

Ref: L-10NRC_DENR1.doc

2nd August 2010

Ms Crystal Paniccia
Project Coordinator, NRM Integration
Department of Environment and Natural Resources
GPO Box 1047
Adelaide SA 5001
Crystal.Paniccia@sa.gov.au

Dear Ms Paniccia,

RE: NRM Delivery in South Australia

On behalf of the South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF), I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be involved in this process of assisting the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) in improving NRM delivery in South Australia.

Contact people at SAFF, in the following order are:

1. Ms Carol Vincent, CEO
2. Ms Sandra Keane, Natural Resources Executive Officer
3. Mr Kent Martin, SAFF Natural Resources Committee
4. Mr Joe Keynes, SAFF Natural Resources Committee

The Federation would like to make the following comments on **current** NRM delivery in regional South Australia:

1. Many farmers perceive that there has been a lack of engagement by Board staff with the community, with the change from Animal and Plant Control Boards, Soil Conservation Boards and Catchment Water Management Boards to NRM Boards. Many farmers feel that has been a loss of local contact and local identity. Board officers are not seen in the regions as often as before and are not as 'hands-on' as before.
2. To some farmers, the NRM Boards are seen to support projects that help biodiversity rather than encourage sustainable farming. In other words, NRM Boards are seen to only consider the sustainability of the environment and not the sustainability of the farming business. This thought is only heightened, when funding opportunities arise, and money is only available to 'community groups' and not individual farmers.


3. When Boards are 'quiet', it is perceived that no work is being done. Boards need to actively 'advertise' what they are doing in their local areas; otherwise farmers question what their NRM levy payments are being used for.
4. Communication between the Board, Groups and landholders needs to be improved. NRM Groups may be actively doing 'good work' out in field, but farmers may not be aware of this, or that they even exist.
5. There are many 'obstacles' to farmers who wish to do NRM work on their property. Such as when a farmer needs to undertake a Water Affecting Activity, where on top of the Land and/or Water NRM levy, farmers have to pay for a permit, fill out onerous paperwork, make arrangements for a site visit; which has the potential to force them to put the works 'on hold' for 3-4 months.

The Federation would like to make the following comments on **future** NRM delivery in regional South Australia:

1. The three goals for DENR's sustainability program are 'too green'. The current wording does not relate to farmers. The words are still very 'conservation' focussed, and need a 'productive land' focus.
2. DENR must continue to fully embrace the concept of integrated Natural Resources Management. Even though water and pest/plant management are now within separate departments, it must not be seen as a barrier to effective NRM. It must not slow the approval process of applications, increase paperwork to farmers or delay on-site visits by Board staff.
3. It is essential that SAFF maintain its status as a 'Peak Body' under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004*, and under any future version of this Act. As SAFF is South Australia's peak agricultural organisation representing farmers across the State; it is vital that SAFF are involved in all levels of natural resource planning from the regional to the state level.
4. NRM Boards must continue to be a local interface between Government and farmers. Local delivery of information must continue, and local staff must be seen to be 'out and about' in the community. If the farming community do not see any local on-ground works being done, then they may perceive that their levy funds are being wasted and as a result, may not be as involved in NRM as much as the Boards envisage.
5. NRM Groups must be maintained in the new delivery system. As they tend to be comprised of members that have farmed or lived in the local areas for many years; they are a good way to get local input, experience and history on how to manage the natural resources in the local area to the Boards; whose staff may not be from that region or are only in the job for 1-2 years.
6. More must be done by the NRM Boards and State Government to secure funds for on-ground NRM works for individual farmers. This will reinforce that the Boards support sustainable farming and land management.
7. The approval process for NRM works on farm properties must be more streamlined. The time to get permits approved can leave farmers 'in limbo' for 3-4 months.

The Federation looks forward to being involved in shaping the NRM service delivery role of DENR to maximise sustainable farming opportunities and farming community involvement in NRM. The delivery of NRM must remain autonomous and remain community based and focused.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Carol Vincent', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carol Vincent
CHIEF EXECUTIVE