

2004

## Property planning



## Purpose

This module supports *Guidelines for Developing a Regional Natural Resource Management Plan and Regional Investment Strategy in Queensland*. It is intended to:

- provide general information about property planning
- highlight linkages between NRM regional planning and property planning
- provide examples of actions that may be pursued by the regional NRM body in order to facilitate more effective property planning in the regions.

The property planning module has links with other guidance modules including the suite of modules under *Integration of Regional Planning Processes* and the *Target Setting and Monitoring and Evaluation* modules.

## Introduction

For the purposes of this module, the term 'property planning' refers to the development of rural property plans ranging from the minimalist through to elaborate production and quality assurance systems that are supported by third party audits.

Property planning has been increasingly raised as an effective mechanism to address natural resource management problems through both Commonwealth and State processes. In Queensland, property management planning has been identified as a key policy instrument in a number of recent natural resource management initiatives including:

- Land and Water Management Plans under the *Water Act 2000*.
- Property Vegetation Management Plans under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.
- Draft State Rural Leasehold Land Strategy.
- Reef Water Quality Protection Plan.

## Background

Within a farm management system, a property plan is a document for the management of the enterprise and natural resources on a property.

Factors that may influence a landholder to prepare a plan include peer networks, generational changes, diversification, regulatory requirements including Workplace Health and Safety, access to natural resources and market access. Some landholders use aspects of these plans to assist them in negotiating more favourable finance and lending arrangements with financial institutions and reduced insurance premiums.

The natural resource management (NRM) and environment components of a property plan are the primary area of interest in the regional NRM process. These aspects of a property plan include management of pests, soil and water, the preservation of wetlands and riparian habitat and the conservation of nature and cultural heritage. In this sense, it is a mechanism for the property manager to set out how the statutory duty of care for the land and environment are being met (Land Act 1994 s199, Environmental Protection Act 1994 s319).

The National Property Management Campaign, launched in 1992, has promoted an integrated and on-going approach for managing the farming business in the short, medium and long term. This campaign in Queensland, has provided a service to rural participants in assisting them to understand the relationships between the parts

of the whole system (natural, human, enterprise and financial) and awareness of the benefits of a holistic approach to planning. While the National Campaign finished in 2002 Futureprofit continues and has expanded its services to assist where possible with planning delivery and change at catchment and industry levels. Support for this activity now comes from the national Farmbis program, which is a learning initiative funded by the State and Commonwealth Governments until June 2004.

Considerable momentum still exists at the national level for property planning. This is illustrated by related initiatives like the National Framework for Environmental Management Systems (EMS)<sup>1</sup> in Agriculture and the initiative funded through the Rural Industry Research and Development Corporation to scope the potential for a national scheme for accreditation for professionals in the agricultural and natural resource sectors.

There is increasing promotion of improved planning and management practices from rural property managers themselves and from industry. Rural industry is increasingly using best management practice (BMP)<sup>2</sup> programs and quality assurance schemes that assist industries to comply with statutory and marketing requirements and enhance economic opportunities for marketing 'clean and green' products. Innovation with industry has led to best management practice programs that promote property planning.

There are statutory requirements to undertake property planning to support the issue of certain regulatory permits. Examples include the land and water management plan, required prior to irrigators using their water entitlement in certain circumstances and a vegetation management plan to support issue of a permit to clear vegetation.

Current Government incentives **aimed at encouraging landholders to develop property plans include:**

- requirement for access to Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA) loans;
- requirement for some landcare tax deductions and rebates;
- requirement for claims for drought investment allowance;
- tax rebate for up to \$3000 from the Australian Government to prepare an EMS; and
- access to loan and grant funding for property development and public good conservation respectively.

Government agencies and industry groups have acknowledged that there is now a need to work in partnership with a view to developing a holistic framework for farm management systems in Queensland. Such a framework has the potential to harmonise the various property planning initiatives and result in efficiencies and reduced administrative burden on agencies and rural producers. Regional NRM bodies will have an increasingly important role in developing and implementing such a framework.

---

<sup>1</sup> **EMS** refers to part of the overall management system that includes organisational structure, planning activities, responsibilities, practices, procedures, processes and resources for developing, implementing, achieving, reviewing and maintaining the environmental policy. (AS/NZS ISO 14001:1996)

<sup>2</sup> **BMP** refers to the management of the activity to achieve an ongoing minimisation of the activity's environmental harm through cost-effective measures assessed against the measures currently used nationally and internationally for the activity.

Detailed information on property planning methods, statutory planning requirements, EMS and the Future*profit*, Farmbis and QRAA programs is available at a number of links on page 4 (Further Information). Details on industry promoted initiatives is available from peak industry bodies, accessible through the link for the Queensland Farmers Federation.

## Linkages and practical measures

The relationship between regional NRM planning and property planning essentially involves a two-way flow of information between regional and property plans. From the regional perspective, property plans are an important mechanism for delivering on-ground changes needed to contribute to the outcomes and targets specified in the regional NRM plan and the regional investment strategy. Alternatively from the landholder's perspective, catchment and regional plans are a source of information about the world beyond the property boundary, which should assist the landholder to make more informed decisions.

Monitoring and evaluating progress toward regional targets will need to be informed by measurements and information at the property level. Therefore, it is important that regional targets can be translated to the catchment and property scales. This will allow landholders to develop strategies and action plans to contribute to their own targets; and monitoring programs to measure relevant indicators.

There may be opportunities for landholders, possibly with the support of the NRM regional body, to take advantage of economies of scale in the collection of the information needed at the sub-regional levels. This may involve groups of landholders coming together through the landcare, pest management or catchment networks to share information, data and scientific research, and set common direction and targets consistent with the regional targets and any State level targets.

Through the target setting process, the regional NRM body may identify more effective property planning as a means to achieving its resource condition targets. For example, it might set a management action target for the proportion of properties with property plans established within a defined area within a stated time period.

A central Queensland project comprising members of Morinish and Caves Landcare Groups to trial implementation of EMS through the Australian Land Management System (ALMS) shows how a structured approach can facilitate transfer of catchment and sub-catchment priorities to policies and actions at the property level. Details of the ALMS/EMS approach were presented to the Regional Group Collective in October 2003.

The regional NRM body is well placed to facilitate or engage in practical measures aimed at achieving more effective property planning in the region. Management actions that may be considered include:

- Providing regional resource information (including natural resource descriptions and condition) and priorities for regional NRM that may be relevant at a property level.
- Providing advice on appropriate NRM targets at the sub-catchment and property level needed to achieve natural resource sustainability in the catchment.
- Providing guidance on regionally appropriate management practices including levels of ground cover and water use efficiency practices (similar to the way

Regional Vegetation Management plans can provide guidance on vegetation management practices).

- Funding regionally appropriate property-scale modelling and natural resource condition assessment.
- Funding capacity to develop property plans, through advisory services, workshops, scholarships etc.
- Providing assistance in performance monitoring and evaluation at the property level.
- Funding for public good conservation measures such as restoration of riparian and wetland habitat or nature conservation covenants and agreements that have management commitments within the property plan.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

**Queensland Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy** website [www.nrm.qld.gov.au/planning/index.html](http://www.nrm.qld.gov.au/planning/index.html) is a link to various planning guidelines prepared by the Department including at the property scale eg, *Property Resource Management Planning – Guidelines for Landholders* March 2003 and *Guideline for Land and Water Management Plan – State Guidelines* May 2001.

**Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries** website [www.dpi.qld.gov.au/futureprofit/](http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/futureprofit/) includes *Futureprofit* contacts and services information.

**Environmental Protection Agency** website [www.epa.qld.gov.au/environmental\\_management/land/natural\\_resource\\_management/](http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/environmental_management/land/natural_resource_management/) includes the EPA *Directory of Products and Services for regional natural resource management, planning and implementation*.

**Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority** website [www.qraa.qld.gov.au/farmbis/](http://www.qraa.qld.gov.au/farmbis/) provides information about the Farm Business Improvement Program (**FarmBis**), a learning initiative jointly funded by the State and Commonwealth Government- the site includes information about training providers and training courses.

**Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries** website [www.affa.gov.au](http://www.affa.gov.au) includes an EMS navigator and links to publications such as *Australia's National Framework for Environmental Management Systems in Agriculture*, Natural Resource Ministerial Council October 2002.

**Rural Industry Research and Development Corporation** [www.rirdc.gov.au/ems/](http://www.rirdc.gov.au/ems/) includes extensive information about environmental management systems.

**Queensland Farmers Federation** [www.qff.org.au](http://www.qff.org.au) provides links to member organisations that includes details of industry promoted natural resource management or best management practice initiatives.

Paper presented to **Regional Group Collective** (October 2003) by Jock Douglas and Tony Gleeson: *ALMS: A New Approach to Natural Resource Management*.