

# recent developments

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Editor: John Ashe

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### **New Ministerial Councils Announced**

At its meeting in Canberra on 8 June 2001, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreed to a restructuring of Ministerial Councils, which combines a number of Councils in related functional fields. The changes include:

- a **new** *Natural Resource Management Council* subsuming natural resource management (NRM) issues from the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia (ARMCANZ), the Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC) and the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA);
- a **new** *Environment Protection and Heritage Council*, which amalgamates the National Environment Protection Council (NEPC), the non-NRM component of ANZECC and the Heritage Ministers Meeting;
- a **new** *Gene Technology Council*; and
- restructuring of Councils and fora dealing with local government and planning, regional development, industry and technology, food regulation, energy, minerals, primary industries and the national electricity market.

### **New Air Protection Measures Agreed**

At its meeting in Darwin on 29 June 2001 the *National Environment Protection Council* (NEPC) announced a number of measures to improve Australia's air quality. The NEPC agreed to:

- a National Environmental Protection Measure (NEPM) to improve the in-service emission performance of diesel road vehicles;
- preparation of a draft NEPM for air quality standards for selected air toxics;
- plans for a consistent air quality monitoring approach in all jurisdictions;
- a three-year funding package for the National Pollution Inventory; and
- a scoping study for the management of clinical waste.

For further information, see the NEPC web site at [www.nepc.gov.au](http://www.nepc.gov.au) or phone (08) 8419 1200.

### **National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity**

ANZECC has released its *Review of the National Strategy for the Conservation Of Australia's Biological Diversity*. The Review found that substantial progress has been made in achieving the Strategy's objectives, Advances include identifying threatening processes, management for conservation and implementing ecologically sustainable forest management. A number of specific objectives however have not been fully met. The Review identified vegetation clearance, invasive species and salinity as the three major existing and emerging threats to biodiversity.

Copies of the review report are available from Environment Australia's Community Information Unit, phone: (02) 1800 803 772 or via the web site [www.ea.gov.au](http://www.ea.gov.au).

## **Call for Submissions on Draft Australian Forestry Standard**

A draft Australian Forestry Standard has been developed to encourage continuous improvement towards sustainable forest management and provide assurances of forest management standards to consumers of wood products. The draft Standard has been developed from economic, social, environmental and cultural criteria drawn from community values and forest management science.

The Australian Forestry Standard is intended for voluntary application and to be available for the certification of forests managed for wood production. Certification will be based on independent third party audit of forest management practices, using defined audit protocols.

Copies of the draft standard and further information are available at the Standards Australia web site [www.standards.com.au](http://www.standards.com.au) or the Australian Forestry Standard web site: [www.forestrystandard.org.au](http://www.forestrystandard.org.au). Written comments on the draft Standard are requested by 19 October 2001.

## **National Action Plan on Salinity and Water Quality**

The Commonwealth and all States and Territories (except Western Australia) have signed the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) on the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality. The IGA sets out the overarching commitments and obligations of governments to the Action Plan. Western Australia has set up a review of the State's salinity strategy and will await the findings of the review before deciding whether to sign the IGA.

South Australia is the first State to sign a bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth. The agreement outlines the further commitments of the two governments in implementing the Action Plan, including the framework for regional participation and implementation.

Further information is available via the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries web site at [www.affa.gov.au](http://www.affa.gov.au).

## **Murray–Darling Basin Integrated Catchment Management Policy**

The Murray–Darling Basin Ministerial Council has released an Integrated Catchment Policy Statement for the Murray–Darling Basin. Copies of the policy statement are available from the Murray–Darling Basin Commission (MDBC), phone: (02) 6279 0100) or via the MDBC web site [www.mdbc.gov.au](http://www.mdbc.gov.au).

## **Business Leaders' Environmental Plan for Rural Australia**

A report prepared by the Allen Consulting Group for the Business Leaders Roundtable identifies strategies for mobilising nearly \$13 billion over ten years from the private sector to invest in measures to address salinity and other environmental problems in rural Australia. The Roundtable comprises representatives from a number of private sector companies as well as the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) and the CSIRO. The report is available through the ACF web site at [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au).

## **New Effluent Guidelines Released**

On 12 July 2001 Federal Agriculture Minister Warren Truss and Federal Environment Minister Robert Hill released new national guidelines to reduce the impact of urban storm water and sewage effluent on inland and coastal waters. They are the *Australian Guidelines for Urban Stormwater Management and Guidelines for Sewerage Systems—Use of Reclaimed Water*. The guidelines were produced jointly by Federal, State and Territory governments as part of the National Water Quality Management Strategy, and encourage the re-use of storm water and effluent.

Copies of the guidelines are available from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on 1800 020 157, the Australian Water Association on (02) 9413 1288 and Ausinfo.

## **A National Approach to Waste Tyres**

Environment Australia has released a report, *A National Approach to Waste Tyres*, prepared for Environment Australia by the Atech Group. The report assesses the current management of waste tyres and outlines policy options for improving the management of waste tyres.

Copies of the report are available from Environment Australia at [www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/oilrecycling/tyresreport.html](http://www.ea.gov.au/industry/waste/oilrecycling/tyresreport.html).