

An innovative approach for improved water resource management: **the Australian Government Rivercare Facilitator Network**



Overview of Presentation

- Background & Context
- The Facilitator Network & Our Roles
- Practical Examples
- Reflections
- Key Messages



Natural Resource Management (NRM) Goals of Australian & State Governments



1. **Sustainable use and management** of Australia's land, water and marine resources
2. **Conservation** of Australia's biodiversity
3. **Support for individuals, landholders, industry and communities** to conserve and manage Australia's natural resources



NRM Investment

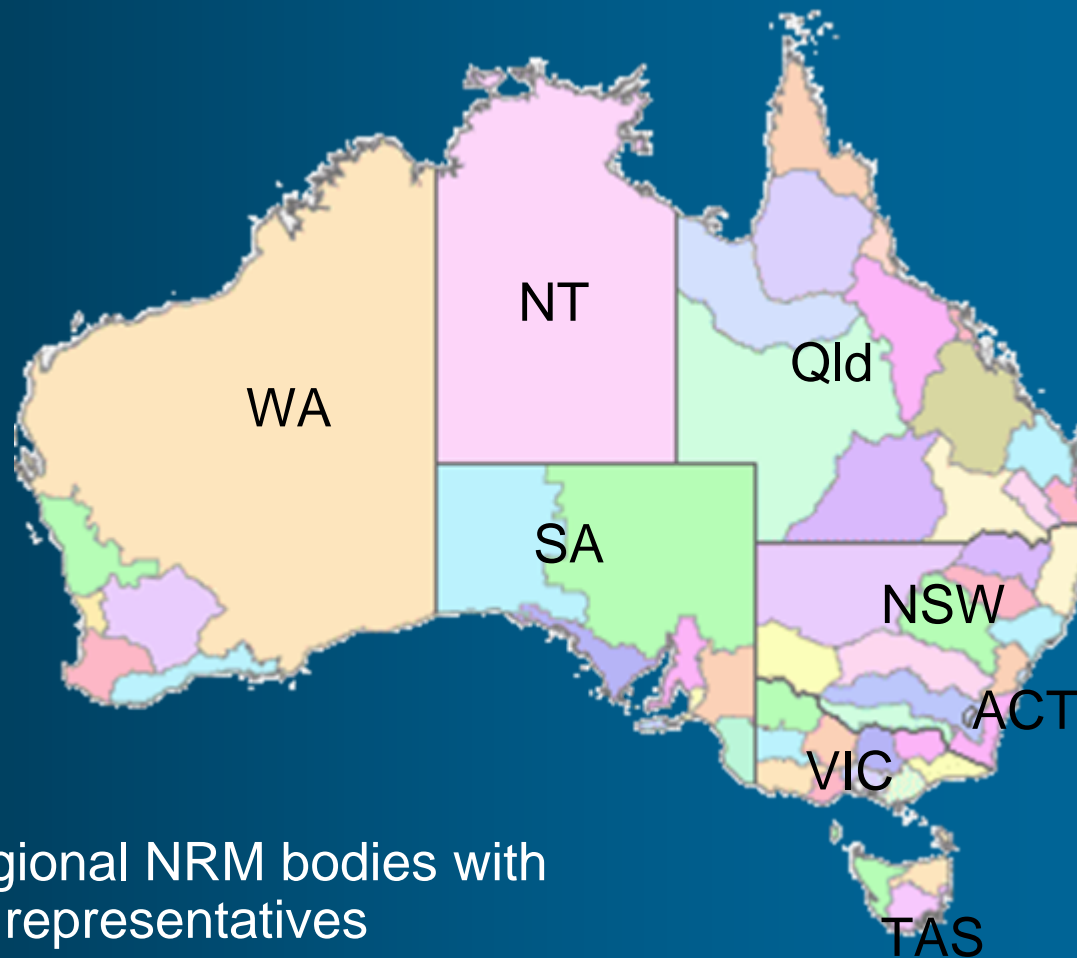
~\$3 billion over 5-7 years matched by state/territories

[~\$2 billion Aust Gov commitment post Jun 2008]

- Natural Heritage Trust
- National Action Plan for Salinity & Water Quality
- Other (e.g. National Landcare Program, Envirofund, Biodiversity Hotspots, Community Water Grants)



'Regional Delivery' Model



56 new Regional NRM bodies with community representatives

56 Accredited Regional NRM Plans based on community consultation



Regional NRM Delivery Model

- Strategic regional investment
- Focus on landscape scale change
- Strong stakeholder engagement
- Agreed short & long term targets
- Strong monitoring & evaluation
- Joint Aust Gov – State Gov steering committees
- Support from national network of NRM 'facilitators'





NRM Facilitator Network



Facilitator Network Structure

Dept of Agriculture,
Fisheries & Forestry

Dept of Environ' &
Water Resources

Aust Government Joint NRM Team

National Facilitator Network

**Rivercare/Water
Facilitators**

Biodiversity

Agriculture

Coastal/
Marine

56+ Regional
Facilitators

13 Indigenous
Facilitators

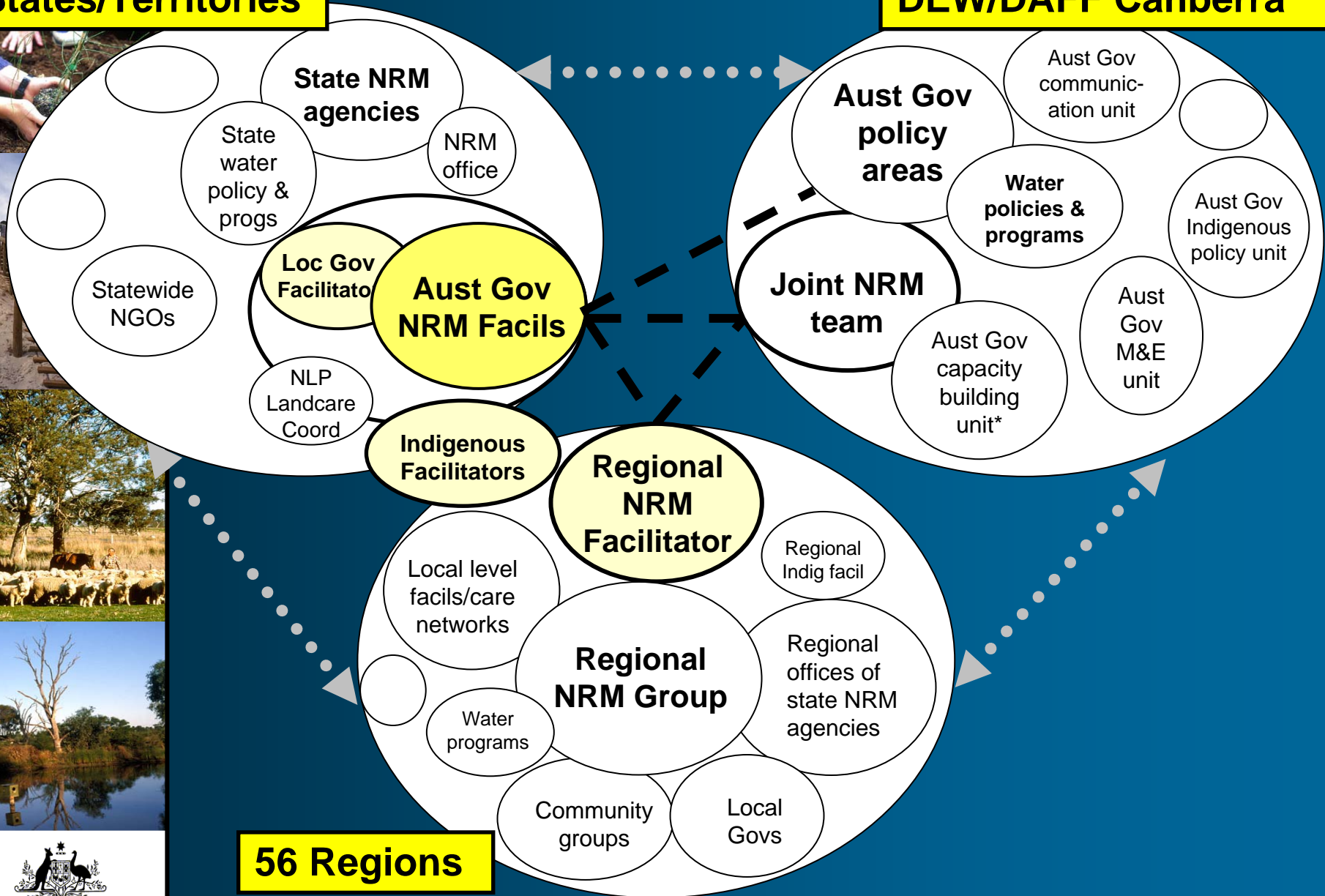
8 Local Gov
Facilitators



Facilitator Operating Environment

States/Territories

DEW/DAFF Canberra



56 Regions



Key Roles of NRM Facilitators

- Communicate Govt NRM policy, programs, initiatives, tools & other resources
- Provide feedback to Govt on regional NRM issues & achievements
- Encourage stakeholder groups to participate in regional NRM
- Facilitate an effective & well functioning NRM network from local to national scale



Rivercare Facilitators -day to day

- Assist to connect Aust Gov representatives - eg water related policy & program areas - with regional & state stakeholders & vice versa
- Initiate workshops, newsletters, training etc to build capacity of regions & improve water related outcomes
- Participate in water related steering groups, grant assessment, program reviews etc
- Facilitate partnerships & align effort among water related stakeholders





Practical Examples



Raising the Profile of Wetlands



Facilitators add value:

Living policy links
networking building

improved engagement
a communication conduit



Enhancing Capacity of Stakeholders



Facilitators:

Support Networks

Help secure resources

Build community capacity

Celebrate successes



Engaging New Stakeholders: the Community Water Grants Experience

- Focus on raising community awareness and practice change with regard to saving and recycling water
- \$200m in 3 rounds over 4 years
- Facilitators given free hand in promotion and engagement strategies



Facilitators



- worked closely with CWG team to develop initial program - continue to provide 'real time' and strategic feedback in subsequent rounds
- looked beyond traditional NRM community to engage industry associations, local government, regional development organisations, education sector, urban community groups & service organisations
- helped regional bodies recognise value of the program as a tool for:
 - community engagement & capacity building
 - targeted stakeholder engagement
- identified and supported collaborations and ongoing linkages between project proponents and NRM sector beyond the CWG program





Reflections & Learnings



Why is the Network Effective?

- Flexibility - 'ubiquitous someone'
- We give a 'face to government'
- A community of practice
- Enhances information flow & exchange
- Partnerships and trust
- A culture of self reliance



Reflections

- Flexible roles mean diversity across the nation
 - can be confusion about the roles we play and outcomes we contribute to.
- Operating within a Network of Teams
 - challenges and opportunities
- Logistical challenges
- Some paradoxes within the role



Conclusions / Key Messages

- we add to the effectiveness of Government NRM program and policy delivery
- facilitator network is an effective & emerging approach to community engagement and capacity building in NRM
- dynamic people focused networks can play a significant role in water management & NRM sustainability more generally
- investment in Social Capital and capacity building is essential for longer term NRM sustainability





*if you don't
engage people,
it doesn't
happen....*





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