

8th September, 2016

The Hon. Glenn Butcher, MP
Chair, the Agriculture and Environment Committee
Parliament House
George Street
Brisbane Qld 4000



Dear Mr Butcher

Re: *Submission - Auditor-General Report 16: 2015-16 – Flood resilience of river catchments.*

Thank you for inviting the Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective (RGC) to submit to the Agriculture and Environment Committee (the Committee) inquiry into the Auditor-General Report 16: 2015-16 – Flood resilience of river catchments. In essence the RGC supports all of the Auditor-General's recommendations. However, the RGC wishes to bring to the attention of the Committee further considerations.

Whilst there aren't statutory Catchment Management Authorities constituted in Queensland whose role is to provide regulatory support for flood plain management and development, the 14 non-statutory Regional NRM Groups do provide support to flood plain managers by way of technical advice and incentive programs to enhance floodplain health. As well, a number of the Regional NRM Groups work to enhance the health of riverine ecosystems.

The observations of States such as Victoria, who do have Catchment Management Authorities which have responsibility for floodplain management, is that their role is supported by both regional and state integrated catchment strategies which are statutory as well as a more effective "whole of government" approach to integrated catchment management. Whilst Queensland's NRM Bodies have developed Regional NRM Plans, which are underpinned by the best available science and have been endorsed by their communities, they are not statutory nor given much apparent credence by government. There is no state integrated catchment strategy nor any governance arrangements which drive a "whole of government" approach for catchment management.

The RGC are recommending to the Queensland Government that an Integrated Catchment Management Strategy be developed for Queensland. The strategy would need to:

- align and contribute to delivery of new policy directions for water (including floodplains), biodiversity and climate change;
- integrate planning mechanisms resulting in better connections between state, regional and local planning;
- be supported by adequate investment to strengthen the implementation of regional catchment strategies or NRM plans;
- be underpinned by accountable and coordinated delivery;

QUEENSLAND REGIONAL NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT GROUPS COLLECTIVE LTD.

PO BOX 4608, TOOWOOMBA EAST QLD 4350
Ph. 0407 634 224 www.rgc.org.au ABN 43 121 237 054

- drive improved monitoring and reporting of catchment management and condition; and
- be centred on engaged communities and effective partnerships.

The RGC recommend that a more “whole of government” approach be established for catchment management. At present we have aspects of floodplain and water management residing in at least three agencies. In addition to this Local Governments have some regulatory responsibility and River Improvement Trust have other statutory responsibilities. Integration across all of these institutions is very limited at best.

Policy and governance arrangements as outlined below would help address this lack of integration and coordination by providing a whole of landscape approach for the state, better accountability and reporting of landscape health (inclusive of floodplains), an improved overall environmental outcome, definition of roles and security for regional communities. To achieve this following is recommended:

- Establishment of an independent, expert based Queensland Catchment Council (or equivalent) producing five yearly State of the Catchment Reports. A QCC would take a whole of landscape approach and would provide landscape scale co-ordination and accountability to government.
- Legislation is required which gives authority to the Catchment Council and defines its and NRM body functions, and responsibilities.
- Reconstituting cross agency coordination through Regional Coordination Groups.
- Development of an NRM or Integrated Catchment Strategy for Queensland that articulates a vision, sets targets, identifies the roles and responsibilities of governments, Industry, Regional Bodies and other essential stakeholders.
- Ongoing reform by NRM regions to maximise effectiveness and efficiency of delivery.
- Statutory recognition of the role and function of the Regional NRM Plans and Regional NRM Bodies.

The resources required to support the above framework need to be both adequate and committed for the long-term to deliver tangible improvements into the health of Queensland’s landscapes as well as lifting the level of engagement, knowledge, commitment and capacity of communities.

The regions are often the nimblest of institutions in disaster response and the only mechanism for post disaster Natural Resource Management. Clearly defined and securely funded Regional Bodies would be better able to respond to floods, inundation, volunteer co-ordination and other disasters.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission with the Committee more fully. I can be contacted via [REDACTED]

Yours sincerely



Mike Berwick

Chair

Queensland Regional NRM Groups Collective