

2004

Monitoring and Evaluation Implementation Plan for the national (Australian and State) programs



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List of Acronyms Used in This Document

ACT	Australian Capital Territory
ANZLIC	Australia New Zealand Land Information Council
CCI	Coastal Catchments Initiative
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CoAG	Council of Australian Governments
FNQ	Far North Queensland
IFA	Interim Financial Agreement
IGA	Inter-Governmental Agreement
ISRA	Information System for Regional Arrangements
JSC	Joint Queensland / Australian Government NRM Steering Committee
MAT	Management Action Target
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MER	Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
MERRWG	Monitoring Evaluation, Review and Reporting Working Group
MfT	Matter for Target
NAPSWQ	National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
The Trust	Natural Heritage Trust – Extension (previously NHT2)
NLWRA	National Land and Water Resources Audit
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
RCG	Regional Coordination Group
RCT	Resource Condition Target
RGC	Regional Groups Collective
RIS	Regional Investment Strategy
RWQPP	Reef Water Quality Protection Plan
SA	South Australia
SEQ	South East Queensland
SIP	State-wide Investment Program
S&T	Standards and Targets
WA	Western Australia
WQIP	Water Quality Improvement Plan

1.0 Purpose of this Implementation Plan

This plan applies to national (Australian and State) programs and sets out arrangements for monitoring progress and achievements and for evaluating program effectiveness against stated objectives. The plan clarifies State responsibilities vis a vis those of regional bodies for data collection and management, reporting, review and evaluation.

National programs include the:

- National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ)
- Natural Heritage Trust - Extension (the Trust) Regional component
- National Landcare Program

and may extend to the:

- Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (RWQPP)
- Water Quality Improvement Plans (WQIP), a national component of the Trust
- Coastal Catchments Initiative (CCI)

as these latter programs are developed.

Monitoring, reporting and evaluation arrangements encompass:

- resource condition indicators
- performance and implementation information and indicators
- data protocols and data collection processes
- roles and responsibilities for collection, storage, analysis and reporting of monitoring data
- suggested formats and agreed timelines for reporting achievement
- a schedule of planned evaluations at all levels including:
 - roles and responsibilities for the identification, direction and conduct of evaluations
 - processes for the implementation of recommendations
 - arrangements for review of the schedule
- an appropriate allocation of resources, including cost-sharing arrangements.

2.0 Queensland Context

In May 2001 the Australian Government extended the Trust for an additional five years from July 2002 with new funding of \$1.032 billion. Queensland has yet to sign a bilateral agreement for the delivery of the extension of the Trust, but in the meantime is progressing the Trust arrangements under an Interim Financial Agreement

On 1 March 2002, the Queensland Government and the Australian Government signed a Bilateral agreement for each to invest up to \$81 million over seven years in the NAPSWQ. The plan is to address high priority salinity, water quality and related natural resource issues across Australia. The Trust Bilateral agreement will establish a framework under which Queensland and the Australian Government will work cooperatively for the purposes of section 19 of the *Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997*.

Any Trust Bilateral will eventually be similar to the NAPSWQ Bilateral agreement and will draw on the existing Trust Partnership Agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU).

2.1 National Programs

2.1.1 National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

In Queensland the NAPSWQ applies to the priority salinity regions of Burdekin-Fitzroy; Lockyer–Burnett-Mary, Condamine-Balonne-Maranoa and Border Rivers. The goal of

NAPSWQ is to motivate and enable regional communities to use coordinated and targeted action to:

- prevent, stabilise and reverse trends in salinity, particularly dryland salinity, affecting the sustainability of production, the conservation of biological diversity and the viability of our infrastructure
- improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment

2.1.2 Regional Component of Natural Heritage Trust - Extension

The objectives for the Trust are:

- *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
- *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
- *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.

2.1.3 Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (RWQPP)

The goal of RWQPP is to halt and reverse the decline in water quality entering the Reef within ten years. Two objectives support this goal. They are to:

- reduce diffuse sources of pollutants in water entering the Reef
- rehabilitate and conserve areas of the Reef catchment that have a role in removing water borne pollutants.

These are addressed by:

- improving decision making in land use planning
- adopting sustainable production systems
- rehabilitating damaged wetlands and riparian areas
- conserving existing wetland and riparian areas.

It is expected that implementation of a number of the main strategies and actions of the RWQPP will be carried out by regional bodies under the auspices of the NAPSWQ and the Trust programs.

2.1.4 Other Programs: Water Quality Improvement Plan (WQIP) and Coastal Catchments Initiative (CCI)

The CCI seeks to deliver significant reductions in the discharge of pollutants to agreed hot spots. The CCI, to be undertaken in collaboration with State Environment Protection Agencies, involves the preparation of water quality improvement plans and the identification and implementation of cost-effective and timely projects by all parties – including the Australian, State and local governments, and community and environment groups with investment from the Australian Government.

2.2 Regional Planning Framework

In Queensland delivery of the regional component of NAPSWQ and the Trust will be devolved to designated and accredited community-based regional natural resource management (NRM) bodies. These bodies, legal entities but without statutory powers, will

work in partnership with regional agency coordination groups and other State and local government officers.

Regional bodies are responsible for the development of accredited integrated regional NRM plans and their implementation. Regional plans that reflect national, State and regional biophysical targets need to address priority NRM issues and gain accreditation. Regional Investment Strategies (RIS) consisting of prioritised management actions to improve resource condition will be used to seek investment from the funding programs and other organisations, including corporate and industry sources.

Regional bodies in the priority regions/catchments for the NAPSWQ are:

- Burdekin Solutions Ltd. (trading as the Burdekin Dry Tropics Board)
- Burnett-Mary Regional Group for Natural Resource Management Inc.
- Condamine Catchment Natural Resource Management Corporation Ltd. (trading as Condamine Alliance)
- Fitzroy Basin Association Inc.
- Qld Murray Darling Committee Inc.
- SEQ Western Catchments Group Inc.

Additional regional bodies which access other than NAPSWQ funds are:

- Cape York
- Desert Channels Queensland Inc.
- Mackay-Whitsunday Regional Natural Resource Management Group Inc.
- Northern Gulf Resource Management Group Inc.
- Natural Resource Management SEQ Inc.
- South West Natural Resource Management Group Inc.
- Southern Gulf Catchments Inc.
- Torres Strait
- FNQ NRM Ltd.

In the NAPSWQ regions, the delivery of the Trust and NAPSWQ funding will be based on a single regional NRM plan and the RIS, although the two funding programs will require separate financial and performance reporting and evaluation.

2.3 Management Arrangements

2.3.1 The Joint Steering Committee (JSC)

For the purposes of the Bilateral Agreements for the NAPSWQ and potentially the Trust although currently under the Interim Financial Agreement (IFA), the Joint Australian/State Government Steering Committee (JSC) manages both programs, which will include:

- reviewing performance against milestones and authorising quarterly payments in advance
- reporting decisions and decision making processes on investments
- submitting an annual review of the investment program, incorporating progress to date, to Ministers

2.3.2 The regional bodies

Both the NAPSWQ and the Trust will be delivered primarily at the regional level through incorporated regional bodies. Each regional body is responsible for:

- developing NRM plans for accreditation
- developing regional investment strategies for agreement
- implementing the plan in accordance with the Regional Partnership Agreement
- reporting to the JSC.

The investment strategy developed by the regional body will be directed at achieving the NRM outcomes identified in the regional plan and will detail:

- specific actions/projects proposed to be undertaken including responsibility for implementation
- costs of the proposed arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of individual actions
- the expected return on investment
- the assumptions underpinning the chosen actions
- timelines and performance indicators for each action.

3.0 Queensland's Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework

Queensland has developed a NRM Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting (MER) Framework (the Framework) to assess progress towards sustainable regional NRM. The Framework focuses on the measurement and assessment of:

- condition and trend in land, water, vegetation, biological and cultural resources, and landscape health
- performance of programs, strategies, policies and structures which support and promote the sustainable use, conservation, and rehabilitation of these resources.

The first part of the Framework describes the principles on which monitoring and evaluation is based. The principles in the Framework propose that monitoring and evaluation:

- demonstrate thoughtful and collaborative planning in advance
- have a focus on improving the capability of all participants
- employ a shared set of criteria or themes across all activities
- contribute to long term improvements by feeding back into the decision-making process
- incorporate opportunities for frequent and constructive communication at all stages of the process
- recognise the context (biophysical, climatic, social, institutional and political) within which the planning and activities are being progressed
- strive for practicality and affordability.

The Framework also suggests a series of common themes that should be considered in constructing monitoring and evaluation programs. The preferred approach and some distinct initiatives are then identified. This section provides the basis for integration and consistency of reporting on a number of regional, State and national NRM matters related to the delivery of regional NRM.

The five initiatives in the Framework are coherent suites of programs, strategies, structures, policies or projects:

- national (Australian and State) programs, for example, the NAPSWQ, the regional component of the Trust and the RWQPP
- state level policy, planning & support for healthy regional arrangements
- regional bodies, the Regional Group Collective (RGC) and regional agency coordination groups working together in the development of a supportive regional evaluative culture
- regional arrangements and regional NRM planning effectiveness
- State-wide Investment Programs, the "SIPs" – state-wide capability development projects in water quality, salinity, social and economic aspects, regional information provision, capacity building and sustainable agriculture.

These initiatives deliver or support the delivery of regional NRM planning and implementation within the State. Their standard of performance will influence the effectiveness and long term sustainability of regional delivery of NRM.

The Framework contains an evaluation strategy for each initiative. Strategies develop key evaluation questions, propose measures and identify potential stakeholders and evaluation

participants for each initiative. Evaluation strategies are being developed in consultation with stakeholders.

In addition an implementation plan for each strategy contains details of agreed monitoring and evaluation (M&E) arrangements based on the issues and potential measures identified for initiatives in the Framework. See the *Queensland Natural Resource Management Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework (Qld NRM MER Framework)* for further details.

The relationships between significant State and national documents, the Framework and its five component initiatives, strategies and implementation plans are shown in Figure 1 below.

4.0 Monitoring and Evaluation Activities

M&E will assess the program's performance in improving resource condition. In line with the principles of the Framework, monitoring and evaluation must contribute to long term management capabilities – these feeding back to the decision-making process. It is acknowledged that measurable and observable resource condition improvement may require a longer timeframe than the investment programs. So, in order to demonstrate efficiency and effectiveness; promote NRM successes; and to document accountability for public funds, the collection of short-term program performance information is necessary.

4.1 Monitoring

Monitoring which refers to tracking the condition and trend of land, water, vegetation and biological resources is called **resource condition monitoring** in this document. Monitoring which tracks the performance and implementation of programs, strategies, policies and structures is called **program monitoring**.

Monitoring will involve tracking and assessing progress in achieving both set resource condition and management action targets.

The *Queensland Guidelines for Target Setting for Regional NRM Planning* provides information on setting targets for an accredited regional NRM plan. Regional bodies in collaboration with technical advisory groups and regional coordination groups will need to:

- identify *aspirational targets* or goals for NRM in their region
- set achievable, time bound and measurable *resource condition targets*
- determine *management options* and set management action targets including necessary *resource assessment, capacity building, planning and on-ground activities* to effect progress towards each resource condition target
- calculate *investments* required to undertake and successfully implement priority management activities.

Specific performance and implementation monitoring and reporting information is needed to meet management and accountability needs.

Monitoring information is required to assess progress in terms of:

- *Resource condition matters for targets* – to monitor progress toward effecting change in resource condition **outcomes**, that is impacts on resource condition at the catchment and landscape scale
- *Management actions including capacity building targets* – to demonstrate the achievement of medium-term **intermediate outcomes** which should contribute toward and eventually lead to improved resource conditions; for example, these would include the adoption of more sustainable resource management practices or the adoption of codes of practice

-
- *Capacity building, regional planning or specific on-ground activities* – identifying short-term specific **outputs**, i.e. activities, goods or services produced in implementing regional plans or developed through regional and State-wide capacity building projects, focused on the particular resource condition matter for target they are intended to impact
 - *Financial activity* – reporting on **investment** against progress in achieving significant milestones in capacity building activities, regional plan development and implementation.

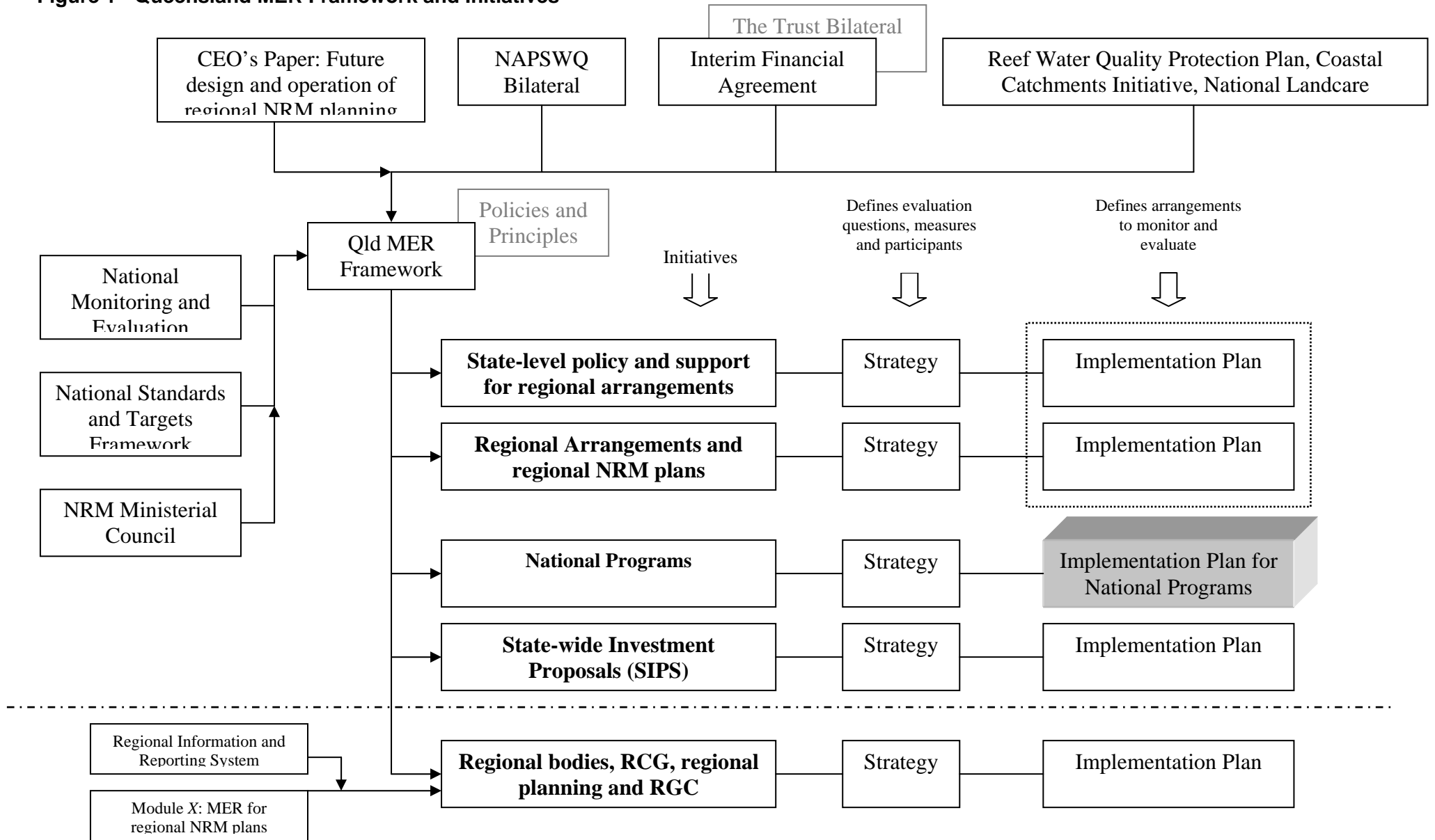
In order to satisfy annual reporting commitments to the Australian and State Governments respectively (See Attachment 4), the State and regional bodies need to keep track of:

- inputs, outputs and progress toward intermediate and ultimate outcomes
- progress in implementing regional plans and progress towards meeting regional targets
- progress in implementing other program elements including capacity building and communications
- conformity with the land and water reform elements of the NAPSWQ
- progress against the investment strategy.

In addition to target setting, it is expected that regional NRM plans will identify a commitment to, and broad approaches for, continuous improvement in the planning and implementation and regular review of the plan. To the extent possible, proposed output measures for capacity building, regional planning and on-ground actions will also need to be identified. Generally outputs can be categorised broadly as primarily **resource assessment, planning, capacity building** or **on-ground works**.

Further details on monitoring and evaluation for regional NRM plans are available in the *MER Strategy for Regional NRM Plans*, a module attached to the *Guidelines for NRM Plan Development*.

Figure 1 - Queensland MER Framework and Initiatives



4.2 Evaluation

Evaluation will seek answers to one or more of the following:

- Effectiveness – How well have programs delivered on their stated goals and objectives? Did the programs work? Did they do what they said they were going to do?
- Appropriateness – Whether the national funding programs strategies and mechanisms (including regional planning and delivery) were the most appropriate means of achieving their high level objectives. All things considered, were the programs a sensible use of resources and people’s effort for the problem at hand?
- Efficiency – How efficiently and cost-effectively did national program funding achieve its outcomes. Were resources used efficiently or was there waste of some kind?

The NAPSWQ Bilateral Agreement requires stakeholders to agree on an annual schedule of planned evaluations. These evaluations must:

- meet the performance and accountability needs of all levels (regional, State and National scale)
- identify roles and responsibilities for both the evaluations and the processes for implementing the evaluation’s recommendations.

5. Outcomes Monitoring

Specific performance information is required to meet both program accountability and management needs. Performance and implementation will be monitored by:

Focus	Performance or Implementation Result	Monitoring Focus
Outcomes Monitoring	Outcomes	Resource condition targets
Program Monitoring	Intermediate Outcomes	Management action targets
	Outputs	Capacity building; Regional planning; Specific on ground activities/projects
	Investments	Progress in activities/projects against significant milestones

5.1 Outcomes Monitoring

5.1.1 Resource Condition Outcomes

The National NRM Standards and Targets Framework (S&T Framework) establishes national natural resource outcomes for both the NAPSWQ and the Trust. For details of goals and objectives refer to the attached **Annexes A** and **B** respectively. The national outcomes provide direction to assist with identifying specific time bound and measurable targets. Progress towards natural resource condition targets provides an indication of the level of achievement of national outcomes.

5.1.2 The Purpose of Outcomes Monitoring

Outcome monitoring measures and reports on the progress towards resource condition targets set as long-term outcomes. Outcomes monitoring informs the decision-making processes in the management of programs and supports better targeting of resources.

The Bilateral Agreements require an annual report to the NRM Ministerial Council on:

- inputs, outputs and progress towards intermediate and long term outcomes;
- performance against regional targets, consistent with the National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets; and
- implementation of the program.

5.1.3 Targets

The S&T Framework identifies specific resource condition matters for which achievable targets must be set. Each matter has a performance indicator and set of measures to be used in monitoring and reporting on the outcomes. The natural resource condition outcomes, Matters for Target and performance indicators are in **Annex C**.

Regional bodies may also wish to set targets for matters that are additional to those identified in the S&T Framework.

The resource condition targets established by regions should be specific, time bound and measurable. The timeframe for achievement of these targets is likely to be 10-20 years. Targets could relate to absolute improvement in resource condition or decreases in the rate of degradation. The regional body will determine the actual level of the target through its planning process.

Target setting, both for resource condition and for management actions, must consider potential social, economic and related environmental impacts which might arise from the adoption of those targets, and evaluate the costs and benefits of various options, as well as the implications of taking no action.

For guidance on formal methods of incorporating socio-economic considerations of likely impacts, please refer to *Integrating Economic and Social Issues in Regional Natural Resource Management Planning: A Framework for Regional Bodies* available on line at <http://www.regionalnrm.qld.gov.au/planning/guidance/social.html>. Additional methods are discussed in *Prioritisation Models for the Regional Investment Strategy*, which is Module 2 attached to the *Guidelines for NRM Plan Development* and additionally in the *Queensland Guidelines for Target Setting for Regional NRM Planning*.

The Australian and Queensland Governments will consider the plans and the targets they contain, as part of the accreditation process prior to investment in those plans.

5.1.4 Baseline data

As part of target setting, regions should establish baseline data that can be used to predict the resource condition trend for a particular asset with no further intervention. Over time the comparison of actual data against the estimated “no further intervention” trend will measure the results of the investments. Establishment of trend should be based on the best available data.

Regions should estimate the expected impact of the intervention strategies over the term of the target. This expected impact trend will facilitate improved monitoring and reporting of progress towards the target and evaluation of the effectiveness of the intervention strategy.

5.1.5 Resource condition indicators

Resource condition indicators are used to monitor changes in resource condition as a result of management practice. Indicators are usually selected on the basis of cost, simplicity, consistency, practicality and ability to deliver information from the location through to the national scale.

Resource condition indicators have been agreed nationally for each of the Resource Condition Matters for Target. Regions should state targets in a way consistent with the agreed resource condition indicators. These indicators are to be used to measure and report on the progress of investments in reaching their targets.

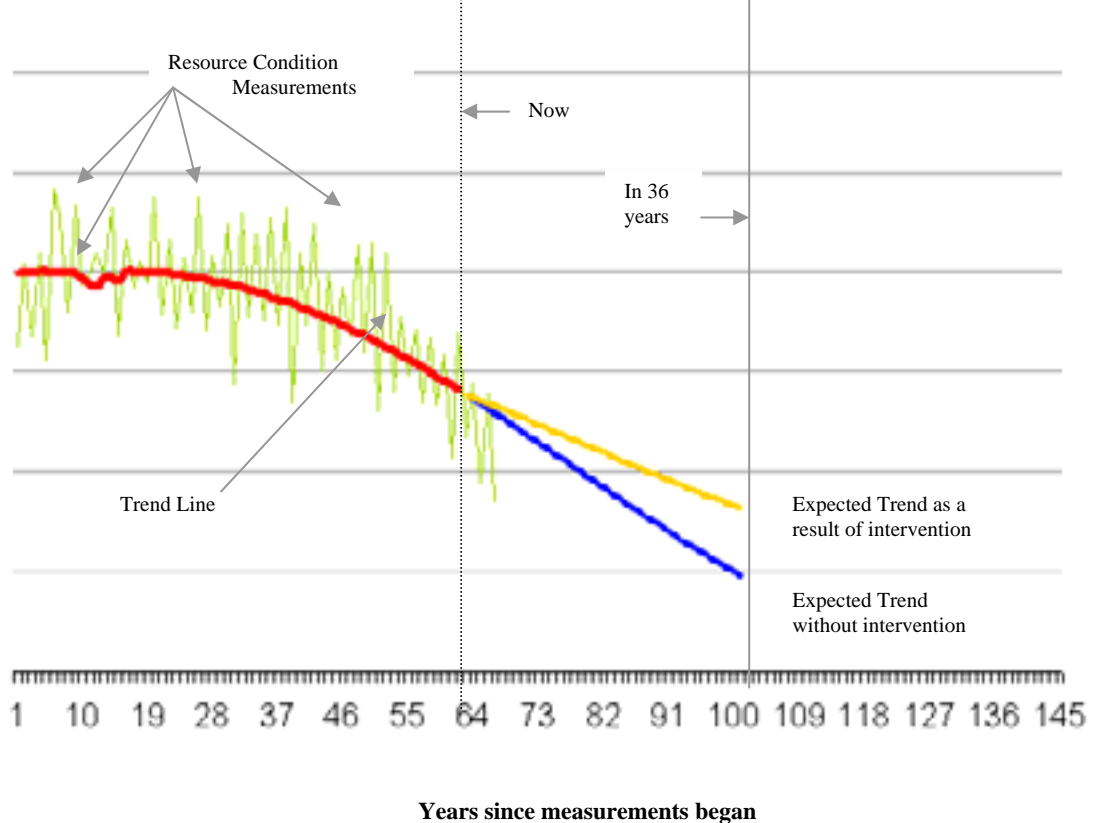
The indicators are listed in **Annex C** and measurement methods can be found on the Internet at <http://www.nrm.gov.au/monitoring/index.html>. Not all indicator information is equally well developed at present. Information at this site will be progressively updated.

NOTE: Only those indicators that are relevant to issues addressed in the Plan should be used.

5.1.6 Measurement Methods

There are agreed measurement methods for each indicator of the Matters for Target. Consistent measurement methods are important to ensure that measures of regional progress can contribute to developing a statewide and national picture of resource condition. The *Queensland Guidelines for Target Setting for Regional Natural Resource Management Planning* provide State-level guidance templates to ensure a consistent approach.

Figure 2 - Resource Condition Trend Lines, with and without Intervention



5.2 Resource Data Access

5.2.1 Existing Monitoring

The State takes responsibility for measuring and monitoring resource condition and trend in many areas. Where possible, resource condition monitoring and reporting by regional bodies should use monitoring data from State and local governments and other organisations.

The directories of products and services prepared by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Primary Industries & Fisheries and the Department of Natural Resources, Mines & Energy identify existing monitoring programs, together with information on regional availability, access, pricing policies and time lines. Data from many monitoring activities undertaken by the State government will be provided on the basis of cost of provision, rather than cost of collection. Where feasible, no charge will apply.

Regional bodies should discuss planned activities with their Regional Coordination Groups (RCGs) to determine the significance and availability of data from existing monitoring programs.

5.2.2 Data Collection

Coverage of the more significant resource monitoring programs undertaken by the State for a range of natural resources relating to the resource condition Matters for Target is identified in **Annex E2**. This Annex should be read in conjunction with the *Queensland Guidelines for Target Setting for Regional NRM Planning*. Management action measures which the State has put/is putting in place in order to meet its requirements to deliver NAPSQ and the Trust (via the IFA) in Queensland are in Annex E1.

Where the data is being collected as part of an ongoing monitoring program, the regional body needs to make arrangements with the current custodian of the data to ensure that the data collection program will provide the required information and that information will be available when required. Where regional bodies have assumed responsibility for data collection, they will need to contact the appropriate data custodian to arrange for their data to be placed into the relevant database.

As a number of Resource Condition Matters for Targets and Management Action Targets may be related to individual landholder activity, quality assured data from property level monitoring may contribute to baseline and resource condition and trend monitoring. Regional bodies may wish to facilitate the voluntary collection of such data by landholders with training and support programs, using tools such as the Landholder Monitoring Guide.

5.2.3 Data Provision

Regional bodies require resource condition data to report progress towards resource condition targets. Regions will seek the data from the relevant data custodians and use the data to assess progress towards the achievement of the target on an annual basis.

Regional bodies will be required to report on the monitoring results of resource condition change relevant to their management actions, but will not be held accountable for any changes or lack of change in resource conditions, as there may be external factors over which they have little or no control. This should not be taken to imply they do not record and report against these indicators.

5.2.4 Links to NLWRA

The National Land & Water Resources Audit (NLWRA) coordinates and collates resource condition data. It liaises with data custodians to ensure data is available for use at a national level.

State resource monitoring will supply most of the NLWRA's data for Queensland. The State will need medium to long-term strategies to develop and maintain a core set of data. The State will consult with the NLWRA to ensure consistency with data requirements for reporting on agreed natural resource indicators. The State will then endeavour to make this and monitoring data from other identified providers known to the regional bodies. The Strategic Data Capture Plan forms a basis of this strategy.

5.3 Resource Data Management and Analysis

5.3.1 Quality Assurance for Data

Data collection and storage arrangements should be in accordance with the Australia New Zealand Land Information Council (ANZLIC) protocols as agreed in the NAPSWQ Bilateral Agreement and the Trust IFA. These will ensure that data are available to all relevant stakeholders in the expected format. These protocols may be viewed at <http://www.anzlic.org.au/policies.html>.

5.3.2 Data Interpretation

Some data interpretation will be required to provide an accurate representation of progress towards targets. Interpretation must be within confidence limits and with regard to context. For example, the raw data for an end of valley salinity measurement site may need to be converted into the appropriate rolling average or modified to take into account the effect of seasonal conditions. Regions will be responsible for the interpretation of data in conjunction with the data custodians identified in **Annex E2**.

5.4 Reporting

Reporting on progress towards achieving resource condition targets is required annually by the JSC and the Ministerial Council. Details of this report are in Section 8.

Regional, State and national data capture and reporting needs are currently being identified in order to develop a comprehensive information storage and reporting database for monitoring and evaluation activities that is tailored to the needs of all stakeholder groups. (See Section 6.3).

5.5 Allocation of Financial Resources

Every effort should be made to use data from the existing resource condition monitoring programs already in place throughout the State. This use should not

require additional efforts from regional bodies to monitor the outcomes of the programs. Regional bodies might consider negotiating with their RCGs or respective agencies to develop tailored monitoring sites or programs that meet their particular needs on a fee for service basis.

Proposals for new or extended monitoring should be included in the RIS. Any proposals will need to have regard to the following principles:

- investment proposals which address resource condition targets must include a monitoring, evaluation and reporting component
- the monitoring and reporting component must utilise existing monitoring where possible. Investment could support new and additional monitoring requirements which, following consideration of an appropriate cost/benefit analysis, would be fully funded as part of the investment proposal
- monitoring and reporting components must be consistent with the Queensland requirements for the relevant core indicators
- the State would aim to have a medium to long term strategy for the maintenance and development of the indicators in the core set

In the development or review of this strategy, Queensland would consult with the NLWRA and endeavour to ensure that the proposed plan or strategy is consistent with the data requirements for reporting on the core set of natural resource management indicators

6. PROGRAM MONITORING

6.1 The Purpose of Program Monitoring

6.1.1 Decision-making and Adaptive Management Processes

Program monitoring will provide the JSC and the regional body with performance information on a regular basis, which will form the basis for assessing progress, identifying opportunities for further review and making amendments to proposed activities to ensure the long term success of the investments. This adaptive management utilises monitoring activities to make necessary adjustments to the program.

6.1.2 Reporting

The Bilateral Agreements require that the JSC report annually to the Ministerial Council on the implementation of the program on:

- inputs, outputs and progress towards intermediate and long term outcomes
- performance against regional targets, consistent with the National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets
- progress in the implementation of the other program elements including capacity building and communications
- progress towards the achievement of all other commitments under the Agreement.

Once signed, the Trust Bilateral Agreement also requires that these reports should include material sufficient to permit the State and Australian Governments to satisfy their reporting commitments under the Act.

6.2 Performance Indicators

Significant change in resource condition is unlikely to be measurable in the time frame of the national investment programs. In order to track NRM interventions, the details of program delivery will need to be recorded and reported to provide confidence that activities supported by the program are leading to expected long term outcomes.

6.2.1 Management Action Targets

Regional bodies are expected to set short-term targets (1-5 years) relating mainly to management actions or capacity building which will contribute to progress towards the longer-term resource condition targets. These short-term management action targets will provide an indication of the likely success of specific strategies.

The National Standards and Targets Framework specifies three matters for management targets which regional bodies will set and monitor:

- critical assets identified and protected
- water allocation plans developed and implemented
- improved land and water management practices adopted.

Other matters for management targets are not specified, as the solutions to degradation vary between regions. **It will be the regional bodies' responsibility to develop additional regionally-appropriate Management Action Targets.**

Management Action Targets need to take into account the guidelines and protocols for measuring and reporting the targets established under the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and supporting information developed in the *Queensland Guidelines for Target Setting for Regional NRM Planning*.

Management Action Targets should be measurable and time bound for a period of 1-5 years. Regions will identify the expected trend and estimate annual projections of progress towards these targets over the life of the target in order to support realistic expectations of achievement and appropriate reporting.

Members of the Queensland Monitoring Evaluation Review and Reporting Working Group (MERRWG) have contributed to the development of a nationally agreed set of reporting categories for Management Action Targets for potential use and trial during the 2003-04 financial year. See **Annex D**. Regional bodies and Statewide Workplan Implementation Boards will be invited to trial these categories using their respective foundation funding, priority action proposals and project plans to ensure that the final categories are appropriate to Queensland's conditions, institutional arrangements and management practices.

Following this trial, the revised guidelines and protocols for measuring and reporting on these Management Action Targets will be agreed and adopted as part of the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for implementation in 2004-05.

6.2.2 Outputs

Outputs –expected products and services for the activities funded by the national programs – will be identified through the Schedules to the Partnership Agreements between the JSC and the regional bodies. Monitoring the achievement of these

outputs provides an indication of the success of the activities that contribute to the achievement of the targets.

As with categories of Management Action Targets, regional bodies and Statewide Workplan Implementation Boards will be invited to trial the appropriateness of the *output* reporting categories and measures developed nationally during 2003-2004 to ensure that the final categories and measures are appropriate to Queensland's conditions, institutional arrangements and management practices.

6.2.3 Investments

The national program investment stages are:

- foundation funding
- priority action proposals
- regional investment.

Expenditure monitoring will indicate progress of inputs. Monitoring actual expenditure against JSC approved expenditure for the period, as well as expenditure Management Action Targets and Resource Condition Matters for Target, or in their absence against activity purpose category, will demonstrate the value for money of these investments.

The processes and details of financial accountability and reporting are established under the Financial Management Protocol as required by the Bilateral Agreement. The processes and information developed under this Protocol are complementary to the processes and information established under this Implementation Plan.

6.2.4 Key Summary Indicators

The JSC will monitor key indicators. These indicators provide a financial and performance overview and include:

- expenditure against budget and investment sources (total, regional and State)
- expenditure by the funding categories in the Bilateral Agreement (foundation funding, priority actions, capacity building, regional investment, other) (total, regional, State)
- expenditure by Resource Condition Matters for Target and Management Action Target categories (total, regional and State)
- expenditure by region (total, regional and State)
- progress towards achieving Management Actions Targets, compared to planned progress.

6.3 Data Management

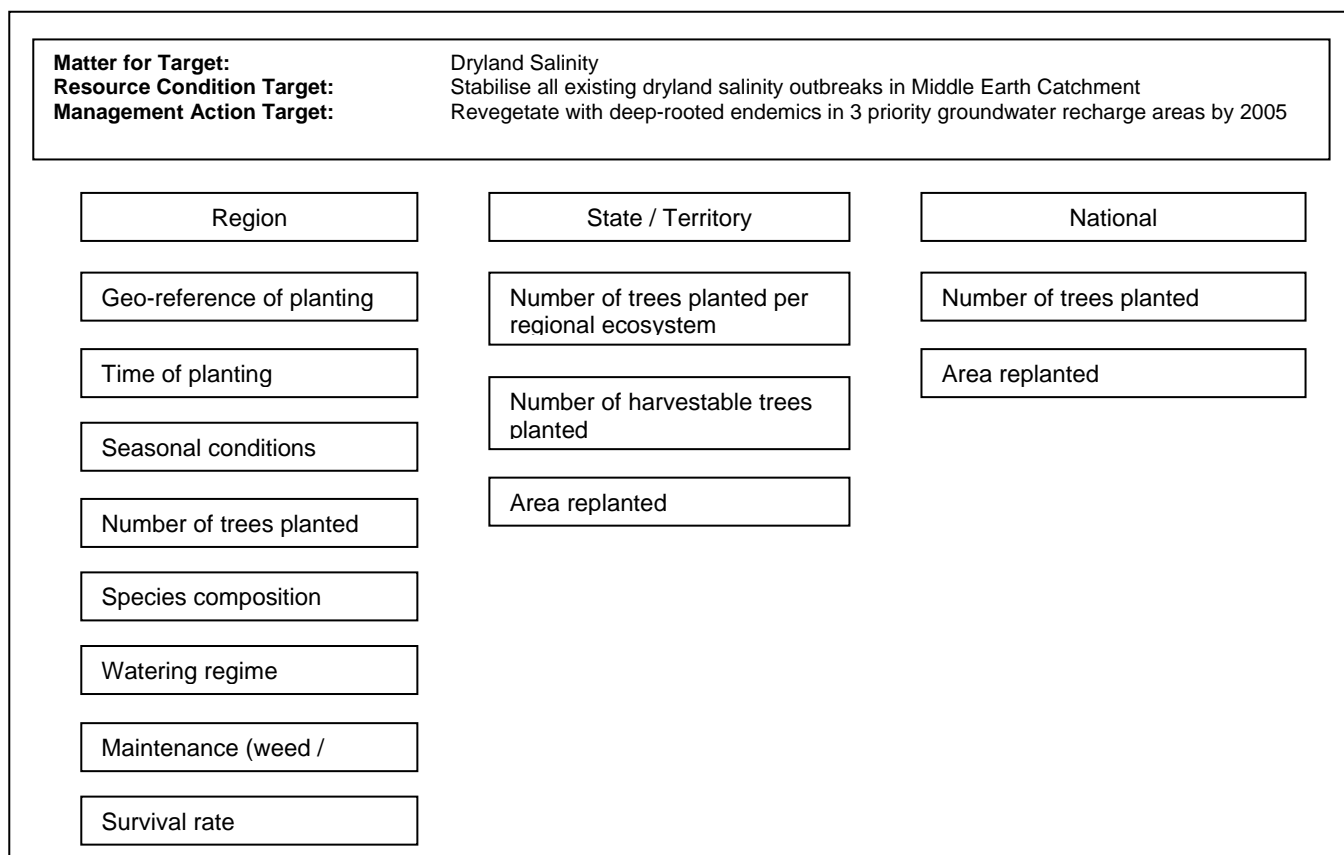
Monitoring processes need to be simple, cost-effective, affordable and practical. The data infrastructure required should:

- avoid duplication of effort
- use data for multiple purposes
- ensure user access
- ensure users can determine the existence of suitable data.

Monitoring data must meet the needs of resource management personnel at a number of scales. The extent and detail of required management information will vary according to jurisdictional level. Management needs of regional bodies reflect a

greater attention to detail than at either State or national level. Figure 3 shows successively summarised reporting data with decreasing detail.

Figure 3 - Successively Summarised Reporting Data with Decreasing Detail



The process of meaningfully interpreting and accurately aggregating data for use by all parties from regional bodies to the JSC will be greatly simplified by the wide adoption of an agreed data management system.

The Information System for Regional Arrangements (ISRA) project in conjunction with the Information Systems sub-working group of MERRWG is to determine information management needs and to assess the capacity of a number of commercial and purpose-built data management systems. ISRA is advancing in consultation with similar developments in other states and at the national level. Additional investment may be required to achieve coordinated efficient and effective data management and analysis capability that accommodates:

- open systems
- common data model and common identifiers
- standard meta data specifications
- State level reporting
- State level data validation
- standard data transfer
- consistent use of the protocols for measuring and reporting.

To ensure that the performance indicator data for management action targets and outputs can be used for reporting purposes at regional, State and national levels, they should be collected in accordance with the guidelines and protocols for measuring and reporting. These data will be stored and maintained to meet agreed international or national guidelines or standards for the management of spatial

information as endorsed by ANZLIC (to be) agreed as part of the Bilateral Agreement(s).

6.4 Analysis of Monitoring Data

6.4.1 Analysis at Regional Level

Regional plans should include details of how program monitoring data will be analysed and utilised for adaptive management and for reporting under the regional plan. In general, regions will be responsible for either undertaking or commissioning such analyses.

These processes must ensure that the data for reporting on program performance is provided in accordance with the data management requirements of the JSC and the Ministerial Council.

6.4.2 Analysis at the State Level

The State will produce an annual State summary of data from reports by regional bodies, other proponents and key program performance indicators. The State summary will contribute to both a State and national report. Appropriate data validation process will be determined. This will report on the quality of the data, particularly the accuracy and its conformity with the required data protocols and specifications. The report will be included as part of the State summary on an annual basis to provide an indication of the reliability of data for interpretation purposes.

6.5 Reporting

Regional bodies will report to the JSC and RCG every six months (see Section 8). The details on financial reporting, in the context of endorsed regional NRM plans, are part of the JSC/Regional Body Partnership Agreement.

6.6 Financial Resource Allocations

6.6.1 Regional Resource Requirements

Regional monitoring costs are to be included in the funding agreements except where specifically exempt.

6.6.2 State Resource Requirements

Resources to monitor the performance of the program will be determined as soon as practicable after the commencement of the program. The Joint Steering Committee will ensure that resources are available to monitor and report on the performance of the programs. It will determine cost-sharing arrangements that will be contained in a Schedule to the Bilateral Agreement.

7. EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

7.1 Purpose of Program Evaluations

Evaluations have both a *formative* purpose of supporting adaptive management during the program and a *summative* purpose supporting accountability and contributing to the design of follow-on or future programs.

In general, evaluations during the course of these programs will focus on effectiveness and efficiency. Questions of appropriateness are best addressed either at the very beginning or at the very end of the programs although information collected in the interim will support such assessments.

Evaluations should be planned to provide information at key decision points throughout the life of a program. Results inform adaptive management by improving program design or delivery and may reorient activities and investments. Less formal review of progress should be undertaken to help refine processes, further review targets and adjust milestones as needed.

Evaluations at the end of a program can be used to determine impacts, appropriateness of its design, any requirements for follow-on or replacement programs, and to ensure “lessons learnt” are applied to the design and delivery of future programs.

7.2 Joint Steering Committee Evaluations

Implementing national programs through Bilateral Agreements is based on a nationally consistent approach recognising the requirements of each jurisdiction. The JSC is responsible for establishing evaluations of the performance of the programs that are:

- appropriate to the adaptive management needs of the programs
- the accountability needs of all parties.

The JSC will establish processes to plan and manage evaluations of the performance of the programs and to report on the implementation of their recommendations.

Parties wishing to conduct formal evaluations related to the delivery or accomplishments of the national programs are advised to seek JSC approval in order to ensure the fullest cooperation. Evaluations initiated by other parties in addition to those initiated by the JSC will be resourced and managed by that party. A copy of the report from formal evaluations conducted by other parties will be provided to the JSC.

7.2.1 Evaluation Planning and Schedules

Planning for evaluations must ensure an appropriate and comprehensive coverage of aspects of the programs to ensure stakeholders are adequately informed about the performance of the programs. Planning for evaluations must remain responsive to management needs with the flexibility to undertake evaluations as the program unfolds and as the need for evaluations emerges.

In determining the focus of these evaluations, it is recognised that the national programs are being implemented across all States and Territories. To ensure that evaluations that are conducted within Queensland are able to contribute to a national

perspective on the performance of the programs, common key focus areas will be identified for inclusion in the development of the schedule.

A schedule of proposed evaluations will be jointly developed and will detail the purpose of each evaluation. The schedule, when approved by the JSC, is the basis for the management and resourcing of evaluations and will form part of the M&E schedule to the Bilateral Agreement(s). The schedule will be reviewed each financial year or when required to confirm the year's program of evaluations and to allocate resources to their management and conduct.

A register of evaluations will be maintained by the JSC, which details the agreed purpose, focus, and the commencement and completion dates of each evaluation. Reports from these evaluations will be available for the Ministerial Council and, with JSC approval, for selected other stakeholders to use in considering achievement of expected outcomes for that particular activity.

7.2.2 Evaluation Management

The JSC will arrange for the management of evaluations prior to the financial year in which they will be conducted. Management of evaluations will include:

Initiation of the Evaluation:

Prior to the commencement of the financial year, the JSC will agree on the evaluations related to the delivery of the national programs to be undertaken during the financial year, their purpose and focus, commencement date and resource requirements. These evaluations may be at either the State or regional scale.

Appointment of Steering Committee:

The Joint Steering Committee will appoint a steering committee for each evaluation. It may choose to serve as the steering committee itself or appoint a committee. Where a committee is appointed, representatives from relevant State and Australian Government agencies with appropriate expertise can be appointed.

The Steering Committee will:

- provide clear, timely and appropriate advice on program and evaluation issues to the evaluators
- provide guidance on and resolve major difficulties
- regularly report to the JSC on progress and major issues;
- review draft reports and recommendations
- recommend to the JSC acceptance of the findings and recommendations.

Smaller scale evaluations may not require a formal committee but it should always be clear where the responsibility for an evaluation rests.

Development and Approval of Terms of Reference

The Steering Committee for each evaluation will establish the terms of reference for the evaluation based on the purpose and focus agreed by the JSC. This development may be undertaken in conjunction with key stakeholders. In general, terms of reference should provide details of:

- the purpose of the evaluation
- the key issues and questions
- estimated time lines
- other issues.

Funding and Resources

The JSC will be responsible for providing resources (human, physical and financial) for each evaluation.

Design and Conduct of the Evaluation

The design and conduct of evaluations will be the responsibility of the group or individual selected by the Steering Committee, which should be consulted during the development of key evaluation questions and performance indicators.

Approval of Final Report

The JSC (or its nominated group) will approve the final report. Approval of reports for evaluations commissioned by regional bodies rests with the regional body concerned.

7.2.3 Reporting

Communicating Findings and Recommendations

The JSC will be responsible for making evaluation findings and recommendations available to the Ministerial Council and selected other stakeholders. Where the JSC has initiated a regional scale evaluation it may choose, pending regional body agreement, to make findings available to other regional bodies.

The roles and responsibilities for each of these stages are summarised in **Attachment 5**.

7.2.4 Conduct of evaluations

Evaluations should be conducted according to the principles set out by the Australasian Evaluation Society. These are available at <http://www.aes.asn.au/aesguide02.pdf>

7.3 Regional Evaluations

The regional body will be responsible for planning and managing evaluations at the regional level including the appointment of a steering committee, providing funding and any other resources. Evaluations at a regional scale will be undertaken to meet regional requirements. Such evaluations could relate to improving management processes. The results of evaluations and ensuing reports will be provided to the JSC as a component of the region's full year performance report. The JSC may choose to provide the results of individual evaluations to other regions, pending regional body agreement, where such reports will assist in adaptive management.

The JSC may initiate a regional scale evaluation where it requires information on particular regional projects or processes. Activity Agreements between the State and regional bodies currently contain mechanisms for the State to require evaluation information from regional bodies.

8. REPORTING

8.1 Purpose

Performance reporting for the NAPSWQ and the Trust Extension will support both management decision-making and accountability purposes. Performance reporting

for these programs will use a common reporting structure. This meets the performance reporting requirements of the Bilateral Agreements for the two programs as well as the Queensland NRM MER Framework and the National M&E Framework.

Under the Bilateral Agreement, consolidated national program performance reports are to be provided to the Ministerial Council on an annual basis. The Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council agreed a format for these Annual Program Performance Reports. This format provides a separate report on each program. The agreed format for these consolidated national reports is included at **Attachment 1**.

The Bilateral Agreement and the IFA provide both parties with access to performance information. Sufficient performance information will be available to Queensland to meet its reporting requirements under the *Natural Heritage Act*.

8.2 Reporting Coordination

Performance reporting must be simple and cost-effective and meet the needs of all stakeholders. To achieve this, performance reporting processes at regional, State, JSC and national levels must be coordinated through a common reporting and information structure, and timeframes.

8.2.1 Common Reporting Structure

The JSC is responsible for the implementation of both the NAPSWQ and the Trust Extension. These programs are implemented through similar processes. A common reporting structure will be used for both programs, which uses the same reporting processes and information requirements.

This common reporting structure will facilitate meaningful aggregation of regional data to provide whole of State summary reports for use by the JSC and by Queensland. State and Territory reports will be aggregated into meaningful national level information for the Ministerial Council and the Australian Government as shown in Figure 4.

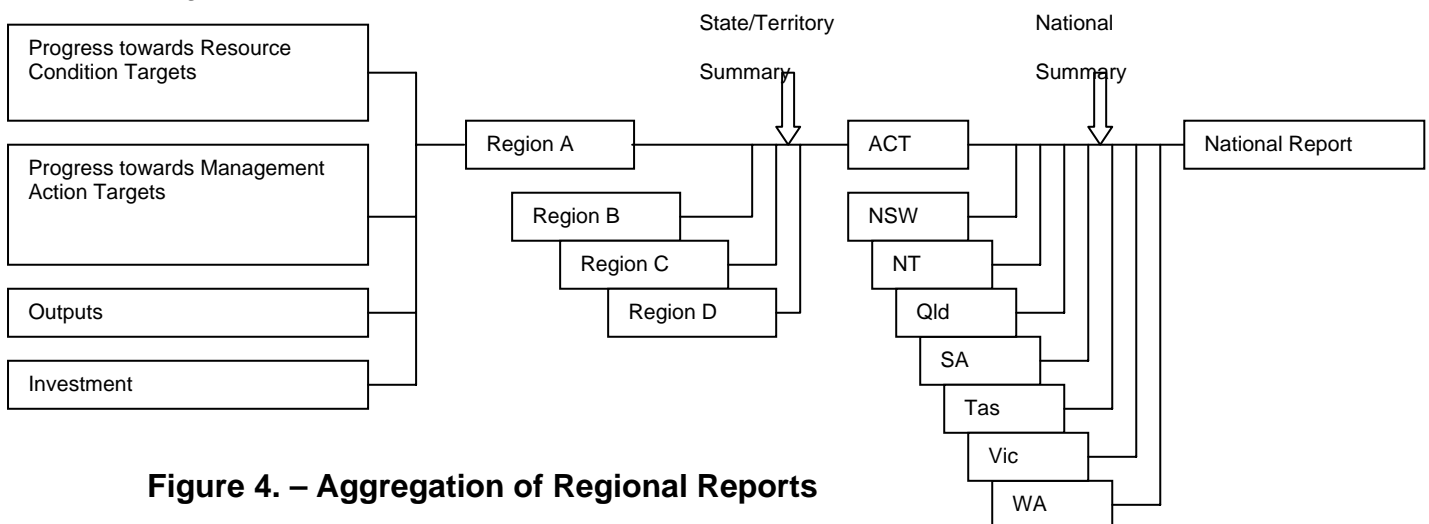


Figure 4. – Aggregation of Regional Reports

The common reporting processes include:

- regional performance reporting is to be undertaken on a six monthly basis
- the first report is to include outputs achieved for the first half of the year
- the second or yearly report is to provide a report on achievement of outputs for the second half of the year, a cumulative summary of outputs for the year, and a report on progress towards the achievement of relevant management action targets and resource condition targets
- the yearly progress report to the JSC will be used to determine the region's performance for the year

These regional reports provide the data and information for a State Annual Summary, which, after agreement by the JSC, will be used to prepare the Annual Report for the Ministerial Council. This Annual Summary will also be used by both the State and the Australian Governments to support their respective annual reporting requirements.

This reporting structure, described diagrammatically at **Attachment 2**, places significant emphasis on a common information structure and data management processes to ensure the accuracy and reliability of data at all levels.

8.2.2 Regional Reporting

Reports provided by the regional bodies should contain information necessary to meet the needs of both the State and the Australian Governments. Consequently, a preferred reporting format will be supplied for regional reports in order to acquire data in a form that accords with the guidelines and protocols for measuring and reporting outputs and management action targets agreed and established as part of the National Monitoring and Evaluation Framework.

The half yearly and yearly report format to be used for the 2003-2004 performance report is in **Attachment 3**. This form should be used in the absence of accredited plans and funded regional investment strategies. The performance reporting template under accredited plans and funded regional investment strategies will, in addition, link actions to Management Action Targets, and Management Action Targets to Resource Condition Targets.

8.2.3 State Summary

Much of the State level reporting will be based on a summation of information collected and reported at the regional level.

The Queensland Annual Summary will aggregate regional performance along with statewide investment information to a State level. The compiled report containing data at both regional and State summary level will be provided to the JSC for its approval for use in the Ministerial Council reports on the NAPSWQ and the Trust Extension and the Annual Reports of each party.

The yearly summary format is in **Attachment 4**.

8.2.4 Reporting Timeframes

The yearly performance report from the regional bodies to the JSC will cover a period from 1 April to 31 March in order to ensure time and resources for review prior to finalising annual funding allocations. This timeframe will also help to ensure a timely annual report to the Ministerial Council.

Regions will provide half yearly reports to the JSC by 31 October so that the JSC may review the regional bodies' progress towards achieving agreed outputs.

Yearly reports will be provided before 30 April so that the JSC can consider regional body progress towards achieving the agreed outputs and outcomes. As part of this performance review, the Queensland Annual Summary will be compiled for agreement within six weeks of the JSC's acceptance of regional bodies' yearly reports.

Following agreement by the JSC, the Queensland Annual Summary will be compiled into the national annual report to be provided to the October meeting of the Ministerial Council. The reporting timeframes are summarised in the table in **Attachment 7**.

8.2.5 Data Management

Regions will provide the reports in a compatible format, where possible through the agreed information system developed by ISRA. Data will be provided in accord with the data management requirements of the JSC.

Following the compilation and analysis of the data, the report will be presented to the JSC for approval. Following the JSC approval, data will be provided to the stakeholders in the agreed formats in accord with the data management requirements of the JSC.

8.2.6 Analysis of Monitoring Data

Analysis at Regional Level

Regions must establish processes to monitor the performance of projects and activities funded by the programs. These should address how the regional planning body proposes to analyse and utilise monitoring data for adaptive management and reporting under the regional plan and investment strategy. In general, regions will be responsible for undertaking or commissioning such analyses. These processes must also ensure that the data for reporting on program performance is provided in accord with the data management requirements of the JSC.

Analysis at the State Level

The State Summary and key program performance indicators will be compiled from reports by regional groups and other project proponents. To ensure that data provided by a region/proponent can be aggregated with data from other regions/proponents to provide a State-level summary that can be used to provide a national report, an appropriate data validation process will be undertaken. This process must provide a report on the quality of the data, particularly the accuracy and its conformity with the required data protocols and specifications. The report will be included as part of the State Summary on an annual basis to provide an indication of the reliability of data for interpretation purposes.

8.2.7 Allocation of Resources

Monitoring of the performance of projects and activities is an integral element of the management of the program. The costs of this monitoring are included in the program costs, not additional to it.

Regional Resource Requirements

Unless specifically agreed, the costs of monitoring are to be included in the amounts approved under the funding agreements for projects and activities.

State Resource Requirements

The resources required to monitor the performance of the program will be determined as soon as practicable after the commencement of the program. The JSC will ensure that an appropriate allocation of resources is available to monitor and report on the performance of the programs. Cost-sharing arrangements will be agreed by the JSC and contained in a Schedule to the Bilateral Agreement.