



A Co-operative venture of the municipalities of:
Cockburn, East Fremantle, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville & Rockingham

Regional NRM Business Plan

**The South West Group Councils working together to deliver a landscape
vision for healthy communities**



12 August 2013

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Executive Summary

1. PURPOSE

The South West Group NRM Business Plan sets out the arrangements for the six member Councils to work together to implement *'a landscape vision for healthy communities'* through a Regional NRM Strategy, a five year Regional NRM Program and development of a Green Network across all of the landscapes and communities. It complements the Regional NRM Strategy and supports the Regional NRM Program.

2. SOUTH WEST GROUP

The South West Group, formed in November 1983, is a Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (VROC). It comprises the Cities of Cockburn, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville and Rockingham and the Town of East Fremantle, and is managed by a Board consisting of the Mayors and CEOs of the member Councils. The South West Metropolitan Region provides a significant contribution to the State's economy, is a major growth zone of the Perth metropolitan Area and is rich in natural diversity across its landscape, coastal and marine environments.

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The South West Group recognises that regional scale natural resources management work needs to fit into a wider strategic context for land use and development in order to protect and manage valuable natural areas across its landscapes and communities. This covers the national, state and regional context and considers at both regional and local scales as outlined below.

Capital City Planning

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has established 'Objectives for Capital City Planning' that focus on the need for *"improved integration, complementary and consistent planning and delivery across relevant parts of government"*. The message for the South West Group is that the Australian Government will require strategic and integrated approaches in any bids for funding for infrastructure that support natural resource management.

National and State NRM Frameworks

A feature of the national NRM framework is the changing nature of programs which reflect changes in governments, policy and priorities. Recent changes include a stronger emphasis on climate change, carbon sequestration and clean energy. Understanding these changes, identifying opportunities to leverage funding for regional NRM activities and engaging in collaborative bids for large scale funding programs will position the South West Group to maximise grant funding and NRM outcomes for the region and the member Councils.

The formal State NRM Framework has two relatively small funding programs administered through the State NRM Office, Community Grants and Strategic Priority Project Grants, but there are a range of other state agencies that the South West Group can collaborate with to implement the Regional NRM Strategy and NRM Program.

Local Government Structural Reform

It is likely Local Government Structural reform will occur in the second term of the Barnett Government, with reports on reform undertaken to date indicating a focus on 'regional' approaches to natural resources management across Council boundaries.

Environmental Conservation and Biodiversity Conservation Act Strategic Assessment

The EPBC Act Strategic Assessment will identify 'Matters of National Environmental Significance' (MNES) across the Perth Peel region and, together with valuable State areas not already protected, will form an important backbone for the future natural areas network across all landscapes. In turn this will strongly influence future land use in the South West Metropolitan Region. The South West Group is well positioned to advise member Councils on the implications of the EPBC Act Strategic

Assessment through its active participation in the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment Stakeholder Reference Group.

Directions 2031 and Sub-regional Structure Planning

'Directions 2031 and Beyond' sets the framework for the future planning and development of the Perth Peel region. The Sub-regional Structure Plans (which represent the initial planning response to the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment) will provide future land use and development definition, taking into account biodiversity conservation and management requirements. The South West Group and member Councils have the opportunity to work collaboratively with the WAPC and Department of Planning to achieve an agreed landscape vision for the region and workable sub-regional structure plans that are able to be practically implemented through Local Planning Schemes.

Local Government Integrated Planning Framework

All Local Governments are now required, through amendments to the *Local Government Act 1995*, to prepare Strategic Community Plans and Corporate Business Plans, supported by a consistent set of "Informing Strategies". The Regional NRM Strategy represents an "Informing Strategy" addressing regional issues and identifies how the NRM, environmental management and sustainability components of each member Council's business model link into their Strategic Community Plans.

WALGA Regional Framework for Local Biodiversity Conservation Priorities

A very important component of the Regional NRM Strategy is mapping of all valuable natural areas on public and private land, including important vegetation complexes, so that the areas requiring protection and/or threatened by development can be identified. This mapping exercise has been initiated through the Regional NRM Strategy and will enable consideration of areas as regional priorities for conservation and provide a robust data source for the South West Group and member Councils to negotiate with the State Government on retention of those areas or suitable mitigation measures and offsets for areas at risk. Mapping of this important biodiversity information for the first time at a regional scale has been made possible through application of the WA Local Government Association's Regional Framework for Local Biodiversity Conservation Priorities to the South West Metropolitan Region.

4. REGIONAL NRM OPPORTUNITIES

The South West Metropolitan Region will undergo rapid and extensive development over the next two decades. Accommodating growth and protecting areas that form the highly valued landscapes in our communities will be a major challenge. The Regional NRM Strategy will provide greater understanding and appreciation of the natural values in the region and enable consideration of broader conservation perspectives during the development assessment process. While this poses challenges, there are also opportunities to progress toward and achieve a whole of landscape and community approach to future development and conservation. Key opportunities are evident in a range of areas including:

- Increased understanding that development impacts at a whole of landscape and community scale.
- The contribution of natural landscapes as an essential component and key community interaction areas in the natural and built environment.
- State Government agencies working closely and collaboratively with Councils, industry, commerce and the community so there are clear roles and responsibilities in natural area conservation and management.
- Public and private agency strategic and operational plans linked to identify a joint landscape and community vision with agreed goals, objectives and targets.
- Agreement on the NRM programs and projects for the South West Metropolitan Region and in local areas through a Regional NRM Program.
- Communities and 'NRM' Community Groups actively engaged in large scale, regional projects with multiple benefits.

These are not just aspirational statements, but represent activities, initiatives and collaborative mechanisms that can be developed and implemented through the NRM Strategy, Program and Business Plan. Those activities involving State Government agencies or other external stakeholders can be implemented through joint agreements and MOUs.

5. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AND STRUCTURE

The South West Group has an existing governance framework that, together with the management elements set out in this Business Plan, will support endorsement and implementation of the Regional NRM Strategy and NRM Program. The key elements include:

- The South West Group ‘Corporate Governance Charter’ and Memorandum of Understanding, which provide for establishment and funding models for programs and projects such as the Regional NRM Strategy
- Affiliation with the South West Corridor Development Foundation Incorporated (SWCDeF), which can administer and manage funding for South West Group initiatives.
- A Board structure and a strong framework of committees to develop, review, endorse and implement the elements of the NRM Strategy and NRM Program.
- The South West Reference Group (SWRG), which oversees and advises on the regional NRM work and is an established committee of the South West Group Board.
- A South West NRM Framework, which identifies the four ‘NRM Themes’ (Green Network, Water, Climate Change and Sustainable Development) and links with NRM arrangements and activities undertaken by the six member Councils.

6. FUNDING AND RESOURCES FOR A REGIONAL NRM PROGRAM

The funding and resources required to progress the Regional NRM Strategy and Program have been considered under the following key headings:

- Regional NRM Strategy – this relates to “core” funding associated with the employment of an NRM Facilitator who would be responsible for implementing the Regional NRM Strategy and providing support for implementing the Regional NRM Program. These direct cost funding sources will primarily be met through member Council and South West Group contributions.
- Regional NRM Program – this relates the regional priority projects and initiatives identified and agreed by the member Councils, based on a five year program involving annual reviews. The funding for the Regional NRM Program is “discretionary” and relies upon priority projects and initiatives where funding contributions are secured from participating member Councils, government agencies, external stakeholders and/or grants.
- External funding – this relates to external funding secured through Federal and State NRM and environmental grant programs. Due to the changing nature of funding programs and their priorities, external funding can not be relied upon for NRM activities and is dependant upon the success of funding applications through a competitive assessment process.

Further details regarding funding and resources are provided in Section 6.

7. SOUTH WEST GROUP COORDINATION

The final section in the NRM Business Plan covers the arrangements for coordination across the six South West Group member Councils and with external stakeholders. This is important as regional approaches and collaborative projects require adequate coordination and communication to ensure activities progress in a timely and agreed manner.

South West Group Coordinating Structure

The South West Group's Board and committee structure is well established and suited to progressing the regional NRM activities, with the South West Reference Group taking the lead role to date in the development of the Regional NRM Strategy. The key elements involved in coordinating the regional NRM activities include:

- Establishment of the South West Reference Group as a formal committee of the South West Group
- Reporting arrangements of the South West Reference Group to the South West Group Board
- Referral of items and reports with member Council budget or resource implications to the Technical Directors Committee
- Internal Coordinating Groups for Planning/Environment and NRM Information/GIS
- Establishment and maintenance of the online South West Group TargetOn database platform as a repository of regional NRM information
- Provision of GIS mapping capability

Member Council Coordination

The regional coordinating structures above, together with the Regional NRM Framework and member Council organisational structure and planning strategies for NRM, provide a well integrated model for member Council collaboration and coordination.

The member Council organisational framework was used to map the NRM business across each Council and the information gathered through this process will provide a useful overview of how NRM activities are currently undertaken in the region. It is planned to load this information onto the South West Group TargetOn platform so that it is available to the member Councils into the future.

External Relationships and Coordination

The development of the Regional NRM Strategy has resulted in the establishment of productive working relationships with State Government agencies and other regional stakeholders. These relationships will be critical in gaining an understanding of NRM activities at a broader level and negotiating any collaborative projects in the future. It is expected that a key role of the NRM Facilitator will be to maintain and enhance these external relationships.

Draft South West Group NRM Business Plan

1. PURPOSE

The South West Group NRM Business Plan sets out the arrangements for the six member Councils to work together to implement **'a landscape vision for healthy communities'** through a Regional NRM Strategy, a five year Regional NRM Program and development of a Green Network across the landscapes and communities in the region. A key step will be linking this work to the implementation of 'Directions 2031 and beyond' which sets out the Green Network as one of the three Structural Elements for the future planning and development of the Perth Peel area.

2. SOUTH WEST GROUP

2.1 Role and Background

The South West Group, formed in November 1983, is a Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (VROC). It comprises the Cities of Cockburn, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville and Rockingham and the Town of East Fremantle, and is managed by a Board consisting of the Mayors and CEOs of the member Councils. The South West Group seeks to work with the six Councils and through cooperation with industry, community and the other spheres of government to capture a wide range of opportunities to enhance economic growth as well as supporting a diversity of quality lifestyles in an enviable environmental setting.

From an economic perspective, the region is very important for the State with around \$28 billion gross regional product and contributing \$30 million annually to the State's economy. The Western Trade Coast, which covers all of the heavy industrial areas in the region, produces \$15.5 billion output annually and directly employs about 11,600 people. There are a range of new developments proposed for the region including at least one new port, a number of industrial areas (such as Latitude 32 with a large inter-modal transport hub) and new urban developments along the coast and the Perth Mandurah railway. As a result, there will be an estimated investment of \$1 billion annually in development over the next 20 years.

From an environment perspective, the region is rich in natural resources with:

- Two RAMSAR wetland associations (Thompsons Lake and Becher Point Wetlands)
- A magnificent coastal environment with near shore reefs stretching from Fremantle to Rockingham, including Garden Island, Penguin Island, the Shoalwater Marine Park and the Becher Point Sanctuary Zone
- The Iconic Swan and Canning Rivers, including the Alfred Cove Marine Park and shoreline sanctuary
- The Beeliar and Rockingham Lakes Regional Parks and the Port Kennedy Scientific Park
- The Jandakot Regional Park and Jandakot Mound, which is an important water supply and contains valuable wetlands and damplands.
- Over 80 Bush Forever sites and other valuable reserves and areas of natural vegetation
- The Kwinana Industry Buffer Strip and its large areas of native vegetation and other areas that will be important for biodiversity and public amenity.

The South West Group Vision in the Strategic Plan (2010 – 2013) is:

Local Governments in South Metropolitan Perth, through cooperation with industry, community and the other spheres of government will capture a wide range of opportunities to enhance economic growth, promote a resilient economy as well as supporting a diversity of quality lifestyles whilst servicing and sustaining cohesive, productive communities in an enviable environmental setting.

2.2 Regional NRM Strategy

The Regional NRM Strategy contributes toward the “*enviable environmental setting*” and provides the opportunity to translate the vision into whole of landscape outcomes that can be practically implemented through statutory planning at regional and local levels.

The key features from the NRM Strategy relevant to the Business Plan are outlined below:

- Provides a practical mechanism to implement the Green Network in ‘Directions 2031 and beyond’.
- Enables NRM and sustainable development to be integrated with land use planning.
- Advocates and promotes the role of Local Government as a leader in NRM.
- Provides a regional ‘snapshot’ of NRM assets to assist with future planning, management and decision making.
- Has a Regional NRM Framework for implementation that builds on the information gathered from member Councils (Council Actions, Regional Actions).
- Establishes collaborative management measures for all natural areas that clarify the roles and responsibilities of State and Local Governments as the main land managers.
- Establishes internal working arrangements and lead roles for, member Councils (e.g. Planning/Environment and NRM Information/GIS Coordinating Groups and GIS lead and TargetOn lead Councils).
- Establishes external working relationships with key government agencies and regional stakeholders.
- Resourcing and budgets developed through a five year Regional NRM Program based on priorities and schedule of activities.

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1 Capital City Planning

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG), following a report by the COAG Reform Council (April 2012), has established ‘Objectives for Capital City Planning’. Key aspects of the paper include Recommendation 2:

“COAG should encourage governments to continue to focus their efforts on improved integration – complementary and consistent planning and delivery across relevant parts of government, especially transport, economic development and land use, including:

- *Integration within governments, including the Commonwealth as well as State and Territory, and local governments.*
- *Integration between governments, based on continued collaboration”.*

In terms of strategic planning for Perth the COAG paper recognised the strong system with the WAPC and Metropolitan Region Scheme, but that “Directions 2031 does not yet provide a clear whole of government strategy for delivery of the governments desired outcomes in Perth”. This emphasises the importance of Sub-regional Structure Planning and the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act) Strategic Assessment discussed below

Further confirmation of the importance of integration is the first of the COAG criteria for future strategic planning of capital cities:

“Be integrated:

- a) Across functions, including land-use and transport planning, economic and infrastructure development, environmental assessment and urban development, and*
- b) Across government agencies”.*

Integration is important to the Regional NRM Strategy and the South West Group. Local governments operating in metropolitan areas will be required to present strategic and integrated approaches when working with or seeking funding from the Australian Government for planning, development and NRM.

3.2 National and State NRM Frameworks

Nationally and at the State level NRM policy and strategy has varied considerably over time with different approaches being taken depending on the government of the day. This could be attributed to NRM being at an early stage of development across government roles, compared to health, education or transport.

National

At the national level Australia has moved from the National Soil Conservation Program in the 1980s to the Decade of Landcare, which led to the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) and National Action Plan for Water Quality and Salinity in the 1990s.

As part of the Natural Heritage Trust the Howard Government established 56 Natural Resource Management Regions around Australia, with six in Western Australia and with Perth Region NRM covering most of the Metropolitan Area. Each regional group was required to prepare a Regional NRM Strategy looking up to 50 years ahead and Regional Investment Plans looking 3 to 5 years ahead. An important element of this approach was a formal agreement with each State and Territory. Local Government was not formally part of the agreements, but its important role was recognised and the NRM Regions were required to work with Councils and community groups.

This approach changed with the Rudd Government and the introduction of Caring for our Country as the national NRM Program. While the 56 NRM Regions were retained, their Regional NRM Strategies were not recognised and funding was limited to matters where the Australian Government had a recognised national or Constitutional roles. Today there are a range of other Australian Government NRM type programs like climate change, carbon reduction and water efficiency, managed across several Australian Government agencies. Figure 1 shows some of the current arrangements.

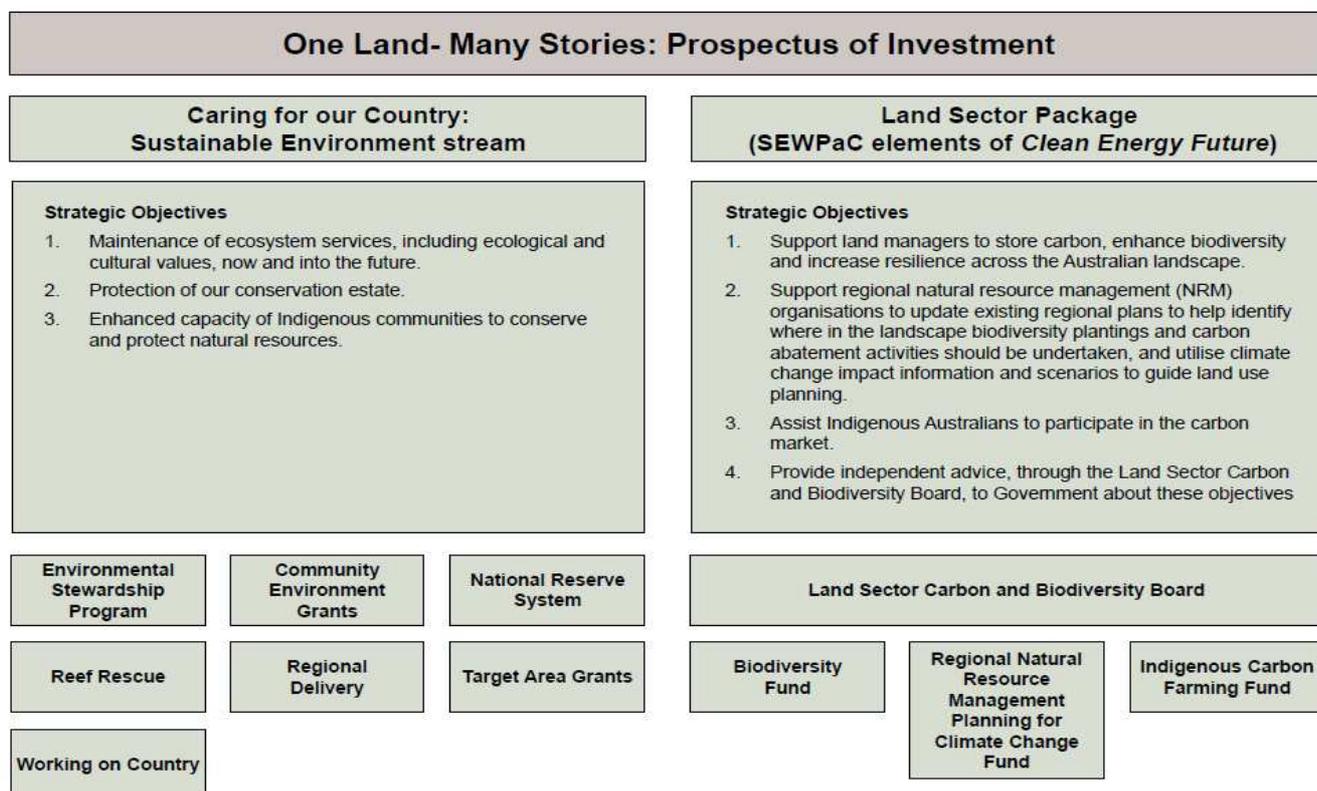


Figure 1 – Prospectus of Investment ‘Map’ from DAFF and SEWPaC February 2013

State

State NRM policy, programs and funding have tended to follow the concurrent Australian Government position although Landcare has been strong in Western Australia with its well developed agriculture sector. It has been administered through a State NRM Office generally located in the 'environment' or 'agricultural' government agency.

The State NRM Office is currently supported by the Department of Agriculture and Food and reports to the WA NRM Ministerial Council. It is responsible for coordinating and supporting the delivery of Western Australian and Australian Government NRM funding initiatives in Western Australia, mainly the Caring for our Country Program. There are two small State NRM programs, Community Grants (around \$3 million per year) and Strategic Priority Project Grants (around \$15 million over three years).

The lesson from past and current NRM funding programs is that the South West Group and member Councils need to be familiar with both the policy approach and funding structures of Australian and State Government NRM, Environment and Sustainability Programs to be successful in attracting funds for Regional Programs and Projects. This includes advocacy at both National and State levels and strong relationships with key stakeholders to undertake collaborative approaches.

3.3 Local Government Structural Reform

Based on the Final Report of the Independent Panel on Metropolitan Local Government Structural Reform (July 2012), known as the Robson Review, the State Government announced (24 October 2012) that the thirty metropolitan Councils would be amalgamated to form between 12 and 20 Councils if the Government was returned after the 9 March 2013 election. A large amount of work, including the release of discussion papers was done to provide background and models for the restructure and much of this work is relevant to NRM and the Regional NRM Business Plan. Relevant papers include:

- Critical and Strategic Issues for Metropolitan Perth
- Functions of Local Government
- Natural Resource Management in Perth
- A critique of Directions 2031 and beyond

The conclusion of the Natural Resource Management paper is worth quoting:

Local governments have a key role in ensuring the sustainability of their communities and environment. However, addressing the critical issues of natural resource management requires a strategic focus and the ability to think of the "big picture". Many environmental issues transcend local government boundaries, and require collective solutions. Individual local governments may not have the capacity to manage the complex and significant issues. The formation of regional local governments is one means for individual local governments to pool their resources, and develop innovative solutions to problems, while tailoring programs to the specific needs of the local community".

The lesson for the NRM Business Plan is that for NRM the focus should be on strategic and integrated approaches across boundaries and that the role of 'regional local government structures' is important. The South West Group was cited in the Robson Review as a good example of a voluntary regional organisation of councils (VROC) involved in government collaboration and liaison. Building a robust regional NRM model through the Regional NRM Business Plan and Strategy will enable a smoother transition into any new structural arrangements in the region.

3.4 Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act Strategic Assessment

The EPBC Act Strategic Assessment and linked Sub-regional Structure Plans for the Perth Peel area will have a major influence on future land use and development in the Perth Peel region, including the South West Metropolitan Region. The aim is to align Australian and State Government environmental

approval processes and clarify where future development can occur together with the areas that should be conserved and managed for their natural values and public amenity.

Figure 2 is a 'Road Map' from the Department of Premier and Cabinet website showing the process for the Strategic Assessment from identifying the environmental values through to implementation.

The central role of Sub-regional Structure Planning can be seen at the centre of the diagram.

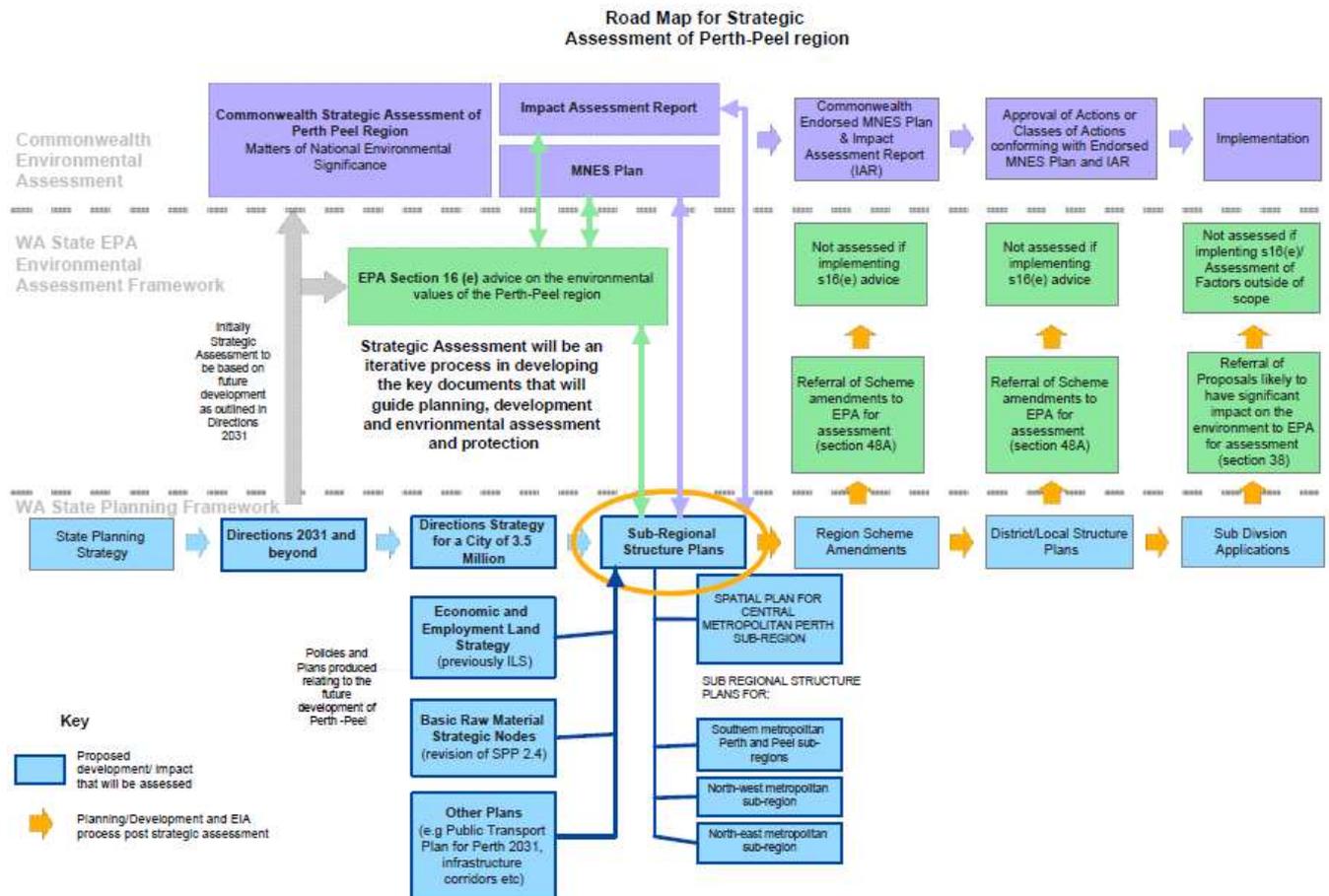


Figure 2 – Road Map of the Strategic Assessment Process (Department of Premier and Cabinet website)

It is clear from a cursory examination of the Strategic Assessment process, and its links to statutory planning at all levels, that Local Government will be intimately involved, particularly in the implementation phase. Local Governments have the capacity to attract additional funding through rates as a result of accommodating population growth, but also will need to meet additional costs in managing many of the conservation assets and offset areas that are created as a result of development and the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment.

While there will be costs that arise from the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment, there will be new opportunities for the member Councils and the region to be involved in offset management, rehabilitation of natural areas, carbon sequestration, collaborative management of Regional Parks and adjacent reserves, and active involvement in the establishment of ecological links.

3.5 Directions 2031 and Sub-regional Structure Planning

Sub-regional Structure Planning is the level where the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment will be translated into a planning response. The Sub-regional Structure Plans will set future land use and management for many years.

Directions 2031 and Beyond

The broad strategic planning context, as set out in Directions 2031 and beyond (WAPC/Department of Planning, 2010), establishes the relationship between the State Planning Strategy and Statements of Planning Policy through Sub-regional Strategies and Sub-regional Structure Plans, to Local Planning Strategies, Local Planning Schemes and Local Structure Plans. The last three are the province of Local Government, so the South West Group and member Councils will benefit through early engagement and identifying on-ground works and landscape scale responses relevant to communities and natural environment, at regional and local scales.

The Green Network, as one of three Structural Elements in Directions 2031 is described as “A network of parks, reserves and conservation areas that support biodiversity, preserve natural amenity and protect valuable natural resources”

Under the Themes and Strategies in Directions 2031, the component that incorporates the Green Network is termed “A sustainable city “, which states:

“We should grow within the constraints placed on us by the environment we live in.”

It includes the following elements.

- Protect our natural and built areas
- Protect and manage significant biodiversity areas
- Protect matters of national environmental significance
- Protect water resources
- Protect our coastline
- Mitigate and adapt to climate change
- Reduce waste generation and encourage reuse and recycling
- Improve air quality
- Expand and enhance our open space network
- Integrate natural resource management into land use planning

As set out in the South West Group Regional NRM Strategy, implementing the Green Network through the member Councils and in partnership with the WAPC and Department of Planning enables the member Councils to create the ‘landscape vision for healthy communities’ and the ‘enviable environmental setting’ in the South West Group Vision.

Sub-regional Strategies and Structure Planning

The Sub-regional Strategies and Structure Plans are key mechanisms to implement Directions 2031 and provide the next level of detail to show the spatial relationships between future land use, conservation and development. The next level down from the Sub-regional Strategies are the Sub-regional Structure Plans, which are also strategic level documents intended to provide a flexible picture of future land uses and infrastructure requirements to meet the long term needs of the community. The Sub-regional Structure Plans are intended to provide an increased degree of certainty and spatial determination of future land uses.

The South West Metropolitan Region will be split by the Central Sub-regional Structure Plan (Fremantle, East Fremantle, Melville plus others) and South Metropolitan and Peel Sub-regional Structure Plan (Cockburn, Kwinana, Rockingham plus others). This split reflects the largely established urban areas in the north of the region and growth areas to the south of the region. Each sub-region will require different approaches in defining and establishing their Green Networks. In addition the Sub-regional Structure plans will incorporate the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment for the Perth Peel area and be a key plan in reshaping the Metropolitan Region Scheme and Local Government Local Planning Strategies and Local Planning Schemes.

It follows then that Local Planning Strategies and Local Planning Schemes will be important tools for protecting landscapes and implementing the Regional NRM Strategy. Structure Plans will provide the next level of detail and it is significant that the Minister for Planning released “Structure plan preparation guidelines” and “Structure plan - digital data and mapping standards” in February 2013.

It is therefore clear that Councils will have a strong role in a more strategic and integrated approach to development in the future through using the Structure Plan guidelines with developers to build the mosaic of land uses to fit into the Sub-regional Structure Plan. In turn this will provide the opportunity to identify and implement the Green Network. This becomes another important part of the Regional NRM Business Plan.

3.6 Local Government Integrated Planning Framework

Another important part of structural reform is the introduction of an Integrated Planning Framework through amendments to the *Local Government Act 1995* (Integrated Planning and Reporting, Framework and Guidelines, Department of Local Government, October 2010). The elements of the Integrated Planning Framework are shown in Figure 3.

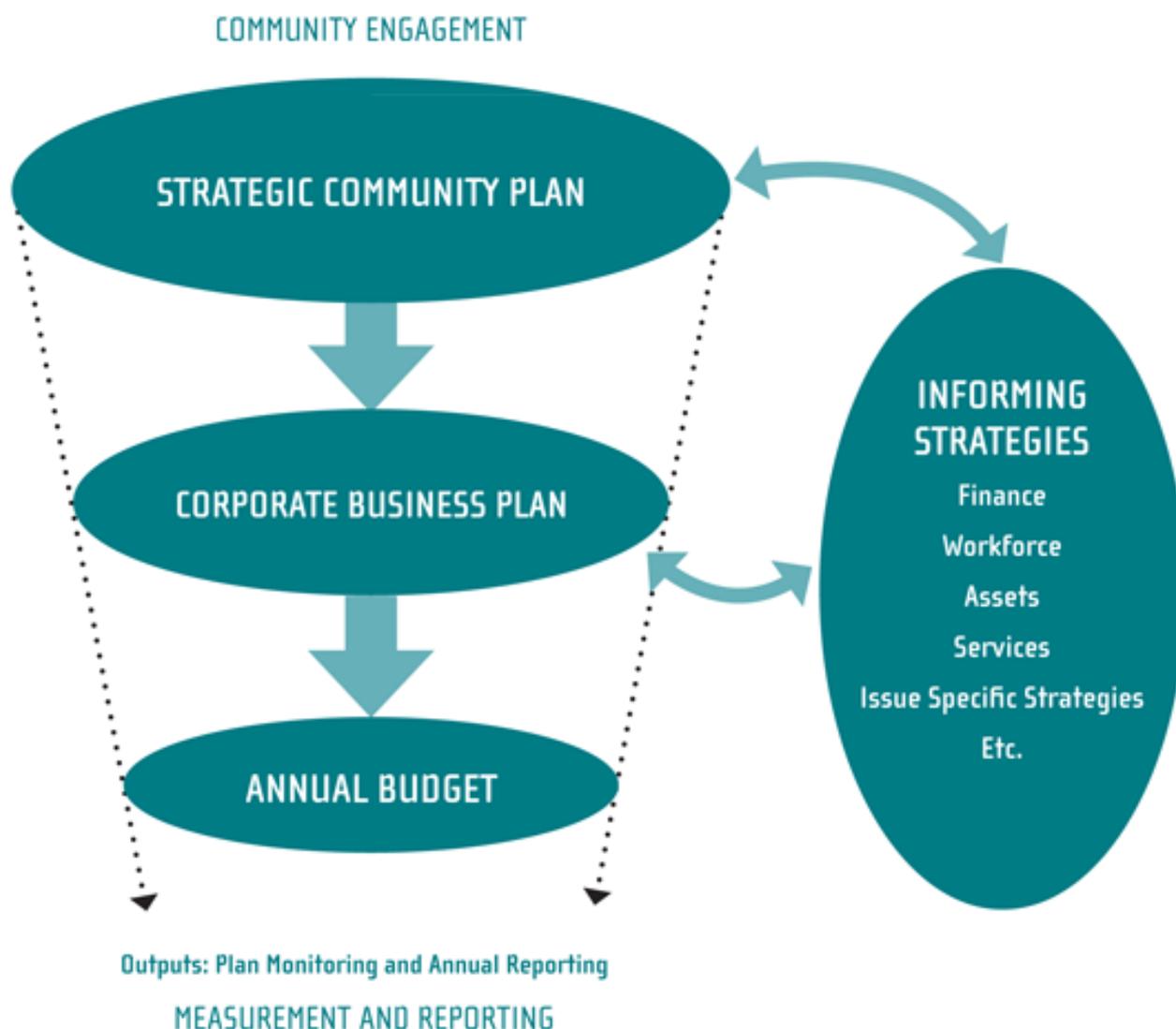


Figure 3 - Elements of the Integrated Planning Framework

The Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework and Guidelines provide the basis for improving the practice of strategic planning in local government. The framework outlines the structural elements and process for developing each component and explains its purpose, and the roles of community, Council and local government administration.

The Guidelines address two key local government planning processes:

- Strategic Community Planning – Resulting in a 10+ year Strategic Community Plan informed by community aspirations.
- Corporate Business Planning – Resulting in an ongoing and integrated Corporate Business Plan that activates Strategic Community Plan priorities. The Corporate Business Plan incorporates four to five year priorities set by Council and a ten year rolling financial plan.

All of the South West Group Councils have prepared Strategic Community Plans and are well advanced with the supporting strategies and nesting their existing policies, plans, strategies and programs into the Framework. The Strategic Community Plans identify how their NRM Business activities work across their organisational structure, and into their statutory planning processes. It is proposed to load this information onto the NRM information system (*South West Group TargetOn*) and is another key element of the Regional NRM Business Plan.

3.7 WALGA Regional Framework for Local Biodiversity Conservation Priorities

The South West Group member Councils have been active in mapping local natural areas as part of their Biodiversity Strategies and natural area management plans to gain an understanding of the extent and ownership of native vegetation complexes in their municipality. This information complements the native vegetation areas identified and mapped in Regional Parks, Conservation Reserves, Ramsar and Conservation Wetlands and Bush Forever sites.

The South West Group has established a partnership with the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) to use the detailed information from the Perth Biodiversity Project (Regional Framework for Local Biodiversity Conservation Priorities) to map local natural areas and the extent of the vegetation complexes in the South West Metropolitan Region and in each member Council area, including those that are at risk because of development. An example of the output includes land use maps (Metropolitan Region Scheme and Local Planning Scheme zoning) overlaid with threatened vegetation communities/complexes and Bush Forever sites

These maps are an initial step in gaining the required understanding to make more informed decisions about the assessment, protection and management of native vegetation in the region. Further work will be required over time to examine areas in more detail (and rate of change) and to assist in translating regional information into local decision making on development, impact assessment and management. This is another element in the Regional NRM Business Plan.

4. REGIONAL NRM OPPORTUNITIES

This section highlights the opportunities that can arise from a regional whole of landscape approach that is built into a Regional NRM Business Plan:

- Development is considered at a whole of landscape and community scale, so infrastructure is planned ahead both to be adequate as the development front proceeds and so that it fits into and complements the natural and built environment. This means, for example, industrial areas will look different from the past, with natural areas linked to the wider environment, areas for public recreation and amenity, and public facilities that link to the wider urban area.' Infrastructure corridors will include natural aspects so they contribute to wildlife refuges and ecological corridors.
- The natural and built environment will flow into each other and interact to provide attractive, connected and liveable landscapes. Wildlife refuges, wetlands and valuable areas of natural vegetation will be protected by compatible land uses and managed collaboratively so their values are sustained. Recreation and public parks will be part of the landscape so there are a range of green spaces in easy walking distance of the whole community.

- State Government agencies will work closely and collaboratively with Councils, industry, businesses and the community so there are clear roles and responsibilities and understanding of how all of the natural and open space areas will be managed for the future. Agreements between relevant and accountable coordinating groups will be signed that define roles and responsibilities and establish priorities, share resources and access funding.
- Public and private agency strategic and operational plans will be linked to identify a joint landscape and community vision with agreed goals, objectives and targets, so that mutually beneficial outcomes are achieved.
- Agreement will be reached on the NRM programs and projects for the region and in local areas through a Regional NRM Program, so that major investment is attracted for regional NRM activities that benefit the landscape and the communities.
- Communities and 'NRM' Community Groups are engaged at all stages and are supported to attract funding to assist in protecting, conserving and managing the larger regional landscape.

These are not just aspirational statements, but each is an initiative or process that can be built into implementation of the NRM Business Plan through joint agreements and MOUs.

These opportunities can also be translated into performance indicators to ensure that the Regional NRM Program outcomes are measured and reviewed to ensure the Regional NRM Strategy is being successfully implemented.

5. GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK AND STRUCTURE

This section summarises South West Group governance framework and structure to set the context for management of the NRM Business Plan and implementation of the NRM Strategy.

5.1 South West Group Operating Structure

The South West Group, as a Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (VROC) is the oldest regional local government structure of its type in Western Australia. It operates under a 'Corporate Governance Charter' which sets out Governance Roles, Board Processes and Board Member Protocols with a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that describes how the six member Councils work together.

The MoU is important as it sets out the funding and resourcing arrangements that would be applied to regional projects and activities such as the Regional NRM Strategy and NRM Program.

Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan 2010 – 2013 sets out the Vision and Mission:

Local Governments in South Metropolitan Perth, through cooperation with industry, community and the other spheres of government will capture a wide range of opportunities to enhance economic growth, promote a resilient economy as well as supporting a diversity of quality lifestyles whilst servicing and sustaining cohesive, productive communities in an enviable environmental setting.

Mission

The South West Group will be persuasive, forward looking and influential in representing, supporting and promoting Local Government interests that facilitate both long term integrated planning and coordinated infrastructure development to improve the quality of life for residents of the South West Corridor.

Goals

- Regional Governance
- Transport
- Economic Development
- Socio-economic development
- Management of the natural and built environment
- Coordinated Municipal Services
- South West Group Management

Each Goal has one or more Objectives and a number of Strategies, with the Goal for *Management of the natural and built environment* - “To provide leadership in the recognition of the values of both the natural and built environment whilst supporting sustainable management for the benefit of current and future generations”.

The relevant Objective is:

To support the effective management of marine and coastal resources as well as sustaining estuarine and inland environments

and the most relevant Strategy:

Prepare regional strategies for recreation, environmental use and management and sustainable use of regional resources.

An Annual Work Plan sets out activities and priorities for each year. The 2013 work plan identified the following NRM activities in the top 20 list of activities:

- *Prepare a Regional Natural Resources Management (NRM) Strategy, Business Plan and governance structure for consideration by the South West Group Board and member Councils.*
- *Establish a regional online NRM database and document management system for the South West Metropolitan Region, through a consultative approach involving active participation by member Councils.*

The Charter and MoU set out the arrangements to fund and resource implementation, particularly in Section 4 of the MoU where it states – “Member Councils and any other body may choose to contribute additional funds to specific South West Group project activity or events”.

5.2 South West Group Board Structure

The Corporate Governance Structure establishes the Board consisting of the Mayor and the CEO of each member local government authority.

The Board has the power to establish sub-committees and the current structure is listed below and shown in Figure 4, noting the South West Reference Group and additional structures (shown in red text) related to the preparation of the Regional NRM Strategy.

- Board
- CEOs Forum
- Planning and Infrastructure Committee
- Technical Directors Committee
- South West Reference Group
- South West Development Foundation Management Committee (SWCDeF)

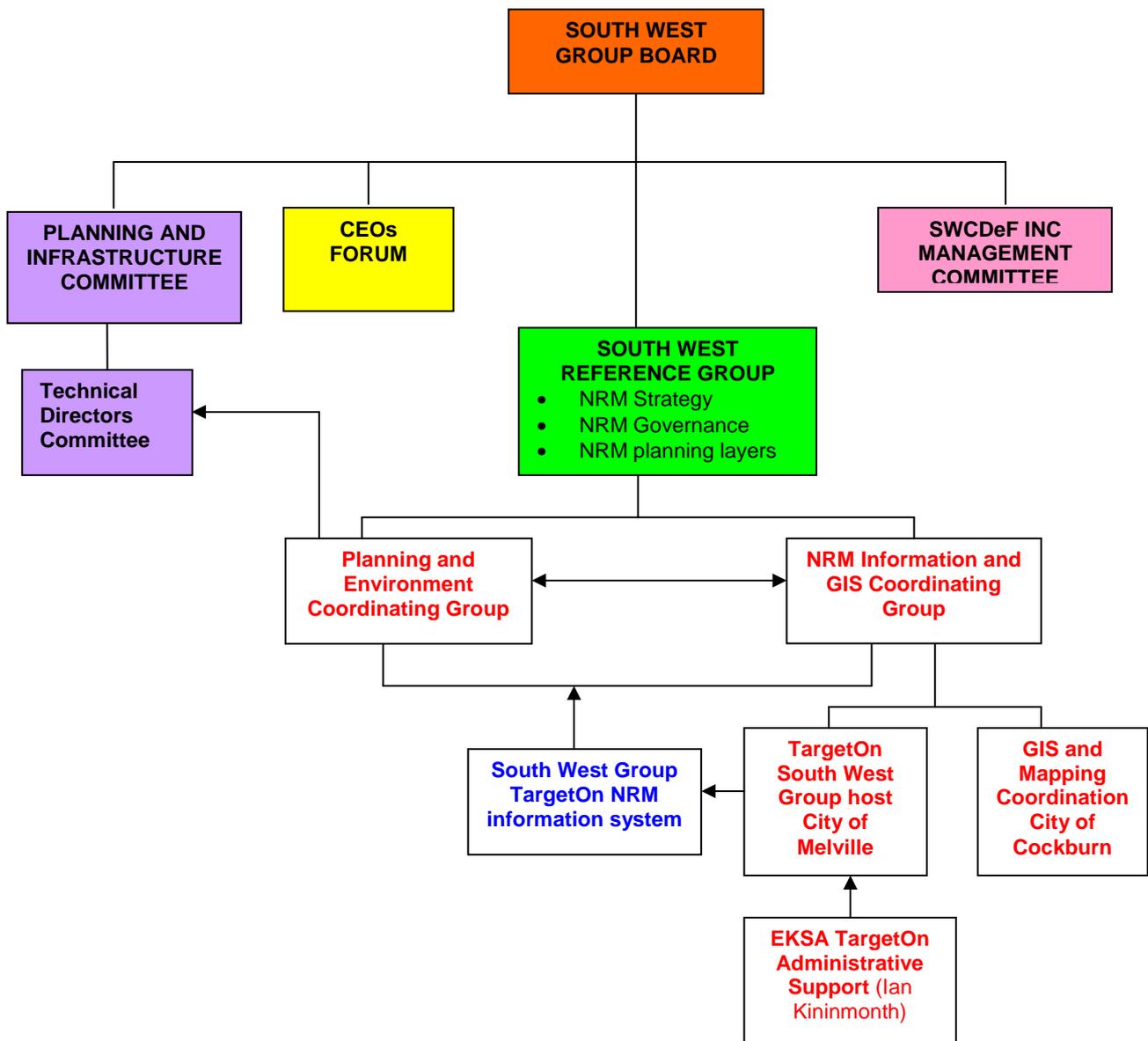


Figure 4 – Structure of South West Group with NRM support and links

The South West Group is affiliated with and provides administrative support to the South West Corridor Development Foundation Incorporated (SWCDeF), which is a not for profit organisation that can administer and manage funding for South West Group initiatives.

Figure 4 shows the South West Reference Group (SWRG), originally one of the Perth Region NRM's (PRNRM) geographic reference groups, which replaced the South West Group Environment and Services Committee as part of an agreement between PRNRM and the South West Group Board. When PRNRM discontinued its reference groups, the South West Group Board resolved to continue with the SWRG including approving the preparation of the Regional NRM Strategy and Business Plan.

Terms of Reference for the South West Reference Group include, but are not limited to:

- *To develop an NRM Governance Model and Business Plan that clarifies the National and State NRM context and establishes a framework for the South West Group and member Councils to work together on regional NRM activities and projects.*

- *To develop a Regional NRM Strategy that links all of the NRM and environmental work being undertaken by the member Councils to better share limited resources, identify priority projects and attract additional funding for NRM activities that benefit the region and the natural environment.*
- *To determine the requirements and a pathway for the South West Group and member Councils to collectively undertake regional natural resource and environmental management activities and raise its profile in negotiations with the State and Australian Governments and other key stakeholders.*
- *To identify and develop required planning layers (Green Map and Blue Map) that link to, and support, planning processes through the Metropolitan Region Scheme and Local Planning Schemes to achieve a sustainable diversity of natural land uses and public amenity for the South West Metropolitan Region.*

As part of the SWRG's work, Planning and Environment, and NRM Information and GIS Coordinating Groups were established, an on-line NRM information system established (South West Group TargetOn) and lead Councils appointed for NRM information and GIS/NRM mapping management. These groups and relationships are shown in Figure 4 as well as the current link to the Board through the Technical Directors Committee, which provide strategic and operational advice.

These committee arrangements, including the links set up for the South West Reference Group, establish a robust governance framework to progress the Regional NRM Strategy, establishment of the Green Network and implementation of the Regional NRM Program.

5.3 South West Group Regional NRM Framework

The final part of the 'Governance Framework' arose from work carried out with the member Councils which sought to:

- map the NRM work undertaken in terms of categories or themes; and
- examine how their work was linked to their Strategic Community Plans and managed across the organisation.

Figure 6 shows the Regional NRM Strategy Framework that resulted through this work.

The Regional NRM framework links to the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment and statutory planning and provides a basis to identify the Priority Regional NRM Projects (Regional Actions) as well as how these link to local projects and initiatives (Council Actions). This framework allowed Priority Projects and Priority Initiatives to be further identified, developed and prioritised to establish an initial draft of the Regional NRM Program.

The Regional NRM framework will be able to capture the work undertaken by member Councils and their contribution toward regional NRM outcomes. It will also enable the identification and development of regional priority projects and initiatives now and into the future.

The South West Group Regional NRM framework is provided in Figure 6.

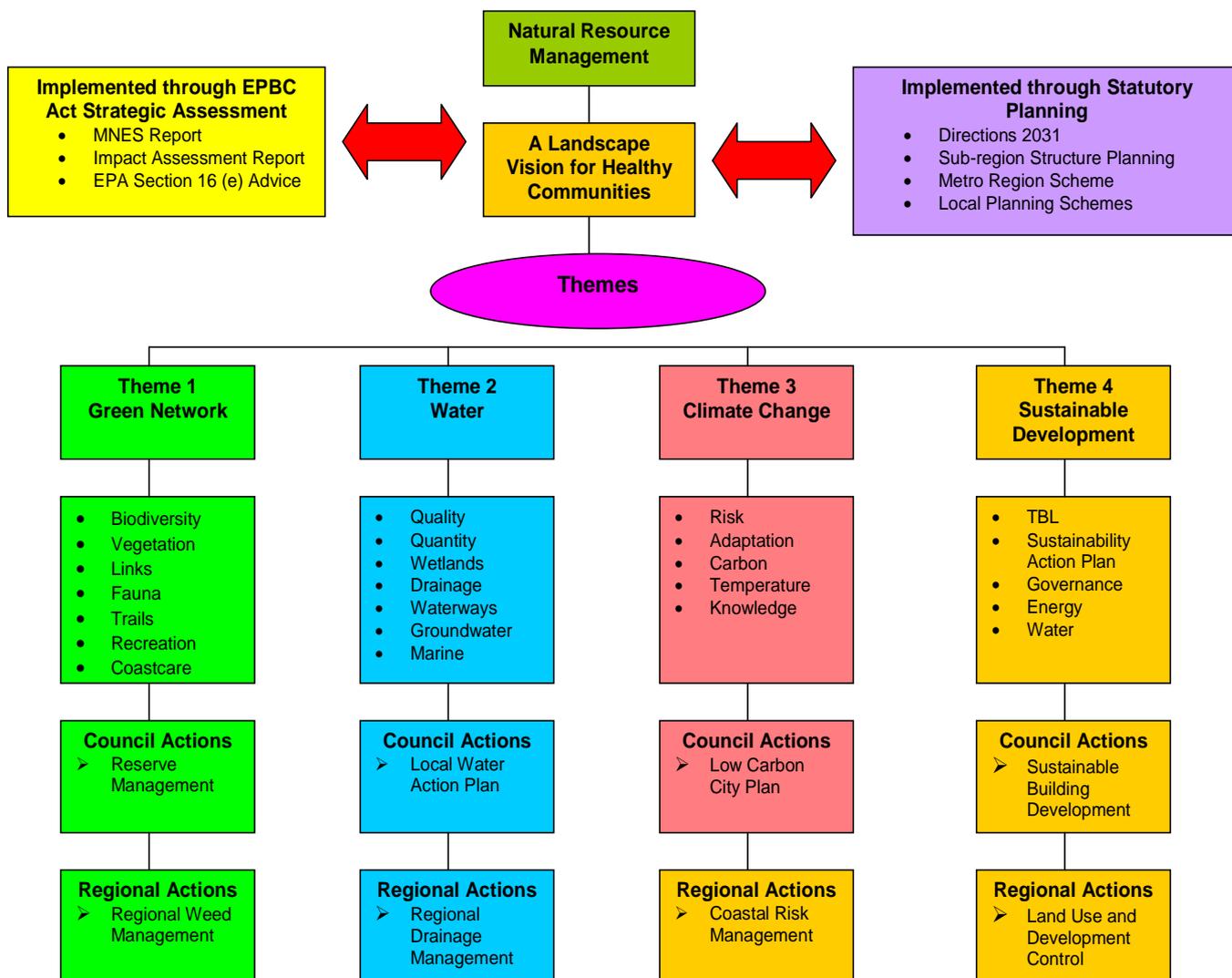


Figure 6 - South West Group Regional NRM Framework

6. FUNDING AND RESOURCES

The funding and resources required to progress the Regional NRM Strategy and Program have been considered under the following key headings:

- Regional NRM Strategy – this relates to “core” funding associated with the employment of an NRM Facilitator who would be responsible for implementing the Regional NRM Strategy and providing support for implementing the Regional NRM Program. These direct cost funding sources will primarily be met through member Council and South West Group contributions.
- Regional NRM Program – this relates the regional priority projects and initiatives identified and agreed by the member Councils, based on a five year program involving annual reviews. The funding for the Regional NRM Program is “discretionary” and relies upon priority projects and initiatives where funding contributions are secured from participating member Councils, government agencies, external stakeholders and/or grants.
- External funding – this relates to external funding secured through Federal and State NRM and environmental grant programs. Due to the changing nature of funding programs and their priorities, external funding can not be relied upon for NRM activities and is dependant upon the success of funding applications through a competitive assessment process.

Further details regarding funding and resources is provided below.

6.1 Regional NRM Strategy

The Regional NRM Strategy “core” funding will need to be met by the participating member Councils under an agreed cost sharing arrangement.

The South West Group Corporate Governance Charter (February 2011) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) 2011-2014 provide the framework for the Board to agree to adopt and implement the Regional NRM Strategy. Further, the South West Group is affiliated with and provides administrative support to the South West Corridor Development Foundation Incorporated (SWCDeF), which can administer funding for South West Group initiatives.

The funding provided by the member Councils could be in the form of a levy across all member Councils or agreed funding arrangement specific to the participating member Councils.

Under the MoU,

“Member councils will be levied according to the annual budget adopted by the Board. The proportion of the annual funding sourced from each member council will be based on a fixed annual fee (\$20,000 for 2011) with the balance being apportioned according to a mix of member council population and rate revenue.

Member councils and any other body may choose to contribute additional funds to specific South West Group project activity or events. This contribution will be at the complete discretion of each member council or external body”.

Note, the fixed fee was increased from \$20,000 in 2011 to \$25,000 in 2012/13.

The Corporate Governance Charter provides the framework for funding arrangements for the Regional NRM Strategy. SWCDeF provides the mechanism for administering and managing funds for the implementation of priority projects identified in the Regional NRM Program, including grant funding.

Further analysis of funding arrangements indicate that the level of effort required to progress the Regional NRM Program across the region will vary considerably across the member Councils. An alternative equitable funding model aimed at achieving greater equity across the member Councils based on variable levels of effort is proposed.

The proposed funding model reflects that the larger Councils and growth areas requiring greater demands, due to their environmental characteristics and development pressures, will benefit most from activities undertaken through the Regional NRM Strategy. NRM activities for these larger Councils will most likely cover the full suite of themes (particularly biodiversity, wetlands and natural habitat initiatives), whereas the NRM activities for the smaller and more developed Councils (e.g. East Fremantle and Fremantle) will mainly focus on themes related to climate change and sustainable development, although there is an opportunity to implement existing ‘green plans’ as part of the Green Network.

Based on this approach, it is proposed that a lower fixed annual fee of \$10,000 (or \$60,000 per annum) be applied with the balance of funding made up of a “needs based” contribution split for direct NRM strategy costs (i.e. core funding) as follows:

- 25% contribution (Cities of Cockburn, Melville and Rockingham)
- 15% (City of Kwinana)
- 10% (City of Fremantle)

The implementation of the Regional NRM Strategy will require a senior level facilitator with sufficient skills and experience with collaborative projects and partnerships. The NRM Facilitator position will be the focal point for the Regional NRM Strategy and ensure that all regional NRM coordination and

communication activities are undertaken in a timely manner. The NRM Facilitator is also likely to play a key role in supporting the development, planning, delivery and monitoring of agreed priority projects and initiatives that are implemented through the Regional NRM Program, which could include reporting on performance indicators to funding organisations and key stakeholders.

A review of the Local Government Officers Award classifications indicate that the Regional NRM Facilitator position is likely to be a Level 8 or 9 appointment, with salary ranging from \$75,000 to \$90,000. In order to secure a suitably skilled and experienced officer, it is recommended that the Regional NRM Facilitator position be advertised as a 3 year contract and be subject to annual performance reviews. An appropriate starting salary is considered to be \$80,000, resulting in a total position cost of around \$150,000 which includes 0.5 employment overhead costs and a discretionary budget of \$30,000 for disbursements (travel, catering, professional development) and support activities.

The Regional NRM Strategy has also resulted in the establishment of support roles in GIS mapping and South West Group Target On database management being undertaken by member Councils. These are important support roles that are essential to the implementation of the regional NRM Strategy and therefore part of the “core” funded activities. It is estimated that 0.2 FTE for each support role would be sufficient and this would attract a cost of approximately \$40,000 in total.

Table 1 summarises the preliminary resourcing requirements to implement the Regional NRM Strategy for consideration by the South West Group Board and member Councils.

Function	Responsibility	Resources	Costs (inc overheads)	Discretionary Funding	Total
NRM Facilitator South West Group	Director South West Group	Full time employee on 3 year contract at Level 8 (salary \$80,000)	\$120,000	\$30,000 per year for support functions	\$150,000
GIS and mapping support	City of Cockburn	Existing employee 0.2 FTE Level 5 (\$60,000)	\$18,000	Not required	\$18,000
South West Group TargetOn	City of Melville	Existing 0.2 FTE at Level 5 (\$60,000)	\$18,000	\$4,000 per year for support from Environmental Knowledge Systems Australia for TargetOn maintenance and training.	\$22,000
TOTAL					\$190,000

Table 1 – Preliminary Annual Costs of Implementing the Regional NRM Strategy

The above preliminary estimates would be subject to negotiations and agreement with member Councils. Based on the current funding model under the South West Group MoU (with fixed fees at \$10,000 as proposed), the preliminary estimates would require funding contributions ranging from a minimum of \$10,000 to a maximum of \$35,000 per member Council.

6.2 Regional NRM Program

Using the Regional NRM Framework, Regional Priority Projects and Priority Initiatives were identified across the six Councils through a consultative approach involving member Councils and key external stakeholders. These form the basis for a Regional NRM Program and priority projects and initiatives identified to date are listed below.

Priority Projects include implementation of plans, research and on ground works:

- Cockburn Sound Coastal Alliance
- Climate Change Adaptation
- Integrated Coastal Management Plan and Perth Corridor Project
- Coastal Conversations Beach Monitoring Project
- Iconic Coastal/Marine Species Project
- Fire Management Project
- Dieback Mapping and Management
- Regional Control of Feral Animals
- Water Conservation and Re-use
- Integrated Wetland Conservation
- Kwinana Industry Buffer Green Belt
- Recycled Water for Heavy industry
- Green Network – Integration of Local Biodiversity Strategies and Mapping of Natural Areas and Ecological Links
- Environment and Sustainability Education

Priority Initiatives include strategic coordination of organisations to achieve agreed objectives and targets:

- Inter-government liaison
- Effective Natural Area Management
- EPBC Strategic Assessment
- Kwinana Industry Buffer

More detail on each project and initiative is provided in the Regional NRM Strategy.

The Regional NRM Program will be presented as a five year program based on priorities and achievable outcomes.

It is intended that the five year Regional NRM Program will be a rolling program with annual reviews against agreed short term and long term performance indicators.

Any regional priority project or initiative costs progressed through the implementation of the Regional NRM Program (e.g. ecological corridors project, climate change adaption project) would be funded by the participating member Councils (and grant funds if eligible) based on those Councils involved and other funding able to be leveraged.

Using this framework, the funding and resources provided by member Councils for core Regional NRM Strategy activities (i.e funding for an NRM Coordinator) can be managed by the South West Group and the funding for regional priority projects and initiatives (member Council and grant funds) can be managed through SWCDeF.

Also as stated in the Regional NRM Strategy, the role of the South West Group in developing and implementing regional priority projects will vary depending upon funding sources, available resources and stakeholder responsibilities.

The roles are likely to fall into three main categories:

- Coordinator – responsible for leading the project, or initiative, managing funding and all engagement activities with key stakeholders.
- Facilitator – responsible for bringing together key stakeholders, negotiating regional outcomes and reporting back to selected stakeholders (e.g. member Councils).
- Partner – contributor to projects led by another organisation with regional implications/benefits.

Table 2 shows a model used to develop the Regional NRM Program and identify the South West Group's role for regional priority projects and initiatives, including required resources (i.e. Officer hours). Funding sources (Member Council, other partners, grants) will need to be negotiated and agreed.

Those regional priority projects and initiatives requiring coordination or facilitation by the South West Group are likely to have the greatest resource and budget demands, compared to the partnering roles. This leads to consideration of the form of funding and resource requirements that the South West Group will need to implement the Regional NRM Strategy and Regional NRM Program, including building the Green Network across the landscapes and communities of the region.

Ranked Projects and Initiatives	South West Group Role	Resources and Funding	
		Member Councils	Grants and Other Sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate • Facilitate • Partner - hours	Officers hours	Funds \$
<p>Ranked Priority Projects and Initiatives – The projects and initiatives were scored against six criteria by all member Councils, the South West Group office and the Cockburn Sound Management Council resulting in the listed rankings from 1 to 17. This provides a reasonable first ranking to build the projects and initiatives into the five year Regional NRM Program.</p>			
1. Green Network - Integration of Local Biodiversity Strategies and Mapping of Natural Areas and Ecological Links	Facilitator - 245		
2. EPBC Strategic Assessment (SWG)	Coordinator - 140		
3. Regional Fire Management	Facilitator - 190		
4. Cockburn Sound Coastal Alliance	Partner - 90		
5. Climate Change Adaptation	Partner - 110		
6. Regional Control of Feral Animals	Facilitator - 145		
7. Water Conservation and Reuse	Facilitator - 205		
8. Integrated Wetland Conservation	Facilitator - 250		
9. Integrated Coastal Management Plan and Perth Corridor Project	Partner - 70		
10. Inter-government Liaison	Facilitator - 195		
11. Effective Natural Area Management	Facilitator - 170		
12. Kwinana Industry Green Belt	Partner - 160		
13. Dieback Mapping and Management	Facilitator - 155		
14. Environment and Sustainability Management	Partner - 40		
15. Iconic Coastal and Marine Species	Partner - 85		
16. Coastal Conversations Beach Monitoring	Partner - 65		
17. Recycled Water for Heavy Industry	Partner - 150		
Total - South West Group five year NRM Program core hours	2465 hours		
Light Industry Audit (Cleaner Production) – new project not ranked			

Table 2 – Resource and Funding Model for a Regional NRM Program

Table 2 shows a first cut at ranking the Regional Priority Projects and Initiatives, the role the South West Group 'office' could play and an estimate of the total hours that would be contributed by the NRM Facilitator position identified in section 6.1.

Most of the regional projects and initiatives will require collaboration with a range of stakeholders and partnership arrangements with some organisations. The key to successfully leveraging funding will be to demonstrate that each project is part of a strategic whole of landscape approach that progressively achieves the 'landscape vision for healthy communities' and implements the agreed form of the Green Network. The Regional NRM Program will also need to show how regional and local projects being carried out by other organisations and community groups link together to form the Green Network, including protection of endangered ecological communities, flora and fauna.

The elements of the Regional NRM Program will cover:

- Implementation of prioritised Regional Projects and Initiatives over time, showing when the projects should commence and the time they will take to complete.
- Establishment of coordination arrangements for carriage of each project, including the resources needed for project management from all partners.
- Identification of how each project links to the broad NRM objectives for the region and progressively forms and implements the Green Network.
- Strategies to maintain and build relationships with key stakeholders.
- Clarification of the reporting requirements for each project, to the funding bodies, partner organisations and to the South West Group Board and member Councils.
- Identification of future management arrangements once the project is completed, including lead and support organisations.
- Development of short and longer term performance indicators based in part on elements of the Regional NRM Business Plan, but also member Council targets in their NRM strategies and plans.

Natural Area Conservation Status		
State Conservation Status	Regional Conservation Status	Local Conservation Status
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional Parks • Conservation Reserves • Ramsar Wetlands (National) • High Conservation Category Wetlands • Rare and Endangered Species 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bush Forever • Conservation Category Wetlands • Threatened Ecological Communities • Threatened Species • Regional Open Space 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Natural Areas not reserved • Local Reserves • Private Land • Local Open Space
Collaborative Management Arrangements		
State Government as the lead with Local Government in well defined circumstances	State Government/Local Government Partnership with clearly defined roles and responsibilities	Local Government with State Government support in defined circumstances, eg private land
Likely Outcome of EPBC Strategic Assessment and EPA Section 16(e) advice		
Elevates conservation and management of some natural areas. May require compensation for development forgone	Elevation of Matters of National Environmental Significance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher level of management • Opportunity for Federal/State funding • Key areas for offsets (established bushland and rehabilitation of degraded land) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local areas recognised as nationally/regionally significant • Local Government able to seek Federal/State funding for management • Compensation for landowners • Key areas for offsets (established bushland reserves/areas and rehabilitation of degraded land)

Table 3 – Natural Area Conservation Status (preliminary model)

The outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment may have implications for the priority projects and initiatives put forward in the Regional NRM Program due to the potential to change the current conservation status of natural areas in the region, thereby elevating their status to a higher value that incorporates Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) factors and State level conservation requirements. This elevated status will require an adjustment to current roles and responsibilities and the collaborative arrangements required to address threatening processes affecting species protected by legislation.

Table 3 provides a useful framework for establishing the collaborative arrangements required to address likely changes to conservation status resulting from the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment and introduces the concept of biodiversity offsets, which are expected to feature in mitigation measures for high conservation value vegetation likely to be cleared due to development.

6.3 External Funding

The national and state NRM funding programs previously described identify potential opportunities for accessing funding for eligible priority projects and initiatives in the Regional NRM Program. A thorough understanding of these funding sources will be critical in securing supporting funds to implement the Regional NRM Program. These external funding sources may be suitable to support capital and operation funding for regional priority projects and initiatives, however they should not be relied upon to support the Regional NRM Strategy and Program core activities, which will require an ongoing source of guaranteed funding.

Any regional priority project or initiative costs progressed through the implementation of the Regional NRM Program (e.g. ecological corridors project, climate change adaptation project) would be funded by the participating member Councils (and grant funds if eligible) based on those Councils involved and other funding able to be leveraged.

The Regional NRM Strategy provides a description of Federal and State NRM related funding programs that may be applicable to priority projects and initiatives determined in the Regional NRM Program.

The funding secured for the implementation of the Regional NRM Program priority projects and initiatives (member Council and grant funds) can be administered and managed through SWCDeF, which is a South West Group affiliated not for profit incorporated body that was established for this purpose.

7. SOUTH WEST GROUP COORDINATION

This section draws on work completed to date on the Regional NRM Strategy and incorporates the proposed coordination and support arrangements provided by the South West Group and member Councils.

7.1 South West Group Coordinating Structure

The key features of the South West Group structure for coordinating and providing support in the development of the Regional NRM Strategy (refer to Table 4 above) are considered suitable for the oversight of regional NRM work in the future and can be summarised as follows:

- South West Reference Group (SWRG) as the main committee for the development and implementation of the Regional NRM Strategy and Program. This committee has Councillor representation from member Councils (including the City of Cockburn Mayor), Technical Directors and senior officers from member Councils and other key stakeholders (Cockburn Sound Management Council, Kwinana Industries Council).
- Minutes from the SWRG, including any recommendations, presented and considered by the South West Group Board
- Referral of items and reports to the Technical Directors Committee as required on issues with budget, resource or operational implications for member Councils

- Internal Coordinating Groups for Planning/Environment and NRM Information/GIS
- Maintenance of the on-line NRM information management/database, South West Group TargetOn, supported by a 'Lead Council' (currently the City of Melville).
- Continuation of the GIS and mapping capability, supported by a 'Lead Council' (currently the City of Cockburn).

The NRM Facilitator would be required to coordinate the above structure as it relates to the Regional NRM Strategy and Program. The preliminary cost estimates have included budgets and funding arrangements to cover resources associated with the lead Council support for maintaining the South West Group TargetOn database and coordinating GIS mapping.

7.2 Member Council Coordination

The Regional NRM Framework (refer to Figure 6 above) outlines how the Regional NRM Strategy relates to the key themes (Green Network, Water, Climate Change and Sustainable Development) and the strategic/statutory plans which will have major influence on future NRM activities (i.e. EPBC Act Strategic Assessment, Directions 2031, Sub-regional Structure Plans, Metropolitan Region Scheme and Local Planning Schemes).

Figure 7 below seeks to capture the NRM work being undertaken by member Councils under the key themes and outlines how the NRM work relates to organisational structure and strategic/statutory planning at the local level.

These two structures support and complement each other and provide a sound foundation for the South West Group and the member Councils to work together on NRM activities for mutual benefit.

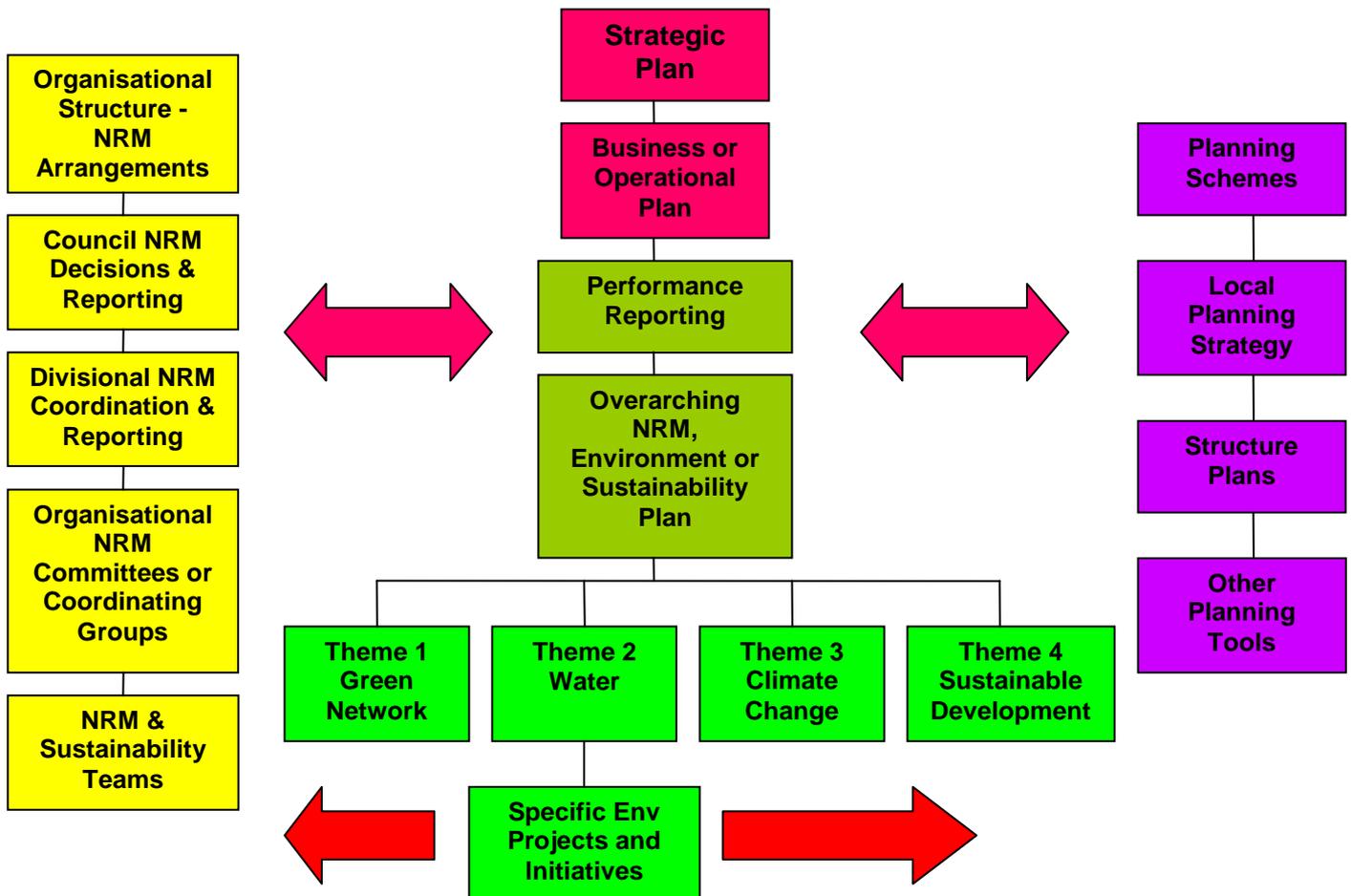


Figure 7 – Layout of a Council Showing Relationship between Organisational Structure, Strategic Planning and Statutory Planning

The information gathered through the above structure will provide a summary of the NRM work and reporting undertaken across each of the member Councils, including organisational arrangements. The information will provide a snapshot of how each Council coordinates and assigns responsibility for NRM, environmental and sustainability business activities. This snapshot, along with the more detailed Council NRM categories and activities, will be loaded onto South West Group TargetOn online database platform.

This valuable information will enable member Councils to gain a better understanding of how their role in NRM fits within a regional perspective and the work being undertaken and organisational arrangements for NRM in other member Councils. It will also provide the opportunity to share knowledge and identify areas where it is logical for neighbouring Councils to work together on joint NRM initiatives.

Specific recommendations for improved coordination of the NRM work within local government authorities were identified in a report published by Perth Region NRM (Integrating NRM into Local Government Core Business, Perth Region NRM, November 2008). The recommendations from the Perth Region NRM report, which were based on a number of Local Government case studies including the South West Group as a regional organisation, have been used by the South West Group Councils to map regional and local NRM work, using the framework in Figure 7.

In summary, the 19 recommendations from the Perth Region NRM report for individual Local Governments have been arranged under the following headings:

- Leadership and Organisational Structure
- Statutory and Strategic Planning, NRM Strategies and Policy
- Resource Allocation and Strategic Management; Financial Reporting
- Definition of NRM
- Internal Coordination
- NRM/Environmental Officer or Coordinator
- Community Engagement and Information
- Education and Training

Five of the recommendations in the Perth Region NRM report were specific to regional local government bodies and covered issues such as:

- regional approaches to NRM
- establishment of a regional NRM standing committee
- large scale collaborative projects and
- definition of roles and responsibilities.

The work completed to date has already met a number of Perth Region NRM report recommendations related to regional local government bodies. It is expected that the South West Group Regional NRM Strategy and Program will be a suitable vehicle to implement the remaining Perth Region NRM report recommendations.

7.3 External Relationships and Coordination

The Regional NRM Strategy and the preceding sections in this Business Plan demonstrate that the South West Group will require close working relationships with government agencies and a range of other regional stakeholders to successfully implement its landscape and community vision. Of particular note is the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment (Department of Premier and Cabinet, Department of Planning, Department of Environment and Conservation, Environmental Protection Authority) and its links to the Perth Peel Sub-regional Structure Planning (Department of Planning), which will in large part determine the future land uses of the region.

In addition, there are a range of public and private stakeholders that the South West Group will need to continue to work closely with to maintain and strengthen relationships into the future as outlined below .

Relationship	Purpose
WAPC and Department of Planning	To support strategic and statutory planning in the SW Corridor and participate in implementation of the Green Network to achieve the South West Group's NRM landscape and community vision.
Environmental Protection Authority	To work with EPA to gain support to develop the Regional NRM Strategy and Green Network, including mapping and implementation of the EPBC Strategic Assessment.
Department of Conservation and Environment (DEC)	To work with DEC to gain support and link their biodiversity mapping and policies to the Green Network, including collaborative arrangements for future management of natural areas.
Department of Water (DoW)	To work with and support DoW so the State and Local Government water information can be integrated to inform future land use planning and implementation of the Green Network.
WALGA	Develop a partnership to work with WALGA to develop the Green Network and use the Regional Framework for Local Biodiversity Conservation Priorities in the South West Metropolitan Region
Australian Government	Identify sources of funding and strategic links for NRM work including implementation of the Green Network, Priority Projects and Priority Initiatives.
Premier and Cabinet	Seek support for 'integrated land use planning' and implementation of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment and Green Network.
Perth Region NRM (PRNRM)	To support Perth Region NRM's Regional NRM Strategy, link the South West Group NRM Strategy and work collaboratively to seek funding to implement the Green Network and Priority Projects.
Kwinana Industry Council (KIC)	Retain the support of KIC for the work of the SWRG and maintain strong links to implement the Green Network and the Kwinana Industry Buffer Zone.
Western Trade Coast	Maintain contact with the Western Trade Coast Committee to collaboratively implement the Regional NRM Strategy and Green Network in their area.
Landcorp	Landcorp is a major landowner and developer in the SW Corridor and its support is needed to implement the Regional NRM Strategy and Green Network.
Cockburn Sound Management Council (CSMC)	Work with the CSMC to integrate marine, coastal and land planning and studies to implement the Regional NRM Strategy and Green Network.
Landgate and WA Land Information System (WALIS)	Seek technical support for mapping and coordination of GIS to develop and implement the Regional NRM Strategy and Green Network.
Department of Indigenous Affairs and South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council	Seek support for the inclusion of Noongar culture and links to the lands and waters they identify as 'their country' in implementation of the Regional NRM Strategy.
Planning Institute of Australia WA Branch (PIA)	Seek support for Integrated Land Use Planning and the Regional NRM Strategy, including a possible forum run by the PIA in partnership with the WAPC and Department of Planning. ⁴⁵¹
Urban Development Institute of Australia WA Branch	Seek support for preparation of the Green Network, including a collaborative approach to determining future land use and management.

Table 4 – Summary of External Relationships for Regional NRM activities

8. CONCLUSION

The Regional NRM Business Plan complements the Regional NRM Strategy by setting out the methods and arrangements for the South West Group member Councils to work together to implement the NRM Strategy and develop and implement a five year Regional NRM Program.

The key features from the NRM Strategy relevant to the Business Plan are:

- Provides a practical mechanism to implement the Green Network in 'Directions 2031 and beyond' and the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment.
- Enables NRM and sustainable development to be integrated with land use planning.
- Advocates and promotes the role of Local Government as a leader in NRM.
- Provides a regional 'snapshot' of NRM assets to assist with future planning, management and decision making.
- Has a Regional NRM Framework for implementation that builds on the information gathered from member Councils (Council Actions, Regional Actions).
- Identifies and maps key regional landscape values using the Perth Biodiversity Project Planning Tool to show how the Green Network sits in the landscape, including ecological linkages between Regional Parks and Reserves.
- Establishes collaborative management measures for all natural areas that clarify the roles and responsibilities of State and Local Governments as the main land managers.
- Establishes internal working arrangements and lead roles for, member Councils (e.g. Planning/Environment and NRM Information/GIS Coordinating Groups and GIS lead and TargetOn lead Councils).
- Establishes external working relationships with key government agencies and regional stakeholders.
- Identified regional NRM priority projects and initiatives as a key input into the development of a five year Regional NRM Program.

The Business Plan adds more key features, which focus on resources, funding and management arrangements across and within the six member Councils:

- Broadening the Strategic Context to include COAG objectives for 'Capital City Planning', coverage of National and State NRM Frameworks, inclusion of the statutory 'Local Government Integrated Planning Framework', and coverage of the implications of Local Government Structural Reform.
- Identifies that the South West Group 'Corporate Governance Charter' and Memorandum of Understanding provide a governance framework for the six member Councils to work together to implement the Regional NRM Strategy and develop the Regional NRM Program.
- Identifies that the South West Corridor Development Foundation Inc (SWCDeF) as a suitable organisation to administer and manage funding for priority projects and initiatives progressed in the Regional NRM Program .
- Elaborates on the key elements of a Regional NRM Program.
- Puts forward a preliminary 'Resources and Funding Model' for the implementation of the Regional NRM Strategy, and development and implementation of a five year Regional NRM Program.

The combination of the above features provide the South West Group with confidence and a robust framework to implement the Regional NRM Strategy and develop the five year rolling Regional NRM Program. The annual costs to member Councils are likely to be well exceeded by the benefits and there are opportunities to attract external funding for large scale NRM projects in the region.

The implementation of the Regional NRM Strategy and Program has the potential to provide tangible and landscape scale benefits for the landscapes and communities of the South West Metropolitan Region. It will be important to review the NRM work on an annual basis to ensure that outcomes are achieved and benefits maximised. The outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment and Sub-regional Structure Plans will have implications for Regional NRM Strategy activities and the priority projects and initiatives being progressed through the Regional NRM Program.

Appendix 1

Local Government NRM Recommendations (from Integrating NRM into Local Government Core Business, Perth Region NRM, November 2008)

Part A - Individual Local Governments

1. Leadership and Organisational Structure

Recommendation 1

Appoint a “champion”. Each Local Government should designate a senior position in the organisation with overall strategic responsibility for NRM. This person would provide leadership to:

- NRM strategic thinking and strategic planning, in the context of the overall strategic development of the organisation and its services,
- the regular review of NRM priorities and the allocation of resources,
- the development and coordination of NRM strategies and policies,
- building the NRM profile across the organisation,
- the coordination of NRM functions across the organisation,
- the coordination of external relationships, and
- the assessment and reporting of the Local Government’s NRM performance.

Recommendation 2

Leadership at Council level should be provided through the establishment of a Council standing committee on NRM and/or the establishment of NRM portfolio responsibilities for selected Councillors, or equivalent mechanisms.

Recommendation 3

In the appointment of (a) a CEO, and (b) a senior manager with strategic responsibility for NRM, overall responsibility for the organisation’s NRM performance should be included in job specifications and appointment criteria.

Recommendation 4

NRM objectives and achievements should be incorporated in the performance management process for senior managers whose responsibilities include NRM.

2. Statutory and Strategic Planning, NRM Strategies and Policy

Recommendation 5

NRM should be integrated into the Local Planning Strategy, Local Planning Scheme, Strategic Plan and business plan of a Local Government in a way that shows the importance of NRM in the overall strategic development of the organisation and the local government region for which it is responsible.

Recommendation 6

- a) As a central part of the planning process, there should be a comprehensive and integrated overarching NRM strategy - a ‘peak’ NRM plan or equivalent.
- b) Progress with implementation of the overarching NRM strategy should be reported to Council annually.
- c) The overarching NRM strategy should be reviewed periodically, for example, each three or five years.
- d) Each more specific NRM plan or strategy (for example, Local Biodiversity Strategy, District Conservation Strategy, Greenhouse Action Plan) should be subsidiary to and integrated with the overarching NRM strategy.

Recommendation 7

To facilitate implementation of an overarching NRM strategy, Local Governments are encouraged to utilise the following mechanisms:

- a) provisions within the Local Planning Strategy,

- b) provisions within the Local Planning Scheme, for example, the specification of conservation zones,
- c) Local Planning Policies attached to the Local Planning Scheme,
- d) strategies that are given force through being established as formal (non statutory) policies of Council, and
- e) strategies that are expressed in the form of guidelines or desirable goals. Their implementation occurs through resource allocation to specific projects, the use of incentives, the education of residents, etc. Many of the components of biodiversity strategies are in this category, for example, management plans for reserves, water catchment restoration projects, programs to encourage and assist private landowners to protect biodiversity, deal with invasive weeds, erosion, dieback, etc.

3. Resource Allocation and Strategic Management; Financial Reporting

Recommendation 8

Implementation of the overarching NRM strategy/plan should be reviewed on an annual basis, leading to revised priorities, targets, action steps and, in turn, resource allocations for the forthcoming year (i.e. an annual NRM business or operational plan), which would be part of a Local Government's annual business plan.

Recommendation 9

Local Governments are encouraged to work towards the development of budgets/business plans and financial reporting arrangements that show total expenditure on the various aspects of NRM, including those that may be the responsibility of different departments or business units, based on the Perth Region NRM definition of natural resources management or a variant of it that suits the structure and modus operandi of the organisation.

4. Definition of NRM

Recommendation 10

Each Local Government is encouraged to review the Perth Region NRM 'definition' of natural resource management with a view to determining (a) the components that constitute the "core" aspects of NRM (and which would be the direct responsibility of a senior manager responsible for NRM, the direct responsibility of an NRM coordinator, would be central in NRM budgets, etc.) and (b) the components that are the responsibility of other parts of the organisation.

Recommendation 11

Those components of sustainability strategies that relate to natural resources (as distinct from those that relate to economic and social matters), and strategies for dealing with climate change at the local government level, should be an integral part of a Local Government's approach to NRM, and should be incorporated in an overarching NRM strategy.

5. Internal Coordination

Recommendation 12

Each Local Government should consider the establishment of a group (a committee, coordinating group, action team or similar) to coordinate the strategic planning, budgetary and operational aspects of NRM, with membership drawn from across the organisation, especially from business units with a direct NRM role, and chaired by the senior executive with overall NRM responsibility.

6. NRM / Environmental Officer or Coordinator

Recommendation 13

To facilitate the day to day coordination of NRM, assist NRM planning and policy development, serve as an NRM focal point for staff across the organisation and for the community, and serve as executive officer to an NRM coordinating group, Local Governments should establish a position of NRM/environmental officer or coordinator (or equivalent).

Recommendation 14

Local Governments should review the responsibilities of NRM/environmental officers in the context of the range of functions included in the Perth Region NRM 'definition' of natural resource management. Functions would be of two types: (a) those that involve direct responsibility, for example, the implementation of specific aspects of an environmental/NRM plan, and (b) those that are the functional responsibility of others, but where the provision of coordination, advice and other forms of support by the NRM coordinator may be necessary.

Recommendation 15

Local Governments are encouraged to review the level of appointment and reporting line for NRM/environmental officers with a view to ensuring that the position has a standing equivalent to other core functions of the Local Government.

7. Community Engagement and Information

Recommendation 16

Local Governments should consider the establishment of an NRM community advisory committee (or equivalent mechanism) to facilitate community feedback and advice on NRM programs, policies and issues, and participation in NRM programs.

Recommendation 17

Each Local Government should develop a 'Communication and Education Strategy', as a key component of an overarching NRM strategy.

8. Education and Training (Individual Capacity Building)

Recommendation 18

Local governments should provide staff education and training aimed at assisting staff to (a) appreciate their organisation's approach to integrated NRM; (b) be aware of relevant NRM strategies, priorities and policies relating to their area of responsibility, and (c) operate at best practice levels in their area of responsibility with respect to NRM.

Recommendation 19

Local Governments should encourage elected members to participate in the module 'An Introduction to Environmental Management in Local Government' conducted by WALGA as part of WALGA's Elected Member Development Program.

Part B - Regional Local Governments

4. Emerging Issues

Recommendation 20

Regional local government bodies are encouraged to consider the adoption, as a high priority role, the provision of proactive leadership to the development of a Local Government regional vision, and to strategic and integrated natural resource planning at the regional level. This would include clarification of the role they play in relation to individual Local Governments and Perth Region NRM Inc at the NRM Region level, and at the State and Federal Government levels.

Recommendation 21

Regional local government bodies are encouraged to consider the establishment of a regional NRM standing committee (or equivalent) whose functions would include:

- facilitating communication and the discussion of regional issues in relation to NRM,
- the development of recommendations to the regional Council and member Local Government Councils,
- the provision of guidance to regional NRM planning, and
- the coordination of regional NRM projects.

Recommendation 22

Regional local government bodies are encouraged to consider working closely with Perth Region NRM and the relevant State Government agencies to develop a 'strategic' NRM Business Plan, linked to the strategic approach in recommendation 10, to facilitate close working relationships and an integrated approach to natural resource and environmental management across their regions.

Recommendation 23

Regional local government bodies are encouraged to consider a role in the provision of leadership to the development and management of large scale (catchment or regional level) collaborative NRM projects in partnership with Perth Region NRM and its Sub-region Reference Groups, and the relevant State Government agencies.

Recommendation 24

Regional local government bodies should work in collaboration with WALGA and Perth Region NRM to develop a coordinated program of information exchange and staff development in relation to NRM.

Recommendation 25

Regional local government bodies should clarify the roles of their environmental officers in relation to the roles of environmental officers working in their constituent Local Governments, as part of the development of the Local Government regional vision (see recommendation 19) and the overarching NRM strategies/plans of their member Councils (see Recommendation 6)