

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE REPORT 2010-2011

While it's always a daunting task to report at the end of the fiscal year, it's a great time to reflect on what we have achieved over the period. This is my seventh year as CEO of South Coast NRM and my seventh report to the South Coast NRM Members. As the cliché goes 'the time has flown' but I can look back with a great deal of pride at how much South Coast NRM has achieved while remaining true to its community roots.

This last financial year has been a challenging one for the organisation, working within a new funding regime and having to tighten the purse-strings like never before. Despite this, our commitment to meeting various expectations including the ongoing funding of the important community project officer positions has continued and I can proudly say that we will support these positions until July 2013.

I want to acknowledge the incredible work of senior management including operations manager Justin Bellanger, business services manager Joshua Jackson and contracts manager Helen Tasker who, with the rest of the team, have worked tirelessly to ensure our business practices continue to improve. This has allowed us to achieve a budget surplus while at the same time honouring our commitment to projects in the region. The continuous improvement of our business has given our funding providers the confidence to continue to invest in the organisation and the region. We've had to make some sacrifices to services along the way but these will not have too great an effect on our overall ability to deliver outcomes against the regional NRM strategy.

Southern Prospects, the South Coast region NRM Strategy, has been updated and is now current until 2016. The review was a huge task undertaken by the South Coast NRM team who, in consultation with the community, have a document that will guide South Coast NRM investment for the next five years. We are now one of the few regions in Australia with an up-to-date regional NRM strategy. The document is already guiding investment and planning at local, regional and national levels through local government, WA Planning Commission and Regional Development Australia planning frameworks.

With an ever changing funding stream from government, it is important for the organisation to look for new business opportunities. I know some in the region are challenged by this concept as they see the organisation as a potential threat to their business and that we may 'bid' for projects they want to implement. This has never been our intent. We have a collaborative business model that encourages partnerships and our three Regional Landcare Facilitators are available to discuss potential local projects. Our interest in developing regional projects is to bring in more money to the region so that we can fund local projects. An example of this is the recently funded Wildlife Corridor project which has seen all funding go to our community partners.

One of my roles is to chair the WA Regional Leaders Group of CEOs. This also means I work nationally with the National CEO Working Group. Some of the projects we have been working on include the scoping of a role for NRM groups to deliver on regional plans through the Carbon Farming Initiative and proposed Clean Energy Futures. The group is also working on the development and delivery of Organisational Performance Reviews to all NRM groups to improve regional governance.

The introduction of the Carbon Farming Initiative is potentially the biggest opportunity for natural resource management as it will provide funding for revegetation to both sequester carbon and improve agriculture, water and biodiversity. In order to achieve this, we need to have robust regional plans that will guide where the work is to take place. We do not want the whole region being used to sequester carbon with no regard for agriculture, biodiversity or water supply. Having a good regional strategy that is recognised by government will go a long way to ensuring this does not occur.

The undertaking of an Organisational Performance Review is voluntary and is important to ensure we continue to improve our business practices. South Coast NRM has just completed the Review and I am happy to report we are one of the best performing regional groups across Australia. The Review has identified both strengths and opportunities for improvement. I would like to thank both South Coast NRM staff and stakeholders who were involved in the Review. Your input is really important and we now have a number of areas we are looking at to continue to improve the operations of the organisation.

This will be my last annual report as the CEO of South Coast NRM as there should be a new CEO in place for the 2012 AGM. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people who have helped me grow both professionally and personally. The success of the South Coast NRM community is due to our skill and expertise in managing the challenges and continuous nuances of government funding. We do this with the belief that we are all trying to protect and enhance the unique natural assets of the South Coast region. It's important we continue to work closely together and collaborate for the future of our region.

I leave the organisation in a strong position to build on its successes and look forward to remaining a member and working closely with you.

Thank you.



Rob Edkins
Chief Executive Officer
South Coast NRM
September 2011