

**THE ROLE OF TOTAL CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT
IN WATER MANAGEMENT**

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The Total Catchment Management ("TCM") philosophy was formalised in NSW in 1980 with the passing of the Catchment Management Act which provides a clear legislative base for the operation of TCM Committees and Catchment Trusts. It is worth stating the functions fo TCM Committees as set out in that Act:

- a) to promote and coordinate the implementation of total catchment management policies and programs;
- b) to advise on and coordinate the natural resource management of authorities, groups and individuals;
- c) to identify catchment needs and prepare strategies for implementation;
- d) to coordinate the preparation of programs for funding;
- e) to monitor, evaluate and report on progress and performance of TCM strategies and programs;
- f) to provide a forum for resolving natural resource conflicts and issues;

- g) to facilitate research into the cause, effect and resolution of natural resource issues;
- h) such other functions relating to TCM as are directed by the Coordinating Committee.

This was the "brief" provided to the first TCM Committees formed in 1989/90 - the seven inland committees which represent the whole of the Murray Darling Basin portion of NSW.

The committees which formed then comprised the Regional Directors (or their equivalent) of the key natural resource agencies, representatives of local government, and community representatives -landholders or land users - (who under the Act must represent the majority), and persons who have a specific interest in environmental matters within the catchment. The North West TCM now comprises 6 Regional Directors, 11 community representatives (including an environmental rep.), and 3 local government reps.

In the early days we had a recipe for confusion - Government Agencies who had rarely communicated with each other thrown together, with community representatives for the first time and with a very broad ranging agenda covering three distinct catchments, and a large proportion of NSW. Those of you from the irrigation industry who attended those early meetings and went home thinking the whole thing was a joke could be forgiven for thinking TCM was an exercise in futility.

Thankfully, however, the committees persisted, fuelled by a desire to bring order to the confusion and by a belief that the historic "tops down" approach to natural resource management had not worked, that there was/and is a clear need for better coordination, and by a sense of urgency that our natural resource base is slipping away from us, and along with it any hope for sustainability.

I can report that TCM (both as a philosophy and as a working model) is now in reasonably good shape both in our Region and as an essential part of the State's natural resource strategy, and that the established framework provides us, the community, with a fantastic opportunity to take hold of our own destiny and, to use the words of the North West CMC's strategy document "to ensure that the natural resources of `our` catchments are managed and protected in a way that will satisfy the economic, environmental and social needs of all living within the north-west".

The Role of TCM in Water Management

So much for general rhetoric, now lets look specifically at the role TCM can play in water management and why you, the cotton industry should be an enthusiastic player both within, and along with, TCM.

Firstly, lets clear up one point - there seems to be some confusion within local politics and/or sections of the industry as to whether or not water is a natural resource and therefore whether it comes within the role of TCM as defined in the Act, or whether it is a resource to be treated separately and, to quote

Hansard, TCM "ought to keep its bib out of it".

One thing we TCM members have not been short of is reading material on natural resource matters. A common theme of that material is that, to be successful in natural resource management, we must have an integrated approach, because what we do in one area of natural resource management must impact on the others. Water, and the management of it, is the key to successful integrated resource management. Water management is what soil conservation is all about, poor water management is the key to salinity, water management is a critical cause and effect of success or otherwise in reforestation, water is the key to success in virtually every field of endeavour, success brings prosperity, and without prosperity we will have no success in natural resource management. We have to consider water as a natural resource, and to make sense of any integrated catchment approach to natural resource management water management must be part of the formula.

The next question is - why TCM? Why can't Water Users Associations working in conjunction with Local Government and the Department of Water Resources bring about the same end?

I will give you several reasons why I believe TCM offers a better option:

- a) TCM is seen as independent - TCM members are on the committee as individuals representing the catchment, not particular interest groups or areas

- b) TCM is a whole catchment approach - not constrained by the limitations of the waterways themselves or by artificial local government boundaries
- c) TCM can involve all the players - by having on the committee people representing the variety of experience which exists within the region, and by working with all other community representative groups - local government, industry representatives, Development Boards, Landcare, environmental groups etc. It seems clear that to achieve long term solutions to natural resource problems, all of the players (stakeholders) must be involved.
- d) TCM comprises the key Government Agencies. TCM is a key component of the Strategies of each of these agencies, and a commitment to TCM forms part of the contract of service of the senior executives of each of those Agencies.

TCM is the forum for pulling those agencies together.

- e) TCM is in a position to influence, directly or indirectly, the Natural Resource budget of the region - for the North West this is estimated to be around \$16 million p.a.
- f) TCM offers a forum for presenting a unified Regional approach which, given the trends in State and Federal funding, will determine our success or otherwise in attracting the resources to solve Regional

problems.

As I write this, the NSW Government White Paper on The Management and Regulation of Water in NSW has just been released. There are at this stage as many different versions of how it is all going to work as there are CEO's of affected Government Agencies, and I have no doubt that this Conference will receive input from a variety of speakers on the subject.

I set out in Attachment 1 in diagrammatic form the structure as I see it, and the pivotal role which I see TCM can play in developing a preferred plan for the Catchment Assessment Commission, a plan which can represent consensus within the catchment - a basis for cooperation, not conflict. I will expand on this during my presentation.

Water Issues - Conflict or Cooperation

I have been asked to address why there is conflict between irrigators and other landowners over water issues. This is a major and emotive topic - I could expand at length and question time may allow scope for further discussion. However, in March this year the North West CMC ran workshops in each of the three northern catchments titled "Water and the Catchment - Conflict or Cooperation?" These were attended by some 420 people, and we had 30 facilitated workshop groups.

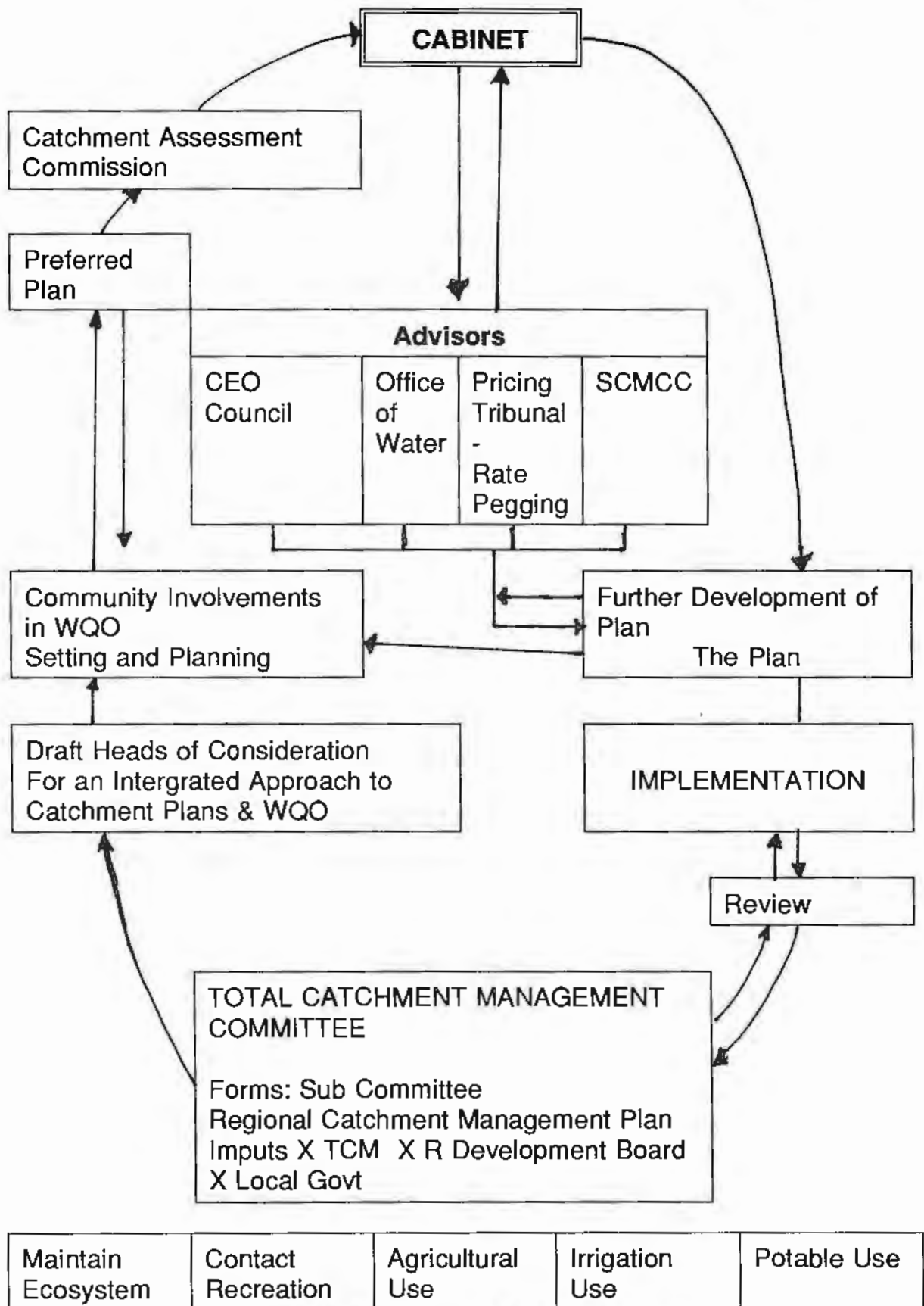
It is clear from these workshops that the underlying cause of conflict is a perceived inequity in water sharing. Emotions are fuelled for a number of

other reasons from time to time, but equity of water sharing is the basis. As water becomes, inevitably, progressively scarcer, so there is potential for the conflict to escalate.

We have an opportunity right now to solve this problem, to establish consensus and to move forward from a positive base. The alternative is illustrated in the extreme by the Whalan Creek situation - a no win situation whereas with a degree of give and take, a great deal of patience and an awareness that reaching consensus will take time, we have the potential for a "win/win" situation.

I hope in outlining the framework of TCM above I have given you enough material to see how the TCM framework can assist. At the end of the day, however, TCM is about people. Without the right people, any framework will fail. Irrigators are a vital ingredient to the composition of TCM, but the challenge for us all is to find the best possible people for the role, people who are prepared to put aside narrow sectoral and possibly short term interests in favour of the longer term success which will flow from community consensus

ATTACHMENT 1
AN OVERVIEW OF THE SETTING OF WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVES - THE PROCESS



Maintain Ecosystem	Contact Recreation	Agricultural Use	Irrigation Use	Potable Use
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WATER QUALITY OBJECTIVES