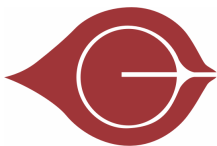




Non-government organisation
engagement in regional natural resources
management processes in South Australia



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of South Australia Inc**

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Disclaimer

This report was prepared for the general purpose of identifying barriers to NGO engagement in NRM. Every effort has been made to accurately reflect the views expressed by those involved with interviews. The views expressed in this report are not necessarily the views of CCSA and recommendations made are based solely on the research findings and published literature.

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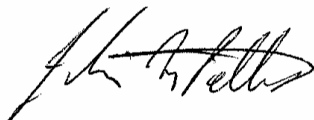
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Table of Abbreviations

AMLR	Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges
AW	Alinytjara Wilurara
CSO	Community Support Officer
CCSA	Conservation Council of South Australia Inc
CVA	Conservation Volunteers Australia
DEH	Department of Environment and Heritage
DWLBC	Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation
EP	Eyre Peninsula
FoP	Friends of Parks
GSA	Government of South Australia
KI	Kangaroo Island
LAP	Local Action Planning
LGA	Local Government Association
NAP	National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
NGO	Non-government organisation
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NLP	National Landcare Program
NRM	Natural Resource Management
N&Y	Northern & Yorke
OGW	On-ground works
SAFF	South Australian Farmers Federation Inc
SAAL	South Australian Arid Lands
SAMDB	South Australian Murray-Darling Basin
SE	South East
TFL	Trees For Life
TWS	The Wilderness Society

Executive Summary

Background

The Conservation Council of South Australia Inc. (CCSA) is the peak conservation body for South Australia and is recognised as such under the Natural Resources Management Act 2004. CCSA undertook this research through the non-government organisation (NGO) Natural Resource Management (NRM) Facilitator position, which is funded by the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) through the South Australian Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC). The NGO NRM Facilitator has been funded to:

- facilitate the engagement of the environmental non-government organisation sector in the development of regional NRM Plans and Investment Strategies;
- facilitate NGO engagement in the development of the Implementation Project for the State NRM Plan strategies;
- consult with CCSA member groups to identify opportunities for better engagement of SA's NGO sector in the delivery of the State NRM Plan beyond June 2008 and prepare recommendations for ongoing NGO engagement, based on the findings of the consultation; and
- liaise with other stakeholders to promote NGO engagement in all aspects of NRM.

NRM is the management, by anyone in the community, of natural resources, including soil, water, landscapes, native vegetation, animals and ecosystems. In South Australia, NRM has been devolved to eight NRM Regions. The eight Regions in SA are managed by community-based NRM Boards to decentralise management and ensure participatory processes in achieving regional and local outcomes. A significant aspect of this change is that community participation is a prime focus in both developing and implementing NRM. Thus community engagement by regional Boards is pivotal to achieving NRM, and the effectiveness of this engagement influential on the outcomes realised. In the three years since their formation in 2005, Regional NRM Boards have made significant progress in assessing regional priorities, apportioning funds to achieve NRM outcomes and developing methods to engage with the community.

NGOs represent a majority of the community already involved in NRM and are an important sector to engage initially, because of their connection and influence within the wider community. NGOs can also add value to the work of regional NRM Boards as they can:

- be flexible, innovative, adaptive, responsive and are prepared to take a different level of risk;
- partner with diverse groups and maintain broad networks;

- provide a service through volunteers and funded programs thereby supplementing government;
- partner with the government to complement its provision of services or public goods;
- challenge government with regard to accountability and by seeking changes in public policy;
- provide environment and community education programs;
- develop visionary landscape schemes at a National or State level;
- build the National Reserve system;
- conduct scientific research and then disseminate this knowledge;
- engage their members and the wider community;
- deliver value for money in NRM;
- have long-term involvement with and provide continuity in State, regional and local NRM that is often supported by both member investment and member-driven purpose.

Aims of this research

This research project was designed to determine the dynamics of NGO engagement in regional NRM processes in South Australia, and provide recommendations to improve it.

The project focused on:

- evaluating how effectively the varying NGOs across the state have been engaged in regional NRM processes;
- identifying what NGOs believe to be barriers to their engagement in regional NRM processes; and
- providing recommendations for improved NGO engagement.

It is hoped that this report can assist Regional NRM Boards and NRM Groups in both designing their community engagement strategies for regional planning processes and developing collaborative approaches with NGOs. It is also hoped that this report will serve to inform the NRM Council, State Government and NGOs to contribute to stronger partnerships and strategies for engagement.

Methods

The objectives were achieved through a qualitative study using structured interviews of 140 NGOs (including 35 CCSA member groups) from seven of the NRM regions in SA from December 2007 to April 2008. No structured interviews were conducted in the Alinytjara Wilurara NRM region. Every effort was made to choose a representative sample of operational NGOs, by selecting NGOs of different focus and size in each region. A range of topics was explored in the survey including:

- conservation group details;
- knowledge and understanding of NRM; and
- past and present engagement in NRM including:
 - the main barriers to engagement with the NRM Boards and NRM Groups; and
 - strategies that could help overcome these barriers and increase engagement.

Key Findings

Of the 140 NGOs interviewed, 21 said they saw no major barriers to engaging within regional NRM processes and six NGOs offered positive praise (five were unsure and four did not respond). Comments included praise for positive working relationships and having good local contacts that are supportive and helpful. Barriers were identified by 110 NGOs. These were either actual barriers to engagement or barriers perceived by NGOs, which are equally important for NRM Boards to consider. Barriers to effective engagement of NGOs in regional NRM processes follow in order of frequency mentioned:

- lack of understanding of the perceived relevance of NRM Boards to NGO activities;
- high levels of bureaucracy of NRM Boards;
- poor communication between NRM Boards and NGOs;
- lack of volunteer time to engage with NRM Boards at the level required;
- difficulties with funding processes;
- poor access to NRM staff for administrative and on-ground support;
- lack of willingness and 'sincerity' of NRM Boards to engage;
- difficulties with reporting and level of administration required;
- poor recognition of the contribution of volunteers;
- misalignment of priorities between NGOs and NRM Boards;
- limited volunteer capacity (ability, availability, willingness), and an inadequate number of active volunteers in smaller NGOs to deliver on-ground works; and
- lack of Local Government links available for smaller NGOs.

Recommendations

Considering the barriers identified and suggestions made by interviewees five recommendations have been generated. These recommendations are discussed in turn.

1. *Diversify methods used to engage with NGOs taking into account differences in size, needs, capacity and structure.*

NGOs cannot be grouped together and treated the same when it comes to engagement and developing relationships or partnerships. Although NGOs have

similarities in terms of their community origins, they operate differently and this must be recognised and acknowledged.

It is necessary to develop different engagement strategies for different NGOs. These engagement strategies should consider governance structures, internal communications, capacity and capability to engage, funding sources (e.g. membership fees, donations) and the way NGOs can add value to regional NRM.

NGOs can add value to Regional NRM Boards through:

- volunteer capacity;
- policy development;
- strategic and local level expertise;
- community reach and networks;
- other sources of funding for NRM;
- advocacy on behalf of NRM; and
- continuity/long-term commitment.

This research has established that it is important to consider the levels within the NRM structure with which different NGOs can best engage (e.g. Local Government, NRM staff, NRM Group, NRM Board or NRM Council).

It is recommended that NRM Boards identify the types of NGOs and engagement requirements by surveying NGOs and develop engagement strategies for different types of NGOs. CCSA plans to further the research to address these questions.

2. Engage enough on-ground Community Support Officers to properly support the work of smaller volunteer NGOs undertaking NRM.

A significant number of the identified barriers, particularly those identified by smaller NGOs, could be overcome through the appointment of sub-regionally based on-ground Community Support Officers (CSO) similar to Project, Landcare and Coastcare Officers. Many NRM Boards employ officers in such support roles, however, the findings of this research suggest that there are now fewer people in these positions and/or the level of support has been reduced. Access to NRM staff or a paid project officer/coordinator in the local area is a major determinant of community satisfaction with NRM.

CSOs should play a role in:

- developing on-going relationships with NGOs;
- communicating and prioritising Board messages/communications;
- informing small NGOs of funding opportunities and assisting with funding applications and reporting;
- assisting in project management including administration;
- providing or sourcing technical advice;
- providing on-ground support (e.g. site visits, participation in meetings); and
- providing a single point of contact for NGOs to NRM Boards for quicker response times and ensuring information is filtered and relevant.

It is important that CSO positions are on-going to ensure continuing contact with NGOs. Continuity is essential to maintaining and building good relationships.

3. Establish simple communication protocols and clearly articulate expectations.

Some of the barriers with engagement of NGOs in regional NRM processes relate to communication. Communication channels need to be clear, open and simplified to break down barriers and create trust that enables relationships and partnerships. Communication channels may be different for different NGOs and going through another organisation or NGO that has a solid relationship with that group and established communication channels may prove effective. The communication expectations may differ with different NGOs and thus communication strategies need to be specific for different types of NGOs. For example, some larger NGOs require strategic level communications, relationships and involvement whilst smaller NGOs want a familiar face and personal communications.

Some considerations made evident from this research that should be included in a communications strategy include:

- Forms of communication:

- engage with landholders through a relevant medium (e.g. *Stock Journal*)
- ensure clear and consistent messages both internally and externally
- provide transparent budgeting (e.g. percentage of on-ground vs. management) and determination of delivery methods for achieving on-ground outcomes
- provide locally relevant information, or ensure it is in a locally relevant context
- condense electronic information
- make websites easier to navigate and ensure key information such as grant information is easy to find
- ensure NRM publications are widely available
- provide an electronic version of the NRM Board's newsletter and a fortnightly email bulletin of events that people could sign up to, and, most importantly, provide a substantial lead time for events and consultation.
- Channels of communication:
 - establish who makes the decisions in the NGO
 - piggy-back onto pre-organised group activities or events as a way to provide information informally
- Timing of communication:
 - ensure enough time is given for the group to act (i.e. consider how often they meet and whether a designated person can make decisions on behalf of the group.)

Bureaucratic processes including constraints on communication content and release are a barrier to community engagement. NRM staff have identified the difficulty in getting rapid, clear communications to the community. Communication protocols need to make it easier to communicate with the community; this may be achieved by developing relationships with NGOs who can communicate on the NRM Board's behalf.

4. Consultation needs to be purposeful, sincere and timely to ensure it supports collaboration and partnerships with community through NGOs.

The purpose of any consultation must be clear and show how intelligence and opinions gathered will be used. This will help to overcome the perception that consultation is only done because it is obligatory. It is essential that there is a genuine desire to collaborate and/or partner with the community in any consultation.

Further, respect for volunteer contributions, expertise and efforts is essential. Many NGOs have substantial knowledge and technical expertise either on-the-ground or strategically across the state or nationally. Partnerships based on mutual respect would enable the consultation process and ensure smooth communication.

Many groups meet irregularly and have a wide membership to consult, therefore, when embarking on consultation it would be ideal to do some preliminary testing to determine which NGOs would like to be consulted, by whom, where and how. Consideration of timing and the turn-around-time that NGOs can achieve will demonstrate that consultation is sincere. In addition, over-consultation has been identified as one of the greatest barriers to engagement. Many NGOs have been consulted by different government agencies on numerous NRM related policies and plans. Taking into account previous consultations will reduce the overload on NGOs.

5. Simplify funding processes so they are secure, equitable and transparent acknowledging that the administration capacity of NGOs is at times a barrier to successful application and reporting processes.

Access to funding and funding processes was identified as a barrier for many NGOs. The NRM Boards need to ensure they can deliver equitable, fair and transparent funding arrangements. These include:

- a transparent approval process that is consistent for all NGOs;
- provision of clearer and more accessible breakdown of budgets;
- ensuring NGOs and the community are aware that funding is available (particularly discretionary funds that NRM Groups can dispense);
- having a NRM Board website page entitled 'NRM Grants Available for Community Groups' with information on how to apply, links and application forms;
- clarification of types of projects to be funded, procedure for distributing funding to reduce the number of unsuccessful funding applications, and ensure NGOs have realistic expectations;
- providing a contact for advice and possibly assistance, e.g. a CSO and/or other NRM support staff;

- availability of discretionary funds for smaller NGOs and availability of funds for new projects or spontaneous initiatives enabling NGOs to be responsive and adaptive;
- ensuring transparent fund allocation through clear procedures such as independent community-based project assessment panels and clear criteria for assessment;
- transparent determination of delivery methods for achieving on-ground outcomes, i.e. why a particular avenue of delivery has been selected;
- provision of satisfactory feedback to NGOs describing why they were unsuccessful in securing grants; and
- ensuring better communication of funding restrictions faced by NRM Boards.

CCSA's Role in Community Engagement

NGOs made a range of suggestions as to how CCSA could assist with NRM engagement processes. These ranged from CCSA strengthening local contacts in each region to advocating for the environmental movement and lobbying for funding. Some responses such as 'helping apply for grants' and 'attending group meetings' were suggested, as there is a perceived lack of such support from the NRM Boards and NRM groups. The regional focus of NRM Boards and Groups should put them in a better position than CCSA for this level of engagement.

Issues that are appropriate for CCSA to consider and/or strengthen are to:

- have a strong voice on NRM issues;
- act as a facilitator between NRM and NGOs; and
- present to NRM Boards the issues and benefits of NGOs and assist with cross-regional efforts.

This research has confirmed that CCSA is in a good position to be of value to all NGOs and to NRM community engagement processes.

1 Introduction

1.1 *The Conservation Council of South Australia Inc.*

The Conservation Council of South Australia Inc. (CCSA) is the peak conservation body for South Australia, representing over 55 of the State's conservation organisations (see Appendix 2 for a full list of member groups). CCSA is an independent non-profit, non party-political, community organisation that provides resources, advice and representation for the SA environment movement. CCSA is committed to facilitating long-term community development and education, and on-ground environmental restoration programs.

CCSA has a large network of skilled volunteers who provide assistance with running the conservation centre and office, on-ground projects, governance and campaign activities. CCSA has representation on many Government and community Boards and committees, with representatives coming from the member groups. CCSA receives a small budget from the State and Federal governments, but primarily depends on support from donations, fundraising and membership fees and grants.

CCSA is recognised as a peak body and partner for delivering the goals of the State NRM Plan under the *Natural Resources Management Act 2004* (henceforth the *NRM Act*) alongside the South Australian Farmers Federation (SAFF) and the Local Government Association (LGA).

Under the *NRM Act* the peak bodies must be consulted:

- by the Minister when NRM regional boundaries are to vary or an NRM region is to be abolished (on creation of a new division);
- by the Minister when there is a variation of a notice under the establishment of NRM Boards;
- by the Minister when a regional NRM Board is abolished (under division 1) and give notice and accept submissions before nominating a person/s to an NRM Board;
- by the relevant NRM Board before an appointment is made of an NRM group member;
- by the NRM Council in relation to any proposal to create or amend the State NRM Plan; and
- by Regional NRM Boards for comment on draft regional NRM plants.

CCSA, representing its member groups, has also been recognised in the State Implementation Plan as having a major role to play in the implementation of seventeen major actions and sixty-two minor actions that contribute to the goals in the

Plan. CCSA also has a nominee on the State NRM Council, established by the *NRM Act* (Section 13) alongside SAFF, the LGA and Aboriginal Landholding Bodies.

1.1.1 NGO NRM Facilitator Project

For some time CCSA has been advocating the need to increase the engagement of NGOs in NRM. In particular, CCSA was advocating the importance of increasing NGO engagement in the State NRM Plan Implementation Strategy and in the development of regional comprehensive plans.

CCSA has been funded by DWLBC to undertake the NGO NRM Facilitator Project to:

- facilitate the engagement of the NGO sector in the development of Regional NRM Plans and Investment Strategies;
- facilitate NGO engagement in the development of the Implementation project for the State NRM Plan strategies;
- consult with CCSA member groups to identify opportunities for better engagement of SA's non-government conservation sector in the delivery of the State NRM Plan beyond June 2008 and prepare recommendations for ongoing NGO engagement, based on the findings of the consultation; and
- liaise with other stakeholders to promote NGO engagement in all aspects of NRM.

1.2 Natural Resources Management

Natural resource management (NRM) is the management of soil, water, landscapes, native flora and fauna and ecosystems. In the *NRM Act* 2004 natural resources are regarded as soil, water, geological features and landscapes, native vegetation, native animals and other native organisms and ecosystems (GSA, 2004, p. 4). NRM is taken generally to encompass 'the direct use, management and/or development of natural resources by anyone in the community' (GSA, 2006, p. 72).

NRM deviates from environmental management in that it does not encompass all natural resources such as minerals or atmosphere. Nor does it focus on significant threatening processes to the environment such as inappropriate planning, development and population targets. These gaps are covered by other Acts and thus the linkages between them are important for the effective management of natural resources. These linkages are also important with regard to community understanding of NRM and associated roles and responsibilities.

1.2.1 Decentralisation and Regional Delivery of NRM

Contemporary approaches to NRM have seen the move from 'top-down' methods to those of incorporating a range of participatory, regionally adapted, integrative and

collaborative approaches in order to harness local level knowledge, motivation and agency for the purposes of more efficient and integrated NRM.

This thinking has seen over 60 countries incorporate some aspect of decentralisation in their NRM over the last ten years in order to improve governance (Agrawal & Gibson, 2001).

Decentralisation can be defined as any act by a government that formally transfers assets or powers to lower level (local or regional) decision-making groups (Agrawal & Ribot, 1999). Decentralisation may take many forms. Most relevant to NRM is 'civic regionalism' or regionalisation, which sees 'decentralisation of authority and resources for NRM to regional citizen Boards and statutory committees' (Lane *et al.*, 2005, p. 12).

Regionalisation is promoted as a means to achieve an appropriate scale for governance to enhance administrative effectiveness and delivery for sustainable NRM (Jennings & Moore, 2000, Paton *et al.*, 2004, Moore & Rockloff, 2006). In Australia, there was a recognised need to change the scale of NRM from that of numerous small Landcare projects or activities under NHT1 (Ewing, 2003) to that of more strategic landscape scale investments under both NAP and NHT2. NAP and NHT2 provided emphasis on regions, regional plans and priority catchments (Lane *et al.*, 2005, p. 12; Moore, 2005). Regional delivery of NRM is now achieved in Australia through 56 administrative regions¹.

Each region has formed a regional body to enable NRM delivery. To access funds a regional Plan must be established identifying priority issues and targets for management (Paton, *et al.*, 2004) as well as ensuring extensive monitoring and evaluation strategies (Broderick, 2005) that encompass economic, social and environmental effects of NRM regionally (Moore, 2005).

The argued benefits for regionalisation focus on its facilitation of across landscape management, ability to enhance cross-agency and government integration, networking and partnerships, and developing participant capacity (Paton, *et al.*, 2004, Jennings & Moore, 2000). Regional delivery has also been advocated as being far more efficient from the viewpoint of economies of scale with administration, dispensing of grants and information delivery (Jennings & Moore, 2001).

¹ Note the latest iteration from the Federal Government is 'Caring for our Country'.

Regional delivery aims to enable community participation in both developing and implementing NRM to achieve regional and local outcomes, by providing a more accessible scale for increased community participation. Indeed the underpinning notion within the regional planning process is that the key on-ground work delivery agent is the community, which is supposed to be empowered by, if not in partnership with, the government (Jennings & Moore, 2000).

With regionalisation the approach is for government to move toward the role of facilitator, with a focus on cooperation rather than regulation, although it would still control program direction, the majority of funding and reporting requirements (Head, 2005). To obtain funding, regional bodies must abide by 'stringent upward accountability measures'. This undermines the perception of a community-based system as it uses resources that could potentially be utilised for the community (Marshall, 2008, p. 90). As well, regional bodies may skew their efforts to those activities that are more easily measurable rather than the more long-term projects that contribute to positive community engagement (Marshall, 2008). Essentially this shift in power and resources to the federal and state level has diminished regional independence and flexibility (Robins 2007, Robins & Dovers, 2007).

Despite the benefits of regionalisation there is a range of challenges for this mode of decentralisation. Most relevant to this report is the challenge of attaining effective community engagement. Thus, although these participatory approaches are welcomed they are not easily achievable and are also to a degree experimental.

The challenges exist mainly because the new regional design introduces a fourth, and largely untested, governance level that assumes regional institutions, staff and local stakeholder groups have sufficient capacity and capability for delivery (Head, 2005). Indeed the key on-ground work delivery agent is deemed to be the (newly) empowered community.

1.2.2 Regional Delivery in South Australia

In South Australia eight NRM regions have been delineated and are managed by Regional NRM Boards. The NRM Boards have statutory obligations under the *NRM Act* and receive direction from the State NRM Plan.

The *NRM Act* came into full operation on 1st July 2005. The aims of the *Act* are:

- to promote sustainable and integrated management of the State's natural resources;
- to make provision for the protection of the State's natural resources;

- to repeal the Animal and Plant Control (Agricultural Protection and Other Purposes) Act 1986, the Soil Conservation and Land Care Act 1989 and the Water Resources Act 1997; and
- to enable the formation of a structure for NRM institutions and decision making. It has also allowed the delivery of the Commonwealth/State programs of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), the National Landcare Program (NLP), the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP) and now 'Caring for our Country' which complement and supplement the NRM levy². (GSA, 2004)

As described by the GSA (2008) the intention of the legislative framework, established under the *NRM Act*, is to balance 'the needs of land users, the environment and an empowered, accountable community'. This model is described as being an 'integrated partnership model' (GSA, 2008).

The South Australian Minister for the Environment and Conservation (the Minister) takes overall responsibility for implementation of the *NRM Act* and maintains substantial powers. Key roles have been delegated to the State NRM Council as well as to the regionally based, community driven NRM Boards that administer the eight regions. Below the Boards are NRM groups, which are sub-regional groups that have local responsibilities and report to the Boards. Within this structure each level was charged, under the Act, with forming a range of advisory committees.

State and Regional Plans

Management of activity in the regions is guided by the State NRM Plan and Regional NRM Plans. Currently most regions are operating under an initial plan that encompasses the range of existing plans and programs that were in place prior to the *NRM Act*. The Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR) NRM Board is the only region, thus far, to have developed a Regional Plan which commenced in July 2008, with the others to follow late 2008 - 2009. The Regional Plans incorporate vision, goals, programs and policies within a 10-year Strategic Plan and a 3-Year Business Plan, which will also incorporate a 1-year Implementation Plan. The Plans also incorporate a state of the region report with goals pertaining to their management. Importantly the Regional Plans are guided by the targets within the State Strategic Plan, as well as being consistent with all other NRM legislation and 144 identified national, international and

² The *NRM Act* provides a mechanism for funding NRM activities through a levy collected by local councils within regions. There are 2 divisions. The first is a levy with respect to land and the second is a levy with respect to water licenses or imported water permits (GSA, 2004).

state policies, agreements, etc. (GSA, 2006). A key aspect of the development of the Regional Plans is comprehensive community consultation.

In 2002 the federal NRM Ministerial Council agreed that, for Regional Plans to be accredited, each NRM Board is required to prepare a communication plan and/or engagement plan that incorporates all features of community engagement and participation in NRM in that region .

NRM Council

The NRM Council provides advice, and reports directly to the Minister, but the Minister cannot direct the Council. This sees the Council 'legislatively and structurally independent of the Department' (Lane, *et al.*, 2005, p. 17). Therefore the Council is, in theory, a separate entity to government, although answerable to the Minister and still ultimately an instrument of the State.

The Council also:

- audits, monitors and evaluates the state and on-going condition of the State's natural resources. This includes both evaluating and reporting on the performance of the eight Regional NRM Boards and also the integration of NRM practices ;
- prepares and reviews the State NRM Plan ensuring that Regional NRM Plans, policies and practices adopted are consistent with the NRM Plan;
- monitors and evaluates the effectiveness of the NRM Act, the State NRM Plan and other NRM policies initiated by the State Government;
- assists in coordinating cross-regional NRM initiatives; and
- convenes State-wide forums to discuss and promote NRM issues (GSA, 2004).

The Council consists of nine members. Four are drawn from specific groups including CCSA, SAFF, LGA, and Aboriginal interests, and the remaining five community members are appointed by the Minister. An important advisory committee to the NRM Council is the NRM Volunteer Committee.

NRM Boards

The NRM Boards consist of nine "skills-based" members appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the Minister, who can also check or regulate powers of the Boards. Roles of the Boards include:

- producing a comprehensive Regional Plan;
- taking an active role in NRM in the region;
- promoting public education and awareness about natural resources;
- providing the means to raise the capacity of people for NRM;
- creating NRM groups and resolving issues that may arise in groups; and

- ensuring public engagement occurs.

The Regional NRM Boards also have responsibility for overseeing the staff of the Board, although the Minister approves staffing arrangements. Despite the fact that Boards are intended to be representative of a range of stakeholders within the region, they are in the end an instrument of the government.

As part of recent changes the Department of Water, Land and Biodiversity Conservation (DWLBC) was restructured to include the NRM Support Division and Local Governments were charged, under the Act, with collecting NRM levies used to help fund regional Board activities.

NRM Groups

NRM Groups consist of seven community-based members selected on skill and suitability by the NRM Boards, under consultation with the Minister. Under the *NRM Act* the Boards decide if NRM Groups are to be formed and can also check or regulate powers divested to them (GSA, 2004). A Board member sits on each Group to ensure more effective communication up to the Board.

The aim of the groups is to be actively involved in both the development and implementation of the Regional Plan at the local level. A key area for the groups is to promote public awareness, support educational initiatives and engage with the public. Both Board and group meetings are publicly advertised and open for public attendance as an endeavor to be more transparent.

It is not clear from the *NRM Act* how the Boards and groups will be accountable to the public they represent as the structure still sees power flowing from the top down. This is an important point as it will impact on community engagement and empowerment.

1.3 Community engagement in NRM

One of the key rationales for decentralisation and regionalisation is to harness local level knowledge, motivation and agency for the purposes of more efficient and integrated NRM. Regional delivery aims to enable community participation in both developing and implementing NRM to achieve regional and local outcomes, by providing a more accessible scale for increased community participation. Therefore, contemporary approaches to NRM have resulted in the incorporation of more participatory approaches aiming to be more community focused and holistic. Conditions of governance are now such that regional NRM bodies are expected to engage with communities across a range of community boundaries and catchments (Broderick, 2005) with increasing importance placed on a range of community engagement strategies.

New regional governance structures require more 'participatory and collaborative forms of co-governance' (Head, 2005, p. 137). This necessitates ensuring sufficient information, experienced and nuanced facilitation, more varied opportunities for participation and even longer operational timeframes (Dovers, 2000).

Deliberate, meaningful engagement of citizens is complex, requiring a creative toolkit and fundamental changes within institutions in order to confront contemporary large-scale problems of NRM. To ensure effective, and not tokenistic engagement strategies, a strong and responsive state is necessary and under these changed conditions of governance the challenge is in ensuring equitable community engagement strategies. Importantly poorly conceived and executed community engagement results in an 'erosion of trust between communities and governments' (Craig & Vanclay, 2005, p. 157). This can undermine any subsequent efforts at engagement and has implications for on-going community involvement in NRM.

There is a conceptual contradiction in attempting to achieve bottom-up participation through (decentralised) institutionalised participation. In its efforts to streamline and rationalise, regional Boards may well alienate the very people on whom they are planning to capitalise on. It cannot be over-emphasised that this is an experimental regime and the response of the community to these changes remains largely undocumented (Head, 2005).

The South Australian State NRM Plan emphasises the important role of community, stating that 'the responsibility to achieve ecologically sustainable development should be seen as a shared responsibility between the public sector, the private sector, and the community more generally' (GSA, 2006, p. 86). The community is seen as pivotal to provide information, contribute to decision-making processes, take shared responsibility and achieve NRM targets. The effectiveness of community engagement is paramount to the NRM outcomes achievable.

Effective community engagement also enables NRM Boards to make more informed decisions. Having both diverse perspectives and potential solutions improves the quality of decision-making as well as enhancing community understanding of how the decision-making process is carried out.

Thus effective community engagement is critical to participatory approaches of NRM. However, 'most regional bodies [Australia-wide] are struggling to find workable arrangements for genuine community-based governance given the size of the regions with which they are now expected to engage' (Marshall, 2008, p. 90).

Reddel (2006, p. 2) suggests there are difficulties and opportunities in achieving effective community engagement, stating that

'[t]he tentative steps by policy makers, program administrators, community organisations and citizen groups to engage with one another outside the traditional routines of a consultation event and an agency coordination meeting seem often undefined, clumsy and shallow but also at times innovative and challenging given the dominance of administrative hierarchies and policy control agendas.'

Although regional delivery in SA sees a commitment to community-based delivery, it is still top down, with the Boards accountable to the Minister and the NRM Groups accountable to the Boards, although both Boards and groups represent the community. Regional NRM was intended to have a decentralised approach with 'effective community involvement in NRM processes [via] ...appropriate devolution of decision-making and authority to regional and local communities' (GSA, 2002, p. 16). This research has identified that this has only partially occurred.

Since NRM Boards in SA have been in operation for approximately 3 years and are in the throws of developing their regional plans it is a prime time to assess the effectiveness of community engagement thus far and provide recommendations for the future. NGOs represent a large majority of the community already involved in NRM. NGOs and their volunteers can play a role to: provide services; add value; purchase land; create opportunities to partner with the community; influence strategic approaches and provide advice regarding issues of the community. They can also seek change in accountability and public policy. Additionally, NRM Boards, even with the resources and budget at their disposal, are unable to deliver the environmental outcomes required to protect SA's environment without engaging and building partnerships with NGOs and their networks of members and volunteers. Therefore this research has focused on understanding how effectively NGOs across South Australia are engaged with NRM and what recommendations they have for increasing effectiveness.

1.3.1 What is Community Engagement?

Community engagement involves active participation by providing real opportunities to make a difference through having a voice, and fosters a feeling of power and effectiveness (McCoy & Scully, 2002). Engagement requires commitment to a process by all parties to achieve decisions and implement actions (Aslin & Brown, 2004).

Community engagement may take many forms depending on the level of input and influence desired. The methods of achieving different levels of engagement are outlined in Table 1 along with tools used in engagement depending on the purpose, context, resources and constraints (Cavaye, 2004).

Table 1. Methods of community engagement.

Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Partner	Empower
Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal	Goal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One-way communication ▪ Raise awareness, provide information ▪ Set issues or policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two way communication ▪ Exchange of views 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Interactive discussion and dialogue between agency and community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Stakeholder representative at table ▪ Joint problem solving 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint decision by mutual agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final decision making in public hands
Tools	Tools	Tools	Tools	Tools	Tools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Fact sheets, brochures ▪ Newsletters ▪ Mass media, websites, CD-ROMs, videos, press releases ▪ Responses to enquires ▪ Reports ▪ Public lectures, training courses ▪ Displays, posters, field days, shop-fronts, education officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public comment ▪ Focus groups ▪ Surveys and interviews via e-mail, phone, mail, in person ▪ Information sessions ▪ Stakeholder analysis ▪ Social profiling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public meetings and workshops ▪ Advisory groups ▪ Deliberative polling ▪ Steering, reference or committees ▪ Leadership awards and prizes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Task forces ▪ Working groups ▪ Negotiated rule making ▪ Citizen advisory committees ▪ Consensus building ▪ Participatory Decision making 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Joint policy Boards ▪ Public-private partnerships ▪ Mechanisms for resolving impasses ▪ Planning committees ▪ Co-management agreements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Citizen Juries ▪ Ballots, forums ▪ consensus confers ▪ Delegated decision-making or power ▪ Deliberative opinion forums ▪ Direct democracy - locals involved in project management
Comment	Comment	Comment	Comment	Comment	Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May facilitate other forms of participation ▪ Majority of tools are simple, easy to produce and mostly impersonal ▪ Viewed as top-down, non-consultative and a public relations exercise if not seen as a process in its own right 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ May be legal requirement ▪ Can be a legitimate first step to engagement but needs to be combined with other forms of engagement ▪ Easy and cheap ▪ Useful as a scoping tool however may become one-way communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Decisions still internal ▪ Can seem like engagement is occurring. Workshops often one-off with little opportunity for individual input but can be useful if using interactive techniques 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Final decision still with one party but becoming more engaged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Power more fully shared ▪ Key shift towards being fully engaged ▪ Negotiate and engage with traditional power holders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Forefront of engagement processes or deliberative democracy. ▪ Can be costly and time consuming requiring capacity building ▪ Care required ensuring equitable representation.

Source: adapted by the author from Arnstein, 1969, Ross, *et al.*, 2002, Bruns 2003 & Aslin & Brown, 2004

1.3.2 Level of community engagement by SA NRM Boards

Community engagement in NRM processes in SA occurs through a variety of the methods described above:

- Governance - through NRM Boards, NRM Groups, advisory committees and technical working groups with community membership. An outline of the structure for NRM in SA and points at which community can engage in the process is shown in Figure 3;
- NRM Plan – through both informal and formal consultation. Under the *NRM Act* consultation for the regional planning process must include:
 - formal invitation to comment on the concept statement for a period of six weeks;
 - formal invitation to comment on the draft Regional Plan for a period of eight weeks (refer to Figure 1); and
 - a public meeting to be held in relation to the draft plan.

On-going Plan implementation offers a real opportunity for community engagement to move towards building relationships and forming collaborative partnerships with NGOs to ensure better environmental outcomes. Table 2 further illustrates where current and future engagement strategies in regional NRM processes are positioned in the spectrum of increasing community influence over decisions.

Table 2. Level of community influence over decisions in SA Regional NRM processes.

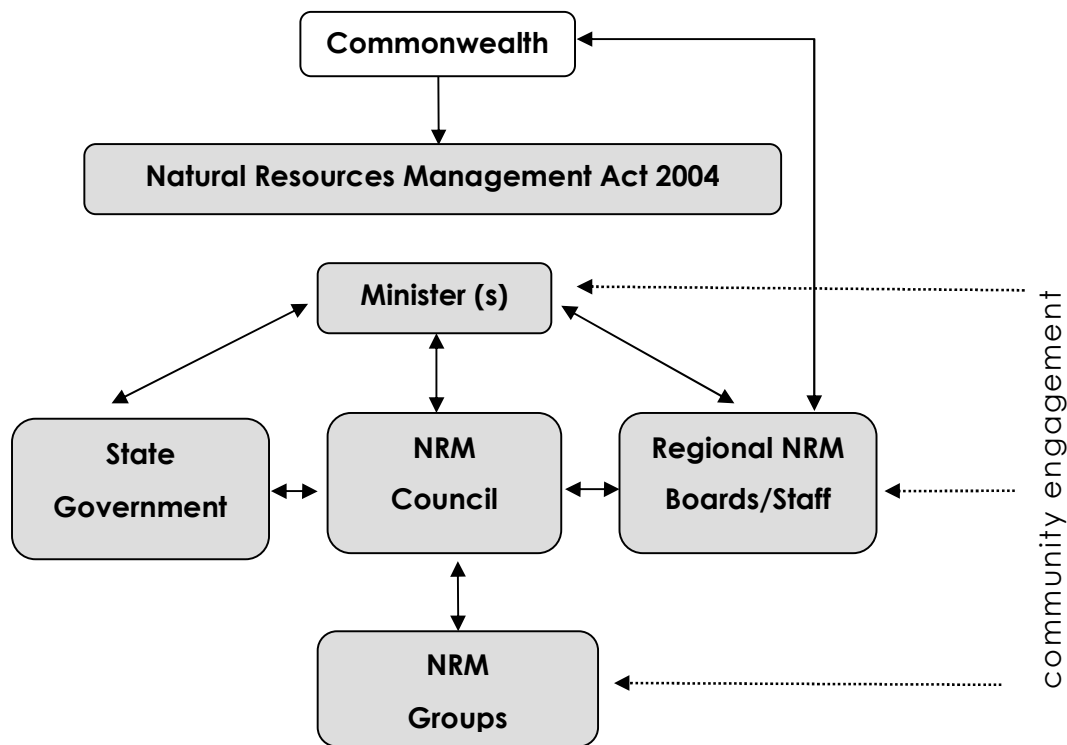
NB text boxes represents the levels of community engagement possible and shading represents actual levels of community engagement at present

Level of Community Influence over Decisions



	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Partner	Empower
Why?	One-way communication. Information on set issues or policies Awareness raised	Two way exchange of views	Interactive discussion and dialogue between agency and community	Stakeholder reps at the table Joint problem solving higher degree of volunteer engagement in on ground activities	Joint decision by mutual agreement	Final decision-making in public hands Enable
How?	Fact sheets Newsletters Websites Field Days Extension officers Training courses	Public comment Surveys Information sessions	Public meetings workshops Advisory groups Steering, reference or committees Leadership awards	Task Forces Working groups Citizen advisory committees Participatory Decision-making	Joint decisions Public-private partnership Planning committees	Citizen Juries Delegated decision-making Locals involved in project management
NRM Boards	Boards constituted with community members			Effective community engagement by regional Boards is pivotal to achieving NRM outcomes		
NRM Groups	Groups constituted with community members			Potential to have wider engagement with community		
Advisory Committees	Usually constituted with community members			→		
Local NRM Officers	Opportunities for engagement including collaboration and development of partnerships with NGOs					
Input into Regional NRM plans	Mostly through 'informing' and 'consulting' with the aim of moving towards collaboration and partnerships					
On-going Plan Implementation	Opportunity for collaboration and partnerships					

Figure 1. Current institutional arrangements under the *NRM Act*.



Source: adapted from GSA, 2007, p. 2

1.3.3 Non-Government Organisations

NGOs are non-profit organisations that are composed of community membership and volunteers, and engage in a range of activities to further a particular cause. NGOs may be charity groups, specific interest groups, social movements, community groups, neighbourhood groups or peak bodies that represent and support their membership. NGOs can range from international and national organisations through to local action groups. NGOs are borne from the community; they exist to satisfy a community need and are therefore truly accountable to community.

NGOs have an advantage because they can:

- be flexible, innovative, adaptive, responsive and are prepared to take a different level of risk to government;
- partner with diverse groups and maintain broad networks;
- provide a service through volunteers and funded programs, thereby supplementing the work of government and delivering value for money;

- partner with government, thereby complementing government in service provision or providing public goods;
- challenge government by seeking accountability and changes in public policy;
- provide an alternative voice and independent perspective;
- provide environment and community education programs;
- develop visionary landscape schemes at a national or state level;
- advocate and lobby on environmental issues;
- conduct scientific research and then disseminate findings;
- work in NRM at national, state, regional and local level;
- engage community;
- have long term involvement in NRM which is often supported by both member investment and member driven purpose; and
- accrue the benefits of the knowledge that non-state actors bring to the table (Lane & Morrison 2006, Weber, 1998 cited in Lane & Morrison, 2006 and Young, 2000).

1.4 Aims

The aim of this research was to determine the dynamics of, and provide recommendations on, the engagement of NGOs in regional NRM processes in South Australia. This study had four main objectives:

1. capture the views of NGOs regarding engagement in NRM processes and evaluate how effectively the range of NGOs across the state have been engaged in regional NRM processes;
2. identify, what NGOs believe to be, barriers to their engagement in regional NRM processes;
3. provide recommendations for improved NGO engagement; and
4. produce a report with both statewide and regional perspectives to present back to NGOs, the NRM Council, NRM Boards and NRM Groups.

1.5 Target Audience

This report has value in being able to present the views of NGOs. It may assist Regional NRM Boards in both designing their community engagement strategies for the purpose of the regional planning process as well as developing collaborative and partnership approaches with NGOs. It is hoped that this report will serve to inform the NRM Council, State Government and NGOs of the on-going barriers to NGO engagement with NRM and contribute to stronger partnerships and strategies to support more effective engagement. This report may also serve to increase NGO understanding of limitations to NRM Boards and reduce the perceived barriers.

2 Research Methods

2.1 Structured Interviews

A total 140 structured interviews of NGOs throughout SA were conducted between December 2007 and April 2008. Interviews were conducted in seven of the NRM regions, as well as with statewide NGOs that also had regional operations. Every effort was made to choose a representative sample of different types of operational groups in each region. The number of groups interviewed in each region and/or statewide are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Number of Groups Interviewed

NRM region	No. NGOs interviewed	No. CCSA members groups
Adelaide and Mount Lofty Ranges (AMLR)	35	7
Eyre Peninsula (EP)	17	
Kangaroo Island (KI)	2	2
Northern and Yorke (NY)	19	1
South Australian Arid Lands (SAAL)	3	
South Australian Murray Darling Basin (SAMDB)	22	
South East (SE)	14	1
Statewide NGOs	28	24
Total	140	35

An introductory letter was sent to each NGO to be interviewed detailing the intent of the survey. The majority of the interviews were conducted on the telephone using the standard survey questions (Appendix 12.1). It is acknowledged that interviewing by phone compared to face-to-face interviews may lead to some loss of observations and communication, but it logistically proved the most efficient use of time for both parties.

Those interviewed were guaranteed confidentiality and anonymity within the research process. For analysis an informant matrix was developed where each informant is assigned a code. Data from all the interviews was analysed to produce basic statistics and identify consistent themes to emerge from the responses. This was determined by grouping consistent responses and using basic qualitative analysis.

A follow-up letter and draft summary of key barriers and recommendations identified was sent out to ensure it reflected the views of those interviewed, that findings were representative of their associated NGO and to offer opportunity for comment. CCSA also held a member group forum to further discuss the results of the survey. This step was

considered important as many of the interviewees found it difficult to separate answering questions for themselves vs. their organisation as a whole.

This research is non-quantitative and therefore responses were diverse. The key barriers identified are based on those themes that were mentioned most frequently by interviewees. The qualitative survey provided a mechanism for identifying barriers and the key barriers have been ordered based on percent of responses. The percentage of interviewees making comment on each barrier is low due to the diverse nature of responses. Had the issues been identified before conducting the research more quantitative responses would have been received. A follow up study using these identified barriers could provide a more quantitative assessment of the importance of these barriers.

2.2 Types of NGOs Interviewed

The activities of all NGOs interviewed were primarily concerned with on-ground works (over 78% of those NGOs surveyed undertook on-ground works). Only seven NGOs surveyed (6%) said they had no involvement with on-ground activities. About 60% also undertook workshops and talks. These findings were relatively consistent across the regions.

Access to paid project officers had a large influence on whether NGOs received funding direct from NRM and their level of engagement. Almost three-quarters (71%) of NGOs with paid staff received funding direct from the NRM Boards and 63% of these NGOs were involved with NRM planning and consultation. In comparison only 22.5% of the NGOs who did not have paid staff received funding direct from NRM Boards and only 25% of those without paid staff were involved with NRM planning and consultation.

The combined years of experience amongst NGOs surveyed was 2817 years and these NGOs represented over 106 995 members.

NGOs received funding from a variety of sources including NRM, Envirofund, NHT, Local Council, DEH and corporate sponsorship.

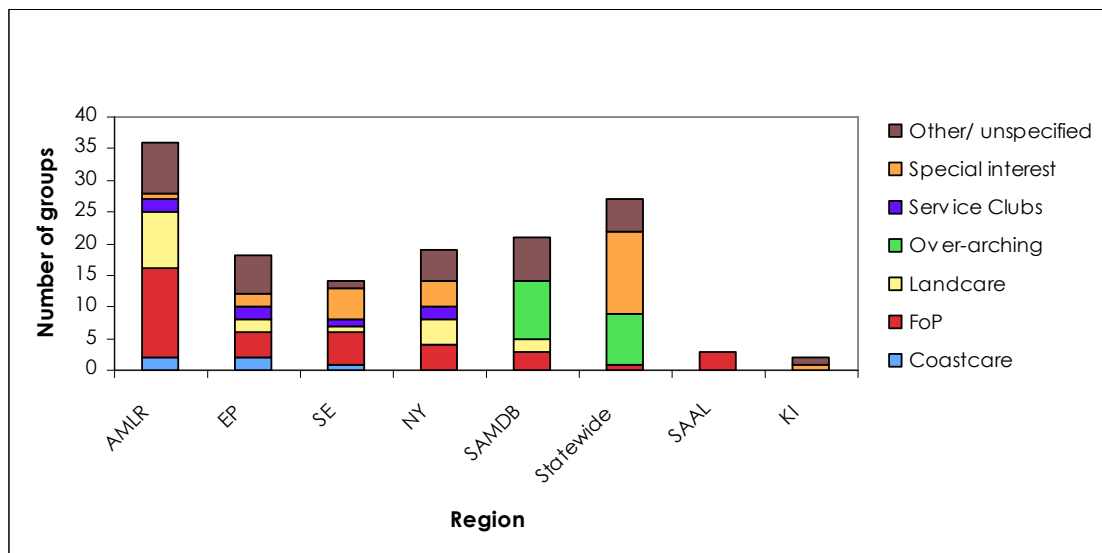
The main focus of these NGOs was biodiversity (82%), followed by water (32%) and marine and coastal (29%).

A wide range of NGOs were interviewed in each region and have been categorised to provide an indication of the representation of those groups interviewed. The categories include:

- Friends of Parks Groups
- Landcare Groups
- Overarching
- Coastal
- Service Clubs/progress Associations
- Special Interest NGOs
- National and State-wide NGOs

There were a number of NGOs that were unable to be split up into the categories above and have been labeled other.

Figure 2. Number of NGOs interviewed in each interest group category by region.



The division into categories was based on trends that emerged from this survey on the governance, structure and/or focus of NGOs. This division is subjective and requires further research but has been made available to demonstrate the diversity that exists among NGOs and the different issues they face. These groupings were established to assist with interpreting the results and determining patterns. However, there is a need for a more thorough breakdown based on groups' interests, capacity and desired relationship with NRM Boards.

It should be noted that there is some overlap between the categories identified. For example, some coastal groups and service clubs are under the auspices of Local Government and many of the special interest groups and overarching groups can also

be categorised as national and statewide NGOs. Each NGO was assigned to one category and for this reason no NGOs were labeled as under the auspice of Local Government. It is believed a few NGOs fell into this category and thus a description and qualitative information has been described below but no statistics were compiled. The level of engagement and awareness of these categorised NGOs with NRM varied quite substantially. The graphs below show the percent in each category who received funding (Figure 4) direct from the Board and the percent in each category that were aware and involved in consultation with NRM (Figure 5).

Figure 3. Percent of each group receiving funding direct from an NRM Board

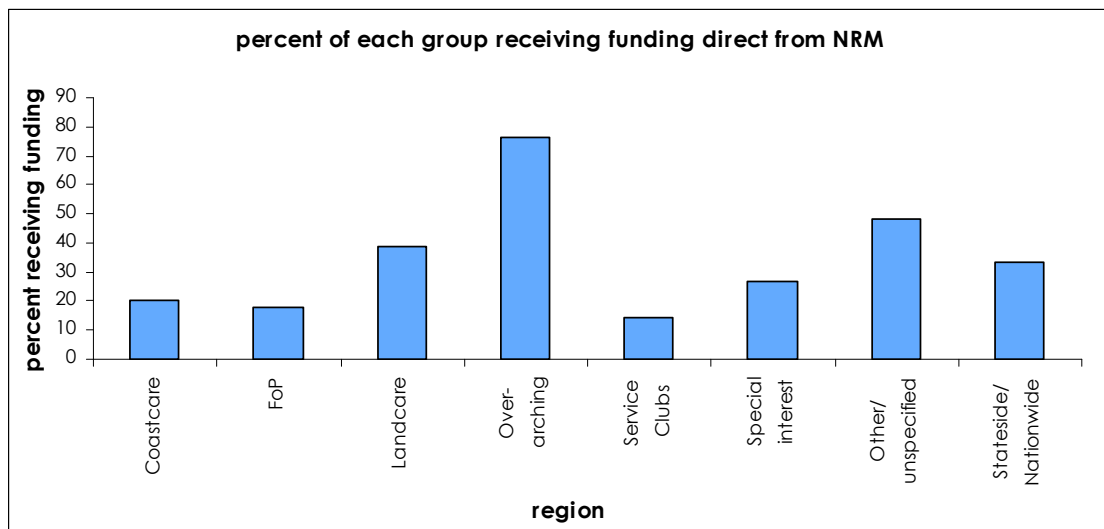
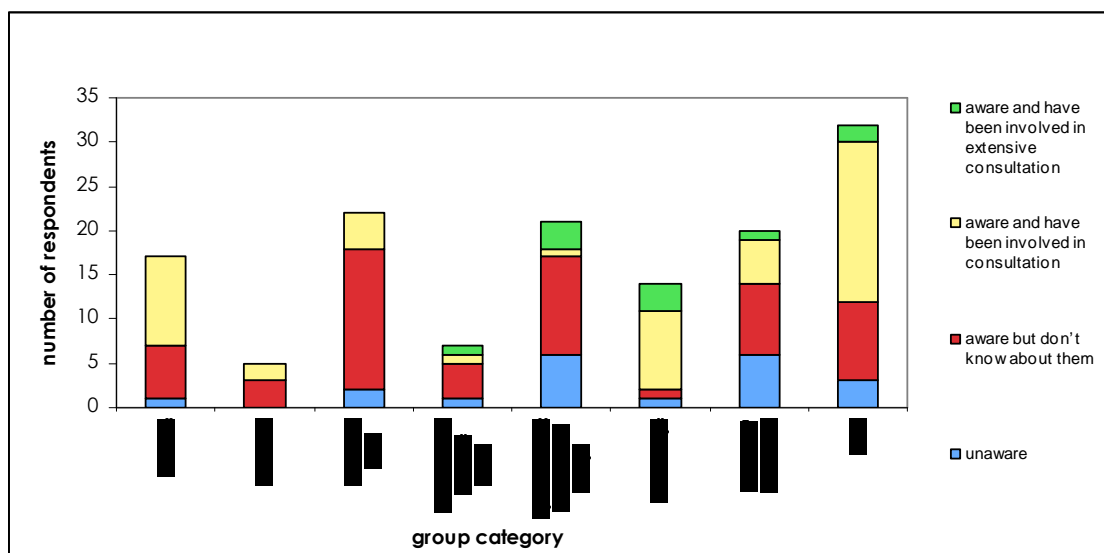


Figure 4. Awareness and involvement in consultation among different NGOs



3 Barriers for NGOs Engaging in NRM Processes

Of the 140 NGOs interviewed 21 saw no major barriers to engaging in SA's NRM processes; five were unsure and four did not respond. Six NGOs offered praise for the NRM Boards, Groups or NRM staff. Comments included praise for positive working relationships and having good local contacts that are supportive and helpful.

The remaining 110 NGOs identified barriers to engaging in South Australian NRM processes. Some distinct barriers emerged from the results as well as recommendations for improvement.

Through grouping of the barriers identified by NGOs, 12 key barriers were established. These are listed below in order of their frequency. Barriers for CCSA member groups were consistent except where noted. Refer to Appendix 3 for the full list of barriers identified by NGOs.

Praise for NRM Boards

"We have worked together with the [NRM] Board lots. Most weeks we are in contact with someone from the NRM Board staff. They've been wonderful to us and we're glad they're there. I'd recommend them to anyone." (EP, Int 11)

"They [NRM Board] have helped us with our planning. We have always had a good relationship with them. NRM is very important / relevant to our group". (N&Y, Int 15)

"[We] have direct contact through one particular contact in the NRM Board]. They have come out and given us advice. They have been fantastic." (AMLR, Int 26)

3.1 Lack of understanding of the relevance of NRM Boards to NGO activities

NGOs were questioned about the relevance of NRM Boards and processes to their organisation and how they would like to work with NRM Boards (see Appendix 12.1, Section B). Some respondents mentioned their level of knowledge and/or understanding of NRM Boards and processes as a barrier; while some NGOs were unaware of what NRM (the acronym) stood for; and others viewed NRM as either an entity in itself or an activity. Given that this was a barrier raised by NGOs it is likely to be a significant barrier in the broader community.

One respondent felt the all encompassing focus of NRM is hard for the community to comprehend.

"the enormity and complexity of the topic i.e. NRM. It's a bit like global warming, most people are overwhelmed by it and it's hard to get it

into your head. Can the average person on the street really grasp the concept?" (AMLR, Int 6)

There was considerable variability in NGOs awareness and perceived relevance of NRM:

- 13 respondents said the NRM Board had little or no relevance to their community group, with 7 NGOs saying that NRM engagement was irrelevant;
- 11 respondents saw the NRM Boards as highly relevant;
- 5 respondents did not know enough about the NRM Boards to determine their relevance or how they would like to work together;
- 4 respondents commented on the lack of understanding about what NRM is; and
- 1 respondent said they would like to sever ties with the NRM Board, but could not because they needed NRM for funding.

Relevance of NRM Boards

"Not only does the community see NRM [Boards] as irrelevant but NRM [Boards] see the community as irrelevant. We need far better connections...I'm an NRM Group member because I want to change things - most NRM Group members are the same..." (EP, Int 13)

"Members of Friends [of Parks] groups don't understand where they fit into the bigger NRM picture. We're failing to communicate this to the individual volunteer. They don't understand how their small scale activities fit into the NRM Plan and how they can attract funding". (AMLR, Int 6)

NGOs working on public land were largely unaware of the relevance of NRM to them. Of the NGOs that saw them themselves as autonomous and therefore not involved with NRM, many were affiliated with Friends of Parks. Many Friends of Parks groups stated that they received all their support through DEH so perceived little relevance and saw no direct links with the NRM Boards.

These findings are of concern as all NGOs interviewed have some relevance to NRM. For example, even NGOs not traditionally thought of as being environmental, such as walking groups, could be promoting and practicing good phytosphthora management and applying for grants to install signs and phytosphthora stations. Those within the Friends of Parks (FoP) system definitely have relevance to NRM despite these NGOs generally not recognising this. Some regions (e.g. Northern and Yorke) are even funding DEH and FoPs groups directly to support their on-ground work projects. The perceived lack of relevance by many NGOs shows that ensuring Boards convey clear messages about what they do, what they offer and how to form partnerships is crucial.

Those respondents who saw the NRM Boards as relevant suggested the main roles and relevance of the NRM Boards to NGOs were:

- as a funding source (22 respondents);
- providing technical advice and support for on-ground works (10 respondents);
- keeping NGOs aware of funding and other opportunities, and of NRM Board activities (10 respondents);
- sharing and exchanging information and consultation (3 respondents);
- to work with the Boards collaboratively and form partnerships (3 respondents);
- recognising group activities and understanding what NGOs on the ground are doing, including having a greater understanding of NGOs/volunteers and the issues they are facing. This includes recognising the value of NGO and volunteer input, and the knowledge and expertise that they bring and on which the NRM Boards can capitalise (8 respondents);
- assisting with project management and planning for NGOs on-ground works (4 respondents);
- providing support for writing grant applications and other paperwork (2 respondents;) and
- providing a single contact point (one stop shop) instead of being 'shuffled from person to person' to find appropriate information (3 respondents).

Overall NGOs saw the role and relevance of the NRM Boards primarily as funding bodies and a source of technical advice and support in implementing their individual projects.

3.2 High levels of bureaucracy of NRM Boards

A common barrier for NGO engagement in NRM processes is that NRM is burdened with bureaucracy. There is a belief that it is top heavy and is an administration focused system.

Of those surveyed, 20 NGOs (14.3%) stated that the bureaucracy and top heaviness of the system, such as paying disproportionate amounts on wages and administration was a barrier. The 'new' bureaucracy of the NRM Boards was perceived to overshadow

on-ground action. This is evident in the comments below:

"The level of bureaucracy that they're enveloping themselves in...they are forgetting about the on-ground side of the equation". (AMLR, Int 24)

"The consultation and bureaucracy in the NRM system is a nightmare and it means groups get burnt out. " (AMLR, Int 7)

"...NRM [Boards] need to be visionary not functionary." (AMLR, Int 7)

"NRM has become a policy development organisation and there has been conflict at various times since it was set up. Our group has tried to maintain its independence from the NRM Board despite funding arrangements. They think they own us just because they fund us. Sometimes we have expressed views contrary to their culture. Our role remains a conduit from the grassroots community to the NRM Board and we try to avoid the downward pressure from the NRM Board." (SAMDB, Int 18)

Concerns of bureaucracy in NRM process

'We're not impressed because they are overloaded with people. Their money goes to salaries, administration and 4WDs'. (AMLR, Int 21)

"NRM Groups can't be a conduit in the same way because they are part of government now. Members of our group who were also NRM Group members have expressed frustration and one resigned because of the bureaucracy." (SAMDB, Int 20)

3.3 Poor communication between NRM Boards and NGOs

Twenty NGOs (14.3%) identified communication as a key barrier to engaging with NRM Boards. The main concern was the perceived lack of two-way communication between NGOs and NRM Boards. This particularly related to the need of NGOs to receive feedback, with some groups commenting that information is fed up the chain but rarely fed back down again to the grassroots level. Some comments suggested that communications had dropped off altogether.

There is a poor understanding by NGOs of NRM Board and Group roles and responsibilities. NGOs also have difficulties accessing and knowing who are the right NRM staff.

NGOs mentioned the importance of having a single point of contact in the Boards and that the relevance of NRM needs to be better communicated. NGOs should have a greater understanding of how they can help and be helped by NRM.

Two-way communication

“Communication with the NRM Board has been lacking and it has been very disappointing. We used to have a good relationship with Landcare Officers and get support. Lots of groups are going into recess because the support network is not there.” (EP, Int 10)

“Communication needs to be a two way thing and that isn't happening. Even the local NRM person doesn't know what the NRM Board and Groups are doing.” (EP, Int 4)

NGOs need to know who to speak with in the NRM structure

“The general public doesn't know who is on the NRM Groups. They wouldn't know who to go to if they had a problem.” (EP, Int 16)

“Its important to have personal contact and get a dialogue going so the NRM Board doesn't become faceless.” (N&Y, Int 18)

‘It is difficult to know who to speak to: group; general manager; key staff; Boards – too hard to penetrate. Sometimes better accessing the staff as they are there 5 days per week’. (State, Int 24)

In addition, NGOs commented on the inadequacy of communication in terms of timing, the accuracy of information, lack of a range of communication methods and lack of 'real' information coming through the system. Some example comments include:

“There have been some community meetings but they've been poorly advertised. We had only 1-2 days notice and they were held at inconvenient

times. There is no feedback when meetings [are] held and people have become disillusioned". (EP, Int 10)

"We were trying to source grant monies and they gave us a list of potential grants. For most of them the due date had passed and the others weren't applicable to us. Their information and advice is often out of date and they are slow to respond. They do not have a consumer friendly approach. Their communication was bad and they made lots of assumptions without actually checking with us. I spent two hours on their website trying to find if any grants were applicable to us and it turned out they weren't. They didn't have the courtesy to tell me that in the first place." (AMLR, Int 9)

"We need more transfer of info and communication of the hard facts rather than glossy brochures that tell us how great the NRM Board is. We need more info from the Sustainable Landscape Officers and the NRM Groups. We need to know more about what the NRM Groups are doing not what the NRM Board is doing. Landcare groups are about on-the ground action so we need to know more about what's happening on the ground and hear less about policy and rhetoric". (AMLR, Int 12)

Email and phone tend to be the most common methods of communication between NGO members (63 and 46 respectively). Some NGOs like to receive information electronically (and/or by post) and then choose relevant information to distribute to their members via newsletters (30 NGOs) or in person (24 NGOs). Utilising a main point of contact such as an NRM Officer, chairperson or secretary, who will distribute information in the most appropriate format was suggested.

Many NGOs commented on the need for the use of a diverse range of media for communication. Many NGOs said they would like to see one-on-one contact for the NRM Boards to get their messages across. There were also comments regarding large documents and trying to get the NRM Boards to send only relevant information to NGOs.

Communication also needs to be relevant and targeted. Many NGOs stated they received numerous emails and had given up trying to read through them to work out what was relevant to them. One respondent stated that:

"The newsletters from the NRM Board tend to be a bit light on and sporadic, with too much PR stuff. They need to produce something that's at a level in between the long reports and newsletters. They have produced CDs of the reports but nobody is going to read them or use them. We also need reports that are relevant to the local area so you don't have to wade through a huge document to find what is relevant to you". (AMLR, Int 30)

Several comments were raised about the inadequacy of consultation for the development of draft NRM Plans. Many NGOs commented that the consultation was not genuine and there was a lack of feedback from the NRM Boards. NGOs who raised this concern felt the approach of being told what the priorities were and then asked to comment was not adequate engagement. Although the Plans are to belong to the regions, and thus communities, the process was not perceived to be community-driven.

There were also concerns that the consultation was not at the right level for smaller and/or specialised NGOs or the community. One respondent comments that:

"...about four of us went to the meetings held for consultation in the development of the Draft NRM Plan. It was so boring. The other group members didn't thank me for bringing them along because it was so boring. Also, they felt they didn't know enough to participate...Someone needs to do an AL Gore and put all the information together in a way that the average person can understand and relate to." (AMLR, Int 6)

Trusting and utilising input and local/regional knowledge from NGOs is also an important aspect of communication. It is not just about relaying information to NGOs but also listening and valuing the information they can provide.

Some respondents also suggested that there need to be opportunities for similar NGOs to come together and have a collective voice in NRM planning.

Need for effective communication by NRM Boards with NGOs

"...the bureaucracy isn't good at communicating the essential messages [about NRM]. It's about the ability to sell the essential messages including letting people know where they fit into the bigger NRM picture". (AMLR, Int 6)

'There needs to be more public awareness showing case studies of where NRM has helped groups'. (AMLR, Int 13)

"We need to have closer communication and more systematic communication and out of that will come greater involvement." (SAAL, Int 3)

Essentially a range of NGOs perceived that, despite best efforts of NRM Boards and Groups, fundamental messages about NRM are not being effectively conveyed to them. Many of the main messages are becoming lost. Bureaucratic processes including constraints on communication content and release is a barrier to effective community engagement. NRM staff have identified the difficulty in getting rapid, clear communications to community. Thus communication protocols are needed to make it easier to communicate with the community.

3.4 Lack of volunteer time to engage with NRM Boards at the level required

The survey results revealed that there is limited time available to volunteers, even retired people, to engage with NRM Boards.

Eighteen respondents (12.9%) said their time limitation was a barrier to engaging with NRM.

*"The biggest factor is time. We even have problems finding time to plan our own activities for the year. It's not a disinterest in NRM from our group but we're busy".
(AMLR, Int 11)*

The requirements of applying for and managing grant applications can become a burden for small NGOs because of the in-kind requirements and volunteer commitments. Travel and expenses associated with volunteering were also identified as barriers relating to volunteer availability. Ten respondents (7.1%) said time and cost of traveling was a barrier, while only one NGO said expense was a problem (e.g. traveling to meetings and NRM workshops).

3.5 Difficulty with funding processes

Accessing funding and the funding process are key barriers encountered by NGOs throughout the state. These include:

- developing partnerships with NRM Boards;
- a perception by NGOs that NRM funds are being spent on wages and administration rather than on-ground-works (14.3%);
- lack of funding continuity (5%);
- competition between NGOs for funding (2.3%);
- perception that NRM Boards are wasting money on expensive consultants rather than utilising local people with valuable local knowledge (1 respondent);
- lack of transparency about the administration budgets of Boards.
- For example, the budget in the Draft AMLR NRM Plan is divided into themes and the cost of administering the Board is included in each theme's budget so it does not show how much is actually spent on administration (1 respondent);
 - unclear information on process of funding distribution (1 respondent);
 - difficulty in maintaining projects without ongoing and secure funding- 'seed' funding is not enough (1 respondent); and
 - difficulty in continuing successful projects without continued funding (1 respondent).

Difficulties with funding processes

"So much funding gets absorbed in admin. The lack of funding that gets to on-ground works is my main concern." (AMLR, Int 1)

"It is a closed circle in that it is difficult to attract funds from NRM Boards (unless you have personal contacts you seem to get excluded)." (SAMDB, Int 3; also operating in AMLR)

"They [NRM Board] need to continue to fund community groups and provide ongoing funding instead of just 'seed funding'...There has been a lot of tension and resentment towards NRM because they are not providing secure funding...Their model of a community group is different from our model and therefore they don't want to keep on supporting it" (N&Y, 3).

A project officer commented that

"[I] have to spend time chasing funding, probably 20% of my time is liaising with government to secure funding, which could be spent on the ground. It also means we can't do long term planning because we don't know what funding we'll have year to year." (State, Int 23)

NGOs raised concerns about NRM Boards taking over projects and funding that used to go directly to NGOs. One respondent stated that:

*“Our group has been made redundant with the new NRM system. We used to have paid project officers and receive money directly but now the **** group and the NRM Group of which I am a member have taken on those roles and the funding arrangements have changed so we would have to apply for grants. Our volunteer base is dwindling because we don't have any funds to manage and people are losing interest. It's a shame because we were a very vibrant group we achieved a lot over the years with our local action plan and access[ed] up to \$1 million dollars in funding. It's personally sad for me because I was the president for 4 years.” (AMLR, Int 4)*

The funding difficulties NRM Boards face was understood by some groups, but others had issues with reduced funding. It is important that funding constraints that NRM Boards face are better communicated to NGOs and the community.

A message that needs to be clear to all NGOs

“There is not enough funding across the NRM Board for all community organisations.” (SAMDB, Int 19)

3.6 Poor access to NRM staff for administrative and on-ground support

Access to NRM staff or a paid project officer/coordinator in the local area is a major determinant of community satisfaction with NRM. Six of the NGOs surveyed (4.3%) saw lack of officers as a barrier and many others also commented that they would like to have one-on-one access to NRM staff. Project officer/coordinator support relates to many other concerns raised, such as:

- 10 respondents (7.1%) did not know who to approach within the NRM organisation and got the 'run around' when they rung up for specific information;
- 4 respondents (2.9%) complained about other issues with customer service;
- 11 respondents (7.9%) said that distance and geographic isolation from staff and volunteers was a barrier;
- 6 respondents said staff are busy or overworked and therefore have less time for personal contact with each NGO. Some comments from respondents include:

"Two NRM Officers always came to our meetings. Those officers have been taken away now with the NRM changes and we haven't had anybody for the last 8 months. Hopefully we'll get someone soon." (N&Y, Int 15)

"I need to liaise with NRM Boards to secure funding for the group to survive but I also have the expectation of doing OGWs with the community-it's a lot of work for one person. Also, it hasn't always been easy to find the right person to speak to about funding." (Statewide, Int 23)

- two respondents (1.4%) felt high staff turnover makes it harder for NGOs to engage; and

NRM needs a personal face

"...we also need more information so we 'know who to contact; rather than every time we ask someone for help we are told you should be speaking to so and so." (EP Int 3)

"A lot of people/groups feel they've been left in the lurch. Lots of Landcare Officers have been lost and Officers are harder to access. There are fewer on the ground, they are further away, have less time and are harder to access. People have lost that local friendly face with all the knowledge. The grassroots people need someone to deal with all the red tape for them. Our group has the NRM contacts so I guess we're spoilt in that way compared to lots of groups. Lots of groups still don't know who to go to even 12 months after there have been changes with an NRM Officer." (EP, Int 17)

- lack of access to people with technical expertise. One group said lack of expertise amongst NRM staff was a barrier and another commented that the NRM Boards were wasting money on external consultants (e.g. Rural Solutions).

There were several additional comments throughout the survey regarding the provision of a single point of contact and a project officer whom NGOs could call their own.

Some of these include:

"The link with the Coastcare Officer means the relationship works well. However, Coastcare Officers seem to be a bit thin on the ground and rarely stay in their position for long." (EP, Int 7)

'People need a single point of contact so they can talk to someone and they can tell them what to do. They don't want to be told to speak to this person and that person and get the run around. They need a single point of contact'. (SAMDB, Int 4)

3.7 Perceived lack of willingness and 'sincerity' of NRM Boards to engage NGOs

Some of the NGOs felt that they are not listened to and do not have opportunities for input into decision-making. Eight respondents (5.7%) stated this as a barrier, while a further two respondents noted the lack of feedback from the NRM Boards as a barrier. Comments surrounding lack of willingness to engage included not utilising local environmental knowledge and not taking on Board community comments. Below are some comments received:

"... barriers... their willingness to engage with groups like ours and listen to us." (AMLR, Int 20)

"Local environmental knowledge is a great resource that's not utilised by government agencies enough." (SE, Int 9)

"Local knowledge is often not listened to. Money is wasted on bringing in expensive consultants to find answers and often they come back to what the local people were saying in the first place." (SAMDB, Int 17)

"The Boards seem a bit reluctant to get involved with each group. For example, we held a field day to talk about works that need to be done etc. We especially invited NRM Board members but they said it was a conflict of interest because groups are competing for funding and they might be seen

to favour our group. We didn't think like this, we thought it would be best if they saw as much of what is going on as possible. Also we held this field day and soon after they held a field day in mostly the same areas-so this was duplicating lots of the work we'd already done." (EP, Int 17)

"Have been invited to participate in meetings and group members have attended but nobody has come to the group and said this is how we can work together." (AMLR, Int 12)

"Our LAP committee doesn't want to attend NRM meetings anymore because they are just so frustrated and don't feel like they are being listened to. The committee is just not interested anymore because they feel that decisions have already been made about how funds will be spent. The understanding is that more funds are spent on jobs and not enough is spend on-ground. We have old plans here that are 10 years old and have never been implemented." (SAMDB, Int 10)

3.8 Difficulties with reporting and level of administration required

A range of NGOs in the state encountered difficulties with reporting and administration. Seven respondents (5%) said they had difficulty applying for grants especially in relation to the paperwork. Issues raised were that:

- grant application processes are difficult and time-consuming and less agency support staff means small NGOs are forced to apply by themselves;
- many volunteer-based NGOs are overwhelmed by the 'paperwork' required and do not have the capacity or time;
- some NGOs have become inactive as a result of administrative burdens; and
- one group suggested when they are unsuccessful in attaining NRM grants they stop applying very quickly and start looking for funds elsewhere.

Administration a burden for some NGOs

"Most of the volunteers in our group don't want to get too tied up in the administration, they just want to get out there and do something." (SAAL, Int 1)

"The paperwork is getting too hard. Things are getting harder and a lot of groups are going to stop bothering." (EP, Int 16)

3.9 Poor recognition of the contribution of volunteers

Lack of recognition and acknowledgement of volunteers was perceived as a barrier by nine NGOs (6.4%). NGOs identified that:

- they want NRM Boards to be aware of their presence and activities;
- they want to see the NRM Boards come out to their meetings to find out about their activities and communicate what the NRM Board can do for the NGO;
- they feel that the time they give is not valued by environmental professionals;
- CCSA member groups identified lack of appreciation and understanding of NGOs and volunteers as a major barrier;
- one group with an unusual model are not recognised and funded by their Board (1 respondent); and
- there should be a communication strategy for the Boards dealing with NGOs (1 respondent).

Volunteer acknowledgement required

“There is a feeling that community groups are not valued or acknowledged for the work they’ve done. There needs to be better acknowledgement of community achievements because we have done quite a lot in terms of changing landholder attitudes.” (AMLR, Int 18)

“They do not have a volunteer friendly approach. Volunteers are important, we put in hours of time that the government then doesn’t have to pay for. You have to respect volunteer time otherwise they’ll stop altogether.” (AMLR, Int 21)

From the suggestions respondents provided it is clear that NGOs want recognition that goes beyond rewarding those NGOs that are producing the most viably successful outcomes. One group described recognition:

“From communication I’ve had with volunteers the Boards need to understand this doesn’t mean just handing out awards... it is about being genuine in engagement, trusting volunteers’ opinions and technical expertise. Many have more hands-on environmental years in the field than NRM staff and many have undertaken environmental education”. (AMLR, Int17)

3.10 Misalignment of priorities between NGO's and NRM Board

Some NGOs identified that regional NRM priorities don't always align with their priorities.

Six small NGOs (4.3%) said the priorities of NRM Boards and their local priorities do not match, whilst the Statewide/National NGOs were concerned with misalignment between State and National priorities. As such some NGOs find it difficult to initiate projects the NRM Boards do not see as a priority.

Some respondents suggested that the conservation sector tends to operate in a more holistic, integrated way when looking at managing natural resources. Thus it is difficult to be funded through investment strategies that attempt to 'fit' projects into silos.³ Related to this, some state NGOs felt that NRM Board's regional NRM focus makes it difficult to work at a state level.

Imposing regional priorities on NGOs

"Our group is dictated to by the NRM Board which makes it hard to initiate projects that the NRM Board doesn't see as a priority." (SAMDB, Int 12)

"They are also bound by the narrowness of the NRM vision. It is limited and doesn't match our vision. NRM doesn't recognise the other social and economic benefits of the ...model. The [local] council is better in a way because it is concerned with the whole of the local community". (N&Y, Int 3)

Limited State and National focus

"NRM sees themselves as local and regional and we see ourselves as State and Australia-wide. They think we're trying to move in on them. The main barrier is their regional focus". (State, Int 6)

³ The term 'Silo' refers to management systems with an inward-looking focus where information sharing is vertical rather than horizontal. This can result in poor exchange of information and reduced opportunities for integration. With NRM, NGOs can find it difficult to fit projects into specific funding streams as they may cross over a range of areas.

3.11 Limited volunteer capacity and number of active volunteers in smaller NGO's to deliver on-ground works

Some NGOs commented that volunteer numbers are dwindling and there are few new recruits to replace them, especially younger people. Four NGOs (2.9%) said lack of volunteers and aging volunteers was a barrier to engagement.

Difficulty Recruiting New Members

"We are getting older so we don't do as many on-ground activities anymore. We would like to have new members but it's really hard to get the young ones involved." (SE, Int 3)

"...started with 30 members and now have 14. People have moved away from the area or become elderly and unable to participate. The average age of our members is over 60. Most community groups have this problem. We have done promotional work to try and gain new membership e.g a stall and photographic display but have been unsuccessful." (AMLR Int 27)

3.12 Lack of Local Government links available for smaller NGOs

The relationship between NRM Boards and Local Government was raised as a concern by some NGOs, as was the limited funding provided to local government for NRM. Also, many NGOs suggested they have links with local government as opposed to NRM Boards. Greater involvement of local government included a range of comments, including:

"NRM Boards need to have a strong relationship with local government. The CEO of [local] councils think they now don't have to worry about NRM issues – NRM will take care of it. Every council should host a biodiversity officer/land manager officer funded by NRM. [We] Need someone in local government who has detailed knowledge about NRM and environmental issues...NRM must have a presence in local government as it helps in [their] policy development." (AMLR, Int 31)

"We consult with council and that is probably all that's needed. We have a very good relationship with the local council and get lots of support from them. Have always been able to convince them of the value in what we want to do." (AMLR, Int 27)

“Groups want to be consulted and involved on local issues particularly with the [Local] Council - we don’t necessarily want to be involved in big picture NRM planning.” (AMLR, Int 7)

“We work with and support the local council and provide the elbow grease to make their projects happen.” (AMLR, Int 9)

4 Recommendations

Five strategies are suggested that NRM Boards, and in some cases CCSA, could undertake to increase engagement of NGOs in NRM processes and overcome the barriers identified in this research. These are:

1. Diversify methods used to engage with NGOs, taking into account differences in size, needs, capacity and structure;
2. Engage enough on-ground Community Support Officers to properly support the work of smaller volunteer community NGOs undertaking NRM;
3. Establish simple communication protocols and clearly articulate expectations;
4. Consultation needs to be purposeful, sincere and timely to ensure it supports collaboration and partnerships with community through NGOs; and
5. Simplification of funding processes ensuring they are secure, equitable and transparent.

4.1 Recommendation 1 *Diversify methods used to engage with NGOs taking into account differences in size, needs, capacity and structure*

Barriers addressed:

- Lack of understanding of the relevance of NRM Boards to NGO activities (Barrier 1)
- High levels of bureaucracy of NRM Boards (Barrier 2)
- Poor communication between NRM Boards and NGOs (Barrier 3)
- Lack of volunteer time to engage with NRM Boards at the level required (Barrier 4)
- Difficulty with funding processes (Barrier 5)
- Poor access to NRM staff for administrative and on-ground support (Barrier 6)
- Perceived lack of willingness and 'sincerity' of Boards to engage NGOs (Barrier 7)
- Difficulties with reporting and level of administration required (Barrier 8)
- Poor recognition of the contribution of volunteers (Barrier 9)
- Misalignment of priorities between NGOs and NRM Board (Barrier 10)
- Limited volunteer capacity and no. of active volunteers in smaller NGOs (Barrier 11)
- Lack of Local Government links available for smaller NGOs (Barrier 12)

The diversity of responses by NGOs captured in this research draws attention to the need to take into consideration differences in size, needs, capacity and structure, as these differences will influence how an NGO will engage with the NRM Boards. It is recommended that NRM Boards develop different engagement models for different NGOs and thus community engagement protocols for each NGO type.

In order to develop engagement protocols, it is necessary for NRM Boards to consider the range of ways NGOs add value to regional NRM, such as through volunteer capacity or at the strategic, policy or adversarial level. A better understanding of the value of NGO contributions to NRM would enable NRM Boards to value the diverse range of NGO activities. It may also lead the way to better trust in NGO judgment and knowledge. This information would also assist NRM Boards in determining how to partner with NGOs and value their expertise.

NGO Engagement with NRM Boards

"We would like to engage at a higher level. It is important for the NRM Board to understand what NGOs do. The Boards need to understand the differences in what NGO groups do. They need to identify the differences. They need to understand the high value of in-kind contributions that NGOs make – better value for money than agencies. ...NGOs cannot afford to engage at every tier. ...would like to see the NRM Board operate with an engagement strategy. The problem now is that most of the consultation with the Boards occurs at the last minute. It is therefore difficult to plan – things come up so quickly...The NRM Board needs to develop a specific understanding of being in partnership". (State, Int 19)

Engagement protocols should also consider the capacity and structure of NGOs to engage with NRM Boards and the correct tier of management for NGOs to engage. That is, NGOs may engage at the level of staff, NRM Group, NRM Board or at the State level. For example, local NGOs may be supported by an on-ground CSO, whereas overarching groups such as LAP or catchment groups could liaise with NRM Groups/NRM staff, and State NGOs may need to be engaged via partnerships.

Special interest groups would like to share their expertise

"We would like to be seen as a stakeholder in biodiversity decision-making...[would] like to be invited to public meetings or to be on a steering committee. We are busy people so we wouldn't put our hand up unless asked. " (SE, Int 2)

Overarching groups such as LAP groups, catchment groups, and private organisations may have a greater strategic role as well as liaising directly with community. They may filter information back to their organisations and up to NRM Groups and Boards.

Local groups want to engage at the level of NRM staff

"...we need support from community based officers like the old Landcare Officers that used to be around." (AMLR, Int 12)

"Landcare Officers used to motivate people, suggest projects and people felt they could talk to them." (EP, Int 1)

"...we don't necessarily want to be involved in big picture NRM planning." (AMLR, Int 7)

Many statewide and national NGOs have long-term experience in delivering NRM through on-ground works, education and capacity building, lobbying and strategic planning. They can contribute significantly to the process of planning and integration as well as being the catalyst for project development. Such NGOs have a wide network, a range of skills to contribute and can add substantial value to Boards achieving their NRM objectives. NRM Boards should be seeking collaborative partnerships with them. There also needs to be acknowledgement of such NGOs as being proven service providers and recognition of the value of long-term low risk investments with such NGOs.

Larger NGOs want to engage at the Board or Group level

"We work closely with the NRM Board and are actively involved with the NRM Groups in our area. There is a high relevance because a working relationship is vital". (SAMDB, Int 16)

"The NRM Board sets the regional priorities and the NRM Groups set the sub-regional priorities. We'd like help from them to sort out our catchment priorities". (AMLR, Int 15)

Statewide NGOs had a range of recommendations to build relationships with NRM Boards:

"For networking to be effective there needs to be engagement with each others programs. There needs to be more networking and more consultation. NRM Boards are a hierarchy in their own right-they could share ownership of issues with other organisations... State-wide groups need some way of communicating directly with the Boards". (State Int 14)

“Statewide groups need assistance to communicate with all the [NRM] Boards at the same time and in a more upfront way. We need to engage with the Boards simultaneously to avoid expending energy communicating with all the Boards separately”. (SAMDB, State Int 3)

“Concern that Boards do not understand the broad agenda that NGOs can have – how they work, their impact. Interested in speaking with regional Boards and providing input on connectivity and areas of environmental value”. (State/National, Int 28)

“We have a good relationship with staff at the operational level but we don't have good communication or relationships at the NRM Board level – this needs to change”. (State, Int 11)

It is a concern that some groups do not see NRM Boards as relevant to their activities and that some larger NGOs are considering whether they will continue providing on-ground services to NRM Boards, because of a lack of a partnership approach, transparent funding arrangement and longer term funding. NRM Boards need to ensure these concerns are addressed and that there is greater promotion of the relevance of NRM to NGOs, particularly the Friends of Parks network.

NRM Boards need to gather information about NGOs to develop engagement protocols, such as:

- types of NGOs with little or no knowledge of NRM;
- types of NGOs with some knowledge of NRM processes;
- types of NGOs already engaging with NRM;
 - the characteristics of those that are engaged
 - governance structure
 - whether they have paid staff
 - how they currently engage with NRM Boards/ Groups/ agencies/ Local Government
 - what their core business is
 - what their field of influence is
 - how they engage with their members
 - how funding is obtained
- level of support required or potential for development of partnerships.

4.2 Recommendation 2

Engage enough on-ground Community Support Officers to properly support the work of smaller NGOs undertaking NRM

Barriers addressed:

- Lack of understanding of the relevance of NRM Boards to NGO activities (Barrier 1)
- High levels of bureaucracy of NRM Boards (Barrier 2)
- Poor communication between NRM Boards and NGOs (Barrier 3)
- Lack of volunteer time to engage with NRM Boards at the level required (Barrier 4)
- Difficulty with funding processes (Barrier 5)
- Poor access to NRM staff for administrative and on-ground support (Barrier 6)
- Perceived lack of willingness and 'sincerity' of Boards to engage NGOs (Barrier 7)
- Difficulties with reporting and level of administration required (Barrier 8)
- Poor recognition of the contribution of volunteers (Barrier 9)
- Misalignment of priorities between NGOs and NRM Board (Barrier 10)
- Limited volunteer capacity and no. of active volunteers in smaller NGOs (Barrier 11)
- Lack of Local Government links available for smaller NGOs (Barrier 12)

A significant number of the identified barriers, particularly those for smaller NGOs, could be overcome through the provision of enough sub-regionally based 'Community Support Officers' (CSO). This would enable the work of smaller NGOs to be properly supported. Whether employed by NRM Boards, Local or State government or NGOs, it would be important to ensure these

"We feel our voice is so small. There are too many stakeholders in the region and geographical spread is so great. Our group feels so insignificant that we are disinclined to participate." (AMLR, Int 14)

"Knowledge and understanding of what both parties do - building a relationship. Regular contact is important and if this doesn't happen it creates barriers." (EP, Int 6)

positions are on-going and contact details for the community remain constant, such as phone numbers, email addresses) and job titles. Providing longer term positions would also increase the level of trust and relationship between CSOs, NGOs and the community. The CSO may work with one or multiple NGOs, depending on the size of NGOs in an area. Ideally, the positions would operate with close connections to NRM decision-making such as a 'community consultation committee' (i.e. NRM groups) that reviews the value of projects and the value of engaging and supporting NGOs.

Developing personal relationships between NRM staff or NRM Group members and NGOs is crucial.

The CSOs would play a role in:

- developing on-going relationships with NGOs including regular attendance at meetings and field visits;
- providing a single point of contact for NGOs to NRM Boards;
- fostering linkages between NGOs and acting as a conduit to share on-ground knowledge;
- help NGOs communicate good NRM stories;
- communicating and prioritising Board messages / communications, thus disseminating only relevant and tailored information for the group;
- helping NGOs to 'digest' information;
- representing NGOs on an ongoing basis and enabling them to express concerns from NGOs back to the NRM hierarchy;
- informing NGOs of funding opportunities and assisting with funding applications;
- assisting in reporting;
- assisting in project management;
- providing technical advice and on-ground support;
- ensuring regular contact between NRM Groups and NGOs. The CSO could develop and present projects to NRM Groups.

Value of CSOs to NGOs

"They need to get a contact person who would be our point of contact. The best way we can get information is through face-to-face contact". (N&Y, Int 7)

"[We] need to develop a way in, a key into the bureaucracy on a personal level". (AMLR, Int 29)

"Would be good to have a liaison person going round to each group to work out the Board's relevance to groups and sources of funding". (CCSA, Int 34)

"There are not enough NRM facilitators in immediate contact with on-ground groups and too many at the top of the bureaucracy". (AMLR, Int 6)

"...involvement of NRM staff....They could be sitting on committees and being aware of what groups are doing. Advice from the NRM Board is just as important as funding in terms of helping us deliver incentives to landholders".(AMLR, Int 18)

"The NRM Board sets the regional priorities and the NRM groups [should] set the sub-regional priorities. We'd like help from them to sort out our catchment priorities". (AMLR, Int 15)

There were some positive comments where CSOs and NGO networks are already working:

- Central Hills Green Web (AMLR NRM Region)

"We're part of Green Web, which is an umbrella group for 5 Landcare groups, Adelaide Hills Council, various government agencies and the NRM Board. It covers the western region of the council and we plan and source funding for projects together and have been building a network of connected bushland sites for habitat. It's a very well organised and big project but it's fairly quiet (it has no website).

Our connection through the Green Web means we are more engaged than many groups. Since 2003 we have received funding from envirofund, private donations, but mainly through the Green Web (sources funding from the NRM Board, state Government and NHT)...We have lots of in kind support and have the support of the Green Web Project officer." (AMLR, Int 7).

Dovers (2001, p. 223) has stressed that it is 'unclear how far the scarce resource of voluntary time and effort...can stretch'. Given this key concern and the administrative burden placed on NGOs by short-term finance and reporting procedures and 'lack of basic support' it is vital to view provision of 'basic administrative and human resource capacity' as long-term requirements.

'Greenweb is a network that is developing into quite a lobby group with a community voice. It is referred to as an example as to what Landcare groups could do' (AMLR, Int)

"...some sort of collective or committee or whatever of similar groups that could come together in a discussion and have a voice. This would prevent time wasting. We are just not inclined to go to a meeting with lots of other powerful interests competing for input." (AMLR, Int 14)

- Lap Groups (predominately in SAMDB NRM Region)

"LAP groups are important as a conduit between community and government agencies... LAP is the translator to bridge the gap." (SAMDB, Int 17)

"Aggregate the work of volunteers into a program that seems worthwhile funding- but It's hard for smaller groups to do this. There needs to be a parent body to do this and this role has been lost with the current NRM system." (AMLR, Int 6)

4.3 Recommendation 3

Establish simple communication protocols and clearly articulated expectations

Barriers addressed:

- High levels of bureaucracy of NRM Boards (Barrier 2)
- Poor communication between NRM Boards and NGOs (Barrier 3)
- Lack of volunteer time to engage with NRM Boards at the level required (Barrier 4)
- Perceived lack of willingness and 'sincerity' of Boards to engage NGOs (Barrier 7)
- Misalignment of priorities between NGOs and NRM Board (Barrier 10)

Some barriers with engagement of NGOs in the NRM processes relate to the type and timing of communication, trust, and volunteer availability.

Communication channels need to be clear, open and simplified to break down these barriers and create the level of trust that enables relationships and partnerships to develop.

Key Issues that should be considered in establishing communication protocols include:

NRM Board Communications

- ensuring clear and consistent messages internally and externally of all issues relating to the community (including what NRM is). An important start is ensuring a consistent message is being delivered to community members;

Methods of communication

The best way for NRM Boards, NRM Groups and CCSA to provide information to NGOs was (in order of findings) via email; post; contact person who will distribute; in person; project officers or by phone. However many NGOs stated that a variety of methods is required. Many CCSA member groups had paid employees therefore the e-mail correspondence was as a preferred contact method.

"The newsletters [contain] too much PR stuff. They need to produce something that's at a level in between the long reports and newsletters." (AMLR, Int 30)

"The NRM Group communicates very well electronically but not everyone is willing to wade through all that- it's a cultural and generational issue. Even though our group members are all online and keen they are not inclined to absorb all that electronic material. Ideally we could have NRM people come to our working bees". (AMLR, Int 6)

"There needs to be more public awareness- showing case studies of where NRM has helped groups" (AMLR, Int 13)

- clarifying whose role it is in each Board to respond to community queries/concerns;
- ensuring that the extent of the Board's role is known, particularly that they are more than just funding bodies and sources of information;
- having all information from NRM staff, NRM Group and Board members widely available to the public through a wide variety of relevant media such as local papers, newsletters (on a recurring basis), websites or brochures (e.g. Who is your local NRM Officer?). Information could include contact details, job title, area of expertise and the geographic range they cover.
- Similar information on the geographic range and contact details of NGOs may be highly beneficial for NRM Boards, larger NGOs and Local and State Government;

Forms of Communication

- condensing electronic information. For example instead of sending large documents ask NGOs if they would like these documents or send them links to the web page;

Channels of Communication

- ensuring NRM publications (e.g. Board newsletters) are widely available;
- providing an electronic version of Board newsletters and a fortnightly email bulletin of events that people could sign up to on the website (similar to the Regional Liaison Officer newsletter);
- ensuring a diverse range of methods for communicating with NGOs i.e. mail, website, phone, newsletter, field days, information sessions, public meetings and workshops;
- tapping into established community group communication channels such as community group newsletters and meetings;
- piggy-backing onto pre-organised group activities or events using these as a way to provide information personally in an informal and non-threatening setting;
- engaging with landholders through a relevant medium e.g. the stock journal.
- engaging other groups that undertake conservation activities (e.g. progress associations);
- providing opportunities for similar NGOs to come together and have a collective voice in NRM planning;

Relevance of reports

"They have produced CDs of the reports but nobody is going to read them or use them. We also need reports that are relevant to the local area so you don't have to wade through a huge document to find what is relevant to you". (AMLR, Int 30)

Content of Communications

- providing transparent budgeting, reporting and funding allocation – so NGOs and community can appreciate the financial constraints NRM Boards face;
- providing transparent determination of delivery methods for achieving on-ground outcomes. It needs to be clear to the community why a particular avenue of delivery has been selected. For example by having an open tendering process or clear criteria and selection process;
- providing locally relevant information, or in a locally relevant context, not 'glossy' government speak;
- producing case studies of
- how NRM has helped NGOs to illustrate how NRM is relevant;
- making websites easier to navigate and ensuring key information such as available grants is easy to find;

Ensure communication and consultation timeframes fit with NGOs

The survey responses revealed the average length of time between meetings was every **48 days** (for those who provided a qualitative response). Therefore to ensure a message is received and comments gathered by all members, 6-8 weeks is required. Some NGOs arrange meetings on an 'as required' basis. It would be valuable for NRM Boards to gather this information for their regions.

Timing of communications

- Ensure enough time is given for a group to act (i.e. consider how often they met and whether a designated make decisions on behalf of the group)
- classifying different types of communication that do not need all the same approval. This would provide for rapid communication when necessary.

Relevance of NRM Boards

"[The NRM Board] could be relevant but we have had no contact with them since... the NRM Officer with whom we used to communicate left about 2 years ago." (N&Y, Int 7)

"There is a lot of frustration when we have tried to contact the NRM Board. Lots of the people we contact are not aware of their roles and so you get passed around to different people and it's hard to find the right person to help you." (AMLR, Int 18)

Bureaucratic processes including constraints on communication content and release are a barrier to community engagement. NRM staffs have identified the difficulty in getting rapid, clear communications to the community. Communication protocols need to make it easier to communicate with the community, which may be achieved by developing relationships with NGOs who can communicate on the NRM Board's behalf.

4.4 Recommendation 4

Consultation needs to be purposeful, sincere and timely to ensure it supports collaboration and partnership with community through NGO's

Barriers addressed:

- High levels of bureaucracy of NRM Boards (Barrier 2)
- Poor communication between NRM Boards and NGOs (Barrier 3)
- Lack of volunteer time to engage with the Board at the level required (Barrier 4)
- Perceived lack of willingness and 'sincerity' of Boards to engage NGOs (Barrier 7)
- Poor recognition of the contribution of volunteers (Barrier 9)

Community consultation is required under the *NRM Act* and it is crucial that it is approached with sincerity and a genuine desire to collaborate and partner with the community. It is important to ensure that consultation is taken as an opportunity for NRM Boards to improve, evolve and build relationships rather than simply as an obligatory function.

It is essential to:

- ensure respect of volunteer contributions/efforts is made clear by valuing volunteers opinions, judgments knowledge and technical expertise. It is vital that Boards understand the expertise that may be held within NGOs especially the larger ones;
- consult and develop partnerships with trusted/known NGOs;
- show how, why and where contributions have been used to ensure communities see that consultation is valued as a sincere desire for input; and
- resolve how and why NGOs want to be engaged, by whom, and when to bring in support.

Trust, respect and recognition of volunteers were considered important for effective engagement. The NRM Boards have recognised this and some have explored their options for recognising the value of volunteer contributions. Formal mechanisms for rewarding volunteers have been explored, but building

"Volunteers are tired of giving and not getting anything back, not getting recognition. Employed people don't always see the value of connecting with the people on the ground doing the work."
(SE, Int 9)

relationships, open communications and valuing volunteer judgment and expertise is even more crucial. In most cases, whether NGOs or landholders, volunteers are the people implementing NRM and without them regional NRM activities would be minimal. Volunteers are a vital resource for NRM Boards and many NGOs surveyed mentioned that numbers are declining.

The recognition of volunteer contributions may include:

- provision of a Community Support Officer who can give tailored feedback and spend time listening to volunteers;
- promoting inspirational stories and working with champions to help promote NRM;
- providing volunteer management training for project officers and NRM Group members;
- providing funding for travel to meetings and other planning workshops;
- developing programs that appeal to younger volunteers, e.g. internships and assisting smaller NGOs with this;
- providing volunteer internet stations at regional centers, such as NRM offices and tourist information centers;
- creating opportunities for NGOs to collaborate and share information and experiences, such as forums or chat sites on NRM Board web pages;
- providing NGOs with the opportunity to place their contact details, activities and achievements on the Board website; and
- celebrating volunteer achievements and contributions through opportunities such as volunteer dinners, Christmas parties, awards and general praise.

Over-consultation is a significant barrier to engagement of NGOs by NRM Boards. Many NGOs have been over consulted by different government agencies on numerous NRM-related plans or policies.

"Burnout- we're a bit sick of it all. We've had too much consultation- we're over it!"
(SAMDB, Int 6)

The community seems to perceive consultation as a requirement and not a genuine desire for input. It is vital to show how, where and why input has been taken. Furthermore, many NGOs feel their contribution in these types of forums is not valued.

For the above reasons it is important to resolve how and why NGOs want to be engaged, by whom and find out who they trust, and when to bring in support.

4.5 Recommendation 5

Simplify funding processes so that they are secure, equitable and transparent acknowledging that the administration capacity of NGOs is at times a barrier to successful application and reporting processes

Barriers addressed:

- High levels of bureaucracy of NRM Boards (Barrier 2)
- Poor communication between NRM Boards and NGOs (Barrier 3)
- Difficulty with funding processes (Barrier 5)
- Lack of volunteer time to engage with the Board at the level required (Barrier 4)
- Difficulties with reporting and the level of administration required (Barrier 8)
- Poor recognition of the contribution of volunteers (Barrier 9)

The major issues with funding raised by NGOs were in relation to:

- acknowledging that the administration capacity of NGOs is at times a barrier to successful application and reporting processes;
- availability of funding not being widely known;
- difficulty with the application processes;
- a non-transparent approval process; and
- difficulty with reporting.

Many of these issues are relevant only to smaller NGOs, however, transparency of the funding process is relevant to all.

There is a need to create secure, fair and undemanding funding arrangements, including:

- upfront clarification of types of projects to be funded and procedure for funds distribution in order to reduce the number of unsuccessful funding applications and ensure NGOs have realistic expectations;
- transparent fund allocation through clear procedures for acquiring funding;
- having independent community-based project assessment panels (i.e. NRM Groups);

- clearer and more accessible breakdown of the figures in relation to NRM Board budgets;
- longer term funding. The change to Boards looking at 3 year budgets will be a major improvement but some smaller NGOs may have difficulty in putting together 3 year plans;
- ensuring availability of discretionary funding in NRM Investment Strategies. This allows for a quick response to key issues or new projects that may arise, as well as for smaller NGOs or ad hoc initiatives that would enable NGOs to be reactive and adaptive;
- ensuring that NGOs/community know that funding is available – particularly the discretionary funds that NRM Groups can dispense;
- ensuring that the process of determining service providers, including in-house projects, is clear;
- provision of satisfactory feedback to NGOs describing why they were unsuccessful in securing a grant;
- providing a page on NRM Board websites entitled 'NRM Grants Available for Community Groups' with information on how to apply, with links and application forms;
- have a contact for advice and (possibly) assistance, e.g. CSO & other NRM support staff;
- staff support to simplifying the grant application process so that voluntary community group members can do it more quickly and easily;
- provision of a kit to NGOs, e.g. 'Dummies Guide to Applying for Grants', which details step-by-step how to apply for grants, the language used in applications, etc. Alternatively provide a CSO to aid in funding applications; and

Funding issues

"The NRM Board could have a special budget line (e.g. \$500,000 or whatever is deemed reasonable) for small community groups to have direct access to via a simple process, i.e. one form and a simple assessment. It used to be like this under NHT but it was thought that it wasn't actually achieving any outcomes. We need to simplify the funding application process". (AMLR, Int 6)

'More community input and funding to community groups and not government agencies. There also needs to be greater transparency in how funds are spent'. (EP, Int 13)

"Not all Boards have a clear website with a funding application kit which groups can download." (SAMDB, Int 3)

- better communication of the funding restrictions of NRM Boards – demonstrate the difficulties – rather than expecting the community just to understand and accept them.

4.6 CCSA's Role in Community Engagement

CCSA is recognised as a peak body representing environmental NGOs and as a partner for delivering the goals of the State NRM Plan under the NRM Act. As such it is in a good position to lobby for, liaise with and compile feedback from a range of NGOs throughout the State.

NGOs made a number of suggestions as to how CCSA could assist with engagement in NRM processes. These ranged from CCSA strengthening local contacts in each region, advocating for the environmental movement and lobbying for funding, to acting as a coordinator and facilitator between NRM and NGOs. Some responses such as 'helping groups apply for grants', 'be the local interface with NGOs' and

"State-wide groups need assistance to communicate with all the [NRM] Boards at the same time and in a more upfront way. We need to engage with the Boards simultaneously to avoid expending energy communicating with all the Boards separately". (SAMDB State Int 3)

"Getting out there to present to [NRM] Boards. Put these identified issues in front of Boards. Promote the benefits of NGO engagement and CCSA could promote the key programs that NGO's are running in a region." (State, Int 11)

"[CCSA] can provide that connection between government agencies and the volunteer groups. If they have funds to have a communications person." (SE, Int 9)

'attending group meetings' were suggested, because of the perceived lack of such support from NRM Boards and Groups. The regional focus of NRM Boards and Groups should put them into a better position for this level of engagement.

Issues that are appropriate for CCSA to consider and/or strengthen are to:

- have a strong voice on NRM issues;
- act as a facilitator between NRM and NGOs;
- present to NRM Boards the issues and benefits of NGOs and assist with cross-regional efforts;

Other suggestions made by NGOs for CCSA actions include:

- collecting comments from NGOs and making submissions on their behalf (or let NGOs add their names to submissions so extra weighting) (CCSA does this already for member groups);
- newsletters and information for the general public;
- running media campaigns;
- preparing NRM issues papers;
- providing advice on how to lobby locally;
- promoting NGOs on CCSA website;
- providing help to increase recognition of threatened species in plans;
- providing help to write letters of support to Boards and councils;
- lobbying to ensure agencies (e.g. DEH/ NRM) are appropriately funded;
- having a strong voice on NRM issues/ speak up on local issues;
- acting as a facilitator between NRM and NGOs;
- presenting to NRM Boards the issues and benefits of NGOs;
- reminding NGOs of key NRM dates (e.g. when comments are due, etc);
- reassuring member groups that CCSA is not working for NRM Boards and that the aim is to get member groups more involved in NRM;
- providing expertise and time related to specific projects;
- actively seeking member group input in such reports as the Native Fish Plan; and
- helping set up the NRM Board to speak at one of our meetings.

"This NRM facilitation project sounds excellent. We need someone to collect comments of groups in a centralised way and feed them through to the Boards. We need someone to keep an eye on what all the groups are doing. Lots of groups don't make submissions on their own but would be happy to add their name to what others are doing." (AMLR, Int 13)

"CCSA could provide a great service to groups like ours by making some sort of collective or committee or whatever of similar groups that could come together in a discussion and have a voice. This would prevent time wasting. We are just not inclined to go to a meeting with lots of other powerful interests competing for input. Our voice needs to be heard more in NRM forums." (AMLR, Int 14).

CCSA is in a good position to be of value to a range of NGOs and to the NRM community engagement processes.

5 Conclusion

This research project was designed to determine the dynamics of, and provide recommendations on, the current engagement of non-government organisations in regional natural resources management processes in South Australia. The rationale is that NGOs represent a majority of the community already involved in NRM and are an important sector to engage.

Contemporary approaches to NRM now incorporate a range of participatory, regionally adapted, integrative and collaborative approaches to address increasingly complex, large-scale, natural resource problems. Regional delivery now explicitly aims to enable community participation in both developing and implementing NRM to achieve regional and local outcomes. Therefore effective community engagement by regional Boards is pivotal to achieving NRM, and the effectiveness of this engagement is influential on the outcomes realised.

Despite the benefits of regionalisation there are a range of challenges for this mode of decentralization. Although participatory approaches are welcomed they are not necessarily easily achieved and are also explicitly experimental.

Regional and integrated delivery of NRM is a new process for South Australia with NRM Boards having the role of coordinating, prioritising and arbitrating funds, as well as managing on-ground delivery and a range of other tasks, on tightly imposed timelines and with limited staffing. This may combine to limit the extent and depth of community engagement, though not necessarily the intent. In the three years since formation in 2005, SA Regional NRM Boards have made significant progress in assessing regional priorities, apportioning funds to achieve NRM outcomes and developing methods to engage with the community.

In spite of this, NRM Boards, with the resources available, are unable to fully deliver the environmental outcomes desired to protect the environment. Therefore engagement methods with NGOs have become a critical aspect in contemporary NRM as they represent a large majority of the community already involved in NRM. They have a significant role in providing services, purchasing land, partnering with community, influencing strategic approaches, providing advice, seeking changes in public policy and ensuring accountability. Thus, engaging and building partnerships with NGOs and

their network of members and volunteers is crucial in achieving better environmental outcomes.

This research has determined a range of current barriers, both actual and perceived, that are hindering the engagement of NGOs in SA's NRM processes. Recommendations have been suggested that focus on breaking down these barriers as it is crucial that NGOs are engaged and empowered by regional NRM processes. Consequently there must be an investment in innovative and inclusive structures for NRM in which Boards, NRM Groups, NGOs, government agencies and other stakeholders can establish better relationships and collaborative partnerships to ensure better environmental outcomes.

Knowledge gaps were also identified that should be addressed in order for NRM Boards, Groups and staff to more successfully engage with NGOs and the wider community to ensure greater environmental outcomes. Firstly, more accurately identifying and defining the types of operational NGOs, determining how they are best engaged and, importantly why they should be engaged in NRM processes. This will ensure a greater understanding of the contribution NGOs are making to Regional and State NRM Plan objectives as well as more accurately determining the level of engagement and support required to maximise contributions.

Secondly, it was identified through this research the importance of determining how larger NGOs and NRM Boards can best partner to ensure strategic environmental outcomes.

Finally, it was determined that further research into how NGOs form networks, and on occasion alliances, is worthy of investigation as it may enable similar processes and networks to be supported in South Australian regional NRM processes.

In addition, was established that it is important to conduct further research to more quantitatively analyse the key barriers highlighted in this report.

6 Regional Summaries

The research determined a range of regional differences in five of the regions. Insufficient data was obtained in SAAL and KI for separate analysis.

6.1 Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges NRM Region

NGOs in the Region

There were 36 NGOs interviewed in the AMLR NRM region. On-ground works, education and capacity building were their key activities, and the aims of the NGOs were primarily related to biodiversity, marine and coastal, and water.

Review of NGOs

- Generally NGOs in the region are resourceful, with some professionals in their membership and are effective in obtaining funding.
- Lots of well-organised and fairly self-sufficient NGOs.
- Some catchment groups have been made redundant because of changes to funding arrangements, which means they no longer receive ongoing funding. Their role as a facilitator of community on-ground activities has been replaced by the other bodies.
- More active coastal groups in this region than others.
- Urban groups may be less aware of NRM because they do not have the same social networks as rural people and are less likely to have stewardship over the land.
- NGOs in the region are more inclined to communicate electronically
- There is a greater range of funding bodies in the region for NGOs to choose from, especially for urban groups.
- Funding bodies are more geographically accessible.

Barriers to Engagement

- Perceived that the NRM Board wants to have the same set-up for all NGOs.
- Some NGOs feel that they do not fit the NRM Board's criteria for a community group and therefore will not be funded.
- Small NGOs are less inclined to be engaged with the NRM Board because they can get funding elsewhere.
- Many NGOs believe the NRM Board is not aware of what is being done on the ground.
- Information received from the NRM Board is seen as a public relations exercise rather than practical or useful.
- Provision of information in regards to available grants has frequently been out-of-date or irrelevant.

- Not knowing who to contact within the NRM organisation and being referred to numerous people before finding someone who can help.
- Issues with NRM staff being slow to respond to NGOs requests for information or assistance.
- NRM staff members are not always approachable.
- Project officers are overstretched because they are now expected to do a lot more in terms of enforcement and compliance.
- A number of NGOs commented that they felt NRM Boards were 'taking over' their NGOs and work.

Feedback on the Community Consultation Process for the Draft NRM Plan

- One group did not want to participate in the workshops because they felt their voice would not be heard and were intimidated by the diverse range of influential stakeholders involved.
- Felt that NRM planning workshops were held at inconvenient locations for many NGOs.
- Some participants found the workshops boring.
- At the workshops, there were assumptions made about the level of knowledge of participants and many people found it difficult to relate discussions back to their activities.
- NGOs that have links with NRM contacts were not necessarily invited to the workshops.
- One group felt that the NRM Board was just going through the motions of community consultation without looking to have any real input from the community.
- Long-running NGOs are disillusioned with government planning processes because they do not believe there is enough funding to translate these processes into on-the-ground outcomes.
- Plans are seen as empty promises with not enough investment in their implementation.
- Many people have a copy of the Draft NRM Plan but simply do not have time to read and absorb it, let alone provide feedback on the Plan.
- One group felt that the Draft NRM Plan does not properly address the issue of urban development, which is crucial for conservation.
- Another group felt the Draft NRM Plan portrays environmental problems in their area as worse than they actually are.

6.2 Eyre Peninsula NRM Region

NGOs in the Region

Seventeen NGOs were interviewed. On-ground works, protection, education and capacity building were the key activities and the aims of the NGOs are primarily related to biodiversity, marine and coastal, and water.

Review of NGOs

- The Landcare movement had been particularly strong in the region. Landcare was the main type of community group and people identified with this model.
- Many Landcare groups are now inactive or have reformed since the NRM changes.
- More group activity on the east coast and southern part of the region.
- Activity of NGOs on the west coast is currently ad hoc and many NGOs inactive at the moment.
- Not many NGOs in the Whyalla area.

Barriers to Engagement in NRM

There were two key barriers: perceived image of the NRM Board and lack of support for Landcare.

The NRM Board's Image

- Widespread dissatisfaction and disillusionment with NRM throughout the region.
- Only a small number of NGOs engaged with NRM and have access to funding.
- The majorities of NGOs feel as though they are working in isolation and are unhappy with the current NRM system.
- NRM is starting to be seen as an 'offshoot' of PIRSA because of the shared staff and because NRM is seen to support PIRSA projects rather than community driven projects.
- Widespread perception that little money is going to on-ground projects.

Lack of Support for Landcare

- Most Landcare groups are becoming inactive as a result of lack of funding and on-the-ground support to facilitate projects.
- People are upset that the support network of Landcare officers has been taken away because they used to provide advice, technical expertise, help with planning and motivate NGOs for projects.
- Tumby Bay District Council has funded a Landcare Officer itself because they did not have an officer available locally to support landholders.

Other Barriers

- Grant application process and associated reporting discourages NGOs from applying for funding.

- Low morale in drought conditions means people are less concerned with NRM.
- Distance is a major barrier in the region - travel time and fuel costs are major restrictions on volunteer activity.

6.3 Northern and Yorke NRM Region

NGOs in the Region

There were 19 NGOs interviewed in the N&Y NRM Region. Protection, on-ground works, and education and capacity building were the key activities and the aims of the NGOs are primarily related to biodiversity, and marine and coastal.

Review of NGOs

- Great diversity of group types and sizes in the region.
- Lots of progress associations on Yorke Peninsula – many undertake conservation activities of some sort.
- A significant number of NGOs receive the NRM Board's newsletter.

Barriers to Engagement

- Fewer barriers identified and fewer negative perceptions of the NRM Board than in some other regions.
- Hard to generalise about barriers to engagement across the region because of the diversity of NGOs and different levels of engagement.
- Some types of NGOs are less engaged, e.g. progress associations and Friends of Parks groups.
- Resentment about the lack of secure funding for NGOs.
- Some NGOs are still confused about the role of the NRM Board in that they do not realise it has taken over the functions of the previous soil Boards and pest control Boards.
- Distance can be a barrier with volunteers at the edges of the region receiving less support and finding it more difficult to have personal contact with NRM staff.
- One group felt that because they have a different model of community group they are not recognised by the NRM Board.
- One group feels that some of their achievements in regard to their social and economic activities go unrecognised and unsupported because they are beyond the scope of the NRM Board's priorities.

6.4 SA Murray Darling Basin NRM Region

NGOs in the Region

Of the 23 NGOs surveyed in the SAMDB NRM Region on-ground works, protection, education and capacity building were the key activities and the aims of the NGOs are primarily related to biodiversity and water.

Review of NGOs

- LAP groups and catchment groups facilitate the work of smaller NGOs and generally have excellent working relationships with the NRM Board.
- The LAP groups have a large number of volunteers and have links with a significant network of landholders.
- A 'Care team' is being put together that will be composed of LAP project officers. Five different teams will be working on a particular issue, e.g. water, land and air.
- There are lots of wetland monitoring groups in the region, which are supported by the LAP groups.
- There are few Landcare groups in the Riverland area but there are some in the eastern hills area.
- Strong presence of Statewide and/or National NGOs, e.g. Murray Darling Association, River Murray Urban Users Committee, etc.

Barriers to Engagement

- NRM is seen to have an overly political and bureaucratic organisational culture.
- LAP groups and catchment groups in the region play an important role as a conduit between the community and the NRM Board and they are in a better position than NRM Groups to do this because they have paid staff and resources.
- Some LAP groups feel they are not listened to and would like to have more input into decision-making with regards to funding allocation.
- Many landholders are defensive when it comes to the NRM Board and see it as threatening because of its compliance role.
- Funding cuts to LAP groups mean fewer ongoing project officers to support NGOs.
- Drought is affecting the region and some NGOs/landholders need a higher level of consultation on sensitive issues that affect their livelihoods.

6.5 South East NRM Region

NGOs in the Region

There were 14 NGOs interviewed in the SE. On-ground works, protection, education and capacity building were the key activities and the aims of the NGOs are primarily related to biodiversity and marine and coastal.

Review of NGOs

- There are very few NGOs in the region.
- There are some special interest NGOs, particularly those concerned with birds.
- Field naturalist groups and Friends' groups are the dominant group types.

- Most NGOs tend to undertake local or small-scale projects/activities and do not require much funding.

Barriers to Engagement

- Lack of awareness and understanding of NRM bodies and their roles.
- Lack of helpful information regarding NRM.
- The NRM Board website provides very little useful information to NGOs.
- Some NGOs are small and composed of older and less physically active members.
- Some group activities relate primarily to environmental monitoring rather than on-ground projects.
- Concern about lack of investment in protecting Aboriginal sites in coastal areas.
- Not enough personal contact between NRM people and volunteers on the ground.
- Friends' groups do not see NRM as relevant to their activities on public land.

6.6 SA Arid Lands NRM Region

There were only three NGOs surveyed in this region, which is insufficient for a separate regional analysis.

6.7 Kangaroo Island NRM Region

There were only two CCSA member groups surveyed on Kangaroo Island, which is insufficient for a separate regional analysis.

6.8 Alinytjara Wilurara NRM Region

There were no NGOs interviewed in this region.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1. Survey Schedule: NRM Structured Interview Questions for NGOs

Questions for the survey instrument were developed by the Conservation Council of South Australia in consultation with the NGO NRM Facilitator Reference Group and CCSA staff. The questions asked were:

Section A: Group Details

1. Are you a social or environmental organisation?
 - If environmental are you (some will be multiple)
 - Protection (define)
 - On-ground works
 - Educational (capacity building)
 - Activism
 - Lobbying
 - If yes, proceed with Section A questions and ask the first NRM questions as the group may have some NGO involvement
2. Who is the best person to contact for information on your group
 - to get information to your members
 - who liaises with the CCSA Council? (only if a member group)
3. What is the best method of contacting that person/s - phone, e-mail, fax, and letter?
4. Number of members
 - Paid membership
 - Meetings/active membership
5. How does the group communicate with its members?
6. Length of operation
7. Incorporated?
8. Programs of Activity
 - a. Do the aims of your group relate to
 - Energy
 - Water
 - Marine & Coastal
 - Planning & Urban Development
 - Biodiversity

b. Do you undertake activities (e.g. workshops, talks) and/or on-ground works (e.g. fencing, weeding)?

9. Funding

- Has the group received funding?
- Where has the funding come from?

10. Paid staff?

11. What is the best way for NRM Boards, Groups and CCSA to provide information to the group?

12. How aware is the group of the CCSA, its role and activities?

(On a scale of 0=no understanding to 10=excellent understanding)

13. What other NGOs do you know of in the region? - networks/links with these groups?

Section B: Knowledge of NRM

1. What understanding does the group (in general) have of:

- State NRM plan/Regional NRM Plans
- Regional NRM Boards and Groups and roles?
 - a) unaware;
 - b) aware but don't know about them;
 - c) aware and have been involved in consultation;
 - d) aware and have been involved in extensive consultation

2. How would you like to work with the NRM Board and Groups?

What do you think their relevance to your group?

Section C: Engagement in NRM/History of interaction

1. Has the group had involvement with regional NRM?

- Funding – directly from an NRM Board
- Planning/consultation – at what stage?
- Has your group made a submission to any NRM policy or planning documents released for community consultation?
- With who (previous Boards/current; other agencies; local government; regional development Boards)?
- Delivery -on-ground works/activities?
- What region/s does your organisation operate in (If applicable)?

2. What does the group see as the main barriers to engagement with the NRM Boards/Groups?
3. What strategies could help overcome these barriers and increase engagement?
 - What can the Board do?
 - What can your group do?
 - What can CCSA do?
 - What support does your group need?

Section D: Communications - (For CCSA members)

1. What benefits do they see being involved with CCSA?
2. How do you feel CCSA membership could be further enhanced?

IF APPLICABLE ONLY

Section E: Encountering Barriers with the Native Vegetation Legislation

1. Has your group found there has been sufficient investment in enacting the legislation?
2. Has your group been enabled or disabled by the new legislation?
3. Are there examples of good native vegetation management in your local area?

In the future there will be further surveys of CCSA member groups to further collate information relating to these questions. Would your member group be interested in being involved further in such discussions?

Y/N

IF APPLICABLE ONLY

Section F: Threatened Species

1. Has your group encountered barriers in accessing the right people with regards to threatened species?
2. Has your group been consulted on policy?
3. Any comments you wish to make on the EPBC Act?

Section G: Additional Comments from Conservation Group

Final comment: Do you want us to contact your organisation with further information in your areas of interest/commonality?

Thankyou for participating

8.2 Appendix 2. Conservation Council of South Australia Member Groups,

April 2008

Anthropological Society	Assn of South East Field Naturalists Societies
Australian Conservation Foundation	Sustainable Population Australia SA Branch
Bicycle Institute of South Australia	Bird Care & Conservation Society
Civic Trust of SA	Field Naturalists Society of SA
Eco-Action Kangaroo Island	Marine Life Society of SA
Mount Barker District Environment Assn	National Trust of South Australia
Nature Conservation Society of SA	North East Hills Environment Conservation Assn
People for Public Transport SA	Scientific Expedition Group
Australian Plants Society (SA Region)	South Australian Herpetology Group
Soil Association of South Australia	Birds SA (SA Ornithological Assn)
Spencer Gulf Environmental Alliance	St Agnes Bushwalking & Natural History Club
Toyota Landcruiser Club of Australia (SA)	Urban Ecology Australia
The Wilderness Society (SA Branch)	Fndtn for Australia's Most Endangered Species
Echidna Care	Institute for Earth Education
Walking SA	Royal Zoological Society of SA
Friends of Willunga Basin	Economic Reform Australia (SA Division)
Permaculture Association of SA	Trees For Life
Natural History Society of South Australia	Orienteering Association of South Australia
Gawler Environment and Heritage Assn	Australian Institute of Landscape Architects
People's Environment Protection Alliance	Western Adelaide Coastal Residents' Assn
SA Genetic Food Information Network	Animal Liberation (SA)
Greening Australia SA Limited	Vegetarian Society of SA
Friends of Parks	Adelaide Bush Walkers Incorporated
Native Fish Australia (SA)	Whale & Dolphin Conservation Society
Southern Eco-Alliance	Fishers for Conservation
Aldinga Bay Coastcare	Vegetarian Action

8.3 Appendix 3. Results of Interviews

This section presents the survey statistics.

Survey: Section A

1. For environmental organisations indicate the key areas of interest/endeavour.

Note that some will have given multiple responses.

	SAMDB	SE	AMLR	NY	EP	SAAL	KI	Statewide	TOTAL
Protection	19	10	12	16	12	3	1	14	87
On-ground works	21	11	32	14	16	3	2	13	112
Education/capacity building	17	5	22	12	11	2		14	85
Activism	2	0	4	3	0	0	1	6	16
Lobbying	7	2	14	3	4	1	1	20	52

The key endeavour of NGOs was on-ground works, followed by environmental protection, and education/capacity building. Once CCSA member groups were included in the results, lobbying and activism became more prominent amongst statewide NGOs.

2. Who is the best person to contact for information on your group

- **To get information to your members**

No information collated

3. What is the best method for contacting that person/s-phone, e-mail, fax and letter?

No information collated

4. Number of Members

- **Paid membership?**

The number interviewed represented approximately **106,995** members (some of these are not paid memberships in the traditional sense). Several individual statewide or national NGOs had tens of thousands of members such as the Royal Zoological Society, Trees for life and The Wilderness Society.

- **Meetings/active membership?**

Those that put a quantitative response to this question meet or correspond with each other on average every 48 days. There were a few qualitative responses to the frequency of meetings (e.g. 'as required') so not too much can be derived from the responses.

Based on those that specified the difference between paid and active membership there is, on average, about 36.5% active members within NGOs.

• **How does the group communicate with its members**

	SAMDB	SE	AMLR	NY	EP	SAAL	Statewide	TOTAL
Email	16	8	18	9	8	2	2	63
Post	8	4	2	0	2	0	1	17
Phone	12	7	8	8	10	0	1	46
In person	2	4	8	6	3	1	0	24
Newsletter	6	3	8	9	3	0	1	30

Note, this data does not include CCSA member groups (refer to Question 10). NGOs primarily contact their members via e-mail, followed by phone, newsletter, in person and via the post.

5. Length of operation (all NGOs surveyed)

Amongst the NGOs surveyed there was 2,817 years of experience. Based on the type of group the average length of operation was:

- Coastcare average length operation is 12.3 years
- Friends of parks 17.7 years
- Landcare 13.6 yrs
- Umbrella/peak NGOs 22.89 years
- Service clubs/ progress associations 47.8 years
- Special interest NGOs 30.9 yrs

6. Incorporated

INCORPORATION	yes	(incorporated under another banner)	no
AMLR	19	3	4
EP	8	4	3
NY	7	4	7
SAMDB	17	3	2
SE	7	2	3
SAAL	0	3	0
KI	2	0	0
Statewide	26	1	0

7. Programs of Activity

a. Do the aims of your group relate to Energy, Water, Marine & Coastal, Planning & Urban Development and/or Biodiversity

Note, respondents provided multiple answers to this question if it was applicable to their group aims.

	SAMDB	SE	AMLR	NY	EP	SAAL	KI	Statewide	TOTAL
energy	0	1	3	1	0	0	1	6	12
water	13	1	11	2	5	1	2	11	46
marine/ coastal	2	5	11	7	7	0	2	7	41
urban planning	1	1	9	2	0	0	2	9	24
biodiversity	20	12	30	14	13	3	2	21	115
(land management)			1	1	1			1	4

Biodiversity is the main area of interest followed by water, and marine and coastal. Other aspects such as health and mining were also mentioned but are not covered by categories in survey and thus have not been included in the table.

7b. Do you undertake activities (e.g. workshops, talks) and/or on-ground works (e.g. fencing, weeding)?

Most NGOs undertake predominantly on-ground activities with the occasional educational component. Only seven NGOs surveyed (6%) said they had no involvement with on-ground activities. About 60% also undertook workshops and talks. These findings were consistent across the regions.

Other activities mentioned by NGOs included working with schools, fauna/ bird surveys, research, monitoring, field days, conferences, displays and stalls, etc.

The peak/over-arching NGOs did less on-ground works and mostly undertook talks and workshops, and provision of information services to others.

8. Funding

- **Has the group received funding?**
- **Where has the funding come from?**

119 NGOs (85%) said they had received funding (about five NGOs took the opportunity to point out that this had not been for a long time), whilst only 16 NGOs (11%) had never

received funding from any source. Note that some NGOs regarded funding to include sales and memberships while others did not.

CCSA member groups tended to be more autonomous relying on subscriptions, donations and sales of their NGOs own products (such as seeds, tours, merchandise).

Most common sources of funding were (note many NGOs reported multiple sources of funding):

Source of funding	Number of Responses
NRM	42
Envirofund	29
Membership/ subscriptions	28
NHT	27
Council	21
DEH	17
Corporate sponsorship/ grants/ funds	14
State	11
Federal	11
Donations	11
Fundraising	9
Small equipment grants	8
Coastcare	7
Urban Forests/ Million Trees program	6
Own commercial endeavours (e.g. selling seeds, reveg, tours, CO2 offsets, merchandise)	6
NLP	4
NAP	4
Old Catchment Water Management Boards	3
LAP	3
WWF	2
Landcare Australia	2
Donations of time by others	2
Community Water Grants	2

Note that the figures for NRM, NHT, NAP and NLP may be inaccurate in that many NGOs would be unaware of the initial source of funding. Those stating DEH were predominately Friends of Parks groups.

Most funding is coming from NRM, NHT, NAP, NLP and Envirofund. Also a large proportion of NGOs seem to get funding from memberships, donations, subscriptions, fundraising and sponsorship.

9. Paid staff?

Over 50% of the NGOs surveyed in the SAMDB had paid staff. The NGOs surveyed at a statewide level all had paid staff. All the other regions had less than 17% paid staff.

A summary of paid staff by NGO category follows:

- No Friends of Park groups had paid staff, but some commented they had direct support from DEH.
- Five Landcare groups had paid staff, but others pointed out that they used to have paid staff and no longer do due to cut backs.
- No Service Clubs/ Progress Associations surveyed had paid staff.
- Six Special interest NGOs surveyed had paid staff
- Sixteen (all but one) over-arching NGOs said they had paid staff.
- No Coastcare groups surveyed (5 respondents) had paid staff.
- Of the other unspecified group categories 7 of 33 had paid staff (at least 2 commented that they used to have paid staff but no longer do due to cutbacks)

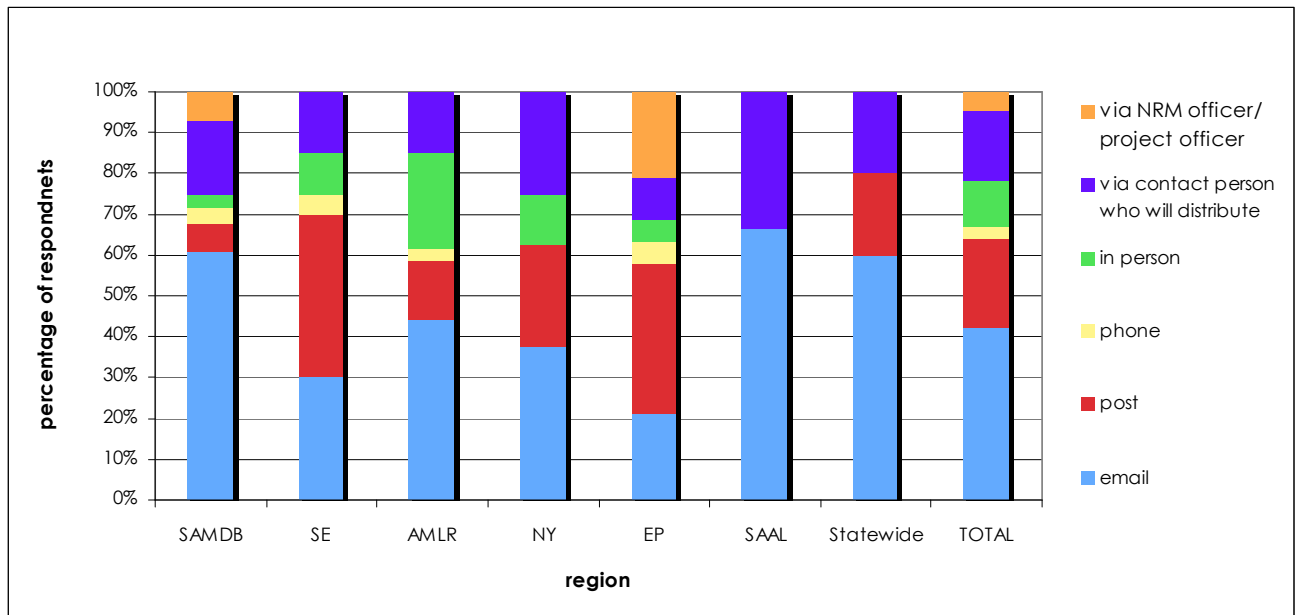
A summary of paid staff by NGOs in each NRM region follows:

	Staff	No staff
AMLR	4	32
EP	1	16
NY	3	16
SAMDB	12	11
SE	0	14
SAAL	0	3
KI	0	2
Statewide	15	11

10. What is the best way for NRM Boards, Groups and CCSA to provide information to the group (Nb some NGOs provided multiple answers)?

	SAMDB	SE	AMLR	NY	EP	SAAL	KI	Statewide	TOTAL
email	17	6	15	10	4	2	2	25	81
post	2	10	5	6	7	0	0	3	33
phone	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	4
in person	1	2	8	3	1	0	0	1	16
via contact person who will distribute	5	3	5	6	2	1	0	1	23
via NRM officer/project officer	2	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	6

Preferred method of correspondence by groups within each region



11. How aware is the group of the CCSA, its role and activities?

(On a Scale of 0= no understanding to 10= excellent)

Including member groups – AVERAGE overall all NGOs=5.36

	Members	Non members
AMLR	7.6	4.6
NY	5	4.4
SE	NA	3.8
EP	NA	4.4
SAMDB	NA	5
SAAL	NA	6.33
KI	8	NA
Statewide	7.56	4.3
AVERAGE	6.25	4.76

By group type (CCSA members only)

Service clubs 7

Special interest NGOs 6.8

Friends of parks 7

Peak NGOs 6.5

Other 7.3

CCSA does not have a profile in rural/regional areas. Greening Australia and Trees for Life (FTL) seem to be the most well known conservation organisations amongst NGOs throughout the State. Also NGOs like Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) and Green Corps Teams are becoming more prevalent – probably because people are looking for more hands-on-support, which these organisations provide.

12. What other NGOs do you know of in the region?

What are your networks/links with these groups?

The responses to this question were somewhat difficult to analyse as it appears, from the associated comments, that some respondents mentioned what groups they knew and others answered what groups they worked with.

This was asked to identify other NGOs in the region and look at group interactions.

- 63 respondents listed they work or network with a support group (or peak group) such as LAP, Local council, CVA, TFL, Greening Australia, Nature Conservation Society of SA (NCSSA), Friends of Parks Inc, etc.
- 55 respondents listed local NGOs such as adjoining Landcare/ Friends of Parks groups.
- 12 respondents listed a specialist group such as wildlife rescue NGOs, bird NGOs, fauna NGOs etc.

NGOs people affiliate with or know of: -

AMLR – Trees For Life (TFL) was very prominent with 7 people listing them. Also noted were Threatened Plant Action Group (TPAG), Friends of Parks (FoP), Greening Australia, Nature Conservation Society of South Australia (NCSSA), Urban Forests, various councils and South Para Biodiversity Project. NGOs like CVA, Green Corp and Youth Conservation Corps were also mentioned.

Statewide – many statewide NGOs mentioned Australian or statewide based organisations such as FoP, Land and Water Australia, Field Naturalists, NCSSA, Landcare Australia, Threatened Species Network (TSN), Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and Greening Australia.

NY – Greening Australia and Minlaton Landcare Group were mentioned often. Grass NGOs (e.g. Mid North Grasslands Working Group, Native Grasses Resources Group), TFL and NCSSA were also mentioned.

SAMDB – LAPs were by far the most common group that others associated with. Also DEH (esp. Bush Management Advisors), FoP, Greening Australia, TFL, CVA and Catchment groups were mentioned frequently. The NRM Boards appeared as a group people interact with in the MDB more than any other region (probably due to the high proportion of paid staff meaning they interact directly with the NRM Board). There was also mention of Waterwatch and water monitoring groups.

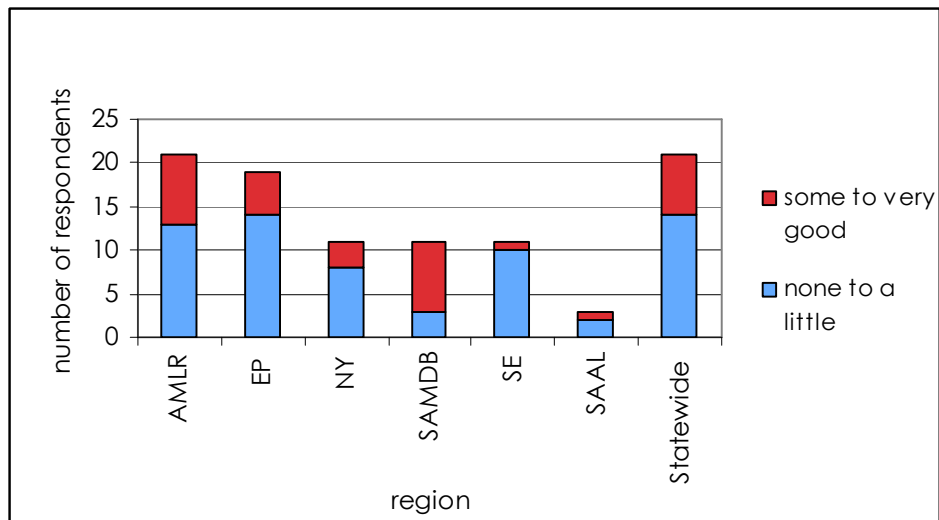
KI – only two groups were surveyed however both mentioned Landcare groups as groups they knew.

Many respondents from SAAL, SE and EP stated that they did not interact with any NGOs, probably because of distance to the nearest active group, and isolation.

Section B: Knowledge of NRM

1. What understanding does the group (in general) have of:

- **State NRM Plan/Regional NRM Plans**
- **Regional Knowledge of NRM Plans**



Most NGOs stated that their knowledge ranged from none to a little (this includes responses such as 'not much', 'very little', 'none', 'a little', 'limited' 'fairly low' 'haven't seen plans').

The only region where this was an exception was the SAMDB where more people indicated they had some to a very good knowledge (this category has included responses such as 'some', 'aware', 'moderate', 'very good'. Again the trend in the SAMDB could be attributed to the level of paid staff directly involved in NRM.

Most people did not specify any difference in the understanding of the state vs. regional plans. However, 12 NGOs did make this distinction and all of these said their knowledge of the regional plans was better. Some of these NGOs had a negative perception of the state plan and its relevance. One of the NGOs stated their involvement in the development of plans had been better in NSW and Vic. Some people commented throughout the survey that they had not been invited to attend planning workshops.

What understanding does the group (in general) have of:

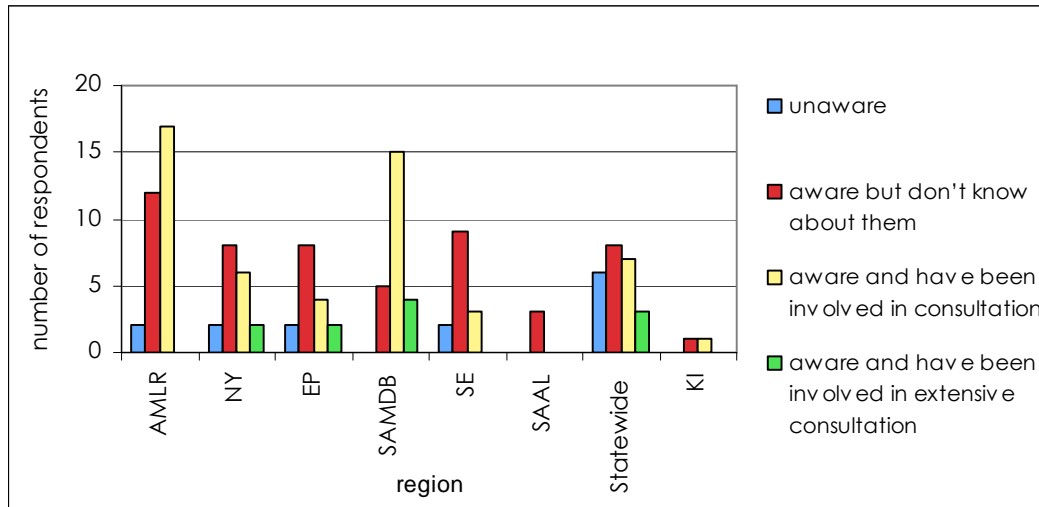
Regional NRM Boards and Groups and roles?

- b. **unaware;**
- c. **aware but don't know about them;**
- d. **aware and have been involved in consultation;**

e. aware and have been involved in extensive consultation

By region

Awareness and level of consultation with NRM by region

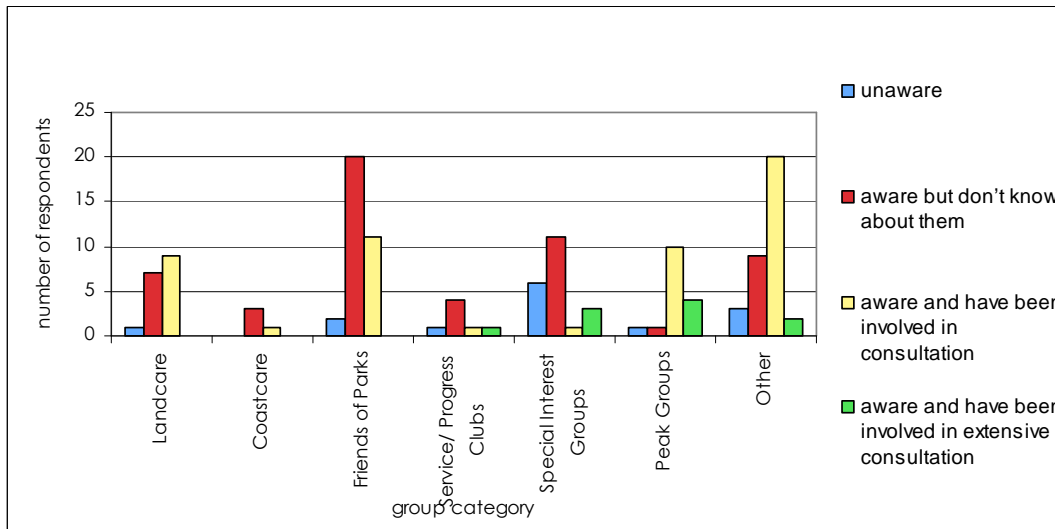


From this information it would appear that the AMLR and SAMDB had greater awareness about the NRM Board and Groups and their roles.

By group type

Peak NGOs seem to have greater awareness followed by Landcare groups and Friends of Parks. Coastcare and Progress Associations do not have great awareness.

Awareness and level of consultation by group type



2. How would you like to work with the NRM Board and Groups? What do you think their relevance is to your group?

The responses were too qualitative and varied to provide a quantitative analysis beyond what is mentioned below although key word searches were used to group responses. The relevance of NRM to NGOs is mentioned in the main text of this report.

RESPONSES:

The main relevance groups perceived the NRM Board to have was as a funding source, with 22 survey respondents specifying this, as well as provision of technical advice, support and guidance for on-ground works (10 respondents).

Ten respondents also felt the Board had a relevant role in keeping the community aware of funding opportunities and what the Board was up to as well as advertising other opportunities for groups. Respondents also thought that Boards should share information genuinely, exchange information and be consulted.

Four groups felt the Board had a role to play in assisting with project management and planning for their groups on-ground-works, and two respondents felt the Board's relevance included providing support in grant application writing and other paperwork. This is a common theme throughout the survey and similar comments appear elsewhere.

Seven respondents felt the Board should recognise group activities and have a role in understanding what groups on-the-ground are doing, and a greater understanding of NGOs and volunteers and issues they are facing. This includes recognising the value of community group and volunteer input, as well as recognising that such groups have knowledge and expertise that the Board can capitalise on. One group stated this in another way saying they were the conduit between the Board and the grass-root level.

Two respondents indicated they would like the Board to provide a single contact point (one stop shop) instead of being shuffled from person to person to find appropriate information, another respondent said this in another way and felt the Board was relevant in providing information that would allow them to work out who to contact and how to access support. These kind of comments appear elsewhere in the survey and appears to be a common theme.

Thirteen respondents said the Board had little or no relevance to their community group (even though all groups are involved with managing natural resources). Some of these see themselves as autonomous and others affiliated with the Friends of Parks system stated they received all their support through DEH so saw little relevance and linkages with the Board. Another said they would like to sever ties with the Board but could not because needed NRM for funding.

On the flipside eleven respondents said they saw the Board as highly relevant and would like to form ties with their group.

Another five did not know enough about the Board to determine their relevance or how they would like to work together.

Only two mentioned that they would like to work with the Board on bigger picture/ regional level issues. This theme appears elsewhere in the survey with groups who prefer to focus on working on their patch and getting support for this work rather than in getting involved in bigger picture issues.

Three groups said they would like to have more input into plans and priorities and three groups said they would like to work with the Boards collaboratively/ form partnerships

Two groups would like stronger links with Local council.

Other isolated comments included:

- Community groups having a greater role;
- Community groups being utilised to promote natural resources in the region;
- NRM Boards helping with hands-on stuff,
- The Board's role in setting policy direction;
- The Board being the catalyst for on-ground projects;
- The possibility of joint education projects;
- The Boards role in getting things done;
- Being no need for a relationship as the Board's role is to provide funding;
- Relevance of two way communication; and
- Only one respondent stated they are more interested in working on the policy surrounding NRM (e.g. issues with divisions into regions in relation to marine issues) rather than working directly with the Board.

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

Community groups see the role and relevance of the Board primarily as funding bodies and a source of technical advice and support in implementing their individual projects. Many groups see the Boards as highly relevant. Those affiliated with DEH Friends of Parks often did not mention the relevance of the Board. Community groups also want assistance with grant applications and paperwork.

Section C Engagement in NRM/History of Interaction

1. Has the group had involvement with regional NRM?

- **Funding – directly from an NRM Board**

Total number of NGOs surveyed (some NGOs were unsure)

FUNDING	FROM NRM DIRECT	
	yes	no
AMLR	14	16
EP	6	9
NY	8	9
SE	0	14
SAMDB	8	12
SAAL	1	2
Statewide	9	14
KI	0	2
Total	38	74

There appeared to be no correlation between NGOs who received funding direct from the NRM Boards and their attitudes towards the NRM Boards. However this was difficult to analyse and a quantitative study could be designed to investigate whether there is any connection between receipt of funding and perceptions of NRM.

- **Planning/Consultation – at what stage?**

NGOs and involvement in planning (a number of NGOs did not respond to this question)

	yes	no
AMLR	20	11
EP	2	13
NY	5	12
SAAL	0	3
SAMDB	14	4
SE	0	12
Statewide	6	8
KI	0	0
Total	47	63

The AMLR and SAMDB have had a greater level of consultation and involvement in planning. This may be because the AMLR has completed its NRM Plan and NGOs in the SAMDB Region have a high proportion of paid staff. The statewide NGOs also tended to be relatively aware. There are plenty of planning opportunities that the other regions could have been engaged with, including development of the interim plans, but despite this the number participating was very low.

The low participation may be because some NGOs suggested they were more interested in their local patch than broader NRM issues and they do not have time to get involved at that level.

- **Has your group made a submission to any NRM policy or planning documents released for community consultation?**

NGOs response to submissions on NRM Policy or Planning Document

(A number of NGOs did not respond to this question)

	yes	no
AMLR	9	18
EP	1	15
NY	3	11
SAAL	0	2
SAMDB	7	8
SE	1	11
Statewide	3	11
KI	0	0
Total	24	76

- **With who (previous Boards/current; other agencies; local government; regional development Boards)?**

No analysis completed as responses incomplete.

- **Delivery-on-ground works/activities?**

No analysis completed as responses incomplete.

- **What region /s does your organisation operate in (if applicable)**

No analysis completed as responses incomplete

2. What does the group see as the main barriers to engagement with the NRM Boards/Groups?

The barriers mentioned were very varied and they have been collated as best as possible. 110 NGOs mentioned at least one barrier (many NGOs mentioned several barriers), 21 NGOs said there were no barriers, five were unsure and four did not respond to this question. Six NGOs offered positive praise.

The responses to barriers are listed below in order of frequency:

Barriers	Non -members	CCSA Member groups	TOTAL
No barriers to engagement	19	2	21
Communication (lack of and poor)	16	4	20
Top heavy/ admin/ bureaucracy	15	5	20
Time of volunteers	11	7	18
Distance/ geographic isolation	9	1	10
Who to contact	6	4	10
Lack funding (especially on-ground works)	9		9
Lack recognition & understanding of volunteers/ NGOs	5	4	9
Lack NRM willingness/ sincerity	8		8
Funding uncertainty	7		7
Group difficulty with grants/ paperwork	6	1	7
Irrelevance	2	5	7
Lack officers	6		6
Pressure on project officers	5	1	6
Priorities matching	5	1	6
Too big communication	3	2	5
Unsure	5		5
Lack/ ageing volunteers	4		4
Customer service	4		4
Lack understanding what NRM is, what do/ roles	2	2	4
No response to question	3	1	4
Lack group interest/ interested their patch only	3		3
Diversity amongst NGOs and region	3		3
Lack experience/ knowledge NRM staff	1	2	3
Competing interests	2		2
Government mistrust	2		2
Staff turnover	2		2
Lack feedback and community not listened to	2		2
Expense to attend meetings and engage in NRM	1	1	2
NRM needs time to fit in/ like starting networks from scratch	1	1	2
Regional focus as a barrier	1	1	2
Not true consultation (involved too late in the process)		2	2
Industry engagement	1		1
Advice out of date	1		1
Duplicating what NGOs already doing	1		1

Levies	1		1
Not community driven	1		1
Public perception of NRM	1		1
Wasting money on consultants/ external experts	1		1
Board taking over NGOs	1		1
Transparency - providing specific information on how NRM Board spend funding	1		1
Lack of stakeholder representation		1	1
NRM Inwards looking		1	1
terminology		1	1

3. What strategies could help overcome these barriers and increase engagement?

General comments to increase engagement and overcome barriers (those in bold were frequent responses):

- **Come and talk to NGOs/ 1:1 interaction/ get out in the field to find out what is going on in the 'real' world/ send group members to community group meetings (Many NGOs mentioned this and was the key recommendation)**
- **Greater interaction between NRM Board and NGOs**
- **Keep communication open/ better communication**
- **Better acknowledgement of community achievements**
- **Help out with group administration**
- **Reduce paperwork and grant application processes (especially for smaller NGOs)**
- **More local NRM facilitators/ Coastcare officers (ideally permanent) – personal contact with NGOs makes it easier – more local level and ongoing officers**
- **Discretionary funding for smaller NGOs**
- **Provide more information on how the NRM Board can help NGOs**
- **Publications are too 'glossy'/ 'glitzy', less PR more real information**
- **Cut down on red tape and cut back on 'talk fests' so things move quicker and actually happen on-ground**
- **Rethink the reporting and grant frameworks/ make them more streamlined**
- **More simplified documents**
- Involvement of NRM staff - could be sitting on committees and being aware of what NGOs doing
- Engage with landholders through media that is relevant to NGOs (e.g. Stock Journal)
- Incentives for Local council and use council to disseminate funding

- More funding specifically for OGW (less bureaucracy)
- Coastal issues should be addressed nationally
- Ensure funding continuity
- Find a way to tap into individual interests of volunteers and utilise their expertise
- Support NGOs that get tangible results
- Statewide NGOs need some way of communicating with the NRM Board
- Invite locals/ NGOs to be on committees, etc
- Condensed version of plan that is more digestible
- Get message out more widely (stop preaching to the converted)/ more publicity (but not 'government speak' need 'general interest stuff')
- Have defined channels for being involved in NRM (seems a bit reactionary/ ad hoc)
- Greater transparency in how funding spent
- More funding to NGOs and less to government agencies
- Help NGOs attract volunteers
- Have a communication tool kit
- Ways of communicating besides internet and email (especially since many volunteers are aging and not online)
- Use LAPs to convey information (less threatening than direct from NRM Board and help build trust)
- More federal funding as it keeps reducing
- Give NRM more power
- Centralisation of information
- Key personnel who talk to NGOs and take feedback to Boards
- Boards need a directory containing key contacts (who is who) and key dates (e.g. for investment strategies) and timelines for each region
- NGOs need to know where recommendations are coming from (e.g. NRM staff or Board members) so NGOs know who to influence and to provide information and advice to
- NRM needs to listen to the volunteer sector
- Much longer timeframes when communicating events
- Streamline grant processes
- Develop communication strategy for dealing with NGOs
- Boards need to know who the NGOs are in their region and visit – come to NGOs for help and advice

- Every Local council should host a biodiversity officer/land manager officer funded by NRM – should be mandatory. Need somebody in local government who has detailed knowledge about NRM and environmental issues.

CCSA member group strategies were largely the same – many mentioned the importance of talking to NGOs and getting liaison person to talk to NGOs.

- **What can the Board do?**

See above

- **What can your group do?**

Few NGOs noted activities they could do to overcome the barriers.

- **What can CCSA do?**

- **Help NGOs apply for grants** (Note: CCSA does not have the capacity and it is a NRM Board responsibility)
- **Go to group meetings/ local interface with NGOs** (note: CCSA does not have the capacity and it is a NRM Board responsibility)
- **Have contact points in each region**
- Collect comments from NGOs and make submissions on their behalf (or let NGOs add their names to submissions so extra weighting)
- Have newsletters (for general public)
- Provide info
- Run media campaigns
- Prepare NRM issues papers
- Advice on how to lobby locally
- Promote NGOs on CCSA website
- Help increase recognition of threatened species in plans
- Help write letters of support to Boards and councils
- Lobby to ensure agencies (e.g. DEH/ NRM) are appropriately funded
- Have a strong voice on NRM issues/ speak up on local issues
- Act as a facilitator between NRM and NGOs
- Present to Boards the issues and benefits of NGOs
- Remind NGOs of key NRM dates (i.e. when comments due etc...)
- Push for joint agreement for management of Gulf St Vincent between 3 Boards
- Reassure member groups that CCSA is not working for NRM Boards, that the aim is to get member groups more involved in NRM

- CCSA has limited resources but is useful at 'joining the dots'. CCSA could provide some funding for specific projects and expertise and time related to specific projects
- Actively seeking member group input to proactively improve the Native Fish Plan
- Help set up the NRM Board to speak at NGO meetings. Also concerned by the lack of support the State gives DEH.

"This NRM facilitation project sounds excellent. We need someone to collect comments of NGOs in a centralised way and feed them through to the Boards. We need someone to keep an eye on what all the NGOs are doing. Lots of NGOs don't make submissions on their own but would be happy to add their name to what others are doing".

- **What support does your group need?**

Most common responses

- Funding/ funding continuation/ help accessing grants
- Help attracting volunteers (especially younger volunteers) "An army of volunteers is what is needed"
- Advice/ technical assistance, e.g. website design
- Digestible information/ regular updates
- Administration support/ help with project management/ help with logistical aspects

Other responses

- Support acquiring freehold land
- Reimbursement for volunteers traveling long distances (e.g. for attending NRM meetings or to do volunteer work where sites are not local)
- Many FoP groups stated they got adequate support from DEH
- Human resources to help out with various projects
- Project offices paid for and situated within NGOs
- Support for specific environmental issues (both local and statewide) and/ or projects

Other Issues Raised

In addition to the question specifically asking what barriers NGOs perceived, there were a number of NGOs who pointed out additional issues with the NRM Board or its processes including:

- No resources available
- No substance to State NRM Plan

- Skepticism that plans will just end up 'dust collectors'
- Criticism on consultation (not genuine)
- Confusion in general
- Difficulty writing grants (especially with the wording) some NGOs have now given up altogether due to rejection
- Staff turnover (new people take time to contact and often have poor understanding of roles)
- Need action not words
- People want to work on their patch and not interested in the planning stuff
- Need one-on-one contact with people on the ground
- Plans are 'too big' and it is difficult to work through planning stuff
- Uncertainty how to fit in with NRM
- No real help and support on-ground
- Job uncertainty for NRM staff
- Lack of funding and support and difficult to attract funding
- NGOs have been made redundant due to NRM and volunteer numbers dwindling
- Want community-run NRM
- NRM 'finds excuses not to fund things'
- Confusion between NRM Groups and DEH
- Concern with the relationship between NRM and local government. The CEO of council think they now do not have to worry too much about NRM issues – NRM will take care of it. NRM should have been set up with local councils. NRM must have a presence in local government as it helps in policy development (e.g. at the moment planting trees is ad hoc). Councils – should have field staff that can look after the natural environment of their council area. Concern that councils do not have the resources to look after their area.
- Finding so many layers with NRM. The Boards should be working out a strategy on the best way to maintain/ develop a relationship with NGOs. Attended the NRM Volunteer Forum – found the difficulties of connecting with NRM Groups were common
- Do the NRM Boards support the environment? Very concerned with how powerful developers are – this issue has deeply affected the local community, many of whom moved down to the area for a holistic lifestyle [with reference to the Aldinga area]

Other comments:

- Tried to access money through Landcare but could not because coastal group.
- The NRM Board is not in the business of giving out funds because it is on a tight budget. They have to raise income through the public with levies and so on. So NGOs have to be self- financed.
- More and more people want to go direct to the ministers such as Gail Gago, Penny Wong, or the Premier. They are not seeing NRM as any help.
- What does NRM stand for?
- Have done NRM related workshop in the past so do not need to do anymore
- Most members just interested in doing the work and not stuff behind the scenes.
- Integrated NRM is a radical concept and to bring it all together is a mammoth task.
- We have to be careful with grants because we have the in-kind stuff - we have to commit to doing the work equivalent to the money. It can be a burden if we cannot match it.
- Lots of Landcare groups have dwindled because they have done all the activities like tree planting, etc. The remaining active NGOs are focusing on sustainable farming, grain and graze stuff to improve yields, etc.
- We do 1700-2000 hours work a year, which is nearly a full-time employee
- Has got a way to go-the understanding [of NRM by the community] is not as good as the NRM Board's would hope.
- Good relationship with Local councils (they are supportive) as they are much greener than they used to be. Good support from the Community Landcare Coordinator
- Need not be a relationship with the NRM Board as group is interested in local projects not regional