating and implementing local and regional change to best management practices, education and awareness raising (friends groups, catchment and sub-regional groups)
- **Issue-based and Statewide community groups** – usually non-Government organisations (NGOs) providing input in policy development and review, supporting local area community groups, partnering in projects with government (including the Conservation Council, Wildflower Society, Urban Bushland Council)
- **Non-Governmental organisations (NGOs)** - work extensively with local communities, government and businesses on conservation programs throughout WA and have considerable capacity to contribute towards the further development and implementation of the Swan Region Strategy.
- **Industry** – encouraging Best Management Practices, cleaner production, supporting research and development, providing leadership and sponsorship to community
- **Local Governments** – provision of information, coordination support, development of local environmental and catchment strategies and plans, statutory land use planning, financial and in-kind support for landcare activities and groups.
- **Swan Catchment Council** – development and implementation of accredited Regional Strategy, development of key partnerships, support for priority needs, monitoring and evaluation, negotiations with Government and key partner groups.
- **State Agencies** – addressing Regional and State issues and functions, provision of technical information, research activities, implementing and coordinating programs and plans, monitoring and evaluation, policy and strategy development, regional planning, developing BMP's and initiating, supporting and pursuing its adoption and implementation
- **Australian Government** – entering into international conventions and agreements (Ramsar, Migratory species etc) implementing the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)* for matters of National environmental significance, providing resources through funding programs such as NHT/NAP, influencing outcomes through export licensing and industry spending through taxation

A range of organisations, who often work in partnership, have specific aims relating to regional capacity building. The Swan Catchment Centre provides training and education support to community members and catchment officers through a range of initiatives. The Catchment Officers Support Network provides peer and mentoring support, as well as access to agency support for regional catchment officers. A key partnership between the Swan Catchment Centre, CALM's Ecoplan and Greening Australia WA provides the award-winning Skills for Nature Conservation Program to community and NRM professionals.

3.8.3 Issues and Pressures

Regional capacity is a particular challenge within this Region, given the pressures of urban and semi-rural landuses, and the extent of the interest of the wider regional community. The Region has a unique role in generating awareness and a response to NRM issues in the wider regional community, so that other NRM regions in the State benefit from the cultural change.

The key pressures for regional capacity are:

- Current coordination between Government and community activities in encouraging improved NRM behaviours is insufficient
- Limited understanding of the social influences on the Region's residents' NRM behaviour
- Technical knowledge and skills for NRM is inadequate
- Information provision and accessibility needs to be improved
- NRM principles and processes have not been adopted comprehensively at State or Local Government levels

- Industry involvement in natural resource management is inadequate
- Funding support for effective community NRM initiatives, which is a critical component of the NRM framework is unsecured
- Bureaucratic processes delay progress
- Volunteer and community burnout
- Willingness in the community for change to sustainable practice
- Work, family and financial pressure reducing ability to volunteer
- Lack of understanding of issues

3.8.4 Current Response

Influencing behaviour in the management of natural resources is achieved through the use of a range of mechanisms. These include the use of regulation, market-based mechanisms, incentives/disincentives, voluntary codes of practice and wider regional community education. These activities are not well coordinated across the Region.

State Government agencies, particularly the key NRM agencies address the range of regional issues and priorities as discussed within this section. There is a vast range of legislative, regulatory, strategic, policy and planning level mechanisms and functions that serve to contribute to the range of NRM outcomes identified in this Strategy. State Government, while providing policy direction also provides technical information, undertakes research activities, implements and coordinates programs and plans, undertakes monitoring and evaluation, regional planning, develops BMP's and initiates, supports and pursues its adoption and implementation.

The schools-based environmental education activity for developing skills and knowledge in NRM has the potential to be incorporated into the Curriculum Framework for primary schools. To be effective this approach needs capacity building and coordination. At secondary school level, the opportunities for environmental education are more fragmented. At the same time, additional resources are needed in raising awareness and encouraging participatory action throughout the wider regional community. The Swan Catchment Centre has developed a strategic model for environmental education program delivery into the Region incorporating a range of initiatives. The draft State Environmental Education Strategy provides an opportunity to reinvigorate this area.

Overall, the current coverage of local environmental strategies is incomplete and inconsistent and does not provide sufficient assurance to Government and the wider regional community that essential NRM issues are being addressed. The trend towards employment of specialist environmental staff in Local Governments is an encouraging development, and clearly lifts the capacity of Local Government to contribute to NRM outcomes.

Current support for individual and community groups, their activities and structures is strongly reliant on project-based funding. Funders include the Natural Heritage Trust, Swan-Canning Cleanup Program and the Gordon Reid Foundation for Conservation through Lotterywest. This project-based approach hinders the effectiveness of these groups. Volunteer burnout is an issue facing many groups as they endeavour to contribute to improved NRM.

The current level of technical NRM skills available in agencies, educational institutions and the wider regional community is not sufficient to support the growing demand for on-ground skills. Increased investment in providing accredited training in the technical aspects of NRM is warranted.

As a guide, the Australian Government has provided a framework that provides guidance to regions for capacity building investments. There are four key messages:

- the need to ensure capacity building investments are clearly and logically linked to Resource Condition Targets
- specific short-term targets related to the necessary changes in the way business is done
- a need for balance across the four areas of capacity building (awareness raising, information and knowledge, skills and training, and motivation and support)
- all decisions need to be made on with a solid understanding of the social, economic and cultural dynamics of the Region (Road-testing the Capacity Building Logic 2003)

The Council developed a “Communications Framework” to guide the development of this Strategy. This Framework provided a set of tools for engagement of all stakeholder groups, including community, industry, Local Government and indigenous communities. This framework has been successful in providing a clear policy direction, consistent messages, measurable objectives and outcomes for target audiences, and a monitoring and evaluation framework. The Framework has led to clear, positive outcomes in terms of Local Government and indigenous community engagement in the development of the Strategy. This process has also been successfully applied to the engagement and participation of the wider regional community in the development of the Strategy.

The adoption of a formal Communication Framework for the development of the Strategy is congruent with the internal communications plan developed and implemented annually by the Council.

The Council has a long-standing partnership with the Department of Environment through the Swan Catchment Centre, which delivers community support and engagement outcomes. This has been achieved primarily through the Catchment Officers Support Network and community support initiatives such as the training programs and the Swan Alcoa Landcare Program.

3.8.5 NRM Strategy Response

The Strategy responses outlined below form the basis for the regional capacity targets detailed in Section 4.

A primary objective of this Strategy is to increase the capacity of the regional community and stakeholders to plan, implement and achieve NRM outcomes and outputs (RCM1.1). This will require a degree of leadership, political will and wider regional community engagement that is outside the scope of any single agency or individual or community group (RCM1.3). It also requires a clear understanding of the socio-cultural influences that drive individual NRM behaviour, combined with a political commitment to change. It will require a review of local environmental plans for spatial compatibility and the establishment of linkages to this Strategy (RCM1.2). It will also necessitate an increase in corporate sponsorship and support for NRM initiatives in the Region (RCM5). Achieving the sustainable use of natural resources remains a major challenge for the Region, particularly given that the Region’s population is expected to reach two million people by 2030.

Cultural change for sustainable NRM is contingent on an environmental ethos linked to every-day activities in Government, industry, business, and the wider regional community (RCM4). The 'stewardship ethic' must extend beyond rural land managers to become an intrinsic part of sustainable living and achieving NRM outcomes. Regional capacity building will be based on these conditions that are particular to this Region.

A regional capacity building framework will be developed that is coordinated, flexible, and related to the range of issues, knowledge bases and levels of awareness across the Region (RCM1.1 and RCM1.4). This framework will be developed in partnership with key organisations, and will be consistent with State and National approaches. Training and education opportunities offered to the wider regional community and stakeholders (including State and Local Government) through current programs are in high demand. This provides the basis for building targeted and relevant training and education initiatives in the Region.

A high proportion of industry education in Western Australia is achieved through Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), such as TAFEs. There is a large amount of sustainable practices content in the national training packages that the RTO’s use as the basis of their delivery (one is completely dedicated to natural resource management), and influencing these organisations to adopt sustainable practice as a principle in teaching is a key element for implementation of this Strategy.

The implementation of the Strategy will continue the participation of the wider regional community, often through volunteering. Sustaining volunteers and individual and community groups into the future will be achieved through mutually beneficial partnerships with other special interest groups, corporate interests, Local Governments, and State and Australian Government agencies. The regional facilitators and coordinators structure has been reviewed through this planning process, with the view to shifting towards the regional delivery model. This regional structure is shown at Appendix 18. Building sustainable roles for the regional NRM professionals working with and supporting these groups will be an important short to medium term process that the Council will continue to lead.

Accessible and relevant regional information is a key strategy to report, inform and guide decision-making in the Region. The regional information system will link local and regional level data, including strategies,

monitoring information and NRM data. Regional community and stakeholder access to this information system will be linked to the Communications Framework.

Community and stakeholder engagement has been the core principle underpinning the development of this Strategy and is actively encouraged by the Council. The Council has sought to engage, inform and consult stakeholders and the regional community through a variety of mechanisms.

Effective and comprehensive engagement is based on informing the regional community of issues, options and performance in meeting targets. Meaningful participation is possible when the regional community and stakeholders understand their role in sustainable NRM. Community and stakeholder engagement is based on effective consultation and participation in policy development, plans and decision-making. These requirements will be addressed in specific engagement strategies targeting stakeholder groups for the implementation of the Strategy.

Effective communication is the key to regional community and stakeholder engagement and capacity building. The Council will deliver the implementation of this Strategy through a three to five year "Communications Framework" that supports the range of initiatives for engagement and capacity building identified throughout this Strategy. Consistent with the approach for the development of this Strategy, the Communications Framework will be based on key themes, supported by goals and objectives, with indicative actions for implementation.

Themes and goals of the Communications Framework will be consistent with the outcomes of the Strategy, roles and responsibilities, target audiences and coordination between partner organisations and agencies. Communicating NRM information, the activities of partner organisations, results of monitoring and evaluation are all key elements of the Communications Framework. Promoting and reporting on implementation of the Strategy, and making regional data accessible to stakeholders are key outcomes. The Communications Framework is based on working group participation, as well as research and broad stakeholder consultation. A comprehensive and appropriate range of mechanisms, based on the information being communicated to the target audience, will become an extension of mechanisms currently used. The aim of the Framework is that communications will be consistent, of high quality, timely, appropriate and understandable to the audience.

3.8.6 Trade-offs

A principle trade-off will be that appropriate levels of support and resources will be needed to deliver effective NRM outcomes and build regional capacity. This support is beyond the level of capacity for any one organisation or institution. A substantial risk to community engagement and momentum exists if the regional structure and adequate resources to support it are not sustainable. A 'whole-of-community' approach may be required through imposition of an NRM levy to enable effective support for regional capacity.

The social, economic and environmental costs / benefits associated with decision-making will be considered during an assessment of trade-offs during the development of the Swan NRM Region investment plan.

