

Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council

Communique – Meeting 7, 9 March 2004

The Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council held its 7th meeting on Tuesday 9 March, at the Civic Centre in Burnie. The meeting opened at 11.10 a.m. and closed at 3.00 p.m.

It included a discussion and a working lunch with members of the North-West Regional Committee, in line with the Council's intention to meet all three regional committees once a year.

As has been the case in recent meetings, the major issues discussed related to the progress of national natural resource management funding programs – the Natural Heritage Trust Extension (NHT2), the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and the National Landcare Program (NLP) – and the development of regional NRM strategies by the three regional committees.

National NRM funding programs

Council was advised of progress with the NAP and NHT2 priority action projects recently announced, and the connected set of projects funded under the NLP. Council also noted the ongoing "Gap round", in which regional committees are seeking to address gaps identified in their approved suite of priority actions.

Members expressed concerns at the governance structure for the assessment and approval of projects, particularly in terms of unexpected decisions being made at the level of the State's Joint Steering Committee.

Development of the regional strategies

Kim Evans informed Council of the outcomes of a meeting between him and the Chairs of the three regional committees, and Council noted a revised timetable for the NRM strategies and investment proposals. This timetable reflected also the discussions at the recent "Investment Proposals Workshop", and is broadly similar to the timetable agreed late in 2003.

Council received formal reports from all the regional committees on progress as at 1 March 2004, the date set under the *Natural Resource Management Act 2002* for submission of draft strategies. The failure to meet that deadline is to be noted in Council's advice to the Minister.

Council discussed at some length how it could most usefully assess the regional strategies and provide feedback to the regional committees. It agreed to set up subgroups to consider the drafts against the accreditation criteria. In the first instance it would examine the consultation processes against the relevant accreditation criteria.

Council agreed that it would take part in a major discussion with all the Regions on 2 July, when feedback would be given on the consultation drafts.

Other issues

Other issues discussed in the meeting included:

- progress with NRM communications. Members noted a draft NRM Communications Action Plan, and made some suggestions;
- the relationship of the NRM process and Tasmania *Together*, and the possibility of Council playing a formal role as a “coalition of interest”. The issue is to be developed further out-of-session;
- a Joint Workshop, which Council and the regional committees agreed in 2003 should be held at least once a year for all members of Council and the regional committees. Council agreed that it would not be practical to hold this year’s Workshop until late in the year. At that time participants should be able to reflect on the completion of the regional strategy and investment proposal process, and look ahead to their ongoing roles..

Next meeting

Council’s next full meeting will be on 1 July, though subgroups will be operating before then. That meeting will precede the inaugural meeting of the “Natural Resource Management Advisory Group” established under the Bilateral Agreement, and will be followed by the 2 July discussions with regional committees.

Kim Evans

Chair, Tasmanian Natural Resource Management Council