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The place, limits and practice of collaboration

**lessons from case studies
in community participation
in natural resource management**

**James Whelan
Peter Oliver
December 2005**



CRC for Coastal Zone
Estuary & Waterway Management



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December 2005

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Executive summary

Background and context

The Australian Government established the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) in 1997 in response to an overall, continuing decline in the condition of Australia's natural resources. A 1999 national discussion paper highlighted the need for all facets of the Australian community, including industry and conservation groups, Indigenous people, landholders, existing landcare, catchment management and other 'carer' groups, and all spheres of government to work collaboratively, and for authority to be devolved to people in regions and catchments by establishing suitable institutional structures to address these issues. The need for these actions was further reinforced through a mid-term review of NHT arrangements in 2000. In 2004 the signing of bilateral agreements between the Australian and State and Territory governments committed these two spheres of government to work jointly to support these new natural resource management (NRM) regional arrangements, including the development of 56 designated, cross-sectoral 'regional bodies' throughout Australia. The publication of an *Options Paper* on the future of regional NRM arrangements in Queensland in 2005 signalled that these arrangements are under further review in this State.

This is the fourth major report for the Coastal CRC's 'Dialogue and Knowledge Exchange' Project. Change is a constant in regional natural resource management, and this three-year study (2003–2005) presents a snapshot of that time period, rather than an up-to-the-minute critique of present activity. However, it is very important that we learn from history. The findings of this study may still serve as a useful basis for reflection on current activity and, where necessary, provide an important foundation for improvement in this area. The study used an ethnographic action research approach to focus on relationships between grassroots 'carer' and conservation groups and the regional body involved in NRM regionalisation in two case study areas in southeast Queensland. The research investigated the barriers and bridges to the success of these relationships, looking at ways to overcome the barriers and build on the bridges to enhance collaborative NRM in regional settings. The findings of this action research were then complemented by a Queensland-wide, desktop study which also had a similar focus. This report builds on three previous project publications (Oliver, 2003; Whelan & Oliver, 2004; and Oliver, Whelan & Mackenzie, 2005).

The project team's first report (Oliver, 2003) reviewed literature relating to collaborative, partnership-based and devolved approaches to natural resource management. The second report (Whelan & Oliver, 2004) identified NRM networks in southeast Queensland and focused on instances where grassroots groups were responding to the emerging regional arrangements in different ways. The third report (Oliver, Whelan & Mackenzie, 2005) evaluated collaboration processes and outcomes in two case studies. This report identified barriers, bridges and solutions to collaborative natural resource and environmental management.

Since completing these three reports, the project team has conducted further interviews, discussions and observations with grassroots groups, government agencies and regional NRM groups to validate previous observations and to support context-appropriate collaborative arrangements. This report synthesises the previous reports and the researchers' subsequent action-research experiences to offer a final set of observations and recommendations. The intended audiences for the report are: (1) stakeholders involved in grassroots group–regional body collaborations; and (2) government agencies who may have a role in supporting these collaborations and in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of regional NRM plans.

Table 1 shows the project team's initial set of research questions.

Table 1. Research questions

<p><i>Where is multi-stakeholder collaboration (science-industry-community-agency) occurring?</i></p> <p><i>What collaborative processes are these groups using?</i></p> <p><i>How effective are these processes and can they be improved?</i></p> <p><i>What barriers and bridges exist to effective collaboration?</i></p> <p><i>How can any barriers be overcome?</i></p> <p><i>How can the bridges or opportunities identified be used to improve the effectiveness of these multi-stakeholder collaboration processes?</i></p> <p><i>What are effective processes for clear, transparent and democratic negotiation with respect to resource-use trade-offs?</i></p> <p><i>What are the characteristics of effective NRM collaboration and partnership-building and how can they be nurtured and transferred?</i></p>
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In order to gain a rich and detailed understanding of multi-stakeholder collaboration the investigation has focused specifically on collaborations between grassroots groups (carers and conservationists) and regional bodies. The project was designed with both medium- and short-term outcomes in mind. In the medium term, the project team aimed to work with coastal NRM grassroots groups in two coastal case study areas, using an adaptive management framework including action research, to

benchmark and improve collaborative management of coastal zone natural resources. In the short term, the researchers aimed to encourage NRM grassroots groups to exchange ideas, experiences and knowledge as a result of opportunities provided by this research and to ensure the CRC's stakeholder training activities are informed and enhanced by the study's findings.

Findings and moving ahead

The research findings summarised here also have broader applicability for regional NRM. The work has created several opportunities for dialogue with regional people and organisations involved in regional NRM in order to inform the project and feed the research findings into the evolving regional arrangements. These activities have included six 'think tanks' with a combined 170 participants, and two-day workshops in Brisbane and Rockhampton on outcomes of this and other governance and partnership research undertaken by the CRC. The workshops were attended by 60 participants.

The barriers and bridges identified to successful grassroots group–regional body collaboration have been clustered around four themes:

- The regionalisation process, especially matters relating to spatial and temporal time scales and the need for shared expectations;
- Resourcing the regionalisation process and the need to clarify roles and responsibilities;
- Grassroots groups working collaboratively, especially collaboration within and between sectors; and
- Recognising and dealing with conflict.

The research has identified three directions in terms of the future of NRM regionalisation and processes that may lead to these directions being followed: (A) the end of regionalisation; (B) delayed, but eventual end to regionalisation; and (C) a sound future for NRM regionalisation with groups involved entering into an 'appropriate collaborative space.'

Given the complex nature of many current NRM problems facing Australia, and the inability of 'traditional' management approaches to resolve them to date, there is a need for all involved to follow direction C. This will involve adopting a culture in which the process of collaboration is seen as integral to the outcomes arising from collaboration, and valued as such.

Two strategies are offered to do this. The first is a monitoring and evaluation framework which uses twenty-three criteria grouped under four dimensions: efficacy; organisation; governance and institutions; and evidence of social learning and adaptation. This framework highlights the interrelated nature of these dimensions. The second strategy presented is a normative (or ideal) model for collaboration, which contains an issue, context and stakeholder identification (ICASA) system, which helps participants to decide on issues that should be dealt with collaboratively and how to go about this process. Understanding when collaboration is an inappropriate NRM tool and understanding the use of social learning and adaptive management are keys to the operation of this model.

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Context

This report marks the conclusion of a three-year study to understand the involvement of grassroots groups in regional natural resource management (NRM) in southeast Queensland. The study also sought to see how lessons learnt could be informed by, and inform, collaborative NRM in other settings throughout Queensland, Australia and elsewhere. The study coincided with the coordinated development of collaborative institutional arrangements for regional land and water management throughout Australia. These arrangements are evolving rapidly and major changes are anticipated in the next two years. The observations and conclusions reported here offer strategies to enhance the participation of grassroots groups in regional planning.

A 1999 discussion paper produced by the National Natural Resource Management Taskforce (NNRMTF) and designed to serve as the foundation for NRM policy in Australia, highlighted the need to devolve authority to regions and catchments by establishing institutional structures to “give the people of the region greater authority over natural resource management” (NNRMTF, 1999, p. 9). The discussion paper also emphasised the need to develop “self-sustaining, proactive communities that are committed to ecologically sustainable development” (NNRMTF, 1999, p. 34). The *Blue Book*, as this discussion paper became known, spelt out the roles and responsibilities of regional groups to plan, negotiate and implement regional NRM strategies. These regional groups would undertake their responsibilities with funding and the in-kind support of landholders, industry and community groups, and all tiers of government. The *Blue Book* emphasised that the success of this approach would rest on government support for two key change processes: (1) the use of incentives and signals to encourage fundamental behavioural change; and (2) a stronger role for industry. The report also foreshadowed a continuing role for existing community-based NRM groups such as Landcare; the need to build the capacity of participants to undertake regional NRM; and the importance of shared information and knowledge as a basis for sustainable resources management (NNRMTF, 1999).

These recommendations were significant and timely. The Australian Government had established the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT or ‘Trust’) in 1997 to “stimulate activities in the national interest to achieve the conservation, sustainable use and repair of Australia's natural environment” (Environment Australia, 2000, p. 2). Between 1996 and 2002 the Australian Government invested \$1.5 billion in Trust programs (Environment Australia, 2000, p. 15) and it was anxious that this money

be channelled to locations and approaches that would achieve the maximum benefit. While an Australian Government response to a mid-term review of the Trust in August 2000 stated that “no fundamental failings were found in the administration of the Trust,” including in areas of financial management, the government was keen to achieve a more focused return on its spending in this portfolio (Environment Australia, 2000, p. 2). The response echoed the *Blue Book* recommendations, especially in regard to the benefits of regional institutional arrangements to support collaborative, partnership-based approaches to develop, implement and evaluate regional NRM plans that address priority issues identified by all involved. The collaborative, partnership-based tenor of these documents was further reinforced by the bilateral agreement struck between the Queensland and Australian governments to implement the arrangements described in the earlier documents (Environment Australia, 2004).

In southeast Queensland, these intentions resulted in the establishment of a new organisation in early 2003 to develop and implement a regional natural resource management plan. Natural Resource Management Southeast Queensland Incorporated (NRMSEQ), along with 55 other regional bodies throughout Australia, embodies a set of NRM planning principles that are enshrined in bilateral agreements between the Australian Government and State governments. These principles emphasise NRM partnership and collaboration built on the active participation of stakeholders including community groups, conservationists, industry groups and traditional owners. In fact, the granting of NHT funding and, in priority catchments, of National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ) funding, is dependent upon adherence to these principles. Regional groups were required to demonstrate effective community engagement in order to receive designation status to receive and administer devolved funding.

As this study draws to a close, the national approach to regional NRM is under review by both the Australian and State governments. In April 2005, the Queensland Government released its *Options Paper* to generate discussion about future NRM arrangements. Two of the four options presented in the *Options Paper* signify a return to government control of NRM and abandonment of the ideals of collaborative NRM.

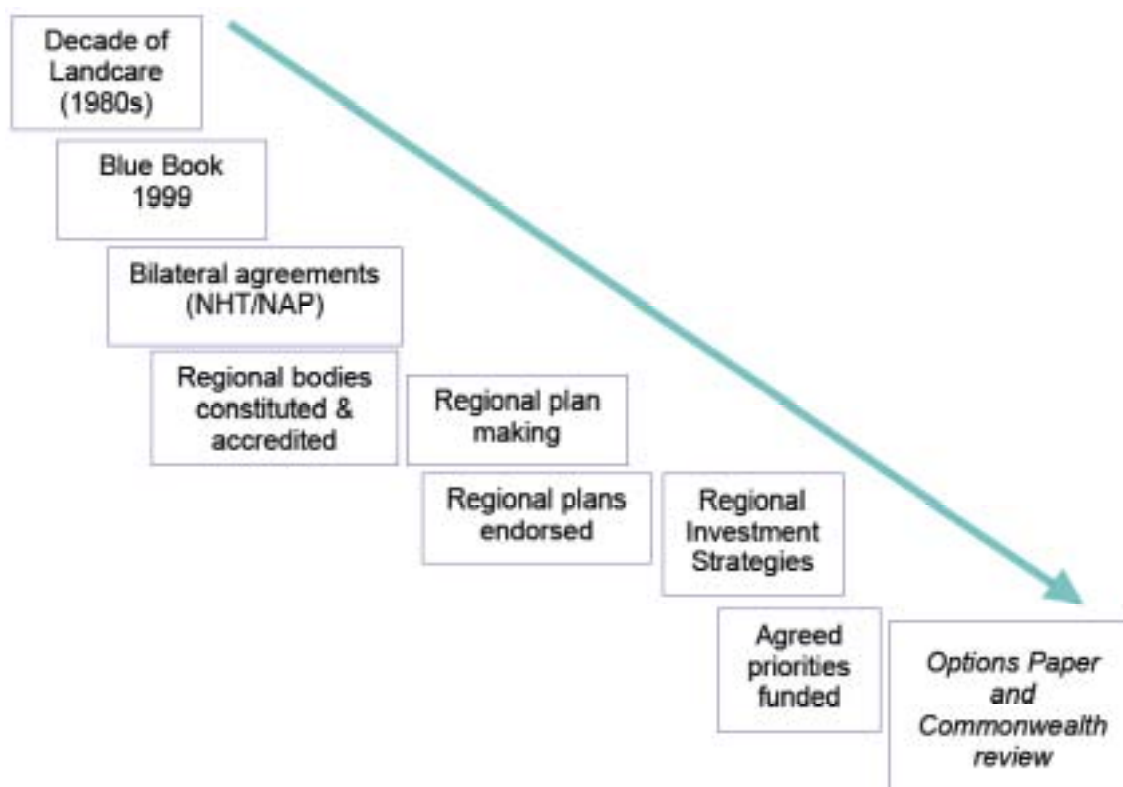


Figure 1. The evolution of regional NRM arrangements to date

A separate national review of institutional arrangements for both the NHT and its sister-program the NAPSWQ has recently been initiated by the Australian Government. With the bilateral agreements between the Australian and State governments lapsing in June 2007, a cloud hangs over regional NRM arrangements. This report suggests additional measures are necessary to achieve the community engagement principles in the bilateral agreement and affirms the potential benefits of inclusive and deliberative NRM arrangements.

Understanding NRM experiences: methods, reliability and trustworthiness

The research questions addressed in this study are listed in the executive summary of this report. While other researchers from the Cooperative Research Centre for Coastal Zone, Estuary and Waterway Management (Coastal CRC) sought to understand regional body–local government; regional body–state government and community–industry relationships in NRM, our work used case and desktop studies to understand the nature of collaborations and knowledge exchange between regional bodies and grassroots groups involved in the new NRM regional arrangements. In summary, we sought to understand:

- What are the limits to collaboration and partnership-building among participants involved in natural resource management?
- How effectively are these people working together?
- How can they reflect on and learn from their efforts so that the knowledge held by all participants can be better shared to inform NRM decision-making and on-ground activities?

To answer these questions we pursued the following research objectives. We sought to:

- identify the forces and factors that may strengthen and inhibit collaboration between the regional body and grassroots NRM groups, and
- derive a series of recommendations for open, participatory, transparent and effective collaborative processes.

The research methodology adopted in this study was discussed in detail in the *Bridges and Barriers* report, the third of four reports on this study (Oliver, Whelan & Mackenzie, 2005). For the purpose of this report, an abbreviated justification follows.

The project involved the collection, analysis and synthesis of seven separate sets of qualitative data:

1. A broad-ranging literature review on collaborative NRM (35 000 words, summarising 150 references);
2. A collection of government and regional body documents, derived from the literature review, our field work and a web-based search of documentation from the 15 regional bodies in Queensland;

3. Field notes and participant observation of over two years of regional body–grassroots group interaction, observing a wide range of activities including NRM forums, workshops, conferences and NRMSEQ ‘citizen senates’;
4. Twenty interviews with grassroots group members, regional body staff and board members, and government extension staff;
5. Seven interviews with participants in collaborative NRM arrangements interstate and internationally;
6. Six ‘think tanks’, over two years, where 170 people with an interest in regional NRM came together to discuss our emerging findings; and
7. Two symposiums (one in southeast Queensland and one in central Queensland) where we presented our preliminary findings and sought feedback from over 60 people.

By synthesising these seven complementary data sources, the project team were able to triangulate the observations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1984) by drawing conclusions from a variety of perspectives to validate the themes that are discussed in this report.

The documents analysed during the study, many of which are cited in this report, relate primarily to collaborative regional NRM. Many are specifically concerned with Australian schemes—the NHT and NAPSWQ initiatives—and the implementation plans of regional NRM groups in Queensland. The review of relevant scholarly literature by Oliver (2003) was much broader and addressed theoretical constructs such as ecological modernisation, power and social learning as well as applied research questions related to citizen participation and collaborative and partnership-based environmental decision-making.

Two main social science research traditions (or methods) were utilised in the study. The first, grounded theory (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994) provides techniques to discern patterns of social interaction that are consistent with the experiences of social actors rather than shaped by externally-derived theory. In brief, grounded theory involves examining a social environment to identify themes or categories that explain interactions and relationships. It is important to continue research until no further themes or categories are suggested and agreed categories are consistently confirmed (referred to as a state of ‘theoretical saturation’). In this study, the confirmation of our findings and suggested themes was achieved through extended fieldwork and through six think tanks or participatory workshops. The 170 participants in these think tanks included the members of several grassroots groups, regional NRM body staff and board members, and researchers working on

projects to examine related aspects of regional NRM. Their observations and ideas helped the project team explore the themes in this report and apply our tentative recommendations to real situations. Our second research method, action research, involves cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting. The two action research cycles described in the *Bridges and Barriers* report culminated in several collaborative and catalytic (change-oriented) think tanks where we worked with participants to test and apply our emerging understandings.

Initially, the project focused on the relationship between grassroots groups and the regional NRM body in southeast Queensland. Our case studies were exclusively in this region and included groups that were participating in regional NRM planning in different ways. We limited our field of inquiry to grassroots, community-based, non-government and ostensibly volunteer-based organisations. This specific scope meant the study was unique, although we recognised the strong links between our study and the many parallel research projects that have examined regional NRM arrangements with other questions or concerns in mind.

As the project progressed, however, we found it necessary to broaden the scope of the study in two ways. Firstly, we began to examine other relationships: between regional NRM bodies and governments (federal, state and local); and between regional bodies and other stakeholders including industry. It was not feasible to understand the experiences and observations of grassroots groups without considering how other stakeholders experienced the new institutional arrangements. Secondly, we found it necessary to look outside the region to see how grassroots groups in other parts of Queensland and Australia were experiencing the new NRM arrangements. The impetus to broaden our study in this way came from other studies of regional arrangements (Bellamy *et al.*, 2004; Head, 2004; Holm and Associates, 2004; McDonald *et al.*, 2004) that indicated the trends we were observing in southeast Queensland resonated with those in other regions. We also examined collaborative environmental governance structures and processes in the United Kingdom and Canada. Clearly we were observing similar patterns in our regional case studies as other researchers were finding elsewhere. By broadening our study to integrate these research findings and additional comparative assessment, including a desktop audit of NRM bodies' board membership across Queensland, we have maximised the relevance of our conclusions in both this and other regions.

Theoretical background

Throughout this study, we have analysed trends in environmental governance through reference to a framework developed by Buhrs and Aplin (1999, p. 317) who outline three approaches that governments may use to address natural resource and environmental management problems:

1. A green planning (rational policy) approach involving the formulation and implementation of long-term policies, strategies and plans;
2. An institutional reform approach focusing on the development of new governance arrangements and the development and enforcement of legislation and regulations; and
3. A social mobilisation approach which focuses on encouraging community and industry action to address shared problems.

The regionalisation of natural resource management in Australia reflects elements from the first and second of these approaches. For instance, current NRM arrangements entail the formulation and implementation of regional plans and the development of regional bodies as new institutions to implement these plans. The third approach—social mobilisation—is arguably at the heart of the management arrangements proposed in the *Blue Book*. The authors of the *Blue Book*, the *Bilateral Agreement* and the *Mid-term Review of the NHT* advocated that the beneficiaries of natural resources should share responsibility for their management through partnerships in which roles and responsibilities are clear and agreed (Environment Australia 2000, 2004; NNRMTF, 1999, p. 10). In Queensland, the Australian and State governments entered into a bilateral agreement and initiated a social mobilisation process that relies on the establishment of regional voluntary organisations to develop and implement regional NRM plans (Environment Australia, 2004). The fifteen regional bodies must be formally designated or approved by government and have formal legal status (e.g. be an incorporated association or a company limited by guarantee). They must also have their plans and investment strategies endorsed before they can receive government financial and in-kind support for plan implementation.

Many of the NRM problems that regional bodies have sought to address through social mobilisation have proven to be intractable to 'traditional', regulatory and legislative measures. The development of these bodies may be viewed as a foray into the realm of *associative democracy*—the idea that associations may take on governance of particular issues (e.g. social, economic and environmental) that previously have fallen under the domain of representative government (Hirst, 1994).

The study of associative democracy is a contested field with both proponents and critics arguing its merits or otherwise on ethical, philosophical and pragmatic terms (e.g. Baccaro, 2005; Cohen & Rogers, 2003; Rossteutcher, 2005). For example, even if one thinks only in pragmatic terms, the decentralisation associated with NRM regionalisation may not necessarily go hand in hand with de-bureaucratisation and consequent improvements in the efficiency and effectiveness of NRM actions.

We have found several other social science concepts useful in understanding these new NRM regional arrangements, their impact on grassroots groups and the barriers and enablers to the relationship between grassroots groups and regional bodies. These concepts include social learning, social capital, partnership and collaboration, power and empowered participatory governance. A brief overview of each of these concepts and their use as tools for understanding the social mobilisation process follows.

Social learning

Social mobilisation, the third NRM approach described by Buhrs and Aplin (1999), requires social learning, an expression or idea that is used in diverse ways (Parson & Clark, 1995, p. 429). Milbrath (1989) saw learning in social settings as the process by which people could envision and move towards a more sustainable society. For this study, we utilise the definition offered by Schusler, Dekker and Pfeffer (2003, pp. 311–312) who draw on public deliberation and social learning literature to define social learning as a process that occurs when people “engage one another, sharing diverse perspectives and experiences to develop a common framework of understanding and basis for joint action.” The deliberation and dialogue that ensues when people engage in social learning and “share diverse perspectives and experiences” can also build social capital.

Social capital

The notion of social capital is central to the principles and practices of regional arrangements under the NAPSWQ and NHT and is the subject of a dedicated chapter in the southeast Queensland regional plan (NRMSEQ, 2005a). Although the expression ‘social capital’ was first used about a century ago, it was only in 1990 that James Coleman developed a comprehensive theory to explain this social phenomenon (Coleman, 1990; Gabbay & Leenders, 1999, p. 2). Portes (1998, p. 7) provides an accessible explanation by differentiating between economic capital which is “in people’s bank accounts,” human capital which is “inside their heads”

and social capital which “inheres in the structure of their relationships.” Putnam (1993) conceptualised social capital to comprise trust, moral obligations and norms, social values, and social networks. Rydin and Pennington (2000, pp. 158–190) have attempted to summarise the nature of social capital, particularly as the concept applies to citizen participation. They note that it also encompasses the density and knowledge of relationships within networks, “forms of local knowledge” and “existence and sanctions to punish ‘free-riding’” (Rydin & Pennington, 2000, pp. 173–174).

When “formalised groups” such as grassroots groups and regional bodies develop a high level of social capital, “people have confidence to invest in collective activities knowing that others will do so” (Pretty, 2003, p. 1912). The social capital found and developed within such groups (bonding social capital), the relationships between these groups (bridging social capital) and the relationships they have with others, including industry groups and spheres of government (linking social capital) are fundamental to the success of the social mobilisation approach adopted in the regionalisation of NRM in Australia.

Partnership and collaboration

The authors of the *Blue Book* proposed that “natural resource management requires a partnership between all parties—government, communities, industry, landholders and individuals—with clear and agreed roles and responsibilities” (NNRMTF, 1999, p. 10). The notion of partnership is another integral element of the current regionalisation approach, but is rarely defined in NRM plans and policies in a precise or agreed way. We define a partnership as a collaborative relationship in which participants cooperate and share the power present in the relationship to achieve goals that are desired by, or beneficial to, all who may be affected (Arnstein, 1969; Eisler, 1987, 2002; Oliver, 2004). Leaving aside the issue of power-sharing for the moment, we draw on Gray (1985, p. 912) to specify three defining features of a collaboration: (1) the pooling of appreciations and/or tangible resources (e.g. money, information and labour); (2) by two or more stakeholders; (3) to solve a set of problems which neither can solve individually.

“Collaboration is, of itself, a neutral term, the process only taking on a bias if one participant exerts fear or power over others, coercing them to do things they would not do otherwise” (Dukes & Firehock, 2001, p. 5). While Pretty (2003, p. 1914) signals some optimism in terms of the success of the 400 to 500 thousand collaborative NRM groups worldwide and their ability to manage NRM issues, he

also points to the danger of being too optimistic, because divisions between groups and the lack of social capital that results can result in environmental damage. He also cites inadequate knowledge resulting in people not knowing that what they are doing may be harmful. Few (2001) highlights the potential for political capture and containment of collaborative processes. Walker and Hurley (2004, p. 748) maintain that collaborative natural resource management is inherently political, and that:

Careful assessment of the political terrain is at least as critical to the success of collaborative programs as assessment of appropriate procedures and institutional requirements.

Other critics note that collaborative approaches to NRM that devolve government authority for management of public resources without responsibility abdicate government responsibility, ignore current laws or preclude citizens' rights should be avoided (Coggins, 1996, 2001; McCloskey, 1996). As practitioners and researchers we recognise these limits to collaboration and agree with Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000, p. 231) that any public decision-making process, including collaboration, should be able to meet tests they describe for legitimacy, wisdom and fairness before it is deemed acceptable.

Power

The concept of power is central to our definition of a partnership and to any assessment of the 'fairness' or 'legitimacy' of NRM relationships. Power is an important concept in social science and in collaborative NRM. It is many-faceted and therefore does not easily lend itself to concise definition. Max Weber (1947, p. 47), one of the founders of social science, says that power is:

The probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out (their) own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis upon which this probability rests.

Ledyayev (1997, p. 4) provides a more contemporary view of power noting that:

1. Power is not the property of individuals, but a relationship between them;
2. Any statement of outcome of its exercise must be couched in terms of probability;
3. Almost anything can serve as a basis for power; and
4. Power is 'despite others'. It is about conflict and resolution of conflict.

Eisler and Koegel (1996, p. 7) assert that it is possible to have a collaborative relationship where one party has greater power than another, citing for example the collaborations between the conquered and those who conquered them (e.g. Nazi Germany being able to occupy most of Europe during World War II). We agree, and note that collaborations really only become the partnerships aspired to in the *Blue Book* and described by Arnstein (1969, p. 217), when the power within the relationship is redistributed through negotiation between those involved.

Empowered participatory governance

The concepts of *empowered participatory governance* and *countervailing power* developed by Fung and Wright (2003) are helpful for those interested and actively involved in collaborative NRM and the regionalisation process throughout Australia. Systems of empowered participatory governance (EPG) “rely upon the commitment and capacities of ordinary people to make sensible decisions through reasoned deliberation and (*in which they are*) empowered because they attempt to tie action to discussion” (Fung & Wright, 2003, p. 5). Successful EPG relies on the exercise of countervailing power, that participants involved in a collaboration renegotiate power imbalances so that their relationship moves towards one of partnership and the sort of ideal partnerships between government, communities, industry, landholders and individuals alluded to in the *Blue Book* (NNRMTF, 1999, p. 10). Table 2 below further characterises EPG.

Table 2. Varieties of governance structures and processes (Fung & Wright, 2003, p. 262)

	Adversarial decision-making processes	Collaborative decision-making processes
<i>Top-down governance structures</i>	Conventional interest group politics	Expert/elite problem-solving (e.g. negotiated rule making)
<i>Participatory governance structures</i>	Some town meetings	Empowered participatory governance

Fung and Wright (2003, p. 263) point out that collaborative endeavours without an appropriate form of countervailing power to move them towards what we term partnership can fail for three reasons:

1. Countervailing power may be already well organised in an adversarial form (e.g. labour and environmental movements) with shifts to collaborative forms of governance seen as risky.

2. The design of institutions within which collaboration is to take place are the result of outside political processes (in such instances the rules governing the relationship are likely to favour entrenched interests of the more powerful).
3. Other forms of countervailing power are not put into place to counteract these entrenched interests.

Table 3 highlights the relationship between empowered participatory governance and countervailing power and four basic governance regimes that result.

Table 3. Four governance regimes (Fung & Wright, 2003, p. 265)

	Low degree of countervailing power	High degree of countervailing power
<i>Top-down administration</i>	I. Captured sub-government	II. Adversarial pluralism
<i>Participatory collaboration</i>	III. Co-optation, participatory window dressing	IV. Empowered participatory governance

In this report we use the concepts of empowered participatory governance and countervailing power to analyse relationships between grassroots groups and a regional NRM body and to situate these findings on the broader canvas upon which the picture of collaborative NRM is emerging throughout Queensland and nationally. In framing the recommendations that arise from our work we are also very aware of four propositions that Fung and Wright (2003, pp. 266–267) make concerning collaborative governance and countervailing power:

1. Forms of participatory collaboration, including EPG institutions, will in general fail to yield the benefits that their proponents desire without the substantial presence of countervailing power.
2. The sources and forms of countervailing power that are appropriate in collaborative contexts are in general quite different from those found in adversarial ones.
3. The two broad varieties of countervailing power—adversarial and collaborative—are not easily converted from one to the other.
4. The problem of generating countervailing power suitable for collaborative governance is not easily solved through clever public policies and institutional designs.

Fung and Wright (2003) analyse four case studies on collaboration. In this analysis they assert that the practice of EPG is still in its early days and that successful EPG is based on presence and use of ‘collaborative countervailing power’. They

observed three main sources of collaborative countervailing power in these case studies:

- Locally (rather than nationally) organised groups (e.g. locally organised environmental groups);
- Political leaders who see that countervailing power may make good political as well as policy sense; and
- The slow transformation of traditional organisations such as religious and social movement organisations (Fung & Wright, 2003, pp. 282–285).

The notion of collaborative countervailing power echoes Riane Eisler's (Eisler & Montuori, 2001, p. 13) discussion of how power is construed and exercised in 'partnership organisations': those holding power have the "capacity to work to achieve goals with others but not at the expense of others."

Research observations

To this point, the report has presented the context for our analysis of collaborative community-based regional NRM, a brief explanation of our research methods and techniques, and a synthesis of the theoretical frameworks that we have found useful in this analysis. These three elements have been explored in greater detail in the three previous reports from the current CRC research project (Oliver, 2003; Whelan & Oliver, 2004; Oliver, Whelan & Mackenzie, 2005). We turn now to a discussion of our observations and conclusions. The first part of this discussion is framed around four themes: the regionalisation process; resourcing the process; collaboration; and conflict. These interrelated themes provided a coherent framework to describe our findings during the first action research cycle (2003–2004) and have been confirmed as satisfactory explanatory themes in our subsequent data collection and analysis.

The regionalisation process

We have grouped four ‘subthemes’ identified in our research together under this broad regionalisation theme. Each is discussed in turn below.

Spatial scale

Throughout our fieldwork it was apparent that members of grassroots groups were, for the most part, understandably more interested in the issues and places that led them to participate in their local, carer or conservation group than in thinking, planning and acting regionally. One of our interviewees commented that even the “concept of a region” was difficult enough for some people to understand, let alone asking them to work as volunteers to improve regional sustainability. This resonates with the Duane’s (1997) typology of community involvement in environmental management which suggests *communities of interest* and *communities of place*. It also accords with findings of other more contemporary Australian researchers. For example, Tropical Savannas CRC researchers (McDonald *et al.*, 2005, p. 2) examining regional arrangements in northern Australia noted that:

Most stakeholders associated more strongly with *parts* of an NRM region, as in a district or subcatchment, or with NRM issues that directly impacted on themselves, their industry or sector.

In our first cycle of action research, we observed that there was indeed a tension between top-down regional planning at a larger spatial scale and bottom-up activity

focused on smaller geographic units. We noted that this had four effects on grassroots group members:

1. Conservation grassroots group members were generally enthusiastic during their initial involvement, hoping that the broader scale might capture conservation and biodiversity issues that were only really apparent when viewed at that scale.
2. Carer grassroots groups were perhaps more inward-looking and pragmatic. While some could appreciate the concept of thinking in a more strategic regional sense, they were (mostly) initially interested in having a relationship with the regional body to the extent that it could help them with funds and other support to fulfil the motivations and goals of their individual grassroots group, or at the very least to see that their motivations were being protected.
3. There was some concern among all grassroots groups that the focus on the broader regional scale might not pick up or value the outcomes of awareness processes and practice changes that had occurred as a result of previous activities at a grassroots group level, or that it may destroy the social capital that these grassroots groups and their activities had accumulated. Bove (2003) also notes this point.
4. Grassroots groups had very little input into defining regional boundaries in the study area. This, and other early top-down exercises of power, set a benchmark against which the collaborative and partnership-based quality of relationships between participants involved in regional arrangements could be monitored and evaluated.¹ It appeared from actions such as these that little collaborative countervailing power was to be yielded to the grassroots groups by government in terms of the regionalisation process and that perhaps the only way groups might exercise such power was to use adversarial countervailing power and either not become involved in the process, or withdraw, as they saw appropriate (Fung & Wright, 2003).²

¹ As of 1 December 2005, the two regional bodies in southeast Queensland designated by the Australian Government have merged to form one body, *SEQ Catchments*. It should be noted that there was some level of consultation with grassroots groups, not so much relating to whether or not the groups should merge, but concerning the institutional arrangements that would be put in place when the merger occurred.

² For example, the president of one grassroots group interviewed stated that the main reason his group joined the regional body was as a spectator, to “keep an eye” on the regionalisation process in terms of how it may affect them, rather than actively influencing its development. This view was supported by an executive member of another grassroots group who said they became involved to “find out the bigger picture” and where they sat in the region in terms of NRM. For her, if funding for her group came out of the process, that was a bonus and not the primary reason for involvement.

Temporal scale

The natural resource and environmental management issues facing southeast Queensland are the result of long-term human activity that began with European colonisation of the region. We deal with monitoring and evaluation of grassroots group and regional body activities and relationships elsewhere in this report, but it is salutary to note that evaluation of the impact of the regionalisation process at a landscape scale using an inappropriate temporal scale, for example a politically expedient three-year time scale, may give a faulty picture of the impact of the regionalisation process. NRMSEQ, as have all regional bodies, has endeavoured to accommodate this 'temporal mismatch' by classifying the NRM targets they hope to achieve at different temporal scales.³

The analysis presented in this report is based on two years of data gathered between November 2003 and November 2005. This period sits at the interface of NHT1 (the first phase of NHT) and the regionalisation process developed for NHT2 and NAPSWQ and takes in several key factors in the development of the relationship between the grassroots groups and the regional body in the case study areas including:

- the effects of withdrawal of significant financial and in-kind support to grassroots groups by federal and state governments, and the redirection of this support to the regionalisation process (ongoing from July 2003);
- development of the regional NRM plans (ongoing throughout 2004);
- commencement of preliminary project work to be funded by the Interim Regional Investment Strategy Project (January 2005);
- acceptance of the regional NRM plans and interim regional investment strategies by the Joint Steering Committee (February 2005); and
- publication of the *Options Paper* for future community engagement in natural resource management (April 2005) (Queensland Government, 2005).

Between November 2003 and December 2004, we observed the regionalisation process to be very 'plan focused'. Even though the regional body staff worked hard to try to maintain contact with the grassroots groups, their focus was predominantly elsewhere, with the need to consult on, complete and gain accreditation of the plan and a regional investment strategy critical to turning on the supply of Australian and State government funds for on-ground project work by grassroots groups. Regional bodies were provided with some 'foundation' funds for start up prior to accreditation,

³ The NRMSEQ Plan (2005a) identifies short-term management action targets (1–5 years), medium-term resource condition targets (10–15 years) and long-term aspirational targets (30–50 years).

as well as some on-ground priority action projects, some of which were allocated by regional bodies to grassroots groups. While government saw the completion and accreditation of the plan as the primary goal, there was already a growing awareness among the regional body staff in the case study area that maintenance of relationships with grassroots groups would be critical to implementation of the plan, and that there was a need to try to complete both tasks simultaneously. McDonald *et al.* (2005, p. 4) reinforce this observation, saying, “most regional bodies saw the process of development of fundamental social infrastructure, with long-term goals fixed on future use and ongoing relationships” as critical to their work.

Also, while it was outside the control of the regional body, the development of social capital within the relationships between grassroots groups and the regional body was further challenged by the hiatus in government funding to grassroots groups brought about by the length of time it took to develop an accredited NRM plan and regional investment strategy.⁴ In the first report for this project we discussed a typology developed by Pretty and Ward (2001), which describes the evolution of NRM groups according to fifteen criteria, with the final stage of group evolution being one of “awareness-interdependence”. In this stage groups have little need for external support. Pretty and Ward (2001) state that group evolution to the awareness-interdependence stage should not automatically be considered desirable or ideal. For example, if expectations, roles and responsibilities among all parties (government and non-government) are clear and sources of funding and support are therefore secure, it makes little sense for volunteers to want to forgo such funding and support. However, this was not the case and is discussed in more detail in the following section.

The publication of the April 2005 *Options Paper* on the future of regional arrangements in Queensland post June 2007 was also significant. The *Options Paper* brought to the fore the essentially political nature of natural resource management and the ‘temporal mismatch’ between political and NRM temporal scales discussed earlier (and also by Blomquist and Schlager, 2005). Two of the four options presented for comment by the community, industry and local government foreshadowed the potential for the State Government to withdraw its support from the regionalisation process and to resume full control of regional NRM.

⁴ Australian and State governments need to accredit NRM plans and regional investment strategies to ensure that taxpayers’ funds expended on the regionalisation process are wisely spent and properly accounted for. However, we would also argue that they have a responsibility, if they wish to work in collaboration and partnership with community, industry and local government on key NRM problems facing Australia, to strive for empowered participatory governance. This involves a new way of thinking in which those with the greatest power (in this case federal and state governments) consciously construct institutional arrangements so that those less empowered may exercise collaborative countervailing power, as discussed in this report.

Dovers' (2003) description of the attributes of effective adaptive NRM institutions includes the attribute of longevity. Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000) also comment on having adequate time as a crucial factor in the fostering of effective NRM collaborations. From the perspective of some volunteers in the regionalisation process, the *Options Paper* was an indicator of the potentially short-term and transient way in which government viewed the processes in which they were involved, and of where the power lay within the relationships between those participating.

Need for shared expectations

It has been our observation that those outside grassroots groups (e.g. State agency and Local government staff) may have unrealistic expectations of the capacity of these grassroots groups. NRMSEQ has made commendable efforts in involving, networking and seeking membership of grassroots groups in their organisation. Their website shows over 90 groups as members, and 59 of these are carer or conservation grassroots groups (NRMSEQ, 2005b). However, our South-East Queensland case study and Queensland-wide desktop study concludes that during the time of our study the level of involvement of grassroots groups has been variable – both between sectors including the carer and conservation grassroots groups, and over time. Interviewees commented on non-participation or low levels of participation of grassroots groups and attributed this to various factors including:

- limited capacities of the groups to participate in multiple concurrent planning processes;
- their need to compete for resources;
- their emphasis on local rather than regional priorities;
- conflict between grassroots groups in neighbouring sub-catchments; and
- shortcomings of community engagement processes carried out by other planning bodies.

As mentioned previously in this report, we have also observed that grassroots groups need to have trust in the longevity and fairness of the regionalisation process if they are to commit their time as volunteers.

These concerns aside, most interviewees considered that relatively few grassroots groups had the capacity to meaningfully participate in regional NRM planning. As we commented in our *Bridges and Barriers Report*, this may result in a mismatch of priorities and local capacity to support planned interventions if the regional body embarks on local priorities based on an overestimation of the capacity and support

for volunteer-based NRM projects. Government agencies may also fall prey to having overly ambitious expectations of volunteers in terms of NRM at a regional level. As McDonald *et al.* (2005, p. 3) point out, "Expectations of government funding agencies (*of regional bodies and the volunteers that support them*) were unrealistic given the complexity of the task."

However, our observations are that where volunteers are offered opportunities to focus on specific projects relating to local, place-based issues or broader-based issues that have meaning and personal relevance and they can see the results of their work, that volunteering is quite robust and resilient. Several Landcare, Waterwatch and 'Friends of ...' groups in our case study areas all show strong evidence of this trend. High-priority regional NRM issues may have more chance of attracting volunteer support in areas where they correspond with local, more personal motivations. This also accords with the observations of the review of regional NRM bodies conducted by Holm and Associates (2004, p. 7).

Clarifying roles and responsibilities

The shift in scale engendered by regionalisation has resulted in confusion concerning the roles and responsibilities of all participants. From the outset the *Blue Book* highlighted a need for clear roles and responsibilities in regional planning (NNRMTF, 1999, p. 10). Holm and Associates (2004, p. 20) also highlight the need for appropriate responsibilities to be agreed, and for constant communication on roles and clarification of boundary issues, citing an interviewee who commented, "Government agencies are treating volunteers as paid employees, not as volunteers". Our research leads us to conclude that roles and responsibilities in regional NRM are still contested.

During this study, this concern was apparent, for example, when we interviewed a grassroots group volunteer about a project her group considered important:

How can we set up this project? Is that a regional project? Is it a priority of council (local government) to do this? How are they going to do it? Where are they going to do it? And does NRMSEQ set that up? Does (our group) set it up? Does council set it up?

While it is outside the direct focus of our research into relationships between regional bodies and grassroots groups, it is important to note that a clarification of roles and responsibilities of others, including local government and other government agencies, will help to sort the situation out for grassroots groups and

regional bodies. McDonald *et al.* (2005, p. 6) note that regional coordination groups (groups of staff from agencies associated with NRM) have a significant role to play here.

In our *Bridges and Barriers Report* we suggested that, with respect to the engagement of grassroots groups, the barriers to collaboration appeared surmountable. Grassroots group participants interviewed suggested the regional body could:

- work strategically with other organisations that have effective community engagement strategies in place (e.g. the Moreton Bay Waterways and Catchments Partnership was mentioned as one example);
- recruit staff with first-hand experience in the community NRM sector in order to enhance communication with and relationships with grassroots groups; and
- recognise and harness enthusiasm for projects that, as one interviewee put it, were “in their own back yards”.

We observed that NRMSEQ was active on all these fronts. We particularly noted the ‘round tables’ the regional body has run with grassroots groups throughout the region, where NRMSEQ worked with grassroots groups to recognise and harness enthusiasm for projects that were literally in their own back yards. These round tables may go part-way towards solving a problem identified by Holm and Associates (2004, p. 2) concerning responsibility for decision-making, at least within the grassroots group–regional body collaboration. Put simply, they may help both parties to better understand each other’s business and to work out what each is doing in terms of NRM, why it is important to them and on what matters they may collaborate and work to their mutual benefit. For conservation grassroots groups the process may be more involved as many of their biodiversity and other issues may lie across several round tables. This is in line with Baccaro’s (2005, p. 4) assessment of the obstacles facing ‘dispersed’ interests such as conservation grassroots groups compared to the usually more ‘concentrated’ and localised interests of carer grassroots groups.

Resourcing the process

The adequacy of resources to support the participation of grassroots groups in regional NRM arrangements emerged as a theme early in our study and has been confirmed through interviews and observations. When the new regional arrangements were first being discussed, the Australian Government had

suspended its funding for community-based NRM activities. The two national funding schemes that now serve as the foundation for regional NRM, the NHT and NAPSWQ, had provided crucial funds for catchment coordination and other environmental projects administered by grassroots groups.

During the start-up phase of the regional NRM body in southeast Queensland, grassroots conservationists and carers were anxious to see the new arrangements in place as soon as possible so funds for on-ground projects would flow again. This interruption between the first and second phases of the NHT had forced many of their organisations to retrench staff and interrupt projects. Their dependence on these funds meant that, during the initial stages of regionalisation, many were prepared to acquiesce to management approaches that they might otherwise have rejected. We observed a high level of pragmatism at this stage, with representatives of regional grassroots groups expressing concern about decisions but remaining involved in the process. This was not the case in other places throughout the State, as noted elsewhere in this report, with some grassroots conservation groups in many regions rejecting the governance arrangements quite early in their evolution.

Our study appraised the resources available through the new regional arrangements to support grassroots groups' involvement through observations and interviews in this region and, further afield, via web-based collection of regional NRM plans and documents throughout Queensland and an extended literature review. The reliability of this appraisal was reinforced by feedback from think tank and symposium participants. We offer ten recommendations relating to arrangements to support grassroots participation in regional NRM. These are shown as Table 4.

Some of these mechanisms have already been incorporated into the legal and organisational structure of regional bodies, including NRMSEQ. Others require resources to be set aside. They all take time. The time and money required to develop and administer collaborative regional NRM arrangements has been viewed as a wasteful distraction from urgent NRM interventions by many of the interviewees over the time of this study, and by other researchers examining regional NRM. When a retreat for the new NRMSEQ board was held, for instance, some grassroots groups' members considered the training and group development elements of this activity a lower priority than on-ground NRM projects that might otherwise have been funded. Conversely, the support for grassroots involvement in this region has resulted in a much more diverse and representative governance structure than the NRM bodies in other parts of the country.

Table 4. Mechanisms to support the participation of grassroots groups

1. Regional body constitution requiring balanced representation and the active involvement of grassroots groups as ordinary members and on the board
2. Explicit requirement that board members actively represent their constituencies
3. Community engagement strategies specifying performance indicators and minimum standards
4. Regular, innovative and context-appropriate community engagement activities to engage both active stakeholders and the broader community
5. Opportunities for public comment on key planning documents
6. Staff with relevant experience, networks and skills engaged to support the involvement of grassroots groups (community support officers)
7. Remuneration of costs incurred through participation including travel, time and office equipment
8. Training for grassroots group representatives to enhance their governance skills
9. Regular evaluation and monitoring of the level and diversity of grassroots groups' participation
10. Remedial strategies to enhance the participation of under-represented groups

In some parts of the State, sitting fees have been made available for board members to support their participation. Our audit of Queensland's fifteen regional groups revealed that the beneficiaries of generous sitting fees have included board members who were already more than adequately supported (including local councillors), while grassroots groups' members were either unsupported or not participating. The comparatively low level of participation of grassroots groups in the management of regional NRM bodies has, without doubt, been exacerbated by the costs and time required of their volunteer members. This apparently skewed arrangement applies equally to other support mechanisms for participation, including extension staff and resources.

In southeast Queensland, the four community support officers employed by NRMSEQ have been responsible for the engagement of stakeholders including grassroots groups. The SEQ body has also had considerable success in engaging Aboriginal groups while NRM bodies in some other regions have not maintained the level of Indigenous stakeholder involvement that is mandated in the bilateral agreements between the Australian and Queensland governments. Support officers were employed 'by sector' in the Western Catchments regional body area, upstream of SEQ, with a staff member assigned to support the activities of grassroots conservation groups. With the merger of the Western Catchments Group and NRMSEQ, this support has been extended throughout the entire, 'merged', regional body area.

State-wide, it is clear that grassroots conservation groups have struggled to participate in some regions and have actively boycotted the NRM processes in some others. This may be partly explained by contrasting the level of support available for conservationists with support mechanisms for industry groups. Several regional NRM bodies employ staff to exclusively support industry involvement, but few employ community support officers to pay the same level of attention to conservationists' involvement. The Regional Groups' Collective, which helps coordinate regional arrangements in Queensland, supported the employment of a 'policy partnership officer' to help community conservation groups throughout Queensland participate in regional NRM. Appropriately, the officer was located in the office of the Queensland Conservation Council and liaised closely with the peak conservation network's member groups. After several short-term contracts, during which it became apparent additional resources would be required to effectively meet the sector's needs, this position was terminated in November 2005.

In general, there are fewer forms of support available to grassroots groups than to other NRM stakeholders including local government and industry, and support has generally been available at a much lower level. Interviews with conservation grassroots groups' members indicate that they have travelled further to participate, covered more of their own expenses, and received less targeted support than other stakeholders. Not surprisingly, they are much less well represented across the State than are other stakeholder groups. This outcome is consistent with Baccaro's (2005, p. 4) assessment of the obstacles facing 'dispersed' interests such as community and civic groups compared to the higher level of participation by 'concentrated' interests including producer groups.⁵

Grassroots groups working collaboratively

The promise of current regional arrangements is that sustainable management decisions will be reached and implemented through deliberative and inclusive arrangements that support collaboration between government, industry and community sectors. By participating satisfactorily in the identification of regional problems and solutions, stakeholders will derive a strong sense of ownership (Joint Steering Committee, 2002, p. 6) and plans will be effectively implemented and evaluated. This approach entails collaboration both within and between sectors.

⁵ There is evidence that grassroots groups also appear to have been marginalised in the monitoring and evaluation of regional arrangements. For example, a report commissioned by SEQ Catchments to clarify roles and responsibilities of regional bodies and key agencies (Briggs, 2005) was based on interviews with 20 stakeholders, none of whom was formally associated with grassroots groups. Significantly, two interviewees represented industry groups.

Our *Bridges and Barriers* report noted that this ideal was difficult to attain and that grassroots groups' members sometimes experienced the regional approach as a competition for influence in which they were marginalised and dominated by more powerful or influential stakeholders. This situation is consistent with Fung and Wright's (2003, p. 262) description of conventional interest group politics as it incorporates both top-down governance structures and adversarial decision-making processes. It is clearly still a considerable distance from the ideals of participatory governance structures, collaborative decision-making and empowered participatory governance expressed in the *Blue Book*, the bilateral agreement between the Queensland and Australian governments, and the planning documents of NRMSEQ and other regional NRM bodies across Australia.

Collaboration within sectors

This study is primarily concerned with the experiences of grassroots groups. Over the time of the study, to what extent have these groups experienced the new regional arrangements as collaborative?

Since the early stages of regionalisation, grassroots participation has shown clear signs of decline. Both the 'carers' and 'conservation' divisions responded actively (if not enthusiastically) to the initial public meetings and the opportunity to join as member groups and board members. During the first year of the new regional arrangements, both these divisions worked to maximise the involvement and influence of their constituencies through face-to-face meetings, email bulletins and discussion groups and formalising communication networks. Within twelve months, however, the board members representing conservation interests were much less clearly supported by and responsive to their constituents. The (initially) regular divisional meetings became less frequent and communication between board members and their communities of interest was more sporadic.

The carer grassroots groups had previously been supported by the Queensland Landcare and Catchment Management Council, a representative group of carers who provided advice directly to the Queensland Government through the then Minister for Natural Resources and Mines. With the advent of new regional arrangements, the Queensland Government disbanded the council, providing funding for the establishment of Queensland Water and Land Carers Inc., a group which provides support to grassroots groups, including provision of insurance. This allows these groups to carry out on-ground repair, education and awareness and monitoring work.

In southeast Queensland, the carers also formed a regional group, which meets quarterly, usually in conjunction with a field trip or other activity. These networks have been augmented by the establishment of the Queensland Landcare Foundation, which provides various forms of support and coordination for carer groups, for example a regular newsletter, *Q-Link Landcare News*, with details of community initiatives, funding opportunities and engagement activities.

Over the time of the study, we have observed that, as regional governance arrangements have matured, with established boards and significant progress toward plan development, institutional power has tended to become more centralised. Fewer decisions have been made through processes that engage the broader community and procedural decision-making (such as voting) has tended to replace deliberative processes (such as building consensus), although activities such as the two citizen senates held during the study period indicate genuine efforts to work against this trend, at least in terms of seeking advice and feedback on the actions of the regional body from grassroots groups and the community in general.

However, in some respects we note that the regional body has shifted incrementally from its inclusive origins to reflect elements of corporatist or 'dominator' organisational cultures (Baccaro, 2005; Eisler, 2002, p. 212) that are more commonly associated with government agencies than with community-based organisations. The externally imposed demand to develop and implement plans to a government-determined timeframe may have contributed to this trend. It may also be implicated in comments we have noted during field observations relating to the need for skills-based rather than representative boards, and adoption of corporate modes of decision-making, somewhat distant from the deliberative and inclusive ideal described in earlier regional NRM documents.

Collaboration between sectors

From the outset, representatives of established grassroots groups expressed reservations about the extent to which the arrangements would achieve the intended level of collaboration. In fact, when we presented a leading conservationist with a diagram that depicted the region's emerging institutional arrangements for NRM in late 2003 and asked him to identify collaborative spaces (where decisions might be made collaboratively), he replied, "None of this is about collaboration." His assessment was confirmed during our study in interviews with several community members who encountered regional bodies as 'creatures of government'. Curiously, discussions with government officers reveal that they encounter regional bodies as 'creatures of the community'. These disparate views suggest that both sectors have

a relatively low level of ownership and may partially explain the reticence in some quarters to become and remain actively involved.

The most obvious obstacle to collaboration between sectors is that not all interests are strongly or evenly represented in regional groups. This observation is not limited to the regional body in southeast Queensland but applies, perhaps even more acutely, elsewhere across the State. The under-representation of grassroots groups has emerged despite concerted efforts by regional bodies to ensure the participation of grassroots groups and their constituents.

The regional body in southeast Queensland, NRMSEQ, expresses its commitment to participatory and collaborative arrangements in its regional plan, annual reports and on its website. Prior to the organisation's inception, a project officer facilitated a series of well-advertised public meetings in late 2002 to communicate the Australian and State governments' intended regional NRM arrangements. At these meetings, participants were encouraged to comment on preferred strategies to ensure equitable participation and deliberative decision-making. These discussions informed a discussion paper that subsequently served as the basis for the regional body's constitution.

The public meetings culminated in an inaugural annual general meeting for the newly incorporated association where members and board members were selected to balance the interests of grassroots and conservation groups, industry and local government. Since its inception, the new organisation's staff have designed and facilitated a range of community engagement exercises to add to the awareness and involvement of community members. Their activities included community workshops that identified seven key 'drivers' or factors considered most influential in shaping NRM practices. These have been adopted as part of the framework for plan development and priority setting. The organisation states (NRMSEQ 2005a, p. 31) that the regional planning process has involved:

... extensive stakeholder consultation... NRMSEQ board members, representing nine sectors, have actively participated in and guided the strategic policy directions. They have also played an important role in keeping their individual sectors informed as developments occur.

The organisation's strategies to engage stakeholders and reflect community interests and aspirations also involved the appointment of a multi-sector advisory committee and the establishment of purposeful links with existing networks including school-age children, research institutions and traditional owner groups. Significantly,

the regional body considers community groups “absolutely vital” (NRMSEQ, 2005a, p. 46) in NRM and refers to itself as a community-based organisation.

Comparable efforts to actively engage grassroots groups have been made across the State. The Queensland Government (2005) described the regionalisation process as a step toward “healthier arrangements” that would invest in community capacity to be involved in the development and implementation of natural resource management. This commitment to the spirit of collaborative NRM has been a universal feature of regional NRM groups throughout Queensland and is prominently communicated through their public communication including websites as summarised in Table 5.

Most regional bodies adopted detailed community engagement plans that included multiple opportunities for grassroots groups to help set priorities and shape NRM plans. These community engagement plans were required for regional bodies to receive designation status as defined in the bilateral agreement between the Queensland and Australian governments. Clauses 67 and 68 of the agreement stipulate that regional groups must have a “majority community membership, balancing production and conservation interests” and ensuring the “effective participation and representation by relevant stakeholders including Indigenous interests, and local government”. Designation status applies not only to the establishment of regional NRM bodies, but also stipulates that, “to maintain their designation status under this agreement, regional bodies must ... continue to enhance their governance arrangements” (Environment Australia, 2004, p. 15).

Table 5. Indicative commitments to community-based NRM from regional bodies' homepages

Regional body	Indication of commitment
Burdekin Dry Tropics board	"Our goal is to have an empowered community that delivers solutions to natural resource management issues for the best environmental, social, cultural and economic outcomes in the Burdekin Dry Tropics region."
Burnett Mary Regional Group	Our purpose is to... "seek opportunities for effective community-based management of our natural resources and to establish a framework for broad action and targets to guide the regional community."
Condamine Alliance	"... A regional body with the lead responsibility for enabling the community to achieve sustainable natural resource management... through facilitation, coordination and management of assets and investments..."
Desert Channels Qld Inc.	"DCQ ownership: the community of the region"
Fitzroy Basin Association	"... A community-based organisation that promotes sustainable development in Central Queensland. FBA involves the region's major natural resource management stakeholders who have an interest in the use and management of the natural resources..."
Mackay Whitsunday NRM Group	"... Formed in 1997 to improve the links between government, industry and community... a community-based groups that is made up of representatives from a broad range of stakeholders ..."
Southeast Queensland Natural Resource Management Inc.	Our vision: "A caring community sustainably using, protecting and enjoying the region's natural resources, beauty and environment"
Northern Gulf Resource Management Group	A "not-for-profit, community-based company... Membership of the NGRMG is open and managed via five sectoral branches, these being local government, industry, Indigenous, community and conservation. The groups must at all times provide accountability to the Northern Gulf stakeholders and communities"
Queensland Murray Darling Basin Committee	"Through the development and maintenance of cross-community, industry and government agency partnerships, QMDC enhances its ability to achieve goals and outcomes."
Southeast Queensland Western Catchments Group	"... Draws together the efforts of community, environment, industry, traditional owners and government to coordinate and prioritise natural resource management of the region ..."
South West NRM	"The community working together to build a healthy, sustainable, attractive, and profitable southwest Queensland, through the effective management of our natural resources ..."

Despite their efforts, many regional groups in Queensland have struggled to achieve or maintain adequate participation of community sector interests and organisations. Our state-wide desktop audit of the board membership of regional NRM bodies presents a stark picture of imbalance (see Figure 2). While it is not straightforward to identify many board members' sectoral affiliations, there appears an over-representation on most boards by industry and local government. Primary producers and local government authorities occupy half the board positions available throughout the State (approximately one-quarter each) including the majority of

chairperson positions. In some regions, these two sectors occupy almost all available board positions. Board membership by community members associated with carer groups is reasonably strong at 17%, though this figure may present an unreliable indication of grassroots involvement. It is often difficult to differentiate between 'industry' representatives and 'carers' and many board members associated with Landcare and other carer groups are also primary producers. They might equally be considered to represent the interests of industry. By contrast, conservation and community interests are actively represented by just 7% each and fewer than one in twenty board members are formally associated with research or science institutions.

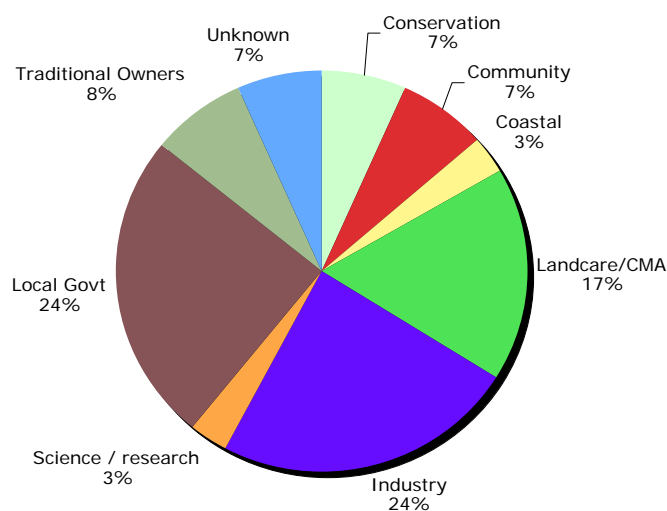


Figure 2. Queensland regional NRM groups' board membership by sector (based on data from fourteen regional bodies)

Grassroots groups are not alone in being under-represented in the regional groups' board membership. Only one-fifth of regional bodies' board members are women and less than one tenth are Indigenous, despite clear commitments by the Australian and State governments, and regional bodies, that NRM funding decisions must be informed through the active involvement of traditional owner interests.⁶

⁶ Board membership is clearly only one indicator of engagement. Bellamy *et al.* (2002, p. iii) suggest the low level of traditional owner participation in these groups can be attributed to the mismatch between Indigenous customary governance and representative structures.

In some places, the noninvolvement of grassroots groups can perhaps be attributed to factors beyond the control of regional NRM groups, such as the proportion of the community self-identifying as conservationists or carers and the tyranny of distance. The latter factor is certainly influential. During this study, we heard reports of conservationists travelling thousands of kilometres to participate in regional groups' meetings. In some regions, NRM bodies have found it difficult to engage with local conservationists and have instead engaged environmentalists from coastal cities or the larger national environment groups. These factors do not, however, explain the active boycott of regional NRM processes by conservationists in some regions. In at least two regions, conservationists have decided to disengage until regional bodies address their concerns about planning, community engagement and staffing. The policy project officer employed to support conservation sector participation explained that this decision was a rational assessment by community conservationists that:

... regional conservation values and outcomes would be best served by remaining outside the regional NRM processes and maintaining their core business of conservation advocacy and campaigning, which includes critiquing the local NRM plan (Queensland Conservation Council, 2005, p. 1).

The Queensland Conservation Council's assessment of conservation sector involvement (QCC, 2005) concluded that processes intended to be deliberative and participatory were actually experienced as competitive and that the imbalance of representation contributed to an overwhelming bias toward the interests of primary producers and developers. This is not an uncommon experience for environmentalists, and resonates with Gray's (2004) case study of the failure of collaborative decision-making concerning the future of a National Park in Minnesota. Conservationists considered their efforts might be diluted and lose credibility if they worked closely with regional NRM bodies due to the low level of trust in these institutions. In part, this lack of trust seems to be based on the longevity and demonstrated capacity of regional NRM bodies. These institutions are still very new in most parts of the State, whereas the community-based regional conservation councils have existed for at least thirty years.

In other regions, NRM planning processes have stalled and grassroots participation has not been possible.

Few grassroots conservationists speak positively of the regional arrangements. A recent interviewee referred to the regional NRM approach as "a fiasco" and indicated his sector was "still very dubious about obtaining serious conservation outcomes through this process." He observed that the conservation sector is

“generally poorly resourced to engage in this process compared to many other groups.” Other explanations for community groups’ disengagement from deliberative processes have been suggested during this study and elsewhere (Hibberd & Madsen, 2003; Oliver, Whelan & Mackenzie, 2005; Whelan, 2005; Whelan & Lyons, 2005; Whelan & Oliver, 2005). Community groups may choose not to participate because:

1. The issues do not directly or sufficiently concern them;
2. They are not convinced that their participation will make a difference;
3. Approaches other than participation in collaborative arrangements appear more likely to resolve issues of concern;
4. Other groups are participating;
5. Government agencies appear to have proposed flawed or inadequate deliberative processes;
6. Community preferences and suggestions about how they want to participate appear to have been ignored; and/or
7. Participating in collaborative decision-making will restrict alternative responses and actions.

Conservationists’ decision to withdraw from or boycott regional NRM arrangements in some regions can be explained through reference to Fung and Wright’s (2003) discussion of empowered participatory governance and use of adversarial countervailing power introduced previously in this report. Despite clear indications that the regional arrangements were based on this ideal, the Australian and State governments have in fact maintained elements of top-down governance arrangements. Rather than devolving power along with responsibility, government agencies have retained their power to determine designation status for regional bodies, imposed a demanding schedule for the development of regional plans and provided no certainty that this model for devolved NRM will remain in place beyond mid-2007. In this context, it makes sense that stakeholders such as grassroots groups have sought to exercise countervailing power. Conservationists’ boycotts of regional NRM processes demonstrate adversarial countervailing power because decisions reached without their involvement will lack legitimacy and be harder to implement. Their boycott has almost certainly created a risk that some regional plans will not be supported by all stakeholders and that they may require renegotiation in the future.

The consequences of the under- and non-participation of grassroots groups in regional NRM arrangements in Queensland are unclear at this stage. It is possible, of course, that regional plans will be developed, funded and implemented regardless. Conversely, conservation grassroots disengagement may undermine the

implementation of the emerging plans because their support and participation is an important prerequisite. Hibberd and Madsden (2003) question the democratic legitimacy of decisions reached by groups that cannot claim to include all affected parties.

Following our State-wide desktop audit of grassroots groups' participation, we looked for evidence that their under-representation had been noted by either individual regional bodies or the Queensland Government. Our investigation uncovered detailed frameworks developed by some regional bodies to monitor and evaluate community engagement (e.g. Northern Gulf NRM), but we did not discover any rigorous assessment of community participation and representation at a regional or State level, or concerted remedial action to strengthen grassroots groups' involvement in areas where this was seen to be lacking.

An additional obstacle to collaboration between stakeholders has been the definition of 'divisions' or sectors by regional bodies. As noted elsewhere, NRMSEQ's constitution defines eight divisions to categorise member groups and board members and ensure equitable and community-based decision-making. This institutional arrangement has been a useful measure of representativeness and serves to balance interests. It has also, however, had other impacts such as creating artificial barriers between community groups and their members.

Under NHT1, the distinction between groups with conservation, carer and marine interests was fuzzy. It was (and is) commonplace to find individuals expressing their interests and concerns through policy advocacy, 'hands-on' efforts and community education related to a range of land and water issues. Our observations and interviews suggest that grassroots groups' representatives adopt behaviours in order to represent their designated division that may weaken collaborative relationships. Specifically, we have noted a tendency toward competition for influence between organisations and individuals who would otherwise consider their interests congruent. This is not to suggest, however, that the grassroots divisions do not cooperate with each other. We recently observed carers (Queensland Water and Land Carers) and conservationists (Queensland Conservation Council) collaborating to strengthen the capacity of volunteers to participate in regional NRM processes.

Recognising and dealing with conflict

Conflict is widespread and endemic in NRM culture generally. From the bureaucracies that shape NRM policy to grassroots groups that focus on natural

resource management, there are continuing conflicts, negotiations and debates as to “what will count as nature, resources and environment” (Tsing, 1999, p. 2). As one grassroots interviewee pointed out:

Conflict happens pretty much on a day-to-day basis, not necessarily within our group, but you hear about other groups in conflict and what it really depends on is what it is (about), who it is, and how it is handled.

In our research we observed conflict being played out in two main ways:

- Turf wars between grassroots groups and between grassroots groups and the regional body, often over limited funds and other resources or over misperceptions and assumptions regarding roles and responsibilities of various parties (conflicts over these matters were particularly evident in the first year of our fieldwork); and
- Efforts to apportion blame for perceived failures of previous social mobilisation approaches to NRM, particularly in relation to activities conducted under NHT1.⁷

Like Tsing (1999), we view these conflicts to be culturally based. As pointed out in our literature review (Oliver, 2003), Eisler (2002, p. 212) describes the modern western culture as following the *dominator* model, with authoritarian structures and relations of control presented as normal. We agree and find it no surprise that ideas of control and domination cause conflict when people try or are forced to work outside their ‘cultural comfort zone’ and to collaborate or partner with others. After all, if we can command limited resources to our own purpose or apportion blame to someone else for the failure of an activity—whether perceived or real—in which we may have taken part, then we will have dominated the situation and won out for our own interests. It is simple: just use the words ‘collaboration’ and ‘partnership’ and then continue to act in the more comfortable, culturally acceptable ways that we have always acted. In terms of Fung and Wright’s (2003) work, acting in such a way will not lead to ‘empowered participatory governance’ as depicted in Cell IV of Table 2, but more likely to Cell II, ‘adversarial pluralism’, with groups exercising a high degree of adversarial countervailing power.

⁷ The ‘blame game’, as we came to call it, was more apparent among both government and non-government people involved in the regionalisation process early in our fieldwork. As our observations progressed we saw more evidence of people also recognising the more positive aspects of the previous arrangements (e.g. the foundation of social capital existing within networks of grassroots groups built during this time).

In essence, we feel that many conflicts we have observed in our research may be able to be resolved if participants had a better understanding of the place of collaboration in NRM and its limits, especially:

- when collaboration really is appropriate in terms of participants' values and motivations in relation to the importance of the issue, and its social and political context;
- whether the issue is really a problem or opportunity that is shared by other potential collaborators and whether or not they are interested in being involved;
- how best to conduct ourselves when working collaboratively: how to build social capital in the collaboration; how to establish norms for use of collaborative countervailing power; and how to engage in social learning in terms of the problem or opportunity that has brought people together; and
- how to monitor and evaluate our progress.

The remainder of this report focuses on these topics. We present proposals to strengthen grassroots involvement and endeavour in a very real and practical sense to highlight the place of collaboration and empowered participatory governance to ensure a sound future for regional NRM arrangements.

Moving ahead: proposals to strengthen collaborative NRM

This report opened by noting that the current institutional arrangements appear certain to change in the next two years. Commitments made by the Australian Government through the NAPSWQ and NHT programs, and the funding to support the current arrangements, expire mid-2007. In anticipation, both the Australian and Queensland governments have initiated reviews of regional NRM arrangements. The national review is being undertaken by a small reference group comprising Mr Kim Keogh, a pastoralist from Western Australia; Mr Bob Frazer, Executive Officer of the Burdekin Dry Tropics board; and Mr Doug Chant, President of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria.⁸ The national review will focus on governance. It was announced on 13 October 2005 by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran (Australian Government, 2005), who stated that the group will be “consulting across Australia with key community and industry stakeholders” to “ensure that any future arrangements build on the knowledge and hard-earned successes gained by government, rural industries and the community to date.” Some grassroots groups in southeast Queensland took up this opportunity to inform future arrangements: the Queensland Water and Land Carers group met with the panel, while other grassroots groups including conservationists appear not to have had the capacity to actively participate in the review.

The Queensland Government’s review began in April 2005 with the release of the *Options Paper* (Queensland Government, 2005). This document outlined four possible future directions. The first option is based on the maintenance of the existing non-statutory, community-based regional NRM bodies. There are three variations to this option: the current system; regional bodies with stronger links to other planning processes; and full integration of regional NRM bodies with the regional planning advisory committees established under Queensland’s *Integrated Planning Act 1997*. The second option foreshadows a statutory basis for regional NRM bodies with new legislation to establish regional groups with or without statutory powers. This would resemble the arrangement in New South Wales, where the thirteen catchment management associations that play a comparable role to regional bodies in Queensland are statutory bodies, established under that State’s *Catchment Management Authorities Act 2003*. The third and fourth options involve government delivery of regional natural resource management—one with community advisory bodies and one without.

⁸ The membership of this review panel is consistent with the imbalance of interests represented on the boards of regional bodies. While all three may be skilled and experienced in the NRM field, all three members are male and there is a clear emphasis on representing the interests of primary producers.

The future arrangements will inevitably influence how grassroots groups participate in environmental decision-making, as well as having an impact on opportunities for social learning or participatory adaptive management, and power, conflict and collaboration. The Coastal CRC's submission (Appendix A) to the Queensland Government's *Options Paper* expressed the CRC's concern that an abrupt change would interrupt collaborative relationships and undermine the social capital that has developed among and between NRM stakeholders during the last two years and previously through NHT1. It also encouraged the architects of future NRM arrangements to revisit the principles of collaborative NRM communicated in the *Blue Book* and the Queensland and Australian governments' bilateral agreement to establish: (1) whether the basis for these principles should be questioned; and (2) whether sufficient time and energy has been invested in putting these principles into practice.

We have interpreted the *Options Paper* in the context of relevant collaborative NRM theory and our three-year study of the impacts of the regionalisation process to date on grassroots groups and regional bodies and conclude that there are essentially three divergent directions that are likely to eventuate (as shown in Figure 3).

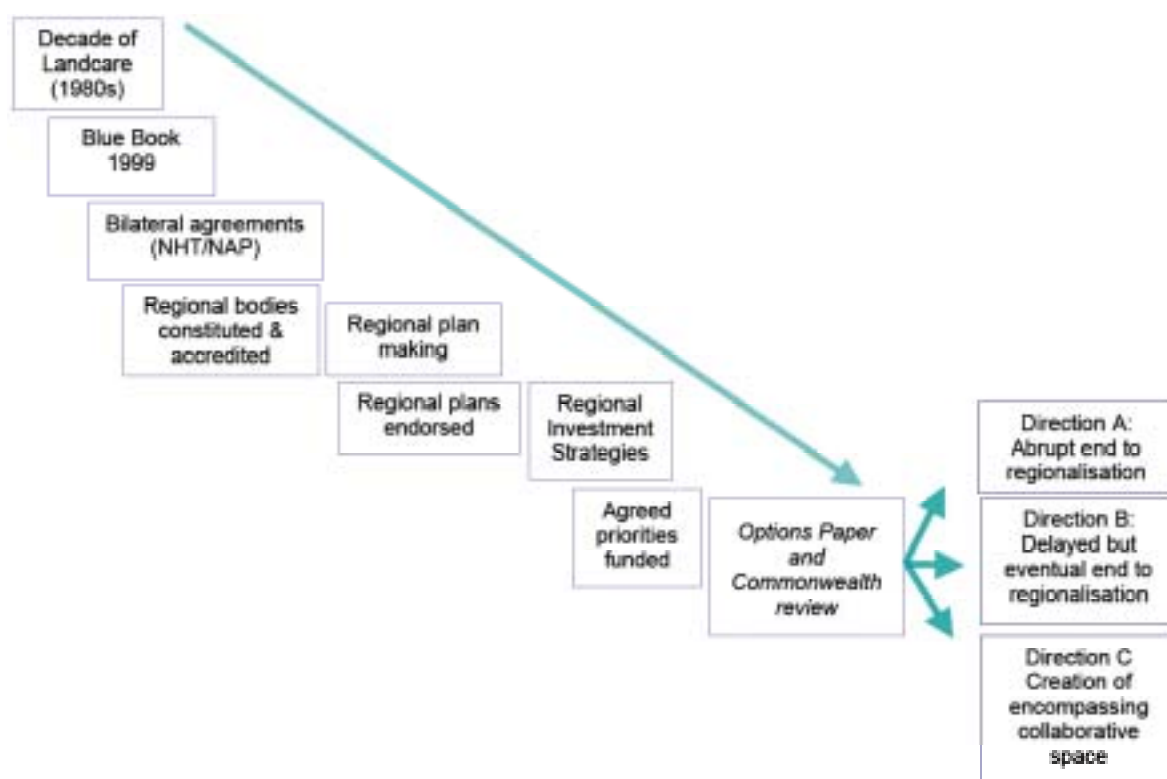


Figure 3. The evolution and uncertain future of regional NRM arrangements

Direction A: The end of regionalisation

The Queensland and Australian governments may conclude that this 'experiment' in regional NRM governance has failed. This conclusion would justify disbanding the regional bodies and resuming (or asserting) control of regional NRM decisions.

Direction B: Delayed but eventual end to regionalisation

The Queensland and Australian governments may continue to control resources and power. Elsewhere in this study we have noted that although responsibilities have been devolved to regional groups, commensurate power and resources (including money) have not always been devolved. This future direction might be signposted by institutional features including: (1) a shift from representative governance structures to skills-based selection of decision-makers including board members; (2) not redefining and constraining the responsibilities of regional groups to NRM work that requires collaboration and that is resourced; and (3) integrating regional NRM with statutory planning processes. In the long-term, these features are not conducive to collaborative governance as they are based on an acceptance of corporatist or 'dominator' values and practices. Consequently, pursuing this direction will likely to lead to continued uncertainty.

Direction C: Enter into appropriate collaborative space

Regional bodies may be supported to learn from their experiences, and to foster social learning and adaptive management. Continuing under the current framework, groups will develop and utilise frameworks to monitor and evaluate their processes and outcomes. There will be greater recognition of spatial, temporal and resource scales. Collaborative approaches will be confined to NRM work that requires collaboration and that is appropriately resourced. Regional arrangements will be integrated with the statutory planning processes and roles and responsibilities will be further clarified. Groups will become more financially and institutionally self-reliant. They will continue to strive to be collaborative and representative, and embrace an associative culture. These features will ensure greater certainty and continuity for all involved.

Given the uncertain future of regional NRM institutional arrangements and the significant decisions to be made in the next 18 months by grassroots groups and other stakeholders, regional NRM bodies and all spheres of government, it is timely to identify strategies that will support the purposeful pursuit of collaborative regional governance. We present in the final section of the report a set of strategies that respond to the two issues we consider most pressing to achieve collaborative

regional NRM and to move in Direction C: (1) monitoring and evaluation; and (2) defining and working within collaborative space.

Monitoring and evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation approaches adopted by regional NRM bodies largely determine the activities and outcomes that receive priority attention and shape organisational culture, including roles, responsibilities and relationships. Monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the current regional NRM arrangements are especially influential as they determine funding decisions and what constitutes success. To critically appraise current approaches to monitoring and evaluation, we have examined: (1) environmental management literature; (2) government policies and prescriptions for monitoring and evaluation; and (3) the interpretation and application of these frameworks by specific regional bodies.

Evaluation models, approaches and instruments

The first stage of this analysis entailed a bird's-eye overview of divergent monitoring and evaluation approaches. Our literature review (Oliver, 2003) highlighted a clear preoccupation with activities and environmental outcomes. What management interventions have been undertaken to improve the condition of land, water and air and what impact has resulted from these interventions? A national review of integrated catchment management evaluation arrangements conducted by Bellamy *et al.* (2002, p. iv) provided examples of both activity and outcome indicators. Activity measures include the number of plans and the area of riparian vegetation fenced, while environmental outcome measures relate directly, for instance, to measures such as improvement in catchment health.

Outcome measures may also address the socioeconomic impacts of environmental management. Moote and Conley (2003) suggest six socioeconomic monitoring indicators: (1) relationships built or strengthened; (2) increased trust; (3) participants' gained knowledge and understanding; (4) increased employment; (5) improved capacity for dispute resolution; and (6) changes in existing institutions or creation of new institutions.

A second and related approach to monitoring and evaluation addresses *process* outcomes: shifting attention from the results of management interventions to examine how plans are developed, implemented and reviewed. Process evaluation instruments are quite distinct from 'program impact' and 'efficiency evaluations'

(McDonald *et al.*, 2004, p. 51) and offer a complementary set of indicators. Table 6 presents five clusters of process indicators suggested by theorists in this field.

Table 6. Process indicators to complement outcome-focused evaluation

Theorist	Process indicators suggested
Beierle (1998, p. 14)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were participants representative? • Was the membership balanced? • Did participation occur early in the process? • Were there face-to-face discussions between the public and agency representatives? • Was the agency committed to the participatory process and responsive to public input?
Bellamy <i>et al.</i> (2005, p. 12)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transparent, inclusive and effective processes for stakeholder participation are widely recognised as critical for successful outcomes in regional planning and decision-making
Craig and Vanclay (2005)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impartiality of the lead agency and the chair • Honesty amongst stakeholders • Opportunities for stakeholders to participate • Extent to which all relevant perspectives are represented • Potential influence of NRM committees relative to other actors • Availability and utilisation of all relevant knowledge • Commitment to consensus-based decision-making • Specific characteristics of the issue itself • Policy parameters (discourse)
McDonald <i>et al.</i> (2004, p. 15)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional process and tools support the integration of different types of information, knowledge and values • Capacity exists for all players to participate in regional planning, management and implementation processes • Processes that support regional NRM are widely perceived as fair • Processes are adaptable and responsive to changes in understanding, values, priorities and external pressures. Appropriate strategies and approaches are used to facilitate change • Processes support and exhibit connectivity within and between scales
Moote and Conley (2003, p. 376)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broadly shared vision • Clear, feasible goals • Diverse, inclusive participation • Participation by local government • Linkages to individuals and groups beyond primary participants • Open, accessible, and transparent process • Clear, written plan • Consensus-based decision-making • Decisions regarded as just • Consistent with existing laws and policies

Environmental governance structures face other decisions concerning evaluation and monitoring arrangements. In addition to questions about whether to focus on outcomes, processes or both, Bellamy and McDonald (2004) suggest that environmental managers need to determine the extent to which evaluative

processes will be participatory, whether they will rely on a single agreed evaluative instrument or multiple methods and the spatial and temporal scales for evaluation.⁹

The first of Bellamy and McDonald's (2004) questions is particularly relevant in this context. Given the explicit intention that regional NRM processes will be community-based, stakeholder-driven and conducive to adaptive management, it is appropriate to consider how best to involve all parties with meaningful opportunities to participate in evaluating processes and outcomes. Ideally, evaluation is part of the adaptive management cycle and facilitates negotiation and mediation processes (Bellamy & McDonald, 2004).

This principle may be difficult to apply, however, in an institutional context characterised by hierarchical managerialism. Environmental planners' and managers' desire to satisfy funding bodies, such as the Australian Government in this context, may lead to evaluative processes that are ostensibly geared toward the approval of government agencies. Conversely, Sewell's (1979, in Beierle 1998, p. 14) survey of the evaluations of 22 public participation programs concluded that the dominant objective was to "secure public acceptance of agency proposals". Beierle concludes that evaluators' intended audiences and purposes, and their role in the planning process, influence their evaluative approaches. For instance, public acceptance and approval by funding bodies may be a stronger factor shaping evaluations performed by citizen groups, independent observers and consultants than those performed by public servants and professional planners.

Guidelines from Australian and State governments

The second level of our analysis of monitoring and evaluation approaches entailed an appraisal of protocols required or recommended by the Australian Government. The Department of Environment and Heritage (DEH) provided two key guiding documents to inform regional groups in their approaches to monitoring and evaluation: the *National Frameworks for NRM Standards and Targets* (DEH, 2003a) and *Monitoring and Evaluation* (DEH, 2003b). These guiding documents specify three sets of targets required of all regional plans against which NRM plan implementation will be monitored and evaluated:

- Aspirational targets: long-term goals which may take fifty years to attain;
- Resource condition targets: indicators of specific biophysical matters defined by the Australian Government. These are intended to be

⁹ Moote and Conley (2003, p. 379) identify a range of inductive and in-depth evaluation methods, and observe that ethnographic approaches including participant observation, focus groups and workshops, document analysis and interviews have gained credibility over time. It is worth noting that these are the chosen techniques for data collection in this study.

realistically achievable within ten to twenty years and must be in place within three years of the signing of a bilateral agreement.

- Management action targets: short-term targets or outputs achievable within one to five years that will contribute to the achievement of longer-term targets.

Furthermore, the *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework* (DEH 2003b, p. 13) recommends that targets should meet five criteria:

- Simple (easily interpreted and monitored);
- Measurable (statistically verifiable, reproducible and show trends);
- Accessible (regularly monitored, cost effective and consistent);
- Relevant (directly address the objectives); and
- Timely (provide early warning of potential problems).

These five criteria are referred to as the SMART filter¹⁰. Both framework documents advocate an evaluative approach that is oriented primarily toward biophysical outcomes—specifically, an improvement in natural resource condition. Process outcomes are suggested, for instance through measurement against “associated institutional matters” and “monitoring changes in management practice” (DEH, 2003b, pp. 10–11), but are not developed. Similarly, socioeconomic indicators receive minimal attention, although the Australian Government has indicated its intention to further develop this evaluative dimension and has convened a working group (NLWRA, 2005) specifically to undertake this task under the auspices of the National Land and Water Resources Audit. The relatively low level of emphasis on these indicators, however, is clear when examining the detailed set of biophysical indicators that are provided against recommended resource condition targets by both DEH and NLWRA.

The framework documents provide minimal guidance on process indicators. Both clearly communicate the Australian Government’s support for adaptive management approaches, but remain silent on whether this iterative management regime should be inclusive or participatory. Community stakeholders such as grassroots groups are not identified as active participants in this recommended management approach. Regional groups are expected to ensure community members can access monitoring data and to “transmit” complete and accurate information to “required stakeholders” (DEH, 2003b, p. 7), a far cry from the ideals of collaborative governance.

¹⁰ The SMART filter has been applied to a wide range of social and economic indicators by another Coastal CRC research team. See Lockie *et al.* (2005).

Regional groups in Queensland are given further guidance concerning preferred approaches to evaluation and monitoring by the Queensland Government's (2004) *Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*. Like the national frameworks, this set of prescriptions emphasises outcome evaluation, focusing on changes in regional resource condition, goods and services delivered through the regional planning processes, and quantitative measures of investment. The State Government signals some interest in process indicators by incorporating intermediate outcomes including capacity building.

In brief, these statements provide a clear sense that the Australian and Queensland governments expect a rigorous evaluation of 'on-ground' actions and outcomes. They communicate to regional groups a priority on tangible, concrete and short-term impacts.

Regional groups' approaches

Our third level of analysis was to examine specific regional bodies' approaches to monitoring and evaluation. In this desktop study, we were struck by the high level of rigour and attention given by regional groups to monitoring and evaluation. The plans developed by Queensland's regional NRM bodies have developed aspirational targets, resource condition targets and management action targets tailored to priorities in their catchments. The majority of regional plans, including the plan for southeast Queensland (NRMSEQ, 2005a) reflect the preoccupation with outcome indicators, resource condition in particular, modelled by the Queensland and Australian governments. By contrast, there is relatively less attention to process outcomes, and evaluative arrangements are not especially conducive to the forms of social learning or (participatory) adaptive management discussed in this report.

Two regional groups' approaches to evaluating process outcomes warrant mention here as exceptions to this pattern. The regional NRM group for Southern Gulf Catchments engaged consultants to develop a communication and engagement strategy (Thomas, Metcalfe & McClure, 2005) which incorporates process indicators to evaluate the nature of stakeholder representation, the effectiveness of engagement and communication methods and the extent to which guiding principles for process are being implemented. Similarly, the Western Catchments Group's capacity building program includes a comprehensive suite of process indicators organised around four themes: (1) support and resourcing for engagement; (2) knowledge and information; (3) technical, management and 'people' skills; and (4) structures and arrangements. Appendixes D and E provide extracts from these two regional bodies' process indicators.

Perhaps the most important question to ask about any of these evaluative approaches and commitments is whether or not they are actually implemented. This is equally important whether groups have adopted an ostensibly outcome-oriented approach, a process-oriented approach or a blend of the two. If, for instance, process indicators have been adopted to measure the extent to which institutional arrangements are transparent, inclusive and participatory, these must be utilised in a timely manner to allow both summative and evaluative evaluation. Apart from the Holm and Associates Report (2004), we are not aware of process evaluations having been undertaken at a regional, state or national level since the inception of the NAP/NHT regional arrangements. Furthermore, our research suggests that an independent State-wide process evaluation would conclude that the process indicators required for regional groups to be granted designation status are no longer met by several groups.

Towards an integrated evaluation framework

On the basis of this appraisal of monitoring and evaluation approaches, we have developed a framework (presented in Figure 4) to integrate practical and philosophical dimensions of collaborative regional governance.

This framework relies on a substantial body of literature summarised in the preceding discussion and cited above, as well as our own analysis of data gained in this research. It is also informed by the ongoing fieldwork and analysis being undertaken by researchers in the Engaged Government project.¹¹ The framework emphasises that efficacy or outcomes-focused monitoring and evaluation needs to be balanced with process monitoring and evaluation, showing the four dimensions that span these two areas as interrelated. We argue that any attempts to emphasise outcomes over process or vice versa, in terms of activity or monitoring and evaluation, would lead to an overall decline in the health and achievements of regional NRM collaborations. We have suggested 23 criteria that we see as useful in achieving an understanding of what is happening within the four dimensions of the framework. As we believe that NRM monitoring and evaluation should be as participatory as possible, we flag these as concepts that participants may wish to explore so that they may develop and use this framework in a manner that is appropriate to their situation.

¹¹ This project is also investigating the concept of collaboration, focusing on engagement within and between spheres of government and between government and community and industry. See <<http://www.griffith.edu.au/projecteg>>.

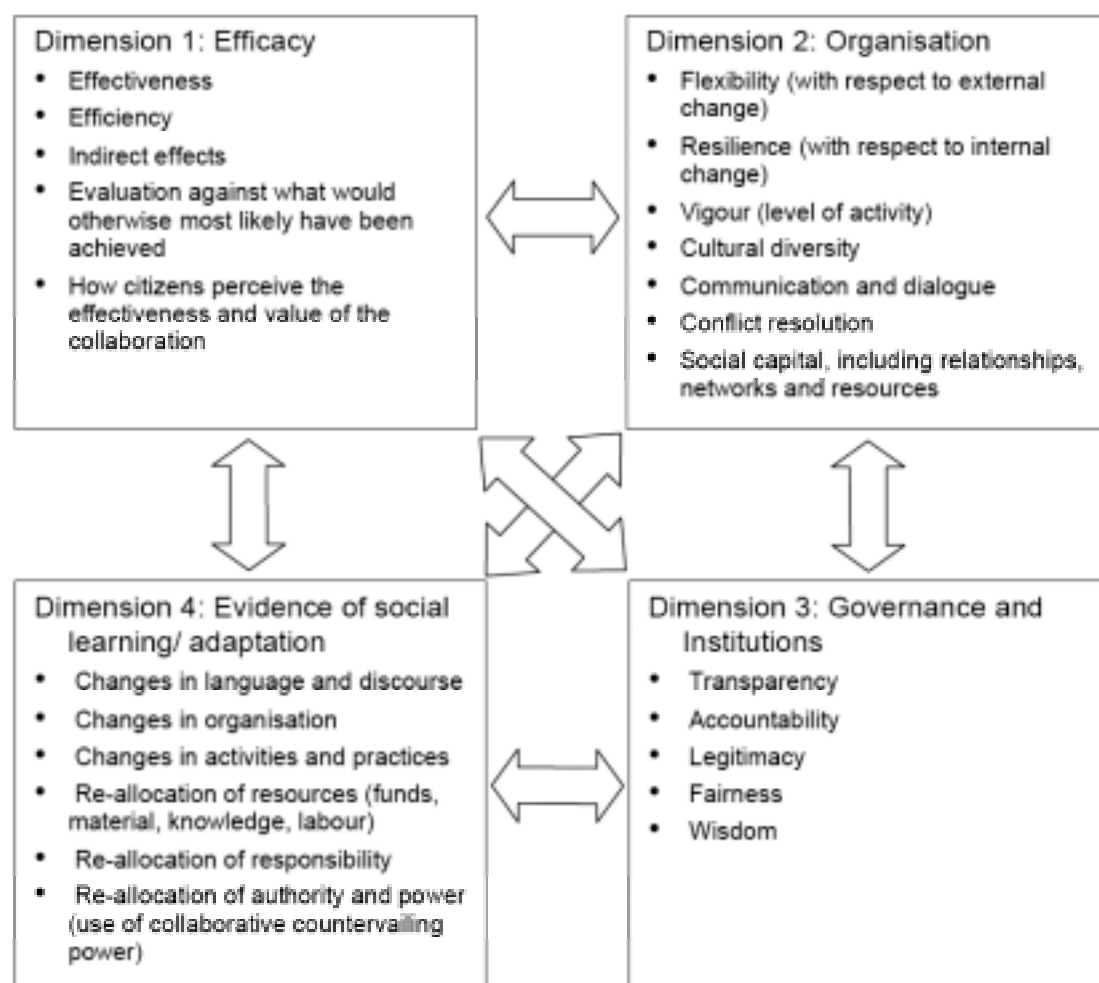


Figure 4. Monitoring and evaluation toolkit: four dimensions of ‘health’ of collaborative arrangements (after Fisher & Ury, 1983; Fung & Wright, 2003; Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Habermas, 1974, 1979; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1998; Oliver, 2004; Portes, 1998; Rees, 1988; Wondolleck & Yaffee, 2000).

Defining collaborative space

When *not* to collaborate

Not all NRM problems are amenable to social mobilisation and a collaborative solution. Recalling the definition for collaboration of Gray (1985, p. 912) offered earlier in this report, we stress that in practical terms collaboration is about solving problems or realising opportunities that participants cannot solve individually. Potential participants also need to be motivated to be involved. The issue at hand has to be important to them. As Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000, p. 250) emphasise in posing the following questions: Is the situation amenable to a collaborative solution? Is it characterised by such fundamental value differences that collaboration is likely to provide little room for agreement? Do the groups who should be involved have the incentive to engage in an effective way, or can incentives be structured to encourage their participation?

Darlow and Newby (1997, cited in Roberts, 2000, p. 13) agree, stating that “commitment, resources and the right set of people and circumstances are all needed if (collaborations) are to work.” Sometimes it may be preferable to try one approach or a range of approaches in combination (e.g. legislation and regulation, economic incentives and disincentives and advocacy) (Cosgrove, Evans & Yencken, 1994, pp. 5–6). Parties from community, industry and government may all initiate these actions. In line with Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000, p. 230) we recognise several concerns relating to government-initiated social mobilisation for NRM including:

- The need for agencies to embrace their statutory responsibilities for various aspects of NRM and not to abrogate these through devolution to collaborative groups;
- The argument that groups who have not participated may disagree with the decisions or outputs of the collaborative process; and
- That citizens participating in the process may lack the expertise to make sound decisions and the resources to implement them.

Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000) respond to these criticisms by offering a three-way test for determining the merits of a potential collaboration:

- “Is it legitimate?” Does it provide for normal public review and opportunities for comment?
- “Is it fair?” Have all parties who may be affected by the matter been invited to be involved? Are less able parties being resourced appropriately so that their participation may be ensured? Is the process open and transparent? Are the requests being placed on respective participants, in terms of their participation, reasonable and in proportion to the NRM problem under scrutiny? If the collaboration is to be a true partnership (Oliver, 2004) and an example of empowered participatory governance, are less powerful participants offered avenues to exercise collaborative countervailing power by the more powerful parties involved, or do they still have to exercise countervailing power adversarially?¹²
- “Is it wise?” Have adequate knowledge sources been identified and brought to bear on the matter at hand? Do participants understand areas of uncertainty in this regard?

¹² For example, in terms of our research we would argue that avenues for negotiating collaborative countervailing power early in the regionalisation process (e.g. prior agreement among all parties on binding conflict resolution processes to be used in the event of disagreements arising during the regionalisation process; more equitable distribution of resources to enable participation of disadvantaged groups) could have averted the use of adversarial countervailing power by grassroots conservation groups in some NRM regions exemplified by a boycott of the regionalisation process in their areas.

Determining collaborative space and how to work within it

Dukes and Firehock (2001) also address the issues of when and how to collaborate. We have included checklists they have developed for this purpose as Appendix B of this report. The literature cited above shows that there are certain issues, contexts and times when collaboration is an appropriate NRM tool and that there are other times when its use is clearly inappropriate. Reflection on our analysis of results supports this view. It is apparent to us that:

- There is a need for people contemplating a collaborative approach to NRM to clearly define the boundaries of the “space” within which collaboration may occur and to spend time devising a “valve” or set of checklists appropriate to their situation that helps them to systematically determine which issues and in what contexts they should work in that collaborative space and with whom; and
- Some sort of normative or ‘ideal’ model of the collaborative process that they will use when working within that space should be devised. This would be a space within which partnerships (which we define as collaborative and cooperative relationships that involve a renegotiation of power within the relationship) and empowered participatory governance (through the exercise of collaborative countervailing power) may flourish (Oliver, 2004; Fung & Wright, 2003). The culture within this space would be one of partnership rather than domination (Eisler, 2002, p. 212).

Figure 5 presents this model diagrammatically. As can be seen from Figure 5, a credible, skilled collaboration broker is needed to facilitate the process. This person initially starts work outside the collaborative space, working with ‘interested others’. Together they develop an issue, context and stakeholder analysis (ICASA) system (a series of checklists—see Appendix B for examples) appropriate for their situation to help them to determine which NRM issues are ‘ripe’ for collaboration in terms of their regional body and grassroots group. This is the sort of process that may well take place at round tables between regional bodies and grassroots groups. However, rather than moving directly to issues and hoping that the appropriate stakeholders were already around the table, this would first involve participants in the development of an ICASA system appropriate for that situation. A regional body would work with its grassroots groups to determine what the ICASA system should look like for their region.

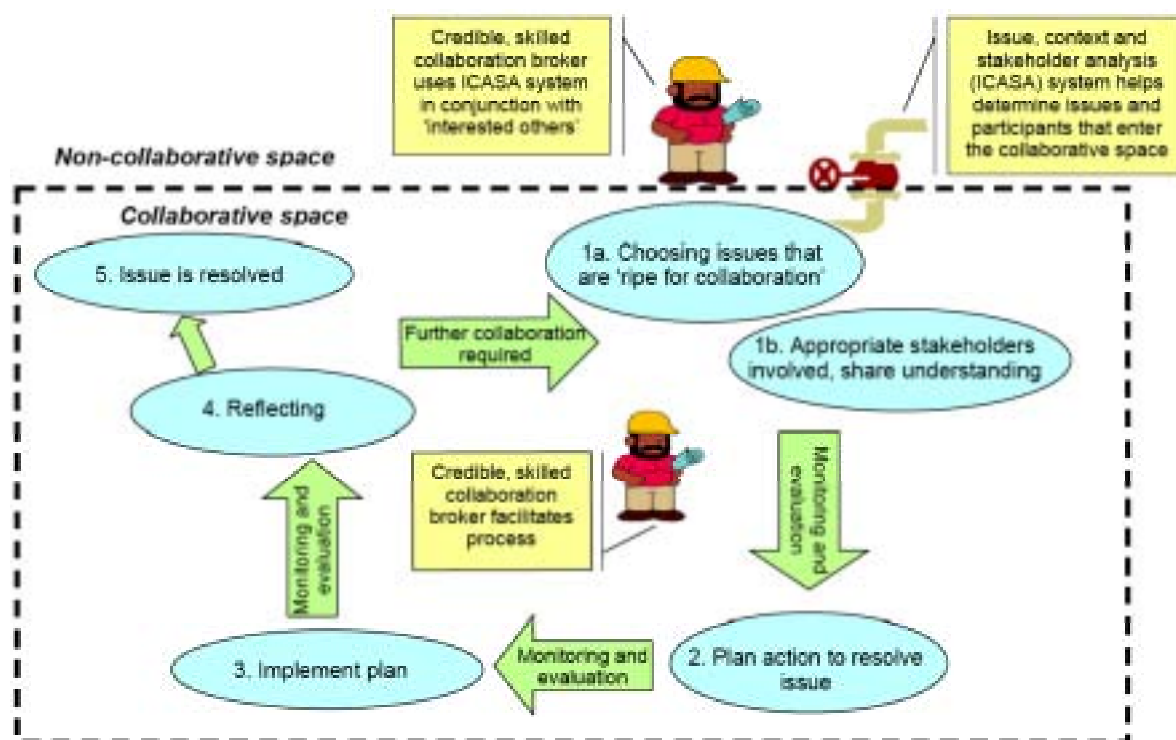


Figure 5. Normative ('ideal') model for collaboration

The process we have described is facilitated and adaptive in nature. In terms of our research setting it may be, for example, that the regional body community support officers fulfil this facilitative role, or that skilled and interested members or project officers from grassroots groups would facilitate the process within the collaborative space. The monitoring and evaluation framework described in the previous section is a key to the collaboration. It drives the collaborative process. The emphasis it places on efficacy and achievement of outcomes in dimension 1 is complemented by dimensions 2, 3 and 4, which highlight communication, conflict resolution, social capital building and social learning processes, as well as governance and institutional matters. In essence, the criteria expressed within each dimension are a checklist for outcomes, process management, governance and institutional design for whatever occurs within the collaborative space. We would stress that this is an 'ideal' model. We present it as a reflective tool to guide and inform rather than to regiment and control collaboration between grassroots groups and regional bodies. We feel that this normative model and the monitoring and evaluation framework may have more generic application and may also usefully inform other collaborations taking place within regional NRM and elsewhere.

Overcoming external barriers to grassroots group–regional body collaboration

The collaborative process, however, is not just confined to regional body–grassroots group relationships. In the *Bridges and Barriers* report we mentioned four assumptions we had made as researchers about the NRM regionalisation process.

In summary, these were that:

- The decision to regionalise collaborative natural resource management is beyond the sphere of influence of the participants involved in our research (grassroots groups and regional body members);
- At present, Australian and State governments are key planners and financial investors in the process, with grassroots groups, regional body members and industry being more the implementers of the process and investors, in terms of in-kind support and time. Local governments are also investors and implementers of the NRM regionalisation process;
- Government agency staff face competing motivations that affect their involvement in NRM regionalisation—the need to minimise costs and risks to their agency while simultaneously meeting agency-stated goals of supporting sustainable NRM; and
- Collaboration has its limits (Oliver, Whelan & Mackenzie, 2005, pp. 18–19).

Our research has confirmed these assumptions. For example, we have observed that the planning, investment and implementation actions of all spheres of government in terms of NRM regionalisation (the second and third assumptions, above) have had a significant influence on grassroots group–regional body collaborations. These actions have given rise to some of the major barriers we have observed affecting grassroots group–regional body collaborations (e.g. cessation in funding to grassroots groups early in the fieldwork; or delineation of regional body boundaries).

All spheres of government may need to work individually and collaboratively to overcome these barriers. Collaboration is culturally new and a challenge for government and agencies, as well as for grassroots groups and regional bodies (Eisler, 2002). Wondolleck and Yaffee (2000, pp. 213–225) present what they call a “primer for agencies” that may help agency staff manage the tensions created by the competing motivations and pressures they face in NRM, as may the work of Fung and Wright (2003) regarding the use of collaborative countervailing power. The normative model and the monitoring and evaluation framework presented above incorporate many of the ideas presented by these and other authors mentioned in the series of reports for this project. These two tools may also usefully inform other collaborations taking place within regional NRM (e.g. government–regional body collaborations, and collaborations between agencies within regional coordinating groups).

Conclusion

Natural resource and environmental management approaches based on collaboration and partnerships are not a passing fashion. Communities, industries and agencies have arrived at their current interest in collaborative governance via a long and arduous journey. They (and we) have reason to believe that reorienting governance culture from adversarial to collaborative (or associational) will reap significant social and environmental benefits including additional resources, legitimacy and ownership.

But this is not going to be an easy journey. Collaboration or empowered participatory governance are every bit as challenging as effective centralised administration and there are consequences of failing to get it right. Through our fieldwork and literature review, we have highlighted a range of reasons why stakeholders may express adversarial countervailing power and some forms this might take, including nonparticipation, competition and conflict. At its worst, collaborative governance is simply a misleading description for governance arrangements that maintain adversarial pluralism. Most importantly, collaboration is not an answer to every NRM situation and should be utilised in a considered and context-appropriate way that recognises the necessity of other forms of intervention including regulation, enforcement and economic incentives.

Our study of collaborative NRM was ideally timed, allowing us to observe and contribute to a significant national experiment in regional environmental governance. With the Coastal CRC's support and the encouraging participation of grassroots groups and other stakeholders and organisations, we have utilised an ethnographic action research approach to understand the limitations and opportunities presented by the NHT and NAPSWQ programs. During our study, these governance arrangements have evolved rapidly and dramatically. As we anticipated, the participation of grassroots groups emerged as a central dilemma in these processes.

We offer two frameworks to strengthen collaborative governance. The first is a monitoring and evaluation framework that addresses four dimensions: (1) efficacy; (2) organisation; (3) governance and institutions; and (4) social learning and adaptation. By attending to each of these four interdependent dimensions, regional groups can balance process and outcomes. The success of other non-collaborative NRM tools could equally be rigorously monitored and evaluated to help participants

determine which tools are most appropriate to their situation. Secondly, we present a normative model for collaboration to help participants decide which issues should be dealt with collaboratively and how to go about the process.

This report marks the beginning of the end of this study. Having now communicated our findings in various forms, we look forward to continuing the conversation with groups and individuals interested in collaborative approaches to natural resource management and welcome feedback on the usefulness of our recommendations.

Acronym list

CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DEH	Department of Environment and Heritage
EPG	Empowered participatory governance
ICASA	Issue, context and stakeholder analysis
NAPSWQ	National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NLWRA	National Land and Water Resources Audit
NNRMT	National Natural Resource Management Task Force
NRM	Natural resource management
NRMSEQ	Natural Resource Management Southeast Queensland Inc.
QCC	Queensland Conservation Council
SEQ	Southeast Queensland

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Appendixes

Appendix A. CRC submission regarding future NRM arrangements, May 2005

The General Manager
Strategic Policy and Regional Arrangements
Department of Natural Resources and Mines
GPO Box 2454
Brisbane 4001

13 May 2005

Dear Ms Crimp

RE: Options for future community engagement in natural resource management discussion paper

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above paper. As you may be aware the Coastal CRC has a significant research emphasis on governance and partnerships in natural resource management (NRM) and currently has six research projects that relate either directly or indirectly to community, industry and local, state and Australian government engagement in NRM regional arrangements. It is from the basis of knowledge that researchers involved in these projects have gained over the last 18 months studying governance and partnerships issues relating to the NRM regionalisation process in Queensland and Australia, their knowledge of overseas experience in community-based NRM, and their many years of work in this area generally, that we offer the comments below.

Let me congratulate your department on having the foresight to seek a more enduring way of undertaking this task. We offer the following observations and feedback. We hope that it aids you in this process.

- 1. Maintain the current system. Manage it adaptively, working respectfully with all involved.** It is very important that you maintain the current system of regional NRM bodies post 2007, until such time as all involved can meaningfully and respectfully participate in an evidence-based discussion of the merits or otherwise of any changes to be made to the current system. Assessing the effectiveness of existing groups and proposing new arrangements seems more than a little unfair given none of them are far, if at all, into the implementation of their first plan. The current regional arrangements have simply not been operational for long enough to make such important decisions. Such a process of change needs to be managed adaptively, with all parties (non-government and all tiers of government, including local government) systematically collecting evidence, analysing and reflecting on findings and evaluating current and possible future actions that may be taken using criteria that are fair, wise and legitimate. It may be that NRM arrangements evolve differently in the each region. Stakeholders (e.g. local government, individual landholders and community-based groups) may have different interests and influence across the state. On a related theme it appears important to involve participants and stakeholders in developing an evaluation framework for regional arrangements. Having set up an evaluation framework, provide time for regional arrangements to perform and then evaluate as agreed.

2. **Present evidence and reasoned argument to justify change.** Regrettably, the *Options Paper* lacks any analysis of evidence gained locally, nationally or internationally, relying simply instead in Appendix 4 on telling the reader what others are doing in terms of regional arrangements elsewhere in Australia. It is silent on how well these other models are working and what can be learnt from them. Accordingly, people responding to the options paper are forced to rely solely on their own perceptions. The lack of evidence and analysis frustrates both those seeking to make a response to the paper and those in government who hoped to benefit from their feedback.
3. **Criteria need to be well informed and to value all participants fairly.** The criteria used in the paper (pp. 13–15) lack provenance. It would be good to know where these criteria came from and how they have been developed and justified. The reader may then have more confidence in their use. While the criteria appear strong on efficiency, effectiveness and accountability for government investment, they are weaker on equity and fairness for present and future volunteers from community and industry who may also seek to “invest” their time and resources in regional NRM. Surely any future arrangements must do more than simply recognise community aspirations (pp. 13–14). They must also recognise and value the investments of volunteers in existing arrangements. Criteria used should also allow community and industry to recognise government aspirations for regional arrangements and for both parties to identify and work toward achieving *shared* aspirations. As ‘elected stakeholders’, local governments also have a key role to play in regional NRM arrangements. Their aspirations also need to be recognised and valued in regional NRM adaptive management processes. It is our observation that the dialogue to allow this to occur in terms of the regionalisation process is only just beginning. We have learnt from our work that there are a host of other factors that influence the effectiveness of regional NRM groups apart from the particular institutional arrangements mentioned in this paper—continuity and levels of funding and support from all tiers of government not being the least of them. It seems unfair and illogical to ignore these other very obviously important factors and to confine what is, in effect, an evaluation of the current system solely to the way it is organised.
4. **The engagement process used in relation to the *Options Paper* does not reflect the principles that officially guide regional arrangements at present.**¹³ Many Queensland government agency staff and other people from local government, community and industry involved in regional NRM have a wealth of experience and skill in the community engagement area. I understand that the Government is showcasing some of this wealth in the upcoming *International Conference on Engaging Communities* that it is hosting in Brisbane in August. Sadly to date, processes used to develop and seek feedback on this Options Paper do not appear well informed by this experience. In terms of procedural fairness all parties who may be affected by such an important decision should be involved in the development of options relating to the decision. They should also be presented with arguments based on evidence that may support or detract from various options. These options and arguments should be presented to them in a timely and respectful way, with their feedback sought in a manner that is appropriate to their circumstances. All involved should know who actually is actually going to make the decision on which they have been consulted. Finally, they should also be provided with feedback as to how their input was valued in terms of the decision-making process. The engagement process being used for the *Options Paper* is lacking on several of these fronts.

¹³ See the jointly developed Australian–State government guidelines for developing regional NRM plans in Queensland (Joint Steering Committee, 2002). They mention principles such as “early and iterative involvement of key stakeholders; well-planned and comprehensive processes; processes which build on previous regional consultation; the development of social profiles to address regional needs”; and the need to “secure stakeholder commitment” p. 7).

- 5. Address the funding issue first.** The logic underpinning the need to undertake this consultation process and to review regional arrangements is questionable. It appears from the Minister's Foreword that although NHT funding will still be available there will be a 'crisis' of in terms of funding when the NAPSWQ agreement ceases at the end of 2007 (p. 3). This issue needs to be addressed. However, it has been used instead to justify a very speedy and inadequate review of existing regional arrangements. There may be other ways to address this funding issue rather than rolling back regional arrangements. For example, we understand that your department has a group of staff investigating changes to water pricing to fund operating costs of water infrastructure and water delivery. May we suggest that they also include the maintenance of landscapes over which this water flows as a vital part of this infrastructure? We understand that over 600 000 megalitres of water are consumed in urban areas of southeast Queensland annually. Including a two cents a kilolitre rate within any new urban water pricing arrangements throughout Queensland would go a long way to ensuring a stable funding base for regional arrangements, resulting in the long term in water quality and other NRM improvements throughout the State.
- 6. Underpinning NRM legislation may also help with funding and integrating regional arrangements with other approaches to NRM.** Carefully developed legislation may help to integrate and coordinate planning, regulatory, compliance, education, economics and other tools within a regional NRM arrangements framework. However, such an exercise would need to be inclusive and approached thoughtfully. The current *Options Paper* mentions existing major NRM-related regional plans (Appendix 3). Of course, other NRM tools are also used at a regional level. If Australian, Queensland and local governments all agree to pursue regionalisation as a matter of policy, then it would appear sensible to integrate and coordinate all NRM tools on a regional basis. It may also help to resolve regional body funding issues by enabling regional bodies to raise their own funds.

Appendix B. Collaboration checklists

Dukes, E.F. and Firehock, K. (2001) *Collaboration: a guide for environmental advocates*, University of Virginia Institute for Environmental Negotiation, The Wilderness Society and National Audubon Society, Charlottesville, Virginia, pp. 58–59.

Determining whether or not a collaborative process is appropriate

A checklist

General questions of suitability:

- Ø Is the issue of sufficient significance to warrant the effort?
- Ø Will participants be able to maintain their basic values and principles?
- Ø Is the issue “ripe” for discussion (such as a stalemate unacceptable to several parties)?
- Ø Are key parties willing to participate?
- Ø Do relevant decision-making agencies support the effort?
- Ø Is sufficient time available (and allocated) to address the key issues?
- Ø Is implementation of any agreement likely?
- Ø Does success as defined by participants appear to be a reasonable possibility?

Specific questions:

- 1) Does this approach promise to protect and enhance environmental protection?
 - Ø Is there appropriate legal protection such that enforcement of current laws and regulations will be continued or strengthened?
 - Ø Are there sufficient drivers (incentives) for all parties that provide sufficient leverage to compel fair negotiations?
 - Ø Is appropriate representation available, including organisations with a state constituency for state lands and resources and with national constituencies for federal lands and resources?
- 2) Is the process being proposed or developed likely to be fair and effective?
 - Ø Are other environmental organisations aware of and involved with this effort?
 - Ø For initiatives convened on behalf of public entities, is there a clear understanding of the purpose and sufficient opportunities for linkage with those entities throughout the effort?
 - Ø Will you and other participants have considerable say in the design of the process?
- (3) Are you and/or your organisation suited for participation?
 - Ø Is this effort consistent with your organisational mission?
 - Ø Are meetings held at reasonable times and locations for you and other participants to attend regularly?
 - Ø Do you have a representative with sufficient expertise—technical knowledge, negotiation skills and political skills—to participate effectively?
 - Ø Does your representative match up with other participants in terms of experience and capability?
 - Ø Does your representative have time to prepare for, attend and participate effectively in meetings?

Scorecard for determining the need for caution, consultation and process discipline

1. Large scope	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Limited scope	9	10
2. Larger constituency represented	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Limited constituency represented	9	10
3. Public lands and resources	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Private lands and resources	9	10
4. Long-term impact	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Briefer impact	9	10
5. Policy/regulatory	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Direct action/implementation	9	10
6. Precedent for other settings	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Unique to a particular setting	9	10
7. Greater authority	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Less authority	10
8. Mandated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Voluntary formation	10
9. Power disparities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Power balanced	10
10. Fundamental values at stake	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Lesser significance	10
11. Extensive conflict	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Minor conflict	10
12. Bargaining and agreement	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Dialogue and information seeking exchange	10

Greater caution, consultation and process discipline

Very high concern
12–30

High concern
31–52

Medium concern
53–78

Less concern
79–102

More freedom and flexibility

Little concern
103–120

Appendix C. Southern Gulf Catchment Management (process indicators)

Source: Thomas, K., Metcalfe, J. and McClure, J. (2005) *Communication and engagement strategy for Southern Gulf Catchment Management*, p. 21.

Monitoring and evaluation indicators	Guide questions
Nature of stakeholder representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are all key stakeholder groups represented?— Type of groups? Numbers? Geographical spread? • What trends are emerging regarding the nature and diversity of stakeholders being engaged? • How 'representative' are those being engaged?
Effectiveness of engagement methods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do stakeholders feel their contributions have influenced development and implementation of the plan? • How do stakeholders rate the process/methods being used?— What is working well? How can methods be improved? • How informative is the process to developing and implementing a meaningful Plan? What are the gaps? How responsive are we? • How well is diversity and conflict being managed? • How committed are stakeholders to proposed targets? • To what extent and in what ways will stakeholders continue to engage in Southern Gulf Catchment NRM initiatives? • How well do we understand the socioeconomic and cultural dynamics that will impact on plan objectives? • How evident are the links with other strategies?
Effectiveness of engagement communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent do stakeholders feel they have had appropriate opportunities to engage in the process? • How do stakeholders rate the communication process/material? • Is there direct or indirect feedback?
Application of guiding principles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent are the guiding principles being applied? How? In what ways can we improve this? What organisational support might be required?

Appendix D. Western Catchments Group (process indicators)

Source: Western Catchments Group (2003) *Capacity building program: final report*.
(Supplied by email on 16 November 2005)

Support and resourcing for engagement

- Local and regional interests and outcomes are well integrated
- Effective and regular communication
- Track record in accessing resources for initiatives and programs
- Evidence of effective partnerships across different interests and sectors
- Local community presence, profile, networks and activity

Knowledge and information

- Knowledge of where and how to access relevant information
- Role and capacity to extend useable, accessible and information to target audiences

Skills: people, technical and management

- Technical skills to set NRM priorities
- Partnership-building skills across sectors and scales
- Business and investment management skills
- Planning, strategy and positioning skills

Structures and arrangements

- Evidence of working with a regional vision and perspective (above local / sectoral)
- Defined roles and responsibilities to set and deliver regional NRM priorities
- Adequate resources to develop and evaluate NRM plan
- Effective organisational structures for delivering key outcomes