



**GOULBURN
BROKEN**

CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY

The Story of
John Dainton's Role in

MENDING THE GOULBURN BROKEN

by John Northage

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by John Northage

Based on interviews and research undertaken between 2003 and 2008.

Foreword



Managing Australia's environment and working out how to produce our food, fibre and energy more sustainably is a big job — far too big for individual landholders, industries or communities. It is a job for all of us. How well we

do it impacts on us all. So we expect governments to take it seriously; we expect legislation to be enacted and government agencies to be responsible for its implementation; we expect research into problems and their solutions; we expect wise policies and funding programs to implement them; we expect investment in infrastructure; we expect that a range of organisations, public and private, will play different roles; we expect that science and technology will continually improve our individual and collective know-how to manage Australia's environment.

These are expectations of 'the system' – the institutions, policy processes and management regimes that both constrain and enable the decisions and actions of people as we go about our daily lives. They are profoundly pervasive and influential in shaping the way resources and environments are managed in Australia.

But while systems make things possible, people make them happen.

This is the story of John Dainton, an outstanding community leader in natural resource management (NRM), and a great example of how committed people can make things happen.

I first met John Dainton about thirty years ago when I was working as a young forester at Shepparton in the Goulburn Valley region of north central Victoria. One of my jobs was trying to encourage and support farmers to plant more native trees. John was already involved with the Salinity Pilot Program, and he was later to chair its Advisory Committee, among many other NRM leadership roles in the Goulburn Valley and beyond. John's quiet authority and the deep and widespread respect he enjoyed across the community was a wonderful asset for every organisation and group he was involved with. In addition to his NRM roles, John was variously Director, Deputy Chair and Chairman of Ibis Milk Products, Bonlac Foods, Goulburn-Murray Water, the Victorian Water Association and the Regional Development Board. This industry leadership experience gave John a wonderful contact network in industry and government, and also empathy and credibility with his fellow landholders and primary producers in the region and beyond.

In particular through his leadership of the Goulburn Broken Catchment and Land Protection Board (later to become the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority), and in more recent years his work with the University of the Third Age, John has been instrumental in attracting expertise and resources to his region to help lead the community through the development and implementation of some of Australia's most comprehensive land and water management plans. Along with other regional leaders, John has created a lasting legacy in the communities and landscapes of the Goulburn Broken Catchment, of which he should be rightly proud.

John Dainton's story was assisted through a Community Fellowship from Land & Water Australia, funded by a generous grant from the Dara and Poola Foundations. These modest fellowships were about documenting the extraordinary achievements in community leadership of many 'ordinary' people. John Dainton's is a remarkable story, but fortunately for Australia, it is more exemplary than unique. Over the last thirty years I have met many people working in landcare and natural resource management who have played very important leadership roles in their own communities and industries, spanning the occasionally wide gulf between governments and communities, and helping to navigate a path forward that is able to get us to where society needs us to go, without alienating or leaving too many people behind. Without leaders like John Dainton, Australia's management of its rural landscapes, natural heritage and natural resources would be immeasurably the poorer.

This fine biography by John Northage is testament to just how much can be achieved and influenced by the sustained efforts of one quietly effective community leader. It deserves to be widely read – not just by people interested in environmental policy and sustainability, but by anyone interested in the future of Australia.



Professor Andrew Campbell

Head, School of Environment, Charles Darwin
University

March 2014

(Executive Director, Land & Water Australia, 2000-2006)

Preface



Since the 1970s I have studied, designed and managed regional organisations in various parts of Australia.

From the Albury-Wodonga Growth Centre project of the mid 1970s to resource developments in the Bowen

Basin, Hunter Region and the Latrobe Valley in later years, I have seen government agencies, private sector corporations and community bodies working together to address extraordinary challenges, but with varying results.

I have learnt that a crucial ingredient for success is the presence or absence of effective leaders: dedicated and capable champions of the regional goal.

Of all the scenarios I encountered, one especially stood out – the Goulburn Broken catchment. It was without equal for its exemplary mix of quality decision-making, community involvement and the performance of its Catchment Management Authority and predecessors. Community leaders like Penny Jones, Pam Robinson, Dianne McPherson, Angus Howell, Tom Perry, Jeremy Gaylard, and, of course, John Dainton, were critical to the process.

While John Dainton may not have fitted the stereotype of a charismatic leader, his acumen, impressive commitment, integrity, eclecticism and status as a proven champion for the region, placed him as the preeminent regional leader of his time.

The Goulburn Broken communities' success has resulted in the catchment becoming one of Australia's most studied in many natural resource disciplines. This body of work captures lessons from Goulburn Broken communities' cross-disciplinary, collaborative approach. Such lessons are largely missing from the academic literature and management of many regional organisations.

I decided to include significant levels of detail in some parts of the document, hoping to make it a more comprehensive resource so that researchers could get to the bottom of issues easier. A task remains for someone else to prepare an abridged "coffee-table" version appropriate for wide readership.

John Dainton's story about how strong personal values and capacity have flowed through to benefit the regional community has implications for all Australians. I was certainly inspired to go way beyond the initial brief, interrogating far more documents and interviewing many more people than originally intended.

Acknowledgements

Understandably, the most significant personal contribution to this story was made by John Dainton, both by way of sharing his recollections and his later checks of the draft. Bill O'Kane, Chief Executive Officer of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (until 2009), provided similar assistance. Bill was able to draw on his experience of service since 1986 in the successive catchment organisations responsible for salinity control and natural resource management in the Catchment.

A feature of the considerable workload associated with the collection of personal anecdotes and insights was the enthusiasm and helpfulness of the community leaders, public servants and other contemporaries of John Dainton who were contacted.

I gratefully acknowledge the generosity and patience of all who helped in this way. Many of these interviewees have also been contributors, in varying degrees, to the achievements in the Goulburn Broken.

In undertaking this project, I have depended on the computing skills and patience of my wife Venice, in the sizeable task of preparing this record and previous drafts.

John Northage

March 2014

Contents

CHAPTER 1			
Another Milestone	10	Responses to Salinity – Precursors and Early Initiatives: 1970-1985	43
		Salinity – A Labor Election Issue	45
		Shepparton Region Initiatives	47
		Dryland Initiatives	48
CHAPTER 2		CHAPTER 6	
The Region	15	Launching the Pilot Program	50
Early Resource Exploitation	16	First Steps	54
The Goulburn and the Broken Catchments	17	Roles and Representation	54
The Goulburn River Catchment	18	Selecting the Chair	55
The Broken River Catchment	18	SPPAC Membership	56
Dryland Salinity	19	Decision-making and Advisory Structure	58
The Shepparton Irrigation Region	19	Program Management Team	61
Physical Features	19	Government’s Initial Expectations of SPPAC	61
Climate	19	Inaugural Meeting of SPPAC	63
Land and Water Use	20	Existing Consultation Mechanisms	66
The Salinity Problem	20	Objectives	66
The Current Salinity Situation	20	Review of First Six Months	70
Settlement and Development	20	The Role of Sub-committees	72
Environmental Change	21	Irrigation and Dryland Sub-regional Strategies	72
Environmental Conditions in the 1980s	22	Finetuning SPPAC’s Performance	73
Relationships with the Goulburn Dryland Region	22	The Assessment of Alternative Approaches	74
Regional Economy	23	SPPAC’s Defined Objectives	74
		The “System” Found Wanting	76
CHAPTER 3		Communication Issues	76
The Catchment’s Community, Institutions and Leaders	24	PMT First Annual Report	78
Key Institutions	25	SPPAC Local Initiatives	79
Community Leaders	27		
CHAPTER 4			
John Dainton: Predecessors and Personal Profile	29		
Predecessors	30		
John’s Beginnings	32		
Dairy Farming at “Lagoona”	33		
Family Lifestyle	36		
Public Life	37		

CHAPTER 7			
Completing the Pilot Program	83	Implementation Performance: GDSMP	141
SPPAC Membership Beyond the First 12 Months	84	Review of GDSMP	142
Pilot Program Executive Support	86	Landcare	143
Sub-committees/Strategy Working Groups	90	Natural Resource Management – A Changing Scene	144
The Irrigation Working Group	90	Water Industry Reforms	144
Specialist Staff	92	John Dainton's Appraisal: Lessons, Trends, Concerns	145
Senior Officers in Key Roles	94		
Technical Expertise in the Region	96	CHAPTER 9	
Dryland Sub-committee/Management Plan Working Group	98	Transition – Goulburn Broken Catchment and Land Protection Board (GBCLPB): 1995-1997	151
The Draft Dryland Plan	100	SPAC's Response	152
Community Education Sub-committee	101	Proposed Structure	154
The Underground Flood	103	State Government Processes: Regional Landcare Planning	155
Expert Officers	106	State Government Processes: Catchment and Land Protection Proposals	158
Local Government in the Pilot Program	106	CLP Legislation	162
Finalising the Salinity Management Plan	111	Transition in the Goulburn Broken	166
The Draft Plan	115	Transition Report	167
The Final Submission to Government	117	Regional Assessment Panel	173
The Next Step	122	Implementation of ICM	173
		Ongoing Implementation	177
CHAPTER 8		John Dainton's Model	179
Implementation - Salinity Program Advisory Council (SPAC): 1990-1995	123	Other Leadership Roles	188
Decision	125	G-MW and the Water Services Committees	188
Contention Over Current Cost Depreciation	127	A Troubled Past in Water Management Reforms	189
SPAC Membership	129	Water Services Committees	189
Key Support Personnel	130	John Dainton's Role	190
An Evolving Structure	130	IBIS and Bonlac	192
SPAC and its Committees	132		
Other Aligned Groups	134		
Local Government	135		
Relations with Agencies	136		
Executive Support Unit	136		
Implementation Performance: SIRLWSMP	136		
Environmental Outcomes	137		
The Mosquito Depression	138		
Drainage Strategies Revisited	140		

CHAPTER 10**Integration – Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA): 1997-2002 195**

Review of Catchment Management Arrangements	196
State Government Response	198
Policy Aims	198
Structure of a Catchment Management Authority	200
Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council	202
Transition Issues	203
Integration in the Goulburn Broken	203
The Task of Integration	204
Options for Structural and Procedural Arrangements	206
Assessment of Options	208
Consultation	208
Incremental Change	212
New Challenges	212
Achievements in the Goulburn Broken to 2002	213
NRM Achievements	214
Other Achievements and Awards	219
Recognition	220
Moving On	220
The Politics of Drought	221
Right Man for the Job	222

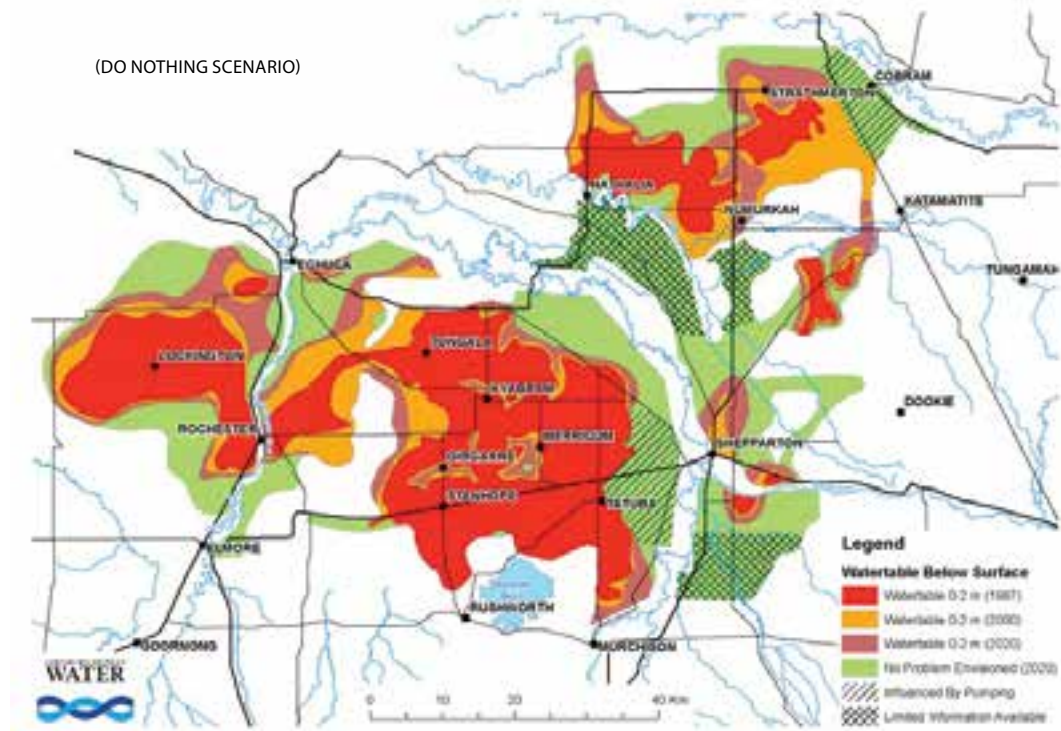
NOTES AND APPENDICES

Timeline: Milestones in Salinity Control and Natural Resource Management	224
Endnotes	226
Highlights of Jeremy Gaylard's Public Career	231
Acronyms	232
Glossary of Terms	235
Interviewees	239
Index of Key Persons	240
Bibliography	241
About the Author	245
SPACC and SPAC Members and Key Agency and Other Personnel	246

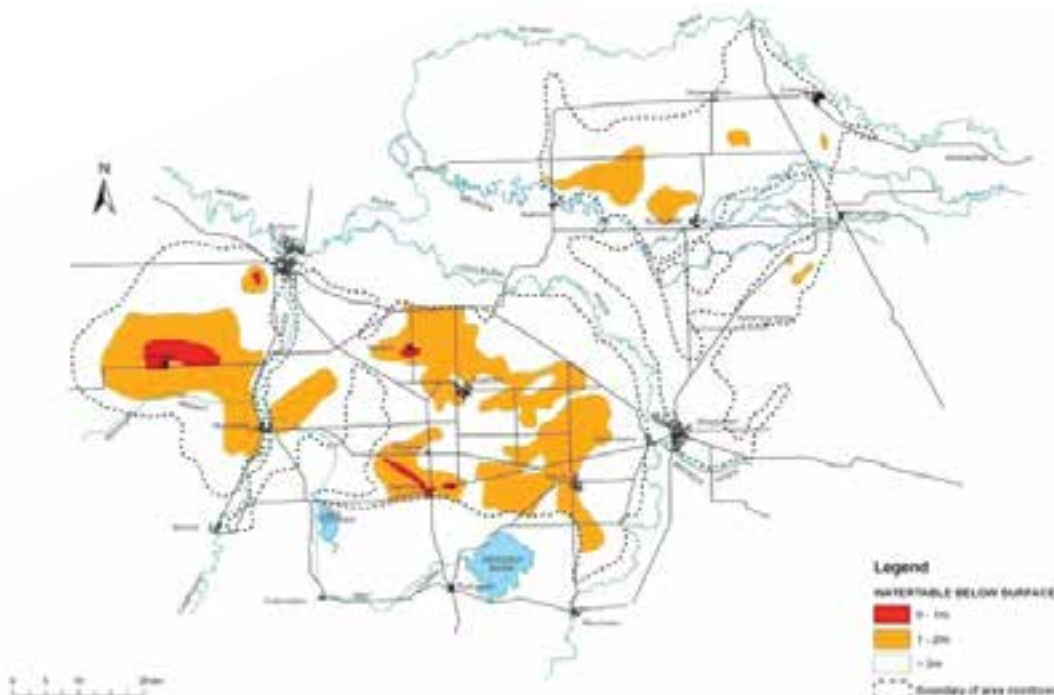
The Underground Flood

The “underground flood” of the 1980s catalysed many of the actions described in this story. The first map below shows the 1987 prediction of the watertable in 2020 if nothing was done. The next three maps show the reality in 1982, 1988 and 2012.

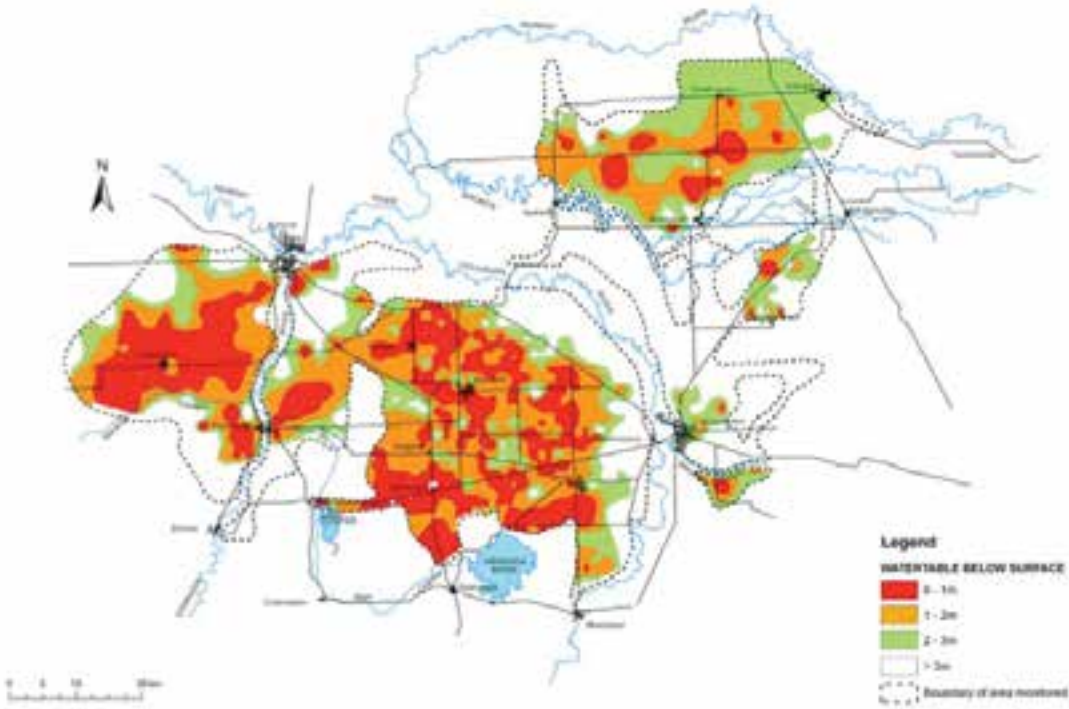
Shepparton Region Watertable Predictions – To the Year 2020



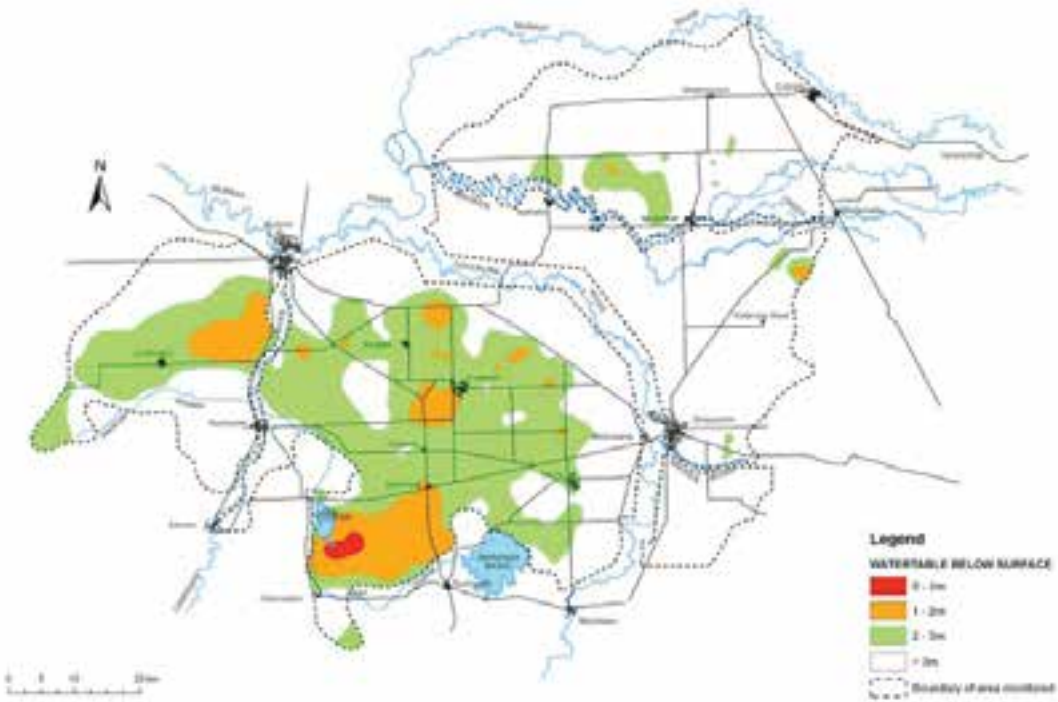
Shepparton Region Watertable Contours – August 1982



Shepparton Region Watertable Contours – August 1988



Shepparton Region Watertable Contours – August 2012



Chapter 1

ANOTHER MILESTONE

As a catchment community event, it was as good as it gets in rural Australia. The presence of the Deputy Premier John Thwaites MLA, local members of the Victorian Parliament and representatives of the Commonwealth Government highlighted the significance of the occasion. Mayors and councillors from across the Catchment, senior officers from State government and regional agencies, members of the Catchment Management Authority family, current and past Board members, representatives of the Indigenous community, industry and Landcare groups also attended with other distinguished guests to mark this milestone in natural resource management on 21 November 2003.

Even the weather complied. In a timely break, the clouds scattered and the sun shone on the launch of the second Regional Catchment Strategy for the Goulburn Broken. The media covered the program of formalities befitting the occasion.

The speeches lauding the strategy's shared vision for the catchment recognised the array of factors crucial to its preparation and implementation. The Chair of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA), Stephen Mills, spelt out how the catchment community had achieved this outcome.

On reflecting on why this community has been so successful at developing and implementing natural resources management strategies, I have come up with five critical success factors which I would like to share with you. Since 1985, we have enjoyed:

- A bipartisan approach by governments
- Leadership at all levels
- A committed community
- A partnership between the community, government agencies and statutory authorities
- A culture of success.

Mr Mills highlighted the continuing and pressing need to respond to emerging issues and challenges.

The review of the Regional Catchment Strategy is part of our learning journey. It is important to note the revised Regional Catchment Strategy represents a major change in thinking. Up until now, our strategies were based on the assumptions that we could achieve our goals by the adoption of best management practices.

Clearly, the Regional Catchment Strategy is not a static document. Issues continue to emerge and the challenges do not seem to diminish.

He welcomed major contemporary initiatives such as the State Government's Green Paper "Securing Our Water Future" and the Living Murray process being pursued by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission as responses to similar challenges in the wider sphere of natural resource management.

He had words of assurance and encouragement for the Catchment community.

This doesn't mean we have changed our focus away from production and the delivery of our excellent sub-strategies like salinity, water quality, river health etc. We still believe we can double production in the next decade by protecting our natural resource base and adopting new technology. We are confident because we have done this every decade since the war.

The change is, we also believe we can double the Catchment's ecological output. We have a regional economic output of \$7.8 billion, which is underpinned by agricultural production of over \$1 billion measured at the farm gate. Put simply, our regional economy is dependent on the Catchment's land and water. The sustainability of the Catchment economy is based on the sustainability of the catchment's land and water resource. The interdependency of the economy and the environment is unambiguous.

We have another form of interdependency in the Catchment. The CMA cannot deliver the Regional Catchment Strategy alone. We rely on our partners to deliver the aspects of the Regional Catchment Strategy where they have strengths. DSE, DPI, G-MW, GWW, Local Government, Landcare and environmental groups all work together to a common goal – the Regional Catchment Strategy.

I believe it is our ability to work together and resolve issues of contention and then get works on the ground which sets us apart. It is great to have so many of our partners here today.

Mr Mills gave a special welcome to the former Chair of the GBCMA, John Dainton and the Chair of its predecessor the Salinity Program Advisory Council in the early 90s, Jeremy Gaylard. Jeremy had gone on to oversee the development of structures and policy for the catchments across Victoria in the mid 90s as Chair of the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council.

John Dainton, then Chair of Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW), contributed to the launch on behalf of the Authority's many partners in the region's community, industry, Landcare groups, local government and State government agencies. He could speak from a long and diverse experience in this area.

Partnerships in this Catchment really started with the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) in the mid 80s.

Government departments, the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC), water authorities and local government learned to work together to address the emerging dryland salinity problems and the high watertables and emerging salinity problems in the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

It is a credit to the community that the partnerships have been maintained over the years and that a culture of co-operation and working out local solutions to local problems continues to gather strength.

Today we have moved in our thinking from looking at issues in isolation to where we now look at natural resources issues on an integrated catchment basis.

John Dainton could speak with authority and justifiable pride about the high level of community involvement in catchment management – a feature of the Goulburn Broken for which the Region is renowned.

The other major lesson learned by SPPAC was that empowering the community in local and regional decision-making brought real and enduring benefits. Groups such as the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Implementation Committees and G-MW Water Services Committees were set up to facilitate greater community involvement.

At the beginning of SPPAC in 1985, (Labor Minister and later Premier) Joan Kirner acknowledged that most of our environmental problems were on private land and if the Government didn't involve these landholders in the decision making process, then any attempt to resolve the salinity problem would be doomed to failure. How insightful Joan was!

John Dainton also knew from his frequent contacts with World Bank senior personnel and the visits they arrange for organisations in developing countries, that the Goulburn Broken is seen as having world's best practice in customer and community consultation.

In his concluding remarks the GBCMA's Chief Executive Officer, Bill O'Kane, referred to a similar assessment of the Catchment's standing from a different source.

Hans Joehr is the Corporate Head of Agriculture (world-wide) at Nestlé in Vevey, Switzerland. (I was greatly impressed when I found that Hans' budget was \$10 billion per year). On a recent visit Hans said the following:

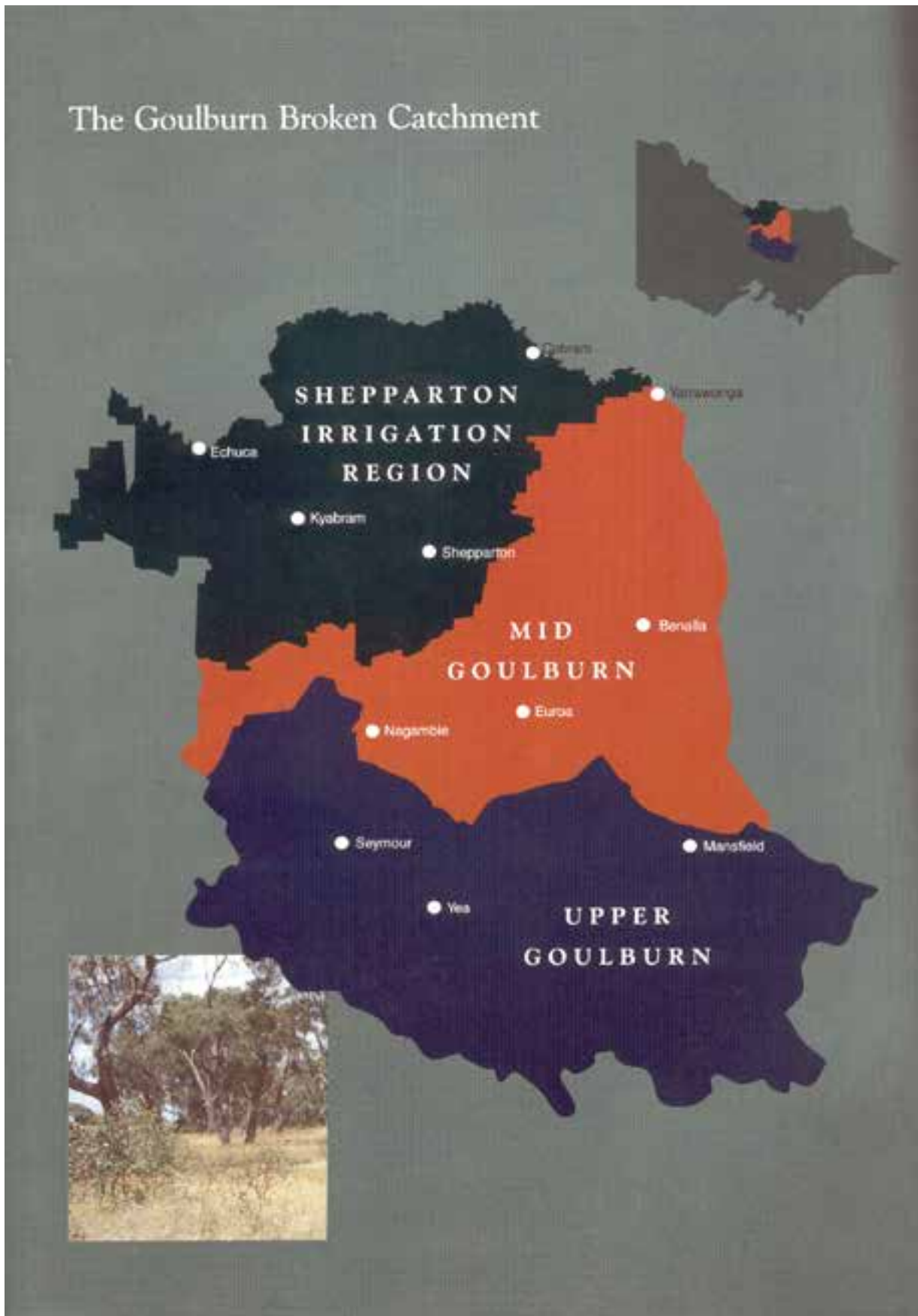
"I have been to a lot of countries but I have not seen anything that compares with the way your community is working together to create a sustainable environment.

Nestlé sources milk from dairy farms in this area and I am very impressed with the systems you are putting in place to ensure the sustainability of the environment and agriculture for generations to come and that creates wealth that is good for the whole community.

I will be pleased to act as an ambassador for you and I will use this region as an example of what can be done. Around the world we are working to encourage sustainable agricultural systems but you have exceeded what we hope to achieve. You should tell the world about what you are doing here."

This record contributes to the task of "telling the world" about how this Region has achieved its impressive initiatives in natural resource management. It covers the key issues, the processes and the earlier milestones involved in this extraordinary story to date. It follows the path of John Dainton to his retirement from the GBCMA in 2002. It also identifies the special contributions of his fellow community leaders and the people of the Goulburn Broken Catchment in their efforts to overcome the effects of the historic mismanagement of the Region's resources.

The lessons learned along the way may need to be rediscovered and applied afresh in future decision-making in other rural communities at the regional level.



Chapter 2

THE REGION

The Goulburn Broken Catchment covers 10.5% of Victoria, an area of 2.5 million ha stretching from Marysville and Kilmore on the outskirts of Melbourne north to the Murray River between Yarrawonga and Echuca. As part of the Murray-Darling Basin it comprises the Goulburn and Broken River Catchments and part of the Murray Valley.

Author's note in 2014

Information in this chapter was current at the time of research: between 2003 and 2008.

The Catchment's main land uses are:

- 520,000 ha in the Shepparton Irrigation Region of which approximately 280,000 ha is irrigated.
- 1,100,000 ha is dryland riverine plains and hill country.
- 47,000 ha administered by water bodies.
- 414,300 ha in State Forests, including Barmah, the largest Red Gum Forest.
- 95,827 ha in urban areas.
- 4,228 ha in alpine resort.

Although only 2% of the Murray-Darling Basin by area, the Catchment generates 11% of the Basin's water resource.

Landforms and land use in the Catchment give rise to two major regions – the Goulburn Broken Dryland Region and the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

The important lessons learned in the Catchment in its pursuit of sustainable use of its natural resources need to be understood in the historical context of its settlement and subsequent trends in the use of land and water.

Early Resource Exploitation

From the days of the gold rushes in 1851, unplanned settlements were established over wide areas of Victoria particularly in the central highlands and northern plains. Land use in and around the gold diggings was changed more or less permanently as trees were felled in huge numbers. Water utilisation was geared to the needs of the miners and the industry. This resulted in changes to natural drainage.

Soil and climatic conditions differed vastly from those of the northern hemisphere with which settlers and decision-makers were familiar. Initially the land was taken up predominantly for grazing on large holdings.

This period was characterised by trial and error in establishing the limits of sustainable land utilisation and by impractical idealism on the part of governments in formulating and implementing land policy.

In the 1860s the breaking up of the large land holdings was aimed at a more equitable distribution amongst those wanting to establish small farms on areas of land that were deemed to be self-supporting and sustainable.

The reality of farming methods and climate demonstrated the impracticability of this policy. Recognition of the mistakes was slow in coming with the result that damage to the land and water resources was intensive. Subsequent changes to land legislation took more account of politics and pressure from land applicants than expert advice. Land could be leased initially and then purchased at the end of three years. Section 42 of the Amended Land Act of 1865 permitted landholders to lease 20 acres of land within a ten-mile limit of the goldfields. This Act was successful in that it enabled the settlement of thousands of people to take place in those districts and it led to the extension of the 20 acre limit. Hard on the heels of this legislation came the 1869 Grant Land Act that opened up much more land. Blocks of between 320 acres and 640 acres were obtainable on easy terms.

Governments and land applicants dismissed concerns about land resource exploitation as special pleading and they ignored also the views of knowledgeable officials. Decisions to enact such legislation overrode economic and environmental reality and neither Act took account of differing local conditions or land resource capability. As a result newly selected landholders moved on to these blocks and the process of clearing trees and planting began on a large scale.

The requirements under the land allocation, and the landholders' attempts to increase production, brought about extensive clearing of the land. The blocks allocated were found to be too small and the cost of artificial fertilisers prohibitive. Repeated cropping of the land led to the degradation of this resource.

The removal of trees to meet the enormous demand for timber in Melbourne and the developing rural centres was pursued in ignorance of the role played by trees in maintaining hydrological balance in the Catchment.

Closer settlement was promoted by legislation in 1893 and 1904. With the establishment of the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWSC) came a policy of intensive irrigation of small blocks. Royal Commissions subsequently took the Closer Settlement Board and the SRWSC to task because of the lack of investigation and the inappropriate implementation of these policies. Nonetheless, many of these policies were followed up until the 1950s and into the 1960s.

The State reaped major economic benefits from these early days of resource exploitation. The accumulated costs of these benefits have been passed on to later generations of landholders in the forms of land degradation and salinity.

The Goulburn and the Broken Catchments

The Broken River Catchment (300,000 hectares) and the Goulburn River Catchment (2.0 million hectares) comprise a major section of the Northern Victorian river catchments and are a key part of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Goulburn River Catchment

The Goulburn Catchment consists of the upper Goulburn, mid Goulburn and lower Goulburn reaches of the watershed. Of particular interest from the salinity viewpoint is the mid Goulburn region that comprises the sub-catchments of the Goulburn River between Eildon Weir and the Goulburn Weir at Nagambie. Below Goulburn Weir the major tributaries to the River flow from the catchments of the Strathbogie Ranges.

The Catchment contains four basic sub-catchment types:

- mountain areas with shallow, stony soils, steep slopes (mostly forested) and a high rainfall;
- foothill areas typified by rolling land;
- landscapes with shallow, stony soils on the lower hillsides, and broad valleys with deeper and more fertile soils; and
- alluvial plains characterised by river flats, and gentle hills with deep fertile soils.

Much of the Catchment is productive and is well managed. However, the steeper cleared slopes and hilltops where soils are shallow are especially vulnerable. Similarly, natural drainage lines and stream frontages in the foothills and alluvial plains are at risk if bare of ground cover.

The steep cleared slopes and hilltops are the most difficult on which to establish a strong, stable and permanent ground cover. Significantly, these areas are the most likely groundwater recharge sites for underground aquifers. Hence, the land use and amount of vegetative cover in these areas are critical factors in the management of dryland salting.

The Broken River Catchment

The Broken River is one of the tributaries of the Goulburn River.

The climate ranges from hot summers/cool winters with annual precipitation about 650 mm in the north, to mild summers/cold winters with annual precipitation about 1300 mm in the high mountainous areas in the south-east.

The native vegetation of the riverine plain in the north, and the Mansfield plain in the south, was a woodland in which red gum and grey box were the dominant tree species. On the dry hills in the north, in the woodland to low open forest, red box and red gum were the dominant tree species. On the upland areas in the central and southern parts of the catchment the vegetation ranges from the species listed above on the hills of the drier areas, through open forests of red stringybark, broad-leaf peppermint, candlebark gum, narrow-leaf peppermint, to messmate in the areas with highest rainfall. Some low open forest of snow gum occurs on the highest ridges in the south-east.

Most of the less steep land in the valleys has been cleared. These areas are used for cereal cropping in the north, grazing of sheep and cattle, dairying, small areas of vineyards, orchards and vegetable gardens. The forested areas are not generally intensively managed for timber production except for limited areas in the higher rainfall areas. A large plantation of radiata pine has been established on the Warrenbayne plateau and a smaller plantation has been established in the valley of Blue Range Creek in the south.

The Catchment's annual water yield varies considerably. Both floods and prolonged periods of low flows have been common. The storages of Lake Nillahcootie and Lake Mokoan were constructed to help overcome the problems of variable flow from the catchment.

Dryland Salinity

Dryland salinity occurs in land in rainfed areas containing soils with sufficient soluble salts at a range of concentrations and depths that:

- reduce the capability of the land to sustain a range of activities, including agricultural production and uses associated with rural subdivision and urban development, causing economic loss of both production and the land resource;
- increase salt levels of water storages and intermittent streams used for domestic and livestock water supplies thus reducing the quality of this water;
- contribute stream discharges and surface water runoff that increase salinity to downstream and irrigation users; and
- damage the environment by increasing the incidence of soil erosion and land degradation.

Technically, dryland soil salting has been present and probably increasing in severity for more than a century. Historical policies and land management practices have contributed to and accelerated the severity of the problem.

The Shepparton Irrigation Region

The Shepparton Irrigation Region extends from Cobram in the north-east to Murchison in the south and across to Tennyson and Echuca in the west. It includes the five Irrigation Areas of Murray Valley, Shepparton, Rodney, Tongala and Rochester. The Irrigation Region also interacts with the Goulburn Broken Dryland Area and with dryland parts of the Murray and Campaspe Valleys.

During the early settlement in the Shepparton region the growth of agriculture was limited due to unreliable rainfall. This led to the establishment of an extensive irrigation system.

Physical Features

The riverine plains of the Shepparton region are alluvial deposits having a comparatively flat surface and a general north westerly slope of 1/2500.

The nature of the sub-surface strata is complex. Very coarse sediments generally between depths of 80 metres and 120 metres mark very old infilled ancestral river systems (deep leads).

Aquifers occur at all depths in these deposited sediments. These underground water-bearing layers of sand or gravel are capable of supplying significant quantities of water to bores or springs. Water quality in these aquifers becomes poorer with depth. High watertables have generally followed saturation of the aquifers in the uppermost 30 metres.

Climate

The Shepparton Irrigation Region has an average monthly temperature range of 7.5°C to 22°C and average annual rainfall of 380 mm to 500 mm.

Evaporation exceeds rainfall in the Region over nine months and averages 1350 mm per year. Irrigation is therefore essential to support summer growing crops and is desirable for autumn and spring growing crops.

Winter frosts are common and spring frosts can cause significant damage to some varieties of horticultural and vegetable crops.

Land and Water Use

The Shepparton Irrigation Region totals about 500,000 ha with some 487,000 ha of farm holdings of which 430,000 ha (86%) is suitable for irrigation and 280,000 ha (56%) is irrigated. Of the irrigated area, the largest proportion is used for pasture production (246,000 ha or 88%) whilst a further 9,600 ha (3%) is used for horticulture. The remainder supports grain crops, seed crops, lucerne, forage crops and vegetables (23,000 ha or 8%).

Of the 7,300 farms within the Region 3,600 (49%) are "mixed" farms, 3,100 (42%) are dairy farms and 650 (9%) are horticultural farms.

The Salinity Problem

The Shepparton Irrigation Region salinity problem is related to high watertables that have developed over the past 150 years. As already noted, the basic reason for watertables rising, mobilising salt and thus creating land and water salinisation problems is the fundamental change in the hydrological cycle that has followed the advent of European settlement on the slopes and plains of Northern Victoria.

Subsequent interventions through the manipulation of stream flows and irrigation developments accelerated the onset of the current problem. Unfortunately, reversing past interventions will not restore the water balances to those experienced several hundred years ago except in the very, very long term.

In the Region watertables are regarded as high if they are within two metres of the land surface. Watertables at this level will certainly affect trees and tree crops and will begin to affect pastures. Watertable levels within one metre will produce major adverse effects upon most forms of agricultural activity. Some 188,000ha of land were assessed in 1988 as subject to high watertables. These areas comprised more than a third of the Region and the position was deteriorating.

The Current Salinity Situation

The salinity problem is essentially caused by the existence of permanent high watertables. The high watertables cause:

- discharge of saline underground water into streams and rivers;
- soil salinisation; and
- consequent saline runoff into streams and rivers.

The problems within the Irrigation Region (and its bordering rivers and streams) were exacerbated by increasing salinity in upstream flows caused by worsening salinisation in the dryland catchments.

Settlement and Development

The development of the Shepparton Region was an outcome of the economic and social policy objectives of many successive Victorian Governments. From the first Selection Bill 1860, right through to the completion of the Heytesbury and Campaspe West schemes in the mid 1970s, Victorian Governments promoted closer land settlement and irrigation development in Northern Victoria. This policy was initially a response to the popular working class demand to unlock the land from the control of the squatter elite of the 1850s and 60s. The Government envisioned a closely settled and prosperous countryside as an outcome of the selection initiative. The fact that this vision was at variance with the land resource and climate of the Region was lost on both the government and electorate of the day.

The development of irrigation schemes from 1883 to 1915 was a response to the failure of the selection policy in the face of drought and inadequate property size. Irrigation development provided a means of continuing the closer settlement social priorities policies of the Government.

New social priorities drove the next wave of irrigation development from 1915 onwards. The need to protect voluntary recruitment during wartime and to accommodate the social pressures of demobilisation led to the continuance of the closer settlement policy under the name of “soldier settlement”. Many of the Shepparton Irrigation Region communities grew out of soldier settlement (for example Yarroweyah and Baulkamaugh).

Following the Second World War, the Victorian Government continued the development of irrigation. Successive Governments believed the investment in irrigation would result in substantial wealth creation benefits through rural production and the substantial associated processing industries. This belief has been realised and is demonstrated in the impressive record of economic development.

Environmental Change

The streams, wetlands and floodplains of the Shepparton Region originally provided the key elements for a very rich and diverse ecosystem. Vast stretches of open flood plains of box forest were dissected by prior streams of red gum forest, and scattered throughout were large numbers of open wetlands of varying sizes.

The flora and fauna were well adapted to the natural range of environmental conditions and, in particular, to the natural extremes of floods and droughts. For example, floodplain trees such as red gum and black box relied heavily on regular flooding or access to groundwater for regeneration and growth, while development of the thick stands of grey box on higher ground depended on their ability to establish deep root systems to intercept most of the rainfall which infiltrated the soil profile. The density of trees was largely determined by the availability of water from rainfall, floods and aquifers.

Native fish and waterbirds evolved special mechanisms to enable the species to survive under severe drought conditions and then take advantage of floods for reproduction and dispersal. Many other native birds and mammals depended on the available range of terrestrial, wetland and riparian (stream) habitats. Reports by early European settlers confirm the great abundance of wildlife in the Region and describe the pattern of hunting and gathering by the Aborigines, which was finely tuned to the availability of the various plant and animal foods.

There is ample evidence that the vegetation has played an important role in maintaining the hydrological balance of the Region. Botanical reconstruction suggests that the presence of closed red gum forests along the prior stream channels in the western part of the Goulburn Valley protected these depressions from salinisation some 20,000 years ago when high regional watertables resulting from climatic changes led to the formation of many salt lakes and salinas (saline discharge pans).

Development of the Region for agriculture following European settlement has resulted in the removal of about 95 per cent of the native forests and woodlands. Extensive clearing in the upstream catchment areas and the introduction of major irrigation schemes have also had major effects on surface and groundwater hydrology. The environmental quality of a large proportion of regional streams and wetlands has been diminished by a range of factors including clearing, grazing, drainage works, rising watertables and salinities, and the introduction of exotic plants and predators. However, some of these streams and wetlands are still ranked as high quality habitats.

The degradation of the natural environment of the Riverine Plains since European settlement has probably resulted in the extinction of eight species of mammal, a reduction in the diversity and abundance of native flora and fauna and a serious decline in landscape values.

Environmental Conditions in the 1980s

The Draft Salinity Management Plans¹ prepared in the late 1980s summarised the environmental conditions. The major rivers draining north to the Murray River include the Goulburn River, with its extensive headwaters in the highlands, the Campaspe and Broken Rivers and Broken Creek. These are all set in red gum flood plain depressions of varying widths but their hydraulic regulation (principally for irrigation supply) has altered their natural flooding patterns. Some flow is provided from Goulburn Weir to the lower Goulburn River for environmental purposes; however, this is not the case in the Campaspe and Broken Rivers.

The Goulburn River below Nagambie is Victoria's most important Murray cod habitat, supports significant populations of catfish and silver and golden perch and also forms part of the natural range of the endangered trout cod. Water quality in the Goulburn is generally good and the presence of deep pools and areas of fallen timber adds to its value for native fish.

A high proportion of wetlands have been significantly modified since European settlement. Many have been drained for agricultural purposes whilst others have been affected (or created) by changes in hydrological regimes, rising watertables or increasing salinities. However, wetlands represent the most valuable habitat area in the Region.

Little remains of the extensive grey box open forests and woodlands which covered the majority of the Riverine Plain region before European settlement. Clearing of land for agriculture has also left little of the original stands of river red gum, yellow box, yellow gum, Murray pine and bullock.

A large proportion of the remnant grey box has been either killed or is in poor condition as a result of waterlogging produced by the high watertables. These old trees are particularly vulnerable to rising watertable, because their root systems are unable to adapt to the changed conditions. However, experience indicates that newly planted grey box can successfully establish in areas with high watertables by putting out shallow root systems.

The extensive clearing and subsequent death or decline of remnant trees has significantly degraded the landscape values of the Region.

Relationships with the Goulburn Dryland Region

Interactions between the irrigation areas and adjacent dryland areas occur in two ways:

- i. increasing salinity in dryland areas results in higher stream salinity and higher salt loads entering the irrigation areas, and
- ii. the underlying aquifers provide a link between the groundwater bodies underlying the dryland and irrigation areas.

Stream monitoring from 1977 to 1988 did not identify any increasing trend in water salinity. This indicated that any trend over that time had been small. It is possible that increments occur predominantly as sharp increases following very wet periods and may not have been evident in the data for the latter years in this period. Very rudimentary process modelling suggests that salt loads emanating from the dryland catchments could more than double in the very long term.

Regional Economy²

In the Dryland Region, recreational users value the famous high country for its snow, pristine mountain streams and spectacular scenery. Logging from native hardwoods as well as hardwood and pine plantations, grazing and increasingly viticulture are the main enterprises. The plains and foothills support productive rainfed cropping on arable lands and grazing industries for beef, sheep meat and wool production on native and improved pastures.

This Region of the Catchment also contains Lake Eildon, Victoria's most important water storage, with a capacity of 3,375,000ML.

The 2001 economic profile² by Michael Young & Associates noted that the rich Shepparton Irrigation Region in the lower catchment is one of the most intensive agricultural areas in Australia. The principal rural industries are dairying, horticulture (stone and pome fruit and tomatoes) with some mixed grazing (sheep and beef) on irrigated and rainfed pastures, as well as some irrigated and rainfed cropping.

This Region produces around 26% of Victoria's rural export earnings, with over \$100 million a year invested over the nine-year period to 2003 in food processing. Farmers in the irrigation area alone spent more than \$40 million each year in this period on salinity mitigation and waterway nutrient reduction.

For the Catchment overall, dairying, horticulture, livestock production (beef, sheep, goats, pigs, poultry), cropping, timber and aquaculture are the major primary industries. A large number of smaller specialist enterprises include mushrooms, flowers, peppermint, wasabi, green tea, herbs and importantly, the thoroughbred horse stud breeding and the leisure horse riding industry.

The statistics for dairying and fruit growing reflect the national importance of the Region, aptly called the nation's food bowl.

The 3,000 dairy farms in the Catchment comprise about 24% of the nation's dairy farms producing about 26% of the nation's milk. Milking herds range

from less than 80 to over 1000 cows with the typical herd being 150 to 180 cows. The total herd size has grown only slightly, staying around 350,000 to 400,000 cows.

As one of Australia's premier fruit-growing areas, the Region has approximately 600 horticulture properties with an area exceeding 10,000 hectares. The principal orchard crops are pears, apples, peaches, nectarines, apricots, plums, nashi, kiwi fruit and cherries grown for both the fresh market and for processing through the major canneries in the region. In recent years crop production has expanded significantly. Globalisation has forced the industry to develop intensive, high density planting systems in an effort to produce early yielding, quality, price-competitive fruit.

The region produces:

- 90% of the national deciduous canned fruit;
- 85% of the national pear crop;
- 45% of the national stone fruit crop;
- 14% of the national fresh stone fruit crop;
- 16% of the national apple crop;
- 90% of the national kiwi fruit crop; and
- 80% of the national nashi fruit crop.

The total average annual production of fruit exceeds 250,000 tonnes.

Tomatoes are grown for the fresh food market as well as processing. These are two distinct and major industries. Their importance in 2000 was reflected in the volume of 188 tonnes of processing tomatoes grown in the northern region of the Catchment and the 900 ha committed to the fresh tomato market.

These agricultural enterprises support a raft of agribusiness and food processing industries. Murray Goulburn, SPC Ardmona, Heinz, Henry Jones IXL, Kraft, Bonlac, Unilever and Nestlé are among the national and international food processors that have made large investments in food processing in the region.

The Catchment has a regional economic output of \$7.8 billion that is underpinned by agricultural production of over \$1 billion measured at the farm gate.

Chapter 3

THE CATCHMENT'S COMMUNITY, INSTITUTIONS AND LEADERS

The Goulburn Broken Catchment has a population of approximately 190,000 (as at 2004). Its main centres are the cities and towns of Kyabram, Tatura, Mooroopna, Shepparton, Numurkah, Cobram, Yarrawonga, Euroa, Benalla, Mansfield, Alexandra, Seymour, Yea and Kilmore. The more closely settled Shepparton Irrigation Region has 63% of the catchment population with its irrigated farming activity, larger service towns and value-adding industries. Population is growing more rapidly in those centres within commuting distance of Melbourne and the City of Greater Shepparton.

Author's note in 2014

Information in this chapter was current at the time of research: between 2003 and 2008.

The region is home to the largest Aboriginal population in Victoria outside of metropolitan Melbourne. Cultural and linguistic diversity is a feature of the Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR). Post World War II migration particularly has resulted in well-established communities with roots in Southern Europe. More recently arrived groups from countries such as Iraq, Iran and India are also establishing significant communities.

During the fruit harvest season from December to March, the population increases considerably when some 10,000 itinerant workers from across the nation and from overseas converge on the SIR.

Key Institutions

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Local government for the municipalities of Moira, Campaspe, City of Greater Shepparton, Mitchell, Delatite, Murrundindi and Strathbogie plays an increasingly significant role in natural resource management. This role is particularly important in underpinning key elements of the Catchment Strategy as in the introduction of planning controls for the management of surface water flow. The strategy also jointly funds a Municipal Liaison Officer to ensure ongoing interaction with Local Government.

LANDCARE

The 120 Landcare groups in the Catchment collaborate to provide major input to Local Area Planning and to strategic plans for future works.

GOULBURN BROKEN CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT AUTHORITY

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority, the peak natural resource management organisation in the Catchment, is responsible for the coordination, planning and implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy.

Detailed strategies address land and water degradation, biodiversity, salinity, water quality and waterway management, floodplain management, pest plants and animals and climate change, setting out priorities and goals for onground work.

The Regional Catchment Strategy in the Goulburn Broken Catchment is internationally recognised as one of the world's leading natural resource protection and management programs which has evolved through a partnership between government at all levels, the farming community, supporting research, development and education agencies and the wider regional community, business and industry.

This integrated approach to natural resource management ensures that issues are not looked at in isolation, but on a catchment-wide scale. All of the works undertaken within the catchment fit within State, Murray-Darling Basin and National strategies.

Implementation Committees drive the works programs to ensure the activities of the Goulburn Broken CMA reflect the views of the community. The committees comprise community members with wide knowledge and experience in areas such as agriculture, food processing, waterway and floodplain management and biodiversity. They are responsible for setting priorities for works in three geographical regions within the Catchment – the Shepparton Irrigation areas, the Mid Goulburn Broken and the Upper Goulburn. Other committees are issues-focused in areas such as biodiversity, waterways and water quality.

These committees act as a valuable link between the community and the CMA Board and play a major role in Goulburn Broken's extensive consultative processes.

GOULBURN-MURRAY WATER (G-MW)

Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW), the nation's largest water authority, is a government owned business enterprise charged with the responsibility of managing the allocation of bulk water entitlements along the Murray and Goulburn river systems to irrigators and urban users of water. G-MW is also responsible for the distribution of irrigation water to

the farm gate of irrigators and the management of drainage disposal.

GOULBURN VALLEY WATER (GVW)

Goulburn Valley Water (GVW) is the region's major urban and industrial water supply and waste disposal authority. This organisation's economic power, coupled with effective regional strategic planning for infrastructure needs, has enabled a coordinated program of urban and industrial water supply and waste disposal infrastructure upgrade to be implemented across the Catchment.

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT (DNRE) VICTORIA

Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) Victoria plays a major role in supporting the farm sector in the Goulburn Broken Catchment through:

- research covering natural resource management, dairying, horticulture and cropping;
- information provision relating to production and resource management; and
- regulatory issues relating to crop and animal health and public land management.

DNRE Tatura is a world-class research establishment, with approximately 200 scientists and support staff, conducting research into salinity and natural resource management, horticulture and irrigated crops. The Kyabram Dairy Centre conducts dairy research and extension programs and DNRE Cobram supports research and extension programs for the horticulture, cropping and dairy industries. These research groups have played a significant role in supporting the development of the Region's salinity, land and water management plans.

High quality education and training facilities most notably Melbourne University's Dookie College Campus – Institute of Land and Food Resources, a campus of LaTrobe University in Shepparton and Goulburn Ovens TAFE serve the communities and industries in the region.

Community Leaders

As Stephen Mills pointed out at the launch of the Regional Catchment Strategy, the Goulburn Broken Region's pre-eminent position nationally in natural resource management is due to several critical factors. It is the working of these factors in combination that explains the outstanding level of achievement in the Catchment since the late 1980s.

Of these success factors, the responses of government have no doubt been essential to the implementation of the initiatives undertaken. No one would doubt the importance of a bipartisan approach by government to natural resource management issues in the catchment – but the government responses to catchment organisations across Victoria have, in the main, been commensurate with catchment community responses to the challenges of salinity and other forms of environmental degradation.

This bipartisan approach has also helped foster the strong and multi-faceted partnership between the community, government agencies and statutory authorities – another of the “success factors” in the region. These partnerships are essential to “making it happen” on the ground. While the potential for partnerships of this order is common to most regions, in the Goulburn Broken the need to establish and maintain them has been assigned a high priority.

Of the remaining factors identified, effective leadership at all levels and the commitment of the community have been the hallmarks of the Goulburn Broken story. In many ways, these two particular elements have been vital in eliciting and securing both a government bipartisan approach and the strong institutional and community partnerships in the region.

The remaining factor, “a culture of success” connotes achievements of a high order, best practice in the delivery of services and works on the ground, leadership in policy formulation and project performance and the proactive involvement of the catchment community in these outcomes.

Without in any way diminishing the importance of the other “success factors” identified, the role of leadership at all levels (especially in the community) and the evolving response of the community are the two areas of special interest in this record of the lessons learned in the Goulburn Broken. These lessons arise in many and varied aspects of the story that really commenced in the mid 1980s.

As this story unfolds, the cast of players includes a changing group of government members, Ministers, senior public servants, technocrats and consultants. Fortunately for the Catchment, this group has included politicians and specialists who brought both a high level of skills and genuine dedication to this region under threat. Some individual contributions were, no doubt, more generous in recognition of the challenge faced by the Catchment. In many cases, they also realised they were working on a policy front of national importance in collaboration with a group of impressive leaders of a committed community.

Community leaders in the mid 1980s such as Leon Heath, Athol McDonald, Angus Howell, Geoff Whitten, Henry Vegter, Ian Elder, Jeremy Gaylard, Bruce Lloyd, Tom Perry, Pam Robinson and John Dainton helped generate and communicate the initial community responses. Several of these leaders in the 80s and early 90s went on to significant roles in natural resource management at the state and national levels. The Region has thus contributed in a strategic way through many dedicated and experienced leaders it has bred and shaped. This record of the Goulburn Broken experience does not set out to compile a roll of honour. However it does acknowledge a number of leaders, who had a role in the resolution of particular issues.

This account of remarkable achievement in the Goulburn Broken is, in many ways, John Dainton's story. A broad insight into John's abilities, character and motivation comes together as the story of his participation progresses.

While John is held in high regard for his work in the Catchment, many are puzzled that such an ordinary bloke could achieve so much in two intensive decades of community service in natural resource management. Some watchers of the Catchment and its leaders opine that his unpretentious manner has been one of John's major assets in relating to people generally and negotiating with community and industry groups and with government.

This account of John's role in the region will likely show that his achievements are simply due to his development of a combination of ordinary strengths, a heavy regime of hard work and a genuine commitment to openness and honesty in communicating. Two words that recur in comments on John's contribution are integrity and dedication.

One of the fundamental lessons and encouragements to be drawn from the Goulburn Broken story is that ordinary people can make a difference – a big difference – where they have down-to-earth abilities, a practical vision, integrity and real commitment. It is a lesson that runs the risk of being easily overlooked amid the many lessons that come out of the Catchment's experience.

In order to better appreciate the lessons of the region, it is helpful to know a little about John Dainton the man, his roots, track record as a dairy farmer and his involvement in the dairying industry and the wider community. This understanding will dispel any notions that John was advantaged by academic training, inherited wealth or being an arm-chair farmer. In fact, in the years leading up to his more intensive community service, he and his wife Pat poured themselves into developing their dairy herd, progressively adopting the then best farming practices.

A vital component in this best practice was well-informed and astute management of their basic resources – their land and water. This hands-on management experience no doubt helped prepare John for his leadership in the Catchment and especially its farming community.

Chapter 4

**JOHN DAINTON:
PREDECESSORS
AND PERSONAL
PROFILE**

Predecessors

John Dainton is a fourth generation member of a family who, from pioneering days, have left their mark on the Goulburn Broken landscape and in its community life.

The founder of this dynasty, James Henry Dainton was born in Bristol, England on 12 February 1841, son of Jane and John a stone mason. James followed his father into this trade. By the time he had completed a seven year apprenticeship as a stone mason he was also literate, a skilled tradesman and capable of drawing plans. Attracted by prospects in the New World, approaching age 23 he obtained employment as the ship's carpenter on the "Winefred" prior to its departure from London. This was a position of some importance in those days. So with his sea chest containing saws, an adze, hammer, mallet, caulking irons and numerous chisels he arrived in Port Phillip in the colony of Victoria on 6 April 1864.

During the voyage out, James had fallen very much in love with Elizabeth Parker, a passenger on the "Winefred," travelling with her mother and two sisters. The young couple were married on 5 November 1864, moving to Clunes where James was contracting. Their first five children were born at Clunes, two of whom died of diphtheria. The growing family found life very hard on the goldfields. They moved to Sandhurst (now Bendigo) where, for five years, James engaged in contracting, building many of the original bridges and surface mining structures.

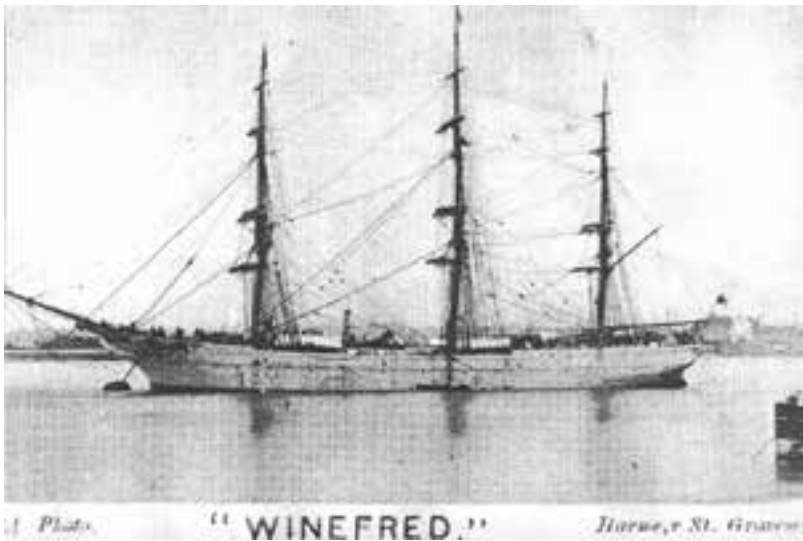
In 1877 the family, now with five children, made the hazardous trip to Shepparton by horse and dray. Their priority, in those early days, was to establish a home for their growing family, as they did at Pine Lodge. Along with the other many yeoman-type farmers seeking land, James had to challenge the squatter stronghold on the land. Fortunately the timing of legislation that allowed "free selection before survey" enabled James to lease land on the former "Pine Lodge Run".

In these initial years, the family had a difficult time financially trying to eke out a living and also meet the improvement clauses of selection. In the 1880s the four eldest children became increasingly involved in helping to run the farm. Also in the 1880s and 1890s James returned more to construction contracting. He was involved in an impressive list of projects, building bridges, wharves, railway lines, weirs and private irrigation works. The bridges included Kirwans Bridge built in 1890 and now heritage listed. As the longest timber bridge in Victoria at 315 metres, it is unusual in that it was built with an angle in its alignment. This contribution of James Henry Dainton to the infrastructure needed in those pioneering days is acknowledged in the naming of two important bridges and a plaque commemorating his role as wharf builder.

Elizabeth his wife was remarkable as the homemaker for the 9 children who survived from the 15 she bore her husband between 1865 and 1891. In the harsh environment of those pioneering days, being pregnant or nursing a child, caring for a family and hard working husband would have demanded great courage and perseverance.

Of the sons who survived into manhood, Albert Ernest was the youngest. Like his brothers, he began farming in the Pine Lodge area. He married Harriet Wright, the daughter of a well-established early pioneer family whose farm Albert and Harriet took over. During his life Albert Ernest was highly regarded in horse and sheep breeding and was a violinist of some talent, playing at the local dances. He also served on the school council as president for 15 years. Harriet was a member of the Mothers' Club for many years. They raised a family of 11 children of whom Ronald, born in 1907, was the eldest son.

As a young man, Ronald was closely associated with the wheat industry becoming President of the Pine Lodge Silo Committee and for the larger silo at Dookie. Ronald continued the Dainton record of community service as a councillor on the Shire of Shepparton for three full terms.



◀
The "Winefred" carried adequate provisions for 84 adults for a voyage of 140 days. The journey to Australia however took only 96 days. It had sailed from Victoria Dock on the Thames Estuary under the command of Captain W. Sargent and docked at Sandridge on Port Phillip Bay 6 April 1864.

Reconstruction of a local bridge.
Left: James Henry Dainton – Contractor.



▶
After naming of Causeway bridge in 1991. Emma, elder daughter of Jan and Trevor M Dainton. Courtesy Shepparton News June 1991.



▲
1878 Goulburn River Bridge remained until 1913 when it was replaced with a concrete bridge by (the Later Gen. Sir) John Monash. Wharf underwent restoration work in the mid 1990s. Photo believed to be about 1900. Courtesy John Dainton.

He was also a member of the Advisory Council of Shepparton High School, the Pine Lodge Water Trust, the Pine Lodge Methodist Church (Trustee for 37 years) and the Pine Lodge Tennis Club of which he was president in the 1920s. Ron and his wife Freda (nee Barnett) had five children. Of the four surviving, three sons and a daughter, John Dainton, the eldest was born in 1938.

John's Beginnings

John Dainton grew up on the sheep and wheat farm at Pine Lodge, the property held by the family from the days prior to selection. He attended Pine Lodge Primary School prior to going to Shepparton High School. A quiet boy, he was a keen reader and less inclined to go fishing and shooting, the passion of his younger brothers. With the expectation that he would go on the land, John concluded his formal education at Shepparton Technical School. He then went to work on the family farm, picked fruit locally and went shearing for some three or four years.

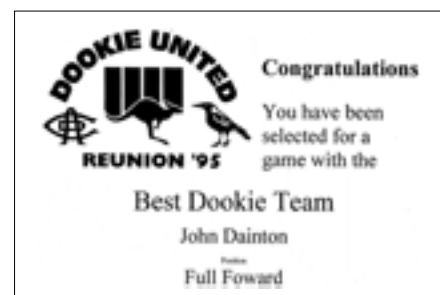
During these formative years John developed considerable talent as a sportsman particularly in Australian Rules Football.

He was very impressive as a full forward, a strong mark and had a very long accurate kick. In his days with Dookie he was a member of the Team of the Century. Then with City United (now Shepparton United) he was the leading goal kicker in the Goulburn Valley Football League in 1958 and 1959 - one of only three players to have topped the league's goal kicking on two occasions. As a prominent player in country teams, he was seen as a potential recruit to the Melbourne scene. John also excelled in tennis, being selected to train in the Harry Hopman squad, that comprised the most promising young players in the region.

Whatever future he may have had in the VFL and other sport was cut short by a serious accident. When he and his brother Doug were felling green timber on his uncle's property, a branch deflected John's axe into his boot. It went deep into his foot. It was a serious injury and took a long time to heal. This accident finished his promising career in football. It was one of those turning points when the prospects of possible high achievement in one sphere are taken away. The energy and dedication he had demonstrated in the sporting field would be directed into other spheres.



◀
The Dainton Family.
Left to Right: Donna, John and Pat.



Dairy Farming at “Lagoona”

John had previously met Pat Wilkinson also an accomplished tennis player. When he was aged 22 they married and settled on a run-down mixed (sheep and wheat) farm of 348 acres at North Mooroopna. The farm had limited irrigation and a small walk-through dairy capable of milking four cows at a time. His siblings found it amusing that John eventually went dairy farming. He had been the least interested in milking the four house cows on the dryland farm. Being realistic though, there was a difference between doing this chore for your father and doing it for yourself – and, of course, hand milking was a different task to using machines.

The young couple’s start in farming was made possible by a number of loans, equal to the cost of the farm, which were guaranteed by John’s father. Like many other young farmers they had it all in front of them – developing a profitable enterprise, repaying loans, building a new home, raising a family.

John’s days in dryland farming had convinced him of the need to take up an irrigated property. In the early years they assessed the income stream from dairying to be more reliable and developed a farm plan. In those days there was no government assistance for such plans. The farm was progressively equipped to handle six and then eight cows in a walk-through dairy. Then in 1975 they built the first rotary dairy in Rodney Shire. It had a 16 cow platform which most observers considered was too big. However, the then Extension Officer from the Department of Agriculture, Jack Green, thought it might be limiting in the future – and he was right. When they reached a herd size of 200 cows, the rotary was far too slow taking three hours per milking.

Rotary dairies were uncommon in the late 1970s and the Dainton’s dairy attracted interest locally and among visitors to the region. With the support of the Victorian Dairy Industry Authority they installed a glass-viewing platform around the dairy. Busloads of school children, group tours and industry fact-finding tours from within Australia and overseas became



▲
“Lagoona”.

more frequent visitors to the dairy that was open to the public in the evenings. This tourism venture ran for some years but ceased when John's involvement in the dairy industry became more intensive.

During a period of very severe depression in the dairying in the mid 1970s, John and Pat faced the difficult question of whether to continue on the farm. Thousands of cattle were being shot and buried in pits. As with many other families dairy farming at that time, they needed a regular non-farm income to survive. When Pat obtained a catering job in the Mooroopna hospital she was not always available to help with the milking.

On occasions, John faced the challenging task of running the dairy alone.

John had seen an automatic teat cup remover in 1975 at the milking systems design competition run by the Milking Research Centre. With the help of Ian Markland of Mooroopna and Department of Agriculture dairy officers, Alex Pollock and Peter Hicks, John produced a modified version of this design for his dairy in 1976. It was much cheaper than commercial units available and had the added advantage of halving the labour requirement, effectively converting his 16 unit turnstile into a one-man operation.

Tourists will see dairymen at their work

"Lagoona" a modern dairyfarm situated at North Mooroopna has now converted part of its operations to tourists.

The unique venture is being initiated this week by John Dainton and his wife Pat.

Visitors will be able to see at first hand the operations of a modern rotary dairy and the venture should prove very popular particularly with school children.

The Daintons have spent several thousand dollars in building a viewing area with five glass panels through which visitors can see the entire milking operation without disturbing the cows.

"Lagoona" is a strictly commercial dairy farm, milking 130 cows and is operated solely by John and Pat.

Visitors will be able to see the milking of the cows and feeding of calves.

There will be promotional and general displays of various aspects of the dairy industry and it is hoped in the near future to include cheese tasting and the selling of cheese, flavored milk and other dairy products.

The minute is unique to the area. The idea was advanced following a meeting in Shepparton on tourism in Shepparton some months ago, when it was emphasized there was a lack of availability for tourists to have a close look at both dairy farms and orchard operations in the area.

Because of the large number of non-paying visitors to his dairy to see cows being milked etc, John decided to spend a few dollars and try and make it more suitable for visitors.

The Dainton's modern milking shed is equipped with a 16 unit rotary milking plant, one of the few such machines in the Goulburn Valley, and each unit is equipped with automatic cup-removers.

The shed is fitted with electric fans and fluorescent lighting.

Brochures are being especially printed and distributed to tourist authorities, travel agents, and hotels and motels in the area to publicise the new tourist attraction.

Admission charges have initially been set at 70 cents for adults and 30 cents for children.



Section of the Dainton's 16 unit rotary milking plant was photographed by News photo-grapher Simon Greig through one of the observation windows which will be used by tourists to view the milking operation.

STORY:
Bill Davies

PICTURES:
Simon Greig

IT'S DAIRY

SHEPPARTON



Pat and John Dainton were pictured alongside one of the large displays set up to publicise milk products in their new tourist venture at "Lagoona".

DAIRY FARM HAS TOURIST ATTRACTION

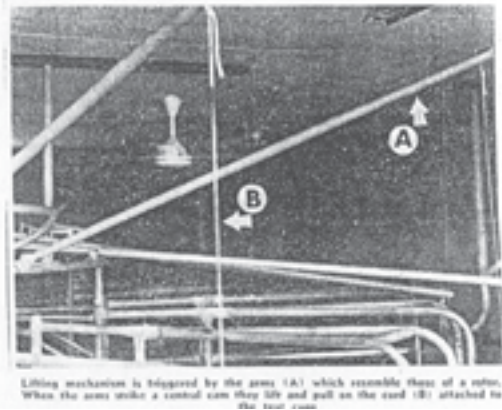
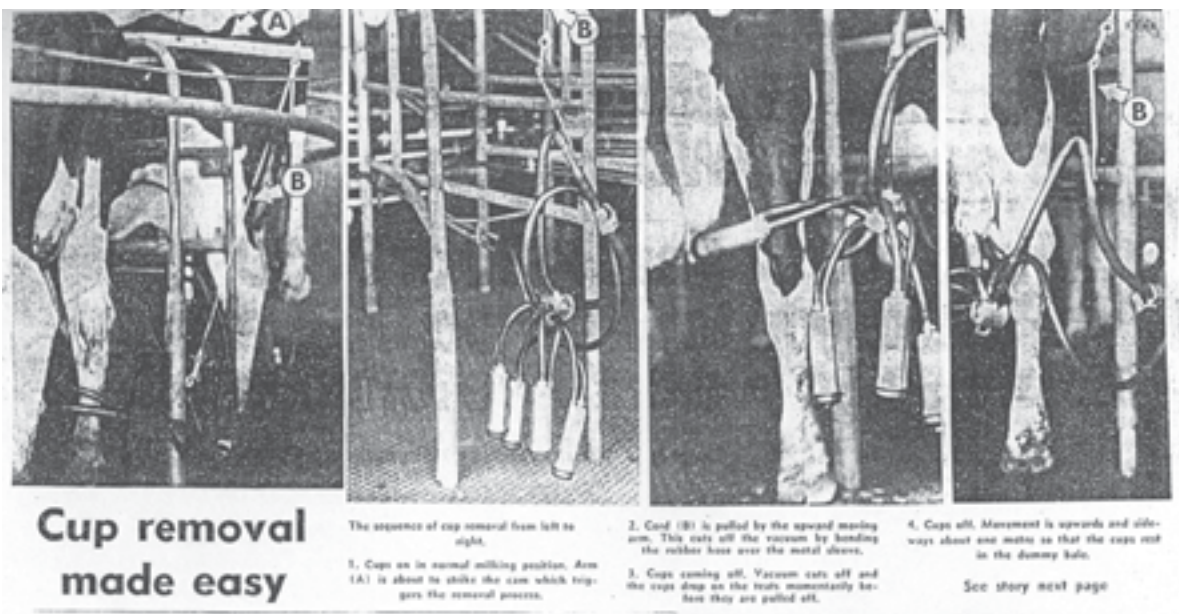
An a tourist project the Railway Shire Council will erect directional signs leading to Mr John Dainton's "Lagoona" dairy farm.

Mr Dainton writes to request... (text continues with details of the project and council involvement)

With the assistance of Forster Brothers, farm equipment mechanics in Tatura, John continued to refine the design over the next few years. With this modified design he won second prize in the Milking Procedure and Machinery Section for Farmer Invention Awards at the 1979 Farm World.

In 1983 John acquired "Coomboona", comprising 255 acres that he ran in conjunction with "Lagoona". In 1990 he developed a lucerne project as a joint venture

with Rocky Scorpari a very successful lucerne grower. In 1995 John upgraded to a 40 cow rotary platform to cope with the herd of 320 cows. In 1997 he was awarded the Ernest Jackson Award by the Irrigation Association of Australia for outstanding contributions to the improvement of irrigation farm and catchment management.



▲ Cup Removal made easy.

◀ 1979 FarmWorld: Farmer Invention Awards.

Family Lifestyle

Family life was dominated by the regime of the dairy. John and Pat were busy with meeting the regular timetable of milking and seasonal tasks. The Dainton's only child, Donna, was a keen helper in the demanding life of the dairy farming household. In addition to the basic tasks of getting the cows into the yards and feeding the calves, Donna, as a young girl, had the job of guiding the visitors around the rotary dairy. She showed them the operations of the rotary dairy, giving them tastings of the locally produced IBIS cheese and other dairy products that she sold, along with Big M flavoured milk, t-shirts and other tourist memorabilia.

In the absence of siblings, Donna looked to her father to join in the games she enjoyed (marbles in the lounge room, races up and down the hall). As she moved into her teens, homework demands meant she spent less time in the dairy, but she eased her mother's workload by preparing the evening meal. In those days Donna was in a position and mature enough to appreciate her father's talents and commitment. She grew to respect his creativity and his abilities with graphics, developing concepts and as a wordsmith.

The early days establishing the farm were demanding. Both John and Pat were fully taken up with the round of tasks on the dairy. Gradually they saw the results of their farm plan materialise, the herd size and productivity increased. They built a new family home on the farm. They took on a sharefarmer who occupied the original farmhouse and looked after the day-to-day running of the dairy with John helping. Pat was winding back her involvement but always kept a keen eye on the operations of the farm. John was diverting more of his time and effort into his Catchment, UDV, G-MW and Bonlac commitments.

John's times of relaxation at home were taken up with reading newspaper articles, books, watching TV educational programs and documentaries and especially football, a lifelong passion.

His commitments in the Catchment community and in corporate life increased especially in the late 1980s. The family would gather for their evening meal around a low table talking and watch TV. More often than not, the phone would ring. This would be the first of a series of long phone discussions John would have that night. Increasingly the heavy program of night meetings with industry, Catchment and other groups meant that, after taking the phone calls, he would then gulp down his evening meal and hurry off.

Both Pat and Donna gave solid backup to John in this demanding lifestyle. Pat with her meticulous care laid out John's clothes on the bed so he could rush from the dairy, shower, don his clothes and hurry out the door. Later in the night John would phone in to say when he would be home ... 10.30pm; they knew from experience that meant 11.30pm.

At home, John was not given to talking a lot about his growing commitments. Donna found that, to satisfy her curiosity, she had to seek updates from him. John was always willing to answer her questions. Pat was always there to discuss the issues of the day. These discussions became more frequent and intense, especially in the late 1990s when John's corporate roles were both heavier and more problematic.

At times Pat or Donna attempted to protect him from the succession of phone calls. If Donna took a call she would sometimes ask if John could call back, as he had just come in. In her later teens she would think at times that her Dad deserved a break, but she found that he didn't see it that way. Still she occasionally forced it on him, just so he would relax a while. Then John would start phoning the callers back. Even Pat wearied of the phone at times. She would tell Donna to take the receiver off. Donna sometimes protested "we can't do that to Dad". Nevertheless they did occasionally protect him in this way. They were concerned about how tired he became at times and in their own special way they cared for him.

Particularly in the very busy period 1996-99 when John was concurrently Chair of the GBCMA, Deputy Chair of Goulburn-Murray Water and Chair of Bonlac, Pat was always at his side at various functions. They travelled widely in Victoria in those years seeking to relate to the many representatives of the community, dairy industry, corporate life and the business sector. In the course of the many events and meetings they attended, John grasped the opportunity to pursue the issues of the day at the personal level. Pat moved among the wives/partners making many good friends.

Public Life

John Dainton's early experiences in the dairy industry and irrigation/drainage bodies marked him out as a participant with ability, commitment and integrity and prepared him for the salinity related tasks of the mid 1980s.

John's interest in the dairy industry grew naturally out of the impacts of its cumbersome decision-making structures and market anomalies on dairy farmers' returns. In particular, the inequities of the antiquated liquid milk contract system, that advantaged dairy farmers serving metropolitan processors, drew increasing fire from the many non-participant farmers. As President of the Shepparton Branch of the Victorian Dairy Farmers Association John, together with other officials of the Association, welcomed the Government enquiry into the industry announced by the then Victorian Minister of Agriculture, Ian Smith, on his visit to the region in February 1974.

In the 1970s John was becoming known as one of the noisy young farmers who emerged in the dairy discussion groups. He was highly regarded amongst his fellows and among the Department of Agriculture extension staff. He was respected as one of the early farmers to put in a rotary milking shed. He also introduced a solar hot water service that delivered hot water to his 'pink veal' unit – the shed for the calves they were rearing. This was a very progressive step in

those times. It attracted the attention of government agencies backing the local Solar Renewable Energy Subcommittee. Since the project was set up as a trial, it received assistance by way of a government grant. Dairy extension-staff were impressed by his skills as an innovative farm manager and by his planning and development of the wetlands and substandard areas of his property.

However, John's track record with government agencies was not without blemish. One day, to his surprise, officers visited him from the Environment Protection Authority to inspect the runoff from his dairy. Ironically, this visit had been prompted by a complaint (presumably to a senior EPA officer in Melbourne) from a member of a tour group who had recently been shown over the property. The tour leader had explained the significance of the various environmental and resource management initiatives adopted on the property. A lady in the group, who came from Melbourne's elite suburb of Toorak, was disturbed that, in a leading dairy, the runoff from the milking shed was not treated but went via a drain into a depression on the property that the tour guide had described as a degraded wetland.

The EPA officers may have found their task on this occasion somewhat unusual, since they were dealing with a dairy that was regarded highly. It was, in fact, typical of even the best dairy farms in the 1970s. They were using a practice, generally accepted prior to the introduction of dairy shed effluent systems.

Initially, the EPA officers gave John 12 days to rectify the situation. This was an impossible deadline. He shared with the officers his dilemma as to how to meet their requirements. Their proposal involved retaining and re-using the runoff by constructing a receiving pond from which the runoff could be pumped for re-use on pasture. In the circumstances the EPA officers accepted John's undertaking to develop a pit as a temporary measure within the twelve days time limit and to complete the pond and re-use system as soon as possible. Apart from being an embarrassing experience, the irony was not lost on John. It had been triggered by a farm inspection tour – a feature of "Lagoona" that the

Daintons were proud of, both as a means of exhibiting the then best practice in dairy farming and of raising awareness of the dairy industry and of farm issues and lifestyles to the non-farm community. This experience heightened John's understanding of how government departments should deal with emerging natural resource and environmental issues with landholders. A lesson he later took into the Salinity Program.

In these early days of his public life, John demonstrated an ability to work in partnership in either leadership or in support roles. He was known for his attention to detail and thoroughness in preparation. He developed abilities that were valuable on the executive of industry and community groups, particularly in research, drafting speeches and submissions and organising events. These strengths were to the fore in 1975 when Tom Perry as President of the No.10 District Council of the Victorian Dairy Farmers Association and John as Vice President, organised major dairy industry meetings in Shepparton. These meetings were convened to consider a draft Council submission to government recommending the abolition of the milk contract system, the restructure of the Federal administration of the industry, the reduction of the number of governing bodies in the dairy industry and an underwritten guaranteed price for export skim milk powder.

With the reorganisation of the peak and regional dairy industry bodies, John became Secretary of the No.9 District Council of the new United Dairyfarmers of Victoria. The UDV in the Goulburn and Murray Valley organised a region-wide rally in Shepparton in May 1976, as part of its Operation Concern. In the lead up to the rally, through the local media John Dainton encouraged dairyfarmers and their wives, service industries as well as the general public, to demonstrate to all Australia their concern over the plight of the industry. Speakers at the rally included the UDV President Mr Bill Pyle, the Chairman of the Australian Dairy Corporation Mr Tony Webster and the Member for Murray, Mr Bruce Lloyd. The rally was impressive as a broadly based regional protest

and deemed a success by its leaders in getting the industry's message through to the people in the big cities.

In 1978 John was one of 10 Victorian dairy farmers to win places in a study tour to New Zealand sponsored by the Australian Dairy Corporation. This was both a well-earned honour and an opportunity to attend the dairy conference of the Federated Farmers of New Zealand, the Ruakura Farmers Conference and the New Zealand field days. The study tour also visited leading dairy farms and factories.

As Secretary of the No.9 District Council of the UDV, John worked closely with the Council President, Tom Perry. Tom, a dairy farmer from Tatura, was also Deputy President of the UDV, farm representative for the Victorian Dairy Industry Authority and Deputy Chairman on the Board of Directors for Tatura Milk Products. The No.9 District Council prepared a bid to have the fourth annual UDV Conference held in Shepparton in May 1979. This was a bold move. The industry conference was normally held in Melbourne and, understandably, the president of the UDV, Bill Pyle, was concerned about the risk of the conference falling short of the standards the dairy industry had come to expect. He had a high regard for both Tom Perry and John Dainton and the other members of the conference coordination committee: Col McCracken, Kevin Jordan, Ken Whan and Noel Russell (all of whom would have roles in various dairy industry and natural resources management organisations in the years ahead). Bill Pyle was finally convinced that with this Coordination Committee and John Dainton as Conference Director, he could be confident about the outcome. The seriousness of the task was brought home in Bill Pyle's parting comment to John that, if he stuffed it up, he'd be kicked from Shepparton to Gippsland.

The delegates at the 1978 annual conference in Melbourne approved the proposal. Having committed the organisation of the 1979 Conference into their hands, Bill Pyle gave them solid support with its preparation.

Dainton

DAIRYFARMERS NEED SUBSTANTIAL HELP

"Dairyfarmers face certain ruin in the 1976-77 season unless they get substantial assistance from the State and Federal Governments," Mr John Dainton said today.

Mr Dainton is secretary of No. 9 District Council of the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria.

"A further drop of about 30 per cent in the price of butterfat is indicated for manufacturing milk. This could eliminate half of Victoria's dairyfarms and spell economic disaster to many country towns," he said.

President of the Australian Dairyfarmers Association, Mr Bob Sample, has stated that dairyfarmers have less than a 10 per cent chance of Government assistance in the coming season. The UDV Central Council has decided they have no option but to publicise the dairyfarmers' plight by a series of rallies throughout the State.

The UDV in the Godthum and Murray Valley Region will hold a big rally in Shepparton on Thursday, May 27, beginning with a march along Wynham St. It will start at Ibis Milk Products at 11.30 and proceed to the rally point at the Queen's Gardens.

Speakers at the rally will include the UDV president, Mr Bill Pyle, and the chairman of the Australian Dairy Corporation, Mr Tony Webster.

Towns involved will be Numurkah, Cobram, Nathalia, Invergardoo, Katandra, Shepparton, Tatura, Kyabram, Stanhope, Tongala, Echuca, Lockington, Rochester and Nazarenda.

It will involve the UDV Nos. 7, 8, 9 and 10 District Councils.

BIG SHEPPARTON RALLY

A rally planned for Echuca has been cancelled and is being combined with the Shepparton rally.

Organisations such as City and Shire Councils, Rotary, Apex, CWA, Lions, Jaycees, churches, chambers of commerce and political groups will be asked to support the rally. Their members be asked to take part in the short march as a demonstration of concern and solidarity.

Local organisers are trying to make the march and meeting as spectacular as possible, as there will be local, and national press, radio and television coverage.

Organisations will be asked to carry a placard indicating their name and concern. UDV organisers will make placards which will carry especially prepared slogans and these will be paraded during the march and rally.

The rallies will be the first big public effort by the new UDV.

Mr Dainton said today the roll up of dairyfarmers and their wives, as well as the general public, will demonstrate to all Australia their concern over the plight of the industry.

It is hoped that whole communities will take part in the rallies being held in major centres. Organisers expect that shops in some centres will close and that

dairy farmer will have a return high enough to cover his farm production costs next season.

"And that means sheer and utter disaster for the industry and tremendous flow-on economic, social and political implications for decentralisation, employment and for consumers."

Mr Pyle said the rally organisers expected that in some country towns shops would be closed and schools let out to enable people to all walks of life and of all ages to march side by side with dairy farmers and their families in the greatest demonstration of rural concern ever seen in Australia.

The marchers would carry placards and banners setting out the minimum needs of dairy farmers for survival through the coming 1976-77 season, commencing in July.

He said rallies would be held on: May 24, Warman, 8 pm; May 25, Leongatha, 1 pm and Maffra, 8 pm; May 26, Camperdown, 1 pm, and Colac, 8 pm; May 27, Shepparton, lunch-time and Echuca, 8 pm; May 28, Wodonga, 1 pm.

"This is a chance for every Victorian whose livelihood is wholly or partially dependent on dairy-farming -- and that means the best part of 100,000 people -- to participate in Operation Concern," Mr Pyle said.

"We have here in Victoria one of the world's most productive and efficient dairy industries and it would be crazy to let it go to the wall because of a temporary world glut of skimmed milk powder attributable largely to the unrealistic agricultural policies of the European Economic Community," he added.

Thousands of dairyfarmers and their supporters line up in Wyndham Street this morning in preparation for their march to Queen's Gardens where a rally was held and the farmers plight put.

THE NEWS
 SHEPPARTON
 DAILY MONDAY TO FRIDAY Recommended Price 13c PHONE SHEPPARTON 21 9944
 Vol. XCIX No. 104 Thursday, May 27, 1976 16 PAGES

St CO

The Shepparton today brought the from thousands o industry workers a

A placard-carrying crowd strode along Wyndham St to the Queen's Gardens, where a rally emphasising the plight of one of Australia's most valuable primary industries was staged.

It was obvious as members assembled that solid and active support had been given to the United Dairyfarmers of Victoria.

A few hundred people were in Wyndham St by 11 am - and a massive stream were walking in the assembly point.

Many came in whole family groups to march - some brought their own banners.

There were plenty of tales of hard times, which were expected to become grimmer each week.

An Ibis tanker bore the sign "For Sale, \$600 - No Further Use".

A dairyfarmer looking at the tanker estimated it would normally cost \$20,000.

The price, however bore a \$4000 for sale price tag.

Well before the march, a small army of dairyfarmers and their families prepared banners. One group used a part of the Ibis premises, the other wrote the banners in the sunlight on the opposite side of Wyndham St.

"Be a Dairyfarmer - Get Milked Today" was one banner.

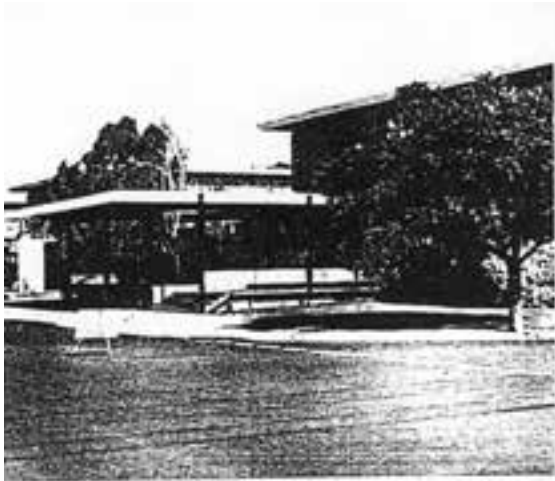
Some were simple: "The Dairy Industry Must Stay" and "No Money - No Milk".

Others were more subtle: "Tell the EEC to take a powder", "Kid, Come on with Your Churn - Help on the Farm" and "Milk - Be a Pal - Help the price swell to 70c".

Today's rally followed other successful campaigns in the Western District and Gippsland.

Speakers at the rally included the UDV president, Mr Bill Pyle, the chairman of the Australian Dairy Corporation, Mr Tony Webster, and the Member for Victoria St.





The above picture shows the magnificent Civic Centre which comprises the municipal offices for the administration of the city, the art gallery which is one of the finest in country Victoria and the Town Hall that is popular centres for functions and conferences.

First ever UDV conference in Shepparton

The United Dairy Farmers of Victoria will hold its fourth annual conference at Shepparton this week.

The conference is being held on next Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and is the first ever held in country Victoria.

Having the conference will be the number one District Council of the UDV, which comprises the branches of Katamatjola, Shepparton, and Tatura.

The idea of Shepparton as a venue for such a conference was suggested early last year, and a submission was then prepared by the number one District Council and put to

the delegates at last year's Annual Conference in Melbourne, where it was duly accepted.

Apart from being the first of its kind to be held in the country, the conference will also boast another first in that it will devote a good deal of attention to the role of the woman on the dairy farm.

As there are many women heavily involved in the running of the farm, the UDV believes they should be encouraged to participate in the running of their industry through attendance at gatherings such as branch meetings, conferences, etc.

Conference co-ordinator, Mr John Dainton, said that since dairy-farming, more so than other types of farming, was a family involvement, a greater emphasis should be given to the important role that women played.

The ladies' committee, which comprises local dairywomen, and is headed by Mrs Gwen Jenson of Mooropna, has helped to co-ordinate the activities of the women to the conference as a whole.

Shepparton 1979 Conference director John Dainton reports .

MOST dairy farms in Victoria are run on a husband and wife partnership basis. But when it comes to decision making in their industry it seems that the meetings and conference are solely a man's domain.

The Shepparton conference committee intends to rectify the position and provide a special program for the ladies at the fourth annual conference from May 23 to 31 next year. This will include informal discussions on aspects of the dairy industry along the lines of the "What's Bugging You" segment at the UDV second annual conference.

While the meeting will be chaired in an easy going manner, it is hoped that worthwhile discussion will take place and that recommendations can go forward to improve our industry and ensure a more positive role for women at future UDV conferences.

The ladies' program, although independent of the UDV conference, will be held within the Shepparton Civic Centre complex.



John Dainton conference director for the fourth annual UDV conference to be held in Shepparton next year.

The Shepparton conference committee will be seeking assistance from all branches and DCs to ensure firstly that ladies attend the conference and secondly with topics to stimulate discussion and provide an interesting and impressive program.



UDV Conference Co-ordinator, Mr John Dainton, with Mrs Gwen Jenson, who will be assisting Mr Dainton in organizing the women's section of the conference.

Shepparton 1979 Conference Director John Dainton Reports.

John was determined that this conference should have several distinctives. It was already the first of its kind to be held in a regional centre. So the overall approach as well as the organisation by the Coordination Committee needed to be of a high order. The Committee pursued its huge task with vigour: recruiting conference sponsors, organising program seminars, speakers, displays and opportunities for interaction on specialist topics, setting up tours to places of interest in the region, securing the participation of high profile people in the dairy industry and in the government, corporate and scientific areas and involving media personalities such as Peter Russell-Clarke, the then celebrity chef on TV.

John was keen to see this conference give special emphasis to the role of women in the dairy industry. Dairy farming, more so than other types of farming, depended on the involvement of the family. In the media, John pointed out that there were many women heavily involved in the running of the farm and that their role should be recognised. The UDV believed they should be encouraged to participate in the running of the industry through attendance at gatherings such as branch meetings, conferences etc.

The ladies' committee brought together for the conference comprised local dairy women and was headed up by Mrs Gwen Jensen of Mooroopna. This group helped to coordinate the activities of the women in the conference as a whole. John had sought out Gwen for this role, having worked together with her on the North Mooroopna School Committee. John had been President with Gwen as Secretary. They had led a very successful team with an impressive track record in fundraising. Gwen was also well known for her involvement with the Country Women's Association (CWA) through her organisation of various major events. In his strong commitment to the recognition of the role of women in the industry in the 1970s and in his inclusive approach, John was possibly ahead of his time. In his organisation, he also demonstrated an ability he would use again in the days ahead, that of choosing the right person for the right position at the right time.

John Dainton's significant contribution to and standing in the dairy industry was reflected also in the corporate positions he held. In 1977 he became a director of a IBIS Milk Products Limited that operated processing plants in Shepparton and Stanhope. In 1983 he became Deputy Chairman, the position he held until the merger of several Victorian dairy processors to form Bonlac Foods Limited.¹

Ern McDermott, Administration Manager for IBIS, who was also Secretary to the Board for a time, observed John's contribution. Ern was impressed by the amount of time Dainton gave to his duties as a Director, when he and all the Board knew of his heavy commitment to water issues in the region. John used his connection with the other directors who were all farmers, to press them into taking on their share of responsibility for the battle against salinity. Ern also noted the diligence with which John Dainton applied himself to issues coming up for consideration.

He didn't go to Board meetings and just open up. He used to consider (issues) very carefully, what he was going to say and then he would say it. And when he said it, he was talking sense all the time. I think John has not only been the man for big initiatives, but also the man for a hard day's labour.²

John was one of four IBIS board members who were appointed to the Bonlac Board on 1 January 1986. He became Chairman of Bonlac in 1996, a position he held until 1999.

Chapter 5

**RESPONSES
TO SALINITY –
PRECURSORS AND
EARLY INITIATIVES:
1970 – 1985**

A meeting of 500 angry farmers in Kerang in 1981 marked a critical turning point in the approach to salinity and, later, the wider issues of natural resource management in rural Victoria. The meeting had been called by the all-party Parliamentary Public Works Committee (PPWC) as part of its program of hearings on a scheme for salinity and drainage problems proposed by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission (SRWSC). PPWC panel members and other politicians concerned with its outcome attended the meeting.

The opening address by David Constable, Commissioner of the SRWSC, covered the Commission's proposed Mineral Reserve Basins (MRB) scheme. The proposal had become highly controversial due to concerns among farmers about its technical, environmental and compensation aspects. Significantly, though, this was the first opportunity for many of them to ask vital questions and to express their views, as most hearings to that point had been held in Melbourne.

After a rowdy, at times abusive debate, the meeting rejected the scheme. Local politicians present moved away from their support of the scheme, openly siding with the farmers. The experience of this meeting left a deep impression on another politician in the audience – the Labor Party's Shadow Minister for Conservation and Planning, Evan Walker. Recalling the event for Peter Russ, author of "The Salt Traders,"¹ Evan Walker identified effective community involvement in the process as the essential factor that was missing.

It (the MRB proposal) was clearly a very emotional issue, and I didn't know a lot about it, but there was evidence that we really had to address the issue. I can hardly say that I was always opposed to Mineral Reserve. It was explained when I sat and watched David Constable try to handle the farmers and try to tell why they were doing the Mineral Reserve Basins. It made sense to me; mind you, I tended to leave it to technically trained people, but the farmers were also technically trained, so it was interesting to watch that. But Constable, I thought, was highly credible; and there is nothing to say that the Commission wasn't necessarily correct, they probably were; what was really coming over, what was really learnt, was that it's one thing to be right in that narrow sense, but it's not necessarily true to say that you are right in the bigger or broader sense, and we learnt that the community is the most powerful part of what you're doing.

You can't do anything if you don't carry the community with you, and that community of farmers opposed Mineral Reserve because they didn't believe in it.

The planning process for the MRB scheme with its kaleidoscope of environmental, technical, compensation and implementation issues had been led by bureaucrats and specialist officers. Keith Collett drove the process for the SRWSC and its successor the Rural Water Commission (RWC) for eight years while the Commission was locked in a struggle with the opponents of the scheme. Collett saw the process culminate in a bitterly fought class action that the RWC won in 1985. However, the project was assessed not to be economic and it did not proceed. The protracted and heated conflict over the MRB scheme convinced the key Labor figures in advance of its election to government of the need to use community-based planning as a means of reconciling competing interests in the Kerang Lakes area². Experienced RWC technocrats like Collett were subsequently mentored by specialists in community planning such as Sharman Stone who, from 1986 – 89, occupied the new position in the RWC of Manager, Social Planning and Marketing³.

The stormy Kerang meeting in 1981, the drawn out conflict between the SRWSC and the farming community and the costly and divisive class action had wide ramifications. It threatened to split the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF), the peak lobby body for farmers because the Shepparton farmers favoured the scheme going ahead, while the Mallee, Swan Hill and Kerang farmers were set against it⁴. "At the political level the MRB paralysed the National Party which represented the political interests of farmers in the State."⁵

Salinity – A Labor Election Issue

With a State election due in April 1982, the Australian Labor Party (ALP) found a rural issue to major on in marginal rural seats – salinity. The ALP had included salinity in its rural policies. With the technical help of Gyn Jones, an extension officer with the Department of Agriculture, and several other young public servants, mostly from Swan Hill – all deeply concerned about salinity but not all committed to the Labor Party – Evan Walker and close friend Ron Davies, a Labor stalwart, drafted a one page paper on which the Labor Party's salinity policy would be based. In preparing the policy for the Party's Country Conference and the main Victorian ALP Conference its proponents:

... got hold of interstate policies on salinity which were nil, they'd got hold of National Party policy on salinity and the environment which was pretty hopeless, the Liberal Party ditto, the VFF which wasn't much better; in other words there was nothing to really base their policy on, they had to start from scratch. It was just a group of young people mainly, with idealised, great ideas, and wanting to get some place. It's an object lesson to what a group in the community could really do. And that's where it all began.⁶

Other grassroots initiatives contributed to the growing momentum against salinity. The "Halt the Salt" awareness raising campaign started by sharefarmers Ross and Olive Hercott attracted considerable interest and support. So successful was it in generating concern that Hercott managed to extract promises from Labor that if John Cain won government in 1982, they would establish an all-party salinity committee and double the funds for salinity control in Victoria. "Halt the Salt" succeeded in lifting salinity to "number 2 on the ALP country ticket, second to unemployment."⁷

With their election in 1982, the Labor government set up an all-party Parliamentary Select Committee on Salinity in July 1982. Whilst it had to cover the MRB issues as a priority, it had terms of reference broad enough to investigate the causes, effects and control of land and river salinity. The enquiry may have been overdue given the history of salinity, its complexities and the controversies surrounding particular control schemes. It had the advantage, though, of being independent. It also had credibility as far as its many participants were concerned. Importantly, it had political appeal to the new government anxious to involve members from all three parties in resolving the vexed MRB issues.

The enquiry struggled in its start-up period with the complexities of salinity. They sought and gained more resources and more time to undertake independent unbiased research. The Committee was fortunate in its appointment of Graham Hunter as Director of Research. Graham ensured that community involvement in the enquiry and the communication of the enquiry's progress throughout the community were maximised.

The enquiry was comprehensive, open to contributions from all sectors of rural Victoria, academia and research bodies, government agencies and consultants with relevant expertise and experience. Its processes were inclusive ensuring opportunity for questioning and criticism of specific submissions. This costly enquiry over two and a half years visited sites and held meetings in interested centres across rural Victoria convening special hearings in regional centres. All political parties and interest groups welcomed its report released in October 1984.

The report identified the "fragmentation of responsibility" among government agencies and the lack of a "mechanism for formal coordination" of action as major constraints on the effective control of salinity. While it assessed the level of community consultation had been adequate, it proposed more community involvement and initiatives in the planning and implementation of salinity control measures.

The report proposed the establishment of a Salinity Control Board (SCB) for an initial period of five years, answerable to the Minister of Agriculture. Representation on the Board was to comprise part-time members from government agencies and from the salinity affected communities. Its role was to develop broad policies and strategies to control salinity. The task of administering the program was with the Department of Agriculture. These arrangements ensured that salinity issues would be given priority by the State government.

Significant changes to government administration occurred during and after the enquiry. In 1984 the SRWSC was revamped into the Rural Water Commission and a Department of Water Resources was formed to deliver independent advice on policy matters. The Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands combined the roles previously held by the Ministry for Conservation, the Forests Commission and the Lands Department. With the creation of an Office of Rural Affairs, this office was combined with the agriculture portfolio to form the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DARA).

The government top-level machinery on salinity issues only took shape after considerable resistance to proposals for high priority to be given to salinity and a high profile unit to formulate the salinity control program. Significantly, the decision to continue with a Ministerial Task Force (MTF) of five senior cabinet ministers led to its secretariat and the specially created Salinity Bureau being housed in the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC).

The membership of the MTF included Evan Walker the new Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Joan Kirner the new Minister for Conservation, Forests and Lands and Andrew McCutcheon the new Minister for Water Resources. Evan Walker had the benefit of a close involvement with salinity issues and the ways rural communities had sought to respond to them.

An announcement by Evan Walker in the Legislative Council⁸ on "Salinity Management Initiatives" included undertakings by the Labor government to establish

appropriate government, budgetary and institutional arrangements for an overall strategy and focused action against salinity.

Shepparton Region Initiatives

Alongside these State government developments, in the Shepparton region indications of salinity that had been noticed but lived with for decades, took on a new significance after the wet year of 1981. Some farms had rapidly declined in carrying capacity and crops failed to germinate. Agency specialists working with farmers suggested measures such as laser grading to improve surface drainage, use of pasture species more tolerant of salinity and lowering the watertable by the use of groundwater pumps.

The threat of increasing salinity in the Shepparton Irrigation Region became a community issue as Henry Vegter, a recent arrival from Phillip Island struggled to find an answer to the salinity on his newly acquired farm at Girgarre. Vegter sought out Ian Norman, a senior officer of DAV, who had recently been appointed to oversee salinity research and advisory services in the region. Norman had encountered salinity during his earlier service at Maffra. Vegter phoned to ask Norman to come and look at his land. Norman found⁹ that the groundwater was oozing out to a level of about five centimetres and was flowing across the land.

Norman recognised that it would be necessary to pump to lower the groundwater and then use freshwater to irrigate. However Vegter could not dispose of the saline water into the main drain that passed his farm so it would be necessary to construct an evaporating basin. When Norman realised that the problem was much more widespread he called a meeting of landholders. When he spoke to the gathering of some 80 farmers at the Stanhope Hotel about the extent of the problem, he realised they already knew but wanted to keep it quiet. Norman warned them about the implications of doing nothing.

I know you blokes are worried that if I start talking salinity in the press, your land values will go down. But you can be assured that if you don't acknowledge the problem and take action, the salinity will get worse and your land values will go down anyhow. You have a chance of fixing this if you are prepared to give it a go.

This was the beginning of the Girgarre Evaporation Basin Case Study and the formation of six or seven interested farmers into the Girgarre-Stanhope Salinity Action Group (GASSAG). The momentum behind the project eventually came from existing more widely based community groups such as the Goulburn Irrigation Regional Drainage Action Committee (GIRDAC) the Victorian Irrigation Research and Promotion Organisation (VIRPO), the VFF and UDV – and the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council, when it was launched in 1986.

VIRPO had been established in 1966 to promote irrigation research and the economic and social benefits of irrigation in Victoria and to press the case for drainage works. The need for adequate drainage had been recognised since the turn of the century but priority had consistently been given to irrigation development. Remedial drainage works had been undertaken only when salinity became an obvious problem or when public works were undertaken by the State to alleviate unemployment.

When watertables rose dramatically with the major floods in 1974, the loss of many fruit trees due to waterlogging and salinity underlined the critical need to tackle the backlog in drainage works. VIRPO saw this need but was constrained as a lobbying organisation as its membership included a number of officers from relevant government agencies. It had a key role in forming a community-based organisation, GIRDAC, to push for a more effective approach by the government and the agencies responsible for drainage works.

The driving force behind this initiative, Ernest Jackson ("Watershed Jackson") of Albury, had for many years advocated a "whole of catchment" approach to solving the problems of poor drainage and salinity in the irrigation regions of northern Victoria. He had learned this concept from a visit to the USA where he examined the successful application of the total catchment approach to solving similar problems. Jackson approached irrigation and farm groups to set up GIRDAC and a sister organisation in Kerang. From its inception in 1974, GIRDAC had representation from irrigator groups, farmer groups, local government, processors and manufacturers of fruit and dairy produce, government departments and environment groups. John Dainton was nominated to join GIRDAC in August 1978 representing dairy manufacturers. At that time Leon Heath, grazier of Mooroopna brought his considerable skills to the role of Chairman of GIRDAC¹⁰.

In 1979 Eric Merrigan, representing the VFF vegetable growers, was elected as Chairman of GIRDAC. John Dainton was elected Chairman of GIRDAC in 1984 and held that position until 1987. When John was appointed to the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) in 1986, he continued as a member of GIRDAC (beyond relinquishing the position of Chair) reporting regularly on SPPAC activity.

During this period GIRDAC encouraged the development of regional Landcare groups. It organised bus tours to the various regions to observe how the different groups were meeting their local drainage and salinity problems. GIRDAC had a crucial role in lobbying governments to increase resources for the solving of land and stream degradation problems.

Dryland Initiatives

Meanwhile, landholder groups began to develop responses to salinity in the dryland region of the Goulburn Broken Catchment. In the 1970s salinity became a growing concern in the Warrenbayne-Boho district near Violet Town. Angus Howell¹¹ remembered that, as a boy, he had asked his father about some bare bits of land on their property in the Strathbogie foothills. His father had replied that they were just bits of sour ground. When Angus came home from school in the late 1970s he noticed that the "bits of sour ground" were getting bigger. Neighbours were also talking about similar observations on their properties. The extensive evidence of dryland salt in the foothills was assumed to be due to a rising watertable.

Early attempts by local Soil Conservation Authority (SCA) officers to establish a Group Conservation Area project did not proceed because they lacked farmer support at that time. Then a few landholders in early 1981 met to discuss the increase in salinity along the edges of the Warrenbayne-Boho foothills. Later, some farmers and the Shire of Violet Town financed a land degradation survey. This initiative was due largely to the awareness raising and lobbying by neighbouring farmers Angus Howell and Pam Robinson. A public meeting called by the Shire in July 1982 to consider the report on the survey attracted 100 landholders – 10% of the Shire's farmers.

A further public meeting called by the District Advisory Committee in February 1983 led to the appointment of six landholders as a local committee. This committee was fortunate in having the support of expert SCA extension officers in Regional Management Resource Conservation. The group of farmers who were known as "the gang of six" became very active in working with the SCA, in networking and the preparation of submissions. Their success was due in no small measure to the technical and professional expertise they were able to call on from the SCA and their shared approach to the huge workload of contacts and to financing their out-of-pocket expenses.

The Group made submissions to the Parliamentary Select Committee on Salinity at the Shepparton Regional Hearing (1 September 1983) and to the Melbourne Hearings in June 1984. Their latter submissions focussed on recharge areas and a Community-based Regional Strategy for Salinity Control in the Shire of Violet Town and surrounding districts.

The Group also made submissions to the National Soil Conservation Program. It fostered and was successful in having a Group Conservation project declared for the area. They organised informal property inspections, farm walks, field days and public meetings. They submitted applications for funding to the National Soil Conservation Program National Component, for the purpose of employing a Community Development Coordinator to work with landholders in the Warrenbayne-Boho Project area over a three-year period. The coordinator's task was to work with landholders in small catchment areas providing them with planning and organisational resources needed to undertake onground works. The Warrenbayne-Boho Conservation Project covered some 150 to 170 landholders in the area with significant dryland salting problems. The Group incorporated with a management committee of eight, which included councillors from two shires, landholders and soil conservationists. They succeeded in obtaining funding from the Federal Government's National Soil Conservation Program to employ a fulltime coordinator and to develop a model landholder group with a demonstrable track record in landholder participation in salinity control. Angus Howell became the fulltime coordinator.

The Group produced a newsletter for 180 landholders in the district, organised visits and tours for government ministers, politicians and agency personnel and established links with the media. Its greatest achievement, in the Group's view, was the change in local landholder attitudes to salinity since the gathering convened in February 1983. "Salt" had been a dirty word.

Most landholders had not wanted to face it as an issue. The prospect of its impact on land values dominated the thinking of many. The practical moves to counter salinity prompted an increasingly positive attitude in the landholder community.

The Group's role as a genuine self-help landholder group and their experience with Local, State and Federal Government prepared them to be key contributors to the wider salinity initiatives that would be implemented in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

The Benalla Region was fortunate in seeing a number of landholder groups emerge in the 70s and 80s. The Sheep Pen Land Management Group that formed in 1976 organised reclamation works and tree plantings. After completing these initial tasks the group lapsed until 1985 when it reformed as more became known about the mechanics of dryland salinity. In the late 1980s with the introduction of Landcare by the Federal Government, these two groups participated in this program along with the Boweya Lake Rowan, Devenish Goorambat Dookie, Molyullah Tatong Tree and Land Protection Groups and the Seven Creeks Catchment Group. The Landcare groups across the Goulburn Broken Catchment became important partners in the task of natural resource management.

By the mid 80s active local groups such as GASSAG in the SIR, the Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group in the dryland and sub-regional bodies such as GIRDAC grew in their knowledge of salinity and collaboration in planning and implementing initiatives to counter it. This meant that there was at least a modest base of community awareness, sense of urgency and readiness to contribute to partnerships with government in countering the increasing threat of salinity.

The growing commitment of the salt affected communities and of key leaders such as Leon Heath, Angus Howell, Pam Robinson and John Dainton would be crucial to the success of these emerging initiatives.

Chapter 6

LAUNCHING THE PILOT PROGRAM

The special place of the Goulburn Broken Catchment in Victoria's history of salinity control and natural resource management began with the major commitment by the Victorian government to a pilot program. The establishment of a powerful Ministerial Task Force (MTF) in the Victorian Cabinet in 1984 was crucial to the administrative arrangements and operations of the pilot program and to the progress and decision-making on the outputs from the program.

The effective membership of the MTF consisted of the new Ministers for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Evan Walker, Water Resources, Andrew McCutcheon and Conservation Forests and Lands, Joan Kirner. Their first meeting considered the complexities of salinity's causes and the technicalities of its control and reduction.

The Ministers could have been expected to pass the task of prioritising issues and options to their policy advisers and technocrats. Instead they decided at their first meeting to continue the MTF and to abandon the proposal for a Salinity Control Board (SCB) included in the Salinity Committee's Report. In doing so they avoided creating yet another quasi-statutory authority, moving rather to an inter-departmental arrangement and giving community groups a major role in the planning process. This left the government with the responsibility for decision-making but with communities responsible for advising on implementation with assistance from government agencies.

The "Salinity Management Initiatives" announced by Evan Walker focused on the arrangements and processes proposed whereby the government and the community would collaborate in resolving salinity issues instead of leaving the task primarily in the hands of technical and professional experts in the responsible agencies.

The arrangements included the:

- new machinery for inter-government cooperation for the management of salinity problems in the Murray-Darling Basin, covering the states of Victoria, New South Wales and South Australia;
- strengthening inter-agency cooperation in Victoria by the continuation of the MTF (rather than the SCB) and by the establishment of an Inter-departmental Liaison Committee (rather than by having a lead agency);

- a Salinity Coordination Unit (later the Salinity Bureau) within the DPC “acting at the direction of, and servicing the needs of, the taskforce”. The unit would also convene the newly formed Inter-departmental Liaison Committee, chaired by Graham Hunter, who had “made a key contribution to the Salinity Committee’s deliberation and (was) now of great assistance to the Government in acting on the recommendations”;
- a coordinated budget submission for 1985-86 of all the relevant Government departments, with an expenditure of \$9 million, to be doubled over the next four years; and
- a pilot program of integrated salinity control measures, involving coordination of agency efforts and involvement of a regional community affected by both wet and dryland salinity problems.¹

With the commitment to a “pilot program of integrated salinity control measures” the MTF was concerned to select a catchment “taking into account the characteristics of the particular region” and the potential for “the local community to be actively involved in planning for salinity control by setting objectives, determining priorities and allocating responsibilities with assistance from government specialists as appropriate.”²

The MTF expected the pilot program “to help determine and demonstrate the most effective procedures by which a fully integrated salinity control program can be established within a region.” The MTF was “interested in learning, for example how best to:

- ensure that action by landholders and the various government agencies within the region is properly coordinated;
- involve the regional community in the preparation of salinity control plans;
- implement research programs that will guide us as quickly as possible to the best solutions;
- share the costs of salinity control more fairly and efficiently;
- provide a coordinated and effective farm advisor service;

- implement a more effective community education and liaison program; and
- fully integrate salinity control with other aspects of land and water management.”³

The selection process for the region covered Kerang region, the Campaspe River Catchment and the Goulburn Broken Catchment which included the Shepparton Irrigation Region. From the Goulburn Broken region “united, local farmer lobby groups, such as Goulburn Irrigation Region Drainage Action Committee (GIRDAC), VIRPO, and Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group, presented a formidable front to government decision-making, with their extensive networks of political, government and media contacts and armoury of persuasive arguments. Their cause was helped by government officials in the Department of Agriculture intent on painting doomsday scenarios for the region if the salinity problem was not solved immediately.”⁴

The MTF gave its reasons for choosing the Goulburn Broken Catchment as:

- the need to encompass a major catchment if the links between the causes and effects of salinity are to be taken into account;
- the existence of a wide range of major salinity problems in both the irrigated and non-irrigated areas and the potential for these problems to increase substantially; and
- the obvious willingness of the regional community to participate in the trial program.

The Goulburn Broken region was said to present “challenges that typify the difficulties in coping with salinity at present:

- there is often considerable uncertainty about the links between the causes and symptoms of the problems;
- in some cases there is a long delay before the effects of actions on the salinity regime become evident;
- the region is linked to other parts of the Goulburn Murray Irrigation District and to the Murray River.”

While emphasising that the selection of the Goulburn Catchment did not imply that it was necessarily the worst affected region in the state, the Task Force noted that the problems confronted in the region were no easier to solve than elsewhere in the State.

While this mix of factors would have played an important part in the selection of the region, John Dainton as the first Chairman of SPPAC was in no doubt that "Shepparton got it ... because the economics in Shepparton are far greater than anywhere else in this State."⁵



Pictured (left to right) are: Mayor of Shepparton, Cr John Weir, Advisory Council Chairman, Mr John Dainton and Mr Walker.

Salinity study announced

A major salinity study will be undertaken as part of the State Government's Regional Salinity Pilot Program in the Goulburn and Broken River catchments.

The study was announced on Friday by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Mr Walker, at the first Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council meeting.

The study aims to establish an agreed salinity mitigation strategy for the worst affected areas of the Shepparton region. Mr Walker, who is also Ministerial Salinity Task force Chairman, said the study will investigate the need for any salt load disposal from the region.

Mr Walker was present at the first advisory council meeting to welcome the 15 member council and outline its role within the pilot program.

He said the program and establishment of the council represented an exciting opportunity for management of Australia's greatest environmental problem.

Mr Walker said there had been a great deal of competition within the state for the honor of becoming the Pilot Program region.

He said the Shepparton region had been selected because of the range of salinity problems present and the obvious community enthusiasm.

Mr Walker said a plan of action must be developed to tackle salinity. He said the advisory council will be responsible for overseeing and evaluating the pilot program. The council will initiate ideas and make recommendations to the task force.



Mr Walker chats with Council Advisory member, Mr Jack Egan, during a break.

First Steps

The MTF set up a Pilot Program Establishment Team (PPET) comprising senior scientists and officers to provide sound advice on:

- the appointment, funding, location and operation of the Program Management Team (PMT);
- the component projects;
- the form of community involvement in the program; and
- a timetable for establishment of the pilot program.⁶

The Establishment Team recommended the formation of a Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) as the means for community involvement and the appointment of a Project Management Team (PMT) comprising government officers to administer the Pilot Program.

The Establishment Team completed its final report in March 1986 but many of its recommendations had already been submitted and approved. Ministers Kirner and McCutcheon had already formally launched the Pilot Program on 19 September 1985 in Benalla. Two members of the Establishment Team, Graeme David and Darrel Brewin, were subsequently appointed to positions with the Program Management Team.

Roles and Representation

Two aspects of the SPPAC ensured community ownership of the process and the contribution of people best placed to represent the various interest groups and stakeholders in the region.

Firstly, it was decided that the technical officers representing Departments should be non-voting participants. The decision-making was effectively in the hands of the 12 to 15 regional members of the Council. Government officers provided technical

input and could engage in the Council's debate and discussion.

This allowed them to bring technical facts and implications so essential to the decision-making process. This left the responsibility for decisions clearly with the community representatives who consequently had no excuse that they had been outvoted by the agency representatives.

Secondly, the MTF adopted a nomination process as the basis for selection and appointment of community representatives. The reasons for this decision were set out in the Draft Final Report, Goulburn Broken Region Salinity Pilot Program:

- as most people's awareness of and interest in salinity was minimal, a public ballot would attract little interest outside of individuals or groups already interested or involved and numbers of votes cast were likely to be small;
- because of the scale of the region (25 municipalities) few nominees would be widely known and voting success would be likely to be dependent on those with the ability to influence sufficient numbers locally and other contacts to vote;
- the public ballot system could well result in a significant imbalance of representation into defined geographical areas (e.g. irrigation vs dryland) with the implication that some 'imposed' constraints could need to be established prior to elections being advertised;
- the nomination selection system enabled expressions of interest from a wide cross-section of the community and enabled selection of a council with wide representation from many community sectors.

Priority was given to having "the right people" on SPPAC. The MTF called for nominations to fill the 16 available positions. The catchment covering 500,000 hectares had a population of over 100,000 people, including 6,000 farms. The team placed advertisements in 12 regional newspapers, as well as sending it to about 80 organisations.

At the closing date 12 December, only 31 nominations were received, which worried some government salinity planners about farmers' perception on salinity. No official explanation was given for the low community interest in the SPPAC selection process.

The establishment team screened the nominations and provided the MTF with a shortlist for final selection together with the team's preferred appointments. The team's recommendations were mostly accepted by the MTF. Initially, the government appointments were for 12 months. Although there was some early turnover of members, the SPPAC team was largely a stable one "following the resolution of issues about government remuneration."⁷ After the initial 12 months, those councillors on SPPAC, with government approval, opted for continuing membership over the life of the pilot program. This realistic approach to appointing the members of SPPAC was clearly vindicated in the Council's performance.

As the task unfolded, both the community members and the representatives of government agencies were reinforced in their conviction that the process needed people with a known track record in the community and who represented an appropriate range of interests.

Selecting the Chair

With priority being given to having the right people on SPPAC, the selection of a chairperson was recognised as crucial to its performance. The MTF, and especially its convenor Evan Walker, had observed the community leaders in Victoria's salinity affected areas sufficiently to have arrived at a shortlist of possible contenders for this position.

Initially Evan Walker approached Pam Robinson who had developed a high profile in relation to dryland salinity and community involvement (Founding

member of the Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group and its Chair from 1983; Shire President of Violet Town Shire Council 1983-84). Pam also had a close working relationship with Joan Kirner, Minister for Conservation Forests and Lands and member of the MTF in 1985 and with Heather Mitchell of the Victorian Farmers Federation who became the first woman president of the VFF from 1986-89 – both of whom became known as the "mothers of Landcare" which was launched in November 1986. Pam thought about this invitation for several days and consulted with close colleagues. In reflecting on her decision, Pam recalled, "I was excited to be asked ... I would have loved to have done it", but she was of the opinion that SPPAC would be of greater significance for the irrigation area. "I didn't believe I knew enough about the irrigation area at that time, so I declined."⁸ Pam was more than pleased to find that they also had someone else in mind and that it was John Dainton.

John had years of experience of farming in the irrigation area and extensive involvement with the farming community and industry bodies, which Pam assessed to be essential qualifications for the task. In retrospect Pam was firmly of the opinion that "if it had been someone else and not John we might not have had the same start."

Joan Kirner recalled "I looked around for people in the community ... people who were pretty good, and lo and behold someone called John Dainton turned up. I thought ... hmm he's impressive. I didn't even know what he did to start with, but I thought he listened. He obviously had good networks in the community! He could bring people with him – he'll do. That was how it all started ... John is always a good listener – it doesn't mean he doesn't have strong opinions. He has, but then I like that. No good having a community person who is going to say 'Yes Minister'".

Initially, this was not a commonly held view of John's suitability to be Chairman. Some farmers from the dryland assumed that he was not sufficiently familiar with salinity issues on their farms. Had they been more aware of John's early days of dryland farming they

could have been somewhat reassured. In any case, with John in the key position of Chair, they were to find that he was very knowledgeable about their problems. He also demonstrated determination that SPPAC should give the appropriate level of attention to their issues, if for no other reason than that they were related to those of the rest of the catchment community.

As Chair, John Dainton took an active interest in the appointment of members to SPPAC, one of his main concerns being to ensure good representation of both the dryland and irrigation areas. He was well placed to assist the establishment team's screening process. His wide involvement in gatherings concerned with salinity gave him a good appreciation of those most suitable among the 31 who nominated for the 16 positions available on SPPAC and who could be expected to work together.

SPPAC Membership

The Natural Resources and Environment Committee of Cabinet (NRECC) had proposed that SPPAC's membership should comprise people from the following areas:

- community education;
- landholders from dryland and irrigation areas;
- local government councillors; and
- appointees from special interest groups.

The membership of SPPAC⁹ in its start-up period included a balance of representation of farmers from the irrigation and dryland areas. Some members had positions in local government (Cr. Pam Robinson and Cr. Max Moor). Others brought special skills and/or affiliations e.g. Don McPherson (media), Dr Menon Parameswaran (Lecturer, VCAH Dookie Campus) and Ms Penny Jones (teacher and adult education). Some members were agri-politicians with a high profile in the region. Others who lacked the same degree of political awareness had significant strengths in their close knowledge of their communities and the networks within them.

Conservation groups held some concerns about the absence of formal representation. Conservation interests were in fact carried, to varying degrees, by many of the farmer members as an integral part of their overall concern with salinity. As SPPAC progressed, this concern was to surface frequently. Of those members who carried a special brief for the environment, Penny Jones in particular made sure conservation issues were pursued with vigour. Penny was well equipped to contribute in the area of community education. However she did not need to focus as heavily on this role once the Community Education Officer Bill O'Kane joined the Program Management Team. As one of the "characters" on SPPAC, Penny was self educated in environmental matters. Environmental care had always been a great passion that she developed as she went through life.¹⁰

Penny is not alone in reflecting on the early days of SPPAC as having a lot of freedom to pursue issues and solutions – more so than in more recent times when she believes protocols and the role of the bureaucracy have become constraining factors. She saw how this freer situation produced open and strong debate and SPPAC had its share of heated discussions. Penny stirred the protagonists for the irrigation area concerns. She saw they had so much at stake and a strong power base, due to the economic imperative of the Goulburn Valley. Along with other members, Penny recognised that this relative freedom enjoyed by SPPAC and the potential for conflict placed John Dainton in a new and challenging situation.

SPPAC members grew in respect for John's handling of the debates. One of his valuable skills was his perceptiveness and ability to know how long to let a debate run, when to step in and how to step in. He sought to ensure that all members had their opportunity to contribute from their different farming and industry backgrounds and different political loyalties. Penny likened him to the captain of the ship that he had to steer and still make sure there was no mutiny.

Understandably Penny gave John a degree of trouble in their debates. By the same token, most members seemed to have had difficulty with Penny from time to time as she tenaciously prosecuted particular environmental concerns. Nevertheless she won their respect. Environmental issues were not the only ones that generated heated discussion. SPPAC was revisiting old controversies, opening up complex issues and exploring options that had different implications for the various interest groups in the region. It was essential that the many perceptions, concerns and expectations held by SPPAC members and the community be shared, discussed openly and addressed effectively – as far as was possible in this path-finding phase of the pilot program. This outcome in terms of openness of debate and vigorous advocacy of disparate views was a crucial indicator of the health and strength of SPPAC as a forum. John Dainton's skill as a Chairman assured members that they would be free to contribute and that they would be heard. Importantly, the integrity and strength of this process generated perceptions and proposals that SPPAC members could commit to and pursue. This ownership of SPPAC outputs was crucial to each member's effectiveness in networking and consultation with their constituencies and the wider community.

Another aspect of representation on SPPAC, which concerned John Dainton particularly, was the presence of only two women (Cr. Pam Robinson and Penny Jones) in the inaugural membership. As opportunities to replace departing members arose, it was possible to bring in women with considerable experience in rural, environmental and salinity issues. Mrs Nanette Oates brought special skills and a wide experience to SPPAC as a rural environmental writer and consultant, and as a member of the Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group, of various advisory committees and similar bodies. This limited representation by women was to be a continuing problem beyond the pilot program and into the implementation phase of the Goulburn Broken Salinity Program Advisory Council in the early 1990s.

Fortunately, the quality of the contribution made by the women councillors on SPPAC and later in SPAC and particularly in its Irrigation and Dryland Sub-Committees made up in some measure for the limited representation by women in the catchment. Mrs Gwen Jensen who had assisted John Dainton in community and dairy industry ventures served in SPAC on the Irrigation Sub-Committee in the early 1990s. Drawing on a strong background in urban and regional planning and community consultation, Mrs Dianne McPherson served as a member of SPAC and its successors, contributing also on the Irrigation Sub-Committee and as Chairperson of the Community Education Sub-Committee. Dianne would go on to make a major contribution to the program on environmental and planning issues.

Notwithstanding the significant input by these women in the early catchment bodies, they were ever aware of the preponderance of male membership. Penny Jones found "being a woman in a fairly blokey culture ... was hard sometimes ... really hard. I can work well with men, but it is a cultural thing, when you get a whole lot of men together ..." In the more informal times together, for example during their field trips by bus, the conversation could become uncomfortably earthy, she felt.

However, these very competent and perceptive women appreciated the considerable talents, commitment and distinctive personalities of their male colleagues. All but a few made their livelihood as farmers (as did Pam Robinson and Gwen Jensen). Several were active in dairy industry organisations and agri-politics. In the first three years of SPPAC they included forthright contributors like Henry Vegter (the Girgarre activist against salinity) Tom Perry (on SPPAC from 1987: well known for his roles in the dairy industry and local government) Leon Heath (widely respected for his astute and considerable contribution in GIRDAC, VFF bodies, the Farmer Advisory Committee for Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council) and Angus Howell (dryland farmer, co-founder of community based salinity control initiatives and successful lobbyist with government at all levels).

While farmers had a measure of technical knowledge, John Dainton was particularly concerned about his own ability and that of all SPPAC members to both understand the essentials of the salinity problem and possible answers. The scientific and technical language of specialists could confuse and turn off their listeners. Dainton encouraged, where necessary badgered, specialist personnel in their meetings to communicate in understandable terms. This was crucial to SPPAC appreciation of issues, assessment of proposals and effective debate.

SPPAC had members who were less vocal in its meetings. Some may not have had a high profile outside their local farming communities and industry groups. John Dainton and the PMT, however, definitely valued their role and sought to enhance their effectiveness in communicating with their affiliations and in listening to emerging reactions to salinity issues and SPPAC outputs.

The key role of the media was recognised by the inclusion of Don McPherson in the inaugural SPPAC membership. Don had retired from managing the McPherson Group of newspapers in 1985 but continued on as Chairman of the Group. The group's flagship the Shepparton News was a highly successful regional paper. Together with a string of local newspapers in Northern Victoria, the group was seen as having a vital role in community education.

Don McPherson attended a number of SPPAC meetings in 1986 but was put off by the complexities of technical presentations during meetings and the amount of preparation and background reading involved. He believed he could be of more help to SPPAC by ensuring that its news was given appropriate coverage in the Group's papers. Don's decision to relinquish his membership was understandably of concern to members, not least of all to John Dainton. However, his commitment of his publishing group to assisting SPPAC's efforts was reassuring. It meant that this special relationship would ensure the print media in the region would be supporting SPPAC's crucial role in communication.

This proved to be the case for SPPAC and its successors as Don McPherson's group provided space in its papers in the region and its specialist publication Country News, a regular insert in the Shepparton News. John Dainton and those members most concerned with SPPAC's communication task recognised this approach to involving the media as a pragmatic and, in their case, a highly successful alternative to a more direct link via a representation from the media on SPPAC.

Decision-making and Advisory Structure

The relationship between the State government coordination and decision-making units and the pilot program advisory structure is set out below in Figure 1.

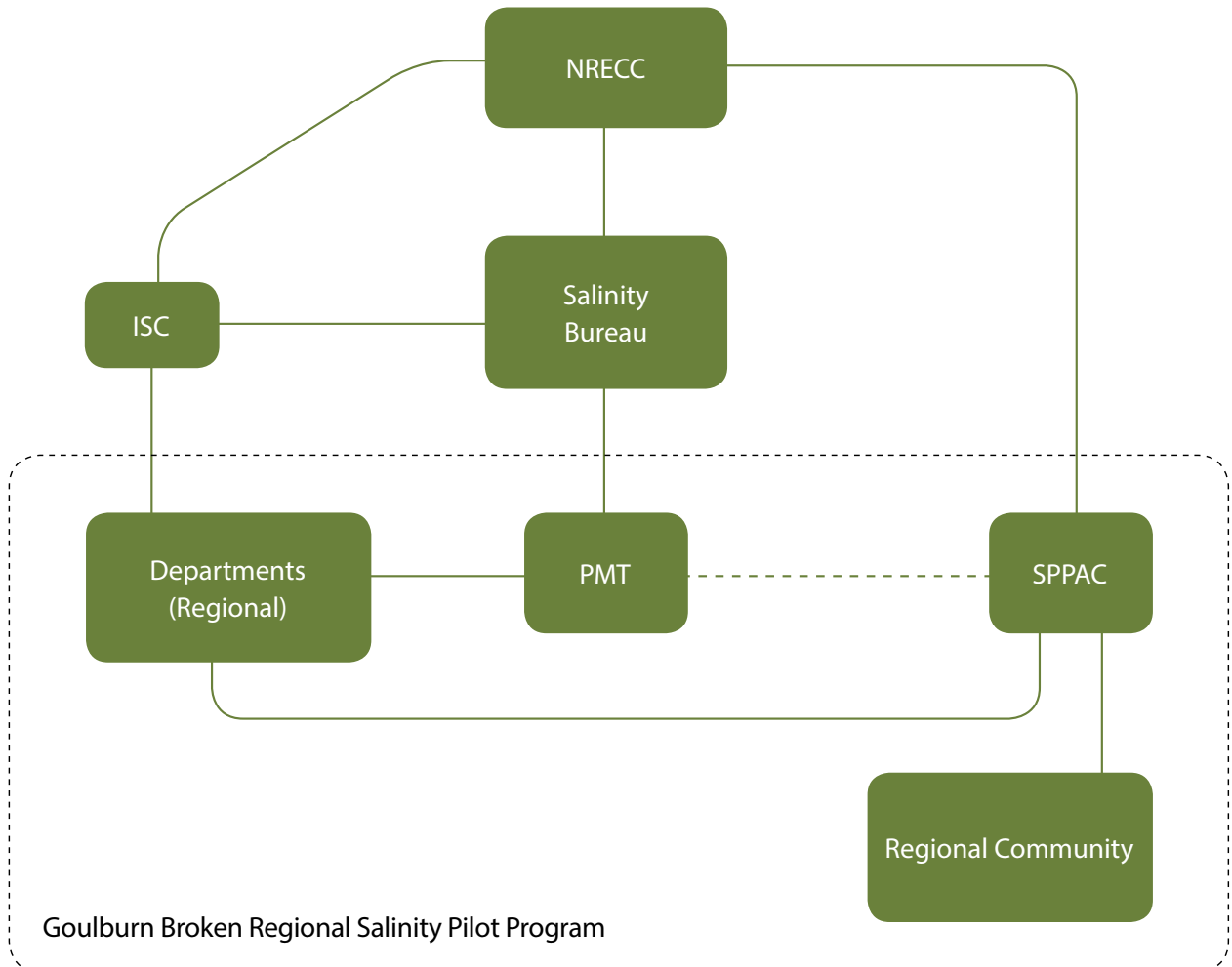
- Hon. Evan Walker, Convenor: Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs.
- Andrew McCutcheon: Minister for Water Resources
- Joan Kirner: Minister for Conservation, Forests & Land
- Robert Fordham: Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources (part-time)
- Jim Kennan: Minister for Planning and Environment (part-time)

The Natural Resources and Environment Committee of Cabinet was supported by the Salinity Bureau that was headed up by Graham Hunter and located strategically in the Department of Premier and Cabinet. Coordination across the relevant departments was through the Interdepartmental Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Environment comprising the Heads of the relevant Departments.

The priority accorded to the salinity pilot program by the State government was reflected in the status of these coordination and policy formulation units – and the special Cabinet Committee.

The structure adopted by the government for the pilot program and the sub-committees set up by SPPAC are shown in Figure 2.

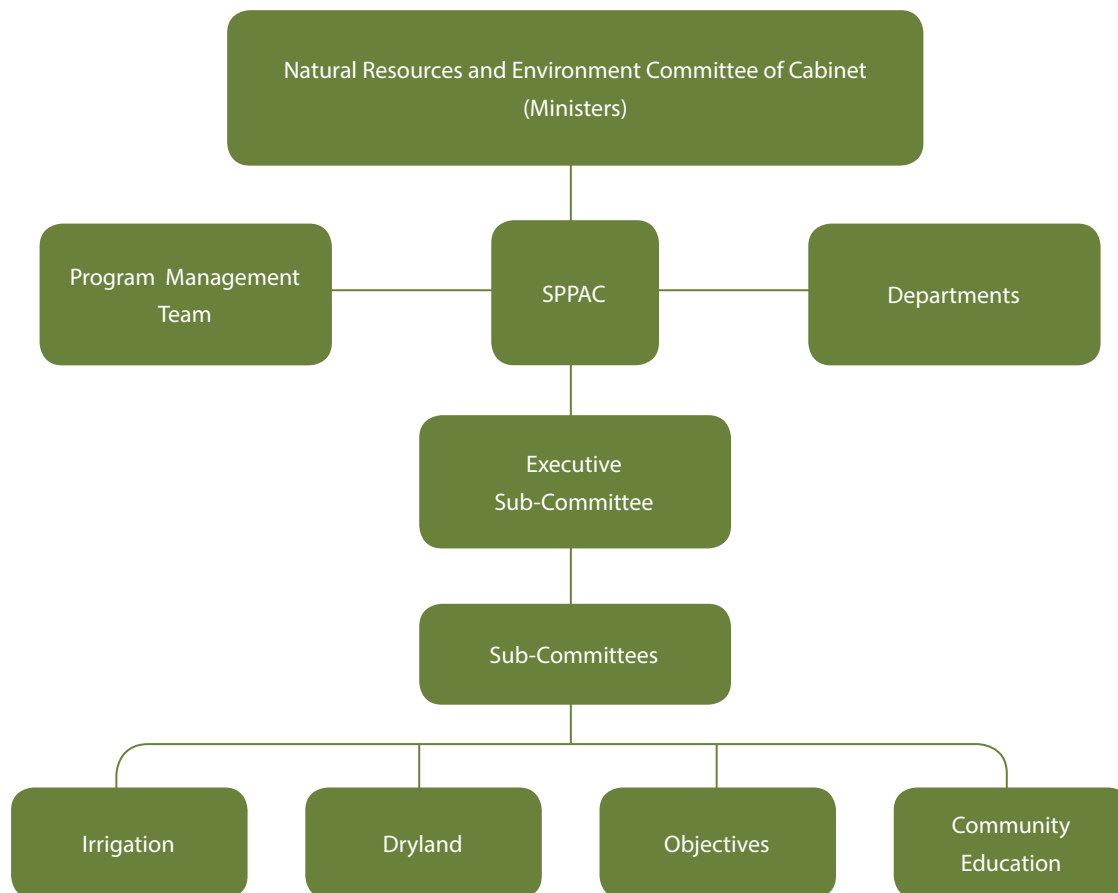
Figure 1: Relationship between State Salinity Program and Goulburn Broken Regional Salinity Pilot Program



Key:

- NRECC** Natural Resources and Environment Committee of Cabinet (Ministers)
- ISC** Interdepartmental Standing Committee on Natural Resources and Environment (Department Heads)
- Salinity Bureau** State Salinity Co-ordinating agency, Department of Premier and Cabinet
- PMT** Program Management Team of the Goulburn Broken Regional Salinity Pilot Program
- SPPAC** Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council
- Departments** Main participating departments:
 - Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs
 - Department of Conservation Forests and Lands
 - Department of Industry Technology and Resources
 - Department of Water Resources
 - Ministry for Planning and Environment
 - Rural Water Commission

Figure 2: Structure of Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC)



The key components of the Pilot Program were:

- a. A Program Management Team (PMT) consisting of a Coordinator, two Assistant Coordinators and one Clerical Officer. Part time assistance was provided by a Community Education Officer of the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs. The role of the PMT was to initiate, coordinate, evaluate and report on salinity control activities associated with the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council. The Team was responsible to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee of Cabinet through the Salinity Bureau (Resources Branch) of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.
- b. A Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) comprised 13 government appointed members including a Chairman. The Council operated in three capacities – as advisor on the conduct of the Pilot Program; as the regional council overseeing the region's salinity control activities; and as advisor to government on community attitudes and priorities for salinity control.
- c. Government agencies involved with the State's salinity control activities. The departments were represented on SPPAC but did not have voting rights.
- d. The regional community, in particular the farming community which managed most of the land within the Region.

The success of the program was seen as dependent on development of sustained cooperation between all components. The key component in departmental coordination was the Regional Managers' Forum established and convened by the PMT to address the interaction between policy and field activity.

Program Management Team

The Pilot Program was fortunate in the staff appointed to the Program Management Team.

Graeme David as Program Coordinator had served in the Soil Conservation Authority (SCA). He had undertaken a Master of Environment Studies in land capability assessment in 1978-80 and returned to the SCA to conduct a salinity study in the Axe Creek Catchment near Bendigo. He was well known and respected for his work as a Regional Environment Officer particularly by those acquainted with the Loddon Campaspe Regeneration Project, known more widely as Project Branchout.

Darrel Brewin, Assistant Program Coordinator had experience with the Department of Agriculture and DCFL and undertook post-graduate studies on farmer attitudes and activities in Group Soil Conservation programs. He was a member of the Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group and had helped set up land management/salinity groups at Dookie and Sheep Pen Creek near Violet Town. Darrel was highly respected by the dryland farming community and would play a key role in developing the strategy for the dryland sector in the Pilot Program.

Stuart Brown had extensive experience in the northern irrigation areas as a dairy extension officer with DARA. Having been based in the Kyabram, Echuca and Shepparton offices he knew the problems faced by this region. Over the period he served SPPAC and as a consultant to its successors in later years, Stuart Brown was outstanding as a resourceful and practical contributor. He could be relied on to find a way to "make things happen".

Later, the PMT was joined by Bill O'Kane as Community Education Officer, working out of DARA. Bill would go on to a successful career in the salinity program and in the wider arena of natural resource management in the Goulburn Broken.

Government's Initial Expectations of SPPAC

Initially the terms of reference approved by the MTF required SPPAC to:

- be a forum for assessment of the objectives, policies and projects of the Pilot Program and to recommend priorities for action;
- inform the regional community about the Pilot Program and its progress and enable citizens to participate in decisions about salinity issues relevant to them;
- advise the Ministerial Task Force and the Program Management Team about community attitudes toward salinity control within the region;
- review the role, structure and performance of the Advisory Council and report on its future operation to the Ministerial Task Force.¹¹

Essentially SPPAC was set up as an advisory body. However, it was quickly to become much more as it explored the complex range of issues on its agenda and evaluated the process proposed initially by the RWC as a response to these issues in the irrigation area. With their ability to discern the "big picture" and their commitment to achieving SPPAC's goals, both Leon Heath and John Dainton in particular came to realise such an expansion of its role would be crucial to its effectiveness.



Salinity pilot program management team members, Mr Darrel Brewin (far left) and Mr Graeme David (far right), are pictured with Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Mr Walker; and salinity program advisory council chairman, Mr John Dainton. The third team member, Mr Stuart Brown, is absent.

Salinity pilot program co-ordinators named

The management team appointed to co-ordinate the Broken-Goulburn Salinity Pilot Region Program was announced yesterday by the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Affairs, Mr Walker.

Mr Walker, who is also the chairman of Victoria's ministerial task force on salinity, announced the team during a brief visit to Shepparton.

"The pilot program was recently launched as a major regional focus on salinity control in Victoria.

The three-team management team will comprise the pilot program co-ordinator, Mr Graeme David, and two assistant co-ordinators, Mr Stuart Brown and Mr Darrel Brewin.

Mr David is an agricultural scientist who has been closely associated with regional salinity programs. Mr Brown is associated with irrigation and the problems facing the region through his work as a dairy extension officer in Shepparton, and Mr Brewin is a pastures specialist and soil conservationist who has been involved with dry land salinity control programs at Dookie and Caniamba.

Mr David explained the management team would act as the "middle men" between the farming community and government departments.

He said the team would look at the government

departments' salinity control programs and would co-ordinate approaches to tackling salinity problems.

"With the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council we will look at how the farming community perceives salinity and the solutions they see as relative to the problem," Mr David said.

He said the team would look at what resources, education and extension activities were needed to implement such solutions.

"A lot of emphasis needs to be placed on community education about salinity — what it is and the significance and urgency of the problem."

He explained the team would work with the advisory council to determine the most efficient way of tackling the problem of salinity and co-ordinating the pilot program.

Before announcing the management team, Mr Walker visited the Ardmona Cannery and spoke with the Victorian Canning Fruitgrowers' Council about the state of the fruit industry.

Mr Walker said the council indicated it wished to work more closely with the State Government.

Mr Walker also spent time meeting and speaking to staff at the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Shepparton office.

The pilot program management team will be situated in these offices in Welsford St. 1986

Inaugural Meeting of SPPAC

Evan Walker's address to the inaugural meeting of SPPAC on 14 March 1986 summarised the overall approach taken by the State Government to its salinity program and the role of the pilot program for the years in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. He drew special attention to the Government's recognition of the need for effective community involvement in the region. He identified that the key questions to be addressed should include: "How should objectives be set and a plan of action developed? Who should be involved? Who should undertake the work? Who should pay?"¹²

The Minister highlighted the role of the Program Management Team as that of a facilitator, responsible for day-to-day management and coordination of the program. The regional staff of government agencies that prepared the "Establishment Team Report" were an ongoing source of technical advice and assistance for activities in the pilot region. SPPAC was expected to work closely with these two groups.

The working arrangements for SPPAC included:

- appointments to SPPAC were initially for one year;
- SPPAC's method of operation and the conduct of its meetings were entirely up to the Council to decide;
- SPPAC was to report to the MTF on a regular basis; and
- the Chairman, John Dainton, was free to contact the Minister direct in regard to SPPAC concerns.

In assuring SPPAC (and the region's community) of this level of independence of operation under these arrangements, by far the most significant aspect was the Chairman's access direct to the Minister. This arrangement was unusual. It highlighted the priority given by the MTF to the work of SPPAC. Senior personnel in the departments and agencies, who would normally be the point of contact and channel for SPPAC reports and submissions, regarded it as extraordinary, if not a potential concern.

It placed John Dainton in the privileged position of being able to bend the Minister's ear to issues SPPAC may have with the responses or performance of government agencies. The general effect on Departments and agencies was to ensure they took the pilot program and the work of SPPAC seriously.

John Dainton was aware of the value of this extraordinary access to the Minister. As the pilot program progressed, it was not necessary to use this access except in a few exceptional situations. Departments usually met whatever needs for help and assistance that SPPAC or the PMT brought to their attention. John Dainton respected the position of the departments concerned with the matters SPPAC felt should be brought to the Minister direct and astutely advised them of his intention to contact the Minister. This course of action was not only reassuring to the senior officers affected, it also fostered a mutual respect and cooperation between John and SPPAC and the responsible agencies.

In the course of his opening address, the Minister announced a major study of salinity in the Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR). Later in the meeting, Keith Collett of the RWC outlined the proposed "Shepparton Regional Salinity Option Study". It was to concentrate on areas where the salinity problem was most intense, watertables high and there were pumpable aquifers. Keith Collett sought SPPAC's advice as to the best way to involve the community in decision-making. At its second meeting SPPAC agreed with the options study in principle, but formed "a sub-committee of active irrigators on the Council ... to review the study proposal and report back to the next Council meeting."¹³

SPPAC had hit the ground running. Its handling of the proposed options study would be something of a test case as to how it would go about its major tasks. The planning for this study had been underway long before SPPAC was formed. This explained why the study was expected to include some areas outside the designated area for the Pilot Program. SPPAC was prepared to take on the possible problems associated with this aspect, since the MTF had "ordained that SPPAC form the core of the consultative body to

monitor the project." So SPPAC decided to invite a representative from the Cobram area and one from the Rochester-Lockington area to attend meetings of the sub-committee or SPPAC when the options study was being considered.

SPPAC recognised that this decision highlighted "an important principle" which it would have to face if the pilot program was "to be meaningful and realistic." For particular reasons, SPPAC may need to "vary the parameters of operation" as in this case with the boundaries of the pilot study area. SPPAC also recognised that in due course it would be obligatory to consult with additional people and organisations – such as downstream Murray River water users and interstate interests. Members saw that, if SPPAC was expected to provide a forum for public involvement in the pilot program, then it would have a very important and demanding task of informing other interested parties particularly at the time of reviews. Thus the consultation and community involvement aspects of SPPAC's role were taken seriously from its early days along with the workload implications – as far as these could be judged at that point in time.

Other issues covered in the terms of reference for the Options Study drew the fire of particular members and organisations e.g.:

- the concentration of the study on the high production areas;
- the need to address surface drainage;
- the use of a map which could have been unnecessarily distracting;
- the winter pumping option needed attention;
- the concern that the RWC had seemingly taken the "soft" option in focussing the study on 25% of the area and that it should be possible to disregard such limiting factors as the study proceeded; and
- consideration should be given to "incentive schemes" to encourage farmers to undertake necessary works e.g. installing and operating pumps and other "on-farm work."

With Keith Collett undertaking to modify the draft terms of reference to take account of these concerns, the sub-committee agreed to support the study. When it came before SPPAC three weeks later, Keith Collett announced the relevant changes and asked SPPAC whether all of SPPAC or a sub-committee would take on the consultation tasks. SPPAC agreed that the sub-committee should represent it in the consultation process with the RWC and to report back with recommendations. This was one of those fundamental questions SPPAC would meet in its pathfinding phase. Its responses had the potential to become patterns or templates for its longer-term approach to its diversity of tasks.

In its initial phase of meetings, SPPAC broached or was alerted to the major issues it would need to address comprehensively. Officers from the responsible government departments presented their departments' current perceptions and priorities. Where they considered it to be appropriate, they also presented the proposals they were committed to pursue in the context of the Pilot Program and in collaboration with SPPAC. It was a time when departments had to get serious about being open to the regional community and SPPAC was the forum in which to pursue this process.

The arrival of the PMT and SPPAC upset the established departmental order, and relationships took time to settle. Salinity was a new, high profile government initiative. SPPAC had power over the departments in a way not seen before. It was responsible to a committee of ministers, not just one minister or department. It could bypass departmental officers and deal directly with the ministers. This power was used by SPPAC several times during the life of the Pilot Program. The departments were not used to dealing with advisory councils who didn't have to answer directly to a department.

Each department became accountable to SPPAC, and the departments were conscious of this scrutiny. The members of SPPAC saw the role of departmental officers as technical advisers and advisers of their department's policies, leaving SPPAC to make the decisions. SPPAC put pressure on the departments and the departments struggled to come to terms with integrating salinity into their programs.

SPPAC made the departments cooperate, sometimes by force, sometimes through cajoling. The members of SPPAC saw this as perhaps their greatest achievement. SPPAC kept questioning and challenging the answers it was given, compelling the departments to provide greater detail or cooperate to resolve technical differences. The PMT's and SPPAC's independence meant they could deal directly with regional managers of the departments (or with the cabinet committee with major problems). Regional managers' meetings were instituted. Opinions of these forums varied. Some said they never worked; the regional managers delegated others to attend for them. Others said the meetings were valuable to getting people from the different departments working with each other.¹⁴

The major issues which came up for attention were predictably the priorities in each agency's current and sometimes longstanding work program, as in the case of the RWC's Options Study.

DWR's Dr Phil Macumber presented the salinity issues of the Pilot Program area in the context of the overall salinity problems and processes across the State. Dr Bob Wildes (DARA) outlined salinity control techniques in the irrigation area. DCFL provided an overview of dryland salinity research and identified where their investigations inter-related with the DWR work program.

The Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) was concerned that social planning issues should be given adequate attention in the Pilot Program. Sharman Stone (now with DPE) was working on a state-wide approach to the social issues concerned with salinity, and was looking to incorporate ideas and studies into the Pilot Project Region. Key points in Sharman's presentation to SPPAC included:

- social issues should be considered hand-in-hand with farm practice and regional solutions;
- farmers farm for different reasons and have different values and attitudes (they're human!);
- a regional salinity strategy should encompass strategies for hydrological processes, farm practices, land management and the social implications of these options;
- changing farm practice is not just up to farmers but the whole community and this will best occur through public awareness and education programs; and
- a major aim of any salinity program must be to maintain rural communities and their morale.

Sharman was recommending six state-wide projects to the Ministerial Task Force for funding from the Salinity Task Force. These were:

1. Farmer education and extension services.
2. Evaluation of voluntary salinity mitigation groups.
3. Structures and processes for public participation in salinity control.
4. The impact of salinity on community networks, family and farming life.
5. Socio-economic costs of salinity control.
6. Public awareness and acceptance of salinity as an environmental and social issue.

Sharman maintained that social research was required to fulfil the requirements of on-farm works and allow identification of real needs and program acceptance.

Also at this SPPAC meeting, Margaret Kelso from DWR reinforced Sharman's comments. Margaret pointed out the need to look at the social issues before any salinity strategy can be worked out, and that up to this point SPPAC had no societal objectives to salinity control. In the final strategy there would be many equity issues to be resolved, for example, who pays, where will the works go etc. Margaret felt that social studies in this context weren't premature, but late!

These comments indicated that government agencies were now taking up the social issues relating to salinity control perhaps belatedly, but with genuine commitment. This put SPPAC on notice as to how it developed its objectives and the possibility of input from the agencies working on these issues.

Existing Consultation Mechanisms

SPPAC recognised that it had potential friends in the region who had been developing regional consultation via the Goulburn Regional Consultative Council (GRCC). Its membership comprised representatives from municipalities, relevant State Government departments, non-government organisations and the community.

David Wauchope representing the GRCC outlined to SPPAC its community development role in identifying needs and available resources and its aims to:

- ensure people are aware of community issues;
- ensure people have access to information;
- identify opportunities to develop individual skills;
- identify opportunities to participate in community projects.

David felt that the GRCC could help SPPAC in several areas, namely:

- through its well-developed network within the SPPAC region;

- by sharing its knowledge and experience;
- helping to measure community responses; and
- encouraging people to seek change to improve their situations.

Given its special status in the region and the affiliations SPPAC had access to via its members, it could have regarded the GRCC offer lightly. SPPAC wisely chose to follow-up this offer so that its members could identify GRCC members from their own localities and networks. SPPAC recognised it needed to make the most of whatever opportunities it had to engage with the community through its existing institutions and groups.

Objectives

SPPAC gave priority to preparing a Statement of its Objectives. Such a Statement was crucial to its future direction, identifying priorities and evaluation of its performance. It was also essential to councillors for their collective understanding and ownership of its complex task.

The SPPAC Objectives Sub-committee, comprising Penny Jones, Angus Howell, Pam Robinson, Henry Vegter, John Dainton and the Program Co-ordinator Graeme David, started by considering the objectives¹⁵ proposed in the Establishment Team's Report that had been endorsed by the MTF. (Refer Government's Initial Expectations of SPPAC above). Their discussion on Objectives was influenced by the extent of their emerging workload, the range of issues raised in specific tasks (e.g. the RWC "Options Study") and their experiences in relating to departments and particularly the Salinity Bureau in DPC and the MTF.

A variety of concerns and suggestions were considered. Initially there was some uncertainty about SPPAC's role – was it responsible for decisions made or was its role to make recommendations to the decision-making bodies e.g. MTF/State government?

John Dainton was clear in his concept of SPPAC's importance and that it should be seen as responsible for its decisions.

SPPAC was also mindful of the key role of the PMT especially in the task of disseminating information. Members wanted to ensure that SPPAC and PMT would collaborate effectively in this task and in facilitating community participation in its processes.

The Sub-committee recognised that if SPPAC were to undertake the essential task of self-assessment by the end of its first year i.e. March 1987, SPPAC would need to start this task in December 1986. This period of corporate self-assessment was also seen as an appropriate time for Councillors to consider their ongoing involvement in SPPAC.

Their experience with the range of issues coming before SPPAC in its early months prompted concerns about being distracted from its focus on the Pilot Region. However it was realised that this matter would need to be clarified in relation to issues being presented from "outside" by, for example, the MTF for consideration. They were also concerned about the limited time available to study major issues before recommending action as had been the case with the RWC study, the salinity budget, etc.

The Sub-committee's discussion went beyond the scope of a statement of objectives as the urgency and nature of some of the Pilot Program weighed on their minds. Some of the discussion had more to do with the category of priorities, work program tasks or aspects of particular processes. Understandably issues such as an integrated inter-departmental approach to salinity, cost-sharing, environment education, the disposal of saline wastes, a community awareness program and specific tools (newsletter, newspaper supplements, sponsorships etc.) were raised in an extended wide-ranging discussion. This expanded consideration of objectives was understandable since SPPAC Councillors were keenly aware of the expectations of government and the growing expectation in the regional community about a major initiative such as the Pilot Program.

As the task of focussing the Statement proceeded, Councillors refined the process of identifying SPPAC's objectives, priorities and issues.

By June 1986 SPPAC had met three times. John Dainton felt that the Council had "been given a good overview of the salinity and degradation problems confronting landholders in Northern Victoria and in particular, the Pilot Project Region". He acknowledged the ongoing need to improve their general knowledge by inviting experts to address SPPAC, inspection tours of sites of interest and exploring the readily available data.¹⁶

Obviously from his report to SPPAC John Dainton felt the settling in period was largely over. He challenged Councillors to "begin the job we have been appointed to do." He spelt out the urgent priorities, as he perceived them at that point in time:

- an education program regarding salinity problems and solutions that will reach the widest spectrum of the community;
- the promotion of our role and responsibilities to all interested organisations throughout the pilot region;
- determine an order of Project priorities before too many submissions are received, in order to ensure that the overall goal of salinity control is best achieved;
- ensure that the public reporting of SPPAC decisions and information is carried out throughout the Region via the press, TV and radio; and
- arrive at a formula for funding many of the larger projects that will be carried out in the future, i.e. identify the percentage the various interested parties will be required to fund the project i.e. landholders, municipalities, regions, State or Federal Government.

The PMT had come on board in May 1986. John Dainton had carried a significant workload on the preparation for and records from the early meetings and he continued to work with the PMT in preparing the agenda papers for each meeting. This was a selective hands-on approach.

John saw it as a strategic involvement whereby he could be informed on both the emerging issues and positions being taken by interested parties. He could then, where appropriate, seek to streamline the presentation and consideration of particular items. For its part, the PMT gave priority to drafting a comprehensive outline of its objectives, programs and projects. SPPAC and PMT were well into the path-finding phase in which they would both redefine their roles and settle on the arrangements best suited to ensure effective collaboration.

The Report from the SPPAC Objectives Sub-committee was discussed by the Council at its fourth meeting with guidance and additional input from Penny Jones. Concerns previously raised in the Sub-committee meeting were revisited by Council members and additional issues which were not strictly in the category of "objectives" received attention including:

- SPPAC Councillors had a responsibility to report back to their own groups;
- the need for a consultative mechanism which SPPAC could help develop but not be the communicators; and
- the MTF should initiate mechanisms for consultation along the Murray River.

The task of objective setting in the pilot program was seen by both SPPAC and the PMT as crucial to their success. The government had engaged a highly regarded consultant to overview the pilot program and assist with strategy development. John Dainton suggested that since they were breaking new ground, the consultant could be helpful to SPPAC and the PMT in this task of objective setting.

Subsequently, the consultant spent two weeks initially with PMT from 28 July 1986. In SPPAC's September meeting, Darrel Brewin commended the consultant's Report as valuable to PMT in listing projects within the program and ways of recording and evaluation, giving PMT a method of measurement of the Pilot Program. Interestingly, John Dainton was not as impressed.

His comments from the Chair indicated he felt that as an initial report it lacked direction for SPPAC and that it was a re-write of the PMT's programs. John's disappointment and judgment on this "consultancy" were fair warning to any expert ("someone from somewhere else") who came on board to help SPPAC. In John Dainton and other Councillors, they would have to reckon with clients who were practical no nonsense people.

Several tasks which fell to SPPAC in the first three or four months raised basic questions about its role. These questions affected its perception of its objectives. The request from the government for SPPAC comments on the salinity budget for Victoria drew a strong cautionary comment from John Dainton. In a special note included in the papers for Meeting No. 5 he made an important distinction between having the benefit of an overview of the State Salinity Budget and the inappropriateness of "a Region (making) any comment on any matter that does not directly affect it."

SPPAC responded to the MTF request by means of its record of resolutions from the Meeting on 3 June. It thanked the MTF for the opportunity to consider the 1986/87 salinity budget and aimed to provide more meaningful contribution to future budgets when, they expected, there would be more time available for presentation of detail and discussion. They had found one meeting of SPPAC was inadequate, given the limited detail of projects presented in the meeting papers.

SPPAC did not consider it appropriate to comment on the 1986/87 budget, either in detail or on the manner in which it was assembled. SPPAC did comment though on the processes they felt should be followed:

- departments should communicate their budgetary proposals to specified community organisations for endorsement, and also be responsive to community requests for research, investigation and extension activities in state-wide budgetary matters;

- departments should provide the Ministerial Task Force with specific methods of communication for each region of the State; and
- within the Pilot Region, all departments were encouraged to have their specific communication procedures and specific consultative groups endorsed by SPPAC prior to consideration by the Ministerial Task Force.

SPPAC also conveyed to MTF a list of issues discussed in relation to the Budget including:

- the appropriate level of attention to the export/ removal of salt;
- inadequate emphasis on developing surface drainage in the irrigation areas, particularly within the pilot region;
- the possibility that insufficient resources were being allocated to the investigation and trialling of systems to reduce groundwater recharge at the regional level;
- incentives for irrigators to implement salinity control activities may be inadequate compared with the dryland areas and a satisfactory grants scheme was required;
- the extent to which the proposed social research program, or components of it, were relevant to the Pilot Program; and
- the Rural Finance Commission component of the budget was deceptive as the money was loan money and hence would ultimately be repaid.

SPPAC also advised the MTF that the question of whether it was appropriate to comment on state-wide salinity issues had been referred to its Objectives Sub-committee for review. The two issues of concern were:

- SPPAC may not consider itself competent to provide informed opinion on state-wide issues; and
- time spent on state-wide issues must inevitably reduce the time available to discuss and develop regional programs.

This had been a demanding exercise for the fledgling Council. Understandably, individual Councillors and in particular the Chair, John Dainton, were concerned to respond effectively to the MTF invitation, but found the timetable and the level of detail available to be major constraints. Nevertheless, they grasped the opportunity to pass on comments on the process that should be followed at the regional level in particular – if there was to be genuine consultation with the affected communities.

This early experience of the inadequacies of the advisory process no doubt sharpened SPPAC's thinking about its Objectives and its Priorities. Also Mike Smith, Assistant Director, Resources, Department of Premier and Cabinet had reminded SPPAC about the Government's intentions with regard to the Pilot Program. The Ministerial Task Force was the Government's guiding star in terms of policy and the Pilot Program was a trial to work out methods to develop community input structures in terms of salinity control. The Program Management Team had been specifically set in place to support SPPAC but it had other duties as well.

SPPAC was not required to solve technical problems, but was expected to provide input on community attitudes and methods of involving the community in salinity control programs to the Ministerial Task Force over a three-year period. SPPAC was expected to develop the best model for community participation in policy-making and to report this to the Ministerial Task Force.

This may have been helpful in reinforcing SPPAC's focus, but Councillors already knew that the diversity and complexity of issues they had encountered to this point and particularly the need to produce action on the ground called for a wider role. John Dainton had commented that the responsibilities and role of SPPAC in the Goulburn Broken catchments was a very onerous one that very few people had fully understood. The broad approach that it must take to fully inform all sectors of the community made this a very complex and time-consuming role.

SPPAC had a specific example before it of inadequate community input, in the case of many of the programs at the Tatura Institute for Irrigation and Salinity Research. John Dainton believed that an advisory committee was needed to ensure that research findings should be capable of being quickly applied to the broader on-farm practice, by way of demonstrations on farms. The need for a quick response by farmers to the changing environment was seen as paramount, if the region were to remain as productive as in the past. John Dainton believed that these principles of relevance and applicability should be followed by all Research Institutes in the Project Region.

Review of First Six Months

After SPPAC had been operating for six months, John Dainton reviewed their progress in his Chairman's Report. He congratulated SPPAC on its track record, high morale and positive approach. He commended the PMT on their professionalism and commitment. Then he proposed a radical change in their *modus operandi*. He challenged his fellow Councillors:

I believe that we can be quite satisfied with our first six months, but we must now begin to stand on our own and build up our Council to a structure that will, at the end of our three-year term, be able to cope into the future without the assistance of a PMT. Both SPPAC and the PMT must begin to change direction. We must as a Council, refrain from moving resolutions along the lines of 'the PMT investigates our recommendations' and look at how we would operate without them. This needs careful thought and may lead to many trials with their inherent failures and successes. The procedure we have used in the past to handle problems by having the PMT investigate and report back to Council has worked quite well, but it really

has just evolved that way as we developed from one meeting to the next. This has put an enormous workload on the PMT and is weighing them down with extra work that could, and should, be directed to a relevant department, but worse still, it is making Council more dependent on the PMT every month.

I therefore recommend that in future SPPAC direct their recommendations to the relevant departments and, in turn, I expect that these departments will respond to our requests in the same manner as the PMT has in the past few months. I believe that it is essential to SPPAC performance to be fully acquainted with each department's strategies re salinity control and I will be looking forward to the departments' documented outline of salinity strategies for the Goulburn Broken Region as soon as practical. Whilst I will accept that there will be different strategies for dryland and irrigation salinity, I believe that it is quite urgent for involved departments to develop a strategy regarding the interaction of salinity problems within dryland and irrigation and vice versa with the view to some action being taken in this pilot region. The departments involved with SPPAC have cooperated and agreed to our requests up to this time, and I believe will be just as keen to support us in the change of policy that I am recommending us to adopt.

I would ask all Councillors and departments to consider my comments, bearing in mind that in thirty months time the Council will be operating without a PMT. Don't let us just coast along. The community involvement concept is a good one; let us all go on and take the necessary steps to prove the community and government departments together can contribute to salinity control measures in our own region.

In his role as Chairman, John had collaborated closely with the PMT and had developed direct personal contacts with key agency specialists in the region. This gave him insights into both the impact of SPPAC's requirements on the specialist personnel in PMT and also the potential of, indeed the necessity for, departments to respond more directly and effectively to SPPAC's processes. Primarily though, John was concerned with the situation at the end of the three-year Pilot Program when, presumably, there would be no PMT support. (Fortuitously, his concern would go some distance to covering another, as yet unforeseen, situation – the departure of two members of the PMT before the end of the three-year term).

Interestingly, the goal John Dainton set before SPPAC was not explicit in its statement of objective nor in its list of priorities – unless it was deemed to be included eventually in Objectives 8 and 9 relating to the role, structure and performance of SPPAC and working arrangements with PMT.

Discussion on this Chairman's Report at Meeting No. 7 on 2 September was vigorous and revealing. Support for the main thrust of John's proposals came from several departmental officers. Dave Wauchope (DARA) saw this approach as placing more onus on the departments to respond to SPPAC, and thereby requiring them to relate more directly to SPPAC. Bill Trehwella (RWC) identified the need for commitment from the various departmental regional managers to ensure SPPAC's requests could be met. Prompt responses would be dependent on departments being adequately resourced.

In an insightful comment, Leon Heath described SPPAC as evolving, initially from a community involvement concept to an advisory council and now a "management council". This last term may not have been entirely apt but it did point to what John suspected SPPAC would need to become in relation to the planning and implementation of salinity control works. Leon cautioned against divorcing PMT from SPPAC. While this may not have been what John Dainton had in mind, it was a salutary warning about SPPAC's need for high-level executive assistance.

As a first step, John Dainton requested each department to provide to SPPAC, as soon as practicable, a departmental salinity strategy for the Pilot Program region.

He pursued this fundamental issue, of how SPPAC should operate in a coordinated departmental attack on salinity in the region, in his report to the next SPPAC meeting. In spelling out his concept of the roles of the major players in the region he used a corporate analogy where:

- the Council functions similarly to the board of a medium sized cooperative company;
- the landholders and the community are the shareholders in this company; and
- the coordinating departments are the executive and staff.

For the term of the Pilot Program, he viewed PMT as consultants brought in to help integrate the "board" and the "company". This concept highlighted the need for SPPAC to have clear objectives and priorities for decision-making and to ensure that salinity control measures were properly coordinated. It also placed the onus on SPPAC Councillors to bring to Council the views of the shareholders (community). John Dainton believed that in adopting this type of approach the time spent in Council meetings would be used more effectively.

In retrospect this may appear an obvious construction to place on the consultative, decision-making and implementation machinery in the Pilot Program. By contrast, in the bureaucracy, the community, and perhaps to a lesser degree among the architects of the Pilot Program in Cabinet, the realities of longstanding processes and roles engendered expectations more akin to a "business as usual" approach. SPPAC, however, was much closer to a thorough understanding of the opportunity it had been given. It was also moving, cautiously, to recognising the need to go beyond the basic advisory functions set out by the MTF.

With insights such as that contributed earlier by Leon Heath and John Dainton's down-to-earth revision of how SPPAC should see itself and the other major players, SPPAC members were moving toward a new mindset .

John Dainton's clear thinking and directness sharpened SPPAC members' understanding and focus. It also helped in the very practical problem of what needed to be dealt with by SPPAC and the extent to which issues should be pursued. However, if John Dainton erred in chairing SPPAC meetings, it was in allowing, indeed encouraging, all members with a view to contribute to the discussion of each issue. This practice, as valuable as it was, tended to prolong SPPAC's early meetings when its agenda was expanding to cover all the emerging issues in the Pilot Program.

The Role of Sub-committees

Just as John Dainton saw clearly the urgent need for SPPAC to adopt an appropriate corporate mindset, he equally recognised the urgent need to restructure its decision-making processes. SPPAC members would, by this time, be ready to agree with John's diagnosis and proposal for changes.

Technical matters should not be discussed in any great detail at Council meetings. Sub-committees such as Irrigation or Research and Investigation should attempt to have a reasonable knowledge of the technical details of a given project and the opportunity to obtain this should be available at these sub-committee meetings. The role of the Councillor at SPPAC Council meetings is not to debate technical issues – the experts are from the departments, but whether the project fits SPPAC priority criteria and how the

particular project should be funded and how the community should be informed. In the functioning of SPPAC I see the sub-committees as playing a very important role.¹⁷

Once again, the answer may be obvious in retrospect, but the factors behind the move to strong roles for sub-committees had taken time to emerge and to generate awareness of the growing need for alternative processes.

In addition to the sub-committees on Irrigation and on Research and Investigation, SPPAC had already established sub-committees to define and undertake its role in Community Education, identify its Objectives, establish its Priorities and manage its operations through its Executive. Along with the delegation of function to the sub-committees, John expected that these groups would give close attention to their areas of interest and submit their assessments and proposed solutions for specific issues to SPPAC. This would enable SPPAC to deal with their recommendations more expeditiously. This arrangement aimed at limiting Councillors' meeting commitments to one SPPAC and one sub-committee meeting a month. John expressed appreciation to SPPAC members for their commitment to the increasingly heavy workload of meetings. These commitments were growing as SPPAC gained a higher profile in the community. It was expected that this workload would increasingly be taken over by the members of the Community Education Sub-committee and PMT.

Irrigation and Dryland Sub-regional Strategies

In the course of this overview, John Dainton noted with concern that, to this point, there was "no overall dryland sub-committee nor one for advisory services."

The lack of a dryland sub-committee was remedied at the next meeting on 4 November 1986. In part, this move was in response to some concern that irrigation issues were dominating meetings and there was a need to have meaningful discussion of both irrigation and dryland issues in SPPAC meetings.

Subsequent events and SPPAC's later success in integrating the irrigation and dryland salinity strategies validated this initial sub-regional approach. The PMT fully supported this step. Both Graeme David and Darrel Brewin were convinced that the dryland issues warranted special consideration. They observed that in the SPPAC meetings too much time was being spent explaining the basic differences in salinity issues at the sub-regional level. The dryland Councillors on SPPAC were having difficulty with irrigation and drainage issues and the background science. Similarly, Councillors familiar with the irrigation area laboured over the dryland salinity issues and the science behind the proposed solutions. As close observers of the process, the PMT, along with John Dainton, were convinced of the need for a sub-committee comparable to that set up for the irrigation area to develop a dryland salinity plan.

Perceptions in Melbourne though were markedly different. Key decision makers could not readily accommodate such an approach. Graeme David ran into solid opposition. Joan Kirner regarded a sub-regional approach as anathema, believing the Catchment should be the context for integrated decision-making. Graham Hunter strenuously opposed it for similar reasons – in terms of the then “best practice” for catchment and regional planning for natural resource management. Graeme David came under considerable pressure to take the proposal back to the full Council to reverse the decision. Brewin and David held the line. They insisted that the delivery of an integrated catchment plan was totally dependent on the two groups on SPPAC initially processing their own issues and developing their options separately. Then in looking at the interface of the sub-regions across the catchment, the plans could be integrated.

Finetuning SPPAC's Performance

The November meeting demonstrated some of the inadequacies of SPPAC's approach and reinforced the case for a strong sub-committee structure. In his report to the December meeting, John Dainton spelt out his frustration with the way the agenda items were covered and the fact that he found himself “pushing through items with some haste.” As a Chairman who was committed to maximising participation by Councillors, this deeply concerned him. John challenged SPPAC to look hard at their meeting agendas and procedures. The fact that the Pilot Program was in itself an experiment gave them the charter, John asserted, to experiment with their meeting format and the role of sub-committees. In a summary of the outcome of the November meeting, John identified “the predicaments we seem to unwittingly lead ourselves into”. While some items went well others were marred by:

- a departmental officer not having a resolution to present or preferably having the matter dealt with by the Irrigation Sub-committee;
- a belated presentation by DITR personnel which went over time and showed up the need for a better preparation of some topics;
- a presentation by an expert who should have addressed the Irrigation Sub-committee – not SPPAC;
- the item on Priorities had to be deferred again because of time constraints, but its consideration in December would benefit from being dealt with by both the Irrigation and Dryland Sub-committees in the meantime;
- the consideration of major issues such as the PMT budget proposals for 1987/88, the Chairman's Report on the Regional Managers' Forum and the Community Education Report had to be rushed.

John regretted that the meetings hurried consideration of the Community Education Sub-committee's report gave rise to a number of poorly worded resolutions. From his position as Chairman, John Dainton watched the evolution of SPPAC in regard to its effectiveness in comprehending the full range of salinity issues, its capacity for assessing and developing solutions and its achieving quality outputs that would be helpful to the community, the departments and particularly the MTF. John was obviously committed to effective quality control in SPPAC's key activities. He was ready therefore to grasp the nettles that he and others identified and to propose realistic solutions for his fellow councillors to consider. This required him to be reflective, direct, confronting or encouraging according to his reading of the situation. Above all, it required John to be accessible to his fellow councillors and to be proactive in his wide-ranging contacts in the community through key representatives of its associations and networks.

The Assessment of Alternative Approaches

In addressing major questions such as SPPAC's operations, it was important for John Dainton to acknowledge alternatives to his proposals, to assess them and explain why he did not favour them, especially where he was aware that some level of support existed for these alternatives. This was the case with the proposal for bi-monthly meetings of SPPAC that would have eased workloads associated with the full Council meeting. John was careful to spell out his reservations about this alternative:

- The total catchment philosophy was better demonstrated by all Dryland and Irrigation people meeting regularly, thereby countering the risk of a "them and us" approach.

- Two months between meetings is a long time if a matter of some urgency arises. John was reluctant to see the Executive Sub-committee involved more as a result and possibly given too much decision-making power.
- Time could be devoted to ensuring that all Councillors were aware of what was happening within SPPAC and that its objectives and priorities were being met.
- They needed ample time to discuss their role in the Regional Managers' Forum and their input regarding strategy and budget provisions for salinity control.
- From time to time there would be the need for speakers to address the full Council on any of a multitude of different issues that could not be done properly within any sub-committee.

SPPAC Meeting No. 10 addressed these points and complementary proposals by Graeme David, Program Coordinator, PMT. Changes to the timetabling and procedures for references to the sub-committees and to SPPAC were introduced. The sub-committees also took the reports by the Chairman and by Graeme David as a starting point for developing stronger roles with the aim of improving SPPAC's performance.

SPPAC 's Defined Objectives

Meeting No.10 also adopted the second draft of the Statement of Objectives with two additions. As with many similar pathfinding exercises, SPPAC's development of a Statement went through expansions and contractions and other changes. It eventually arrived at a summary of Objectives with which Councillors had sufficient personal history of familiarisation, understanding, exploration and revision to identify with them as their agreed charter. This 'ownership' was crucial to Councillors' confidence in promoting and explaining their role and in engaging their constituencies, networks and associations in the Pilot Program.

The Statement of Objectives included in SPPAC's "Review and Evaluation of Performance in the First Year of Operation – March 1986 to March 1987" summarised them as follows:

1. To develop a regional strategy for salinity control.
2. To establish priorities for salinity control within the Pilot Region.
3. To promote and ensure coordinated action by government departments and the community.
4. To involve and inform organisations in the community of regional salinity issues.
5. To advise government of community attitudes and issues most relevant to salinity control within the Pilot Region.
6. To promote and assist salinity education within the Region.
7. Monitor State funding on salinity.
8. Identify the present level of input to salinity control by industry and the community and determine the level of input of regional resources required in future.
9. To regularly review the role, structure and performance of SPPAC and recommend to government on its future operation.
10. To be actively involved in assisting the Program Management Team in carrying out its programs.

The evaluation of each of the SPPAC objectives was carried out by discussion and recommendation. Key points made in this evaluation indicated the successes or shortfalls in SPPAC's performance. Contributing factors that warranted attention were also noted. Valuable lessons were to be learnt from this evaluation by government, SPPAC and the community.

As to SPPAC's primary objective, it considered the regional strategy for salinity control to be on schedule. An essential aspect of the process adopted (which John Dainton saw as crucial to the community's commitment) was the planning by the Dryland and Irrigation sub-committees of their separate parts of the regional strategy. These sectors would progressively come together in the course of SPPAC's integration of the overall regional strategy.

The priorities for salinity control established by SPPAC (Objective 2) included eight tasks that were formally adopted at that stage:

- Identify dryland and irrigation recharge areas and their impact on catchment hydrological characteristics.
- Develop revegetation strategies including use of deep rooted perennial pasture and tree species for recharge areas.
- Develop a regional surface drainage system.
- Tailor economic land management to achieve long term salinity control.
- Identify equitable salinity control cost sharing arrangements.
- Establish a regional salt disposal strategy.
- Develop and deliver a regional salinity awareness and educational program.
- Ensure adequate resources are made available to carry out salinity control programs.
- Improve community participation and organisation through landholder groups.
- The first priority for expenditure of limited salinity funds should be for "onground" works.
- The additional priorities were more in the category of "facilitating" activities:
- Ensure adequate resources are made available to carry out salinity control programs.
- Improve community participation and organisation through landholder groups.

SPPAC recognised that these priorities could change as work on the Regional Strategy progressed. The priorities list amounted to their basic agenda when SPPAC communicated about "what it was doing".

The "System" Found Wanting

SPPAC found during its first year of operation that the coordination of action by government departments and by the community were essential functions that had special challenges. After 12 months of mixed responses from government departments to the specially formed Regional Managers' Forum, SPPAC had found that the Project Management Team still had to bear the burden of coordination.

Departments, in the main, were inclined to adhere to their normal priorities. SPPAC recognised the harsh reality that action was required at the most senior levels in government and the departments to remedy this situation. SPPAC appreciated that salinity control was only one of the functions in departmental work programs. However, the State Government had announced the Pilot Program as its special initiative to "demonstrate the most effective procedures by which a fully integrated salinity control program can be established in a region." Understandably, SPPAC felt it was being let down by "the system" and addressed this issue very directly in recommendations to the government:

- That the NRECC, via its permanent heads in Standing Committee, issue clear directives to their departments and specifically to the senior personnel in the salinity Pilot Region, that they place highest priority on the salinity issue, and that they make appropriate time available to develop the coordinated departmental approach to salinity.
- That heads of departments give SPPAC and the PMT ready access to discuss policy on salinity.
- That SPPAC express its wish that departments see SPPAC as an ally in the fight against salinity. SPPAC wishes to actively support government agencies in the achievement of salinity control objectives.¹⁸

Communication Issues

Some networking existed among farmer groups, but coordinated action between community groups was judged, at that point, to be extremely limited. SPPAC expected two initiatives to correct this situation – a group seminar/workshop and the growing momentum of the community education program.

The task of involving and informing organisations in the community (Objective 4) was affected by SPPAC's limited, though growing, knowledge of activities in farmer groups. Also salinity information in the mass media was predominantly related to irrigation areas. Again the community education program, the regional newsletter in preparation and improved mass media contacts would help overcome these disadvantages.

Formal advice to government of community attitudes and issues most relevant to salinity control within the pilot region was provided via SPPAC minutes and meetings with NRECC, the Salinity Bureau and Standing Committee. SPPAC also provided input to 'Salt Action', the draft State Salinity Strategy. Two aspects of their communication with government were of concern:

- SPPAC needed to be confident that their communications actually reached Ministers via the Salinity Bureau and that it was interpreted accurately; and
- feedback from NRECC to SPPAC was inadequate.

SPPAC put NRECC on notice in the following recommendations:

- i. That the NRECC will give credence to representation made by SPPAC and that it will respond, in writing, to issues raised.
- ii. That SPPAC and the Program Management Team meet with the NRECC in the Region in a conference situation to discuss SPPAC's evolving role and its future, and to determine what the NRECC sees as SPPAC's role.

SPPAC also suggested that NRECC note the following points:

- Major salinity issues in the Pilot Region had been addressed by SPPAC to the best of its ability.
- The regional community was taking the salinity problem very seriously and SPPAC's role and approach was very useful and professional, particularly in monitoring, assessing and commenting on the appropriateness of government actions.
- SPPAC needed to upgrade its working relationships and effectively communicate its priorities with other departmental advisory committees and boards.

SPPAC's progress with planning and implementing its community education program (Objective 6) was largely due to the considerable efforts of John Dainton and his fellow councillors who maintained very full personal programs of public speaking and organising public meetings. They were fortunate in having Penny Jones as a key contributor and Bill O'Kane (DARA) as their Community Education Officer. Although Don McPherson ensured that the Pilot Program was given good coverage in his group of newspapers, SPPAC identified the need for a journalist within the Region who could produce copy and articles on the Program.

SPPAC had found the task of monitoring State funding on salinity (Objective 7a) difficult but recognised that there were no other channels for community comment on the pattern or priority of programs. SPPAC had reached a position where it was confident about giving general advice and it saw the monitoring of regional budgeting as a crucial role. SPPAC therefore gave this task special attention, but the procedure was still evolving.

SPPAC had sufficient experience with the various government departments to reach the conclusions that:

- departments were too conservative in their regional budget initiatives;
- salinity related projects still tended to be developed independently in each department; and
- some departments had different priorities for salinity between head office and in their regional offices.

The task of identifying the input to salinity control by industry and the community and determining the levels of input of regional resources required in the future (Objective 7b) was more straightforward in the dryland areas. The documentation produced on DCFL incentives schemes could be readily analysed. The task in the irrigation areas was more difficult. SPPAC saw it as important to determine which groups in the regional community were capable of contributing to salinity control.

PMT research projects were expected to help overcome gaps in the information needed. The comprehensive collection of information was to be documented in the Regional Strategy.

The regular review of SPPAC's role, structure and performance and recommending on its future operation (Objective 8) was partly fulfilled by this evaluation of its first 12 months. Significant points that SPPAC felt it could make at this stage included:

- SPPAC should be allowed to continue its project role in 1987;
- members of SPPAC needed to be able to represent community interests with commitment and a professional approach;
- membership should include a majority of landholders as it was they who would bear the main responsibility in salinity control; however future nominations were expected to represent a

more balanced spread of interests;

- one year appointments were supported as a longer term may make it difficult to get the right people initially;
- SPPAC would prefer that the appointment of the chairperson may, in future, be on its recommendation to NRECC;
- SPPAC saw the need to move to ensure that its advice to government was as far as possible through cooperative decisions with departments.
- the remuneration for councillors was considered satisfactory but for the chairman the financial drain and workload far outweighed the level of remuneration for that position; this was due to the fact that many of the chairperson's tasks could not be delegated and the Pilot Program had such a high regional profile.

SPPAC's assistance to the Project Management Team in carrying out its programs (Objective 9) was seen as an ad hoc ongoing task. The reality was that SPPAC generated a considerable workload for the team. John Dainton was especially concerned about this situation and he and councillors explored how they could help with the preparation of the SPPAC agenda. They had contributed to PMT events as speakers and in developing the community education program. SPPAC could see the need for a part-time administrative officer to assist the PMT in servicing routine SPPAC requirements.

PMT First Annual Report

The Program Management Team had prepared a report on the first year of the Pilot Program in parallel with that prepared by SPPAC. In areas in which both units operated the PMT report fully endorsed the position taken by SPPAC, sometimes presenting a sharper view of shortcomings in the State Government's performance. The level of respect the team had for Council members is reflected in various assessments of the Program's progress thus far.

The PMT Report was direct, insightful and would have been of significant value to the Salinity Bureau, NRECC and senior departmental officers. Many of its conclusions would have had significance for salinity initiatives across the State:

- The absence of Murray-Darling Basin, State and Regional salinity strategies had created difficulties in defining a regional focus.
- The success of the Pilot Program suggested that unless salinity policies (e.g. State Salinity Strategy) were accompanied by clear direction from and to all levels of Government, responses would not occur as a matter of course.
- Within the Pilot Region, Regional Managers had been given no direction on the priority to be allocated to neither salinity nor how to interact with the Pilot Program. This resulted in difficulties in equating departmental and salinity (i.e. Pilot Program) priorities. The lack of guidelines to define what qualified for State salinity funding was a further complication.
- Departments had problems in adapting long term capital works and research and investigation programs to shorter-term priorities and funding fluctuations. These problems acted as a constraint on upgrading salinity control activity.

The Team's comments on SPPAC's performance in particular areas were reassuring:

- The efforts of SPPAC as a Council and the individuals on it in establishing an operational structure and credibility within the community were deemed admirable and had occurred under difficult circumstances. The magnitude of these efforts and time involvement could not be overstated.
- Formalised links were being established with RWC and DCFL Advisory Committees and with the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordination Group.
- SPPAC had modified its operation to cater for changing circumstances. With the development of dryland and irrigation salinity strategies, the Irrigation and Dryland Sub-committees were more dominant as working groups. The full Council continuing to meet monthly had streamlined its operation. Co-opted members of the working group were likely to perform a valued role. Further modification of the structure was expected with changing circumstances.
- While SPPAC had regularly raised issues with departments, the reverse had not often occurred. If the real potential of the Pilot Program was to be developed it was essential that this be addressed. Otherwise departments would inevitably come to regard SPPAC as a "challenging" council rather than one through which closer cooperation could occur between the public and private sectors. This required close scrutiny by all involved with the Program.
- The presence of departmental personnel at SPPAC meetings was essential for informed debate. At times that presence could hinder discussion, particularly if sensitive issues were being discussed relevant to particular departments. Several suggestions had been made to minimise this constraint. SPPAC had resolved to allow for a period of "in-committee" discussion at the end of its meetings, and departmental presence for only part of meetings had also been suggested. The latter had been rejected by SPPAC because it considered departmental input essential in most discussion.

The Team, with its combined experience of working within "the system" and now alongside it, was well placed to assess the performance of government agencies. They identified the reasons for shortfalls, lack of coordination and unresponsiveness to the requirements of the Pilot Program. Its insights should have been of considerable value to the government and its agencies.

The PMT report drew attention to the notable successes and deficiencies in the way the departments worked with SPPAC:

- Departmental involvement in SPPAC had been excellent with nominated departmental officers being regular and important contributors to the meetings. This had led to the development of good rapport between SPPAC and the departments at this level. The departments had, almost without exception, responded to requests for information and reports to the satisfaction of SPPAC. The demands had often been unanticipated and required considerable time input.

SPPAC Local Initiatives

John Dainton knew that for SPPAC to have credibility with the regional community it needed to achieve results on the ground. He looked for opportunities to initiate actions that would demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the new SPPAC. John and his fellow councillors knew that, regardless of how much they might achieve within the government system and in assessing planning and preparing future salinity control measures, they needed to respond, where possible, to pressing local salinity problems.

SPPAC did not need to look far. At its third meeting it received correspondence about the serious salinity problem affecting Undera Recreation Reserve. SPPAC asked the PMT to investigate and report to the next meeting. Here SPPAC had a community asset with a high profile that was seriously affected by salinity.

The reserve was on Crown Land with facilities for football, cricket, tennis, netball, clay target shooting, motocross and a motorcycle speedway. Local and district schools utilised the facility. Since 1970, a rising watertable had been evident leading to tree deaths and flooding of the speedway. Flooding occurred after only low local rainfall indicating that the water did not come from run-off. RWC investigations had shown that a groundwater mound existed under the complex.

A groundwater pump was proposed along with discharge into RWC channels. Stuart Brown, Assistant Coordinator on the PMT, approached Rodney Shire suggesting that the government would pay a proportion of the costs of installing the pump and associated works provided the irrigators/recreation reserve met the annual operation and maintenance expenditure. The Shire recognised this as a win/win situation and agreed to the funding. At its fourth meeting SPPAC had a comprehensive and concise report from Stuart Brown. The item was given priority. SPPAC endorsed the proposal for a joint funding arrangement by the RWC and Rodney Shire Council. The significance of this process and the positive result was not lost on John Dainton and his colleagues.

In its review of the first 12 months SPPAC noted the importance of this exercise and the issues it raised.

This was SPPAC's first request for action from the community. It provided a major impetus for SPPAC to determine procedures for handling such requests. What were the roles of SPPAC, the Program Management Team, the departments and the community in such situations? The questions of who should be operational on the issue and how should the cost be shared were debated.

A fundamental principle evolved from the issue. The relevant government departments are always operational, SPPAC provides its opinion after gauging

community expectations and interest and the Program Management Team assists with the coordination of departmental resources.

The need to develop clear SPPAC objectives and priorities (in this case) and the detailed objectives/priorities discussions which followed were important in getting members to think about the total program.¹⁹

In making the first of such decisions, SPPAC realised that, in future, similar proposals would need to be assessed according to guidelines it had yet to develop.

SPPAC could not avoid involvement in the ongoing Girgarre Evaporation Basin saga. Its links with GASSAG and the network of widely based community groups such as GIRDAC, VIRPO, the VFF and UDV (see Chapter 5) drew it into the controversy surrounding the proposals developed to resolve this high profile salinity problem. Given the complex history and high profile of this project, understandably NRECC referred it to SPPAC for advice. This entailed providing advice on cost sharing issues, determining and advising on community attitudes, highlighting the experimental nature of the project and contending with disagreements between various experts.

SPPAC's decision to support the project was vital to maintain its credibility and that of the government. Community expectation of the Basin's imminent construction had been high and this issue demonstrated to government SPPAC's willingness to make strong recommendations on behalf of the community. The government's eventual support in October for the Basin encouraged SPPAC as it considered that the government was willing to listen and act on its advice. This result did not put paid to the opposition to the project and to SPPAC's role in the decision-making process.

Controversy about the project surfaced in the annual meeting of GIRDAC (at which John Dainton had

been re-elected as Chairman). Leon Heath, who also attended, reported at the following SPPAC meeting that Dr P. Macumber had addressed the meeting about his strong opinions on the non-viability of the project, both technically and economically. Heath reported that when GIRDAC had requested expert information from other than the RWC, none was forthcoming but now that the community had agreed to the proposal new evidence was appearing. Dr Macumber's presentation was viewed as inappropriate for landholder guests at GIRDAC to be hearing at this late stage, particularly as local farms would not be affected.²⁰

More serious questioning of SPPAC's role came in a letter 1/12/86 from Minister McCutcheon who suggested that it may have acted irresponsibly when considering the Girgarre Salinity Control Scheme. SPPAC firmly stood its ground justifying its position with an explanation of the consultation process it had undertaken in the course of reaching its decision.²¹

SPPAC had fought very hard to ensure that the \$1.2 million evaporation basin project went ahead. The region was breaking new ground with the experimental aspects of this project. In its prosecution of the case for this project the community and government became aware of SPPAC's strength and commitment as the region's new advocate.

These were two high profile examples of SPPAC's involvement in salinity issues of which the community was very much aware. With the experience that John Dainton and other farmers/councillors had of local and industry issues, they understood the dynamics of involving the farming community. Their perception that salinity control would be dependent largely on actual landholder involvement, led SPPAC to strongly promote the concept of farmer groups.

The value of the group concept lay in its potential for the more efficient and effective use of advisory services, wider discussion of problems, stronger moral support among members and more effective presentation of attitudes and problems to decision-makers.

John Dainton had made a strong case to his fellow Councillors earlier in June in a special note on community involvement in his Chairman's Report. He exhorted Councillors to be proactive in their liaison with community groups.

The need for SPPAC Councillors to involve the general community in salinity issues is vital. Each Councillor should take back to his or her representative organisation, issues directly affecting that group for discussion and resolution, indicating the group's view on a particular issue. I believe that if we are to truly represent the region, we need the support and involvement of all interested organisations and groups. Resolutions brought into SPPAC are tangible evidence of the wider communities' attitudes to salinity issues. I therefore ask you to endeavour, at all times, to raise salinity issues and inform your groups of the current position and actively seek their interest and involvement and make them aware of the contribution that they can make to your council and its decision-making.

Press releases informing the community are fine and must be issued throughout the region, but the real solutions will only come when the community has the opportunity to become actively involved. Each and every one of us on Council must initiate this involvement and begin to get the community motivated to protect their environment and to demand action to provide solutions to overcome the potential disaster before too much is lost. The involvement of these organisations who will obviously represent the leaders of the community is urgently needed as a first step towards a wider spread of community awareness. SPPAC's need for the setting of salinity priorities is a good opportunity to get the regional community involved.

SPPAC's priorities in community education tied in with those goals. When the evaluation of its first 12 months was carried out, its Community Education Sub-committee had been working towards a program of increasing general awareness of salinity and land degradation problems within the region. A regional newsletter was almost ready for distribution. A coloured brochure was being prepared for distribution to key groups such as municipalities, VFF branches, service clubs etc. Community service announcements on TV; speaking engagements to school groups, farmer groups etc.; geography teachers in-service training to develop a salinity curriculum for this region and increasing use of the media, TV, radio were underway.

John Dainton believed that there had been a tremendous change to salinity awareness within the Shepparton Irrigation District because of SPPAC's efforts. The dryland areas were receiving more publicity and with the impending commencement of the dryland strategy there would be an even spread of information throughout the region. A specific example of partnerships in the promotion of community involvement at the corporate level was the joint GIRDAC/SPPAC salinity project award for interested voluntary and community groups. Projects were to be practical community efforts and the judging would be by way of evaluation by participating groups and organisations.

John Dainton's catchcry of "action, not words" was beginning to be implemented.

Chapter 7

COMPLETING THE PILOT PROGRAM

In its first year, SPPAC's activities had been dominated by team building, establishing its credibility with the community, and the government and its agencies in the region, developing its procedures, determining its objectives and priorities and commencing a community awareness program. In the two years that remained for the Pilot Program, SPPAC was committed to preparing a regional salinity strategy that was acceptable to the community and the government and to promoting the construction of onground works both as public infrastructure and at farm scale.

A major issue that SPPAC would need to address in achieving this outcome was the future structure and role of community participation in the regional salinity program. The experience of the Pilot Program would equip SPPAC to advise on the need for a regional salinity council, its membership and representation.

SPPAC Membership Beyond the First 12 Months

At the conclusion of its first year, SPPAC needed to deal with the question of its ongoing membership. This issue was partly addressed in its recommendation to government that SPPAC "continue in its present form for a further 12 months to March 1988 and that the current councillors be invited to continue their role for that period."¹ Of the original 15 councillors, 11 were still members. Mr Kevin Holland, who had led the formation of the Shepparton East Landholders' Group and networked widely in the horticultural industry, had retired due to ill health. Mr Jack Regan had died. He had been tireless in his advocacy on salinity issues and the driving force behind the Tongala Groundwater/Salinity Project. Two members, Don McPherson and Cr Pam Robinson, had withdrawn towards the end of the first 12 months due to other responsibilities. Although these two members had moved on, they continued their commitment to salinity issues in their spheres of influence. In the case of Don McPherson, this influence was considerable through the vehicle of McPherson Press that served the region, particularly through the Country News supplement in the Shepparton News. Cr Robinson had roles in local government (Shire of Violet Town) the Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group, the Salinity Committee of the Municipal Association of Victoria and as President of the Local Government Women's Association of Victoria and Vice President of the Australian Local Government Women's Association.

While John Dainton and his fellow councillors were concerned about losing the input of these key figures in the regional community, they had the consolation of knowing that both Cr Robinson and Don McPherson had the experience of SPPAC membership to draw on and opportunities to promote the Pilot Program and Salinity issues in their other important arenas.

At its meeting of 11 August 1987 SPPAC agreed that it needed to be brought up to full strength (15 members) subject to suitable nominations being received. Since SPPAC was half way through its allotted term, it requested NRECC to allow the SPPAC executive and regional departmental operational managers to review any nominations for SPPAC membership on their way to NRECC.

John Dainton was concerned about the losses of representation for the dryland and local government (P. Robinson), media (D. McPherson), irrigation (J. Regan), horticulture/industry/RWC District Irrigation Advisory Committee (K. Holland). In addition to filling these gaps, it was highly desirable to have representation for the mid-upper catchment areas (dryland), and broader conservation/ecological interests. Given the high profile achieved by the Pilot Program, a larger number and high quality of nominees was expected.

With SPPAC having established formal links with RWC District Irrigation Advisory Boards (Shepparton, Rodney, Tongala, Campaspe and Murray Valley), DCFL Regional Advisory Committees (Benalla, Alexandra, Bendigo) and Mid Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group through its Irrigation and Dryland sub-committees/Strategy working groups, appropriate people representing those interests would have been welcome appointments to SPPAC. NRECC followed a similar process to that adopted in selecting the initial membership. In September 1987 the four replacements appointed broadened the expertise and networks accessible to SPPAC. Each of the new Councillors was to make a significant contribution to the Pilot Program.

Mrs Nanette Oates had specialist skills as a rural environment writer and consultant. Significantly, Nanette also represented the interests of the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group of which she was a member.

Tom Ryan from Pyalong, a grazier and agricultural contractor, was Secretary of the Kilmore Branch of the VFF and a Committee member of the Glenaroua Land Management Group.

Cr. Tom Perry had occupied senior positions in various industry bodies over the years. He and John Dainton had worked in the two branches of the Victoria Dairy Farmers Association in 1973 and 1974. Tom had chaired the UDV meetings which arranged the Conference held in Shepparton in 1975. John had effectively been his scribe and conference organiser. The roles in their working partnership had been Tom as the front man and John as the behind the scenes operator and policy formulator. Tom's experience of natural resource management issues was gained through membership of GIRDAC, the Lower Goulburn Waterway Authority and later as a Councillor for Shire of Rodney, then arguably the most advanced local government body in natural resource management. From their years of collaboration in various organisational settings, Tom had learned to respect John's strengths, particularly his ability to listen to everyone and then bring the relevant views and ideas together. Like John, Tom was to demonstrate in his time on SPPAC a strong commitment to "getting things on the ground".

The appointment of Jeremy Gaylard at this point was to have considerable significance for both the Goulburn Broken Catchment and Jeremy himself in the emerging response to salinity issues at the regional and state levels. Ironically, his nomination to SPPAC attracted some opposition - unbeknown to him at the time.

Jeremy's nomination was understandable in terms of his involvement as a Councillor for the City of Shepparton and his position as Mayor later in 1988 and 1989. As a stock and station agent and farmer he had a wide range of contacts in the region. This networking ability was reinforced by his track record of positions held in various rural, community, youth and industry groups over the years including that of a Commissioner on the Broken River Trust. His flamboyant style and keenness to talk up the Goulburn Valley meant that he readily adopted a high profile in public life.

Some Pilot Program watchers privately questioned Jeremy's appointment claiming he would last until he saw the substantial workload and then he would disappear. This assessment proved to be far off the mark. Fortunately for SPPAC and the region's community, Jeremy Gaylard seemed to be at a stage in his life when he was ready for a major commitment. Some would say he was always prepared to run with a heavy workload.

The working relationship between John Dainton and Jeremy paid big dividends for SPPAC. John was business-like, relentless in his pursuit of issues – regardless of the status of those in the discussion. While John wasn't a knock-about sort of person, both he and Jeremy had political savvy, but expressed it in very different ways. John was the more serious personality, Jeremy was more up front, inclined to be impulsive and demonstrative. Characteristic of his style, at his first SPPAC meeting Jeremy thumped the table, taking the line "Right you guys, we want to be big on action, short on talk – let's get going! I want to see action!" Jeremy had arrived when SPPAC had been diligently working through the many issues of the Pilot Program and so they were conversant with the complexity and extent of the workload. Jeremy would soon come to this appreciation of the task ahead.

SPPAC watchers saw John and Jeremy as a powerful partnership, totally complementing each other. Over time, the achievements of SPPAC and its successor organisations attracted criticism and complaints about the power that Dainton and Gaylard exercised. There was often reference to them both – one seldom

being mentioned without the other. The reality was that they had substantial influence, but they did not have influence thrown at them. They worked very hard and had the political astuteness needed to bring the decision makers with them. The third member of what became a formidable team further down the track was Bill O'Kane who had commenced his career in the Goulburn Broken Catchment as SPPAC's Community Education Officer. Over time this three-man team would intrigue many as having a sort of chemistry running and it was a chemistry of complementing one another that basically worked.

Pilot Program Executive Support

The three members of the Program Management Team continued to provide professional and administrative support to SPPAC during their respective terms. The PMT had already earned the respect and appreciation of SPPAC Councillors through their professionalism and efforts during the nine months they were on deck in SPPAC's initial year. Graeme David, Darrel Brewin and Stuart Brown had key roles in the establishment of the Pilot Program and in the formation of SPPAC. They already had extensive experience in advising committees in the natural resource management sector, but these bodies were largely ineffectual due to the attitude of the agency personnel involved and the low expectations of the people representing industry and landholder interests. Graeme David had seen the community with an effective voice during his time with the Loddon Campaspe Regional Planning Authority. Most importantly, the strong will and commitment of the government ministers involved in the Pilot Program, especially Evan Walker and Joan Kirner gave them confidence in the Pilot Program process.

They saw John Dainton's role also as crucial to its success. While they worked assiduously on the agenda and papers for SPPAC meetings, it was John's performance as Chair that set the tone and the pace of discussion and encouraged Councillor participation. John's intellectual ability (notwithstanding his limited formal education) was evident as he teased out issues and ran technical points to ground. The PMT had been impressed by the results of the first SPPAC meeting when the RWC presented their proposal for a regional salinity plan. John, with the strong support of academically trained councillors, such as Leon Heath, clearly identified and pursued the community's concerns. The RWC presentation had focussed on areas in the region that had pumpable groundwater of a quality suitable for shandyng. John Dainton challenged the adequacy of this approach, questioning: "What about those areas that are outside of those with pumpable groundwater?" The RWC was put on notice that the public had a right to know the extent of these areas.

The PMT recognised the wisdom in John Dainton's concern that SPPAC had to quickly get "runs on the board" to demonstrate that it was not just another talk-fest. Graeme David had raised the ire of senior public servants when he co-signed a letter with John Dainton addressed to Evan Walker stating that the development of the Girgarre Salinity Basin must go ahead. The Department of Water Resources headed up by John Patterson was strenuously opposing this project on economic grounds. John Dainton bluntly pointed out that economic arguments should be over-riden by the priority of developing an effective regional salinity program. This project was seen as a test case. Its implementation and trial were largely a result of SPPAC's efforts.

In debate and lobbying efforts, John's intellect and presence plus the strong support from Councillors made SPPAC a force to reckon with. The PMT noted John's astuteness in his dealings with politicians. He appreciated that the politicians had to receive their rewards in the shape of recognition for their decision-making and support. He led SPPAC and worked with the PMT to ensure that government policy was translated into action on the ground. He made sure that in the process the State government received the kudos it deserved from its commitment to the Pilot Program.

In reflecting on those days, Graeme David recalled "John was never one to shoot his mouth off without having a basis for saying it. John could grasp onto issues and he could discern their significance. He had the ability to understand if people were bullshitting him. And John would do his homework. I know because I used to try to ring him at night often and John would spend hours on the phone at night networking, chasing people and people would be chasing him. It wasn't one-way traffic. He knew from whom he could get unbiased quality responses. He would consult and before he said things he would make sure that he was on pretty good ground. When chairing a meeting he would know who he could best pull information from."

The PMT worked exceptionally hard through that period on ensuring that the proper information came before SPPAC. This involved providing reliable paperwork and presentations to the Council. They also sought out the most appropriate people to make presentations to the Council. There was a deliberate policy of making sure that strong presentations were received from all of the protagonists. In this way SPPAC gained an accurate understanding of where they were coming from. This thoroughgoing support by the PMT gave the grounding for the Pilot Program to develop the power, results and the status it achieved eventually with the catchment community and with government.

The pressure that John Dainton, the PMT and the individual Councillors worked under exceeded their expectations of the workload associated with this process. Graeme David recalled its impact on John Dainton as he expressed it some six months into the Pilot Program. John used to come in to the PMT office about four times a week. This level of involvement was indicative of his commitment. On one occasion when he came in he shared with Graeme David:

Graeme I've been an irrigator and a farmer all my life and I go out and do my day's work, tending the cows and calves and maintaining the irrigation systems. I would come home at the end of the day and I'd be knackered and I would want to have a meal. I was always gazing at people in offices who would complain of getting tired, because to me there was no physical exertion involved in working in an office and I couldn't understand that. But I come home from chairing one of these SPPAC meetings at the end of the day (and these meetings were going virtually all day) and I'm absolutely knackered, absolutely exhausted. When I was farming, I'd go home and have a meal and when I'd finished the meal I would be recharged and ready to go again, but after chairing one of these meetings all day, I go home exhausted, have a meal and I'm still had it. My whole perception of what is involved in working in an office or doing mental work against doing physical work has changed through this process.

Graeme David developed an early respect for him.

I found that I could work with John because he had a keen intellect. He wanted to develop it. He was always asking and searching ... not saying, you've got to do this, or you've got to do that. I never felt

that I was working for him, rather I was working with him and we were able to work together.

As the Pilot Program progressed, the skills and astuteness John Dainton was acquiring came to the fore in difficult policy situations. Among those that stood out was John's challenge to the RWC over their replacement policy for irrigation assets. He wouldn't have been in a position to do that at the start of the three years (of the Pilot Program).

John did his homework on these issues. Through his involvement with Bonlac, he was able to tap into the insights and best practice options on financial management with senior executives in Bonlac. He would go through the issues and bounce them backwards and forwards. In that way John gained the understanding and the confidence to take on a range of complex issues like the options available to RWC in its assets management and replacement and their financial implications.

The departures of Graeme David and Darrel Brewin early in 1989, before the three year Pilot Program had finished, were serious blows at the time. Media coverage of these departures gave John Dainton the opportunity to warmly acknowledge the special contribution by David and Brewin and to express some angst about how "the system" had let them down.

The fight against salinity has been dealt a fierce blow with the loss of two of its front men. Last week, the coordinator of the Shepparton Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) Mr Graeme David announced he has taken a new position. This follows the recent loss of SPPAC dryland salinity specialist Mr Darrel Brewin

to a Canberra position. These losses come as draft plans for the management of dryland and irrigation salinity are due to be publicly released in June.

"Graeme has been a key motivator within the program over the past three years," said SPPAC Chairman Mr John Dainton. "He had a tremendous way with people – he was respected wherever he went, in the community and among academics," Mr Dainton said. While Mr Dainton said he did not regret their decisions, he strongly criticised a government system where key figures could not find suitable positions within rural areas.

"All the good guys go because of the system, they can't get promotions in the country and have to go to the cities," he said. "We have lost these men because of a secondment system, just when everything was coming to a head. This is unsatisfactory."

But despite the loss, Mr Dainton was confident the program would not "crash". He said the working life of SPPAC would come to an end in June, but was likely to be replaced by an ongoing regional council.

"We won't fall to pieces, we have good departmental support. But we must get the plans (the Shepparton irrigation and dryland region land and water salinity management plans) out and get some implementation on the ground." Mr Dainton said.

Brian Garrett, also from DCE, completed Darrel Brewin's task of drafting the dryland plan over the next nine months. Stuart Brown, in his new role as Program Coordinator, along with Bill Trewhella, Peter Alexander and Leon Heath were virtually locked up

for six or seven weeks to undertake the extremely stressful phase of work on drafting and consulting regarding the irrigation plan. Stuart Brown saw this task through to completion. He departed after its presentation in September 1989. Bill O'Kane replaced him.

The impact of the loss of key personnel was not confined to the PMT. Experts in DCFL were also "lost in the hour of need." Three hydro-geologists researching dryland salinity were relocated by DCFL to Bendigo. John Dainton vented his feelings on DCFL.

"We are releasing a management plan this week which clearly shows the dryland salinity problem is worse than we thought," Mr Dainton said. "At a time when we are asking for more, the decision to take these people away is terrible." Mr Dainton's attack came after appeals by district landholders concerned over the loss of staff. Work has been underway in the Molyullah-Tatong and Warrenbayne-Boho areas for the last 12 months.

The three researchers' relationship with the 11 landholder groups in the area acted as a key bridge between research and farmer extension. Mr Dainton acknowledged research was needed in other parts of the State, but said this was the only region to have a management plan targeting dryland salinity control. And this must be supported by continuing research. The management plan recommends an intensive research program be conducted over the next five years.

Sub-committees/Strategy Working Groups

SPPAC gave priority to its regional salinity plan initially through two parallel planning processes – the Goulburn Broken Region Dryland Salinity Management Plan and the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan. Two sub-committees comprising both SPPAC members and additional representatives from the respective areas headed up these processes.

The Irrigation Working Group

The expanded irrigation working group was chaired by Leon Heath who had a degree in Agricultural Science and was steeped in salinity and drainage issues. Other SPPAC councillors from the irrigation area (including John Dainton) along with representatives of the region's five RWC district irrigation advisory boards (Deakin, Rodney, Shepparton, Campaspe and Murray Valley) and of the Goulburn Irrigation Regional Drainage Action Committee (GIRDAC) comprised the membership. Local government was also well represented in this group, as were environmental interests by a SPPAC Councillor Geoff Witten, the President of the Goulburn Valley Tree Group. The working group undertook a wide-ranging awareness/consultation program through the many bodies represented by its members (in addition to the media) and used a targeted approach to consultation.

When the timetable for the presentation of the draft management plan to NRECC was advanced to November 1988 instead of March 1989, SPPAC was concerned about the pressure this would place on all involved in preparing the draft and about the impact on the effectiveness of community consultation.

The sub-committee had major issues to resolve in developing the draft. The Second Annual Report prepared by the PMT highlighted these issues:²

- Cost sharing. While the “beneficiary pays” principle was generally accepted as appropriate under the salinity program, the definition of who benefits from what programs and under what conditions was still to be resolved. This issue was addressed with the aid of a regional economic analysis. In addition, clarification of the method(s) of costing for major public scale capital works including surface and sub surface drainage was also required. This, in turn, had major implications on the costs to be borne by all sectors of the community (and components within it). SPPAC requested clarification of this important issue of accounting procedures from NRECC. Within the irrigation community itself the splitting of costs between portions of the region with differing potentials for salinity control was a major issue.
- Channel and drain salinities. The Murray-Darling Basin decision to permit salt disposal from the Shepparton region and the management of saline groundwater pumped within the region for internal use and external disposal had major implications. The disposal of salt from the region required transport via the irrigation channel and drainage system. This would lead to some salinity increases within them – a potentially contentious issue which had to be handled sensitively.
- The different “management area types” within the region also required sensitive treatment to ensure each was dealt with equitably. While landholders could not expect the same level of salinity control, the completed plan should enable them to evaluate a range of options applicable to their particular situation, under prescribable cost sharing arrangements.
- Any potential for conflict between the salinity control and wetland habitat requirements was addressed through a Regional Surface Drainage Review and a Regional Wetlands Assessment, key inputs to the plan.

SPPAC was concerned to give prominence in the plan to improved on-farm land and water management throughout the region – hence the inclusion of “land” and “water” management in the plan’s title. This expanded title was aimed at ensuring that the community did not interpret its outcome as a purely engineering approach to salinity control reliant only on public scale groundwater pumping, surface drainage and salt disposal. SPPAC also became concerned about the management of this project, the slowness of generating crucial technical and scientific data and defining its own role prior to the preparation of issues papers and recommendations required for their consultation program. These shortcomings were largely addressed between March and June 1988. The remedies included finetuning the role of the PMT’s Assistant Coordinator Stuart Brown to ensure priority to project coordination and particular attention to the input of on-farm management and landholder incentives programs. Stuart Brown, Bill Trehwella of the RWC and the consultant, Don Leslie, played key roles in this task, along with John Dainton and Leon Heath.

The technical competence of this planning process was the special concern of a support group, the Project Management Advisory Committee (PMAC). In addition to its chair, Keith Collett (RWC Melbourne) the group included, Stuart Brown (PMT) John Dainton and Leon Heath, Bob Wildes (DARA) and representatives of other departments involved.

The standards used by RWC in its design of channel and drainage systems became a major issue for SPPAC and the community in the course of developing the capital works plan. Many farmers believed that the RWC used “gold plated” standards. This perception and the wider issues of surface drainage and farmer-designed surface drainage came to the fore in the debate about the RWC possibly relinquishing its power to the community over drainage systems.

Understandably the RWC determinedly held their ground on the basis of engineering design standards and risk management. On the other side, farmers were contending that they could install these works more cheaply and effectively and were prepared to wear the risk.

Reflecting on this issue in the Shepparton News, John Dainton recalled when SPPAC was surprised and disappointed to discover that at the existing rate of expenditure, it would take almost 200 years to complete the surface drainage network. (At the time, John had simply declared this as unacceptable.)

We responded to this by developing a more flexible approach to the provision of surface drainage with more community involvement. The community surface drainage scheme is an excellent example of this approach.

The Community Surface Drainage Incentive Scheme was, in a large measure, the result of the considerable efforts by PMT Assistant Coordinator, Stuart Brown. Stuart modelled the scheme, in large measure, around that used by East Loddon Shire Council. Their Council Engineer had developed a pragmatic approach to meeting the need for drainage – get it in place along with some landholder agreements and let them be responsible for the management. Stuart Brown had the advantage of bringing together G-MW, Local Government, DARA and the necessary legal advice to launch the type of schemes that became more common in the region. The key ingredients were the level of enthusiasm amongst irrigators and the government’s readiness to get the schemes up and running. Where cost-sharing schemes already existed, it was a case of simply adapting the legal arrangements to their particular situations.

When introduced by the State Government in 1987, it encouraged the development of surface drains by community groups by providing grants of 90 per cent of the survey and design costs and 50 per cent of the construction cost of community drains. Originally, drains funded under the incentive scheme were limited to a maximum length of 5km and 10 landholders. However, as a result of strong community support, the scheme eventually expanded to include much larger projects, such as the north Murchison / Toolamba drainage scheme involving 40km of drains and 60 landholders. Community Surface Drainage Schemes were generally seen as a realistic approach to standards and the involvement of landholders. As John Dainton pointed out, community surface drains were cheaper because they provided a lower level of service and, in most cases, this was an appropriate approach.

On the wider front of government performance, SPPAC pursued similar questions of timing and current salinity programs with the responsible agencies. Each agency was required to predict the salinity implications in the region in 10 years, 20 years and so on.

In September 1986 John Dainton had identified the need to know what each department's funds were at the regional level. This issue had arisen in relation to the requirement that SPPAC comment on the State's annual budget proposals for salinity control. In March 1987, at Meeting No. 12, SPPAC commended the departments on their responses to its requests for regional budget information, especially in view of the considerable workload involved for agency staff. In Meeting No. 14 in May 1987, SPPAC requested each department to provide six monthly summary reports on their activities on a rotational basis of one department per meeting. These regular updates equipped SPPAC to review the salinity program within the Pilot Program and to comment on its effectiveness.

Specialist Staff

The Pilot Program was fortunate in having highly skilled and committed specialist staff in key positions in the government agencies supporting the Program. Close working relations developed between the agency personnel and SPPAC. These were fostered and progressively enhanced by the mutual respect that grew between the mostly non-technical Councillors and the technical representatives from the agencies. This was especially the case among the many agency personnel who had known John Dainton over the years as a farmer and as an industry representative.

Peter Alexander in his role as a regional design engineer initially with the SRWSC and its successor the RWC had considerable experience with surface drainage in the Shepparton region. In the course of these responsibilities, Peter had met John Dainton when drainage works the RWC proposed in the Ardmona Depression were going to interfere with the water re-use system John had introduced on his property – a rare initiative among farmers at that time. The professional staff and specialists in the water industry, regarded John Dainton as being at the forefront of water technology. Peter saw this as one of the indicators that John was ahead of his time in farming practices.

In his role as an observer for RWC, Peter Alexander was impressed by John Dainton's ability to pull teams of people together to get work done and in taking on board the advice of the many specialists who contributed to SPPAC's deliberations. Peter also judged him to be a good chairman in that he was not a hands-on manager nor was he directive, though he would provide a very good indication of where he wanted things to go and he just expected them to happen.

SPPAC Councillors had to grapple with the technicalities of surface and subsurface drainage. While they could relate readily to the surface drainage technicalities, the sub-surface issues relating to hydraulics and water quality were more complex and there was much detail to comprehend. The technical

personnel appreciated John, as Chairman, because he managed to gain a very good understanding of technical issues. However, he was also astute in that he did not go to the fine level of detail but rather latched on to the key concepts and goals. By dealing with these technical issues at a broad level, John and his fellow Councillors were better equipped to bring the community along with the ongoing consultation and recommendation process. In the wider arena of government agency coordination and ministerial contacts, John's grasp of the technical issues, policy options and implementation implications enabled him to advocate effectively for SPPAC and the Salinity Management Plan process. Peter Alexander believed that John was able to lay the foundation for the catchment organisation structures progressively adopted by Victoria in the 90s.

Other RWC specialist personnel such as Don Blackmore had seen the foibles in the classical engineering approach to the delivery of community assets – “you see it, you build it, you move on.” Blackmore knew only too well that unless the community comes along with the project and respects it, it won't last and will not be sustainable. Don Blackmore had encountered John Dainton initially at a meeting in Tatura. Don detected in John a very healthy scepticism and guessed that he was probably a bit sick of everyone telling the rural community where they needed to be and where they needed to go. Blackmore attributed the success of the process John designed for the Pilot Program, to taking everybody back to basics and questioning proposals from a community perspective. John was obviously not confused by all the detail. He was candid and frank about community aspirations. Those whose lives and businesses were to be affected needed to understand the planning process. While John was always friendly in these meetings, those attending were never in any doubt that he could also be curt in the course of moving discussion along, drawing out the best knowledge from specialists and resisting any attempts to steamroll the process. Agency personnel respected John as the steady hand on the community side.

Other personalities such as Jeremy Gaylard came in on their white chargers and achieved very special goals. In Jeremy's case he brought the municipalities into the process and, as described later, took up the reins of the advisory body established by the State government to oversee the salinity program across Victoria. Blackmore recognised that John could see the immense value of contributions such as those made by Jeremy. He adopted a complementary role, consolidating the gains made. As the catchment structures evolved in the 1990s, John's contribution would ensure the effectiveness of the catchment organisation in the Goulburn Broken Region. The integrity and performance of these successive catchment bodies made it easier for key government agencies such as the RWC to invest in the regional salinity and drainage strategy.

From his early days in the SRWSC in the 60s and later as a senior officer in the RWC, David Dole had experience of salinity and water logging issues. During his term as Chief Engineer of Water Management in the 80s and up to the last days of the RWC in 1995 (when he moved to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission) Dole had ongoing contact with John Dainton and with the regional bodies concerned with these issues such as GIRDAC, SPPAC and its successors in the Shepparton area. Dole was keenly aware that to develop an understanding and knowledge was essential for a solution of these issues and that the Commission had a major role in leading the technical analysis.

At the same time the Commission was becoming more aware of the need to engage the community in understanding the problem and developing solutions including viable approaches to cost sharing and landholder involvement. This task of encouraging community engagement was one that needed to be vigorously led by the community. While the technical analysis was independent of personal issues and views, the translation of technical knowledge into community understanding, acceptance and action involved a lot of work.

Dole had seen the Commission's very long history of engagement with the community through advisory boards. What Dole saw emerging slowly out of these years was the realisation that, when dealing with land and water management problems, you have to look at them in terms of the whole catchment – an integrated catchment approach. Dole recognised John Dainton's strength in this regard and that he had a very influential role in those days. He actually put pressure on the Commission from the early days of SPPAC to look at the whole catchment – not just the irrigation area. Dole was also impressed by John Dainton's farsightedness in his commitment to a balance between economic, social and environmental outcomes.

At the personal level, Dole viewed John Dainton as a very direct man and very blunt, but never personal. He had encounters with John that showed up these personal traits. When Dole was the Commission's Director of Water Resources, Planning and Policy, the financial reforms being pursued involved pay for service, understanding costs and developing a different approach to water services. For irrigators this meant increases in charges. In promoting these reforms, the Commission took the line that the recognition of the capital consumption of assets had to be by adopting current cost accounting, whereas depreciation was based on the recognition of the current cost of replacing the asset. David Dole remembered the presentation of these issues to community leaders in the Goulburn Broken region. John Dainton was present. On concluding his presentation, Dole recalls John met him with a steely gaze and that he was "pretty gruff, not personal, I mean." Dainton said: "Do you really believe that rubbish?" Dole was shaken. Here he was an engineer responsible for corporate planning for a major government agency and he is challenged by a senior business figure, a successful farmer, a senior member of the dairying industry.

John Dainton simply spelt out what he perceived as one of the major flaws in the Commission's approach to the financial aspects of asset management. For an agency responsible for drainage, John Dainton

questioned how the Commission could depreciate a drain or a channel, which is just a hole in the ground. "If the hole is already there and being maintained," he said "what are you talking about?" The account of this exchange became a popular anecdote among irrigators. For Dole, John's query was part of a substantial contribution he and other likeminded landholders made to the Commission's later review of financial management.

Senior Officers in Key Roles

Various senior officers had key roles in relation to SPPAC's task. From the Melbourne end, people such as Graham Hunter and Keith Collett contributed greatly to the success of the Pilot Program.

Graham Hunter had a prominent role in the successive phases of the State Government's development of policy and decision-making structures in relation to salinity.³ From his days as the Director of Research for the Parliamentary Salinity Committee in early 1983, he impressed government ministers, interest groups and landholders as open, accessible and someone who played with a straight bat. As the author of the draft "Salt Action: Joint Action" he led the related consultation process from mid 1987. Understandably, he had drawn on the experiences, issues and proposals emerging from the Pilot Program and SPPAC for this "detailed blueprint for managing land and water salinity in the Garden State."⁴

The consultation program involved numerous public seminars in country towns:

Some farmers who had little to do with the central government in Melbourne were pleasantly surprised when senior public servants, such as Graham Hunter took the trouble to talk to them in their own backyards.

Although the visiting government officials were seen by some farmers as policy salesmen for a mistrusted Labor Government, their message of Salt Action: Joint Action was generally supported by the rural community because they came bearing gifts of funding for salinity control measures if the strategy was accepted and acted upon by the rural community, within the emerging guidelines.⁵

After two years in the making, the State Government released its salinity strategy “Salt Action: Joint Action” in May 1988.

In the 90s in the early days of the Decade of Landcare, Hunter was heading up the Salinity Bureau and a member of the National Soil Conservation Program. He recognised that the salinity program in Victoria was a template for managing the diverse range of environmental issues facing the nation. By substituting the words “land degradation” and “Landcare” for salinity in the executive summary of “Salt Action: Joint Action” he gained ready approval for his Landcare Plan as the model to be followed by the States and the Commonwealth governments. This positioned Victoria in the vanguard of the Landcare program.

In similar fashion when he was implementing the Catchment Land Protection Act in 1995 and the Catchment and Land Protection (CLP) Boards were being established, Hunter drew very much on the lessons from SPPAC and other salinity planning groups. Hunter saw John Dainton’s role and that of the successive regional bodies he had led as pivotal in the formulation of policy at this regional level. This was the case in regard to:

- SPPAC’s preparation of the region’s salinity plans and their funding proposals;
- the introduction of community drainage schemes;
- the extension of SPPAC’s regional approach to salinity to develop a regional Landcare Plan in the early 90s thereby capitalising on the success Hunter had in gaining approval to his Landcare Plan;

- the enshrining of the requirement for Regional Catchment Strategies in legislation in the mid 90s; and
- the resolution of the thorny issues surrounding funding and cost sharing arrangements.

In regard to this last achievement, Hunter considered that John was instrumental in drafting a plan that identified the costs, the beneficiaries (e.g. farmers, community etc.) and the extent to which each group could be expected to carry these costs. John did not begin with an ambit claim (e.g. government to pay all the costs). What Hunter saw come from John Dainton and the regional community was a well-reasoned and responsible argument – an approach that had integrity and identified appropriate levels of commitment from the landholders, local government and the wider community.

Keith Collett as Manager Investigations Branch of the RWC had a key role in advising SPPAC and its irrigation group on the technical aspects of drainage. Keith had been in this position from 1984 and had previously been responsible for the design of the Mineral Reserve Basins project. He stayed with the many twists and turns of this controversial project. Following a massive protest by farmers in North-west Victoria on a cold winter morning in 1986, State Cabinet’s Ministerial Task Force on salinity deferred the project indefinitely. The Government also approved the payment of part of the legal costs incurred by farmers in their earlier class action against this project. Collett had seen at close quarters, the hazards of the decision-making process in regions where landholders and other stakeholders would be directly affected by RWC proposals about access to water, land and the cost implications.

The coaching of RWC senior officers by rural sociologist Sharman Stone in regard to community consultation helped prepare Collett for the Pilot Program in the Goulburn Broken. Under the leadership of John Dainton and the networking skills of SPPAC members, the role of the community would gradually dominate the regional process.

As Chairman of PMAC, Keith Collett's respect for John Dainton and Leon Heath grew as he watched their impressive efforts and those of Stuart Brown at communicating the technical issues to landholders and the wider community.

Technical Expertise in the Region

Specialist officers based in the region also had a key role in advising SPPAC and contributing to the many public meetings, workshops etc. which were key elements in the SPPAC communication program. Prominent among these specialists were Bill Trewhella (RWC) and Bob Wildes (DARA). To members of SPPAC and PMT who were close enough to observe their input, they seemed to thrive on the demands and challenges of the Pilot Program.

Bill Trewhella had been based in the region initially from 1968 to 1972 when the early salinity work was mainly with groundwater pumping targeted to the orchard areas. After about eight years in Melbourne looking at salinity problems across Victoria, he returned to Tatura to work in an expanded salinity program. However this program faltered due to funding problems and salt disposal questions. Trewhella saw the opportunities for genuine progress with a salinity program in the region with the arrival of SPPAC and the salt disposal issues dealt with under the Murray-Darling Basin Salinity and Drainage Strategy.

Notwithstanding his assessment that the opportunity for real progress now existed, Trewhella was sceptical about the extent to which genuine consultation might occur in the region. He also thought there was a risk that the outcome may be one of political convenience in order to get a result. In retrospect he saw the output achieved by SPPAC as only being possible where someone like John Dainton was involved. He recognised that others in the SPPAC team made major contributions, especially Leon Heath as Chair of the Irrigation Sub-committee. Leon had trained as an agricultural scientist, worked for DARA at Hamilton, married the daughter of a farmer in the Shepparton region and took over the family farm. Heath impressed as "a very meticulous operator". Trewhella recalled how difficult it was for the non-technical members of SPPAC and Committee members. Leon Heath would arrive with his papers liberally splattered with red ink. "He had read every line and had commented extensively and meticulously." By comparison, Trewhella knew that John Dainton lacked professional training but "as a team they were as good a combination as you were ever gong to get." Trewhella considered though that John Dainton's sheer ability, his political nous and his "touch" were factors that were critical to the achievements of the Pilot Program.

As a Regional Investigation Officer, Trewhella provided much of the technical input to meetings. He, along with other technical experts, made their presentations but they realised that often they unavoidably went over the heads of many present. While many struggled to get their minds around the technicalities, it seemed that John Dainton almost always seemed to understand the processes and had an ability to interpret them. Trewhella "always found it very challenging because none of (the proposals) was ever really black and white.

There were plusses and minuses and it seemed important for SPPAC members to understand these because they could then put different values on the outcomes. So you had to make sure that people were presented with both sides of the story and that just made a lot of things very complex." Trewhella took the

view that, if you didn't give the minuses and pluses, the complexities and uncertainties of the technical "story", you could be accused of misleading people. So with committed technical officers like Trehwella, the Pilot Program was both a thoroughgoing and very open process in regard to technical issues.

Bob Wildes, as the representative of the Department of Agriculture on PMAC, was based in the region but spent a lot of time in Melbourne in his role as Principal Officer on Water and Salinity Management. He was involved in the region and head office and had a close working relationship with John Dainton especially during the early phases of implementation of the salinity management plan in 1990-1994.

As with other observers of John Dainton's leadership style, Wildes was impressed by his vision of the future direction or next step for SPPAC or later SPAC and succeeding regional bodies he led. Yet Wildes believed that he was also politically astute in that, in leading his constituency, he avoided getting too far ahead of them and actually "losing" them. Wildes observed how Dainton would take his colleagues and the region's community from very specific issues, about which they were very passionate, to engage with broader issues and a broader view of the world. This ability was crucial to the development of programs that had to be accepted at the State level and would also involve other regional communities.

The complex issues arising in SPPAC and its sub-committees were the responsibility of various government agencies and their specialist representatives. Wildes noted that Dainton did not try to tell the technical people their business. Rather, he encouraged them, took their advice and was able to bring all the various agencies together in working towards a common goal. He was inclusive in his working relationships and in his sharing of information. Wildes recalled how a car trip to Melbourne with John Dainton (which Dainton made frequently) could be a very enlightening experience as John shared where the many salinity issues were progressing or had stalled.

Dainton also reported regularly to SPPAC and other related meetings on the outcome of his contacts and representations with Ministers and agencies in Melbourne. Dainton's openness and acknowledgement of agency roles were crucial to bringing the wider range of sometimes competing bodies, largely pursuing their own ends, to working together toward a common goal.

As the decision-making process and implementation programs moved along, John, and also Jeremy Gaylard, gave more than formal acknowledgment to the agencies involved. They both strongly supported the agencies in public and in private. When a milestone was reached or a major event celebrated, they were quick to praise the achievements of the agencies involved, always lauding their contribution to the wider team effort in the region.

Similarly in the consultation and implementation phases, John Dainton sought out processes that would result in decisions that everybody would be comfortable with. In the implementation process, John built on the approach adopted with the SPPAC sub-committees. He established Working Groups for the programs that were a mixture of technical people and community representatives. They worked through the issues thoroughly so that the proposals were well founded and thoroughly tested in terms of their implications both technically and for the community.

Wildes attributed the level of influence John achieved to the fact that while he was assertive he was not aggressive. When he had a point to make, it didn't matter who it was aimed at, he could make it well without turning it into an attack or becoming aggravated about it. This meant he was able to get his message across without getting people's backs up. His adherence to this approach was no doubt due to his concern to maintain his credibility. Dainton had said: "Once you lose your credibility it is very difficult to ever get it back." So he always worked hard at maintaining credibility.

Wildes recognised that this level of involvement of agencies and the regional community and their ongoing ownership of outcomes was basically due to the attitude of Ministers such as Joan Kirner and Evan Walker. He appreciated that they genuinely 'walked the talk' on community empowerment. The experience of most agency personnel who worked with people like John Dainton was that they started to really enjoy this way of going about their business. And when they could see some achievement they had been involved in, along with their local community, it was very empowering for specialist officers – like Bob Wildes.

Dryland Sub-committee/ Management Plan Working Group

With Penny Jones as Chairperson, the Dryland Sub-committee had SPPAC members from the dryland, Ian Elder, Angus Howell, Keith McLarty, Nan Oates, Mike Ryan and Tom Ryan, along with Menon Parameswaran (VCAH Dookie College) and John Dainton. Members co-opted for the working group represented the VFF, Mid Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group, the DCFL Benalla Regional Advisory Committee, Whiteheads Creek Catchment Group and the Molyullah-Tatong Tree and Land Protection Group. PMT officers Darrel Brewin and Graeme David provided support along with departmental officers, Kevin Ritchie and Brian Garrett from DCFL, Gerard Mahoney (DARA), Bill Trehwella and Geoff Earl (RWC). This membership followed the pattern of appropriate community and technical representation that SPPAC had adopted for the parallel planning process for the irrigation area.

In several respects the dryland salinity strategy process was less intensive than applied in the irrigation area:

- It did not have an agency, an equivalent to the RWC, nor a technical group, equivalent to PMAC, closely supporting the sub-committee.
- Darrel Brewin as the PMT Assistant Program Coordinator managed the dryland plan but left to join the MDBC before the strategy was completed.
- Key departments in the dryland were less supportive of the planning process.
- Pressures on the two Assistant Program Coordinators (Brewin and Brown) prevented them from liaising effectively.

The perceptions and cultures in the irrigation area and dryland were significant factors in shaping the planning outcomes. Dryland issues were confined to particular areas of the region. Then there was the notion that dryland farming systems were contributing to the salt load of the irrigation farmers and there was a limited understanding of groundwater and salinity issues in the dryland.

Contrary to the perceptions held by many in the region, John Dainton was familiar with dryland farms having grown up on one. He strongly supported the dryland planning process through his membership of the dryland sub-committee. Also he encouraged the dryland representatives who had taken the lead in attempts to understand and counter salinity in the period before SPPAC came on the scene. He recognised the key roles that Penny Jones, Ian Elder, Angus Howell and Mike Ryan in particular had in the dryland component of the overall strategy.

Others close to the action felt though that John had a problem coming out of his culture of dairy farming and irrigation in relating to the culture of the dryland. Farmers in the two regions were driven by different imperatives and systems. For six months of the year dryland farmers had modest workloads. By comparison irrigation farmers, particularly those in dairying, were driven by the continuous demands of their industry, the intensity of farming practices and their unrelenting personal inputs.

By reason of their working cheek by jowl as property owners and their ongoing industry and market concerns, dairy farmers were a close group. Among dryland farmers their associations were limited more to personal connections. Individual landholders could be largely unaware of the properties or the situation of other farmers in their area.

The irrigation area, in terms of the value of production, heavily dominated the region's economy. Drylanders' observation of the commercial imperatives in the irrigation area generated a perception that its farmers were dominated by a business culture. Drylanders, by comparison, tended to manage their lives and their businesses as a lifestyle culture. Attending the sheep sale on Friday morning and the cow sale on Tuesday afternoons were their regular commitments – along with managing the property. They regarded the workloads of dairying from 4am to 7pm seven days a week as an unduly heavy commitment.

The dryland was fortunate in the membership of its SPPAC Sub-committee. Penny Jones (Chairperson) was well versed in salinity issues and had a major concern about the implications for the environment of its impacts and of proposals to remedy salinity. Penny also had considerable experience of community consultation. This was all the more important in the dryland where there was a much lower level of awareness of salinity and its ramifications for both dryland farms and for flow-on effects in the irrigation area. Penny had strong support from Ian Elder (Deputy Chair). Ian ran a beef herd and merino sheep at Longwood. He was awarded the prestigious Hanslow Cup (the forerunner of the Landcare award system) for his achievements in land management. He was a member of the Grasslands Society, a past President of the VFF Euroa branch and a member of the Creightons Creek Group. Darrel Brewin had been keen to see Ian involved in SPPAC due to his knowledge of Ian's work with the Soil Conservation Authority.

As with other SPPAC members who were involved in meetings with government departments in Melbourne, Ian valued the times he travelled by car with John Dainton.

He benefited from the open discussion on the Pilot Program with the key players in Melbourne and in the region. Ian appreciated John's simple charisma and found it a pleasure to work with him. Ian also observed how quickly John gained the respect of the senior people in the Departments as well as the Ministers. He attributed this largely to the fact that John never said anything stupid or off-line. He was always lucid and to the point in discussions. It was obvious that he always prepared extremely well in advance of these meetings.

Both Penny and Ian greatly valued the skill and experience Angus Howell brought to the Sub-committee. As noted in Chapter 5, Angus had been prominent in the dryland in raising awareness about salinity and other natural resource management issues, holding field days in Warrenbayne and moving on to form the Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group. In their quest to bring together the farming community, they had applied to the National Soil Conservation Program in Canberra for funding to employ a coordinator. Angus applied for this position, which he held for more than eleven years during which Landcare became the source of funding.

Through the 80s, the Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group successfully lobbied agency personnel and Ministers, including Evan Walker and Joan Kirner, who had demonstrated their concerns for natural resource management issues such as salinity. These ministers, particularly Joan Kirner who came and met with the Group's executive, had a special interest in empowering communities to assert their role in the planning and implementation of remedial measures.

The Group worked hard at raising awareness, growing to a membership of 140 landholders. They captured farmers' interest initially regarding salinity as a widespread problem across the locality. They facilitated access to State Government assistance, as this was being refocussed through cost sharing under the soil conservation programs. Where farmers were involved in the changes in land management practices and salinity programs, the landscape in dryland areas gradually changed.

As a member of SPPAC when the Pilot Program commenced in 1986, Angus realised that a larger input went into the irrigation sub-committee both technically and in agency resources. He recognised that this may have reflected the larger community involved and the more extensive research and knowledge base in the irrigation area. He was reassured by John Dainton's concern and respected his challenges to SPPAC and to the sub-committee to get the dryland staff going. However he was not sure that even John Dainton knew what that meant. Angus observed that John Dainton pressed the PMT officers Graeme David and Darrel Brewin, to pursue the dryland strategy. Fortunately they both had a solid background in dryland issues as did most of the sub-committee members. Angus believed that the technical information was presented in such a way that the sub-committee was able to understand it in the main. Their motivation was high because they appreciated that they were driving one of the two major components of the Pilot Program – a high profile government initiative.

Angus appreciated John Dainton's ability to lead SPPAC so that it was perceived as a united exercise. At the same time the drylanders tended to feel that they were getting less out of the process and that the irrigation area gained more in terms of the available resources. This emphasis reflected the less well-developed technical understanding and the more limited progress in identifying remedial measures in the dryland at that stage.

In the awareness raising and community consultation in the dryland, Angus admired John Dainton's endless energy. He could not recall John ever declining an invitation to address a meeting – even though he was more at home with the issues and the facts in the irrigation area. The drylanders realised that John had a lot more community and interest group issues to deal with in the irrigation area, but that he also had more tools and understanding to work with.

Angus believed that SPPAC achieved an enormous amount largely due to John Dainton's passionate persistence. This commitment meant that he had some major disagreements and severe arguments but he never apologised for the position he took. There were occasions when he admitted he was wrong. In these situations he did not hang on to a questionable position. It wasn't that he didn't care if he offended people. He did care and he tried not to offend. He wasn't always successful, but he kept going.

John Dainton's commitment and persistence were the qualities that marked him out as a champion for the Pilot Program. Angus Howell learnt from SPPAC experience and similar initiatives that "you can have systems, as many systems as you like, but they don't go anywhere unless you have champions."

The Draft Dryland Plan

With the departure of Brewin to a position in Canberra, the task of finishing the draft passed to Brian Garrett in 1989. Garrett had the unenviable task of drawing on the limited material produced to that point and a preliminary related document prepared by a consultant. After working up a basic draft with the Dryland Sub-committee, they embarked on a consultation program. The quality of the feedback did not impress Garrett on the whole, although some on the Sub-committee may have felt it was helpful. The dramatic increase in the level of awareness generated by the consultation program was tracked by awareness surveys in this period.

The use of maps indicating salt and recharge areas was important in achieving this result. The preparation of these maps was a difficult task for Garrett and other specialist personnel, involving a lot of work on recharge areas and rough approximations in some of the maps. However this material and the results of the consultation provided the basis for identifying priorities and formulating proposals in the draft strategy.

Brian Garrett warmed to John Dainton as a “big picture person.” While he was aware of John’s background in agri-politics, Garrett read his vision as differing from that of regional government being the answer to regional issues. John Dainton had a ‘we can fix it’ approach that envisaged the community taking a major role in redressing their problems. It may not be necessary to have all the government support mechanisms. Garrett interpreted John’s vision as one where, as long as the people thought the task was worth doing, they could get on and tackle it.

Community Education Sub-committee

This Sub-committee appropriately chaired by Penny Jones also included other SPPAC members with experience (Nan Oates) and/or close involvement with the media (M. Parameswaran, G. Witten and John Dainton).

SPPAC was required to design, implement and evaluate a community education/awareness program. Under the State Salinity Program, baseline data on the level of salinity awareness was also required. The Sub-committee’s ongoing awareness development program focused on these priorities. Monash University was also contracted to provide an assessment of this program and community education recommendations. A well-planned media program was launched and maintained.

A close working relationship with the region’s media, particularly the McPherson Press ensured that SPPAC, the PMT and the government departments involved in the Pilot Program enjoyed a high level of support in communicating with the community. The McPherson Press had launched its Country News supplement in March 1987 as a result of collaboration between a McPherson journalist Ms Diana Mundy, the PMT and DARA’s Community Education Officer, Bill O’Kane. David Wauchope, the senior DARA officer in the region played a vital role in providing research and other topical material. This was used in articles, progress reports and other relevant material. The Country News supplement was committed to fully supporting the Pilot Program, reporting on all rural news of relevance in the region and featuring salinity issues. This supplement was included in all the local newspapers McPherson published across the region. This maximised the reach of this print material.

The Sub-committee was responsible for the region’s salinity newsletter “SPPAC CHAT” which was designed to go beyond the general news coverage on the Pilot Program in the media. SPPAC realised that the target audiences it had identified needed a special presentation of specific issues relevant to salinity. It was SPPAC’s way of communicating to the region about its own issues, without the distraction of technical or bureaucratic information. The number of landholder groups across the region increased in line with the higher profile given to salinity. “SPPAC CHAT” would have been a key factor behind these trends. John Dainton attributed the increasing awareness of salinity issues, the more informed participation in public meetings and practical responses largely to the impact of “SPPAC CHAT”.

SALT FORCE SPPAC CHAT

NEWSLETTER OF THE GOULBURN BROKEN REGION SALINITY PILOT ADVISORY COUNCIL SEPTEMBER 1998

WE NEED YOUR THOUGHTS!

This is the first SPPAC issues paper seeking feedback on a range of salinity matters being addressed under the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land Water and Salinity Management Plan. Raising water tables and associated salinity problems are expanding and must be managed across the region if productivity is to be maintained.

John & David
CHAIRMAN, SALINITY PILOT PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL

ISSUE 1: MANAGING CHANNEL AND DRAIN SALINITIES THE FACTS

- Salt is accumulating in the region at 30,000 tonnes per year. This amount is over and above that removed by surface drainage and disposal from the Phase A pumping scheme.
- Water tables are steadily rising. Some 35 percent of the region (175,000 ha) had a water table within two metres of the surface in 1987. If no action is taken to address the "Underground Flood", this will spread to 84 percent of the region by 2020.
- The extent of salinity is expanding with the spread of high water tables.
- Current channel salinities vary within the region from 50 EC in the Murray Valley Irrigation Area to 130 EC in the Rochester Irrigation Area.
- Pasture and crop yields are not affected by irrigation water salinities below 500 EC. In the lighter soil types water up to 1,200 EC has no detrimental effect provided water tables are controlled.
- A policy of groundwater pumping, reuse and managed salt disposal will protect some 150,000 hectares.
- Drain salinities will increase four to five fold by 2020 if nothing is done to correct the water table-salinity situation.
- Drainage diversions already play a major role in reducing salt disposal from this region. This activity should continue.



SALT DISPOSAL

- The Phase A groundwater pumping scheme already protects the bulk of the region's horticulture by outlying groundwater to the channel and drainage system. Much of this pumped water is used by irrigators productively after mixing with the low salinity channel water.
- Some additional disposal of groundwater to the River Murray is to be allowed under tightly controlled conditions agreed between the Victorian, New South Wales, South Australian and Federal Governments. This extra disposal entitlement is to be phased in over approximately 20 years under the Murray Daring Basin Salinity and Drainage Strategy.

But . . .

The above policies will see some trade offs. These are:

- Salt disposal can only occur via the region's channel and drainage systems.
- The region will need to purchase salt disposal rights to the River Murray. (This will contribute proportionately to works downstream to reduce river salinities.
- Groundwater pumping and salt disposal can only occur where suitable aquifers are located. Some areas will not physically support groundwater pumping options (the subject of a future issues paper).
- Some channel salinity increases will occur in areas where water tables are not able to be controlled.
- Marginal increases in channel salinities will have minor impacts on regional industries and towns which draw water from the channel system.

THE PROPOSALS

To protect as much of the Shepparton Irrigation Region as possible through groundwater pumping and reuse while minimising impacts within the region and the need for salt disposal to the River Murray, SPPAC recommends the following:

- The Region's channel and drainage systems are to be available for groundwater outfall on a managed basis.
- Channel Salinity increases are to be minimised with maximum limits being set by current Phase A operating rules:
 1. Average seasonal salinity to be less than 500 EC (300 ppm)
 2. Maximum average for any seven consecutive days to be 750 EC (45 ppm)
 3. Maximum salinity at any stage is 850 EC (500 ppm)
- Special consideration is to be given to minimising channel salinity increases into areas where sub surface drainage is less feasible.
- The local community will decide on the extent to which surface drains are to be used for salt disposal when developing the details for on-ground works

Comments are needed on this paper by 10th October.

Direct to:

CHAIRMAN:
SALINITY PILOT PROGRAM ADVISORY COUNCIL,
P.O. Box 1752, SHEPPARTON, Vic. 3630

For further information contact:

Stuart Brown (Phone 058 22 2288)

The Sub-committee also explored and pursued other ways of informing and engaging sectors of the community beyond the reach of the normal flow of SPPAC communication. The awareness-raising program that was particularly successful in the Shepparton Irrigation Region majored on:

- general awareness of high watertables and salinity implications;
- awareness of SPPAC activities, attitudes, and advice;
- awareness of the developing regional salinity strategy (dryland and irrigation components);
- schools/formal education in collaboration with DARA Salinity Education Officer and including major participation and involvement in the state-wide "Saltwatch" program; and
- raising awareness of 'target' audience groups with specific interests in a need to become familiar with salinity (e.g. municipalities, bankers/financiers, estate agents).⁶

The Underground Flood

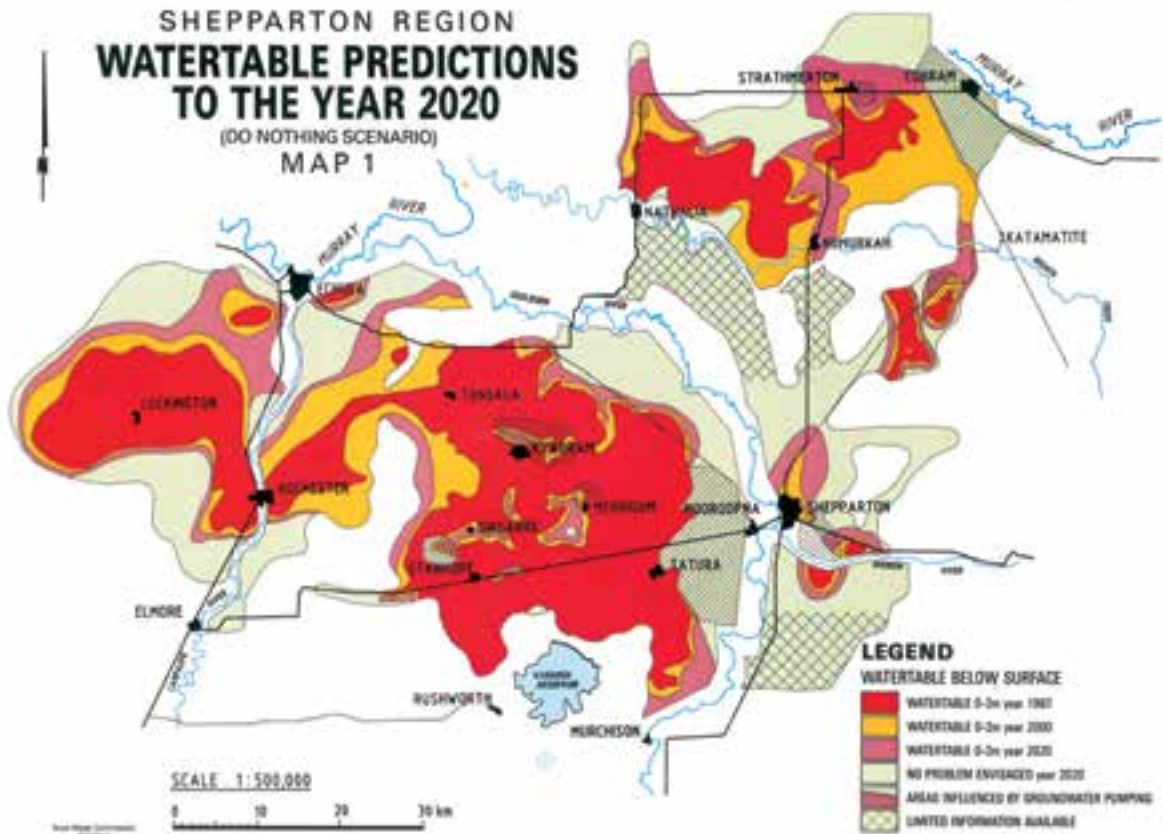
The program included several highly effective features. The release of the brochure "Salinity – the Underground Flood" had a major impact on the region. It included watertable maps that showed how high watertables (less than one metre from the surface) had expanded dramatically between 1982 and 1986/87, coinciding with the filling of the Goulburn Valley with ground water. All sectors of the community became aware of the worsening picture clearly illustrated in the maps. Those concerned with their financial and property value implications were alarmed. Des O'Shea, a real estate agent of longstanding in Shepparton saw the effectiveness of the maps in client reactions. Wherever the red colour (for high salinity) appeared there was instant resistance to even considering a property in that area. This was especially the case in areas such as Stanhope. Just a mention of the area resulted in immediate loss of interest in spite of the fact that there were magnificent properties there.

Potential buyers from other dairying areas in Victoria, such as Warragul, were doing their homework and arrived with their watertable maps as an essential guide.

SPPAC would have been more than satisfied with the effectiveness of the watertable maps as an awareness-raising tool, notwithstanding the reactions of the many landholders, estate agents and financiers who contacted SPPAC members or the PMT officers. As a means of communication the maps were simple, suitably coloured illustrations of the mounting salinity threat revealing the progress of the "underground flood" in recent years. These indicators could be related to the well-known examples of salinity on severely affected properties, public land and recreation areas (e.g. Tatura Golf Course).

The colour brochure "Salinity: a Delicate Balance" dealt with issues in the dryland. Understandably its impact was not as dramatic as the coloured maps in "Salinity: the Underground Flood," simply because there was less that was shocking and that called for urgent action in the dryland.

SPPAC's face-to-face communication with the community continued as members met with organisations in their networks and other interest groups, as opportunities arose. This generated a heavy workload especially for John Dainton and the PMT officers. Special community-based seminars and workshops provided major opportunities to raise awareness and encourage participation in salinity related initiatives. Seminars were convened with dryland and irrigation municipalities, landholder groups and bankers, financiers, real estate agents and valuers. They were also designed to cover special issues relevant to salinity e.g. surface drainage, farm finances. The effectiveness of these gatherings depended on the delivery of appropriate information on technical issues and practical proposals that the participants could take up. The preparedness of those attending to take the Pilot Program seriously was given a solid nudge by presenters such as the Community Education Officer, Bill O'Kane who became renowned for his down-to-earth communication style.



Keeping an eye on salinity

By Abbe Miller

The salt of the earth has been subjected to more than usual scrutiny this week with the twice yearly saltwatch program underway.

Saltwatch is a community education and action scheme.

Schools, community groups and individuals can be involved in sampling local water sources and measuring the salinity of the samples.

Thirty students from grades three to six at Grainsville Primary School have this week been collecting samples from home and farm water sources, as well as channels and bores near the school. Samples have been measured using an electrical conductivity meter which measures the conductivity of the water. This reading can then be easily converted to salinity parts per million (ppm).

Salinity Community Education Officer, Mr Geoff McFarlane co-ordinated local aspects of the week which relies on

co-operation from a number of Government Departments including the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DARA) and the Rural Water Commission (RWC).

The RWC compiles all the information from various sites into saltwatch maps, which show the salinity content of flowing and non-flowing surface water and underground water. Catchment boundaries are marked on the map and the pattern of salinity can be followed from one end of a river basin to the next, and from one time of sampling to the next.

About 25,000 Victorian children from more than 600 schools gather and analyse the samples twice a year.

They have participated for the past four years and the results of their sampling help develop the RWC's year strategy for fighting salinity.

The scope and importance of saltwatch school involvement is unique in the world and provides the children, and very often their parents with an

understanding of research methods, the importance of salinity and a great sense of community involvement.

Head teacher at Grainsville Primary School, Mr Jeff Blackley said that although the school was not running a district salinity program, the future school studies environmental themes throughout the year and saltwatch is only one aspect.

According to Mr Blackley the children are keen to be involved and their improved understanding of the problem is leading to discussion and sometimes action in the home and on the farm. Community Education Officer Geoff McFarlane believes the program has raised awareness in the area and provides the basis for a more informed generation of farmers in the future.

Saltwatch co-ordinators have a couple of meters available for community groups to use and some schools have applied for community salinity grants to purchase their own meters.



Head teacher at Grainsville Primary School Jeff Blackley and students from grades four and five analyse water samples with a conductivity meter.

Participants at a surface drainage meeting recounted Bill's memorable performance, to good effect beyond the gathering. PMT Assistant Coordinator Stuart Brown had completed a presentation on the seriousness of the salinity situation and pointed out how the landholders could form a group. Bill O'Kane then reinforced this challenge with an anecdote along the following lines:

It reminds me of the old fisherman from Rushworth who used to fish on the Waranga Basin – he was a bit of an old rogue.

The young Fisheries Officer, straight out of University, set himself the task of catching him poaching. He used to wait up late at night, get up very early, but he couldn't catch the poacher.

Eventually the old fisherman took pity on the young Fisheries Officer and invited him to come fishing with him the next morning.

The fisherman cruised to his favourite spot, stopped the motor, dropped the anchor then reached into his tackle bag and produced a stick of gelignite. He nonchalantly lit the fuse and tossed it over the side. You wouldn't believe the carnage – there were dead and stunned fish everywhere.

The old fisherman started to rake the fish in despite the fact that the fisheries officer was laying down the law and what would happen when he got him to dry land.

The old fisherman took absolutely no notice and when he got the last fish in the boat, he casually reached into the tackle bag and produced another stick of gelignite, lit the fuse and handed it to the young Fisheries Officer and said "Are you going to sit there talking or are you going to fish?"

Bill reckoned the salinity problem was like the stick of gelignite – we could sit around talking or we could fish. SPPAC made it very clear it was their intention to fish.

O'Kane excelled in communicating in a way that grabbed the audience's attention. His use of some light humour got the people thinking clearly ... and it provided some welcome comic relief.

The Sub-committee also set out to raise awareness in the education institutions in the region. This strategy benefited from Bill O'Kane's experience in the Country Areas Program where he had worked extensively with schools. His standing as a community education person helped him significantly in gaining access to schools. This inspired a variety of projects including visits and research into salinity affected areas and remedial works such as tree planting initiatives. SPPAC and the PMT noted a major increase in the number of enquiries from secondary and tertiary students for project material.

Similar increases in the rate of enquiries from landholders were experienced by RWC, DCFL and DARA. Interest in community drainage schemes increased among existing landholders. General enquiries about salinity also increased, some of which came from potential property purchasers. From mid 1988 the Commonwealth Development Bank required potential borrowers purchasing in the region to obtain information regarding the salinity status of the properties under consideration.

SPPAC progressively reviewed the effectiveness of its various forms of community consultation. Major events such as the Community Conference on Salinity in mid 1987 were assessed and reported on to NRECC and the Salinity Bureau.⁷ While SPPAC considered the quality of feedback from this conference was generally encouraging, there was some concern about the number of non-departmental and non-organisational delegates compared with departmental personnel. SPPAC members identified a number of reasons for this outcome including inadequate publicity, competing regional seminars, costs associated with attendance (travel, accommodation and down-time).

The next major event, a Salinity Dinner hosted by the VFF (Tatura Branch) was an outstanding success. SPPAC also contracted Monash University to provide an ongoing regional community awareness assessment and community education program recommendations.⁸

Expert Officers

The PMT Officers Graeme David and Darrel Brewin and DARA officer Bill O'Kane in the position of Community Education Officer assisted the Sub-committee. For Bill, this was the beginning of a significant career in salinity and later in the wider arena of natural resource management in the region. It was also the beginning of a long and fruitful 'partnership' with John Dainton as John and Bill respectively moved through a sequence of leadership and management positions in the catchment organisational structures that emerged during the next 15 years.

Bill O'Kane's introduction to SPPAC was well remembered by councillors. Dressed as community leaders in their white shirts and ties their first glimpse of Bill was of a laid-back individual wearing shorts and Roman sandals. Some remembered his large hairy toes. The SPPAC members would have possibly expected someone more in the mould of an extension officer – with moleskins and R M Williams gear. Bill's mode of dress was deliberately pitched to distinguish him as "different" and more in the "normal bloke" category. Respect for Bill as an extraordinary contributor to the Pilot Program came quickly and grew over succeeding years as the catchment organisations evolved – and his attire became more appropriate as he grew in stature with them.

Bill O'Kane's communication philosophy was crucial to the success of the Sub-committee. He recognised the strengths of John Dainton's ability to translate technical issues and planning options into everyday language.

Bill, himself, adopted an approach that he had used successfully in his Country Areas Program and that complemented John's communication style. While Bill did not see himself as the best person to deal with the media, he knew he had skills in organising events to mark the milestones and celebrations of special achievements. In these events he ensured that the emphasis was on the community, its people, so that they were always the primary focus rather than the departmental officers. So events were community driven rather than driven by technical issues. Bill's approach was basically to keep communication simple. He believed that "too much knowledge buggers you up for thinking simply." So he majored on "getting simple concepts out." This was the main strategy behind the success of the watertable maps. They used the signature colours of the watertables underground to convey a blunt message about salinity.

Local Government in the Pilot Program

The role of Local Government had always been clearly recognised by SPPAC as critically important in salinity control. The definition of this role was therefore a major objective pursued through general awareness raising, in seminars on a range of relevant issues and on topics of specific concern to local government in each of the dryland and irrigation sub-regions.

Salinity impacted on local government through its degradation of roads and public space in areas of high watertables. Extensive areas of cumbungi, a native perennial reed that grew in borrow pits and other low-lying areas contributed to the serious problem of rising watertables in the irrigation area. SPPAC worked with local government exploring ways of eradicating it. PMT Assistant Coordinator Stuart Brown investigated the potential of cumbungi in the manufacture of particle board.

In June 1988 (Meeting No. 22) SPPAC decided that, where there was adequate drainage outfall, municipalities should be encouraged to drain their roadside borrow pits, as a means of assisting salinity control.

Councils were responsible for large areas of public land alongside roads, the drainage for which should have been an integral part of a community or regional drainage program. Proposals to use these areas as drainage lines foundered on the risk of legal liability (for example, in relation to accidents). One pragmatic approach used was to locate the drain inside the fence line of adjoining properties and contributing towards the cost of these works. However the cost of maintaining road shoulders and pavements in the areas of high watertables was a significant budget item for affected councils. This was one of the key issues SPPAC used in discussion with councils as a means of encouraging their involvement.

The Shire of Rodney, in particular, had been actively involved with the Pilot Program both through its administration and then through Cr. Tom Perry when he was appointed to SPPAC. The Shire had proposed a consultancy to better define its own role in relation to groundwater pumping and landforming. Its application for a grant from the Federal Local Government Development Fund for a study of the role of local government in relation to salinity control was solidly supported by SPPAC.

SPPAC saw this as an important initiative of relevance to all irrigation municipalities. It was proposed that if successful the consultancy should run from April to completion in November to allow the findings to be keyed into the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan. The PMT was aware that the Municipal Association of Victoria had received a grant for employment of a part-time research officer and a consultant to investigate the municipal role in salinity and was assured that, if the Rodney Shire application was successful, the two programs would be interlinked.

SPPAC found it necessary to write to Shires in the Pilot Region requesting planning information on their private forestry and tree planting policies. The Dryland sub-committee had to cover private land, pine forestry and other tree planting issues specifically in the revegetation component of its strategy. This included an investigation and clarification of the control provisions in Shire Planning Schemes and Interim Development Orders. These and other salinity related planning issues prompted SPPAC to request information from the MAV on how each municipality in the Pilot Region made land use planning decisions in relation to salinity, particularly in relation to the issues of subdivision, drainage, road stability, building sites, agriculture, forestry, water quality and erosion hazards. SPPAC needed to know if salinity was taken into account in municipal planning decisions throughout the region.

SPPAC encountered other potentially serious planning issues for local government that were related to salinity-affected land. In mid 1988 the Shire of Tungamah applied to the Ministry for Planning and Environment for planning approval to proceed with a 40 lot unsewered residential subdivision at Katandra West. The MPE recognised from watertable maps that the area was within a high watertable zone and requested comment from DARA, DCFL, RWC and EPA. The latter three all registered concern re high watertables, particularly with regard to the operation of septic tanks. The proposed allotments were all standard sized residential allotments and a second stage of the subdivision was proposed for a later date.

It was clear that the Shire of Tungamah saw itself as a "guinea pig" on the issue. The Shire had written to SPPAC requesting financial assistance for groundwater/soil investigations requested by MPE (and to be conducted by the RWC) to enable consideration of the application. SPPAC did not have funds for such purposes and considered site investigations to be the prerogative of the proponent.



Seminar on impact of salinity on municipalities

Goulburn Valley councils face serious changes to rating structures and land values as regional salinity problems worsen, a Shepparton seminar was told last week.

Melbourne valuer, Mr Phil Murray, told the seminar for municipal councillors that urban rates could rise by 15 per cent as a result of declining rural revenue caused by salinity.

Mr Murray said his figures were based on an estimated 25 per cent decline in rural property values, calculated as a "worst possible scenario" if no further salinity control measures were implemented.

He said figures would vary widely between municipalities because of differing levels of salt damage and industry distribution.

Rate distribution could also be severely affected by transferable water rights becoming permanent, he said.

"In those municipalities which have a large component of irrigated land not only will there be a large reduction in total rateable value but also a great change in the distribution of rates," Mr Murray said.

Irrigated properties within the municipality will

pay less but this deficit must be made up by urban and non irrigated properties.

"Where irrigated property values form the bulk of the total value the increases in urban land and dryland rates could be enormous."

He said losses of farm income within the irrigated region may reach \$45 million a year if no more counter measures were introduced.

Other effects of worsening salinity on shires would include weakening of road foundations due to rising groundwater tables, corrosion of domestic and industrial equipment because of dissolved salts, problems with installation of pipes and pumps, a decline in wetland wildlife and a range of psychological and social problems.

Mr Murray said it was critical Local Governments become involved in implementing and maintaining salinity control programs.

Goulburn/Broken Region Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) coordinator, Mr Graeme David said the seminar aimed to create a greater awareness among shire councillors and officers of how salinity affects local municipalities.

"One way or another salinity is going to have an impact on municipalities," Mr David said.

"Inevitably, control programs are going to cost money and effort and shires, along with Local Governments and other individuals, will have to play a joint role."

"What we are looking to do is talk about the implications of salinity on the irrigation municipalities and on the region as a whole."

"However, we are not in the business of saying 'these are the issues you are going to have to address', we are raising issues to get feedback from the councillors."

He said until recently SPPAC had been raising a broad awareness of the problem but was now at a point where specific issues had to be raised.

"We are looking at how things will be organised on the ground including salt disposal options, salinity management techniques, and how the costs will be borne."

"There is no question salinity and high water-tables are a growing problem and we are at a critical time."

The seminar was sponsored by the Municipal Association of Victoria and SPPAC.

It was one of a series of salinity awareness seminars held by SPPAC to target specific community groups and report their reactions back to the State Government.



Chairman of the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council Mr John Dainton, cost sharing aspects of salinity control will soon become major issues for local councils.



Mayor of Shepparton Cr Bill Hunter discusses the possible impact on councils of a worsening regional salinity problem with Municipal Association of Victoria representative, Ms Jan Salmon. They were taking a break during the recent salinity awareness seminar for shire councillors and officers.



Mr Graeme David



Dead and dying trees border the salinity scar at the Tatura Hilltop Golf Course.

Salinity an urban problem

By ALIDA MILLER

The saline scar on the Tatura Hill Top Golf Course illustrates how regional watertables can affect many aspects of community life, not just farms.

Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) president Alex Arbuthnot joined John Dainton at the golf course to examine the effects of salinity on the broader community before attending the release of salinity plans in Shepparton on Wednesday.

John Dainton said the Hill Top Golf Course scar emphasised that salinity was an urban problem, as well as a problem for farmers.

A section of the course on the Thompson St side and a children's playground across the street both show obvious signs of salinity damage.

Mr Dainton said a groundwater pump would provide the main answer to the problem but salinity would spread to a larger area if not tackled shortly.

Rodney Shire Council has already installed a pump in the playground area on the northern side of Tatura.

The council will install another pump in the O'Brien St area of the town.

Signs of salinity at the golf course include dead and dying native trees and bare ground where common turf grass species can no longer tolerate the salinity. Salt tolerant spiny rush is starting to grow on the course.

Spiny rush is indicative of badly drained areas and thrives in acid and saline soils. The rush is usually one of the last to survive in badly salt-affected areas.

A balance needs to be struck between aesthetic and economic values, according to Alex Arbuthnot.

John Dainton pointed out that the more pumps installed in towns meant that less would be available on farms.

"Agriculture is the State's most valuable asset and major income earner. Tatura and Shepparton are dependant on primary production. Salinity, Victoria's greatest environmental problem, poses one of the biggest threats to that income," said Mr Arbuthnot.



VFF president Alex Arbuthnot with John Dainton and VFF salinity officer Lisa Wilson. Spiny rush is pictured in the foreground.

Subsequent discussions with the Shire of Shepparton had revealed that it also was currently considering a planning application for intensive residential subdivision in an area with a watertable at 30cm depth. SPPAC considered that this planning issue needed to be addressed in a regional context. It pursued this matter in various ways, including referral of known case examples to the Shire of Rodney for consideration under its proposed study and addressing the matter in a municipal seminar.

In October 1988 (Meeting No. 28) SPPAC agreed in principle to the development of a local government planning package as a complement to the Dryland Salinity Management Plan with the Violet Town and Alexandra Shires participating in the working group. The review of planning potentials and the development of a planning package for dryland salinity control was seen as a logical corollary to development of the Regional Dryland Salinity Management Plan.

Earlier in 1988 SPPAC had addressed the wider question of how municipalities could participate in the salinity program. The Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan had advanced to a point where detailed consultation on sub-regional issues was needed. The irrigation municipalities were well aware through involvement with the Pilot Program that they would be participating more in the Program. All relevant municipalities were approached requesting opportunity for discussion on specific issues including identification of priority areas for action, cost sharing and involvement in the consultation process.

John Dainton had been concerned from the beginning of the Pilot Program to have local government involved as a key participant. Now that SPPAC had identified a raft of issues in which the municipalities were either the responsible agency or clearly had a key role, he was determined to engage them more directly and comprehensively. In this task he had the assistance of various SPPAC members with local government connections, of whom

Jeremy Gaylard was his most effective ally. Jeremy had impressive qualifications through his diverse experience of public life in the region and particularly as a Councillor on Shepparton City Council from 1986-1994 and as Mayor for the period 1988-1990, crucial years for the Pilot Program. Jeremy brought his influence to bear on community and industry leaders and the municipalities. He skilfully made the most of the program of seminars, workshops and other targeted events to involve and raise awareness among his fellow mayors and councillors in the region. He was renowned for his ability in "working the room" at those events – a vital factor in the process of bringing councillors on board and gaining their support. John Dainton had developed the ability to communicate the issues, technicalities and options to the wider community. However Jeremy complemented him as a partner who could drive the message home and secure the commitment of other community leaders. This outcome was essential in demonstrating SPPAC's effectiveness in its consultation program.

The effectiveness of this partnership was best demonstrated in the municipalities' response to SPPAC's proposals on cost sharing by local government in the draft Shepparton Land and Water Salinity Management Plan. The plan's name now included "land and water" to better reflect its more holistic scope and emphasis. SPPAC proposed that the operation and maintenance (O & M) components of the public works be met by the regional community and be shared on a 17% local government 83% landholder split. This represented a contribution from local government equivalent to 4.3% of their 1989 rate revenue.

Although the mechanisms and the exact figures had not been finalised, SPPAC provided estimates of what each municipality would be expected to meet under this cost share proposal. The local government contribution would be nil in 1989/90 and rise incrementally to 4.3% of rate revenue over a 30-year period.

SPPAC included two provisions in the Plan that would protect the interests of the regional community.

- The local government contribution would depend on the finance flows from the State and Federal Governments because the region would be paying for the O&M of the capital works component of the Plan. Consequently, if there were no public works, there would be no O&M.
- To ensure that funds collected locally were spent locally, SPPAC proposed that a balance sheet of funds allocated to salinity would be published each year together with the works completed. This would allay any fears of funds being removed from the region or spent on items other than salinity.

SPPAC's success in gaining the support of the municipalities in the region for this cost-sharing approach was one of its impressive achievements.

Finalising the Salinity Management Plan

In October 1988, John Dainton received a letter from Graham Hunter, Manager of the Salinity Bureau, setting out the procedure proposed for finalising the preliminary draft of the salinity management plan. This advice went to the chairpersons of the working groups in the four sub-regions (Goulburn Catchment Dryland Region, Shepparton Irrigation Region, Campaspe West Irrigation District and the Tragowel Plains). It confirmed the deadline for their plans as 31 December 1988 and meetings with NRECC in January and February 1989. Any further consultation and analysis needed could take place on February and March when the Final Draft Plans were to be prepared. The Final Draft Plans were to be released and submitted to the Murray-Darling Basin Commission in March 1989. The deadline for public comment on the Final Draft Plans was scheduled for May 1989. The interim salt disposal entitlements were to be released in June 1989.

At the next SPPAC on 8 November 1988, John Dainton and his fellow councillors agreed to reply challenging this proposal on the following grounds:

- The original concept of a full catchment approach "appears to have been lost as all regions are being encouraged to develop plans prior to reaching conclusions from the pilot program. Completing sub-regional plans without a regional strategy is creating great confusion within the community."
- SPPAC had undertaken to take the major issues to "informed members of the public" before the final Shepparton Irrigation Region implementation plan was released. In this situation the extension of the consultation period by three months could have been considered unnecessary.
- Enormous time, effort, expertise and money had gone into developing the plans. It was anathema to SPPAC that the completion of the plans could be delayed by the bureaucracy's supposition that environmental, technical, economic or consultation issues had not been covered adequately.
- After all this effort, expectation was high in the community that the first stage of onground action was imminent.

SPPAC's primary aim was to expedite the planning phase and to commence implementation. A deadline of July 1989 for finally accepting the plan was considered too distant to retain community interest. Also a basic principle was at stake. The pilot nature of the program would not be used to input to other regions. This would give rise to a major inconsistency in the sub-regional plans. The plan for Campaspe West appeared to be preceding the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan. Furthermore, confusion had arisen with the integration of the Campaspe plan into the Shepparton plan when it was based on a "user pays" principle while Shepparton proposed a "beneficiary pays" approach. SPPAC had sought clarification from the Salinity Bureau about the timelines not being linked to the budgetary timelines of government.

Fortunately, on this score, John Dainton was able to establish that they had the opportunity to have the first year of the implementation programs in the 1989/90 State Salinity Budget.

SPPAC was also apprehensive about the loss of Ministers Joan Kirner, Frank Wilkes, Ken Coghill and Jim Kennan at that time from the membership of NRECC. This committee had also changed its name to the Rural Affairs Conservation and Environment Committee of Cabinet (RACECC). SPPAC congratulated the new members, Ministers Fordham (ARA) Setches (CF&L) and Walsh (RVVC). John Dainton's letter drew attention to the critical importance of the next six months to the salinity program when major decisions would be made by RACECC. With Evan Walker moving to be Minister for Industry, Technology and Resources, SPPAC was understandably concerned about the potential loss of one of the most effective and supportive Ministers especially from the position of Chair of NRECC (now RACECC). SPPAC authorised John Dainton to write to the Premier, John Cain, requesting that Evan Walker be retained as a member and chairman of RACECC to oversee the completion and resolution of the Pilot Program.

As the pace of the Pilot Program quickened in this finalisation phase, John Dainton began to be more concerned about the gaps in the Program's output and unresolved issues. His report to the meeting of SPPAC in November 1988 spelt out his dismay at the results of the public meeting to consider the Campaspe West Salinity Management Plan. At this meeting the working group had reported back from six previous public meetings to which they had taken a first draft to the community. For John Dainton there were several serious concerns about the results of this process:

- there was obviously a great difficulty with the cost of the plan;
- apparently a number of people thought there wasn't a salinity problem; and
- the application of evaporation basins was discounted as a salinity control option.

John Dainton drove home the point that SPPAC needed to learn from this process. For example, how would SPPAC identify whether there is community support for the plan being developed? How could a person who didn't accept there is a salinity problem be expected to support a plan with major cost implications? The meeting had raised a question relating to sanctions indicating that SPPAC would have to consider this aspect of the plan seriously. John Dainton observed that there was obviously a great deal of strain emerging amongst both the working group and associated departmental staff.

SPPAC had various issues yet to be resolved with Government departments, in particular with the RWC. At SPPAC's meeting in December 1988, John Dainton reported on the concerns he had raised with Christine Forster the Chairperson and Michael Blamey, General Manager of the RWC.

The RWC move towards full cost recovery was a crucial issue for the Salinity Management Plans. John Dainton saw this corporate goal as diametrically opposed to the management plans. The RWC could not invest in projects that were not cost efficient. (Salinity works were unlikely to generate extra revenue when they protect current productivity.) Core customers of the RWC (irrigators) could not be expected to pay the full costs of salinity works (nor should they as salinity was a whole-of-community problem and responsibility).

The Shepparton Management Plan was nearing completion with estimated total costs of \$400 million (a \$200 million surface drainage program and a \$100 million sub-surface drainage program plus associated farm works). John Dainton's question was: "How could the Board deal with this scale of works when the annual current capital expenditure of the RWC is \$40 million?"

On the fundamental issue of a rate of return on capital and its implications for charges, SPPAC did not accept that the State government 4% rate of return on capital investment should apply to environmental issues such as salinity.

John Dainton had a number of basic questions for the RWC on this issue:

- Would a 4% rate of return on current cost accounting mean that the present irrigator had to pay for the past, present and future costs of capital?
- Had the RWC Board taken steps towards having this policy waived or taken up within the salinity budget?
- Did the 4% rate of return apply currently to all new projects undertaken by the RWC?

The question of the resources needed by the responsible departments in implementing the management plans had to be addressed. This was a major issue in the case of the RWC. John Dainton asked whether the RWC could gear up with trained staff to handle the increased workload in the areas of investigations, designs and project supervision, resulting from the management plan?

In regard to the RWC Groundwater Charges Review, John Dainton understood the RWC was considering charging full cost for bore construction supervision for groundwater pumps and for permits and annual licences.

- SPPAC had fought very hard to encourage groundwater use in the region to reduce watertable levels (i.e. by means of a \$5 per megalitre rebate) To John's consternation this RWC policy would work in direct competition with a government assistance package. He quoted the proposed charges for supervision of construction at \$600 – 1,300 for an irrigation bore, plus an annual administration fee. John Dainton's question was the one the region was asking - "Why was this level of regulation necessary when the region was drowning in an "underground flood"?"

In his report to this meeting John Dainton gave a clarion call for solidarity on the decisions SPPAC would be making when finalising the management plans. He recognised that in this process, SPPAC and the Irrigation Sub-committee would need to make some very difficult decisions.

Most of these decisions were subject to issues papers that would have been distributed to key organisations and people within the region. SPPAC would not shirk making these decisions since years of research and discussion had gone into the management plan and its recommendations would certainly represent the best bet options available at this point of time. However when the surface drainage option and its five-year work program and other important decisions were released for public comment, Dainton expected there could be considerable pressure and lobbying by sections of the community. For this reason, he stressed how important it was for SPPAC to stand firm behind its recommendations.

In some sectors of the region, the atmosphere was charged due to frustration with government delays. The awareness raising, the heightened expectations and success of the Pilot Program in encouraging initiatives such as the community drainage groups, were positive outcomes. However the lack of a comparable response from government agencies (in this case the RWC as the provider of disposal to channels) was generating frustration and growing scepticism.

John Dainton was understandably sensitive to this situation. He challenged SPPAC to make sure that all steps are taken to ensure the recommended changes outlined by the drainage review were quickly implemented. Failure to get some results would lead to a lot of groups just giving up and becoming very cynical of SPPAC for allowing expectations of a new surface drainage program that would speed up implementation.

John Dainton had a simple but pressing question: "Why cannot pumping into channels be almost immediately implemented under the necessary rules and regulations that apply in areas of the region where pumping is presently allowed?" He recommended a practical answer to SPPAC – that as a matter of urgency, community drains with pump to channel outfalls be assisted financially, provided landholders accept that there is not always outfall capacity available.

This acceptance could be in the form of a legal agreement between the landholders and the RWC. This would allow works to continue prior to the management plan being adopted and should reduce frustration in the community. John Dainton was realistic in assuming that the time delay between adoption and implementation of aspects of the management plan could produce a number of similar situations.

SPPAC had mixed fortunes in the early months of 1989.

- Its term was extended to 30 June 1989.
- Nan Oates had to relinquish her position on SPPAC due to her appointment as a government nominee to the State's Land Protection Council.
- The PMT was seeking a replacement for Darrel Brewin.
- Graeme David was promoted to a position in the Alpine Resorts Commission.
- The Draft Irrigation Management Plan was presented to the RWC Board on 3 February. It was discussed in PMAC as a forum for departmental contact and in a meeting attended by the consultant Don Leslie and senior personnel from RWC and DWR.
- The Irrigation Sub-committee met to provide its final input to the draft plan before its presentation to RACECCC.

The reactions to the draft Irrigation Plan at the various levels of RWC were largely predictable:

- The Board strongly opposed the philosophy behind the plan and the cost sharing approach proposed and pushed for the prioritisation of projects on an economic basis.
- In the PMAC meeting, senior RWC personnel criticised the draft as too aggressive, light on presentation of options, not prescriptive with respect to environmental protection, unable to deal with drainage diverters, inadequate in dealing with more limited salt disposal entitlements and its status as a "regional" plan.

- Don Leslie's more recent discussions (6 February) led to a commitment from RWC and Leslie to prepare a paper prioritising activities under the plan for consideration by SPPAC; in order to prepare more "sophisticated" cost sharing arrangements, Keith Collett (RWC) undertook to provide a list of tables for possible inclusion.
- Don Leslie suggested that producing a draft aimed at satisfying two audiences, the community and the government was a difficult task that, perhaps, should not have been attempted.

Councillors in the SPPAC meeting on 14 February indicated some preparedness to modify the draft, but they were more inclined to strengthen their resolve to run with it:

- Leon Heath insisted that SPPAC was past prioritising projects – that had already occurred in the preparation of the present draft. He believed that the plan needed to highlight, even more, the interdependence of the schemes proposed and to show why options were discarded. This called for the distribution of a set of background papers as a matter of urgency.
- SPPAC viewed with deep concern Leon's account of a follow-up conversation initiated by a RWC Board member. During this conversation it was stated that local departmental officers, and particularly the Program Management Team had poorly advised SPPAC. Leon Heath defended local departmental input to the plan, much of which had been made by RWC officers. Indeed, as he pointed out, one of the strengths of the Pilot Program to date had been the degree of local departmental involvement and commitment.
- SPPAC responded appropriately to this 'back-door' denigration of the plan and its technical input deciding to write to the Chairperson of the RWC expressing its deep concern about this incident.
- Ian Elder summed up SPPAC's view that the plan spelt out what was required – it was not an aggressive statement.

- The problem of conveying the value of the “unseen” outcomes of the plan prompted Geoff Witten to press for an emphasis on the benefits from the maintenance of the environment.
- Penny Jones believed an ecological statement was needed in the plan, and that the environmental objectives needed strengthening. This could have been done by re-emphasising that economic and environmental issues were not separate but were really one and the same concerns. Penny was convinced that the draft was not too political.

RWC officers present suggested that a justification was required as to why the draft was the preferred Option (J Nolan) and there was a need to justify a Research and Investigation program (W Trehwella).

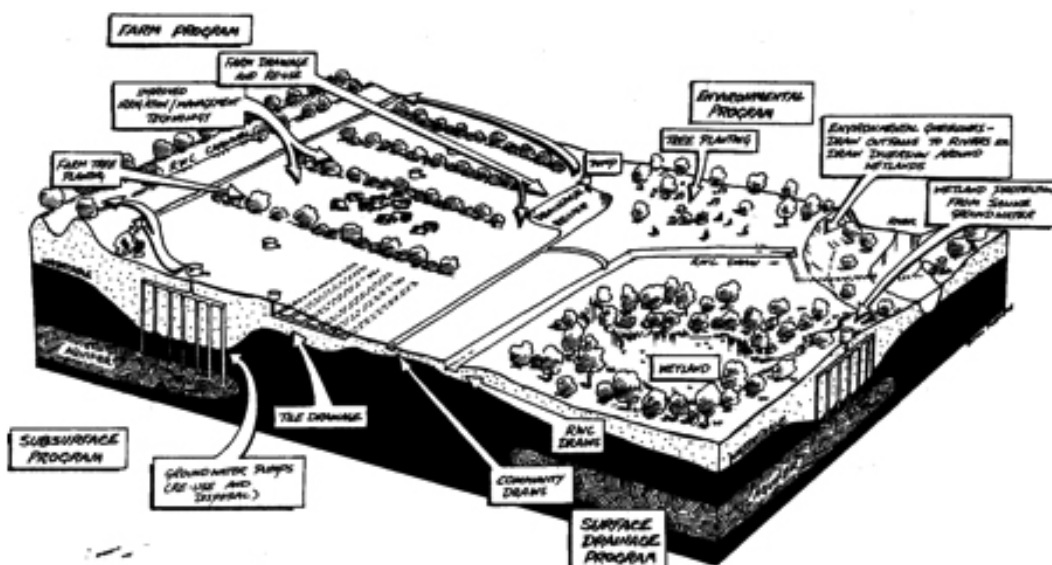
The letters John Dainton had prepared as a foreword in submitting the two Draft Salinity Management Plans for the irrigation and dryland areas reflected the strength of SPPAC’s commitment and readiness to attend to the loose ends. The letters were direct, challenging the government about its failures in regard to the key issues of drainage and its unrealistic position on cost sharing.

The Draft Plan

The Draft Plan submitted by SPPAC was subsequently released by the State Government for comment on 11 August 1989, with the deadline for the submission of responses 6 October 1989. The Draft Plan for final consideration by the regional community and interested government agencies was in two volumes – the Shepparton Land and Water Salinity Management Plan and the Goulburn Dryland Salinity Management Plan. These documents had similar structures overall with variations in approach to deal with the distinctives of the salinity problems in each sub-region. In accordance with the commitment of the State Government and SPPAC to a total catchment approach to salinity, each volume of the draft plan spelt out the basis of its integration with the other. They also took account of the approaches adopted in the Murray-Darling Basin Strategy areas.

These sub-regional draft plans covered the background of hydrogeology, history of land management and the current situation with salinity, focussing on its environmental, economic and social impacts and the impacts of a “do nothing” approach.

An Integrated Approach to Salinity Control, Figure 11 Shepparton Land and Water Salinity Management Plan.



The key features of a Preferred Option were summarised. In the Dryland the focus was principally on the Land Management Units in Recharge Areas and Saline Discharge Areas. In the Irrigation Area a similar priority was given to farm activities, sub-surface and surface drainage and environmental protection.

The evaluation of the Plan Packages included the costs and benefits estimated for both the public and private sectors in relation to farm activities, surface and sub-surface drainage, MDBC costs, environmental works, extension and support, research and investigation.

John Dainton and his fellow Councillors made sure that the evaluation methodology they had arrived at was presented alongside the more restrictive methodology used by government agencies. They could have adopted a politically correct stance in the Draft Plan presentation, attempting to convince the government via a separate (behind closed doors) approach as a means of dealing with the arguments of agencies that strongly opposed the SPPAC methodology. To their credit, SPPAC adopted an open approach and they followed through on their earlier public challenges to the prevailing wisdom in government.

SPPAC prepared two sets of evaluations because it considered that the Government Economic Guidelines did not provide a realistic assessment of the benefits of the Plan. In particular, considerable concern existed regarding the economic evaluation of the surface drainage component of the Plan because it underestimated the actual benefits of surface drainage. Continuing research programs were proposed to allow better assessments to be made of the benefits of surface drainage. The total Plan, as presented, met the economic criteria of the Government of Victoria. It did this without accounting for the substantial social and environmental benefits, thus understating the benefit/cost ratio.

SPPAC drew on its experience of the Pilot Program arrangements in recommending future regional level structures to represent the interest of all parties

– community groups, local government and state government agencies including:

- A Salinity Program Advisory Council whose main roles would be regional priority setting, conflict resolution, policy development and monitoring.
- Salinity Program Implementation Groups that would be established at the Irrigation Area level and would have direct responsibility, within State guidelines, for approved projects and programs including all decisions regarding the implementation of surface and sub-surface drainage.
- The Dryland Draft Plan identified Landholder groups as the focus and forum of coordinated action at the local level and their role as critical to the implementation of any management plan.

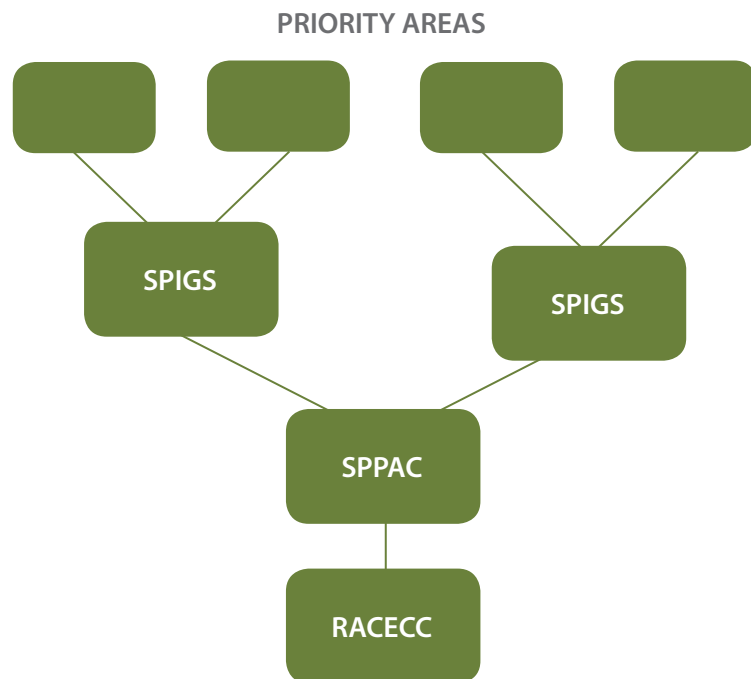
The continuation of the Dryland Committee within the Council along with representation of the Mid Goulburn Catchment Group and Regional Advisory Councils of the Department of Conservation Forests and Lands on the Council was proposed.

SPPAC endorsed the principle of cost sharing in the State Government's policy of "beneficiary pays" and adopted it in the Plan. SPPAC identified the State, National, Regional and Irrigation communities as beneficiaries under the Plan via:

- the reduction in road construction and maintenance costs;
- the maintaining of rate revenue, export earnings and employment with the bolstering of the regional economy; and
- the avoidance of the environmental impacts of uncontrolled salinity.

Under this cost sharing package landholders would receive incentives for on-farm works that reduce the amount of water that gets into the watertable or which lower the watertable; irrigators and municipalities would be expected to bear the "operations and maintenance" costs of the Plan and the State and Federal Governments would be expected to provide the capital for public works and grants and incentives for on-farm works.

Salinity Program Management Framework



The Final Submission to Government

The final submission by SPPAC to the State Government took account of the intensive and comprehensive consultation phase. This covered the regional community, local government, State agencies, industry associations and special interest organisations such as the Australian Conservation Foundation. In the regional community, 11 public meetings were convened to present and explain the draft with some 1500 people attending. Questionnaires were distributed to those attending and their responses were summarised. SPPAC had the opportunity to deal with various issues that warranted some explanation and provoked helpful discussions.

However, some responses during the consultation were judged by SPPAC to be inappropriate. The Australian Conservation Foundation requested a detailed and extensive review to be undertaken “by those with a level of expertise that would enable the effectiveness of the draft plans to be fully evaluated”.

SPPAC believed the development of the draft plans had been carried out in a very open, constructive environment which had welcomed and encouraged input at all stages from all organisations, groups and individuals. This was the approach required in “Salt Action: Joint Action”, a process that involved all parties in addressing the salinity threat. The idea of an extensive review outside these processes was rejected by SPPAC since it would destroy the goodwill generated among the regional community.

SPPAC assessed the overall response to the Draft Plan as “extremely favourable.” The many submissions received equipped SPPAC to fine-tune various proposals in the Draft Plan and strengthened its arm in dealing with the contrary positions adopted by some government agencies. SPPAC prepared recommendations to RACECC that drew on the results of the consultation. These recommendations and the Draft Management Plans were submitted as SPPAC’s consolidated Salinity Management Plan for the Goulburn Broken Salinity Region.

Many of the general recommendations reflected the history of debate, special investigations and progress in government decision-making (or lack of it) associated with particular issues. The issues on which SPPAC saw fit to restate or modify its position included:

- Recognising the fundamental issue of limits to salt disposal under the Murray-Darling Agreement (in the short term), SPPAC pressed the case for a specified Salt Disposal Entitlement (SDE), and interim SDE's for each SPIG for the next five years.
- SPPAC commended the regional input-output analysis as one of the most valuable pieces of work undertaken in the entire plan process, providing the basis for the active physical and financial involvement of the regional community through its agent – local government.
- Despite considerable pressure from government agencies to prioritise works solely on economic grounds, SPPAC maintained its regional approach to salinity control for the Shepparton Irrigation Region. This approach provided a set of operating rules and criteria by which the SPIG's could maximise the State and regional benefit in devising works programs.
- On the grounds of equity and environmental protection, SPPAC held its ground on its preferred option for surface drainage in the Shepparton Irrigation Region since it was in line with the basic philosophy of addressing the needs of all land within the Region not just a proportion. It had community support for this position and therefore could not resile from it.

In the light of the consultation program, SPPAC now believed the membership of SPIG's should include:

- three nominated Water User Group members;
- all municipalities within the boundaries of SPIG should nominate a representative (no discrimination between cities, towns, and shires);
- a local representative from conservation groups nominated after consultation with the CCV;
- a local VFF representative nominated by the State Executive of the VFF;

- any special and relevant interest group could nominate for a single position on the SPIG;
- representatives from the RWC, DARA and CFL, all of whom should carry full voting rights;
- SPIG's should publish a public report detailing annual expenditure and progress with implementation;
- before adopting an annual works program, each SPIG should consider the salt disposal implications, the affects of "doing nothing", the economic and technical efficiency, environmental and social benefits and the impacts on the Dryland margins of the irrigation area;
- three Salinity Program Implementation Groups (SPIGs) should be established in the Dryland Region;
- various interim measures in relation to drainage were recommended pending a government decision on the Plan and the preparation of some technical guidelines needed for effective decision-making; and
- SPPAC insisted that grants be decided on a cost sharing approach based on the "beneficiary pays" principle as recommended in the Draft Plan and that covenants should not be used as means of protecting the communities' interest in salinity control works, where the works were managed by the individual.

Basing works project priorities on Net Present Values (NPV's) was flatly rejected. SPPAC's point was that NPV's did not include benefits beyond the planning horizon and they were only one (economic) issue of a large number to be considered in deciding priorities for funding works.

SPPAC had learnt a number of lessons from the processes adopted in the Pilot Program, which were relevant to the implementation phase. SPPAC and the Regional community had developed the draft plans with an understanding of the differences (environmental, economic, physical and social) between the irrigation and dryland areas. The interlinkage had been identified in both plans since obviously there were impacts from dryland to the

irrigation areas and vica versa. SPPAC believed these interlinkages, although identified in the plans, required further discussion and special attention. In many cases the landholders where dryland meets irrigation would be severely affected.

The guidelines provided by Government for the preparation of management plans had been ambiguous and had often arrived too late to be of any help to SPPAC. Whilst SPPAC accepted the pilot nature of the Salinity Program, it did not accept that it should be admonished for not complying with tardily distributed guidelines. The Salinity Management Planning Guidelines needed to be updated after consultation with SPPAC and other Working Groups.

SPPAC had been disappointed also with the Government agency response to the draft plans, except for that from the RWC. Each agency had adequate opportunity through the technical working groups and representation at SPPAC yet several agency responses revealed a lack of understanding of the plan and were not constructive in their criticism of the output from this major planning initiative.

SPPAC was especially disturbed about the continuing concern regarding the economic analysis of both plans, in particular the analysis for the Shepparton Plan's treatment of the "do-nothing" economic impacts. This matter had been the subject of debate for some time, yet remained unresolved. Extensive work was undertaken for SPPAC on the various related economic issues by Don Leslie, a Principal of Dwyer Leslie Pty Ltd. In a paper presented to the Australian Agricultural Economics Society in 1991 on "The Economics of Salinity Control in the Shepparton Region of Northern Victoria." Don Leslie summarised the approaches developed in his contribution to this controversy. The following abstract from this paper outlines the overall task involved.

Traditional methods of evaluation of agricultural sector projects are based upon concepts of changes in the gross margins of average or typical farms. Such static models suffer from a number of deficiencies. In the case of the Shepparton

region of northern Victoria an attempt was made to create a dynamic model which has the capability to allow for: future change in most of the major determinants of farm household income; the effects of high watertables and salinity on farm output and farm household income; the effects of structural change (including farm amalgamation) and to estimate the consequential off-farm migration. The model also has the capability to estimate that most important data set – the distribution of farm household income – in all the above circumstances and thus to provide an absolute measure of rural poverty as well as valid rural:urban comparison through time.

The estimated changes in farm population, total regional agricultural output and total regional inputs, derived from this work became inputs to a regional economic model constructed by using input-output techniques.

The two models provided estimates of both the on-farm and off-farm effects of failing to deal with the problems of high watertables and salinities.⁹

SPPAC had proceeded regardless of which group of economists' perceptions might ultimately prevail. Otherwise nothing would have happened and the regional community would have become frustrated with the planning process.

John Dainton and his Council adopted a hard-nosed approach to the continued push by the agencies to disaggregate the plan into component projects to allow detailed economic evaluation. SPPAC's commitment had been to protect the entire Shepparton Irrigation Region from salinity.

However, the Plan provided an economic evaluation of the farm program and the sub-surface drainage program. The preferred surface drainage program had also been evaluated by drainage catchment. SPPAC warned that it would continue to resist attempts to dismember its regional plan on purely economic criteria. The economic viability of particular projects would be one of the key criteria the Salinity Program Implementation Groups (SPIGs) would use to establish their works priorities.

As a result of the consultation on the Draft Plans, a number of submissions were received proposing surface drainage as an acceptable salt prevention work in certain areas within the Dryland Region. SPPAC agreed with these submissions. SPPAC also recommended that areas would need to be defined in the implementation plans and that appropriate guidelines (particularly environmental) would have to be developed.

Clear guidelines were also needed for the separate drainage requirements of waterlogging and salinity.

SPPAC was concerned that any off-farm salt disposal from both surface and sub-surface drainage should be carried out in a controlled and equitable manner in accordance with the overall Regional Plan.

As a key agency in the Dryland, CFL had suggested that the proposed system of cost sharing grants based on the "beneficiary pays" principle was not effective and was a retrograde step. The agency claimed that high levels of grants lessen the ownership of the works and result in lower future maintenance. They also suggested that: "different levels of financial assistance are required by different people to get action on the ground".

SPPAC disagreed. These CFL proposals were not consistent with the basic philosophy of the Plan that promoted a cost share based on the "beneficiary pays" principle. SPPAC also saw the existing CFL incentives as definitely inadequate to achieve the proposed timeframes of implementation.

Salinity submission

By PAULINE BRANIFF

The Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) presented its plan for salinity management to government this morning - bringing to an end almost four months of public consultation.

The SPPAC submission on salinity control for the Goulburn-Broken region catchment included strategies for both the Shepparton irrigation and Goulburn dryland regions.

It was presented to the Rural Affairs Conservation and Environment Committee of Cabinet (RACECC) which is chaired by Mr. Evan Walker.

The submission is a slightly revised edition of the two draft plans which were released on August 11 and have since been subject to extensive public discussions.

More than 1000 people have attended public meetings throughout the Goulburn-Broken catchment area and nearly 130 written submissions have been received by SPPAC.

Feedback came from throughout the community including Local Government, business, government agencies, organisations and individuals.

According to Salinity Pilot Program co-ordinator Mr. Bill O'Kane, the overall response to the plans has been very positive.

"We believe we have community acceptance for our proposals. A significant result of the consultative process is the support we have received from Local Government," he said.

"SPPAC is now asking for Cabinet decisions on funding and salt disposal credits. We are hoping to get a decision by March which will then give us time to get into the budgetary process," Mr O'Kane said.

The presentation of the submission was accompanied by talks by SPPAC chairman Mr John Dainton, SPPAC irrigation subcommittee chairperson Mr Leon Heath, SPPAC dryland subcommittee chairperson Ms Penny Jones and SPPAC councillor and Shepparton's Mayor Cr Jeremy Gaylard.

Mr Heath outlined the four-pronged approach for salinity control in the Shepparton irrigation region which focuses on groundwater control.

The strategy involves promoting responsible irrigation practices and establishing surface, sub-surface and environmental programs.

Mr Heath stressed that each program was reliant on the other and should not be treated separately.

He also spoke of cost-sharing between landholders, Local Government and State and Federal Governments pointing out that the overall cost of \$500 million over 30 years could be broken down to a more palatable figure of \$5 million a year for the State Government during the five years of the implementation phase.

Ms Jones said the dryland management plan had identified a total of 71 000 ha as high and moderate recharge areas requiring revegetation.

Along with sowing of pasture, a total of 600 000 trees will need to be planted in the dryland areas.

Cr Gaylard spoke of the economic impact to the region as salinity reduces farm productivity. He said 1800 jobs could be lost by the year 2000 and more than 4000 people would have left the area. These figures would more than double by the year 2025.

He stressed the need for Local Government to be involved in the protection of its municipal environments and economic base saying the vast majority of municipalities in the Shepparton irrigation region support the SPPAC plan and will participate in the cost sharing proposal it outlines.

Import ban lifted

Australia will start importing previously banned Japanese pears with a trial shipment scheduled for September, Australian Resources Minister Senator Peter Cook said in Tokyo last week.

He also said that Japanese quarantine authorities had recognised Tasmania as free from fruit fly, paving the way for increased exports of Australian fruit and vegetables to Japan.

Also the passage of enabling legislation, Japan will in future accept certain fruit and vegetables from Tasmania under certification with-

out treatment for fruit fly," he said. Senator Cook said a trial shipment of one container of Japanese pears, known as Nashi, would arrive in Sydney in September followed by a further nine containers if the first consignment fulfilled quarantine requirements.

The total shipment represents about 5.8 tonnes. Japan produces about 470,000 tonnes of Nashi a year.

Exports to Southeast Asia and North America last year amounted to 12,000 tonnes worth, an estimated \$25.39 million, although exports have been declining because of the strong yen.

GOULBURN & MURRAY VALLEY COUNTRY NEWS

Tuesday, 15 August 1989

PHONE (058) 312 312

Bye from Pete



This will be my last week writing for Country News.

After 13 months at the Shepparton News, I have accepted a position as a journalist with The Weekly Times in Melbourne.

But Country News will continue and I hope given its history serve our farming community.

My strapline is examined with scrutiny I will always treasure — stories like yabbies and turkey farmers determined to have a go, of goats jealously guarded by industry watch dogs and people growing exotic fruits and goods for specialist markets.

I have covered hard issues like herbicide spray drifts, the choking spread of salinity and rising water tables, mining companies hell bent on stealing our land, and even protesters being dumped into silos. Dairy farmers have read of the vicious cost-price squeeze and the prospect of increased competition from New Zealand dairy products being imported into their domestic markets.

And our landowners have watched as the Federal Government seems determined to liberate their whole industry with the exotic disease fivefold for the sake of politics.

But I leave with warm memories of the people from this rich and diverse region, people who have steered me in the right direction after I turned up at meetings on the wrong night or at the right time in the wrong place. I also pay tribute to the folk who fuelled my car when it was dry and pulled me back onto the road when I was hopelessly bogged (usually in the most inaccessible places).

Thanks also to my tireless contributors — the people who helped put together what I believe is one of the leading rural publications in country Victoria.

Finally I would like to thank you — the people of the Goulburn and Murray Valley who read this paper and give us your news and views. I wish you all luck in the future — bringing milk, wool and breaded loaves! Peter Dorrington



"At times I wondered if we would ever get this far — but it is a pleasure to see this." These were the words of Evan Walker MLC (centre) on being handed the three salinity management plans in Shepparton last week. Shepparton Mayor Cr Jeremy Gaylard (left) and SPPAC chairman Mr John Dalton played key roles in the plans.

Salinity plans bring fresh hope

By PETER DORRINGTON

Fresh hope has come for the future of northern Victoria.

Three years of talking and planning ended last week when four long-awaited salinity management plans were launched across the district.

The draft plans, which have been described as the most important blueprints ever devised for the future of this region, call for more than one billion dollars to be spent over the next 30 years to curb Australia's greatest environmental foe — salinity.

The plans cover about 16 per cent of Victoria, which has an annual agricultural production worth more than \$2800 million and has a population of more than 170,000 people.

The Shepparton Irrigation Region salinity management plan (\$880 million spending), Goulburn Dryland (\$99 million) and Campaspe West plans (\$5 million) were launched in Shepparton last Friday. A similar plan for the Traragon Plains (\$54 million) was also launched simultaneously in Pyramid Hill.

The burden of such spending will be shared between landholders, Federal, State and Local Governments on a beneficiary pays basis.

Chairman of the Goulburn-Broken Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC), the 18 man team behind the Shepparton Irrigation and Goulburn Dryland plans, Mr John Dalton said it was crucial that the community considered the plans closely as they would share the costs.

"The whole community is fed up with all the inquiries and reports over the past decade and a half, it is now time for action," Mr Dalton said.

"Acceptance by the community and the governments of these plans will ensure the region will go into the 21st century with a sustainable, productive environment," he said.

"If we don't act now we may forever suffer the consequences — but the time for sitting on the fence is over."

About 200 people were at the launch to see Rural Affairs Conservation and Environment Committee of Cabinet (RACECC) chairman Mr Evan Walker accept the draft plans last week.

"These plans are challenging us all," Mr Walker said.

It was now up to the community to attend a series of public meetings across the district to discuss the plans, he said.

Mr Walker praised the efforts of SPPAC and government departments. "Now we know better how to tackle the problem, have specific goals, how much it will cost us and who should pay."

"This is one of the most comprehensive strategies in the world — it is a national piece of work we can all feel proud of," he said.

The plans are now available for public comment for two months.

About 1000 copies of the plans have been printed with another 15,000 summary bro-

chures mailed to every landholder in the region.

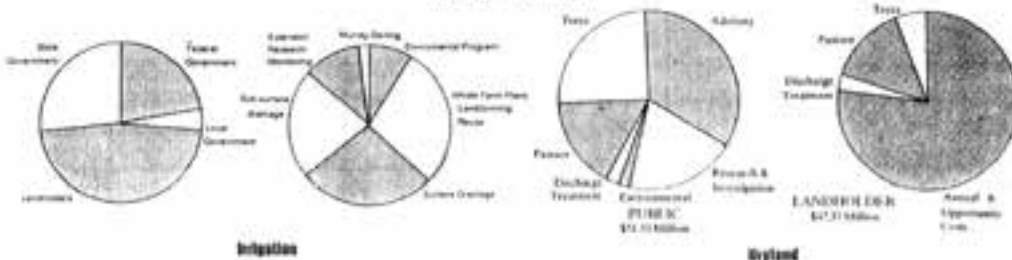
Copies of the plans will be available at Local Government offices and district Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (DARA), Conservation Forests and Lands (CFL) and Rural Water Commission (RWC) offices. They will also go to local libraries and concerned landholder groups.

A series of public meetings to discuss the plans is also set down according to the following timetable:

- Goulburn Dryland Plan.**
 - Benalla, Tuesday September 5.
 - Alexandra, Wednesday September 6.
 - Seymour, Friday September 8.
 - Nagambie, Monday September 11.
 - Ruthworth, Tuesday September 12.
- Shepparton Irrigation Plan.**
 - Shepparton, Thursday August 31 and September 6.
 - Numookah, Tuesday September 5.
 - Rochester, Thursday September 7.
 - Tongala, Tuesday September 12.
 - Yatai, Wednesday September 14.

For more information contact SPPAC coordinator Mr Stuart Brown on (058) 22 2288.

Who pays and for what



The Next Step

With its completion of this final submission to the State Government, SPPAC had more than met the requirements of the Pilot Program. In fact, the role SPPAC had assumed exceeded that envisaged by NRECC and the Salinity Bureau. This expansion of its mission had been pursued hesitatingly at first, but became a conscious and deliberate initiative guided particularly by John Dainton and Leon Heath. They had realised that SPPAC could not produce an effective Plan, meet the government's expectations of the Pilot Program, nor effectively involve the regional community, unless it went beyond the functions of an advisory council and took on aspects of a "management" role.

After three years of familiarisation with a wide array of technical issues, comprehensive and intensive research, policy formulation and targeted consultation, SPPAC's output comprised a Draft Plan that had been thoroughly tested with government agencies and the regional community. The next step was up to the State Government. Its response was awaited with understandable expectancy by the Goulburn Broken region and especially John Dainton and his fellow Councillors.

Chapter 8

**IMPLEMENTATION -
SALINITY PROGRAM
ADVISORY
COUNCIL (SPAC):
1990-1995**

The State Government eventually announced its support for the implementation of the four salinity management plans for Northern Victoria on 6 June 1990.

During this protracted delay following the submission of the SPPAC draft plans, government working groups of specialists assessed the plans and reviewed the comments of peak bodies such as ACF and VFF. This process was coordinated by the Salinity Bureau and headed up by Graham Hunter. Hunter presented potential government concerns to SPPAC and by March 1990 the assessment reports were submitted to the State Government.

This drawn out process exasperated SPPAC and the leaders and peak bodies in the community. They became more apprehensive about the outcome of the Pilot Program when the Premier John Cain announced a major reshuffle of the Cabinet on 1 April 1990. These changes involved the replacement of Ministers who had continuity of experience with and commitment to the Pilot Program. John Dainton went to the media with the frustration and concern emerging in the catchment. A newspaper article headed "SPPAC Response Stalled" captured the feelings abroad at the time.

State government response to the Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council plans has once again been stalled.

Due to be released at the end of March, then the end of April, it is now likely the government will release its response to the SPPAC management plans for the Shepparton Irrigation and Goulburn Dryland regions within the next two weeks.

The recent Cabinet reshuffle has been blamed for the delay.

SPPAC chairman John Dainton said he was disappointed by the latest delay and believed it unwarranted since the plans had already passed through the relevant departments.

"It is important for us to have the report out soon to get the new SPPAC up and running and the SPIGS (Salinity Program Implementation Groups) formed before July 1," Mr Dainton said.

Mr Dainton said SPPAC has been trying to maintain its momentum but until a firm government response has been given SPPAC can only operate at a planning level and "even then we are planning in the dark" he said.

It was originally feared Evan Walker's resignation from State Cabinet in late March would hold up a government decision on the plans. Mr Walker was Chairman of the Rural Affairs Conservation and Environment Committee of Cabinet (RACECC), which oversees the progress of the plans through government.

But Victorian Government Salinity Bureau manager, Graham Hunter, said all major decisions on the plans had been made before Mr Walker resigned.

RACECC has since been renamed the Rural Affairs Committee of Cabinet (RACC) and is chaired by Minister for Health, Caroline Hogg.

In other coverage of this issue, the Shepparton News took a strong stand against the delays in decision making.

The work of Mr Dainton's council is largely done – it has considered all known and understood aspects of salinity, pushed its resultant plan for the future through a maze of bureaucratic channels, but now, nothing.

The plan is completed and the government Ministers seem unable to act.

Many throughout the Goulburn Valley have contributed to the SPPAC plan and all are keen to see something happen, but now we wait at what appears to be the Ministers' leisure.

The News echoes the concerns of those who want to see some action. Ministers procrastinate, but salinity steadily worsens, it does not understand hesitation or delay and pays no heed to political needs or debate.

Salinity is one of the most significant threats yet to the Goulburn Valley and what is needed now is action, not debate.

The government cannot delay its response to the SPPAC plan any longer as the Goulburn Valley, a district which rates among the best in the world as a food producer, cannot wait.

Yes, the work of Mr Dainton and his council is largely done and in response the resultant plan deserves, like Mr Dainton would afford anything else, a fair go.

Decision

The Government's response was announced by the new Minister for Agriculture & Rural Affairs, Barry Rowe in Shepparton on 6 June 1990. The large audience of public servants, community leaders, local government representatives and the media warmly welcomed the result. The core of SPPAC's recommendations to government had been endorsed – the critical need for drainage. The groundwater control for the Shepparton Region commenced in 1975 was upgraded under the accelerated salinity program. Work in the sensitive horticulture areas was already underway and another 153,000 hectares of other horticulture and irrigated pasture were to be given similar protection.

Of equal importance (and significance in the longer term) was the government's endorsement of SPPAC's proposals as to "how" the plans would be implemented. Minister Barry Rowe featured the implementation arrangements in his announcement.

Additional resources will be provided to support community education programs during plan implementation. Community ownership and participation have been cornerstones of the Victorian Salt Action - Joint Action strategy.

"Communities in areas affected by salinity have shown that they are more than capable of taking on major responsibility for salinity control planning" Mr Rowe said.

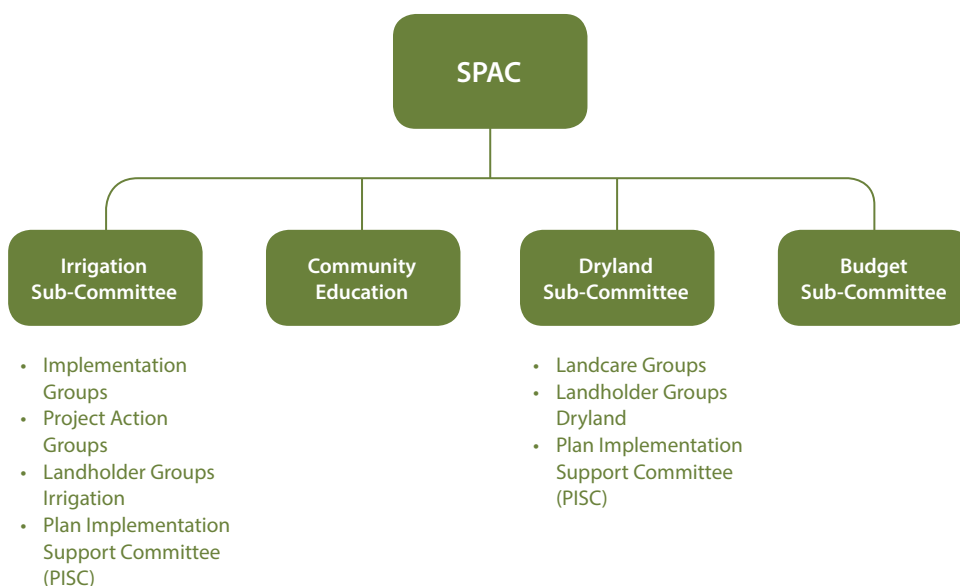
"The government fully supports the formation of community-based committees to oversee implementation of the plans and to monitor progress" Mr Rowe said. The committees will comprise representatives of farming, conservation and Local Government interests.

The government has appointed the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs as the coordinating agency for the three irrigation plans and the Department of Conservation and Environment will coordinate the Goulburn Dryland Plan.

John Dainton and his fellow SPPAC Councillors could take heart from the government's acceptance of the arrangements they had proposed. The government released a document covering the plans, the implementation arrangements and the other major aspects of the salinity program – "Victorian Government Support for Salinity Management Plans". This document outlined the Plan's components. Its technical measures related to on-farm works, the role of trees, surface drainage, sub-surface drainage and salt disposal. Environmental protection procedures proposed by SPPAC were acknowledged along with the need to finalise guidelines for implementation. The key roles of farm education and community education programs were supported.

The ongoing need for research and monitoring would be met and carried out in ways that ensured input by community implementation groups. State-wide planning and policy initiatives relating to water pricing, transferable water entitlements, vegetation retention would continue to be given priority by the State Government. Similarly, salt disposal entitlements (SDE's) were to be allocated according to an indicative 30 year allocation and a five year allocation for planning purposes.

Figure 1: Implementation Structure Irrigation and Dryland Plans



The regional coordination agency for each plan was to “ensure that government resources are used as effectively and efficiently as possible in implementing the plan and to provide the administrative support necessary for the community implementation committees.”

The implementation arrangements approved were outlined in Functions and Membership of Plan Implementation Groups¹. These structural, representative, consultative and administrative arrangements largely followed SPPAC’s recommendations and the lessons drawn from its experience in engaging the community and relating to government. The structure adopted by SPAC to reflect these arrangements is illustrated in Figure 1 from its first Annual Report for 1990-1991.

Annual Reporting Guidelines for the Implementation of Salinity Management Plans were released by the State Government in November 1990. These Guidelines required each of the plans for both the irrigation and dryland sub-regions to provide Performance Indicators, Expenditure Tables (including an Assets Register) and in the case of the irrigation area, Salt Disposal Entitlements. In recognition of the need to develop performance indicators for all Groups of users, community groups were encouraged to develop additional indicators where they saw this to be necessary. Environmental and economic performance indicators being developed by the respective state-wide salinity working groups were expected to be used in the 1991/92 annual reports.

Contention Over Current Cost Depreciation

While the components of each of the salinity management plans for the Region largely responded positively to SPPAC proposals, the government opposed SPPAC’s strong recommendations regarding current cost depreciation. SPAC recognised that this position had to be challenged. John Dainton called on the government to “closely consider the use of current cost accounting methods as they apply to long life items such as drains and structures.”

In an interview with John Dainton reported in the Country News on 24 July 1990, he insisted “this policy has the capacity to radically change RWC drainage charges for all new works and may impact on existing works.” He illustrated the unreasonableness of this approach by recalling his remark in earlier encounters with the promoters of this policy. “You can’t depreciate a hole in the ground and you don’t replace it.” He organised a meeting with senior government officials for mid August.

The News article spelt out a strategy of consultation, warnings to landholders and conditional implementation of drainage construction.

Meanwhile, as a matter of urgency, SPPAC will:

- *Consult with landholders who in the next three years will be directly involved with new works and advise them of the possible increase in drainage rates.*
- *Advise the Rural Water Commission (RWC) that RWC spur drains that could be constructed as a community drain be suspended if they are not supported by the community they are to serve.*
- *Advise the RWC that the design and construction of arterial drains should only continue if these works are treated the same as existing works for the purpose of rating.*

- *Make a submission to the Rural Affairs Committee of Cabinet highlighting the issues of depreciation, existing works, and affordability.*

"SPPAC was pleased when the government supported the financial objective of the Management Plan which stated that the Plan must be 'equitable' and affordable at all levels of involvement, now and in the future" Mr Dainton said.

"However, on the limited information SPPAC has at its disposal, it is apparent that surface drainage charges may not be equitable or affordable in the future," he concluded.

John Dainton and his team had every reason to be pleased with the government's support of the Management Plan, but they were fully aware of the crucial area in which it did not fulfil its stated objective of being "equitable and affordable at all levels of involvement now and in the future." So the tasks of involving the catchment community and challenging the government and its senior officials had to be pursued once more in resolving this issue. John Dainton did not accept an outcome that was largely positive as the best that could be achieved in the circumstances. Yet again he led the catchment's case on the issue they knew had to be dealt with realistically and equitably, if landholder participation in the Management Plan was ever to become a reality.

In his report on the first year of SPAC as Chairman², John Dainton spelt out the seriousness of this issue and summarised SPAC's efforts to resolve it.

Affordability is the most important issue to be resolved in the Shepparton Irrigation Plan. The RWC Business Plan will have a profound impact on the cost of providing surface and sub-surface drainage. At the heart of this affordability problem is the run down of the RWC assets

created by the past Government policy of unfunded depreciation. This generation of landholders are being asked to pay for the backlog of works needed to bring the assets up to standard and create the infrastructure required to combat salinity.

SPAC believes Current Cost Accounting (CCA) is not an appropriate method for calculating depreciation for long life capital intensive assets. CCA collects five times more annually than is actually required to maintain a new RWC drain.

SPAC demonstrated its opposition to CCA through:

- a submission to the Rural Affairs Committee of Cabinet;
- a paper presented to the ABARE Conference, Canberra;
- input into the Arthur Anderson Review; and
- a submission to the McDonald Review of RWC.

SPAC supported the Government's initiatives to commission the Arthur Anderson Report and the McDonald Review. This major review of the management of the Rural Water Commission system included the task of "identifying the beneficiaries of the water supply system" and advising on the most equitable basis for recovering the cost and provision of infrastructure from those in the community who benefit from the system.

The debate eventually came out in SPAC's favour. The second SPAC annual report for 1991/92 noted "the acceptance by the Government that Current Cost Accounting is not appropriate for calculating depreciation charges on long life, publicly owned, salinity mitigation assets."³ Both the Government and the RWC accepted renewal accounting as a means of calculating the depreciation costs for long life assets.

SPAC Membership

As SPPAC's role in the Pilot Program gave way to SPAC's implementation of the Salinity Management Plans, major changes came with the membership of this new peak community body from its commencement on 1 January 1991. After the rigorous years of SPPAC, eight of the councillors did not continue as members of the new Council – Henri Vegter, Geoff Witten, Max Moor, Tom Ryan, Michael Ryan, Menon Parameswaran and two councillors who had made outstanding contributions in key leadership roles, Leon Heath and Penny Jones. Two other councillors, Angus Howell and Ian Elder who had made significant contributions to SPPAC became members of SPAC. Of the other six SPPAC councillors who did not serve on SPAC, three continued to contribute in the implementation phase – Geoff Witten on the Irrigation Sub-committee, Tom Ryan on the Dryland Sub-committee as did Menon Parmeswaran who also served on the Community Education Sub-committee. In this way the community leaders committed to overcoming salinity contributed in other roles in the implementation phase. Over the next four years SPAC was able to draw on the skills and commitment of community leaders who had experience of the earlier days of SPPAC's committees and of SPAC's committees, SPIGS and action groups.

These early days of the implementation phase saw the beginnings of a number of major contributions from community leaders with experience of the Pilot Program and others new to the scene:

- Mrs Gwen Jensen (SPAC and Irrigation)
- Mrs Dianne McPherson (SPAC, Irrigation and Chair Community Education/ Communications)
- Mr Athol McDonald (SPAC, Irrigation, Chair SPAC from 2/12/94)
- Mr Ian Elder (SPAC, Community Education and Dryland - Chair until 1992)
- Mr Angus Howell (SPAC and Dryland)
- Mr Craig Madden (SPAC, Dryland - Chair from 1992)

John Dainton and Jeremy Gaylard continued in major roles. John Dainton stayed on as a transition chairman of SPAC until 1 July 1991 when he opted to pour his efforts into the implementation of the SIRLSWMP as Chairman of the Irrigation Committee. Jeremy Gaylard was elected Chairman of SPAC to replace John – a well deserved and widely acclaimed appointment in view of the strong complementary role he had pursued in partnership with John Dainton to that point.

Jeremy Gaylard also served on the Irrigation Sub-committee, the Dryland Sub-committee from 1992 and the Community Education Sub-committee until 1993. This involvement across the groups with a key role in implementing the salinity management plans followed the pattern John Dainton had adopted until he relinquished the position of Chairman of SPAC. While this was a demanding workload, Jeremy Gaylard would have been keenly aware from his time in SPPAC and extensive experience of local government that this across-the-board participation was crucial to his effectiveness as Chairman of SPAC.

John Dainton served on SPAC and on the Dryland Sub-committee in addition to chairing the Irrigation Sub-committee until 1993. The benefit of this continuity of involvement was obvious to SPPAC/SPAC watchers in that John Dainton brought with him:

- experience of the salinity management planning from SPPAC and of its implementation progressively with SPAC that was both intensive and wide-ranging;
- an acute awareness of the linkages that needed to be acknowledged and strengthened between the plans for both the irrigation area and the dryland – hence his continued membership of the Dryland Committee;
- a strong working relationship with other community leaders, government agency representatives, particularly the Plan Coordinators for both the irrigation area and the dryland;
- the respect of the community and government agency representatives and Ministers; and

- the practical concern that, although the management plans had been prepared thoroughly and finally approved by government, their success was dependent on their implementation and the recognition that, at long last, there was action on the ground – budgets were being approved, designs prepared, works undertaken and salinity was being effectively managed.

The successful implementation of SIRLSWMP faced special challenges especially in the commitment of approved budgets, engagement of landholders and the contribution of expertise and resources by key agencies.

In many respects, John Dainton had taken on the most important and problematical task in leading the community's bold initiative in driving the complex and in some areas, unpredictable task of implementing the SIRLSWMP. The catchment was fortunate in having leaders like Jeremy Gaylard and John Dainton who were prepared to go the distance into the different and demanding phase of "making it happen." In John Dainton, the community knew they had a leader who was not driven by egotism. He discerned the special needs of the Irrigation Committee's work program. They realised he would bring both the commitment and special acumen required for the task. With this perception of the primary task in the implementation phase, John Dainton had no compunction about moving out of the position as Chair of SPAC. With Jeremy Gaylard in this role, John Dainton and his colleagues were assured SPAC would be astutely led.

Key Support Personnel

Over the five years of SPAC's role, the two positions of Plan Coordinator were filled by officers with considerable experience of the Pilot Program and an impressive commitment to the implementation task.

In the Dryland, the Plan Coordinator, Brian Garrett (CNR), had completed the difficult task of drafting the GDSMP for SPPAC. SPAC had his services for most of its first five years. In that period, Brian Garrett developed "a sound base on which to build in future years."⁴ As in his earlier days when he worked more closely with John Dainton, Brian Garrett earned a high level of respect from the Dryland Committee. In moving to a position with the Department of Agriculture, Energy and Minerals at Tatura, he could continue his input to the implementation task.

Dr Bob Wildes, who had worked closely with John Dainton during the Pilot Program, was the SIRLSWMP Coordinator until May 1994 when he was promoted to Principal Scientist, Sustainable Agriculture at ISIA Tatura. His promotion was a significant loss to the Plan Management Team and to John Dainton as Chairman of the Irrigation Committee. Dr Wildes had a "detailed knowledge of the broad range of technical and policy issues affecting Plan implementation." The transition "was made easier because of the efficient management systems put in place by Bob"⁵ - a clear indication of the high standard of his contribution. The eventual replacement for this key Coordinator's position was Ken Sampson who would also go on to make an impressive contribution in the catchment's evolving approach to natural resource management.

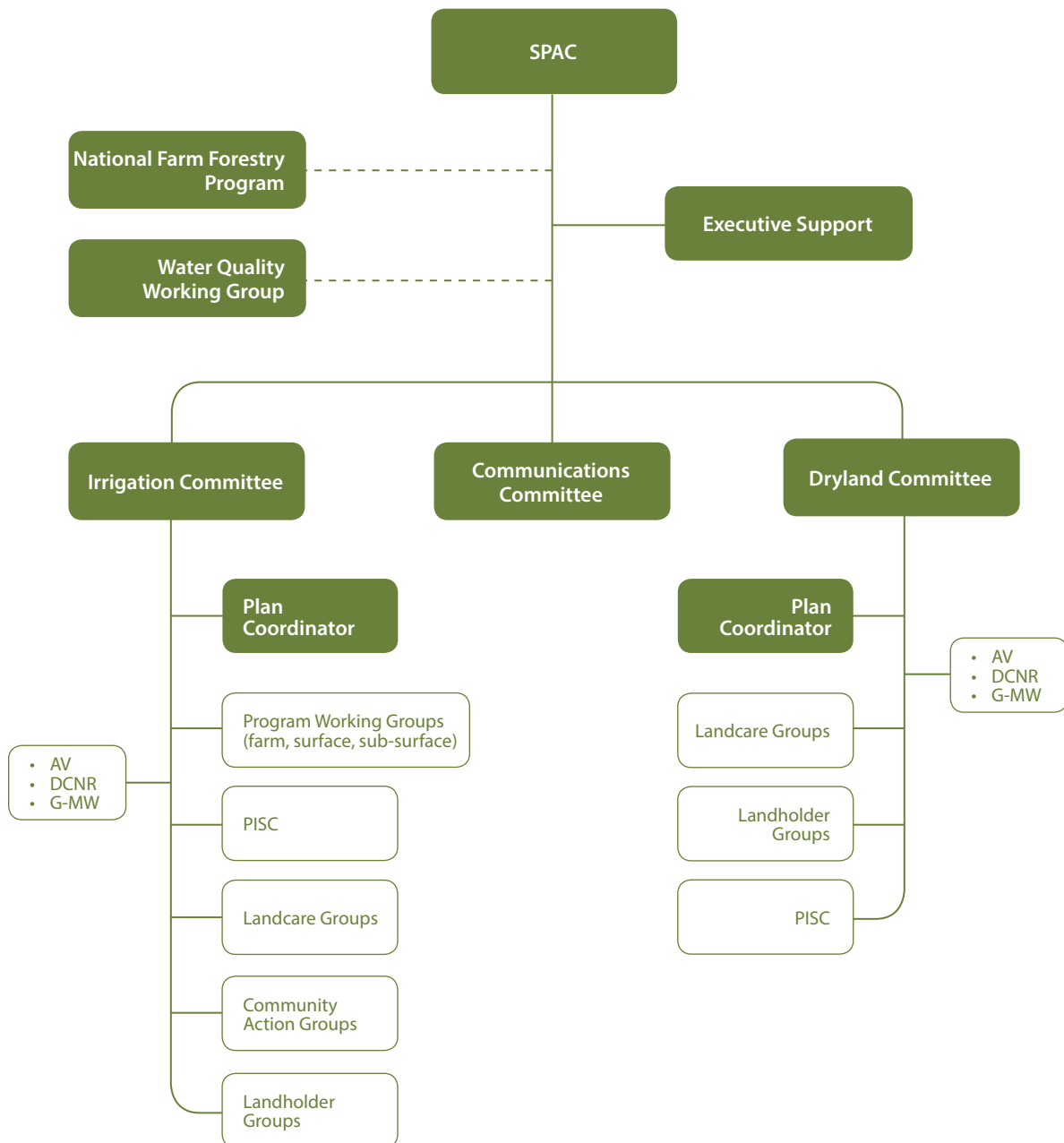
An Evolving Structure

The successive administrative structures adopted for salinity and natural resource management in the Goulburn Broken Catchment have provided models and lessons over the years for comparable catchment initiatives. This was due both to the initial design of the administrative structure and to the readiness of

those who drove it to respond to changes in “the big picture” and to any shortcomings and opportunities as they were recognised. The constant factor in this maturing process was the quality, astuteness and integrity of its leadership and decision-makers and the level of their commitment to work together. This was where the contribution of John Dainton, Jeremy Gaylard and Chairs of SPAC Committees played such a vital role.

Some aspects of this maturing process are reflected in the Salinity Administrative Structure over SPAC’s first five years. A comparison of Figure 1 for 1990-91 with Figure 2.1 for 1994-95 indicates where roles were strengthened and where adjustments and additions were made.

Figure 2.1 Administrative Structure of the Salinity Program 1994/95



SPAC and its Committees

SPAC had the overall “responsibility for the implementation and ongoing refinement of the SIRLWSMP and GDSMP. In fulfilling its charter, SPAC maintained an overview of policy direction and strategic development of salinity control activities throughout the catchment and coordinated the salinity control programs of government agencies and the community. SPAC has also had a major input into groundwater policy at the state level.” As intended in SPPAC’s proposals, “the work of SPAC was largely conducted through committees; Irrigation, Dryland and Communications. SPAC and its committees met eight times (six weekly cycle) through the year. The Irrigation and Dryland Committees were the key forums for the development of policies for the implementation of the Irrigation and Dryland Plans. The Communications Committee concentrated on marketing the Plans to the broader community.”

Salinity Program Implementation Groups (SPIGs) had been established as community salinity advisory groups in the Rochester, Rodney and Tongala irrigation areas. These groups were set up to determine what and where salinity control activities needed to occur in their irrigation area. The effective operation of the SPIGs had been constrained by

“ongoing” policy development. The role of SPIGs had become less clear as SPAC’s guidelines for each of the salinity control programs had become more clearly defined.

SPIGs had not been established in the Murray Valley and Shepparton Irrigation Areas. In the Murray Valley the Muckatah Community Drainage Group was an active and successful community forum that focussed on drainage. Community participation in the implementation of the SIRLWSMP was reviewed in late 1992.

This resulted in significant changes in 1993. The three SPIGs – Rodney, Rochester and Tongala – were discontinued as formal groups within the administrative structure of the Plan. It was deemed a more effective and efficient use of the community support resources to transfer them from SPIGs to directly support community groups implementing onground works.

Experience had shown that community groups could effectively implement onground works within the guidelines established by the Irrigation Committee to prioritise works. This was another indicator of the effectiveness of the Irrigation Committee’s performance under John Dainton’s leadership.



Coinciding with the termination of the SPIGs, the RWC established Water Services Committees in each of its main irrigation areas. Each of these committees nominated a representative to the SPAC Irrigation Committee, providing vital input of local knowledge to the decision-making process and Plan priority setting.

VCE students undertook monitoring water quality as part of their curriculum. This program gave detailed information on water quality including nitrates, phosphates and oxygen levels, salinity, pH, turbidity, flora and fauna. Local water boards and shires donated the equipment required to carry out this program.

SPAC depended on agency field staff to communicate policy and technical information required by landholders. It was therefore important to ensure information flow between SPAC and the agency staff, and between the different agencies involved was fast, effective and accurate. In 1992/93, the composition of the Committee was changed to incorporate more staff from the agencies involved in the Salinity Program and small, single focus working groups were established.

An internal communications strategy was finalised and successfully implemented in 1993/94. Due to the volume and complexity of policy decisions and the need to improve linkages both inter and intra agencies, it was found necessary to streamline the communications process. Among other things, the strategy ensured that key staff were immediately informed of any policy decisions which were likely to impact on their area of expertise.

Turning the Tide, a video on salinity in the Goulburn Broken Catchment, was launched in March by the Treasurer of Victoria, Mr Alan Stockdale. This successfully raised awareness about the two Salinity Management Plans in the general community, particularly the urban community and schools. It highlighted the growing concern about salinity and the actions people were taking to address the problem. A teachers' guide was also developed

to help schools incorporate the video into the school program. Over 100 copies were distributed throughout the Catchment with copies being available for loan through all municipal libraries as well as agency offices. The video was also extensively promoted through local newspapers and local community groups.

To promote Turning the Tide throughout Victoria, advertisements were placed in Saltforce News, Geography Teachers Association newsletter and Australian Association of Environment Education newsletter.

Mr Bill McGrath, Minister for Agriculture, launched the new Watertable Watch Program in Melbourne. The program, developed and trialled in the Goulburn Catchment, aimed to promote the monitoring of bore networks through linking schools with Landcare groups.

Over 2000 people were involved in another highly successful Saltwatch. Sixty staff from the three agencies visited 69 schools and community groups. Far stronger links were established between Landcare groups and the schools, with Landcare groups encouraging farmers to take samples directly to local schools for salinity readings.

The Salt Kit launched in 1994/95 proved successful in highlighting soil salinity and high watertable problems to farmers. The kit was developed by research and extension staff in Agriculture Victoria units at Shepparton and Tatura. Regular workshops were carried out for extension staff and landholders to enable them to monitor soil salinities on their individual properties. This was expected to lead to much greater awareness of soil salinity's economic costs to individuals and the broader community.

A Facilitation and Development of Community Groups program progressed well following the employment of a group facilitator in Shepparton through the NLP program. In the first year of this program eight new groups had been started and by 1994/95 a total of over 45 active groups were on the ground.

A training program for group members in leadership skills was developed, with a group skills manual being produced for community groups. The number of group newsletters was increasing and these together with the Landholder Link newsletter were proving to be a valuable tool in linking groups and their activities more closely together.

Forty-four landholders toured the Kerang area for two days to see the salinity problems in the area and how the community tackled their problems head-on. This tour was partly funded under a Community Salinity Grant.

Another important event in the facilitation program had been the establishment of the Goulburn Murray Landcare Network (GMLN). Over 22 Landcare groups were able to use the Network for information exchange across the groups and to encourage closer links between research and extension programs and the Landcare groups.

A large groundwater monitoring program involving all the groups was to commence later in the year. Readings would be taken each month for three years from a bore network of over 1500 shallow bores. This project was funded by the William Buckland Foundation for the first year of this three year project.

Community Service Announcements (two Irrigation, one Dryland) were screened in the second half of 1994. A total of 49 announcements were screened on WIN TV. These also helped to raise awareness about the programs implemented through the two salinity management plans.

The role of servicing the changing needs of SPAC and the Irrigation and Dryland Committees entailed close monitoring of the target audiences, their requirements and their potential for communicating their role and achievements to the wider catchment community. There were valuable lessons for SPAC and the catchment's many groups in the evolution of the communication task.

The Committee was fortunate to have Mrs Dianne McPherson as Chairperson with her background in planning, wide experience of public consultation and her connection with McPherson Media.

Other Aligned Groups

Figure 2.1 identifies linkages with two groups. A representative from the Irrigation Committee was on the National Farm Forestry Program. This Program was closely linked with SPAC's environmental and farm tree projects. The Water Quality Working Group was sponsored by SPAC to develop a water quality strategy for the Catchment. SPAC saw it was important to ensure the linkage between implementing the Salinity Program and implementing a nutrient strategy.

SPAC maintained its links with two other important bodies that had complementary roles to it in the region. The Sustainable Regional Development Committee (SRDC) had a strong association with the Salinity Program. SPAC was also moving to establish similar linkages with the Mid-Murray Regional Economic Development Organisation being formed under the Federal Government's national approach to regional development. The Municipalities Against Salinity in Northern Victoria (MASNV) coordinated the salinity activities of the 13 (later three) municipalities in the Shepparton Irrigation Region. SPAC had a representative on this organisation that coordinated Local Government involvement in natural resource management.

Local Government

The role of Local Government continued to increase in significance, especially because it provided the legal underpinning of key elements of the SIRLWSMP, through the legislation relating to:

- uniform planning regulations, for salinity irrigation works on farms;
- protecting agricultural land provided with sub-surface drainage under the SIRLWSMP from subdivision; and
- administration and financing community salinity control projects.

From the early days of SIRLWSMP, municipalities in the region had an essential and expanding role and were at the forefront of developing the role of Local Government in natural resource management. They were directly involved in the implementation of salinity control works (especially community surface drains), providing encouragement, managing large-scale schemes and using rating powers to raise community contributions towards construction, operation and maintenance.

The initial agreement by the 13 municipalities on uniform planning controls for drainage works was a first in Victoria. Their processes highlighted the importance of obtaining a “certified” Whole Farm Plan prior to implementing major irrigation development works. They also used Section 173 Agreements under the Planning and Environment Act to protect the use of land benefiting from publicly funded salinity control works.⁶

The findings of the “Urban Communities Salinity Impact Study” conducted in the SIR in 1991 were important to municipalities concerned with the implications of high watertables for water supply, waste disposal, roads and drainage in existing and proposed urban development.

In the Annual Report for 1992/93 SPAC noted that the Shire of Shepparton had taken responsibility for a community groundwater pumping project at Orrvale, a first for the Salinity Program. Most significantly, municipalities across the region were contributing 17% of the operating and maintenance costs of the public salinity control works constructed under SIRLWSMP.

Local Government managed the construction of major new Community Drains by private contractors, on behalf of the landholders. Municipalities worked closely with agency implementation staff, survey and design consultants and the individual Community Drainage groups. The process of defining catchments, consulting with involved landholders, submitting planning permits to councils and dealing with objections by negotiation or, if necessary, through the Administrative Appeals Tribunal was investigated with a view to streamlining approval of CSD schemes.

A key element in this impressive performance by local government bodies was the role of the Municipal Salinity Liaison Officer (MSLO) Colin James who developed and coordinated their participation. The MSLO had a central role in assisting local government to develop and implement uniform planning regulations for salinity control work, ensuring local government involvement was coordinated across municipalities and managing community salinity control projects on behalf of local government.

The expanding role of local government in relation to salinity and the wider arena of natural resource management was enhanced by the mergers and rationalisation of municipal organisations across the State. For the Goulburn Broken Catchment it meant a reduction from 13 to three local government authorities with responsibilities in its region.

Relations with Agencies

SPAC demonstrated its concern to cooperate with the various organisations with regional responsibilities in the Catchment. As with its link with the SRDC, these linkages were the means of attracting additional funds into the Salinity Program.

The Administration Structure (Figure 2.1) identified the major roles of the then Agriculture Victoria, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Goulburn-Murray Water (previously RWC) in supporting the Salinity Program in the areas of research, investigation, planning, resourcing and implementation. SPAC learnt the lessons of SPPAC's success in working with government agencies and saw the program benefit from this close collaboration. This was an area in which John Dainton, as Chairman of the Irrigation Committee maintained a strong role of communication and cooperation with agencies – a process that generated mutual respect.

Executive Support Unit

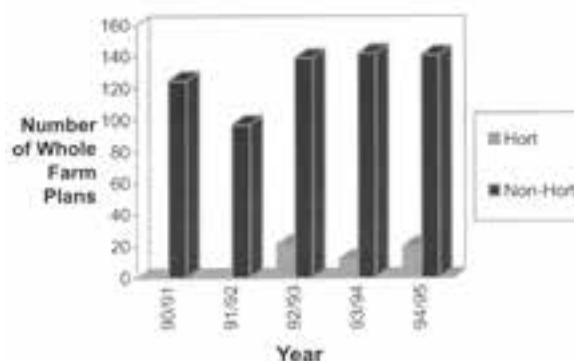
Although the personnel in the Executive Support Unit were acknowledged in each Annual Report, the Unit was not shown in the Diagram of the Administrative Structure until the Annual Report for 1992/93. The key functions and increasing complexity of the unit's role were appropriately recognised in later Annual Reports. The involvement of an increasing number of groups and programs in the Salinity Program also expanded this Unit's demanding role in providing executive support to SPAC and its Committees. The Catchment was fortunate in having committed staff such as Bill O'Kane and Pam Collins in those early years. Bill O'Kane had the ability to weld an effective partnership with Jeremy Gaylard, as he had with John Dainton in the latter days of SPPAC and the start-up of SPAC.

Implementation Performance: SIRLWSMP

Performance in implementing the SMP's under SPAC's leadership was impressive both in terms of its outcomes and the way landholders, action groups, municipalities and government agencies worked together. The achievements in the five-year period were a source of encouragement and reassurance to the catchment community, to committed agency personnel and Ministers. They were also of considerable interest to the growing stream of visitors to the catchment from rural, government and political backgrounds, with concerns about salinity and natural resource management.

As measured by the planning, works and programs implemented under SIRLWSMP, the following data indicates the performance in the first five years.

Number of Whole Farm Plans Completed Per Year 1990/91 to 1994/95



The Irrigation Committee conducted annual surveys to determine the amount of expenditure on salinity control and water management works. This data indicated the substantial investment in improved land and water management by the irrigation community. In the first five years of implementation, 697 whole farm plans were completed. By then over 28% of the irrigated part of the region was served by a whole farm plan.

Landholders developed irrigation systems according to their plans. The investment by irrigators on salinity control and water management works rose from \$24 million in 1990/91 to over \$30 million in 1994/95. SPAC estimated that in 1994/95 an additional 500 reuse systems were constructed. Obviously these works directly benefited the landholders, but there were significant downstream benefits to the increased adoption of these systems – benefits to both the salinity and the nutrient strategies of the Murray-Darling Basin.

With the ongoing development of whole farm planning, the focus on environmental, economic, dairy effluent disposal and rural planning issues intensified as aspects of each of these factors were more clearly identified. The whole farm planning process was well established also in the horticultural industries and was progressing well.

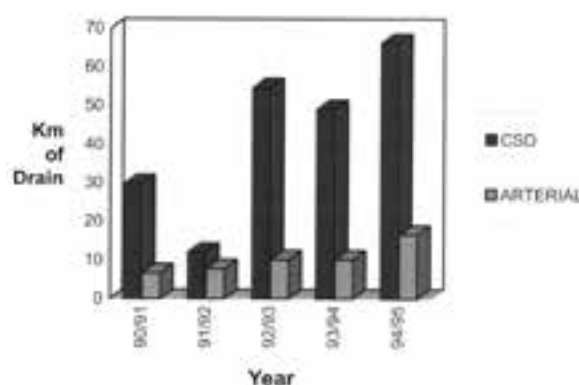
Environmental Outcomes

SPAC saw the integration of the environment program with each of the three other works programs as one of the major success stories of this plan. It demonstrated they could successfully link improved productivity and sustainability with environmental enhancement in the irrigation areas. The farm, surface and sub-surface programs improved productivity. However, environmental enhancement featured in each of these, in particular, the farm and surface drainage programs.

By 1995 SPAC had identified most of the sensitive environmental features in the catchment. After a phase of identification, assessment and planning they had moved on to one of constructing works and implementing environmental management plans. Grants and extension under the program had facilitated the protection and enhancement of over 100ha of wetland, 90 ha of remnant vegetation and 80ha of trees.

A significant portion of these works were linked to the surface drainage and farm program activities. In addition public lands works provided protection for 1800ha of wetland in Gaynor’s Swamp and Lake Cooper.

Kilometres of Surface Drains Constructed Per Year 1990/91 to 1994/95



The Irrigation Committee saw significant increases in construction output with community surface drains in 1994/95 increasing to 66.2km, arterial drains completed by Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) rising to 19.4km and with a further 8.3km remodelled. In addition over 140km of G-MW drains and over 140km of community drains were designed. SPAC was well placed to continue construction at or above this level in future years.



Community Surface Drains are a vital part of the Plan

The Mosquito Depression

The Surface Drainage program was greatly accelerated by assistance from the Commonwealth. In the Annual Report 1993/94, the then Chairman Jeremy Gaylard noted "perhaps the highlight of the year was the Prime Minister's 'Working Nation' Initiative. The allocation of \$5 million over three years to the acceleration of the Mosquito Drain as part of a \$6.2 million regional development package for the Shepparton Irrigation Region was an important breakthrough. This has allowed SPAC to keep faith with the regional community and meet expectations for surface drainage works in a reasonable time frame."

The acceleration of the Arterial Drainage program had provided outfall for potential new Community Drains along the Mosquito Depression, the region's largest arterial project. It formed the basis for even greater program acceleration along the Mosquito in 1994/95 because of a substantial funding increase from the Prime Minister's Regional Development Initiative.

This major advance was not a fortuitous event. It had an improbable beginning in the latter days of SPPAC. In pursuing the processes of the Pilot Program, SPPAC identified the need for a major arterial drain in the Mosquito Depression which wends its way from Tatura through Tongala to Echuca. Staff such as Stuart Brown and Bill O'Kane serving SPPAC at the time recognised its potential role in surface drainage in the SIR but categorised it as mission impossible. It was a very large catchment. SPPAC had no real authority to pursue it as a project – not withstanding SPPAC's progress towards the de facto project management role envisaged in those early days by John Dainton as Chair of SPPAC and Leon Heath as Chair of its Irrigation Sub-committee.

It was the Mosquito's high profile as a key element of essential infrastructure that attracted John Dainton. Furthermore, it had symbolic as well as immense strategic and practical value. The drainage program had virtually ceased when the orchard areas had been drained.

There was no planning of any significance happening. John Dainton assessed the situation as one where something big was needed to kick-start the planning and implementation process. In keeping with his conviction that action, significant action, was needed to lift the Pilot Program out of the category of wishful thinking, he believed it was time to tackle something really big. John had the vision and the boldness to tackle the big, seemingly impossible project and SPPAC rose to the challenge and approved the resolution to plan this arterial drain.

The reality was that the only planning in place for the Mosquito at that point was for the first mile or so - and that was in feet and inches. Although there was no assurance of a budget for the works, SPPAC began a design process that produced plans "on the shelf".

On "day one" of the involvement of landholders affected by the project Bill O'Kane recalls they began with three landholders in the initial planning area. Fortunately they were very cooperative. However as the planning progressed, this project generated protest meetings. The root cause of the protests in that period was landholder dissatisfaction with the RWC performance. O'Kane leaned hard on the RWC to ensure the project was supervised by a competent professional dedicated to managing the drainage program. With the appointment of Ross Plunkett the level of protest subsided.

This level of preparedness was to prove a critical factor when an unexpected source of funding from the Commonwealth became available. Securing the funding was to involve various actors in the Catchment and Canberra.

Bruce Lloyd an irrigation farmer in the SIR was the local National Party Member of the House of Representatives for the electorate of Murray in Federal Parliament for 25 years until 1996. He had served as Parliamentary Secretary for Primary Industry (Agriculture) and as Shadow Minister for a number of portfolios including Primary Industry for six years and also as Deputy Leader of the National Party. From his position in opposition during the Hawke/Keating

era, he recognised the opportunities that might open up for the SIR from the Labor Government initiatives designed to address the problems of disadvantaged areas of rural and regional Australia. When the Keating Government commissioned the Kelty Report to examine the problems of the regions, Bruce Lloyd worked to ensure the success of the visit by Kelty and his co-authors to the Shepparton Region. He knew that the region was unique in the extent to which it processed agricultural produce locally and the way direct linkages could be readily identified between its salinity, productivity and secondary industry.

The Kelty Report concluded that public and private investment in infrastructure in regional Australia was a vital key to regional growth. Whether or not this principle was applicable across the diverse regions of the nation, Bruce Lloyd and other community leaders such as Dainton and Gaylard knew it certainly applied in the Goulburn Broken. Investment in drainage and other infrastructure in the SIR was clearly responsible for recovering and improving productivity and in securing and attracting more investment in related food processing industries.

As the Commonwealth moved to establish its Working Nation program based on the Kelty Report, Bruce Lloyd, Jeremy Gaylard, John Dainton and others with contacts in Canberra began to lobby for outcomes in the Shepparton Region that would include funding principally for major infrastructure. The Mosquito legend has it that in the course of the to-ing and fro-ing from Canberra it was learnt that the Deputy Prime Minister, Brian Howe, had a problem with the name of the project – Mosquito Depression. The arterial drain was duly renamed the Echuca/Murchison Drain.

The lobbying became intensive as the Working Nation budget was being prepared. Jeremy Gaylard and others became aware of numbers being bandied about in Canberra – from \$12M to \$2M and back to \$6M. The key contact among the senior officers working on this process in Canberra was well known to Bruce Lloyd. O’Kane was alerted by her to the risk that the SIR may miss out on funding for Stages 2 and 3 of the Mosquito.

When it was suggested that it would help if SPAC lobbied their contacts in Canberra, Jeremy Gaylard, who excelled in this area, led this exercise by phone. After twelve hours O’Kane was contacted on the Friday night by the officer close to the action. She suggested that the phoning cease. The lobbying had done its job. By Monday afternoon she was able to inform O’Kane that they had secured \$5M for the Mosquito and \$1M for a regional development organisation. This body became the Sustainable Regional Development Board (SRDB) headed up by Jeremy Gaylard as Chairman and John Dainton as Deputy Chairman. Its charter was to implement the Shepparton Region Irrigation Management Strategy Case Study. In the first annual report on the SRDB, Jeremy Gaylard acknowledged that funding for the SRDC had been provided by the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development for allocation towards initiatives of regional importance that focus upon agricultural production and processing opportunities, and which will contribute significantly to the national wellbeing. He also reported that in its first year of operation, the Shepparton Case Study had been able to demonstrate the successful integration of market driven production and productivity measures with local and export value adding food processing industries, all within the framework of responsible environmental management.

The funding for the Echuca/Murchison Drainage Basin (Mosquito Depression) totalled \$1.6M in each of the three years to 1996/97. With regional development the buzz word in the days of the Keating Government, the Victorian Government with Jeff Kennett as Premier was ready to collaborate.

When the Deputy Prime Minister Brian Howe formally handed over a cheque for \$1M towards sustainable regional development in the SIR on 16 January 1995, the Victorian Minister for Agriculture, Bill McGrath, said the funds would be used to accelerate regional development for irrigated agriculture and food processing industries.

Mr McGrath said the State Government was investing more than \$7.6 million on measures to control salinity and announced the commissioning of the Mosquito Depression Arterial Drain as a key component of the regional development package.

It could have been cynically viewed as a day for the opportunists. More realistically, it was a day of triumph for the bold vision of John Dainton and his SPPAC colleagues, for their diligence in pursuing what seemed an unlikely outcome and the astuteness of Jeremy Gaylard, John Dainton and the SPAC team in their relations with government.

Progress with the Mosquito Drain was impressive. In its 1995/96 Annual Report, the SRDB could note that the special funding had resulted in continued acceleration of the project with an additional 4.4km of arterial drain completed and significant progress on the construction of a further 4.6km.

While the Mosquito Drain was the dominant project funded through the SRDB, it undertook various tasks related to sustainable regional development, including:

- The Water for Industry Study and follow-up feasibility studies and upgrading works.
- A Wastewater from Industry Study evaluating a range of strategies to provide economic and sustainable waste water treatment and reuse.
- A study into the Economic Impact of Irrigated Agriculture in the Shepparton Irrigation Region.
- A Regional Information System Feasibility Study.

The strategic value of the Mosquito Drain was demonstrated in:

- the acceleration in the development of community surface drains;
- its impact on the catchment community as a high profile project;
- its vindication of the huge effort that had been poured into the SIRLWSMP;
- the standing of SPAC with the Federal and State governments; and
- the attraction of funding for related works from the MDBC.

Drainage Strategies Revisited

On the broader planning front, the Surface Drainage Strategy was completed in 1994/95 after exhaustive consultation. This strategy was a much more detailed document than that presented to Government in 1989. Some concern was expressed in Government circles at the time taken to finalise this document. The strategy project was subject to a performance audit conducted by the Secretary of DCNR. The strategy formulation process, managed by the Irrigation Committee chaired by John Dainton was assessed in positive terms. The resulting strategy led to a reduction in the estimated capital cost from \$230 million to \$100 million to provide surface drainage to the remainder of the SIR.

A review of sub-surface drainage was also completed in 1994/95. The main areas addressed in the review were progress to date, basic technical assumptions, work targets and cost sharing. It was agreed that the original works targets be maintained except for small pumps and tile drains. The targets for these were reduced in order to protect 1300ha, by restricting them to horticultural areas until a cost effective solution for pasture areas could be found.

Major policy changes included:

- the groundwater pumping incentive scheme was to cease after the 1994/95 season;
- the percentage rebate of capital grants for private pumps was reduced from 80% to 75% with further drops to 65% in the next two years; and
- limits were set for intensive reuse.



Visits by Premier Joan Kirner to launch the Groundwater Incentives Program and Horticulture Policy with Landholder Groups

Implementation Performance: GDSMP

A realistic assessment of the effectiveness of existing community and landholder involvement by the Dryland Sub-committee led the committee to depart from the Government's recommendations for implementation arrangements. Instead of establishing SPIGS in priority areas, they made the Landcare and landholder groups within the Dryland responsible for developing local management plans for their respective areas with the support of Government agencies. In this respect these groups had a similar function to the Implementation Groups in the Irrigation Area.

The implementation process began well with the achievement of an integrated approach to salinity control activities in the catchment. This was largely due to the level of cooperation among government staff, SPAC landholder Groups and particularly group facilitators.

The documentation to guide implementation included SPPAC's draft GBSMP, the submission to RACECC and the government response in June 1990. This material indicated a less advanced level of preparation in the Dryland. It highlighted gaps in knowledge about the potential impact on the Riverine Plain, the effect of salinity on the environment and tree density requirements. Projects and investigations to address these and other concerns given priority, included:

- tree planting at lower densities and the development of a definitive tree density recommendation;
- the community interest in drainage raised the issue of a SDE for the dryland but this issue could not be addressed until the Murray-Darling Basin Salinity and Drainage Strategy became implementable in the dryland of the MDB;
- an environmental program based on data collection from sites in the region in 1600km of stream environs, literature searches and on satellite data on types and health of vegetation;

- raising community awareness about salinity through education programs, intensive campaigns and the formation of more landholder groups, the involvement of schools and community groups in Salt Watch and the Watertable Watch program;
- on-farm works including tree planting, perennial pasture and discharge rehabilitation;
- review of pasture production in less arable areas including steep and rocky terrain and hill country which tended to be the most significant recharge areas in many catchments and were also traditionally areas of low management input;
- hydrogeological studies covering recharge mapping, case studies in tile drainage and stream and aquifer interaction in various areas; and
- monitoring stream salinity, collection of water chemistry data and ground water monitoring.

As in the Irrigation Region, the contributions by landholders to implementation works were affected over the years by a variety of factors:

- constraints on recruitment to the Public Service led to delays in replacing staff;
- reduced farm incomes due to seasonal factors, low commodity prices, waiting periods for field trials and associated research;
- marginal reductions in resources by the incoming Kennett government;
- granting of more realistic incentives (e.g. raising the grants for establishing perennial pastures in high and moderate recharge areas from \$30 to \$60/ha);
- favourable seasonal conditions encouraged greater landholder participation, produced growth and survival rates that exceeded expectations; and
- the Decade of Landcare planning process had a positive impact on the dryland salinity program (although salinity was only one aspect of Landcare, it was a most important issue in some areas).

The study of the effect of salinity on the broader environment in the Goulburn Broken Catchment commenced in 1990 and was completed in 1991/92.

The 435 stream sites assessed in 1990/91 were reassessed to give a wider perspective of salinity changes in small streams over different seasons. Of some 246 wetlands identified as occurring in potential discharge areas, 100 were assessed as a representative sample.

Tree cover in salinity risk areas was mapped. Habitat components and characteristics were used in assessing the effect of salinity on fauna. This and the information collected on streams, wetlands and flora provided data on quality and quantity of habitat for fauna.⁷

Although only in its second year of implementation, the Goulburn Region was seen as a leader within the Australian salinity program and was used as a catchment model for other areas in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Review of GDSMP

SPAC and the Shire of Benalla engaged Pam Robinson and Dr Bob Smith in 1994 to review the processes used in implementing the GDSMP. Their report contained a mix of positive assessments and some qualified comments.

On narrow assessment much has been achieved over the last four years in implementing the Plan. All the program objectives have been met with the exception of on-farm works. There have been significant shortcomings in meeting targets for low density trees, 9% of target achieved; perennial pastures, 38%; lucerne, 38%; and salt reclamation areas, 85%. The most successful performance in on-farm works has been with the establishment of high

density trees where the target was exceeded by over nine times.

If a broader approach is taken to assessing implementation performance (THE BIG PICTURE), a much more successful view is obtained of implementation success. After allowing for adjustment to the initial targets because of changing circumstances and the inclusion of on-farm works undertaken which impact on salinity control but which were funded outside the GDSMP, it is assessed that all the targets have been fully met.

At this time there is no strong evidence to assess whether the outcomes are being achieved. Two potential reasons are the general and broad nature of the outcomes sought and lack of performance indicators in which to assess performance and the time lag between treatment for salinity control and impacts. There are also other activities funded outside the salinity control program being undertaken in the Catchment which impact on the desired outcomes of the Plan.

The GDSMP has many strengths. In particular it has been an evolving Plan with new knowledge and techniques being incorporated in the Plan as a result of research findings and experience. This led to increasing emphasis being placed upon other techniques such as groundwater pumping and break of slope plantings (BOS). In addition there has been increasing emphasis on environmental issues.

While the implementation performance of the GDSMP has been very successful, the challenges are to build upon the achievements of the last five years with techniques that provide for more cost effective salinity control.⁸

The consultants identified areas in which challenges remained including the need for high levels of community support:

- to quantify outcomes and use performance indicators; and
- give greater priority to demonstrating to landholders the profitable applications of farm management practices which are ecologically sustainable.

Landcare

The implementation of SMPs in the Goulburn Broken was enhanced as it interacted with and benefited from other programs related to natural resource management. Understandably the preparation of a Regional Landcare Plan in June 1993 covered issues and approaches that arose in the SMPs and were often common to or complemented those in the wider Landcare programs. Its preparation also involved the participation of many in the catchment community and agencies who were already working together in the SMP's. The national Landcare movement was reinforced by the Commonwealth Government in 1990 with an agreement that the Commonwealth and all States and Territories would each prepare a "Decade of Landcare Plan". The two major goals of Victoria's Plan were:

- rehabilitation of resources adversely affected by past management; and
- continued development and implementation of sustainable land management systems and practices that prevent future resource degradation.

These goals were similar to those being pursued with a more direct focus on salinity in the areas covered by the SMP's. The Plan proposed that Victoria be divided into nine catchment based regions adopted from the existing Salinity Program. Each region, in consultation with the regional community, produced its own Regional Landcare Plan (RLP) that provided the basis

for specific and detailed works programs and activities. The RLP prepared for the Goulburn Broken was in reality, a regional catchment strategy rather than a detailed plan of action. The plan was directed at the regional level rather than to local landholder groups or to the State as a whole. In this way local communities and government agencies could come together in partnership to work through issues at a regional level.

It was recognised that the implementation of the Goulburn Dryland and the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plans and the Mid-Goulburn Catchment Management Strategy were providing the momentum for much of the current Landcare type activities throughout the Goulburn-Broken Region. Progress was impressive, not only in the works and activities undertaken but, more importantly, in the additional level of Landcare activities throughout the region financed by the community and landholders.⁹

The aim of this RLP was to set future directions for Landcare activities, to set the scene for ongoing community involvement and the future allocation of resources to Landcare and to advise the Government on appropriate administrative and community consultation arrangements for Landcare in the region.

Natural Resource Management – A Changing Scene

SPAC watched the evolving scene in natural resource management during its five years. Key contributors to its role also played significant parts in the related planning and institutional developments.

In his comments in SPAC's Annual Report for 1992/93, the Chairman, Jeremy Gaylard noted:

The development of Regional Landcare Action Plans (RLAP) and the proposed rewriting of the Land Protection legislation are important developments for the catchment.

The membership of John Dainton and Craig Madden as SPAC representatives on the Decade of Landcare Committee, was seen as influential in the final outcome.

In acknowledging that the process was still fluid, Jeremy Gaylard also cautioned that SPAC was obliged to protect the aspects of the Salinity Program that were essential to the implementation of the Plans. These included:

- the community's role in establishing priorities; and
- the development of a coordinated transparent budget.

Gaylard warned that, if it became evident the Salinity Program would be worse off under the RLP arrangements in terms of the community's role and budget process, then SPAC would need to consider its position.

Water Industry Reforms

Changes of a more reassuring nature were coming in the water industry. The formalisation of ownership of water in the catchment was an important task. Bulk entitlements more clearly defined current user rights to the resource.

At the institutional level, the region welcomed the change of the Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) from a Regional Board of the RWC to an autonomous Water Authority on 1 July 1994. That the delivery of services from G-MW was not affected by this significant organisation restructure, was a testament to the leadership of the G-MW and the quality of its staff. SPAC developed good working relations with the "new" G-MW Water Authority. This relationship benefited enormously from John Dainton's dual membership of SPAC and the Regional Board, while Peter Gibson, Murray McDonald, Noel Russell, George Trew, John Watson and recently Morice Holland from the Water Services Committees represented the G-MW on SPAC's Irrigation Committee.

A general understanding was developed that SPAC was responsible for the planning and implementation of salinity mitigation works, with G-MW Water Services Committees (WSC) then responsible for operating and maintaining these assets.

There was some potential for overlap in areas like cost sharing, but the Irrigation Committee worked with the WSC's to resolve these issues.

John Dainton's Appraisal: Lessons, Trends, Concerns

The significant changes being initiated in the institutional arrangements and programs concerned with natural resource management had the potential to enhance or to diminish its effectiveness. A major risk lay particularly in regard to whether and how the Catchment community would continue to be engaged appropriately under the new management structure of a Catchment and Land Protection Board.

In a speech to the VFF mid-way through this restructuring and integration process, John Dainton identified the possibilities and the risks involved. He was well equipped to comment, by reason of his positions and experience in several areas of natural resource management and related industry.

He was still a member of SPAC, and also a member of the Water Quality Working Group, the Sustainable Regional Development Committee and a member of the Goulburn Broken Catchment and Land Protection Steering Committee. He was also Deputy Chairman of the Goulburn Murray Regional Water Authority and a Bonlac Board Member. His comments were largely his own thoughts although many were reflected in SPAC policy and had the full support of the Advisory Council.

He was quick to point out that SPPAC's success, in developing management plans for the Catchment, lay in fostering a working relationship between

government departments and the community that would encourage involvement of the community particularly landholders on an unprecedented scale.

A fundamental lesson SPPAC had learnt from the outset was that the physical, technical and social issues were sufficiently different in the irrigation and the dryland parts of the catchment to warrant separate management plans. SPAC had established sub-committees to oversee their development. Equally, however, SPAC also saw the catchment approach was critical for the development of sensible solutions and so maintained an integrated catchment perspective.

Dainton stressed the roles of planning and accountability whereby SPPAC had undertaken a rigorous planning process which had identified the critical needs and priorities for actions. The process included the community and the technical people at all levels since most of the works had to be carried out on farms. The annual budgeting process determined priorities within the context of a five year works program.

For John Dainton, one of the key lessons from the Salinity Pilot Program was that the community, agencies and Government could work cooperatively together to deliver cost effective outcomes. This was not something that happened as a matter of course, but resulted because a number of policy directions were implemented. These policies were based on mutual respect, transparent processes and accountability.

It had quickly become clear in the early days of SPPAC that the community wanted more than an advisory role in the development of the Salinity Management Plans. SPPAC was actually encouraged in this by some of the Ministers of the day in particular by Evan Walker and Joan Kirner. SPPAC quickly adopted a strategy of maximising influence. As a result SPPAC had grown in influence and this had enabled it to focus on works on the ground. This focus had become very much part of the SPAC culture.

SPAC had found the development of a transparent, integrated and coordinated budget was the foundation stone for cooperation within the Region. The process was driven by the community needs as expressed by Council and sound technical knowledge provided by the agencies and consultants.

The development of accountability procedures (built around the production of an Annual report), appropriate reporting procedures and regular reviews ensured the program had the required inbuilt checks and balances.

SPAC had always been seen as being independent from any Government Agency or minority group. This aura of independence was critical in the establishment of SPAC as a credible body in the Catchment. It also assisted it to develop excellent relationships with all tiers of Government, particularly Local Government.

John Dainton and his fellow Councillors had learnt that any community organisation established to represent and articulate the needs of the community they served, could not do this if they were seen as an appendage of a Government agency. Similarly, in the provision of administrative support, the Executive Support must be responsible to the community organisation rather than the administrative agency.

In general, the community is interested in action i.e. works on the ground. The agencies are concerned with the delivery of quality programs within an appropriate planning framework and the Government is interested in getting the best results from the resources committed.

John Dainton was concerned at that stage that, although SPAC had rejected the notion of advisory status and sought a more appropriate role for the community, it was uncertain whether the new catchment Boards would inherit this culture. In this case, the gains made over the last few years could be lost. The SPAC view of an equal partnership, with the community having the major role in prioritisation, seemed even more appropriate in this period of integrating natural resource management roles than it had been in 1986.

Dainton was concerned that if it was to play a meaningful role the new arrangements needed to invest responsibility and accountability in the community. He had seen the relationship that could develop between responsibility and commitment at the community level.

John Dainton was closely involved with the development of the Goulburn-Murray Water Services Committees (WSC). This was another case in point. The old advisory committee system had added little to the decision-making process. However, the decision to invest the right to play a meaningful role in the decision-making process was starting to reap significant rewards. As the Deputy Chairman of G-MW he had a major role in creating an environment where the local knowledge and credibility of the region's leaders combined with the technical knowledge and skills of the G-MW staff. In this environment, real savings were being made by the WSCs.

In seeing itself as independent of any government agency, SPAC regarded its constituency as the catchment community and primary responsibility had to be to the catchment not to an agency.

The establishment of an independent Project Management Team in support of SPPAC had been an important component of this culture of independence. Even in the implementation phase, SPAC was served by an independent Executive Officer. The Plan Coordinators, although more formally located within the Departments, were seen by their colleagues as serving the program, not the agency that employed them.

This culture had been important in establishing SPAC as a credible force for change within the catchment. This had been vital in developing a cooperative approach to planning and implementation and had given significant clout in the political arena on both sides of politics.

John Dainton knew from experience that if you want to be seen as strong and effective, you couldn't be a departmental quisling. He was also convinced from the SPAC experience that a skills-based council had many advantages over elected councils in catchment

issues. SPAC councillors were appointed for three year terms. He saw that the advantages of this process over a more democratic approach were:

- the plans are about protecting the natural resource base so it was not just land managers who were legitimate constituents; and
- an election in an environment where voter turnout will be very low leaves the process open to stacking and leads to a loss of credibility.

John Dainton had watched SPAC earn credibility in exactly the same way as an elected council would – by getting the task done effectively. So he supported the appointment of members provided it was made very clear that their primary constituency was the catchment community not a government agency or a Minister of the Crown.

In addressing the VFF, John Dainton talked the language of the dairy farmer and a board member of Bonlac. He emphasised the reality that sustainable agriculture was profitable agriculture. To achieve changes in land use on private lands then, on balance, these changes must improve the profitability of the land use as well as its sustainability. If the enterprise could not generate a profit, then there was no opportunity for investment in salinity mitigation or other land protection works. Clearly the best outcome was for agriculture to generate the profits required to enable landholders to make significant investments in sustainability.

Surveys had shown that landholders were prepared to invest in sustainable agriculture if they could expect additional income, i.e. if it could be demonstrated that there would be an economic return as well as an environmental return. He acknowledged that in the irrigation region they had the additional benefit of an enormous food processing industry. The recent substantial investment in this area had provided SPAC with additional leverage when negotiating with Governments.

SPAC had adopted the “beneficiary pays” principle to assist in the development of a cost-sharing proposal. SPAC identified the beneficiaries and attempted to

apportion the benefits of each of the projects to be undertaken under the plan. This process produced a cost-sharing proposal that included landholders, local, State and Federal Governments. Fundamental to its approach John Dainton was mindful of the implications of other institutional changes that had been recently achieved or were still underway. In his view, the restructure of Local Government had the capacity to deliver some very positive outcomes. He felt that, previously, municipalities had been too small to tackle the big issues, but this was now changing. SPAC had been able to obtain excellent support from local government including contributions to the Irrigation Plan, Uniform Planning Regulations and a number of other achievements. The significance of these achievements was that SPAC had been able to get 13 municipalities to agree on something. He welcomed the prospect that, theoretically, it should be easier because now SPAC only had to deal with three municipalities.

River Management Boards, having been established under the Water Act, were important players in catchment management although they only operated at the sub-catchment level. At that stage it was unclear as to how they would relate to the Catchment Boards.

Dainton tended to assume that Water Authorities, both rural and urban would focus on their core business as the demand for economic performance returns to Government etc. reduced their flexibility. These authorities had large rate bases and their clients would clearly benefit from improved catchment management. In the case of rural authorities, he judged that return on investment could prove to be a more important issue than water quality. He pointed out, however, that in some circumstances, it could be cheaper for water authorities to invest in catchment management rather than water treatment plants.

In this speech to the VFF John Dainton’s appraisal of the emerging natural resource management scene demonstrated an ability many of his colleagues had come to recognise and respect – the ability to assess the significance of particular issues or emerging factors, to forecast their possible outcomes and the

responses that would be needed. In this insightful assessment of where the Landcare movement was at that point in time, he acknowledged that the Landcare movement had been enormously successful in terms of awareness raising and involving the broader community in natural resource issues. In his opinion, however, Landcare as a movement was at the crossroads and would find the next one to two years to be a critical period.

John Dainton opined that Landcare could either take the next step and become outcome driven and be a key component of Plan implementation or it could become a sophisticated support group for small communities. In his view, the funding for Landcare groups should come through the bodies responsible for implementing Natural Resource Management Strategy Plans and be conditional on the groups delivering outcomes. In this way, medium term relationships could be developed, based on each party fulfilling certain obligations. If a group didn't fulfil its targets, then the funds should go to a group that will.

Known for his plain speaking about hindrances to performance, John Dainton did not mince matters on the question of roles. He insisted that clearly defined roles were one of the key prerequisites for the delivery of effective and efficient programs. From his experience on SPAC, productivity was greatest when agencies and individuals had a clear view of what their roles and responsibilities were. In areas where overlaps were significant, conflict and tensions developed and the program did not work as well.

He had found that the issue of private land and public land as the natural division between agriculture and conservation was always an issue of contention. When he had discussions on whole farm planning he found it strange that he had to deal with two departments to get a holistic approach. He guessed that Dryland farmers interested in pasture renovation must really get confused.

As one indicator of SPAC's recognition nationally, John Dainton cited the evidence of how it had been able to present itself as a credible and appealing organisation to the community it serves and to Local, State and Federal Governments. Its special treatment under the Commonwealth "Working Nation" policy was a clear indicator. The Goulburn Broken catchment was one of two in Australia to be selected to pilot regional development. This had resulted in the injection of \$6M over three years being allocated to the catchment.

In summing up the factors that had enabled SPAC to achieve this status, John Dainton identified:

- its vision for the catchment which was based on sustainable economic output, recognising the enormous food processing industry located in the catchment;
- its development of technically, socially and politically acceptable management plans for the catchment which were endorsed by the community, local government and the State and Federal Governments;
- its use of processes which gave the opportunity for the community to understand and own what was being proposed and to participate in the implementation, bearing in mind that local Government support was critical in this legitimisation process;
- its strength in dealing with sections of the community and government – they were seen to listen and react, but, most importantly "to have a go";
- its development of good lobbying skills which in many ways became a marketing and sales program;
- its credibility due to its independence as a regional organisation and the independence of its support team; and
- its emphasis on accountability as reflected in its detailed Annual Reports and its measurement of outcomes against targets.

In noting that the new Catchment Land Protection Legislation would see the demise of SPAC and the establishment of Catchment and Land Protection

Boards, he bluntly predicted that "If the lessons of the Pilot Program are taken on board then this is likely to be a very positive development. If they are not, we could be part of a process which winds the clock back 10 years."

In the Chairman's Report in SPAC's Annual Report for 1993/94 Jeremy Gaylard commented on the move towards a new regime for natural resource management in the Catchment. He lauded SPAC's efforts but expressed concern about the possible loss of its expertise.

The Catchment and Land Protection Legislation will see the Catchment role of SPAC assumed by the Catchment and Land Protection Board in July 1995.

As someone who has been a SPPAC/SPAC councillor since 1987, I only hope the Board can engender the same enthusiasm and involvement of the community as SPAC has been able to do.

SPAC is arguably the most successful community-based natural resource management group in Australia. It has attracted support from the community, the agencies and Government because it has been independent, thoughtful and strong. Most importantly, it has attracted people with vision.

I hope the knowledge and experience gained through the SPAC program over the last eight years will not be lost.

Fortunately, the decisions on institutional arrangements and membership of the new CLP Board would have assuaged the concerns of John Dainton and Jeremy Gaylard and those privately held by many similarly committed folk in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

The Chairman's Report in the SPAC Annual Report for 1994/95 was made by Athol McDonald, who replaced Jeremy Gaylard when he resigned to head up the

State Council of the Catchment and Land Protection Board. This was a most significant appointment. It both acknowledged Jeremy Gaylard's extraordinary abilities and his service with SPPAC and SPAC, and was a clear indication of the regard that the State government had for the achievements in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

Athol McDonald had followed John Dainton as Chairman of the Irrigation Sub-committee when John resigned from that position in 1993. Athol's intensive experience of and commitment to the implementation phase equipped him well for this demanding task. He was also in a position to comment at the end of the SPAC era in his 1994/95 Chairman's Report on those factors that made it so successful. Athol's summary of the key factors included:

The first of those is leadership. We have been fortunate to have as Chairman, two men with contrasting leadership styles, but styles appropriate for their terms at the helm. I speak of course of John Dainton and Jeremy Gaylard – we have been extremely fortunate in having those two gentlemen of vision mould SPAC into what we have today. My role has been made much easier by the pioneering works of these two. I must also mention Dianne McPherson, Ian Elder and Craig Madden who also chaired SPAC Committees at different times. The other half of the leadership equation is of course the guidance and support provided by the agency staff.

One of the revelations for me when I first became involved with SPAC was the zeal and loyalty displayed by the employees of Agriculture Victoria, Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (CNR) and Rural Water Corporation (RWC – more recently of course G-MW and Hydrotechnology).

It is obvious as I move around the State that the trust and partnership that is a feature of our catchment is not necessarily replicated elsewhere. That trust and sense of partnership is an outstanding feature of the program and something of which we should be very proud.

The second part of the equation is the calibre of the community members that have been attracted to not only SPAC, but also to its Dryland and Irrigation Committees.

We attract people with commitment, vision and above all else, integrity.

Thirdly SPAC has always had the ability to look at the big picture. The most recent evidence of this is our decision to "pass the baton" on to the Catchment and Land Protection Boards. It is obvious that to have SPAC running parallel with the board would be unnecessary duplication so the judgement was made that SPAC should finish. That decision was made by us, no one had to push. I watch with interest as salinity management plans elsewhere in the State struggle to sort out the relationships with their catchment boards.

Athol concluded with strong commendation of the leadership of John Dainton – leadership he would resume as Chairman of the new CLP Board.

Can I conclude by saying that we came together five years ago with the task of continuing the outstanding work of the original SPPAC. SPPAC under John Dainton's leadership had set extremely high standards to follow.

I believe we have fulfilled our brief and that we hand over to the Board a working blueprint for sustainable agriculture in the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

The future does present some threats as well as some real opportunities. The real threat is that the focus of both Dryland and Irrigation plans may become lost in the broader catchment issues. It is up to those of us who will still be involved to ensure that this does not occur.

The real opportunity, and I believe this opportunity is particularly relevant to the dryland part of the catchment, is to fully integrate all land management issues through the CLP Board, once again providing a model for others to follow.

We are certainly in good hands with the old team of Dainton and O'Kane back together again. I look forward to the future with some excitement.

Chapter 9

**TRANSITION –
GOULBURN BROKEN
CATCHMENT AND
LAND PROTECTION
BOARD (GBCLPB):
1995-1997**

Natural resource management in Victoria underwent two major phases of development in the 90s. Firstly, with the rapid growth of Landcare alongside the salinity management plans came the move in 1994 to Catchment and Land Protection Boards. Then with the further rationalisation of roles in the catchment, came the closer integration of management functions under the catchment management authorities in 1997. During these important transitions, both the scope of the overall task was defined in the more holistic terms of Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) and the management arrangements were progressively implemented to achieve more effective integration.

SPAC's Response

SPAC had recognised from its early days that an approach such as the Catchment and Land Protection Board would be the next phase in the development of structures for natural resource management in the catchment. SPAC's views as expressed by Jeremy Gaylard as Chair in the early 90s and those of John Dainton as Chair of the Irrigation Committee proved to be highly significant in these transitions. As already noted, John Dainton, Ian Elder and Craig Madden (in the role of Chair of SPAC's Dryland Committee) had contributed substantially to the policy proposals in the Regional Landcare Plan.

SPAC's concerns about outcomes from the transition process and their implications for the Goulburn Broken were pursued in public forums and representations by its spokespersons, particularly Gaylard, Dainton and the SPAC Executive Officer Bill O'Kane. Bill had co-authored a number of presentations with Jeremy Gaylard and John Dainton. In a paper he prepared on "The Salinity Program – A Catchment Approach" he drew on SPAC's accumulated wisdom relevant to the transition to ICM.

In defining ICM as an integrated approach to land and water management which recognised the linkages made between different parts of the landscape, and the catchment as the base unit for Natural Resource Management, O'Kane pointed out that SPAC supported a minimalist approach to Catchment Management. SPAC believed that a coordinated approach which enabled the appropriate bodies to perform their roles within the framework of a catchment strategy was preferred.

ICM could play a vital role in minimising the need for major structural reform while improving efficiency, reducing duplication and overcoming poor communication. Without a coordinated approach, divergent policies contrary to the sound management of the catchment would develop. Not only was total catchment management philosophically and practically sound, it was also politically sound.

The Federal Government's approach to Landcare required the development of catchment strategies for the States to be eligible for Federal funding.

An integrated approach was essential because of the large number of individuals, groups and agencies which have responsibility for land and water management within the catchment. These would include:

- Landholders
- Local government
- Water Authorities
- River Management Boards
- Salinity Advisory Councils
- State Government (CNR, DofA, RWC)
- Federal Government (Murray-Darling Basin Commission and DPIE)

To be successful, total catchment management had to be structured in a way that allowed decisions to be made by the appropriate people at the appropriate level. It was essential that policy decisions were made by the policymakers and management decisions by the managers. It was also imperative that catchment issues were resolved at the catchment level, regional issues at the regional level and local issues at the local level. On the issues of compliance and regulation, O'Kane was blunt. In the past, a "big stick approach" to these issues had not worked. In the Shepparton Irrigation Area there were 7,300 irrigation farm units with another 7,286 farm units in the Goulburn Dryland. The cost of policing this number of farms would be horrendous. The salinity experience suggested that a combination of education, incentives and legislation as the fall back position was the most effective approach to implementing change on farms.

If the community was required to commit large amounts of time and money, they needed to have ownership of the problem and the plans developed to manage the problem. Therefore, it was essential that the community had a substantial role in the decision making process.

O'Kane cited as an example of the benefits of this approach, the implementation of the Native Vegetation Retention legislation. In the Goulburn Broken Catchment, the issue of native vegetation retention had been very well canvassed within the salinity and Landcare forums. As a result, the legislation was welcomed by the vast majority of landholders and residents of the catchment. However, in some catchments the legislation had not been well received. There were probably two lessons to be learnt from this:

- The community needs to be well informed and involved in the decision-making process; and
- Legislation must be appropriate for all parts of the State.

SPAC experience had also demonstrated that an integrated approach to total catchment management improves the allocation of resources. The community and government agencies working together to develop a strategy had achieved major benefits.

The establishment of common goals was a vital component of any program to reverse land and water degradation. The Strategy could then be broken up into a five-year works program and annual works program. Benchmarks needed to be established and targets set. In this way SPAC and the agencies became accountable to the community and the Government in meeting their targets. O'Kane acknowledged that SPAC was looking at the next five years and trying to make sense of the recent developments in land and water management. Although it was still early days, it appeared almost certain that the Landcare Action Plan process would be the vehicle for change. SPAC had developed the structure outlined below. It had subsequently been endorsed as the preferred option in the Goulburn Landcare Plan.

Proposed Structure

The role of the ICM Board would be to coordinate the policies and programs for land and water management. The ICM Board would set the broad policy agenda and coordinate the budget for the Catchment. The ICM Board would also ensure that management groups develop strategies which were compatible with the overall wellbeing of the Catchment and the basin.

The ICM Board members would represent the following constituencies:

- Private land holders
- VFF
- Conservation Council of Victoria (CCV)
- Water Authorities
- Urban residents
- Local government

SPAC's success with its Committee structure suggested the establishment of management groups to be responsible for Water Quality, Irrigation, the Dryland and Public Lands.

O'Kane conceded that this model was based on the Goulburn Broken Catchment. In other catchments, the emphasis might need to be varied and the management groups may need to be different to accommodate the distinctives of each catchment. Notwithstanding this need for flexibility, O'Kane was confident that the philosophy and structure on which the proposal was based was robust enough to accommodate any differences between catchments.

On the issue of cost sharing, the ICM would be responsible for the development of cost sharing arrangements for each of the management areas, taking into account the benefits of the works proposed.

Landholders, public land managers, ratepayers and Governments would all be involved in the development of these cost sharing arrangements because they would all benefit from the works:

- Landholders through increased productivity;
- Local government through protection of infrastructure like roads and indirectly through increased activity in the regional economy, leading to increases in employment and increases in the rate base;
- Water Authorities through reduced treatment costs; and
- State and Federal Governments through greater exports, increased taxation, employment etc.

From the experience SPAC had gained, O'Kane pressed the case for catchment management with long-term strategies, a five year works program with an annual coordinated budget, targets and an annual reporting process. He realised that it could take more than two years to achieve these arrangements in the non-salinity related areas. Managing this transition was one of the key issues facing the community. O'Kane was concerned to build on the strengths of the Salinity Program without losing the ownership and enthusiasm of the community.

With his customary pragmatism, O'Kane noted that if ICMs were empowered as SPAC proposed, power would be taken from other areas, principally centrally organised groups such as Government Departments and the VFF. This would be a justifiable price to pay for having decisions made at the right levels by the right people. O'Kane also identified the dilemma as to whether ICM should be responsible for all issues that relate to water quality viz salinity, nutrification, turbidity and the riparian environment. It would have been possible, for example, to include all land and water issues in the ICM charter but to delegate to the appropriate bodies the task of determining priorities for non-catchment related problems.

At the time of preparing this paper O'Kane was bemused and more than a little edgy about the multiplicity of issues and proposals being pursued. Everything seemed to be happening at once – the

Decade of Landcare, the State Nutrient Strategy coordinated by the EPA, the Coalition's policy of Catchment Coordinating Councils, the release of "Water – the Next 10 Years", the establishment of Rural Water Corporation Regional Boards. All this was happening over the top of Land Protection Councils, the Salinity Management Plans, the Salinity Forums, the Management Boards, Water Authorities etc. O'Kane was understandably concerned that any new initiatives must be mindful of the enormous gains made in natural resource management over the previous 10 years by groups that had established a great deal of credibility within the Catchment.

State Government Processes: Regional Landcare Planning

At the State level, natural resource management was being redefined in the context of Landcare. The Victorian Government commitment to Landcare flowed out of the Commonwealth-State agreement in 1990 to the preparation of the National Decade of Landcare Plan.

Joan Kirner was familiar with natural resource management issues in the Goulburn Broken Catchment and her role in Landcare was crucial to this process. At a conference on regionalism in 2000, Joan Kirner reflected on the early days of Landcare. She identified the distinctive elements that accounted for its remarkable progress.¹

I had just been elected (in June 1985) as a State Minister of Conservation, Forests and Lands. I was pretty nervous. They actually elected you as a Minister but they never tell you how to do it. But at least I knew country mums from one end of Victoria to the other. I had a network so I decided that the best way to find out what the hell was happening in country areas was to take a bus trip, not a limmo trip, a bus trip, on the

Murray Valley Highway, looking at, in this case, the increased problems of salinisation of the Murray River and the surrounding land.

At each stop along the way, Shepparton, Echuca, Mildura, a different departmental officer came aboard to explain how we could solve the salinity problem by channelling the water of the land, the excess water on the land, back to the river and allowing the salt to disperse, to move downstream to Waikerie and other places. Now as a green, relatively green, and greenie new Minister, I felt my anger rising. I didn't know much about salinity at that stage or about land and water use but I knew enough to know that you don't fix one area's salinity problem by moving the problem downstream to Renmark and beyond.

Later that day I caught up with the local farmers, men and women. The blokes had been calling me Madam Minister all day. The women, who were serving the afternoon tea said, "Joan, how lovely to see you again." The blokes thought "Is this a conspiracy?" and it was. It was because as I listened to them I heard quite clearly that they didn't want me or the departmental officers to be bringing our expertise to them to tell them what to do about salinity. They did want our resources, by the way and more of them, but what they wanted was someone to listen to what they thought good land practice was, not only on their farms but on the catchment area.

So I went back to town and I said: "I want a program based on the ownership of the farmers and the local people of the land.

Based on conservation principles but where the locals own the problem and the solution. "Oh, Minister", they said "do you know what you are letting yourself in for?" I smiled sweetly and said, "Yes, but you've got no idea, have you?" I had a bit of trouble getting it through the Victorian Cabinet because they said we already had Work Care and that had a pretty good reputation at the time – so I shouldn't really muck it up by calling this thing, which was my program, Landcare.

Well, in 1986 we had six Landcare projects in Victoria. In the year 2000 we have over 4500. What I learned from that experience, well, it is my view that if the Landcare principles and processes of community action can start to work to tackle land degradation, then they can work to tackle the other big community problems and that is that they don't need experts and Ministers coming to town to tell them how to do it. They need Ministers and local members to either live there or to come to town to listen to their solutions and resource those solutions. Not in the short-term ... so that we, as a total community, can do something about that land ... the locals have to own the solution. They don't want you to do things for them. They want you to do things with them. For rural community challenges to be faced and met, there has to be a partnership between all sections of those communities and between rural and regional areas and cities.

In an interview Joan Kirner gave in 2004 she also recalled "I took the first proposals for Landcare to Cabinet in 1986 and had to fund it out of my current Departmental budgets." The choice of a name for the program had been a topic of debate.

"The Department wanted to call it TLC – Total Land Care. Legend has it that I said 'I am not being the woman Minister of TLC. No way!' I said we will call it Landcare and I had to get it through Cabinet."

The adoption of Landcare by the Federal Government came about as a result of Senator Peter Cook attending the first anniversary of the launch of Landcare in Victoria. As the Federal Minister for Resources his role was pivotal. Joan Kirner remembers he had been very impressed with what Landcare was achieving. "He went back to Bob Hawke and said the Federal Government must introduce this program across the nation."

The Goulburn Regional Landcare Plan was one of nine, which were prepared concurrently for Victoria's catchment based Landcare regions. Each Regional Landcare Plan was prepared by a community reference group with assistance from the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, the Department of Agriculture and the Rural Water Corporation.

The Goulburn Regional Landcare Plan released in June 1993 reflected the views of the community on Landcare in relation to public and private land, rivers and streams, towns and cities, irrigation and industries. The Plan took account of submissions in response to the Draft Regional Landcare Plan that had been released for public comment early in 1993.

The Community Reference Group that drove the planning process chose to highlight the inter-relationships between land and water degradation issues. From these they developed a number of integrated management strategies to deal with them, rather than approach problems on an issue-by-issue basis. (In developing this approach and other aspects of the Plan, the lessons learned during SPPAC and by SPAC were a major influence.)

The Goulburn Broken Catchment



The major Landcare issues identified in this way were the physical aspects of:

- Maintaining vegetative cover
- Protecting water quality and quantity
- Private land management – farm
- Private land management – non-farm
- Public land management
- Maintaining flora and fauna diversity and the institutional aspects of:
- Community and government coordination, communication and cooperation
- Land use planning.

Priority activities necessary to achieve integrated land and water management were:

1. Communication

- between and within government agencies and private land managers
- stronger community networks across all sectors
- sharing and clear presentation.

2. Planning

- farm and catchment plans for each land management unit
- whole farm planning to include environmental protection and water quality measures
- vegetation corridors and nodes established throughout farms and catchments and to include linear reserves, wetlands, and natural drainage lines
- shire roadside assessment and management plans to encompass remnant plant cover
- ensure existing and future activities use land within its capability.

3. Integrated land and water management programs

- River Management Authorities work with local communities and Landcare groups on streams throughout their catchments
- establish a forum for land and water management bodies to develop strategies for the protection of water quality and quantity
- perennial pasture establishment and maintenance
- grazing management systems
- a two-way good neighbour approach to the management of public land
- ongoing implementation of all existing land and water management strategies and plans in the region.

It was proposed that the Plan would be implemented through a regional interagency team, community development programs and integrated catchment management through incorporating stream, river, groundwater and catchment management issues with land use needs. It was also proposed that a Goulburn Broken Integrated Catchment Management (ICM) Council would be responsible for long term community consultation and implementation of the Regional Landcare Plan.

State Government Processes: Catchment and Land Protection Proposals

In moving towards legislation aimed at the sustainable management of Victoria's resources, in July 1993 the State Government released a Discussion Paper on the proposed legislation for Catchment and Land Protection. The overlap in this process with Landcare planning at the State level may have concerned, even possibly confused, some caught up in the processes. The Discussion Paper identified the relationship between these initiatives.

With the recent preparation of Regional Landcare Plans for all nine catchment areas covering Victoria, coordinated action to manage natural resources involving landholders, industry, local and State Government has been further advanced. Implementation of measures for coordinated community and government action for specific cases of land and water degradation are well developed in a number of regional and State-wide programs. It is now important to build on this work, extend its benefits and, when appropriate, draw the activities into a common consultation and decision-making framework.²

The paper prepared by DNR identified the need to manage natural resources as a system, for which the links between the uses and care of soil, water and vegetation were specifically recognised. "To do this people need to work together to identify the causes and effects, develop preventative or remedial action and sustain such action. The main purpose of the proposed legislation is to help this process of community action."³

The discussion paper proposed that the land and water management program be based on sustainable use, integrated catchment management, community involvement, efficient use of natural resources, performance monitoring and adaptability to changing technology, and social and economic factors.

In making the case for change, DNR drew attention to the "significant shortcomings in current arrangements ... in particular:

- land management and water management are not properly linked throughout the State,
- long-term integrated planning for the use of natural resources is not well developed,
- the quality of land resources and effectiveness of resource management programs are not measured consistently and comprehensively,

- there is inadequate opportunity for involvement of the community in the management of natural resources in some areas,
- the community consultative processes, particularly at the state-wide level, appear to be inefficient,
- the current regulatory framework is inconsistent, narrowly focussed and inflexible."⁴

This and other sections of the Discussion Paper gave the impression that the Government was concerned to rectify its shortfall in performance at the State level, and also to enable catchments to catch up to the best practice that had been developed in regions such as the Goulburn Broken.

Key proposals included:

- **State Catchment and Land Protection Council.** This body would provide a State-wide perspective on the priorities for catchment protection and on the operation of the catchment boards. It would be a peak advisory body for the Government on the management of natural resources and would foster a partnership approach between the community and government agencies in developing and assessing State-wide natural resource policy and programs.
- **Designated Catchments.** Water catchments were the proposed area base for planning, coordinating and facilitating local and regional activities.
- **Catchment and Land Protection Boards.** Decision-making would be devolved at an appropriate local level to a body representing the range of natural resource managers in the catchment, with clear roles and responsibilities, but with enough flexibility to adapt to changing situations and reflect the diversity of the region's natural resources and communities. There was a clear opportunity to rationalise existing coordinating bodies, to minimise duplication by government agencies and the community, and to use resources more efficiently. To meet these needs, a Catchment and Land Protection Board was to be established for each designated catchment.

- **Catchment Planning.** CLP Boards would develop coordinated catchment strategies and advise on priority actions. This planning would focus on aims and outcomes often using existing plans as a base, ensuring consistency and common goals in future plans and monitoring of progress. This process would include participation by the community, all natural resource managers and key interest groups within the Catchment. The strategy would provide a shared vision of the catchment and recommend programs and actions to achieve that vision.⁵
- **Catchment Funding.** The sources and distribution of funds to support catchment management needed to be adequate for the long-term needs, and reflect appropriate sharing of the costs. In apportioning costs of preventative and remedial measures, there must be a capacity to take into account the off-site effects of land and water management.

DNR drew attention to the various sources of funding available in Victoria for natural resource management such as the NLP, MDBC in addition to other Commonwealth, State and regional sources and local government.

The Discussion Paper canvassed various proposals in the Regulatory Framework which DNR saw as crucial to the success of these proposals.⁶ These legislative proposals were intended to help coordinate catchment and land protection activities. However it was expected there would be occasions when regulations were needed to make sure that the off-site effects or long-term on-site effects of serious degradation were prevented. Such powers would generally be used only when incentives for voluntary compliance had failed.

Some existing legislation contained regulations that were relevant to resource management. The new legislation proposed did not seek to provide for all the types of regulation that could be used to protect natural resources. It was restricted to replacing and updating the regulatory elements of existing relevant legislation.

The wisdom gained by SPAC and other catchment bodies had been taken into account in large measure but the responses to this Paper identified several additional key elements in catchment management that pioneers in this field had adopted successfully both in their philosophy and their practice.

A submission from the Department of Agriculture supported the general thrust of the proposed legislation toward an integrated approach to managing land and water resources sustainably. DAV's main concern was that the Discussion Paper seemed to ignore or undervalue the lessons of the Salinity and Landcare Programs where cooperative approaches between Government and the farming community had led to advances in land management through education and information transfer rather than regulation.

In its questioning of the Paper's emphasis on expanding regulatory powers, it is obvious that this emphasis was contrary to the advice offered by DAV during the Discussion Paper's development. This submission may have been designed to reverse the losses DAV had experienced in the interdepartmental process of developing the Paper. Regardless of its purpose, DAV's points had solid foundation in the experience of the more successful catchments' organisations.

DAV had built its case on the lessons of the 80s and 90s:

The Programs developed in the 1980s have responded to specific issues. In the 1990s we have learnt that many of the issues have similar solutions and that the solutions require farmers to adopt new management practices. It has become clear that the solutions, if they are to be adopted by farmers, must be tailored to fit within the total farm business management system and must be productive and profitable.

The new approach to sustainable land management has required the Government and farmers to develop integrated solutions to land degradation. The solutions are developed in the context of farms as a business and seek to identify farm management changes that can be adopted by farmers that will lead to achievement of the desired economic and environmental outcomes. The Salinity Program, in particular, has demonstrated the importance of a strong partnership between Government and farmers in tackling land and water degradation problems that require farmers to change their farm management practices and to invest in new technology.

The Landcare Program has demonstrated the willingness of farmers to cooperate with each other in tackling a wide range of land management and water quality problems. The Soilcare and Farm Advance programs have demonstrated farmers desire to seek profitable solutions to land degradation problems.⁷

DAV went on to quote specific lessons that had been learnt from the 80s and 90s on which it had based its position. DAV then pointed to “the potential benefits to be gained from integrating the delivery of land management programs (e.g. Salinity and Landcare)”.

DAV developed this approach in relation to the new regional boards, with the goal of ensuring that they had a meaningful role. DAV proposed that they:

- Recommend the distribution of funds from the National Landcare Program’s Community Group Program.
- Report annually to the relevant Ministers on the implementation of the region’s integrated catchment management programs.⁸

DAV proposed a model for Regional Boards similar to that proposed by the Goulburn Region Landcare Plan where the emphasis was on achieving program outcomes through sub-committees overseeing functional/sub-regional areas. All sub-committees would have influence over the region’s natural resource management service delivery arrangements for the achievement of outputs. Key points of John Dainton’s advocacy were being acknowledged and taken up.

If some regulatory provisions were required, then DAV supported the principle that the decision to invoke regulations should be made regionally by the Regional Boards. DAV also believed that the major challenge for the Regional Boards was the integration of existing regional salinity, Landcare and water quality plans and not the preparation of a Catchment Management Plan. While the difference might have appeared to be semantic, it did stress that each new Board should not enter into another round of natural resource planning but rather focus its efforts on achieving outcomes through coordinating implementation of existing plans.

DAV proposed that integration occur by building upon existing salinity management plans. These plans proposed detailed works programs for land and water quality improvement and took account of the interaction between land and water resources.⁹

At the level of State Government oversight, DAV made a strong case for the significant roles of the Minister for Agriculture and the DAV in policy and delivery of programs to ensure sustainable agriculture to be recognised in the new arrangements.

The Legislation should formally recognise the key role of DAV in developing Codes of Practice for sustainable agriculture systems in consultation with catchment Boards and industries.

Because of the substantial role DAV has in the development and delivery of Integrated Catchment Management programs as they relate to agricultural land use, DAV believes that it has a major role to play in supporting the regional and state-wide boards.¹⁰

The crucial point behind DAV's paper was its perception that "Farmers are both the main clients and doers in Landcare. The discussion paper fails to grasp the significance of this fact and the fundamental interdependence of agricultural industries and catchment management"¹¹ - a point that would have resonated with SPAC and the contributors to the Goulburn Broken Regional Landcare Plan.

In November 1993, the State Government released its "Victorian Government Response to the Regional Landcare Plans". This statement acknowledged that "Regional Landcare Plans mark the next major step in the development of an integrated approach to natural resource management in Victoria."¹² The document confirmed that, with two exceptions, the catchment boundaries for the new Landcare regions would be based on the salinity planning regions.¹³ So SPAC, and eventually the GBCLP Board, could continue with the same planning area.

This response also noted that Victoria was now "leading the way in integrated catchment management" and that "the government is now working towards the next stage which is the preparation and enactment of the Catchment and Land Protection legislation."¹⁴

CLP Legislation

The Catchment and Land Protection Act was assented to on 15 June 1994. It established the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council and Regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards as the mechanism through which the community would advise the Government and ensure coordination of catchment and land protection activities. (Refer to the following diagram on the next page).

The Council would take a statewide view in advising the Government on the condition of the State's natural resources and priorities for the allocation of funds. It would coordinate the activities of other bodies at the

statewide level, initiate studies relating to the State's natural resources, promote community awareness and support and monitor the operations of the regional Boards. Expressions of interest were invited from those people who would like to be members of the new Council. A selection panel appointed by the Minister for Natural Resources advised him on the appointment of people with the necessary skills and experience. The Council was to be established by early October 1994.

The Regional Boards were required to:

- prepare regional strategies and special area plans for the management of natural resources;
- encourage cooperation of those involved in natural resource management;
- advise Ministers on priorities, guidelines and operation of the Act;
- promote community awareness; and
- recommend the measures on Crown land to prevent land degradation.

The Council and Boards would each have up to 15 members who reflect the major land and water users in the State or a region respectively. Those appointed were to, between them, have experience and knowledge of land protection, water resource management, primary industry, conservation and local government.

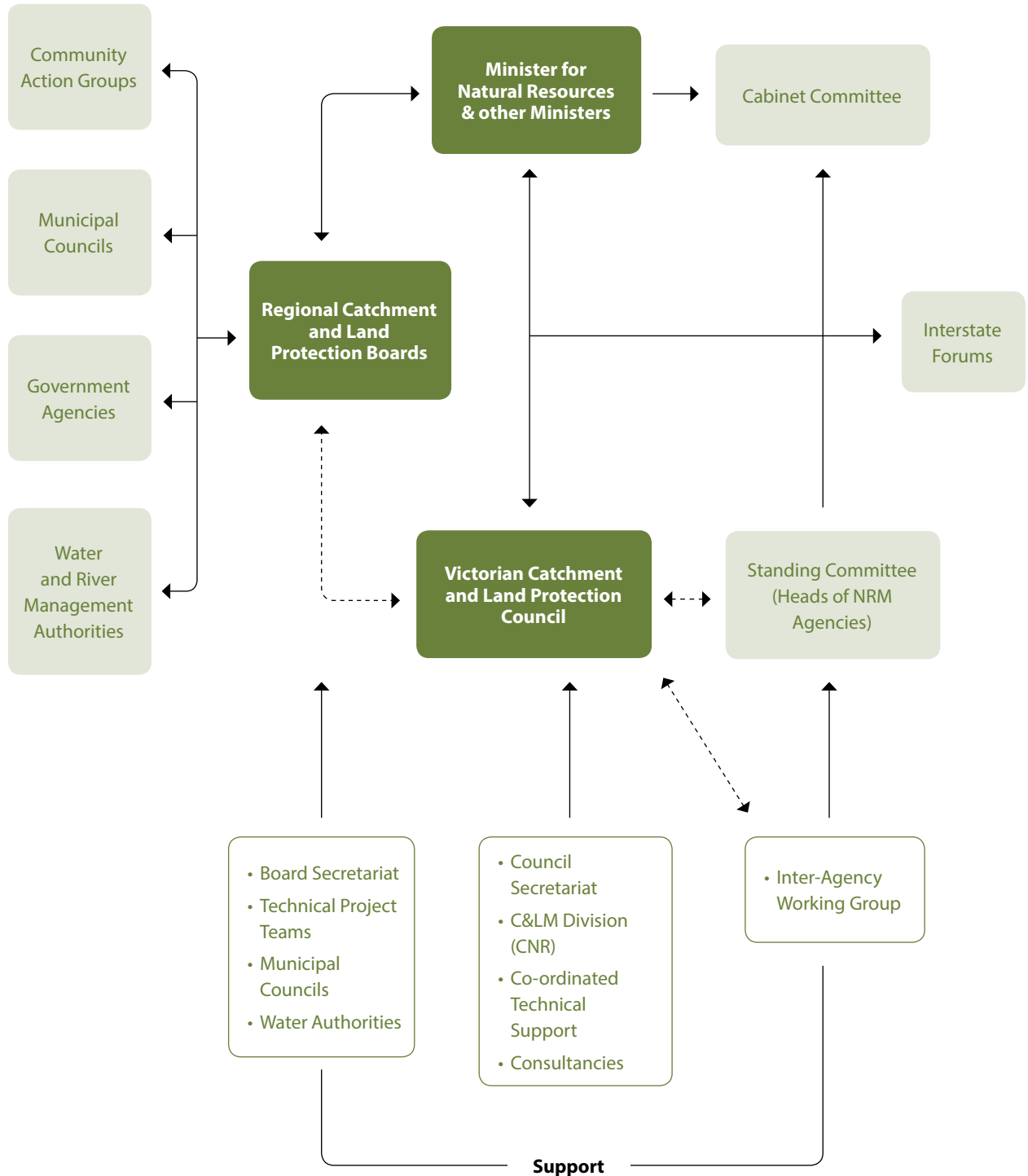
The majority of Board members were to be primary producers.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and Department of Agriculture would be represented on the Council and Boards.

A Pest Animal Advisory Committee was established to make recommendations to the Minister for Natural Resources. Its membership was to include people with knowledge in vertebrate pest animal management, animal husbandry and welfare, and wildlife management.

As indicated above, the final outcome in the legislation took account of some of the key points made by DAV, but the emphasis was on the "prevention of land degradation" and pest control.

The New Catchment and Land Protection Advisory System



Understandably, the preparation of regional strategies remained a key requirement.

In January 1995 Graham Hunter, Project Director Catchment and Land Protection Legislation (DCNR), released a Progress Report to the Regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards on implementing the CLP Act. The report noted that, at its first meeting on 26 November 1994, the State Council had established the State Assessment Panel for the NLP, arranged for the preparation of the Council's Business Plan and appointed members to the steering committee for the Review of Victoria's Decade of Landcare Plan.

On 29 December 1994 the Minister for Natural Resources and the Minister for Agriculture announced the membership of each of the Regional CLP Boards. Their inaugural meetings were scheduled in the period 23 January to 15 February 1995. The membership of the advisory bodies was based on knowledge and skills – and in the catchments that already had an intensive period of effective natural resource management (such as the Goulburn Broken) – membership included people with experience of working within structures of this type. The success of this approach with SPPAC and SPAC was widely acknowledged.

Members were appointed for a maximum of three years with possible reappointment. For the first term, appointment was for two years after which half the membership of each body continued for the third year. Thereafter new appointments were for a three year period thereby providing overlap of old and new members. This required an effective process of replenishment of members every one to two years from October 1996. All non-government members of the advisory bodies were to receive remuneration in part recognition of the value of the skills and effort that they brought to these bodies.¹⁵

The Council and each Regional Board could establish sub-committees, the membership of which was not restricted to the members of the body which formed it. While this was deemed an unusual provision, it was intended to provide an opportunity to bring a broader range of experience and expertise into the work of the bodies as had been so successful with SPPAC and SPAC. In bringing together the key functions in the catchment, it was expected that such bodies as salinity committees and Landcare groups could be appointed as sub-committees.

Community groups overseeing the implementation of salinity management plans were to continue to operate and their relationship to the new Boards would be decided by 30 June 1995. Coordinating advisory bodies at a regional level, such as the Goulburn Broken Salinity Program Advisory Council and the Wimmera Catchment Coordinating Committee, were to be phased out by 30 June 1995 and their roles subsumed by a new Board.

Priority activities of the Boards were expected to include:

- the development of a business plan by June 1995 (this was seen as an important opportunity for the Boards to plan their activities in association with the Government to ensure that resources were available to meet the expectations and to inform interested parties of the activities);
- the appointment of the regional assessment panel to the National Landcare Program;
- the review of the regional Landcare plan in preparation for its development into the Regional Catchment Management Strategy;
- the establishment of communications throughout the region; and
- the review and implementation of guidelines for the preparation of annual reports.

The development and implementation of its regional catchment management strategy was seen to be of critical importance to the effectiveness of each Regional Board in that it would:

- allow the Board to undertake a systematic assessment of land and water management in its region;
- provide a means of setting priorities and goals and thereby providing a credible framework for the provision by the Board of advice to Government;
- assist the Board to communicate its goals and priorities throughout the region and negotiate the responsibilities of regional bodies;
- help identify interactions between the activities and plans of regional bodies and any gaps that may need to be filled.

The core contents of a regional catchment management strategy were to include an assessment of the use and degradation of land and water resources, the definition of objectives for land and water quality, a program of measures to promote the improved use of land and water resources, the allocation responsibilities for taking action, and a program of monitoring and review. The strategy preparation had to include a process of review of the currently proclaimed water supply catchments in the region and assessment of the need for the further determination of special water supply catchment areas under the new Act.

It was expected that each Board would initially develop its strategy by reviewing the existing regional Landcare plan and proposing amendments as necessary within 18 months of the Board's establishment. The minimum process of consultation on the proposed strategies included consultation with the regional community over a four week period, submission of proposals to the Minister for Natural Resources who was to consult with other Ministers as appropriate, and a notice of approval to the strategy by the Government in the Government Gazette. It was recognised that this approach would need to be adapted to the differences in circumstances between each of the regions.¹⁶

Special area plans were tools the Boards could use to provide operational plans to address land and water management issues. Agreement to the development of a special area plan was required from the Government so that agency resources could be committed appropriately to its preparation. A special area plan, as well as providing an operational program, was a pre-condition to agreement to Land Use Conditions and the associated costs sharing arrangements. Land Use Conditions were the only form of ongoing control over the management of land provided in the Act. They had broad applicability but had to be justified and supported as part of the special area plan.

Special area plans also provided a mechanism by which duties of landowners could be transferred. Public authorities, including local governments and water authorities as well as Government agencies were to "have regard" to the provisions of the Regional Catchment Management Strategies and special area plans.¹⁷

Land Management Notices were to be the principal regulatory tool that could be used by the DCNR to address existing activities that could cause land degradation. The Land Management Notices reinforced duty of care and the instruments to control the spread of pests. They were to be served on a landowner, not on the land. The Notices provided broad powers to regulate the use of land and required specific action to be taken. However the issuing of the Land Management Notices was intended to be essentially an action of last resort.¹⁸

Transition in the Goulburn Broken

As noted in Chapter 8, Jeremy Gaylard was appointed Chair of the Catchment and Land Protection Council. With John Dainton back as Chair of the newly constituted Goulburn Broken Catchment and Land Protection Board, the skills and experience accumulated in SPPAC and SPAC were available in the State Council and at the regional level for the Goulburn Broken.

In October 1994 the Goulburn Broken Community Reference Group, that had previously prepared the Regional Landcare Plan for the catchment, gained NLP funding to conduct an independent audit of catchment and land protection and to develop options for integration of current and future catchment and land management activities. With the Regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards not yet in place, the CRG launched this study. With John Dainton's close knowledge of the RLP and his appointment as chair of the new CLP Board, he was well positioned to drive this important initiative.

John Dainton, along with other members of the CRG had recognised that, while the plan was a valuable strategic document, it was not a plan of action. It made no attempt to identify the state, federal and local resources currently devoted to Catchment and Land Protection. Consequently, the status or effectiveness of current resource allocation had not been addressed.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment properly saw itself as leading the State (and probably the nation) in many areas of natural resource management. This had allowed the Catchment to attract considerable resources. The CRG was concerned that the transition to an integrated approach to Catchment Management would be less than optimal if the current situation was not better understood and clearly documented.

The study's primary outcome was to be a strategy for the integration of natural resource management in the Catchment. The primary purpose of the strategy was to assist the Catchment Board develop the institutional arrangements and catchment strategy which would need to be put in place in the first 12 months of its operation.

The CRG acknowledged the lack of detail in the Regional Landcare Plan and sought an analysis of what elements a Catchment Management Strategy should contain. To this end, consultants were engaged to:¹⁹

- review the Regional Landcare Plan, documenting the elements that an integrated catchment management strategy should contain;
- audit the activities currently funded under various state and federal government funded schemes including the amount of funding allocated, the source of funding and the plan, strategy and/or Government service agreements under which the funds are provided;
- identify the implications of the catchment boundary not coinciding with the area covered by the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan, particularly the budget allocations in the SIRLWSMP expended in the Loddon Campaspe Catchment through the SIRLWSMP. (The audit would be for 1994/95 except for the Catchment Boundary issue which needed to include the financial years 1990/91 – 1994/95 to gain an historical perspective. The audit would also identify any Government commitments to reduce or increase expenditure);
- review the audit and identify gaps and overlaps in the scope and quality of existing plans/strategies and make recommendations on gaps and overlaps;
- review the target setting, performance indicators, accountability and reporting practices in place and make recommendations on their effectiveness;

- cross reference the current implementation activities funded in the catchment with the key elements of the Regional Landcare Plan and thereby identify implementation gaps for consideration by the Catchment and Land Protection Board in the preparation of a Catchment Management Strategy; and
- identify related programs (e.g. Regional Development), initiatives and make recommendations on how they can be integrated/linked into the Regional Landcare Plan.

A workshop was proposed early in the consultancy to discuss relevant issues for consideration in the study and provide additional information. Participants at this workshop were to include representatives of DAV, DCNR, RWC, G-MW, the River Management Boards and the relevant Working Groups and Committees.

Transition Report

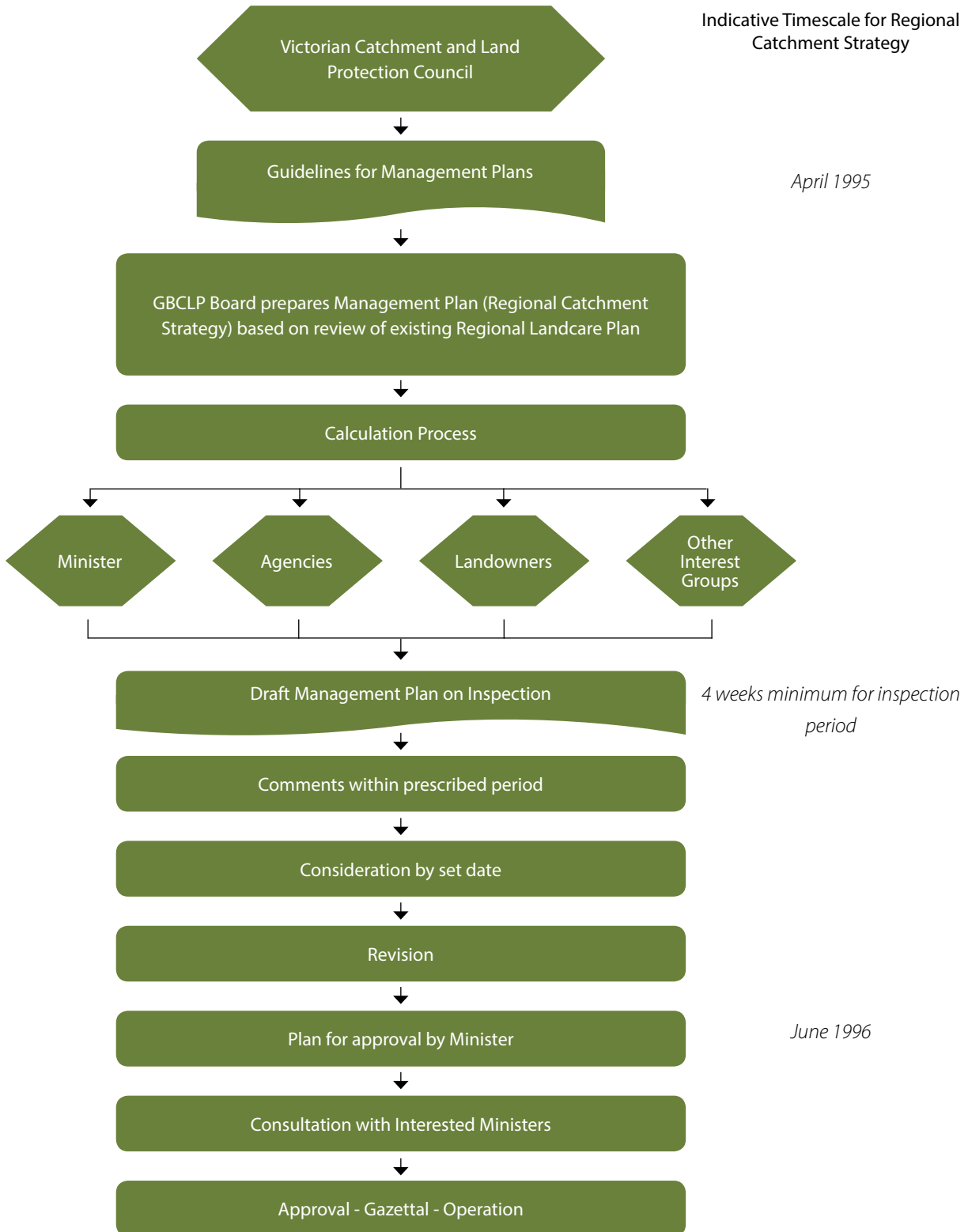
The report developed in response to the CRG’s brief included the workshop’s views on the priority components of NRM in the catchment as a starting point. Participants ranked each of the 78 components in importance for each of four “Program Areas”. The Table below shows the top ten components of natural resource management prioritised for each “Program” – an important initial guide to the coming GBCLPB in identifying priority issues in the catchment.²⁰

An interim approach to developing an integrated catchment management strategy was outlined (refer Figure 5 on next page).²¹

Resource Issue Ranking – Top 10

Dryland	Irrigation	River Environment	Public Lands
Land use planning	Salinity	In stream habitats	Timber harvesting
Hill country management	Irrigation Water Supply	River management	Fire protection
Salinity	Rising watertables	Stream and bank erosion	Coordination
Soil Protection	Groundwater use and management	Wetlands	Flora and Fauna
Pastures	Water quality	Floodplain management	Weeds
Fire protection	Drainage (agricultural)	Nutrient management	Recreation
Communication	Irrigation practices	Water quality	Public land reserves
Rising watertables	Salt disposal	Sedimentation	Wetlands
Water quality	Control of runoff	Fisheries	Communication
Soil erosion	Drainage re-use	Grazing management	Agency staff resourcing

Figure 5: Procedure for Preparation and Approval of Regional Catchment Strategy and Special Area Plans



The Transition Report recommended the Board should consider this interim approach to strategy development which uses the traditional logical and sequential form: Planning; Research; Implementation; Monitoring and Evaluation.

The significant volume and diversity of research into aspects of the Goulburn Broken Catchment undertaken in recent years placed the Board in a favourable position in devising a research program in collaboration with the various agencies and groups involved in this research.

The Board could draw on the planning process and the findings from its research program to derive a draft implementation strategy. The framework for the monitoring system and method of evaluation would be designed in the course of planning the management strategy.

The Report proposed the annual management plan should incorporate the various monitoring timetables for programs/projects which, for the most part, should be geared to the Board's annual reporting timetable.

To assist the GBCLP Board in integrating NRM projects within the catchment it was recommended that:

- The Board promote the use of a coordinated budget procedure for all natural resource management activities within the Goulburn Broken Catchment.
- In the short to medium term, agreed management plans and business plans ought to be acknowledged and respected by the incoming Board.
- Future business plans and strategies, undertaken by agencies within the catchment, would need to be integrated within the catchment management strategy yet to be developed by the GBCLP.

Government funding for natural resource projects was allocated via numerous Government initiatives. Both Federal and State governments made funding available to agencies, statutory bodies, organisations community groups (e.g. Landcare groups) and individuals via a diverse array of programs (see Table 3 on next page).²²

The financial contribution made by individuals, industries, local government (often via River Management Boards (RMB's)) and Water Boards, including Goulburn-Murray Water (via rates), the various Research and Development organisations (e.g. DRDC, RIRDC, LWRRDC etc.) and national non-Government organisations (e.g. ACF, Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers (ATCV), NFF etc.) to natural resource management in the Region were not included in the audit. The incumbent board was advised to recognise this contribution and encourage the funding bodies to maintain their input.

The Board needed as an integral part of its Management Strategy, a program/project monitoring system which parallels each of the reporting systems under the various State agreements, thus enabling the Board to respond appropriately to the Departmental monitoring systems.

An audit of Natural Resource Management projects in the region was undertaken for the year 1994/95. This led to a recommendation that a uniform cataloguing system for Natural Resource Management Projects should be developed by the GBCLPB to allow clear identification of projects within the catchment across all delivery groups.

The relativities of expenditure and Federal/State funding between programs would be important for the new GBCLPB to consider. Clearly the majority of expenditure related to irrigation issues within the Region. Some SIRLWSMP expenditure occurred in the North Central CLP Region and it was necessary to adopt a method of apportioning expenditures. The proportion of the North Central CLP Region in the SIRLWSMP used for the analysis had been determined as 13%.

The GBCLPB needed therefore to recognise the issue of funding allocations moving from one Region to another via the SIRLWSMP. The integrity of the SIRLWSMP had to be maintained to allow the continued implementation of the strategy.

Table 3: Funding Sources for NRM Initiatives

Agency	Core Program	Sub Programs	Scheme
Federal Government	LNP ANCA	LAND WATER NRMS STB FPP WW ESP NWP OBT	Community Landcare group grants Building and Participation Property management planning Healthy Rivers / Water quality / Management Floodplain management to water authorities Country town's wastewater management MDBDP Save the Bush Feral Pests Program Waterwatch Endangered Species Program National Wetlands Program One Billion Trees
State Government	SALINITY LPIS TV CONS. GRANTS WATER ENVIRONMENT TIS	Drainage Farm Research Education Grants Coordination	 Land Protection Incentive Scheme Tree Victoria Timber Industry Strategy
National Non-government	ACF ACNT ATCV GA LAL NFF		Australian Conservation Foundation Australian Council National Trust Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers Greening Australia Landcare Australia Ltd. National Farmers Federation
Research Organisations	LWRRDC CSIRO UWRA RIRDC MDBC AWRAP GRDC GWRDC DRDC		Landcare and Water Rural Research Development Corporation Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation Urban Water Research Association Rural Ind. Res. Dev. Corp. Murray-Darling Basin Commission Australian Wool Research and Promotion Corporation Grains Research Development Corporation Grape and Wine Research Development Corporation Dairy Research Development Corporation

In order to settle the question of a boundary anomaly, it was recommended that the GBCLP and NCCLP Boards should discuss the formal adoption of a catchment boundary for the purposes of implementing the SIRLWSMP and that the boundary be defined by the Shepparton Irrigation Region Surface Drainage Strategy which takes into account low flow, not flooding events.

The Boards were advised to discuss how the SIRLWSMP was to be dealt with in the future and whether it was to be left intact or given a sunset clause.

A Transition Report such as this needed to take account of relevant processes of change and review in all levels of the public sector.

The Federal Government's commitment to implementing its National Competition Policy (Hilmer Report) and the push behind the "new managerialism" had led to a greater concern for accountability, outcomes and best practice, in this case, in the area of catchment management.

At the time of the Report, the Federal Regional Economic Development Group was carrying out an Economic Audit of the Emerging Murray Basin Region. This aimed to define a core geographic area to serve as the Regional Development Organisation (RDO) region(s). At this stage, the economic audit studies relevant to the GBCLPB covered adjoining areas ("Hume" and "Murray"). The GBCLPB catchment straddled the southern and eastern sectors of the tentatively defined regions respectively. This meant that the GBCLPB would need to give close attention to and, where possible, contribute to the work of the REDG particularly with a view to establishing compatible and cooperative regional institutions.

Significant changes in Natural Resource Management had been underway for some time in Victoria including the establishment of the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council, the ten CLP Boards, a State Assessment Panel for NLP funding proposals and a direct link between the State Council and the Landcare and Salinity Standing Committee of Cabinet.

At the regional and sub-regional levels the most significant institutional changes relevant to the CLP

Boards were:

- The ongoing establishment of authorities constituted under the Water Act 1989 whose core function was waterway management and which could be assigned floodplain management and regional drainage responsibilities.
- The roles of the Water Authorities and Water Services Committees within the catchment would be important to the Board in its planning and implementation of the Catchment Management Strategy.
- The preparation of regional environmental plans comparable to those being introduced in NSW.
- The role of local government would have major significance for NRM especially in relation to land use planning, revenue raising and the provision of infrastructure and other works.

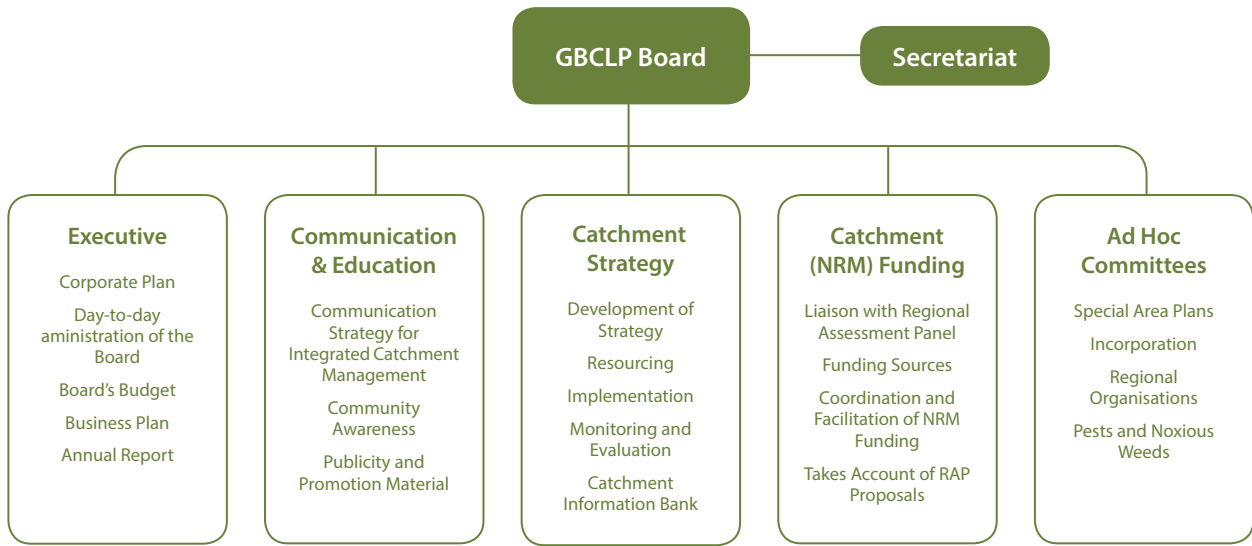
The Transition Report adopted an optimistic and opportunistic approach to institutional arrangements. The SPAC model and track record were encouraging in this regard. The SPAC organisational approach and lessons it had learnt in relating to the community and "the system" in a transparent way provided the Board with considerable wisdom to draw on in developing its structure and management.

Options were considered in regard to:

- a Board Committee structure to expedite its diverse program of activities;
- an Advisory Committee structure for involving key participants in NRM;
- the relationship of the Regional Assessment Panel to the Board, and its composition;
- the Business Plan and its potential as a means of integrating the Board's work on the catchment management strategy with its familiarisation program and communication strategy; and
- a need for effective networking in the catchment.

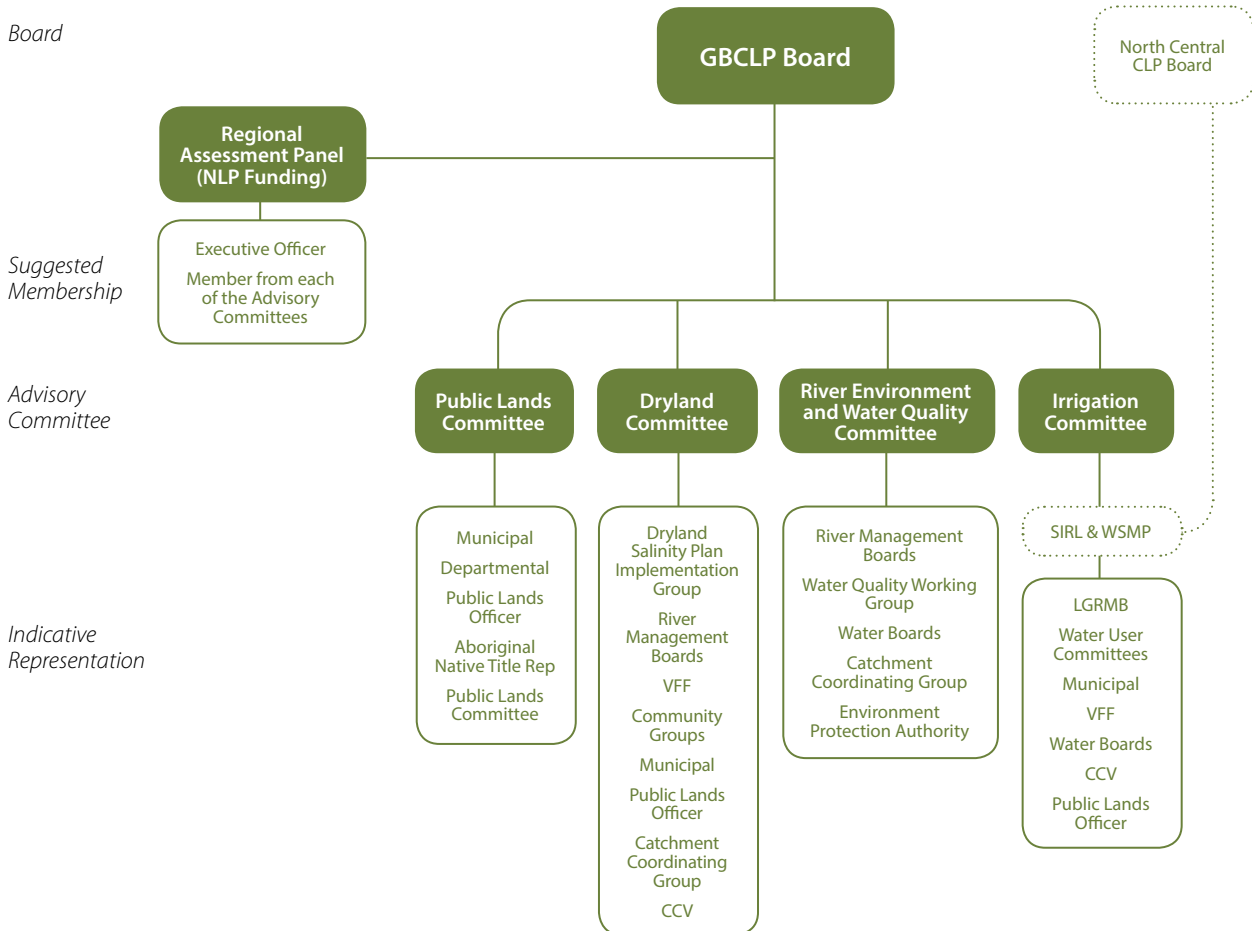
In view of the low frequency of proposed meetings and its limited administrative support, the Board needed to consider a Committee support structure to expedite work on its major tasks (see figure on the next page).

GBCLP Board: Notional Standing and Ad Hoc Committee Structure



This diagram was indicative only of the possible areas the Board would need to consider closely and for which a committee structure may be needed.

GBCLP Board: Proposed Advisory Committee Structure



The suggested structure and the various bodies represented on the Advisory Committees indicated above, were recommended to the Board for consideration. This approach had the major advantage of involving the key stakeholders in NRM through their separate agencies, organisations and industry associations. This spread of representation should have reassured the various groups and organisations of the recognition of their roles.

Regional Assessment Panel

The Report recommended that the Regional Assessment Panel membership should comprise the Executive Officer of the Board and representatives of each of the Advisory Committees. This would ensure that the skills and experience of the members would be available to the Panel as well as their current knowledge of the issues coming before the Advisory Committees.

The Board's task in its first eighteen months of operation (until June 1996) were expected to be formidable, complex and sensitive in some areas of the catchment political scene.

The CNR Progress Report to regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards (January 1995) identified the priority activities of Boards as including:

- the development of a Business Plan by June 1995;
- the appointment of the Regional Assessment Panel to the National Landcare Program;
- the review of the Regional Landcare Plan in preparation for its development into the Regional Catchment Management Plan;
- the establishment of communications throughout the region; and
- the review and implementation of guidelines for the preparation of annual reports.

The preparation of a Business Plan could commence when guidelines were released.

The Board was required to give priority to the preparation of a Three-Year Business Plan for the approval of the Minister in June 1995.

It was recommended that the Board develop an interim Business Plan which would enable it to meet this requirement and to maximise its performance in regard to the opportunities and demands which will be a feature of its early days.

It was also recommended that the Board establish a Catchment Management Network by building upon the existing working relationships among key personnel in NRM and extending these networks as appropriate.

Implementation of ICM

The new CLP Board had the advantage of the catchment's history of natural resource management from the days of SPPAC in managing the transition process into the new ICM arrangements. The Transition Report guided the process. By the time the Board issued its first (1994-95) Annual Report, the recommendations of this Report had been largely implemented.

The Board acknowledged that the final Annual Report by SPAC for the same period would provide the more substantial account of progress in the catchment. The first Annual Report by the new CLP Board noted a number of areas where changes were yet to be fully implemented:

- The Annual Report itself was not yet in the format or detail intended.
- The Catchment Strategy was to be developed by integrating and enhancing existing management strategies.
- The required Report on the condition of the catchment was deferred pending an appropriate methodology (to be developed in collaboration with the State CLP Council).

Other aspects of the new legislation, the institutional scene and public sector budgets concerned the Board:

- Its ability to fund NRM programs would have been enhanced by the power to collect an "Environmental Contribution" from the Catchment Community.
- The requirements of Local Government to reduce their rates by 20% threatened the agreement with Local Government to contribute 17.5% of the operation and maintenance of the public works component of SIRLWSMP and the agreement for Local Government to collect rates on behalf of Water Management Authorities.
- The relationship between the Regional Development Organisations and the CLP Boards was not clear although the importance of agriculture, particularly irrigated agriculture, was well understood. The development of strategic alliances with the Regional Development Organisations being established in the Catchment was a high priority of the Board.
- Public sector budget cuts meant it was difficult to ensure a substantial increase in the Natural Resource Management budget. Consequently, it was becoming increasingly important that resources were allocated to areas where the returns were high. The Board believed the process used at that time, of allocating resources across the State was developed in a period when budgets were increasing and the requirement to be strategic in the allocation of these resources was less pressing. This approach was no longer appropriate and a more strategic approach needed to be developed. The Board believed that the decision to allocate a set budget for each board irrespective of the level of activity and return on investment was an example of this problem.

This last point of concern resonated with John Dainton. He had been a strong advocate of assessing the economics and potential outcomes of specific project and program proposals from the days of the Pilot Program and SPAC.

He was concerned to put inter-catchment politics to one side and to adopt a similar strategic approach used at the State level.

For its part the Board had pursued efficiency and effectiveness by being rigorous in its processes and procedures to ensure that duplication and overlap were reduced substantially. The following reforms were undertaken to improve conditions:

- the disbanding of the Salinity Program Advisory Council;
- the restructuring of the SPAC Irrigation and Dryland Committees;
- the integration of the Water Quality Working Group into the Water Quality and River Environment Committee of the Board; and
- the establishment of a Public Lands Committee.

These reforms fully integrated the salinity program into the broader catchment and land protection agenda. The Board believed there were opportunities to increase efficiencies further by clarifying the responsibilities of agencies, authorities and individuals.

Excellent cooperation had also been achieved with State, regional and local government agencies. The high level of coordination, consultation and collaboration with other public and catchment bodies, pursued by SPPAC and SPAC was readily taken on as a key priority by the new Board.

While the catchment strategy was a priority task, the Board had decided not to embark on a major planning process believing many of the critical elements of a Catchment Strategy were already in place.

The SIRLWSMP was a comprehensive Plan which addressed most catchment and land protection issues and required only slight modification.

The Nutrient Strategy (being developed) together with the Business Plans of the Waterways Management Authorities (WMA) would provide the Water Quality and River Environment components.

The Board acknowledged that, in the Dryland, considerable work needed to be done. The audit conducted for the Transition Report had indicated that about two-thirds of the funds expended on natural resource management were outside the Salinity Management Plan.

The strategy for the Public Lands addressed the downstream impacts of public land management, biodiversity, roadside management and pest plant and animals.

In the course of developing a coordinated budget process, the Board had supervised the prioritisation process for NLP for 1994/1995 a process ably managed by Craig Madden, Chairman of the RAP and the NLP Regional Coordinator, Bruce Radford.

The Board had identified some problems with the NLP process and would be recommending substantial modifications early in the financial year. The Board was firmly committed to generating priorities via the Catchment Strategy, thus ensuring resources expended on natural resource management were focussed on agreed outcomes.

Significant changes in management responsibilities and institutional arrangements in the Catchment affecting natural resource management were implemented during 1994/95:

- The highly successful amalgamation of the Urban Water Authorities and Municipalities had created organisations with sufficient critical mass to make a genuine contribution to catchment and land protection.
- The involvement of the Urban Water Authorities in the development of a Nutrient Strategy had been a critical input into the strategy development.
- Municipalities, particularly in the Shepparton Irrigation Region, had played an essential role in the Community Drainage Program through the use of the Local Government Act and the enforcement of the Water Act through the Planning and Environment Act, specifically as it related to Uniform Planning Regulations.

- The creation of Goulburn-Murray Water as an incorporated State owned enterprise had been well received in the Catchment. The opportunity to relate to an organisation which had a major focus on the Catchment had been a positive development. The relationship developed between the CLP Board and G-MW was seen as excellent. This outcome was facilitated, in a large measure, by John Dainton's role as Deputy Chairman of G-MW and as Chair of the GBCLP Board.
- Bulk entitlements for the Goulburn Catchment had been finalised during the year, clarifying the environment's right to environmental flows and the allocation of water to irrigation and Urban Water Authorities. The Goulburn Catchment was the first catchment in Australia to finalise a Bulk Entitlement. This was a major achievement in the Australian context and provided a model for the whole of the Murray-Darling Basin. The Catchment community had been represented by Jeremy Gaylard and Gordon Weller in this process and the forum ably led by Campbell Fitzpatrick.
- The recent creation of the Lower Goulburn Waterway Management Authority and the proposed amalgamation of the North Central and Upper Goulburn River Management Authorities were expected to resolve many of the issues related to Waterway Management.

The Board and the WMA had agreed that the Catchment should be comprehensively covered by these new Authorities and that the Board would support the WMA in seeking the cooperation of Local Government to assist in the collection of a rate.

While the board had been concerned in 1994/95 about particular gaps in planning and operational guidelines and in the State Government's overall approach to catchment funding, it had major problems with the inadequacy of the budget in its second year.

In his report on the Board's experience in 1995/96, John Dainton delivered a blunt message about the Board's frustration with underperformance due to budget constraints:

- Dainton stressed that the Board's Budget should reflect its outputs if the vision of the CLP Legislation was to be fulfilled.
- The funding of the Catchment Strategies was inadequate and jeopardised the quality of the Strategies.
- The Board's community structure formally involved over 50 community representatives and at least as many groups and organisations in the decision making process. The 1994/95 budget was inadequate and but for the provision of additional support from within the agencies, the Board would not have been able to meet its commitments.
- The implementation phase of the Catchment Strategy, coupled with the opportunities emerging through the Natural Heritage Trust would stretch the Board's resources to breaking point. Dainton pointed out that the Board was in a unique position to attract investment and had demonstrated that significant efficiency gains were achievable when the community and agencies work in partnership. He forecast that opportunities would be missed if the Board's resources were not sufficient for the organisation to carry out its duties.
- Dainton reiterated the concerns he expressed in the 1994/95 Report, that a more commercial approach to funding the Boards was required. Any analysis would demonstrate that an increase in the Catchment Board Budget is likely to yield significant returns by attracting additional resources for Natural Resource Management from the public and private sectors.
- The resources available to the Public Lands Committee and the Communications Committee were also inadequate and a major impediment to their progress.

- Again Dainton advocated a legislative amendment empowering it to collect an "Environment Contribution" from the catchment community to part fund Natural Resource Management programs as part of the cost sharing arrangements for the Catchment Strategy.
- Dainton again hammered the point in the 1995/96 Annual Report that the Catchment Board believed the current policy of funding all Boards at the same level was fundamentally flawed.

Slow performance by some government agencies was also identified as a constraint on progress at the catchment level. A prime example was the Natural Resource Assessment Project headed by Professor Barry Hart. This project had been welcomed by the Board since it would provide a technically sound and practical framework for the Board to report on the conditions of the catchment.

The Catchment Board called on the Project Team and NRE to accelerate this project to enable the Board to use the outputs as the mechanism to report on the condition of the catchment next financial year.

The Board did not hesitate to point out areas where there were significant shortfalls in performance due to lack of cooperation and/or compliance. The Board was not satisfied timber production projects were returning the best environmental, social and economic returns on this large investment. The Board was of the view that the project should have closer links with the Board because it was a Catchment and Land Protection issue. The Board was very disappointed that Whole Farm Plans were not included as a prerequisite for eligibility for assistance with the result that considerable effort went into resolving this issue in the Irrigation Region.

Landholders in the catchment would use these timber production projects as a means to diversify their enterprise rather than a radical change in enterprise. For this reason the Board believed it was imperative that the forest component should be integrated into the farm enterprise through a legitimate farm planning process. The Board called for immediate reform of these projects.

The Catchment Board welcomed the amalgamation of a number of departments to form the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment. It believed this amalgamation would lead to improved efficiencies in service delivery and reductions in cost. It also believed the major reform which led to the formation of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment must be accompanied by changes in community structures. The Board pointed out that the Goulburn Broken Catchment had shown leadership in this area through the integration of the Salinity Program and other Natural Resource Management Programs into the CLP process.

With clear justification, the Catchment Board could claim that the Goulburn Broken Catchment was more advanced than other catchments. Rather than implement a major reform across the state, the Board proposed it may be more appropriate to pilot an approach that formalised the Catchment Board role as the primary purchaser of Natural Resource Management services in the Catchment.

Always careful to give credit where it was due, John Dainton thanked the former Ministers for Natural Resources and Agriculture Messrs. Geoff Coleman and Bill McGrath for their support and encouragement and acknowledged the commitment and enthusiasm of the new Ministers, Deputy Premier, Pat McNamara and Minister for Conservation and Land Management, Marie Tehan.

John Dainton was fortunate in the team of Committee Chairpersons that supported him - Athol McDonald (Irrigation), Craig Madden (Dryland), John Gray (Public Lands), Steven Mills (River Environment), Dianne McPherson (Communications), and their committees. The Coordinators, Ken Sampson, Pat Feehan and Neville Penrose were also recognised by Dainton for their high level performance and dedication. The Board's Executive Officer Bill O'Kane, was singled out for his special role in fostering a common purpose and a commitment to reform and supporting and nurturing this team approach - the value of which had been demonstrated repeatedly in the Goulburn Broken.

Ongoing Implementation

The year 1995/96 was one of significant progress for the new GBCLP Board, especially in the ongoing implementation of SIRLWSMP.

The Irrigation Committee was reconstituted as a committee of the new GBCLP Board. This meant a number of changes. The major role of the Committee was still to implement the Salinity Management Plan, but it had an increased role in implementing the nutrient management and biodiversity strategies in the catchment. The Irrigation Committee was also required to address in more detail the other natural resource management issues in the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

The Committee's Strategic Plan for the Second Five Years was completed and presented to Government as was the Surface Drainage Strategy also, after a major review process and widespread community consultation. Both Reviews were favourably received. A Groundwater Supply Protection Area Consultative Committee was established to prepare a draft management plan aimed at improving the coordinated groundwater control program.

In the considerable controversy that arose during the planning process for the Muckatah Drain, the whole basis of the SIRLWSMP and its Surface Drainage Strategy was challenged. Almost 200 objections to the construction of this drain were received. A major mediation process involving representatives of all groups was undertaken. This led to the endorsement of the basis of the SIRLWSMP and the Surface Drainage Strategy and the design of the Muckatah drain. Modifications to improve the performance of the drain and reduce any potential adverse downstream impact were undertaken. Processes were put in place to further enhance the Broken Creek (the receiving stream). This was a traumatic experience for all involved, but was expected to strengthen community processes in natural resource management in the Shepparton Irrigation Region.

The Dryland Committee assumed the role of implementation committee for the Goulburn Broken Salinity Management Plan. The Committee also set about the task of addressing other land and water management issues in the dryland. A major component of this task involved input to the Catchment Strategy.

Major Dryland Program achievements for the year included:

- The completion and presentation to Government of the Five Year Review of the GDSMP.
- Program Works Implementation targets were exceeded in most areas.
- The dryland areas of the catchment were selected by the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to pilot the development of policies and programs for salinity.
- A range of pest and weed control measures were initiated and continued in relation to foxes, rabbits, Paterson's curse, Serrated Tussock and other weeds were pursued with considerable success.
- 340 ha of hardwood plantation were established.
- Major gully erosion projects were tackled through a joint approach by Landcare groups, DNRE and the Upper Goulburn Waterways Authority in the Alexandra area.
- Acidification of soils and water supplies was identified as an emerging issue in the Catchment.
- A survey of community inputs to the GBDMP confirmed previous findings that considerable complementary works were being undertaken in the Plan area without direct financial support.

The River Environment and Water Quality Committee (River and Water Committee) was established in October 1995 and worked in parallel with the Goulburn Broken Water Quality Working Group (WQWG) to develop the Draft Goulburn Broken Water Quality Strategy.

In March 1996 the WQWG agreed that the task of developing the Water Quality Strategy was substantially completed and transferred its responsibilities to the River and Water Committee. The basic thrust of both committees in 1995/96 had been the development of the Water Quality Strategy. The Draft Strategy was launched in July 1996.

The Public Lands Committee, a first in Victoria (and possibly Australia) was established to integrate the management of public land into the catchment context. A situation statement prepared by Michael Ryan (DCNR) proved invaluable to the Committee in understanding the value of the public lands to the economy.

Other activities designed to raise awareness of river and water issues included a seminar which used an index of Stream Condition as a framework to examine issues of hydrology, water quality, stream physical form, aquatic life and riparian vegetation in the Catchment. The Committee had begun developing a biodiversity strategy for the Catchment and in view of the amount of uncoordinated activity in this area was concerned to redress this situation. Roading in public lands was seen to be a significant issue. Some roads had been constructed using best management practices and had a minimal effect on water quality. However, some were not constructed to a high standard while others were not adequately maintained.

The new Board could be encouraged by its achievements in 1995/96 which included the following:

- All Committees contributed effectively to the draft Catchment Management Strategy.
- The completion of the Water Quality Strategy was a fitting conclusion to the three year project funded through the Prime Minister's Statement on the Environment. The implementation of this Strategy would form a major plank of the MDBC Algal Management Strategy.
- The Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan won the Victorian "Catchment" section Landcare Australia award and was a national finalist.

Investment in the food processing industry had continued at the three year average of approximately \$100M per year. This level of investment indicated the strong demand for food, particularly in the dairy and horticulture sectors, and the faith the multi nationals and the cooperatives had in the long-term viability of the Region.

Increased investment in Good Neighbour had resulted in funds being allocated to a number of Landcare groups to assist the groups undertake a coordinated approach to weed control. This proved very successful and resulted in the Board developing the Local Area Plan concept.

The Board trialled a more strategic approach to NLP funding which included forecasting regional priorities to stakeholders, expressions of interest as the first step in preparing submissions and an increased emphasis on project development.

The Drainage program was subjected to a review by the Commonwealth Environmental Protection Authority (CEPA) who were impressed by its integration of improved productivity and environmental sensitivity. The processes and procedures developed to protect and enhance the environment were endorsed by this review as more than meeting CEPA requirements.

The Farm Exploratory Drilling Scheme (FEDS) funded through G-MW was subjected to an audit by DCNR. The audit demonstrated the Scheme was effective and well managed.

A Groundwater Supply Protection Area was established in the Shepparton Irrigation Region under the Water Act to enhance the implementation of the Sub-surface Drainage Program.

The Board met its statutory requirements in relation to the demanding task of developing a Catchment Strategy by completing the Draft by 30 June 1996 with the release for public consultation scheduled for 13 September 1996.

In developing its first Business Plan, the Board summarised its role as defined in the Catchment and Land Protection Act under seven objectives. Its Annual Report outlined the Board's achievements against these objectives.

John Dainton's Model

In a paper on the "Model for the Goulburn Broken Catchment", John Dainton identified key concerns and opportunities that he (and in some cases the Board) believed should be taken into account in reviewing the arrangements in the Catchment. Some of these had been raised in other arenas (e.g. Annual Report). Other issues he raised in this paper that warranted special attention are covered in the following extracts.

DUPLICATION

Waterway Management Authorities

The Board believes the River & Water Committee of the Board should be responsible for strategy development and priority setting at the Catchment scale.

The Board will play an important role in ensuring the land and water interface is well managed and duplication is avoided. The Waterway Management Authorities should be responsible for implementing bed and banks works, including floodplain management and monitoring of the riparian zone and gravel extraction.

Unless the WMAs develop into efficient works oriented organisations responsible for implementing discrete components of the RCS duplication is inevitable. A clear statement to the effect that the Catchment Strategy has precedence over the WMAs' Business Plans is required.

Recent developments had seen WMAs evolve in a direction that may not be compatible with the future role of WMAs. It may be appropriate to review the structures and legislative base of WMAs to ensure that duplication is minimised.

SRDB

The Sustainable Regional Development Board appears to have significant overlap with the Irrigation Committee and the Regional Development Organisation. If the SRDB is continued past 1996/97 then it should become a committee of the Board or its role absorbed by the Irrigation Committee.

Rating

The salinity program was rigorous in its treatment of cost sharing issues. The inclusion of the Regional Community in the cost sharing for the Shepparton Irrigation Region Land & Water Salinity Management Plan, was achieved after extensive consultation. The cost sharing was based on a "beneficiary pays" approach and took into consideration the benefits to public infrastructure, in particular roads.

The decision by WMAs to levy a rate was not based on a cost sharing notion nor was there significant consultation with the community. As a result, there is now a real backlash in the community.

The Board believes there is strong justification for the Regional Community to contribute to Catchment and Land Management but it must be done under the following conditions:

- it must be based on an agreed cost share;
- adequate consultation with the regional community; and
- only one environmental levy is collected.

For this reason, the Board believes the rating for Waterway Management only is not sustainable and will become a major impediment to developing a workable cost sharing arrangement for the implementation of the RCS.

Murray River

The fiasco over the Deakin Main Drain involving the Moama Shire and the NSW EPA illustrated the need for a single body to take management responsibility for the Murray River.

The Northern Irrigation Region has the Murray for its boundary for the majority of Victoria. This gives Victoria a substantial advantage over NSW. The advantage, properly utilised, will allow Victoria to play a major role in the management of the Murray.

Boundary with North Central

The boundaries of the Goulburn Catchment have been expanded to include the part of the Rochester Irrigation Area within the North Central Catchment for the purpose of salinity.

There are very good reasons to have this boundary formally rationalised for all Catchment Management issues.

The relationship with the remaining gravity irrigation systems to the Catchment boundaries should be reviewed to determine whether the links to the water supply and Murray River outweigh the Catchment links.

OPPORTUNITIES

Local Government

The recent series of consultative meetings conducted by Planning and Heritage on the new rural planning schemes highlighted the high priority given to "environmental" issues in the context of planning.

It was obvious at these meetings that a catchment approach is required to address issues like drainage, salinity, water quality, etc. It is critical that the Catchment Board and Local Government work closely together to develop the planning schemes.

The Uniform Planning Regulations are an excellent example of how planning schemes can be used to generate environmental benefits.

Rural and Urban Water Authorities

The Rural and Urban Water Authorities have responsibilities to conduct themselves as good catchment citizens. The cost of this should be borne by the organisation.

However, the Authorities will, at times, be in the best position to provide a service outside these responsibilities. These services will be delivered via a Government Service Contract.

This is the current arrangement for the arterial drainage program and has proved to be a very effective process.

The joint membership of Water Services Committees and the Board's Irrigation Committee ensures a strong linkage between natural resource management issues and water supply and drainage issues.

DNRE

The current arrangements for the implementation of the Salinity Management Plans with DNRE are working well with a high level of accountability at the service delivery end.

The issue of short-term contracts has been a major constraint in the old DCNR, but this problem appears to be resolved since amalgamation.

There are significant opportunities for efficiency gains particularly in the dryland. The Board always questioned the effectiveness of two separate agencies providing similar services to landholders.

In the irrigation, the CALM Business provided the environmental assessments for drainage and the delivery of the environmental extension and grants program.

The Board sees it as critical that this part of the CALM business is integrated into the DNRE drainage program but is seen as a separate entity. This will allow increased efficiency without being seen as compromising the "independence" of the team. This will ensure that the integrity of this program is maintained.

Regional Drainage and Flood Plain Management

At present, G-MW is the de facto drainage authority in the SIR. Officially, the Waterway Management section of DNRE has the responsibility with very little capacity to deliver. Floodplain management is in a similar state.

The current situation is confusing and inefficient. By developing a Drainage Strategy for the Catchment, the Board can act as umbrella organisation on drainage and floodplain management matters. The Strategy would then be the mechanism to delegate responsibilities.

A likely arrangement is:

- 1. G-MW to be the drainage authority in the Irrigation area.*
- 2. Municipalities to be the drainage authority in the dryland.*
- 3. Waterway Management Authorities to be responsible for Floodplain Management.*

The new planning scheme provides an opportunity for the Board to develop a drainage overlay, based on the Drainage Strategy.

Incorporation

The Board is not able to approach the private sector for funding. Philanthropic trusts and corporations are unlikely to fund Government Agencies but could be enticed to support a community-based organisation like the Board. The Board could then commission an agency or the private sector to perform the task.

In May 1996, John Dainton covered these and other points he had pursued in earlier statements, when he addressed the Catchment and Land Protection Council meeting with non-government organisations. He also included additional points made in the following extracts from this speech.

IMPROVED EFFICIENCY

There are a number of examples (in the Goulburn Broken Catchment) of improved efficiency through community involvement in the decision-making process.

Drainage in the Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR)

In 1989, the completion of the surface drainage network in the SIR was estimated to cost \$400M and take 200 years to complete. The result of a SPAC review of the drainage program has resulted in the reduction of cost to less than a \$100M and an implementation period of 25-30 years.

Irrigation Prices

In the late 1980s irrigators blockaded the RWC office in Orrong Road in protest over increased water prices. The debate was out of control. Now the Board of Goulburn-Murray Water, with the support of the Water Services Committees (WSCs), has implemented full cost recovery in most of their services with good support of the community.

Transparency of budgets and the delegation of considerable responsibilities to the WSCs have allowed gains far in excess of those proposed by McDonald. Full cost recovery for gravity irrigation has been achieved five years in advance of the McDonald recommendations and at a significantly lower price.

Irrigator exposure to irrigation issues through this process has been very educative and has changed the focus to achieving efficiencies.

PRODUCTIVITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The majority of natural resource management problems have their origins on agricultural lands and urban and industrial developments. Successful Catchment Management can only be achieved through the adoption of sustainable productive and profitable farming systems and clever management/minimisation of waste.

Many problems are caused by an excess of elements which are usually considered to be limiting factors.

- Salinity is caused by farming systems which cannot "use" enough of the available water in one of the driest continents in the world.
- Algal Blooms are the loss of nutrients (Phosphorous and Nitrogen) to water in a landscape where land managers are investing large sums on adding these nutrients to farming system.

The need to improve our farming systems using best management practices to make them more sustainable is the lynch pin of Catchment and Land Management. In some areas, the failure to grasp the relationship between good Natural Resource Management and productivity has led to division and acrimony.

Our Catchment Board has had a modifying influence on the zealots within the community and Government Agencies who promote extremes in the productivity/environment debate.

COMPETITION

I believe the 10 catchment Boards are in competition with each other. This competition is healthy and will lead to more innovative approaches to achieving our goals in Natural Resource Management.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment has worked hard to establish itself as Australia's premier catchment in Natural Resource Management. While this is good for the catchment it is also good for Victoria because:

- it assisted Victoria attract significant level of federal funding;
- it created a benchmark for excellence; and
- programs successfully trialled in our catchment have been adopted across Victoria.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment and Land Protection Board (GBCLP Board) believes the current position of treating all Boards equally is regressive in its nature. The GBCLP Board contends that all the Boards are different. They are different because:

- *Catchments and their problems vary;*
- *Community aspirations differ; and*
- *Boards are at different levels of maturity.*

Surely equity is about being given the opportunity to compete for resources not equity of inputs. Current policy will stifle competition and kill the entrepreneurial attitude that has been a landmark of Goulburn Broken's success. The GBCLP Board supports an investment analysis approach to resource allocation.

I am sure the teething problems experienced in some of the Catchments are caused by the pressure to perform at a similar level to the GBCLP Board. It takes time to develop a vision and community leadership.

ONGROUND WORKS

Our Board's emphasis on works on the ground has introduced a discipline into the salinity program that is rarely seen in "government" programs.

The Board is very outcome orientated and its quest for action has been rewarded. In the irrigation region, over 64% of the budget is invested in onground works. Because we have systems in place, any additional funds will be invested in onground works.

The Government agencies have been very supportive of this thrust even though it has reduced funding to research institutes. The Board, and its committees, have been consistent in setting priorities in line with Government policies. This has reduced the potential for conflict enormously.

COMMUNICATION

Strategies provide the blueprint for investment in Natural Resource Management.

Effectively, the Board will become the purchaser and the agencies the providers. In this context, agencies include Government agencies, Urban and Rural Water Authorities, Waterway Management Authorities etc. True accountability can only be achieved through good communication with stakeholders. The Board has prepared a communication Strategy based on a targeted approach. Figure 4 overleaf illustrates how this approach marries with the committee structure.

PURCHASER/PROVIDER

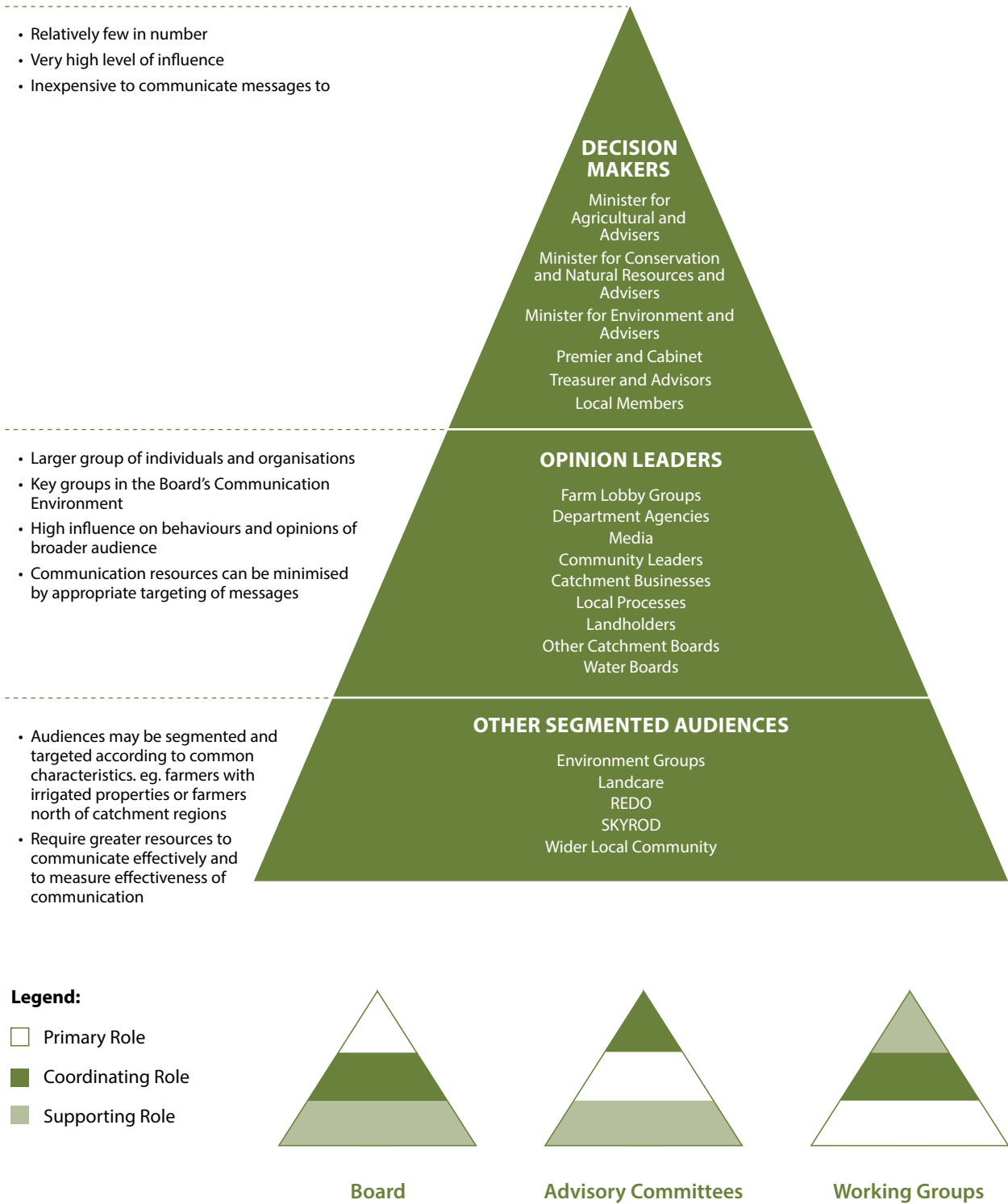
The Governments quest to separate the purchaser/provider functions fits well with my vision for the future. The Regional Catchment Strategies provide the blueprint for investment in Natural Resource Management.

Effectively, the Board will become the purchaser and the agencies the providers. In this context, agencies includes Government Agencies, Urban and Rural Water Authorities, Waterway Management Authorities etc.

This will not require the development of another bureaucracy to manage funds. It can be done by use of Government Service Contracts. The contracts will reflect the Regional Catchment Strategy priorities.

The contracts will be similar to those used to transfer funds to G-MW for implementation of the Salinity Management Plans. The contracts will include performance indicators and reporting requirements. The Board's role will be to set priorities, monitor implementation and participate in performance auditing.

Figure 4: Hierarchy of Target Audiences



DUPLICATION

The Boards were established to provide a catchment focus to Natural Resource Management.

We have not started with a clean sheet of paper and there are a number of organisations which have had part of their role assumed by the Board. We have had some successes and some failures in our quest to reduce duplication. These are described below:

Salinity

In our Catchment, the Salinity Program Advisory Committee (SPAC) was the peak body in Salinity. SPAC had two committees, irrigation and dryland who were delegated the responsibility for implementing the salinity management plans.

The Catchment Board acknowledges the potential for duplication and negotiated the following arrangements:

- *SPAC was dissolved and its responsibilities assumed by the Catchment Board; and*
- *The SPAC irrigation and dryland committees were reconstituted with additional responsibilities as committees of the Catchment Board while retaining their status as salinity implementation groups.*

Water Quality

In 1992, the Catchment attracted almost \$1 million over four years to develop a Nutrient Strategy. This was overseen by the Water Quality Working Group (WQWG) whose charter was to develop Nutrient Strategies and to recommend transition for implementation arrangements.

The Catchment Board worked with the WQWG and established its successor body, the Rivers Environment and Water Quality Committee, as a committee of the Catchment Board.

River Management

River Management authorities have been established under the Water Act to be responsible for the sustainable management of the waterways.

The boundaries of these authorities have been rationalised of late and there are now three River Management Boards in the Catchment. A strong argument could be made to reduce this again.

Although the WMAs are represented on the Catchment Board's River and Water Committee and the Board is responsible for prioritising NLP funding, it is still not clear how WMAs and the Catchment Boards will relate.

To complicate matters, two WMAs have begun rating the catchment community. This has caused considerable angst in the community. I believe the WMAs are implementation arms for some elements of the Regional Catchment Strategy. They are not in competition with, but part of, the Catchment Board's purview. The Water Management Authorities should focus on implementing clearly defined river bed and banks programs.

Consequently, state, federal and local resources must be directed to WMAs as part of the implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy.

Regional Development

There are a number of layers of regional development organisations within our Catchment.

Municipal

Local Government has established Regional Development Organisations to take advantage of growth opportunities within their municipalities.

The trend has been to focus on the municipalities' perceived strength which, in the Irrigation Region, has been value adding to agricultural production and associated industries.

In the dryland, forest related industries have also attracted interest.

Sustainable Regional Development

The Goulburn Catchment attracted \$6 million over three years as part of the Prime Ministers Working Nation Statement. Part of the agreement between the State and Federal Government was the establishment of the Sustainable Regional Development Board (SRDB).

I believe there is overlap between the SRDB and Catchment Board which needs to be addressed at the end of the three year period.

Regional Development Organisation (RDOs)

RDOs have been established to provide Regional Development initiatives with the breadth of vision and critical mass to be successful.

Our Catchment argued that the Shepparton Irrigation Region or the Goulburn Catchment had the vision and critical mass to support an RDO. Unfortunately, the preferred option divided the Catchment between three RDOs. The Chairman of the Irrigation Committee, Athol McDonald, is a member of the Central Murray RDO, but the Board has no formal contact with the other two RDOs.

Regional Development initiatives must be sustainable. Consequently, links between RDOs and the Catchment Board are critical.

The farm forestry initiative is an example of the problems created when the Regional Development/ Natural Resource Management interface issues are not thought through. Our catchment is littered with farm forestry projects which have "withered on the vine" because of the failure to position the projects in an appropriate manner.

Shepparton Irrigation Region Agroforestry Project, Trees for Profit are two of the most recent and the current farm forestry project is headed in the same direction.

COST SHARING, RATING AND TARIFFS

Cost Sharing

The Board believes there is strong justification for a local contribution for some natural resource management programs because the beneficiaries are often residents of our towns and cities.

Cost Sharing is a very important issue and must be addressed in the Regional Catchment Strategy. The salinity program developed cost sharing principles that will be very useful as a model.

Rating

Rating is one of the tools available to implement cost sharing agreements. Prior to Local Government reform, municipalities were prepared to enter into cost sharing agreements on behalf of their ratepayers. Municipalities are now unwilling to collect rates for other organisations.

The CLP legislation precludes the Boards imposing a rate while the Water Act provides for Waterway Management Authorities to impose a rate.

The Board believes the Regional Catchment Strategy is the appropriate framework for developing cost sharing for natural resource management and the rating review proposed by the state C&LP Council has our total support.

Tariffs

The Board is not in a position to comment on possible tariff structures for an environmental levy. The Board believes tariffs must be developed when applying the cost sharing principles developed in the Regional Catchment Strategy.

It is my view that if this issue is not sorted out quickly, the problem will become institutionalised.

PRODUCTIVITY

The Board believes that sustainable agriculture is profitable agriculture. Improvement in productivity is usually a prerequisite for significant investment in sustainability.

The Board is hopeful that the new arrangements for the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment will not insulate the Boards from the mainstream.

There is a school of thought that the Boards should act as “watchdog” and to perform this role, a degree of separation from the agriculture sector is required. Our Board rejects this argument. We are firmly of the view that the Catchment’s best interest will be served by actively developing partnerships with stakeholders not by acting as a watchdog. Consequently our preferred position is for Ministers Tehan and McNamara to have joint responsibility for the C&LP Act because of the impact the legislation will have on their portfolios.

STATUS OF THE BOARD

The Catchment Boards are not legally constituted in their own right. Section 11(2) of the C&LP Act provides for incorporation of Boards by Instrument.

Consequently, the Catchment board can only enter into contracts through a third party. While the board has been able to negotiate around these problems, in the short term, the current situation is not sustainable because:

- Private sources of funds, particularly philanthropic funds, are not accessible.*
- The Bureaucracy is unable to address the individual needs of Boards in terms of funding and providing an employment umbrella.*
- All rating authorities require legal status.*

THE FUTURE

Peak Body

I believe there can only be one peak Natural Resource Management body in the Catchment. If it is to be the Catchment Board, then the Regional Catchment Strategy must be the blueprint for investment in natural resource management within our catchment.

Funding

The State and Federal resources into the catchment will be channelled through Government Service Contracts in exactly the same manner as funds are currently transferred to Goulburn-Murray Water via the Salinity Program. Government Services Contracts will provide the mechanism to separate purchaser/provider functions.

Funding for the Board will be part of the overall program and be a legitimate cost of implementing the Regional Catchment Strategy.

The Regional Catchment Strategy will be the blueprint for natural resource management investment. The Board will be seen as the purchaser of services and the agencies the provider.

DUPLICATION

The Regional Catchment Strategy will clarify the roles and responsibilities of all bodies with responsibilities for natural resource management. Savings will be used to fund works.

Waterway Management Authorities, Regional Development are potential areas for reform.

ROLE AND FUNCTION

The Boards will be an incorporated body and use this status to attract funding from the private sector.

The Board’s Committees will be responsible for the implementation of the relevant components of the Regional Catchment Strategy.

ACCOUNTABILITY

The Catchment Board will have the responsibility for prioritising investment in natural resource management and must be accountable to the public and government for the decisions it makes.

Our Catchment Board is committed to transparent budgeting processes and detailed annual reporting.

RATING

Cost Sharing principles will be in place and the rate levied on the catchment community will be for the implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy and be based on agreed cost sharing principles. Only one environmental levy will be applied but tariffs will vary.

John Dainton was keenly aware of the opportunity he had in this address to make a timely and significant contribution to the ongoing debate on Victoria's evolving approach to NRM. No other community leader would have been better placed to assess the state of the art with catchment management and to point the way forward. He did not hold back. He made the most of this opportunity.

Other Leadership Roles

John Dainton maintained his commitment to the irrigation sector and to the dairying industry over the years of his intensive involvement with catchment salinity, natural resource management and sustainable regional development.

In August 1992 he was appointed Deputy Chair of the new Goulburn-Murray Regional Management Board of the Rural Water Corporation eventually becoming Chair of its successor, Goulburn-Murray Water from June 2001 until 2004. He also served for 22 years as a director of major food processing companies, firstly as a director of IBIS Milk Products from 1977-1986 then as a director of Bonlac Foods Limited from 1986-99, the last three years as Chairman.

G-MW and the Water Services Committees

The significance of John Dainton's contribution to the water industry is reflected in the story of the Water Services Committees and their standing both nationally and internationally. They have been justifiably lauded as an innovative approach to pricing and financial reporting and as having a key role in asset management and developing relationships with the Authority's customers.

G-MW is the nation's largest rural water authority providing bulk water supplies for irrigation, urban use and hydropower generation, servicing an area of 68,000 km² and approximately 24,000 properties in Northern Victoria.

A Troubled Past in Water Management

The supply of irrigation water to Victoria from 1905 to 1984 was undertaken by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission with the goal to break even financially within 20 years. It aimed to meet this target via cost reductions and price increases. Continuing price increases triggered customer unrest that led the Victorian Farmers Federation to urge customers in 1981 to refuse to pay their water bill. This action became known as the Rate Protest. Then, in May 1991, some 400 irrigators blockaded the Rural Water Commission Head Office in Melbourne.

The government responded with the appointment of the Future Management Review Committee. Its final report, the so-called McDonald Review was released in January 1992.

The report included in its key recommendations:

- the Rural Water Commission be dismantled and be restructured into smaller regional bodies;
- a significantly increased customer involvement in decision-making processes; and
- a skills based board to govern each region.

Reforms

These reforms began in July 1992 and by the mid 1990s four rural water authorities were in place including Goulburn-Murray Water.

The COAG Water Reforms of 1995 brought about rural water reforms nationally on the basis of full cost recovery. This COAG agenda brought forward Victoria's timetable for achievement of this goal from 2003/04 to 2000/01. The COAG reforms also called for community involvement in the water reform process. The success of the water reforms, and financial self-sufficiency and ongoing viability, has been due to customers accepting responsibility for their own destiny.²³

Water Services Committees

As at 2003 Goulburn-Murray Water had 11 customer-elected Water Services Committees. Committee members do not have legal accountability for any functions but have a considerable influence on the standard and price of services delivered in their areas.

The role of the Water Services Committees includes:

- To negotiate a Customer Service Agreement with the Board. The agreement sets out levels of service to be provided, including the obligations of G-MW and also what G-MW expects of its customers. The agreement also defines the price required to deliver service levels, and required maintenance and renewals programs.
- To negotiate an annual Business Plan with the Board.
- To prioritise asset investment programs for the area represented.
- To address salinity, water quality and drainage issues and be involved in the development of solutions and the implementation of salinity and nutrient management programs. (This function is pursued in collaboration with the GBCMA).
- To develop communications strategies and participate in communications between the Authority and Area customers.
- To prepare an annual report.

The Australian Society of Certified Practising Accountants specially commended G-MW in 1999 in its Public Sector awards.

The judges were particularly impressed with their attitude to customers, particularly in their efforts to involve them in their business processes. Their approach to customer and financial management clearly warrants an award for special commendation.

John Dainton's Role

From his appointment as Deputy Chair in 1992, John Dainton was committed to the development of the Water Services Committees. Denis Flett, who was CEO for the period John Dainton was on the Board, appreciated that John pursued this task as a charter he sensed he had been given in the selection process for Board membership. Dainton could have assumed that the Minister of the day was nominating him as the public figure who would lead the establishment of the Water Services Committees. He would lead the consultations because it was recognised that his great strength was in his ability to consult, to listen. He would lead the entire Customer Community through a series of public meetings into the way the G-MW involves its customers today. Certainly in the early meetings of the Board John Dainton was identified as the member to lead this establishment process.

As with SPPAC in the mid to late 80s, John benefited from a strong partnership, this time with the Chairman Peter Ross-Edwards. This partnership gave them wide acceptance in their constituency. Peter Ross Edwards had a high level of credibility with the community by reason of his considerable political skills in the broader sense. These skills combined with Dainton's distinctive community leadership style produced a powerful leadership duo. Both developed a very healthy respect for each other from the early days of their partnership.

Denis Flett found that it was not immediately obvious what Dainton's strengths really were. Initially you could almost have the impression that he was a bit inarticulate. Also you may initially think that things that were connected in John's mind weren't readily connected, but when you pursued them you came to recognise the connection – and that they needed to be connected.

In the complex process of consultation and community decision-making John Dainton assiduously followed various "work practices". He shared with Flett that if you came across an obstacle, you know you have to either go around it or take it on. Where you take it on, deal with it in an inclusive

way. Then if it turns out to be a broader problem it is necessary to assess whether we can effect change or whether we won't have any influence – in which case don't persist with it. As CEO, Flett had the opportunity to watch him in action on numerous occasions. He observed how he tested judgements all the time to find the way forward – listening, synthesising, assessing. He did not hold back by choice. He trusted there would be an outcome if you gave people the chance to be empowered. It was best to give people the knowledge – don't hide the problem, don't hide the solution and give them the chance to voice their questions, ideas, objections. If you have the courage to be open then people will recognise that the problems are not necessarily as simple as they perceived – and nor is the way forward. But you'll get a consensus to go forward because of the wider understanding created. This process differed fundamentally from that used by the RWC and its predecessor the SRWSC in its advisory bodies. This process had the goal of "maximising influence" – no longer just providing advice.

The effectiveness of this approach depended in large measure on accepting accountability. John Dainton drove this message home in such a way that it was not accountability in the narrow individual sense, but an embracing accountability that fostered connection between people and across institutions. This principle was highly relevant in the diverse task of natural resource management particularly between the GBCMA and G-MW in their complementary roles in the Goulburn Broken. This manifested in the committees and workshops that brought people together from their professional environment and from the landholder and wider community. This spread the benefits of G-MW's culture and professionalism of water management, but in working with these significant community processes the G-MW benefited from the value added to its outputs. At the practical level, a measure of common membership between the implementation committees of the GBCLP Board, and later the GBCMA, equipped people with both a water utility perspective and a catchment management perspective. While some saw this arrangement as a governance issue,

these peak bodies saw it as a sensible partnership. Each entity could still be responsible for its own core business, but they were enriched by understanding each other's perspective.

Denis Flett was convinced that the basic commitment to connect through people gave the catchment a better chance of getting things to progress. He saw it as one of the reasons why the Goulburn Broken is often cited as the best at natural resource management. He recalled the review of the surface drainage program in which the highly qualified consultant engaged to assess the program used a classic approach to its design and operations. He concluded that it was world best practice, but that it shouldn't be because it was not designed to be. If you took away some of the encumbrances of community participation in the process, it wouldn't work. Bill O'Kane's version of this outcome had been "It works in practice, but it doesn't work in theory".

In the landholder/irrigator community, accountability had its challenges for its representatives on the Water Services Committees. Their role goes beyond that of an advisory customer services group. Their key tasks relate to negotiating a customer services agreement which sets down the expectations and obligations from both the customer and the authority's point of view, including service standards. This involves preparing an area business plan that covers their part in the natural resource management arena as well as the water utility issues for which G-MW core services are required. In effect this is a local manifestation of the G-MW corporate plan, but it is very much a bottom up planning process. Importantly, the WSC's negotiations are with the Board – not with management. Management, in fact, facilitates each WSC's task of preparing its plan.

The accountability factor appears again when reporting on performance. The link with customers is more general and thereby more pervasive and empowering. Interestingly this process is followed in an accountability framework where the WSCs have no legal accountability. That accountability flows from the government through the Minister to the Board and down through management to the delivery of

services. The relationship between the Board and the WSCs is not based on legal accountability but on maximising influence – essentially a cooperative relationship. It brings together the two aspects of cooperation and scrutiny from the bottom up.

John Dainton's involvement in the development of the G-MW culture and its track record also came through his participation in the Authority's annual workshop. Rather than convening a talkfest, these workshops were challenging, focussing on major issues such as developing a corporate family structure and how to articulate it. One workshop majored on benchmarking as a tool to use in comparing the six different areas, the six different clusters of services within the Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District. Although benchmarking was being used widely at that time, G-MW used it to compare different parameters of their services and performance not just between its service areas but also at the national level. This approach was taken up by ANCID giving rise to one of the international achievements of the irrigation industry in Australia in leading the international benchmarking of rural water services.

G-MW's standing internationally is probably better known among developing countries than within Australia. World Bank use of the G-MW as a role model in their work among countries seeking to develop their water resources was described by Geoff Spencer in an ABC program "Water Files". Geoff is well known in water circles in Australia and he is now a senior irrigation engineer with the World Bank, looking after areas in East Asia such as China, the Philippines, Indonesia and the list goes on. In the interview he made the point which is relevant to the above discussion.

What makes Goulburn-Murray Water Services Committees successful comes down to one word and that's "trust" and genuinely including them and empowering them and listening to what they have to say and reacting to that feedback and giving them a sense that they are an integral part of the organisation and that is the same principle whether it is an authority with its customer groups or whether it is government with water user associations as we call

them in the developing world. The other word I would use is "accountability" and that's part of the problem where you have a government dominated service that there is no accountability and if the service is poor the line of complaint by individual farmers is not necessarily there, no one – no individual on the government side or service provider side – is held accountable and you have this continuous cycle of bad service, low productivity for water, non-payment of water charges, less maintenance, assets decline, lower service and around it goes.

In the course of a review of the G-MW Board and management, Denis Flett prepared profiles of the Board members including an insightful description of John Dainton's contribution:

John is a very experienced director and has an outstanding record of community leadership in NRM. He is a good listener, networker, and thinker and has a profoundness and persistence which are immediately obvious. His skills in leadership and community liaison-consultation were to the fore in establishing G-MW corporate family structure and enhancing the organisational culture. He has also been influential in establishing high standards of governance and is a persistent questioner and a constructive challenger of management thinking, he shows no signs of diminishing his high level of commitment and contribution as a director.

In summary, John Dainton, as Deputy Chairman of G-MW, led a most significant initiative in the reform process in the water industry. The establishment of the Water Services Committees achieved an unprecedented level of cohesion among the irrigators and an understanding of the commercial and environmental limitations of the organisation.

IBIS and Bonlac

John Dainton's 22 years as a director of major food processing organisations began in 1977 on the Board of IBIS. He became Deputy Chairman in 1983. IBIS had an impressive record in milk production and the processing of a range of dairy products. In its day it also operated the largest pig farm in Victoria with a capacity of 6,000 stock (600 sows). Its environmental credentials included being the only pig farm connected to a community sewerage system.

By the early 80s IBIS was contracting direct with buyers such as Kraft Foods, Streets, Bunges, PDS, Unigate, Norco, Dairy Farmers, QBB, etc., as well the major supermarket chains, such as Woolworths, Safeway, Flemmings, Davids, SSW, Tuckerbag, etc., on a national supply basis.²⁴ Many Cooperatives such as IBIS revolutionised their marketing methods during the 1970s and 1980s and demonstrated to the market place that they had become as competent at marketing as public companies.

When IBIS joined with Bonlac Foods Ltd in 1986, John Dainton was one of four IBIS directors elected to the Bonlac Board. In 1996 he was elected Chairman. In his role in the food processing industry, as Chairman and as a Director, John helped lead IBIS Milk Products and Bonlac Foods from a commodity focused organisation to a high technology, value added company with an international reputation for excellence.

Major achievements included:

- Increased turnover from \$300 Million in 1986 to \$1.25 Billion in 1999.
- Establishment of the award winning Darnum Park Factory complex which is acknowledged as world's best practice in water efficiency and environmental excellence. This project was awarded the Gold Banksia Award in 1998.
- Development of a bioscience division.

As Chairman of Bonlac, John Dainton experienced the pressures of corporate leadership of a company that was:

- pathfinding in the technology of food processing;
- focusing on sustainable competitiveness;
- dealing with the vagaries of currency fluctuations;
- committed to the balancing act of maintaining farm cash flows while ensuring adequate profit in the business especially when difficult seasonal conditions and low commodity prices were encountered;
- introducing landmark innovations in its industrial relations; and
- continuing mergers with other key players in the dairy and food processing industry.

Bonlac saw that it could not continue as hostage to the commodity market. It adopted a strategy of placing more of its raw material into products to which it could add value. In the Chairman's Review in Bonlac's 1999 Annual Report, John Dainton outlined progress.²⁵

"To deliver strategy required the recruitment of management appropriate for a modern corporation competing in a global market. Bonlac Foods has emerged with four businesses. The development of the beverages business was conceived in May 1996 and then initiated in late 1997 – just two years ago – with the purchase of Spring Valley Beverages. Since then a portfolio of non-alcoholic beverages has been presented to consumers and these products have secured a leading market position in each sector in which they compete.

Another milestone occurred in March when our new UHT facility in Cobden was opened. From this facility our dairy beverage Wave, the flagship of our beverage business, is distributed around Australia and New Zealand. The following month, the Bioscience Division was formed with its first task being to capitalise on the work already done to manufacture and market Recaldent™.

The manufacture and marketing of Recaldent™ is an example of taking relatively small volumes of milk and adding value off that dairy base to create a high-value product. Coupled with a strategy to create and protect associated intellectual property, Recaldent™ demonstrates that success is not predicated on higher milk volumes alone.

Our Japanese business continues to grow and this year became our highest value ingredients market.

The new and innovative marketing strategies devised by the Consumer Products Division have given Bonlac Foods a pre-eminent position in the dairy case."

Executives close to John Dainton in those years respected his work style, integrity and tenacity. As in the SPPAC context, he demonstrated the ability to understand the complexities around issues, to synthesise them and then relay them in a way that people could understand. This skill was vital in the huge task of communicating to shareholders in what was primarily a dairymen's organisation. This involved a heavy program of meetings across Victoria. John was accompanied by his wife Pat on many of these demanding trips. They were both solidly committed to serving their fellow dairyfarmers in keeping them abreast of the commercial realities of the food processing industry. The cooperative principles that underpinned Bonlac were very dear to people like John Dainton. They carried over the culture of dairying into the corporate culture of Bonlac.

Understandably, real tensions emerged as the Board and management attempted to structure a governance framework that met the standards investors were expecting but at the same time recognised the cooperative principles that underpinned the business. At the practical level, Bonlac's "shareholders" depended not only on the long-term achievements of the organisation, but also on its day-to-day performance. Their milk cheque needed to be enough to cover their cost of operation and cost of living. So Bonlac's corporate environment was much more intense than that of the stereotypical public company.

The pace of change within Bonlac as it was transformed to focus on value adding, the politics of the dairying industry, the vagaries of commodity markets and currency fluctuations generated a stressful, at times traumatic, at other times stimulating and always demanding work scene. In John Dainton's term as Chairman major issues generated controversy and strongly divided views in the industry and among Bonlac's shareholders.

In 1999 Bonlac recognised the need to prepare for the deregulation of the dairying industry and engaged in the negotiations for the proposed adjustment package. John Dainton warned dairyfarmers about the inevitability of deregulation. Other concerns, such as bonus payments to Bonlac executives in a period of low milk prices and a 40% drop in Bonlac's net profit, led to a Board shake-up. In November 1999, the Deputy Chairman Dyson Scott and John Dainton were voted out in "a shareholder backlash."²⁶ This traumatic and deeply disappointing outcome was a painful conclusion to 22 years of helping to lead corporate entities in the dairying industry. John Dainton was still able, however, to contribute in demanding roles in the leadership of G-MW and the GBCMA.

Chapter 10

**INTEGRATION –
GOULBURN BROKEN
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY
(GBCMA):
1997-2002**

John Dainton continued to serve the Goulburn Broken as Chair of the new Catchment Management Authority from its inception in 1997 to his resignation as Chair in May 2001. He continued as a member of the Board until his retirement in June 2002. In this period he guided the Authority into the genuinely holistic approach to natural resource management for which it has become a role model. This involved progressively widening its policy front to engage with emerging ecological and resource management issues, and structuring and adapting its organisation to ensure that its performance in planning, implementation and communication was integrated across the region. John Dainton saw the Authority mature and maintain its position as a leading catchment manager.

This process began with the significant reforms introduced by the Victorian State Government in 1997. In large measure, these reforms were extensions of the government's initiatives with Landcare and the CLP Boards. These initiatives had advanced more impressively where they built on existing salinity management planning structures as had occurred in the Goulburn Broken. Not surprisingly, the Goulburn Broken was receptive to these reforms many of which had been strenuously promoted by its leaders such as John Dainton, Jeremy Gaylard, Craig Madden and Bill O'Kane.

Review of Catchment Management Arrangements

In 1996, Jeremy Gaylard in his role as Chairman of the Catchment Management Structures Working Party released a Discussion Paper as the first step in a review process "aimed at stimulating thought and discussion about future catchment managements within Victoria."

The Discussion Paper recognised the recent achievements in natural resource management.

Strong community ownership and involvement in natural resource management has developed through Landcare and through the development of action plans by community based advisory groups for salinity and more recently water quality. Through community participation supported by Government investment, and through the effort of operational groups such as waterway management authorities, water authorities, local government and government agencies, positive progress has been achieved towards addressing existing problems and moving toward sustainable management of natural resources for the benefit of both current and future generations.

The formation of Regional Catchment and Land Protection Boards has provided a framework for coordinated planning and delivery of catchment services into the future. Regional Catchment Strategies are being developed by the Boards in conjunction with the community, which build on and incorporate the extensive planning which has already been undertaken for Landcare and salinity and which is currently being undertaken for water quality.

To effectively implement the Regional Catchment Strategies over the coming years, an efficient and effective catchment management structure will be needed which builds on and supports community efforts, maximises integration and minimises duplication. The current arrangements for management of land and water resources in Victoria, in which various advisory and operational bodies are involved, has developed over the past in response to specific management needs. The appropriateness of these current arrangements for future management and implementation of Regional Catchment Strategies needs to be considered.¹

The Paper assessed the current arrangements identifying their strengths and weaknesses:

- strong community ownership and commitment to implementation of key management strategies, such as Landcare, salinity and nutrient reduction ... the development of Regional Catchment Strategies which encompass all of the key specific issues programs ... the expertise of waterway management authorities capable of providing onground action ... the participation of dedicated and experienced rural community leaders.

- weaknesses in community empowerment where service delivery is managed by government agencies ... gaps in integrated management because CLP Boards do not have a comprehensive advisory role and some significant management gaps exist in relation to monitoring and review and in relation to floodplain management and rural dryland regional drainage ... a lack of capability for targeting investment and service delivery ... no direct accountability on the part of CLP Boards for implementation ... confusion over the roles of authorities, agencies, boards etc. ... some duplication in administration of various bodies.

Two broad alternative models for future catchment management were proposed for consideration and to stimulate discussion.

- **Option 1** – the Integrated Catchment Advisory Body proposed one integrated catchment advisory body in each region which is responsible for coordination of Regional Catchment Strategies and for advice to Government on both Federal and State resourcing priorities at a regional level. However, the catchment body would not manage regional resources or deliver services. Program delivery continued to be provided by service delivery organisations such as DNRE Regions and Waterway Management Authorities.²
- **Option 2** – the Integrated Advisory and Service Delivery Body shifted the focus of the catchment body from advisory to service delivery. It comprised a single catchment body with responsibility, delegated by Government, for managing regional resources for catchment management in addition to providing advice on Federal and State program priorities and responsibility for service delivery either by providing services directly or contracting these to other service providers.

Under these arrangements, Government would purchase resource management services from a single catchment body which provides advice to Government on regional priorities. Regional

investment would be managed by the catchment body and targeted to priorities identified by the catchment body and Government.³

A comparison of these Options appended to the Paper reviewed each Option against key requirements for effective management. Option 2 prevailed.

A Report to the Minister for Agriculture and Resources and the Minister for Conservation and Land Management on the consultation outcomes and the review findings was released in February 1997. It proposed catchment management arrangements along the lines of Option 2. The Working Party's key recommendation No. 1 set out the overarching proposal.

Catchment Management Authorities should be established by 30 June 1997 in each of the nine non-metropolitan CLP regions which will:

- *integrate all existing advisory mechanisms related to catchment management;*
- *be responsible for waterway and floodplain management, coordination/management of rural drainage, management of Crown frontages including Heritage Rivers (outside National Parks); and*
- *negotiate other service delivery programs with DNRE.*

Adequate funding be provided by Government for the establishment of these Catchment Management Authorities, taking account of their increased responsibilities and accountabilities and to enable the Authorities to effectively take on new drainage and floodplain management roles.⁴

State Government Response

The Government supported, in principle, the recommendations of the Working Party. These recommendations were used as a basis for the development of the revised policy set out in its *Future Arrangements for Catchment Management*.

The Regional Catchment Strategies were recognised as the overarching strategy for the development, management and conservation of land and water resources in each region. Implementation of the Strategies would be the key focus of Victoria's land and water management program for the next five years.

Policy Aims

The Government's aims in this policy decision were to establish catchment management arrangements that would most effectively and efficiently implement the Regional Catchment Strategies.

In its view, the most effective way of implementing the Regional Catchment Strategies was to establish catchment management arrangements which:

- ensure that all resources are targeted to the key priorities of the RCS and which can deliver onground outcomes;
- properly integrate service delivery on interrelated issues;
- strengthen links between strategic planning and implementation of onground works; and
- have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and accountability.

The Government was aware though that its existing partnerships with the community should be protected and strengthened further.

Therefore the new arrangements for catchment management were to:

- build on the successful components of the current management arrangements;
- retain and further encourage the extensive volunteer involvement in land and water management at the grass roots level; and
- ensure continued input of local action groups in local decision-making and oversight of onground program delivery.⁵

The Government adopted the Community-Based Service Delivery Model for Catchment Management and gave its reasons and directions for implementing the decision.

The Community-Based Service Delivery Model for Catchment integrates the roles of both the current community-based service delivery groups (including CLP Boards, salinity plan implementation groups, water quality working groups and sustainable regional development committees) and community-based service delivery groups (i.e. the waterway management authorities) to create a Catchment Management Authority (CMA). It combines an integrated planning role with service delivery for waterway management which is expanded to include the related areas of floodplain management, coordination/management of rural drainage, Crown frontage management and management of Heritage Rivers outside of National Parks. In relation to other areas of service provision relevant to the implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS), the CMA has the capacity to negotiate an annual project-based work program with Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE) Regions for the provision of services for which they are responsible and to significantly

influence the work programs of any other relevant service providers (e.g. rural water authorities) where they relate to the implementation of the RCS.

Thus in the next 12 months, Catchment Management Authorities will be established in each of the nine non-metropolitan CLP regions. These Authorities will be responsible for:

- *the development, ongoing review and coordination of implementation of the Regional Catchment Strategies;*
- *the provision of advice to Government on both Federal and State resourcing priorities at a regional level;*
- *the provision of all waterway and floodplain-related service delivery; and*
- *the negotiation with DNRE of an annual project-based works program for regional service delivery which is in line with the implementation of the RCSs.*

The new CMA's will take on the roles of the current CLP Boards and waterway management authorities (WMA's). Therefore, these groups will no longer have the status of separate statutory bodies. The operation of the current CLP Boards will sunset in June 1997. The Boards of waterway management authorities will be reconstituted as Implementation Committees under the new structure and the staff and resources of WMA's will be transferred to the new Catchment Management Authority.⁶

The Mission of each CMA was to ensure the sustainable development of natural resource-based industries, the protection of land and water resources and the conservation of natural and cultural heritage.

In pursuing this Mission its objectives would be:

- to involve the community in decisions relating to natural resource management within their region;
- to promote sustainable development of natural resource-based industries;
- to collaborate with industry and economic development organisations in achieving sustainable and profitable development of catchment communities;
- to maintain and improve the quality of water and conditions of rivers;
- to prevent and where possible reverse land degradation (including salinity control);
- to conserve and protect the diversity and extent of natural ecosystems;
- to minimise damage to natural ecosystems and natural resource-based industries caused by pest plants and animals; and
- to minimise damage to public and private assets from flooding and erosion.⁷

The key functions of each CMA were to:

- implement the Regional Catchment Strategy;
- monitor and report on condition and management of land and water resources; and
- submit an annual report to the State Government on outcomes achieved against targets.

These decisions on future arrangements and the Ministers' statements about the principles behind them vindicated the positions taken by Goulburn Broken and other proponents of reform. They relieved CLP Board members of concerns about shortcomings in their present arrangements. They also encouraged a deeper commitment among members of the new CMA Boards.

Structure of a Catchment Management Authority

The basic structure of a CMA had been designed to maximise community involvement in decision-making and to ensure that the new Authority fully utilised the skills and expertise of exiting service delivery groups.

The basic structure of a CMA would comprise the Board, Implementation Committees (ICs) and Coordination Groups.

The Board's role would be to:

- set Authority policy and strategic directions;
- in close consultation with their Implementation Committees and other key stakeholders, develop the vision for land and water management in the region through the Regional Catchment Strategy and Business Plans. These would set resource management objectives, targets and priorities;
- provide a strategic focus for land and water management in the region, ensuring the integration of program and activities to achieve the common vision;
- be accountable to Government for any service delivery functions that may be assigned to it and specified in Government Service Contracts;
- enter into contracts with service delivery agencies as appropriate;
- be accountable to the community for collection and use of regional resources;
- be accountable for business administration and solvency;
- be responsible for monitoring to assess fulfilment of resource management objectives and targets and adequacy and completion of work programs;
- report to Government on the condition of land and water resources in their region; and
- report to Government annually on performance and achievements of the Authority.⁸

In its operations the Board of Management would comprise:

- not more than nine ministerially appointed members;
- plus a representative appointed from DNRE who would not have voting rights;
- more than one half of the nine members appointed must be persons involved in primary production;
- Board members would have between them experience and knowledge of primary industry, land protection, water resource management, waterway and floodplain management, environmental conservation, local government and business/financial management; and
- members would be appointed for three years and at the end of the first three year period some of the members of the Board would be reappointed to ensure continuity of skills and knowledge.⁹

ICs were to be responsible for the development of detailed work programs and the oversight of onground program delivery for specific issues or sub-catchments. This would include both existing community-based implementation bodies (waterway management authority boards, salinity plan implementation groups, sustainable regional development committees) and any new committees which the Board considered may be necessary to deal with resource management gaps, specific issues or sub-catchments.

They would provide for continuity of current waterway, salinity program sustainable regional development programs and ensure that the expertise of existing waterway management authorities, salinity plan implementation groups and sustainable regional development committees was retained. These bodies, where they exist, would be constituted as ICs of a new CMA.

Where there were currently gaps in resource management, the CMA would determine the best way of dealing with these, i.e. whether to create a new IC to deal with these or whether to expand the role of an existing IC.

The roles of ICs were:

- to operate under broad parameters set by the CMA, to be responsible for the development and implementation of detailed action strategies for specific issues or sub-catchments and to provide oversight of onground program delivery;
- to manage a budget determined by the CMA for service delivery for their issue/ sub-catchment;
- to provide advice to the Board on resource management objectives, targets, activities, priorities and budgets associated with their issue/ sub-catchment for inclusion in Business Plans to implement the Regional Catchment Strategy;
- to act as a communication link with relevant stakeholder groups; and
- to monitor performance on activities related to their issue/sub-catchment and report to the Board on achievement of objectives and targets.

ICs were to operate along the following lines:

- formally established by the Catchment Management Authority under legislation;
- the Boards of existing waterway management authorities, salinity plan implementation groups and sustainable regional development committees would be constituted as Implementation Committees of a new CMA;
- in establishing new ICs, the Board would appoint members after a process requesting nominations from relevant groups;
- ICs would operate as voluntary committees. Where the CMA wished to cover expenses of members, this would be dependent on the overall administration costs of these committees; and

- in assigning roles to an IC, the respective responsibilities of the Committee and the Board would need to be clearly defined. The Board would ensure that conflicts of interest did not occur with respect to issues such as the direction of management and field staff or accountability for actions undertaken. At the end of the day, any legal liabilities for actions would rest with the Board. Clear operating parameters for a Committee would need to be set by the Board and administration of contracts for onground action would need to be the responsibility of the Board.

Adaptability over time was ensured by allowing the structure of the CMA to evolve to meet changing requirements. The Board could restructure its existing Implementation Committees with the agreement of the members of the ICs. ICs formed from existing waterway management authorities, salinity plan implementation groups and sustainable regional development committees would generally be established for an initial term of two years.¹⁰

Coordination Forums were proposed to support the work of the ICs. Where ICs had been established for specific issues or sub-catchments, there would be a need to coordinate their work programs and set priorities for budgets on a region-wide or sub-catchment basis in order to provide advice to the Board. To achieve this, there may be a need to provide some mechanisms for coordination, e.g. the establishment of Coordination Forums. These could be either issue-related or sub-catchment based, e.g. a Waterway Management Coordination Forum providing a forum for several Waterway Implementation Committees within a region or a Sub-catchment Coordination Forum providing a forum for all the ICs in the sub-catchment including the Waterway IC, the Salinity IC etc.

A Coordination Forum would be of value to the Authority and to the ICs in providing the following roles:

- acting as a forum for the determination of regional work programs, priorities and needs and to provide advice to the Board;
- providing a formal linkage between relevant ICs;
- providing a forum in which ICs can address common concerns; and
- providing a forum for input and involvement of other key stakeholders (e.g. water authorities, local government and the Environment Protection Authority).

It was envisaged that Coordination Forums would generally be composed of representatives of relevant ICs together with any further skills or representation from key stakeholders as appropriate. It was expected that they would only meet up to three times a year as part of the business planning, budget and priority setting process. Meetings could be arranged outside of this on an 'as needs' basis.¹¹

CMA staff would include the existing staff and resources of the current Waterway Management Authorities and CLP Boards.¹²

Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council

With the establishment of regional Catchment Management Authorities and the creation of DNRE as the department responsible for natural resource management in Victoria, it was timely to re-examine the role of State Council. The need for Council to have a role in encouraging cooperation between groups had been lessened because of these two institutional changes. In addition, it was clearly inappropriate for the Council to monitor the effectiveness of the CMAs as these would now be statutory authorities reporting directly to the Ministers on their business and achievements.

Given this, the role of the Victorian Catchment and Land Protection Council was revised to provide advice to Governments on:

- Statewide matters relating to catchment management and land protection;
- the condition of land and water in the State;
- Statewide priorities for catchment management and land protection;
- priorities for research and investigation on matters related to catchment management; and
- community awareness programs.¹³

Transition Issues

Steering Committees in each catchment undertook the task of implementing the transition from CLP Board to the more widely based Catchment Management Authority (CMA). DNRE assisted the Committees¹⁴ as they encountered a range of issues, particularly in those areas in which the CMA's were to assume additional legal powers and functions. DNRE provided advice and guidelines in relation to:

- new responsibilities in floodplain management;
- the complex nature of rural drainage and the existing roles of the current rural drainage managers;
- Crown frontage management (which was the subject of a review of licences);
- management of Heritage Rivers (also a function that would be transferred after management plans had been developed);
- a process for determining boundary issues in collaboration with DNRE after the CMA's had been established;
- the status of funding under the existing CLP budgets;
- Waterway Management rating arrangements for 1997/98; and

- trading names for ICs where, for example, an existing Waterway Management Authority became an Implementation Committee (in which case the CMA could choose to name this Committee the xxx Waterway Management Group - not Board or Authority).

Integration in the Goulburn Broken

The Goulburn Broken Catchment was well placed to commence the transition to a fully integrated catchment manager, to the extent that the State Government had endorsed, in principle, the Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) prepared by the CLP Board. When established on 1 July 1997, the CMA would assume a number of roles and had the capacity to appoint Implementation Committees. Without the agreement of members, salinity, water quality, sustainable regional development and waterway management authorities would automatically be converted into Implementation Committees.

These initiatives provided the Catchment with a unique opportunity to implement procedural and structural reform in the delivery of natural resource management services. However there was a strong view abroad that the current management arrangements were sub-optimal and that opportunities for a sensitive integration process and maximising efficiency in the new structure should be explored.

Consultants were engaged to develop options for the integration of natural resource management in the Goulburn Broken Catchment, in collaboration with the Steering Committee. Two broad categories of issues were to be addressed: Organisational and Legal Issues and Strategic and Structural Issues.

The consultants were to cover the key study areas outlined in the consultancy Brief.

Investigate options for processes, procedures and structures for the provision of services related to:

- *Waterway Management*
- *Coordination/management of water quality*
- *Coordination/management of floodplains*
- *Coordination/management of rural drainage including management of regional drainage schemes*
- *Management of Crown frontages*
- *Management of Heritage Rivers outside National Parks.*

The consultants should also identify any significant legal implications associated with the provision of these services.

Investigate options for processes and procedures for the negotiations with NRE on annual work programs.

Identify and make recommendations on the financial, human and material resources necessary for the CMA to fulfil its responsibilities. In particular, the consultants should document expenditure and income on the Heritage River, Crown frontage management floodplain management and regional drainage over the last three years.

Identify and make recommendations on the organisation arrangements necessary for the efficient transfer to the CMA of all rights, property assets, debts, liabilities and obligations as well as ongoing contracts and legal proceedings from all existing authorities and committees under sunset provision.

Review the current rating arrangements of the WMAs and develop a proposal for a uniform waterway Tariff across the catchment including modelling and recommendations for the rate.

As in the earlier transition to the CLP management arrangements, this preparation for integration delivered special benefits in the short and longer term:

- all key participants in NRM in the Catchment came together in an in-depth exploration of the implications of the new arrangements;
- the process had special significance for members of the CLP Board, the Waterway Management Boards and for others with longstanding roles in floodplain management, rural drainage etc. in its assessment of the possible options for integration; and
- a thorough investigation of the implications of the new arrangements would alert all parties to any legal, financial, administrative or organisational issues that would need special attention.

The Task of Integration

This historic move to a full integration of the natural resource management functions in the catchment, in some ways entailed a more sensitive and complex task than the transition to the CLP Board. Other institutions that had a special charter by virtue of enabling legislation, rating powers, existing works programs and a track record of commitment to and leadership in special aspects of natural resource management were being merged into a larger umbrella catchment body – the GBCMA. John Dainton, his fellow Board members and Bill O’Kane, in particular, sensed the delicate nature of this task.

They were ready to tread decisively, but carefully, on the path towards integration – a genuine integration that fostered mutual respect among the key contributors, as well as effectiveness and efficiency of operation. This concern was a recurring theme in the Consultants’ Report to the Project Steering Committee – as evidenced early in its recommendations.

The CMA task of integrating and, where necessary, modifying the functions of existing organisational units in the catchment, should be pursued with sensitivity, and in an open process of consultation. Its implementation task should be sequenced and coordinated so as to minimise the impact of change on NRM functions, relationships with other agencies, groups etc. and participants in the catchment (CMA and NRE staff, community groups, stakeholders etc.).

The CMA should take account of the differing levels of development, scope of operation and potential of the various units which are assuming IC status from 1 July 1997 with a view to:

- a. Assessing the appropriateness of IC status for each of these functions in the longer term;*
- b. The extent to which the areas of activity need to be modified or upgraded in the course of integrating them into a whole of catchment approach; and*
- c. Assessing the administrative implications of proposed integration/ rationalisation and/or upgrading actions.*

The Report drew attention to the need to expedite the preparation of an overall Public Lands Strategy and the establishment of an appropriate organisational approach to its implementation. Likewise the establishment of a Biodiversity Coordination Group was recommended. Its priority task would be to prepare a draft Strategy for consultation in advance of its implementation by the ICs.

The CLP Board’s Communication Strategy needed to be updated by a newly established Communications Coordination Group. The widening range of financial sources available to the CMA called for an upgrade in its Financing Strategy. The new arrangements in the Catchment warranted the CMA, Goulburn Valley Water, NRE, G-MW negotiating arrangements for G-MW to continue to provide NRM services as appropriate.

The role of local government in NRM had to be reassessed as to its future potential, taking account of the return to elected Councils, the establishment of the CMA, the Report prepared by the Task Group on Catchment Planning and Strategic and Statutory Planning and the State government constraints on local government.

Under the amalgamation of local government authorities, the catchment included rateable land in nine municipalities and shires. The CMA would need to discuss with Councils in the Catchment regarding their new role and the scope for a wider collaboration in NRM and NRM works program funding and implementation pending the possible introduction of a selective approach to tariffs to cover salinity works and/or an environment levy across the catchment.

The uneven performance of Landcare groups across the catchment indicated a need for the CMA to spell out its role and that of the RCS and to foster a more cohesive and focused approach to NHT funding applications.

The Future Arrangements guidelines proposed that the SRDB be constituted as an Implementation Committee of the GBCMA. Uncertainties as to whether the SRDB would continue as a separate entity meant that the CMA would need to clarify this situation and respond appropriately.

The consultants facilitated a wide ranging consultation on the Future Arrangements. The results were mixed. More than half participants felt that they had not been adequately informed about the establishment of a CMA. Foremost amongst these were some stakeholders in the Dryland area who had felt for some time that the CLP Board had "ignored" them, "left them in the dark".

The community was most concerned about the potential for the CMA to become remote from the grassroots and community concerns. This was raised repeatedly throughout the questionnaires from all workshops. A related concern was the possibility of the CMA becoming "bureaucratic" – more concerned with its own internal needs than those of stakeholders, especially the people "on the ground".

Responses to the question of Community Involvement showed up the acceptance and appreciation of participation processes implemented under the CLP Board and prior to its establishment. This response was reassuring. However, workshop participants also registered strong concerns about the inadequacies of consultation/involvement in the past and the crucial need for effective communication, marketing, education and involvement processes under the CMA. This apparently inconsistent result reflected the differing perceptions of stakeholders and groups across the catchment. Regardless of the successes in this area in the past, it was obvious that there was also dissatisfaction with past performance in some quarters and a general view that the CMA would need to give very high priority to community involvement in its work program.¹⁵

Options for Structural and Procedural Arrangements

The Report considered possible approaches available to the GBCMA in regard to catchment structures and procedural arrangements. In particular, it looked at the initial and longer-term role of Implementation Committees (ICs), Coordination Forums and other mechanisms which may be more appropriate in the evolving situation in the catchment. In this process it was important to note the key criteria for ICs, their role in the development of "detailed work programs" and in the "oversight of onground program delivery".

OPTION 1:

The CMA was required to respond to the Future Arrangements guidelines from 1 July 1997. Accordingly, the GBCMA needed to establish eight ICs initially:

- Irrigation
- Dryland
- River and Water Quality
- Public Lands
- Waterway Management
 - Upper Goulburn (previously The Upper Goulburn Waterway Authority (UGWA).
 - Mid Goulburn (previously the Broken River Management Board (BRMB)
 - Lower Goulburn (previously the Lower Goulburn Waterway Management Authority (LGWMA)
- Regional Development (Previously SRDB).

This approach was termed Option 1 for the purposes of this Report. In fact, as an option, it was mandatory as at 1 July 1997, under the guidelines. It was obviously an interim arrangement since it gave some functions an inappropriate status.

A case in point was the proposed River and Water Quality IC. The stage reached with the development of the River Environment and Water Quality Strategies and, for reasons similar to those noted with other catchment-wide strategies, would suggest that this function would not require oversight by an IC. A Coordination Group appeared to be a more suitable mechanism.

OPTION 2: "CLEAN SHEET" STRUCTURE FOR CATCHMENT MANAGEMENT

In response to the strong and repeated calls for a more streamlined approach to NRM and corporate management, Option 2 was prepared as a model at the other end of the spectrum of possible structures. It assumed that the GBC institutional map was wiped clean and that the rationalisation of institutional arrangements was taken as far as may be practicable in the catchment.

The key features of Option 2 included:

- the consolidation/integration of NRM functions at the sub-regional level in two ICs (Upper Catchment and Lower Catchment);
- the inclusion of complementary or similar NRM-related functions e.g. floodplain management in the north-east corner with the Irrigation Area (engineering solutions applied to both);
- the boundary would follow either the Hume Highway (or 500 ASL) and, in order to cope with similar NRM functions to the Upper Catchment, could (a) follow the UGWMA boundary to the west or (b) run west, north of Puckapunyal;
- a Coordination Forum would be established as a mechanism for the two ICs when dealing with issues of common concern and processes such as the coordination of works program proposals etc.

The Report recognised that there would be various functions which, in the short and long term, would still warrant special priority by the CMA. These tasks would be undertaken more effectively by working groups (Coordination Groups) comprising the appropriate CMA member(s), staff and professional/technical personnel drawn from NRE and other agencies.

This approach was recommended where strategy preparation and monitoring were required, but the implementation task could be undertaken by each IC "on the ground" in the catchment.

OPTION 3A: RMU BASED

This option used the Regional Management Unit (RMU) areas as its basis for determining the predominant functions and geographic areas for each IC. The main features of this option were:

- The SIR was retained, together with the adjoining Dryland areas in the north west sector, under the Irrigation Region Implementation Committee (IRIC).
- The "Predominantly Riverine Plain and Low Hills" Dryland Area, including the areas of public land within its borders would be oversighted by the Mid Catchment Implementation Committee (MCIC).
- The Dryland (Uplands) RMU and (upper) Public Lands would comprise the Upper Catchment Implementation Committee (UCIC).

OPTION 3B: FLOODPLAINS AND IRRIGATION REGION

This option was a modification of Option 3A. Its distinguishing feature was that the floodplain area in the north east sector of the catchment was merged within the SIR. This change recognised the predominant concern with implementing engineering solutions in the floodplain area – a major implementation task in the SIR.

OPTION 4: WATERWAY MANAGEMENT AREAS

This option built on the community of interest based on waterway management and the administrative support and networking which had been developed to varying degrees by the UGWA, BRMB and LGWMA.

Assessment of Options

These Options were subjected to a SWOT analysis in terms of the key objectives of Future Arrangements in the Goulburn Broken. In general, the assessment of the Options at this stage was as follows:

- Options 1 and 4 were not preferred largely on the grounds of inefficiencies and the fragmentation of NRM across the main RMU areas.
- Options 2, 3A and 3B had different mixes of strengths and weaknesses.
- Option 2 ran the risk of sacrificing community involvement in the process of maximising vertical integration and efficiencies of operation.
- Options 3A and 3B came closer to an optimal outcome.
- Option 3B could have an important advantage in combining the major task of implementing the engineering works programs across the SIR and the adjoining floodplain areas.

Option 3B was marginally preferred in terms of the study methodology.

Consultation

The Report setting out these recommendations was released for consultation. Comment was sought specifically from the three Waterway Authorities, the SRDB and the Public Lands IC.

Most of the Report's findings and recommendations were supported or supported with qualifications and/or an expanded comment on particular issues.

The recommendations regarding structural and procedural arrangements drew fire from the Waterway Authorities particularly the UGWA and the Mid Goulburn Broken Waterways IC (previously the Broken River Management Board).

This response was to be expected given the concerns expressed particularly by the UGWA regarding the possible implications of the Future Arrangements for these authorities. In a draft paper prepared by Russell Wealands, Executive Officer of the UGWA in April 1997, he had canvassed a wide range of issues that would need to be addressed during the transition of a CMA. The paper set out the strengths and the potential of the UGWA and made a strong case for their retention and enhancement. The Board of the UGWA recognised the benefits that could be derived by linking associated functions of floodplain and frontage management, regional drainage and management of Heritage Rivers with salinity, land degradation, waterway management and associated programs.

Their formal response to the Report made the following points:

The UGW members consider that three ICs are needed to undertake the waterway management function across the catchment and that these should be largely based on distinct river management units. Some minor changes to the current arrangements should be explored.

UGW members consider this 'River and Water RMU' approach to be equally, if not more valid than those proposed by the consultant. It also reflects like river usage, similar communities, geographic features and particular waterway issues. Furthermore significant change to these established management units as proposed under options 2, 3A and 3B is likely to confuse and alienate the community further.

Little benefit is seen by changing the basis to an irrigation and floodplain, dryland (riverine plains and low hills) and dryland (hills and low hills) RMUs spread across dissimilar communities.

Each of these is dependent or affected by the other and the sub-catchment, 'River and Water RMU' approach that strongly integrates the various NRM functions is preferred.

There is considerable scope and a ready basis for expanding the roles and functions of the waterway based ICs to include floodplain management, land management, frontage management, water quality program implementation and regional development. These and other responsibilities can be assumed progressively as structures and expertise is available.

The Mid Goulburn Broken Waterways Chairman Dean Runge formally advised the GBCMA that they were in full agreement with the UGW comments. The Lower Goulburn Waterways (LGW) also agreed that "there is a clear need for three Implementation Committees for Waterway Management in the Goulburn Broken Catchment ... representing their individual geographic locations ... it may be that the roles and functions of those three Implementation Committees would expand".

A Workshop was convened on 17 August 1997 to consider the responses to the Report. The question of how to resolve the issues of integration at the CMA level and at the IC level dominated. In particular, the future roles of the Waterways Management Authorities claimed special attention. As longstanding, if somewhat under-resourced entities, the integration process could be seen as the means of bringing them out of their chrysalis, inviting them to fly! By virtue of their history and skills and being the only administrative units on the ground, they could be seen as having "greatness thrust upon them".

It was a point in the evolution of the Goulburn Broken Catchment when astute leadership was needed. Harry S Truman's definition of leadership was singularly appropriate in the situation – "the ability to get people doing what they do not want to and enjoying it"!

The risk of Catchment conflict due to "the them and us" syndrome was real. There were three possible ways of dealing with the potential (and existing) conflict within the Catchment.

- ignore it and hope it goes away i.e. do nothing;
- seek to suppress or fragment the sub-regional communities; and
- recognise it, make the most of it and counter "the structural" basis for conflict through ongoing cross catchment mechanisms.

Whatever course of action was devised, it was clear that positive action would be essential to upgrade awareness, involvement, resourcing and performance in the upper catchment. A range of corporate management initiatives would be needed to achieve this shift in perceptions and motivation:

- the strategic use of specialist input to ICs and associated stakeholder/community groups;
- targeted communication/consultation;
- the selective use of cross catchment retreats/workshops; and
- Field Days which involved visits to two or three completed projects in different sub-regions which demonstrate the integration of NRM projects or programs.

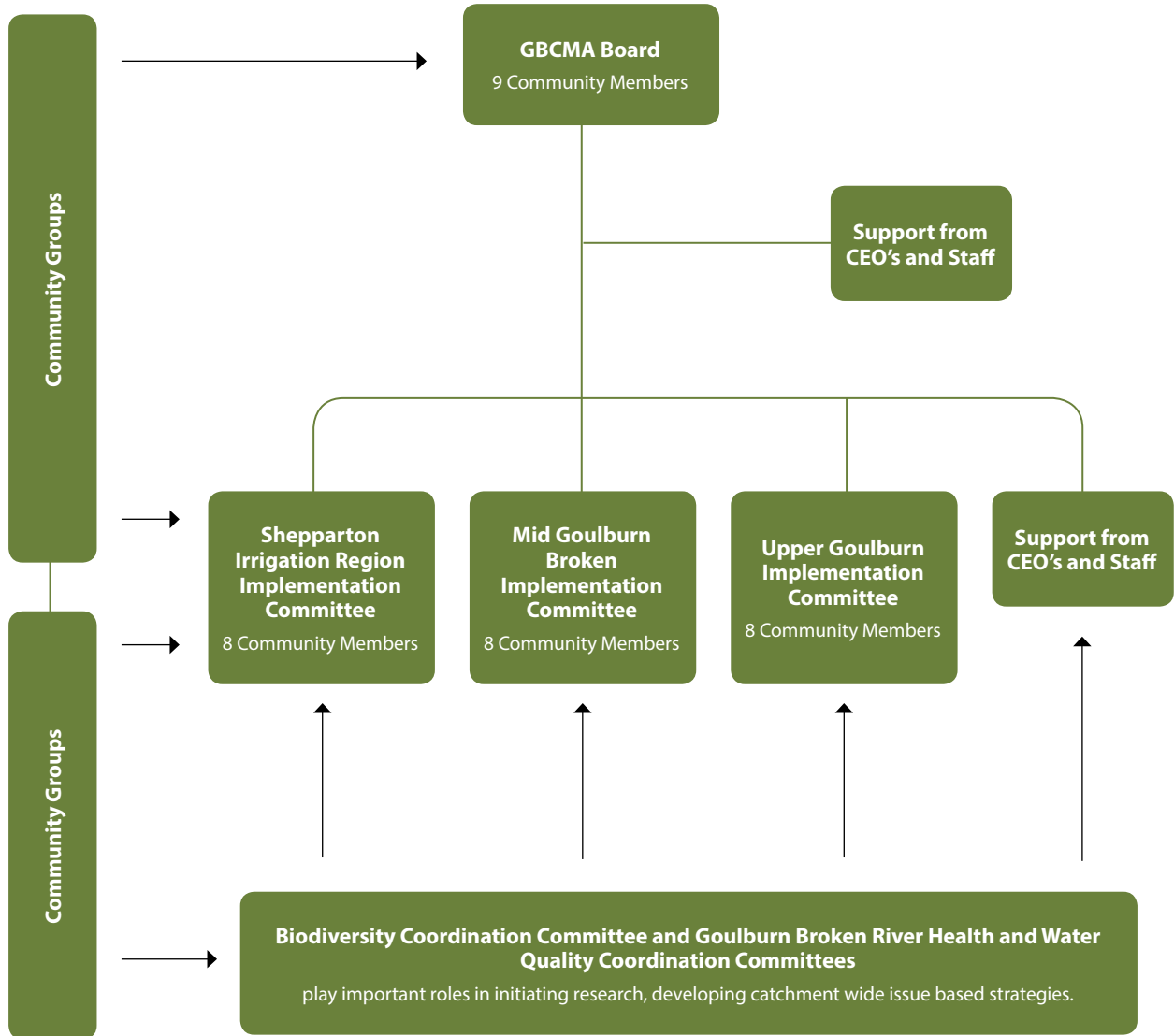
Part of the answer lay in developing a consistent corporate culture across the Catchment. Showcasing those elements that had produced the successes of the past and focussing the message of these achievements into the sub-regions would help foster similar perceptions and motivations.

In the course of the Workshop and in the days that followed, John Dainton, Bill O'Kane and the members of the fledgling CMA Board communicated, encouraged, reassured, negotiated and generally smoothed the way ahead. The CMA set about applying the principles of building on the successes of the past and maximising the potential of its emerging or reconstituted units.

Goulburn Broken CMA Implementation Committee Areas



Structure of the GBCMA



Incremental Change

The CMA's careful approach to a fully integrated structure during 1997/98 was reflected in the continuity of the three Waterway Management Authorities as ICs – Upper Goulburn Waterways, Mid Goulburn Broken Waterways and Lower Goulburn Waterways. (With the Irrigation Implementation Committee, SIRIC, there were in effect four ICs in this start-up phase).

By its second year, the CMA had rationalised the geographic areas these ICs covered, partly because their areas greatly exceeded those they had managed as Waterway Authorities. This rationalisation enabled the CMA to adopt a more appropriate management approach and to reduce the number of ICs to two – the Upper-Goulburn Implementation Committee (UGIC) and the Mid-Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee (MGBIC).

The CMA achieved savings and efficiencies through the amalgamation of the Mid and Lower Goulburn Authorities and focussing more on onground works. In this way the CMA entrusted the prioritising and undertaking of onground works to three Implementation Committees in the Upper Catchment, Mid Goulburn Broken Catchment and Shepparton Irrigation Region. Its devolution of responsibility for implementation of these onground works enabled the Board to focus more clearly on the big picture issues.

Key issues that concerned the ICs and the Board across the Catchment were progressively made the responsibility of Coordination Committees specifically established to initiate research and develop Catchment wide issues-based strategies. One of the first Coordination Committees, the Biodiversity Coordination Committee, came out of this incremental approach to adapting management structures.

The Authority's first major project on biodiversity was driven initially from 1997 to 1999 by a Vegetation Management Plan Steering Committee chaired by Mrs Dianne McPherson. With the task of developing

the Native Vegetation Management Strategy almost complete, the steering committee was upgraded to a Biodiversity Coordination Committee. Dianne McPherson, who had a longstanding reputation for the quality and balance of her presentations, continued as Chair.

The basic structure eventually adopted for the GBCMA and the sub-regions for which the ICs were responsible is illustrated in the diagrams on the previous page.

The Authority's first Board comprised members of the former Catchment Land Protection Board as well as some new faces. John Dainton was encouraged that this mix combined a wealth of knowledge in natural resource management and some valuable new skills, particularly in the areas of business and financial management.

The historic significance of the establishment of the CMA was recognised throughout the catchment community. The new arrangements brought land and water management under the one organisation for the first time, allowing a more integrated approach.

New Challenges

Although the CMA had given priority to the implications of the major structural and procedural changes in the Catchment, in 1997/1998 it achieved the most impressive progress to date with onground works to protect and restore land and water resources.

Total funding from Catchment ratepayers and State and Federal Government sources increased by about 10 per cent, primarily in the areas of irrigated salinity, waterway and floodplain management and water quality. The increases were not, however, across the board. In the Dryland reduced funding and the pressure on landholders caused by low commodity prices were threatening the implementation of the Dryland Salinity Plan.

With the waterway management reforms, this was the first year the entire Catchment was rated for waterway management. This was associated with a substantial increase in the area serviced, which was a challenge for staff and contractors. The CMA worked hard to reduce the cost of rate collection and obtaining good cooperation from local government. Other significant outcomes during this start-up period included:

- The launch of the Upper Goulburn Waterway Management Plan and the SIR Groundwater Supply Protection Area Management Plan.
- Completion of the Murray River Levee Audit.
- A review of the Dryland Research Program.
- On January 1, 1998 responsibility for floodplain management planning was transferred from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment to the CMA. For the first time, integrated floodplain management advice was being generated in the region.
- The Authority began working with Government on the transfer of the publicly-owned levee system on the Murray and Lower Goulburn. The condition of the levees was being assessed and a major review of floodplain management in the Lower Goulburn undertaken.
- The Authority reviewed several Local Government planning schemes and welcomed the positive way the input was received. The new planning schemes were more environmentally focussed than their predecessors.
- As the Referral Authority for floodplain management, the Authority worked with Local Government and other Referral Authorities to develop guidelines on all planning matters to reduce the number and cost of referrals.

Achievements in the Goulburn Broken to 2002

In the course of preparing the RCS that was released in 2003, the CMA reviewed its functions and performance over the previous five years – for most of which John Dainton had led the Authority as Chair.

In its preamble to the RCS, the CMA gave an objective, if somewhat understated, summary of its achievements in that period.

Reviews undertaken as part of the RCS update showed good progress is being made with all Catchment programs, either through meeting targets or gaining a better understanding of the issues and challenges.

The Catchment community has a greater understanding of the value of natural assets and of the ecosystem services they contribute to the region's productive capacity. Natural assets are interconnected and degradation of any natural asset may degrade other natural assets. Biodiversity assets, in particular, are under threat from salinity and intensification of agriculture.

A significant feature of the Goulburn Broken Catchment's approach to natural resource management over the past five years has been stronger integration of land, water and biodiversity management.

In reviewing the RCS we found:

- *The region has worked within the salt disposal, water cap and water quality limits set by the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council.*
- *The Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR) Program has become strongly integrated and is largely on track to meet targets. Government-funding constraints remain the main barrier.*

- *The Dryland Program underwent a major refocus in 1999/2000 after a number of years of below target performance. It has developed a multi-benefit approach to on-farm investments.*
- *The Water Quality Program is exceeding works targets within the irrigation area and overall has demonstrated a major reduction of phosphorus and nitrogen loads at key regional sites.*
- *Upgrading the region's sewerage treatment plants has reduced phosphorus loads from 50 tonnes a year in 1997 to 10 tonnes a year (2002). A further reduction to three tonnes a year is expected by 2004. This achievement is well in excess of the target of 80 per cent reduction by 2015 set by the Water Quality Strategy.*
- *A strategic approach to vegetation management and biodiversity protection has established the foundations for improved biodiversity outcomes. While these outcomes continue to be difficult to measure, regional policies such as the multiple benefits approach to grants ensure that biodiversity gains are made.*

John Dainton could be justifiably proud of having led the Authority, the CLP Board and SPPAC during the development of major initiatives in the Goulburn Broken:

- Salinity Management Plans for both the Irrigation and Dryland
- Water Quality Strategy
- Regional Catchment Strategy
- Goulburn Broken Native Vegetation Management Strategy
- Weed Action Plan.

In setting up the structures and procedural arrangements for the CLP and the GBCMA he had led the establishment of the Implementation Committees and fostered the development of their special role.

John Dainton's commitment to featuring the triple bottom line of social, economic and environmental sustainability in the RCS and its various contributing strategies was well known and respected. This goal was taken on board by the Authority's various committees, groups and other units as they identified issues, undertook investigations, planned and implemented strategies.

NRM Achievements

A brief overview of some of the achievements of the GBCMA under John Dainton's leadership helps to explain the Authority's pre-eminence as a catchment manager.

Local Area Planning (LAP) commenced in the Dryland area in 1997 with the Granite Creek Project Inc. taking on the arduous task of piloting the planning process. Perhaps one of the most enlightening outcomes of the process was the identification of community awareness and participation as one of the critical elements to fulfilment of land management goals. Local Area Planning became a formidable process in identifying barriers to adoption of sustainable land management practices and how to overcome these barriers. Local Area Planning commenced in the Shepparton Irrigation Region also in 1997 with an information night for groups and with the aim of developing four projects in the region each year.

The LAP process was an important tool in helping Landcare groups strategically define where they would undertake activities.

LAP aimed to help groups:

- develop and prioritise their onground works programs;
- integrate natural resource management programs;
- focus efforts and resources;
- address economic and social issues relating to natural resource management;
- develop ideas for future projects; and
- communicate with the MGBIC, GBCMA and other groups about their needs and aspirations.

The MGBIC identified a need to accelerate this program.

Landcare groups had become frustrated in 1998/99 by increasing accountability requirements associated with government funding. In that year, the GBCMA assumed responsibility for Landcare coordination and the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) grants process, along with priority setting and financial management for community and landholder grants.

The uptake of grants in Dryland areas of the Catchment had slowed. This was partly due to the reduced ability of landowners to match grants at a time of crippling commodity prices and poor seasons. There were signs that Landcare was waning. The Landcare Management Guidelines John Dainton released at the Goulburn Broken Landcare Forum in April would have helped Landcare groups adjust to the requirements of increased accountability. The Authority continued to monitor this situation and work with Landcare groups to ensure time was not wasted on unproductive activities.

During 1999/2000 efforts to ensure funding directed to works that achieved maximum environmental gains were further enhanced with the development of new Environmental Grants Guidelines for dryland areas of the Catchment. During the year, Charles Sturt University undertook a survey of landowners to identify the factors that were limiting the uptake of incentives and adoption of best management practices.

Working in partnership with the DNRE and Landcare, the Goulburn Broken CMA revamped its Environmental Management Grants to deliver extra resources to farmers and Landcare groups undertaking works identified as a high priority in the RCS.

The new grants arrangements were achieved by pooling funds from State salinity grants funding and Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding. Landowners received up to 66 per cent of the cost of revegetation, fencing and other environmental works undertaken on private property. The funding was allocated on a graduating scale linked to priorities identified in the RCS.

Later in 2001/02 a single bid for Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) funding, piloted in the catchment in an Australian first, streamlined the funding of grants through the trust for Landcare and community groups. It enabled a more targeted approach with higher priority given to projects able to achieve multiple benefits. The Authority believed the prioritisation of funding applications at a Catchment level was critical to their targeted and strategic approach to natural resources management. An increase in the uptake of grants in that period could be attributed to several factors including the efforts of the CMA and its partner organisations to engage landholders in its integrated works programs; better seasons and commodity prices; and the injection of cash into the region that occurred as a result of dairy deregulation.

The Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation Committee (SIRIC) is the Authority's most impressive achievement in organisation design. Its structure and procedural arrangements ensure integration and catchment community participation in its implementation task.

The responsibility for implementing the revised SIRLWSMP passed from the original SPAC Irrigation Sub-committee and the Irrigation Committee of the CLP Board to the reconstituted SIRIC of the Goulburn Broken and North Central CMAs.

Having acquired an expanded role through this process the SIRIC incorporated strategies for other natural resource issues in the Catchment, including pest plants and animals, threatened flora and fauna, soil structure, soil acidification, farm forestry, farm chemicals, sustainable agriculture and nutrient discharge control.

To ensure it remained fully responsive to community needs and views, the SIRIC adopted an administrative structure detailed in the Figure (overleaf) to facilitate the appropriate interactions. This seemingly complex structure is essential to ensure community input and ownership of the Plan as it continues to evolve during its implementation.

The Plan signifies a true partnership between the local community and all levels of government – state, federal and local. There has been a tremendous commitment and ownership from community members and agency staff because they all have a true role in the evolution of the plan and sense responsibility for it. The committee implements an active community education program which includes, among other things, Watertable Watch and Saltwatch.

The Shepparton Irrigation Region led the State in 1997/98 in the number of participants it had in Saltwatch. With Saltwatch in its eleventh year, this number in the SIR together with the participation in the Dryland schools produced a larger involvement than for the combined figures for the rest of Victoria.

In 1998/99, refurbishment of Murray River levees in the Cobram District, completion of Stage 1 of the Muckatah Surface Water Program and the extensive waterway programs in the Upper and Mid Catchment were highlights of the year's works program.

The following year the operational program the GBCMA pursued in the SIR, completed an impressive array of works related to waterway management targeting specific reaches of the rivers and streams. The primary targets were Seven, Castle and Pranjip Creeks system along with the Goulburn River and Broken Creek.

The development and implementation of a new legal framework for the Community Surface Drainage Program, utilising the powers under the Water Act, 1989, and with G-M Water acting as the authority, was the focus of much effort by DNRE, G-M Water and CMA staff during 1999/2000. It was critical that the transition to this new approach was successful to maintain the momentum of the Surface Drainage Program.

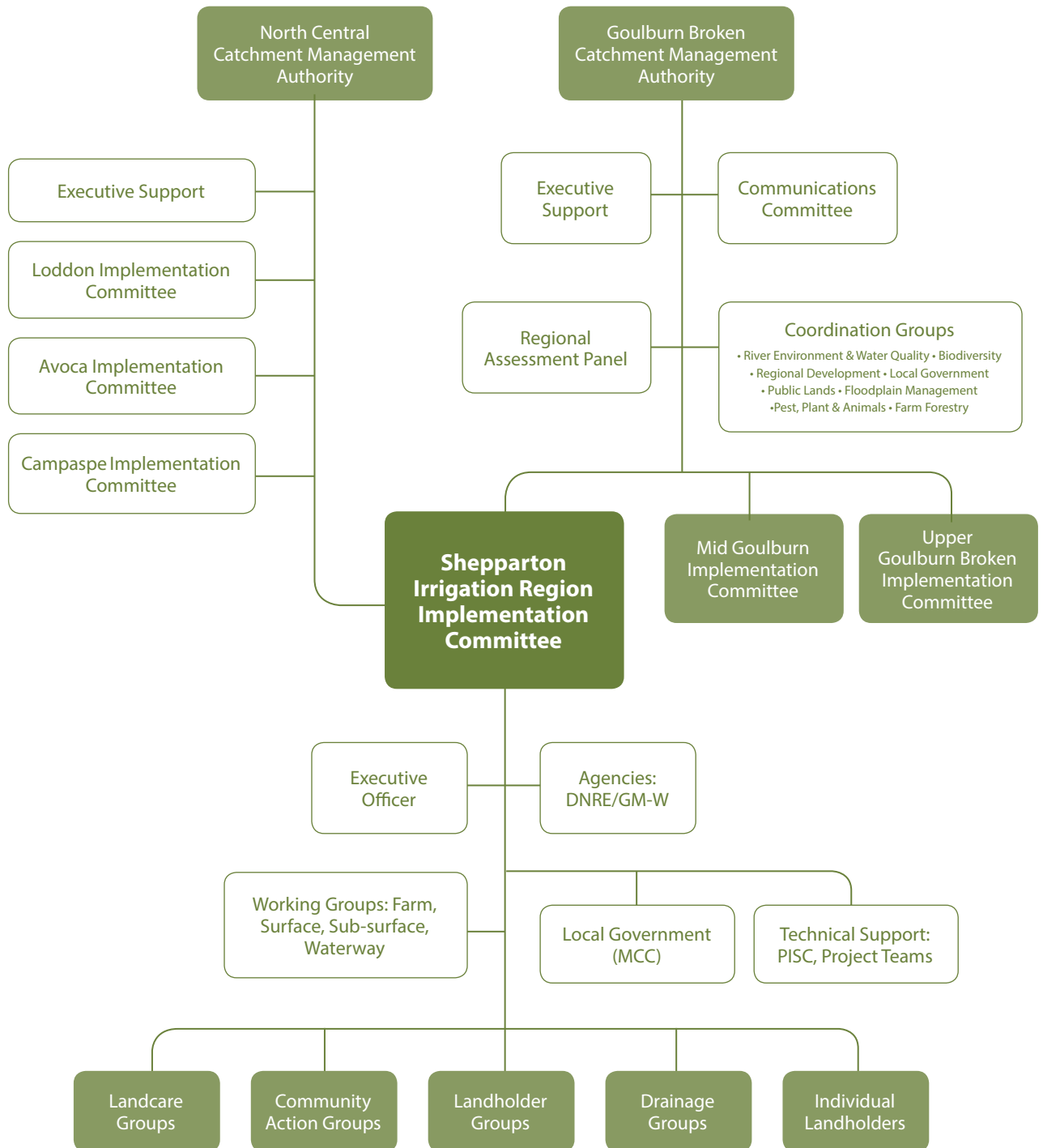
The SIRIC carried out a major review of its strategy to align with a number of State activities. This included major reviews of surface and sub-surface programs, the WFP process, the issue of Landcare support, cost share for environmental incentives and the impact of the native vegetation strategy on its programs. This linked with State and Murray-Darling Basin review processes and was completed in December 2000.

The Ethnic Farmers Accessing Landcare Pilot Project focussed on data and accessibility issues within the SIR for farm families of multicultural origin. It found that over 20 per cent of farm families had diverse multicultural heritage scattered across the Catchment, and that there was potential to better service their needs. Accessibility of services could be improved, for instance by accommodating the communication needs of farmers who had left school at an early age – not an uncommon situation in the SIR.

The farm forestry project successfully produced the first experimental products from farm grown timber from thinning during 1999/2000. Items included fence posts, stakes, sample boards and high quality furniture and were constructed from a range of species.

The SIRIC Surface Drainage Working Group was a finalist in the State Landcare Awards (BP Catchment section). The Waterways Working Group was a finalist in the Waterways section. The Muckatah Project was highly commended in the Australia 2000 Environment Awards announced by Prime Minister Howard in June and was a finalist in two sections of the National Banksia Environmental Awards (Innovation and Land, Bush and Waterways sections). SIRIC won the latter category along with its partners G-MW, DNRE and

Management Structure for Implementation of the Shepparton Irrigation Region Catchment Strategy



Sinclair Knight Merz (SKM). Earlier, the Muckatah Project had been acknowledged with an Engineering Excellence Award by the Institution of Engineers, Victoria.

A Regional Floodplain Management Strategy completed in 2000 formed the basis of how the Goulburn Broken CMA would carry out its floodplain management activities over the next five to 10 years. The strategy was developed by the Floodplain Management Coordination Committee with representatives from municipal councils, DNRE, FICSES, G-MW, Department of Infrastructure and the Implementation Committees of the CMA.

The Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee (UGIC) completed its Recreational Waterway Strategy for the Upper Goulburn Catchment in 2000/2001. The strategy promoted sustainable recreation use of the region's waterways and set agreed guidelines for their development.

A Catchment Stormwater Strategy was completed prioritising actions. Goulburn Broken Catchment municipalities were successful in attracting 25 per cent of the Victorian Stormwater Action Program's (VSAP) funds allocated to regional Victoria.

In Mid Goulburn in February 2001, the Honeysuckle Catchment was targeted under the Heartlands Project that aims to support landowners to undertake environmental works and develop sustainable land use management systems. The Project involved an unprecedented level of research and landholder participation. The Honeysuckle Catchment was one of only two sites in the Murray-Darling Basin that were the focus of the Heartlands Project that includes intensive research by CSIRO. The landholder response was phenomenal highlighting the success of the targeted approach.

Biodiversity was an issue that John Dainton foresaw as a major concern for NRM in the Goulburn Broken. He held that all resource management projects impacted on biodiversity and therefore pushed for biodiversity to become part of "everything we say and everything we do."

In 1999/2000, the GBCMA's Native Vegetation Management Strategy was the first to be completed in the State. It set out clear priorities for managing the precious remaining remnant vegetation. In 2000/2001 the CMA endorsed the Rabbit and Weed Action Plans. These strategic plans provided the framework for pest management for the next five years and had been developed in partnership with the community.

The implementation of the Native Vegetation Management Strategy began in 2001/2002. The finalisation of Volume Two was due early the next year to coincide with the release of Victoria's Native Vegetation Management Framework.

Volume Two incorporated the 'net gain' and 'offset' concepts for referrals under the Native Vegetation Retention Controls consistent with Victoria's Native Vegetation Management Framework.

- Net Gain was deemed to occur when losses of native vegetation and habitat measured by quantity and quality (using habitat hectares) were minimised and more than offset by commensurate gains.
- Net gain was achieved through continued native vegetation works in the catchment and through the offset guidelines implemented through the Native Vegetation Management Strategy.

Rabbit and Weed Action Plan implementation was the focus of the pest management program for 2001/2002. Twenty-four priority weed species action plans were developed and endorsed by the UGIC and CMA Board during the year.

Similarly with ecosystem services, John Dainton recognised the need to broaden perceptions of natural resource management to embrace this concept. It was a major coup for the GBCMA to have a groundbreaking study on ecosystem services conducted in the Catchment.

A major report on the study was launched by Victoria's Governor, John Landy, in Shepparton. The report, *Natural Assets An Inventory of Ecosystem Goods and Services in the Goulburn Broken Catchment*, was an outcome of the Natural and Value of Australia's Ecosystem Services Project that focused on the Goulburn Broken as its main pilot Catchment. The Project was the result of a partnership with CSIRO, the Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation (LWRRDC) and the Myer Foundation. The later stages of the project focused on case studies at sub-catchment scale.

The Report included the following points:

The ecosystem services concept places humans and their economies within ecosystems so that "natural" and economic processes are intimately interconnected. It is a step towards the integration of ecology and economics. It shows the need for investment in the maintenance of natural capital because it is the primary source of value and the provider of life support. This idea is obvious, but the reluctance of societies to bear the costs of maintaining natural capital shows the need for frequent restatement and reinforcement of the idea. The ecosystem services concept changes the need for investment in natural capital from an option to an imperative.

The Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority is already pioneering ways of investing in natural capital, and the ecosystem services concept contributes to this investment.

CSIRO also used the Catchment as a pilot for its study of the concept of "resilience". Leading lateral thinkers in natural resource management from several different countries participated in a workshop at Shepparton with members of the Catchment community. The focus was resilience of the Goulburn Broken Catchment.

Other Achievements and Awards

The Goulburn Broken Catchment became well known in this period (and since) for its pathfinding in NRM and groundbreaking initiatives. Other achievements during the period of John Dainton's leadership included the following:

- Commissioning Stage One of the Muckatah Project by Prime Minister John Howard.
- Launching the 2000th Whole Farm Plan (WFP) by Minister Garbutt.
- The SIRIC was highly commended in the Prime Minister's awards in the category for Community Leadership in Environmental Achievements.
- The waterway management program was recognised by being short listed for the International Riverprize, won by the Mersey River Basin Authority in Great Britain.
- The Authority won the inaugural Theiss National Riverprize and was short listed in the National Banksia Award for Land and Waterways.

Recognition

The catchment community was keenly aware of the place they had in the Australian story of on-the-ground achievement in natural resource management. They also appreciated that they had respected contributors to that story in their community and they honoured them 10 years out from its commencement.

Close to 400 people attended a Goulburn Broken CMA dinner in Shepparton held in June 2001 to recognise 10 years of salinity action in the Catchment and acknowledge the contribution of community members in recognising the problem and developing world best practice programs in response. Jeremy Gaylard¹⁶ and John Dainton who were instrumental in the establishment and ongoing success of the program were singled out for special praise.

John Dainton resigned from the position of Chair in May 2001 but stayed on as a member of the Board until June 2002. In the Authority's Annual Report for 2001/02 Bill O'Kane pointed out:

The Catchment community had benefited enormously from the leadership of John Dainton. It is fortunate that he will remain on the Board.

The following year in his Chairman's Report Stephen Mills recorded John Dainton's retirement from the Board on 30 June 2002, commenting that he "was a strong advocate of major projects that had the potential to bring about significant environment benefits. His vision as inaugural Chair of the GBCMA placed the organisation at the forefront of natural resource management in Australia. This was recognised this year when he was short listed for the Prime Minister's Environment Award."

John Dainton received the Australian Centenary Medal in 2003 for services to the community in the area of salinity programs, the dairy industry, and water and catchment management.

Moving On

John Dainton's resignation from the position of Chair of the GBCMA was primarily due to his appointment as Chair of Goulburn-Murray Water, Victoria's foremost irrigation and bulk water authority, from June 2001. The workload associated with this new position would have been sufficient reason in itself for him to relinquish his role with the GBCMA.

He could be confident also that he was leaving the GBCMA in good hands when Stephen Mills was named as his successor. Stephen had an impeccable record in the management of local and State environmental issues, having held a diverse range of previous and current board positions on industry and community organisations. He had been a director of G-MW from 1994 to 2000 and was at that time Chairman of the Australian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage.

It was known, however, that John Dainton was pressed to stay on as Chair of GBCMA. In the corridors of the State Government the idea of the GBCMA without John Dainton was not easy to accept – and what was more, he could be expected to enhance the partnership between these two bodies even more while holding both Chair positions.

Interestingly, John Dainton had another overriding reason not to follow such a course of action. He actually foresaw the potential for a conflict of interest in holding both positions. This risk, although unimaginable to many who had seen the remarkable partnership develop between the two organisations, was not likely at the personal level but in the area of leadership. This potential for a conflict of interest crystallised in the issue of Nagambie Caravan Park. G-MW wanted to close it down because of risks in relation to flooding and sewerage. A GBCMA decision was also needed in regard to its role in floodplain management. The perception of John Dainton's dual responsibilities in such situations was a critical factor in his decision to relinquish his role with the GBCMA.

The Politics of Drought

John Dainton became Chair of G-MW as many regional bodies were feeling the effects of prolonged drought. In its Annual Report for 2002/03, CEO Denis Flett recorded:

The sixth year of drought also had a significant impact on our business. Unprecedented low water availability meant that we only received \$3.1 million in sales revenue from the Murray system and, once again, no sales revenue from the Goulburn system. Together with the cost of pumping Waranga Basin, this resulted in an operating loss of \$21.6 million, despite an increase in water charges.

Worse was to come as the drought continued. Declining water allocations, falling income and steep rises in water prices brought mixed reactions from farmers. Their anger was also fuelled by the lack of assistance from the State budget.

G-MW's relations with the leisure and tourism industries became strained over issues such as the level of water held in Lake Eildon. John Dainton was increasingly in the firing line from those industries that were affected by the G-MW's attempts to achieve a balanced approach to water management and water sharing.

His deep concern for the impact of the drought on the families of landholders prompted him to call for better coordination of drought information as a basis for guidance and assistance to farmers. In the controversy in 2003 over the Victorian Government's discussion paper on water reform, G-MW responded with qualified support. John Dainton sought to recover a more objective approach to the debate by supporting improved water accounting mechanisms to strengthen the entitlement process. G-MW favoured the unbundling of water into three main components: a water share, a distribution capacity share and a site use licence.

The deepening of the drought prompted stronger reactions among irrigators to proposals by the G-MW for water price rises for the 2004/05 season. Tension mounted and resentment deepened among irrigators as they looked to the State Government for some relief from the increasing costs of water.

The State Government decided not to reappoint John Dainton as Chair beyond 2004. This automatically led to his resignation as Chair of Vic Water, a position he held concurrently with that of Chair of G-MW. These moves disappointed but did not surprise many G-MW watchers.

The Country News recorded his departure sympathetically:

John Dainton was reluctant to discuss the end of his chairmanship, but acknowledged there was a trend to restrict the lengths of service on boards and he had been a director since G-MW was borne out of the old Rural Water Commission 12 years ago. At 66 he was the longest serving director on the board.

His last year had been a demanding one, facing a number of public debates over water pricing, asset upgrades and tourism and recreation. In the long term Mr Dainton said he saw a good future ahead for the region, with more intensive farming required to extract the most value from water, which will continue to increase in price, although not as fast as some farmers were predicting.

Among the achievements under his chairmanship are the establishment of active Water Services Committees, which appear to be favoured by the new essential services commissioner; and the opening up of water trading, without which many dairy farmers would not have been able to survive the drought.

He said if he had a regret it would be the misunderstandings that arose with the role of the Water Services Committees and the authority as they came under increasing pressure with water pricing, while implementing full cost recovery.

Many irrigators expected the committees and the board to fight the Victorian Government for more infrastructure money, but Mr Dainton pointed out the board was answerable to the government and limited in its negotiating power.

"If you don't like infrastructure renewals then you have to take the argument to COAG (Council of Australian Governments) because that's where it's coming from".

Honest, accurate in his assessment of the tumultuous times for the water industry and for farmers, he was restrained but direct, prepared, as ever, to "tell it like it is."

Right Man for the Job

Not surprisingly, John Dainton reappeared on the water scene in 2005 as the independent Chair of the Water Markets and Irrigation Reforms Steering Committee and Chair of the White Paper Irrigation Reforms Consultative Forum – appointed by the Victorian Government.

NOTES AND APPENDICES

Timeline: Milestones in Salinity Control and Natural Resource Management

Commonwealth Government	Victoria: State Government	Goulburn Broken Catchment
Whitlam: 1972-75	Hamer: 1972-81	1973 and 1974: Floods devastate parts of the Shepparton Irrigation District
		1974: Goulburn Irrigation Regional Drainage Action Committee established
	May 1975: SRWSC launches strategy for salinity control and drainage for Northern Victoria	
Fraser: 1975-83		1976: Sheep Pen Land Management Group formed
1980: Tax Concession for Land Conservation		
	Thompson: 1981-82	
	1981: Kerang meeting opposes SRWSC Mineral Reserve Basin Scheme	1981: Early meetings of Warrenbayne-Boho landholders in Dryland
	Cain Jnr: 1982-90	
	July 1982: All Party Parliamentary Select Committee on Salinity	
	1982: Girgarre-Stanhope Salinity Action Group (GASSAG) formed	
Hawke: March 1983 – Dec 1991		
1983: Tax Concession on Tree Clearing		Feb 1983: Warrenbayne-Boho Land Protection Group established
	October 1984: Report by Parliamentary Select Committee on Salinity	
1983-92: National Soil Conservation Program	1984: Rural Water Commission replaces SRWSC	
	26 July 1985: Ministerial Task Force on Salinity announced. Salinity Bureau in DPC	19 September 1985: First regional Salinity Pilot Program launched in Goulburn Broken River Catchment
	1986: Victoria-wide Landscape Program	14 March 1986: Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC) inaugural meeting
	Dec.1986: Mineral Reserve Basin salinity mitigation scheme abandoned and impetus for community leadership in natural resource management grows	
		1987: Girgarre Salinity Control Project commenced. Completed September 1987
1 January 1988: Murray-Darling Basin Commission established. Statement on the Environment. One Billion Trees (OBT) program	May 1988: "Salt Action" a \$50M initiative to mitigate salinity announced	

Commonwealth Government	Victoria: State Government	Goulburn Broken Catchment
	1989: Water Act	SPPAC's term extended to June 1989
		August 1989: State government releases SPPAC's Draft Plan for comment by 6 October 1989
1990: Decade of Landcare commences	6 June 1990: Government Support for SPPAC's Salinity Management Plans announced	6 June 1990: Implementation of SPPAC's Salinity Management Plans headed up by Salinity Program Advisory Council (SPAC)
	Kirner: Aug 1990 – Oct 1992	
Keating: Dec 1991 – March 1996		
	Kennett: Oct 1992 – Oct 1999	August 1992: J Dainton appointed as Deputy Chairman of G-MW
1993 – 2008 National Landcare Program		June 1993: Regional Landcare Plan completed
1994 "Working Nation" Initiative	15 June 1994: Catchment Land Protection Act	1994-95: Surface Drainage Strategy completed
	1 July 1994: Goulburn-Murray Water (G-MW) established	
		1994/5-1996/7: "Working Nation" funding for Mosquito Drain (\$5M) and Sustainable Regional Development Board (\$1M)
		29 Dec 1994 Goulburn Broken Catchment and Land Protection Board (GBCALP) membership announced
		1995-96 SIRLWSMP: Second Five Year Strategic Plan submitted to State Government
		Five Year Review of GDSMP completed and presented to State Government
		October 1995: River Environment and Water Quality Committee established
Howard: March 1996 -		
July 1996: Review of Landcare by ANAO	1996: Catchment Management Structures Working Party Discussion Paper released	July 1996: Draft Water Quality Strategy launched
		Sept. 1996: Goulburn Broken Regional Catchment Strategy launched
1997- 2008: National Heritage Trust		1 July 1997: Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority established
		1997: Local Area Planning commences in Dryland
	1998: Victorian Catchment Management Council established	
	Bracks: Oct 1999 – July 2007	1999-2000: GBCMA Native Vegetation Management Study first to be completed in Victoria
		2000: Regional Floodplain Management Strategy completed
2000-2008: National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality		2000-2001: Catchment Stormwater Strategy completed
		May 2001: J Dainton resigns from position of Chair of the GBCMA. Continues as member until June 2002
		2001-2004: J. Dainton Chair of G-MW
		2001-2002: major report "Natural Assets: An Inventory of Ecosystem Goods and Services in the Goulburn Broken Catchment"
		21 Nov 2003: Second Regional Catchment Strategy launched
	23 June 2004: "Our Water Our Future" – water reform package announced	

Endnotes

CHAPTER 2

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8. Interview 16 February 2004
9. Refer Endnote: Extracts from Minutes of First Meeting 14 March 1986 and details of affiliations in Appendix 2 of Second Annual Report 1987/88
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18. SPPAC Review and Evaluation of Performance in the First Year of Operation – March 1986 to March 1987 p. 17-18
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5. Ibid p. 240-241
6. Goulburn-Broken Regional Salinity Pilot Program: Second Annual Report 1987/88 p. 24
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CHAPTER 8

1. Table 3: Functions and Membership of Plan Implementation Groups.
Community-based implementation committees will be established under the following conditions:
 - a. Relationship to Government
Guidelines, established by the State Government, will guide the implementation of the plans. The committees will recommend priorities and resource allocations within these guidelines.

Guidelines may include cost-sharing and environment protection.

- b. Functions of the Goulburn Salinity Program Advisory Council, SPAC (Covering Shepparton Irrigation Region, and the Goulburn Dryland Region)
 - i. Maintain a policy and strategic overview of both irrigation and dryland salinity control activities within the regions.
 - ii. Recommend further developments and refinements of the Goulburn Dryland and Shepparton Irrigation Plans. This refers to matters of Region-wide significance, and matters where there needs to be consistency between sub-regions.
 - iii. Recommend priorities for establishing sub-regional salinity planning implementation groups.
 - iv. Review budget proposals and priorities for all salinity-funded activities in the region, and, as part of the budgeting process, recommend regional priorities for salinity activities, including Priority Project Areas.
 - v. Provide recommendations to Government on the allocation of salt disposal entitlements within the region.
 - vi. Report on progress in implementing the salinity management plans. This will include preparing a public annual report detailing expenditure on salinity projects within the region and achievement of plan targets.
 - vii. Undertake periodic reviews of project and program performance.
 - viii. Develop a community education and public awareness program.
 - ix. Provide a forum for seeking resolution of issues and disputes.
 - x. SPAC is expected to establish sub-committees responsible for the dryland and irrigation plans.

- c. Functions of Salinity Plan Implementation Groups in the Goulburn Region
 - i. Within the framework of the management plans, develop the individual sub-regional salinity control strategies in conjunction with State agencies.
 - ii. Present to SPAC the case for the particular sub-region's share of the Salt Disposal Entitlement available to the Shepparton Plan area.
 - iii. Sponsor the formation of Priority Project Areas.
 - iv. Endorse, to SPAC, Action Plans for Priority Project Areas.
 - v. Recommend to SPAC (as part of the annual budgeting process) priorities for all salinity activities in the sub-region.
 - vi. Advise SPAC annually on the implementation of salinity projects including rate of expenditure and achievement of targets.
 - d. Membership
 - i. The precise membership of sub-regional and regional implementation committees will need to vary to accommodate regional differences. However, the following membership features will be common to all groups:
 - the maximum number of voting members will be twelve.
 - There will be one member from DARA, and two members from DCE (with one representing the RWC). State Government members will not have voting rights.
 - The chairperson will be a non-Government member.
 - ii. Additional non-voting members may be co-opted to work with the group.
 - iii. Non-Government members will be paid appropriate remuneration.
 - ii. For SPAC the following additional features will apply:
 - Local Government, VFF and either the ACF or the CCV will each have a representative nominated by the State executive of the relevant organisation.
 - Each sub-regional SPIG will be represented.
 - The Salinity Bureau (DPC) and OWR will have membership.
 - iii. For Salinity Plan Implementation Groups the following additional features will apply:
 - community representatives are to be drawn from landholder groups within the plan area. Landholder groups would include Water Users groups and Landcare groups. In selecting community representatives consideration should be given to ensuring that there is adequate geographic representation from within the sub-region.
 - Each municipality within the SPIG area will provide a representative.
 - VFF and either ACF or the CCV will each have a representative nominated by the State executive of the relevant organisation.
- e. Appointment
 - i. Because these groups are advisory committees to the Government, the Rural Affairs Committee of Cabinet must endorse the membership and chairperson.

- ii. Membership of all groups will be initially for up to two years. At the end of that period further refinement of implementation arrangements may occur. Regional Co-ordinating Agencies are responsible for:
- Collating and forwarding funding proposals from all State agencies for projects necessary to implement the management plan.
 - Appointment of a plan coordinator responsible for the day to day coordination of departmental and community salinity control activities.
 - Provision of executive support to the community based implementation committee.
 - Assisting the community implementation committee prepared an annual report of the implementation on the management plan to be presented by the coordination agency's Minister to the Cabinet Committee.
2. Goulburn Broken Salinity Program Advisory Council: Annual Report 1990/1991 p. 8
 3. Goulburn Broken Salinity Program Advisory Council: Annual Report 1991/1992 p. 5
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 5. Salinity Program Advisory Council Annual Report 1993-94: p. 21
 6. Salinity Program Advisory Council Annual Report 1992-93: p. 18
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 8. Robinson, Pam and Smith, Dr Bob "Goulburn Dryland Salinity Management Plan Review of Processes used in Implementation" p. 3
 9. Landcare Victoria: Goulburn Broken Regional Landcare Plan June 1993 – p. 27
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1. Extract from transcript of conference in 2000 on "Regional Australia: Power and Politics"
 2. Catchment and Land Protection: Discussion Paper. Department of Natural Resources July 1993 p. 8
 3. Ibid p. 4
 4. Ibid p. 11
 5. Ibid p. 23
 6. Ibid p. 29
 7. Submission by Department of Agriculture to the Catchment and Land Protection Secretariat regarding the Catchment and Land Protection Discussion Paper Sept 1993 p. 5
 8. Ibid p. 8
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 16. Ibid p. 13-14
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 19. CRG Study Brief "Transition to an Integrated Catchment Approach in Natural Resource Management" Oct. 1994.
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 21. Ibid p. 13
 22. Ibid p. 23

23. Edited extracts from "A Consultative Approach to Financial Management" a paper presented to ANCID 2000 by Trevor Ierino, B.Bus (Acctg), FCPA, Manager Business and Finance; Jeff Huddle, B.Bus (Acctg), Manager Financial Reporting Goulburn-Murray Water.
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25. Bonlac Foods Limited: Annual Report 1999 p. 4-5
26. Shepparton News 1 December 1999.

CHAPTER 10

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2. Ibid p. 13-14
3. Ibid p. 15-16
4. Catchment Management Strategies Working Party "Review of Catchment Management Structures in Victoria Feb 1997 p. (iv)
5. Announcement by Minister for Agriculture and Resources and Minister for Conservation and Land Management p. 6
6. Ibid p. 8
7. Ibid p. 9
8. Ibid p. 10
9. Ibid p. 13-14
10. Ibid p. 14-15
11. Ibid p. 15
12. Ibid p. 12
13. Ibid p. 13
14. DNRE Correspondence to CMA Steering Committees from Campbell Fitzpatrick, Director, Catchment and Water Resources Branch e.g. on Draft Role Statements 6/6/97.
15. The roles of these ICs needed to be the same as those exercised in these areas until 30 June 1997, at least until the CMA considered other options available to it and the need to remove overlaps or to fill gaps in NRM in the catchment. The CMA needed to clarify, as soon as possible, whether it was permissible to change the structure required on 1 July 1997, before the expiration of the 24 month period laid down in the Future Arrangements guidelines for waterway management, salinity program and sustainable regional development ICs.
16. The impressive record of Jeremy Gaylard's many years of service to the Goulburn Broken Region, the State of Victoria and in other spheres is reflected in the following highlights of his public career.

Highlights of Jeremy Gaylard's Public Career

Mayor of Shepparton 1988-1990

Shepparton City Councillor 1986-1994

Inaugural Chairman, Shepparton/Kyabram Rodney Development Corporation

Vice President, Victorian Agricultural Societies Association 1993

Member, Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Council 1986-1990

Chairman, Salinity Program Advisory Council 1991-1994

Member, Agribusiness Council of Victoria 1990-1991

State Landcare Committee 1992-1994

State Assessment Panel 1992-2000

Member, Rural Affairs Committee of Cabinet 1991-1992

President, Shepparton Agricultural Society 1985-1987; 1993-1994

President, South Shepparton Community House 1987-1994

Chairman, Community Hostel Building Appeal

Murray-Darling Basin Advisory Council 1990-2000

Chairman, Regional Water Authorities Review 1993

Standing Committee for Irrigation LECC 1993-1997

Chairman, Melbourne Market Authority 1993 – May 2000

Acronyms

ACF

Australian Conservation Foundation

ALP

Australian Labor Party

ANCA

Australian Nature Conservation Agency

ANCID

Australian National Committee on Irrigation and Drainage

AV

Agriculture Victoria

BMET

Bureau of Meteorology

BRIT

Broken River Improvement Trust

BRMB

Broken River Management Board

CALM

Catchment and Land Management

CCV

Conservation Council of Victoria

CFA

County Fire Authority

CLP

Catchment and Land Protection

CNR

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

COAG

Council of Australian Governments

CRC

Cooperative Research Centre

CRG

Community Reference Group

CSD

Community Surface Drain

CSIRO

Commonwealth Scientific Industry Research Organisation

DAEM

Department of Agriculture, Energy and Minerals

DARA

Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs

DAV

Department of Agriculture – Victoria

DCE

Department of Conservation and Environment

DCFL

Department of Conservation, Forests and Land

DCNR

Department of Conservation and Natural Resources

DITR

Department of Industry, Technology and Resources

DME

Department of Minerals and Energy

DNRE

Department of Natural Resources and Environment

DPC

Department of the Premier and Cabinet

DRDC

Dairy Research Development Corporation

DWR

Department of Water Resources

EC

Electrical conductivity, measured in micro Siemens per centimetre (mS/cm)

EM

Electromagnetic

EPA

Environment Protection Authority

FEDS

Farm Exploratory Drilling Service

GA

Greening Australia

GASSAG

Girgarre-Stanhope Salinity Action Group

GBCLPB

Goulburn Broken Catchment and Land Protection Board

GBCMA

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority

GBDSMP

Goulburn Broken Dryland Salinity Management Plan

GIRDAC

Goulburn Irrigation Region Drainage Action Committee

GIS

Geographical Information System

GMID

Goulburn-Murray Irrigation District

GMLN

Goulburn Murray Landcare Network

G-MW

Goulburn-Murray Water

GPIS

Groundwater Pumping Incentive Scheme

GRCC

Goulburn Regional Consultative Council

GRDC

Grains Research Development Corporation

GSPA

Groundwater Supply Protection Area

GSSG

Girgarre Salinity Study Group

GVW

Goulburn Valley Water

HARD

Housing and Regional Development

IC

Implementation Committee

ICM

Integrated Catchment Management

IISR

Institute of Irrigation and Salinity Research

ISIA

Institute of Sustainable Irrigated Agriculture

KIRSAC

Kerang Irrigation Region Salinity Action Committee

KLAWG

Kerang Lakes Area Working Group

LAAG

Local Action and Advisory Group

LAL

Landcare Australia Ltd

LGD

Local Government Department

LGRMA

Lower Goulburn River Management Authority

LGWMA

Lower Goulburn Waterway Management Authority

LWRRDC

Land and Water Rural Research and Development Corporation

m/L

Milligrams per litre

MASNV

Municipalities Against Salinity in Northern Victoria

MDBC

Murray-Darling Basin Commission

MDBSDS

Murray-Darling Basin Salinity and Drainage Strategy

MGBIC

Mid Goulburn Broken Implementation Committee

MGCCG

Mid Goulburn Catchment Coordinating Group

MRB

Mineral Reserve Basins

MSLO

Murray Salinity Liaison Officer

MTF

Ministerial Task Force on Salinity

NCWMB

North Central Water Management Board (previous Mid Goulburn)

NFF

National Farmers Federation

NHT

Natural Heritage Trust

NLP

National Landcare Program

NRE

Department of Natural Resources and Environment

NRECC

Natural Resources and Environment Committee of Cabinet

NRM

Natural Resource Management

NRMS

Natural Resource Management Strategy

NSCP

National Soil Conservation Program

OBT

One Billion Trees

PISC

Program Implementation Support Committee

PMT

Program Management Team

ppm

Parts per million

PPWC

Parliamentary Public Works Committee

PMAC

Project Management Advisory Committee

RACC

Rural Affairs Committee of Cabinet

RACECC

Rural Affairs Conservation and Environment Committee of Cabinet

RAP

Regional Assessment Panel

RCS

Regional Catchment Strategy

REDG

Regional Economic Development Group

RFC

Rural Finance Corporation

RMU

Regional Management Unit

RIRDC

Rural Industry Research and Development Program

RWC

Rural Water Commission

SALT

Salt Action Liaison Team

SCA

Soil Conservation Authority

SCB

Salinity Control Board

SDA

Salt Disposal Allocation

SDE

Salt Disposal Entitlement

SIR

Shepparton Irrigation Region

SIRIC

Shepparton Irrigation Region Implementation Committee

SIRLWSMP

Shepparton Irrigation Region Land and Water Salinity Management Plan

SKM

Sinclair Knight Merz

SMEC

Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation

SMP

Salinity Management Plan

SPAC

Salinity Program Advisory Council

SPIG

Salinity Program Implementation Group

SPPAC

Salinity Pilot Program Advisory Commission

SRDB

Sustainable Regional Development Board

SRWSC

State Rivers and Water Supply Commission

STB

Save the Bush

SWOT

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

TV

Tree Victoria

UDV

United Dairyfarmers of Victoria

UGIC

Upper Goulburn Implementation Committee

UGWA

Upper Goulburn Waterway Authority

UWRA

Urban Water Research Association

VCAH

Victoria College of Agriculture and Horticulture

VCEWG

Victorian Community Education Working Group

VFF

Victoria Farmers Federation

VIRPO

Victorian Irrigation Research and Promotion Organisation

WFP

Whole Farm Plan

WMA

Waterways Management Authority

WSC

Water Services Committee

Glossary of Terms

Aquifer

A layer of underground sediments which holds water to flow through it.

Biodiversity

Biological Diversity is the variety of all life forms – the different plants, animals and micro-organisms, the genes they contain, and the ecosystems of which they form a part.

Bulk Entitlement (BE)

The right to water held by water and other authorities defined in the Water Act. The BE defines the amount of water that an authority is entitled to from a river or storage, and may include the rate at which it may be taken and the reliability of the entitlement.

Break of Slope

The line across a landscape where the hill slope flattens out and where the hydraulic conductivity of the underlying material decreases.

Cap

An upper limit for the diversion of water from a waterway, catchment or basin.

Catchment

An area of land where run-off from rainfall goes into one river system.

Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs)

Catchment Management Authorities are the caretakers of river health, responsible for regional and catchment planning and coordination, and waterway, floodplain, salinity and nutrient management.

Community Surface Drains

The Community Surface Drainage (CSD) program was developed as part of the original Shepparton Irrigation Region Land & Water Salinity Management Plan. It aimed to reduce the cost and time taken to provide drainage in the whole of the Shepparton Irrigation Region (SIR). The CSD program provides farmers with grant money to assist them in building a drainage scheme for their catchment. Community Surface Drains are a key component of the SIR surface drainage strategy.

Dryland Salinity

Dryland salinity is mainly caused when deep-rooted native vegetation is replaced by crops and pasture that have shallower roots and different water use requirements. This leads to more water flowing into groundwater systems and the increased mobilisation of salts that are present. This saline water rises close to the ground surface in low-

lying areas or at the break of slope, and/or flows underground directly into streams. Dryland salinity is also caused by erosion exposing naturally saline soils, such as hypersaline clays.

Ecologically Sustainable Development

Using, conserving and enhancing the community's natural resources so that ecological processes on which life depends are maintained and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased.

Ecosystem

A dynamic complex of plant, animal, fungal and micro-organism communities and associated non-living environment interacting as an ecological unit.

Ecosystem Services

The condition and processes through which natural ecosystems, and the species that make them up, sustain and fulfil human life.

Effluent

As applied to sewage treatment, wastewater which flows from treatment works.

Electrical conductivity

The most widely used and convenient method of measuring the salinity of water is by electrical conductivity. One measure of electrical conductivity is 'micro-Siemens per centimetre'. The shorthand expression for this is the 'electrical conductivity unit', 'EC unit' or just 'EC'. 1 EC = 1 micro-Siemens per centimetre, measured at 25°C. 1 EC = 0.64 mg salt/L.

Environment

Surroundings in which an organisation operates, including air, water, land, natural resources, flora, fauna, humans and their interdependence.

Environment Flow Provisions

Flow regimes provided to maintain the agreed environmental condition of water systems.

Environmental Reserve

The share of water resources set aside to maintain the environmental values of a water system and other water services which are dependent on the environmental condition of the system.

Environmental Services

Land and water management practices that help preserve natural resources or ecosystems.

Evaporation basin

A shallow pond into which saline water is discharged to evaporate, leaving a residue of salt.

Greywater

Household water which has not been contaminated by toilet discharge and includes water from bathtubs, dish washing machines, clothes washing machines and kitchen sinks.

Groundwater

All subsurface water, generally occupying the pores and crevices of rock and soil.

Groundwater Mound

A bulge in the watertable, usually created by excessive recharge at that point.

Hydrology

The science dealing with surface and groundwaters of the earth; their occurrence, circulation and distribution; their chemical and physical properties and their reaction with the environment.

Integrated Catchment Management (ICM)

An integrated approach to land and water management which recognises the linkages made between different parts of the landscape. Recognises catchments as the base unit for Natural Resource Management.

Irrigation district

An area with definite geographic boundaries within which water is allocated for irrigation under the control of a local or State authority or other body.

Landcare

Groups of people from the same area who join together to do things to benefit the environment. They are involved in activities as wide as erosion-control, planning, planting native vegetation and awareness raising.

Natural Heritage Trust

A Commonwealth Government grants program that funds community projects to improve sustainable agriculture and environmental management.

Natural Resources

The assets of land, water, plants, animals and air.

Nutrient

Plant food, generally refers to nitrogen and phosphorous in water.

Outfall

The site of discharge of a liquid from a pipe. Applied particularly to the point at which a sewer discharges to a treatment works or receiving water.

Perched watertable

A groundwatertable that sits above (perched on top of) an impermeable rock or soil structure.

Permissible Annual Volume (PAV)

The volume of water that can be extracted via licences as authorised by the Minister for Water.

Potable

Suitable for drinking.

Recharge

Restore with new supply.

Recharge areas

An area in which surface water (from rainfall, irrigation or streams) infiltrates into the soil and is added to the groundwater (c.f. discharge area).

Reclaimed Water

Water recovered from sources that are considered to be waste or unwanted supplies.

Recycled Water

Water derived from sewerage systems or industry processes that is treated to a standard that is appropriate for its intended use.

Regulated Systems

Those where the flow of the river is regulated through the operation of large dams or weirs.

Reticulation

The network of pipelines used to take water into areas of consumption. Includes residential districts and individual households.

River Basin

The land which a river and its tributaries drain.

River salinity

Concentration of salts in rivers and creeks caused by saline discharges from dryland, irrigation and urban salinity.

Root zone

The area below the ground surface occupied by plant roots.

Sales Water

Lower-reliability water offered to irrigators on a seasonal basis, in proportion to their base rights, after provision has been made to meet the base rights in the following year.

Salinisation

The accumulation of salts via the actions of water in the soil to a level that causes degradation of the soil and water resources.

Salinity

The total amount of water-soluble salts present in the soil or in a stream.

Salt Load

Amount of salt carried in rivers, streams, groundwater or surface run-off, in a given time period. Salt load is calculated from data on salinity and stream flow. It is often expressed in kg/day, tonnes/day or tonnes/year.

Salt load estimates are vital because they indicate the amount of salt stored in the landscape, washed from land, or entering the system from groundwater. If we only use salt concentration (measured as EC) as an indicator of salinity, we would not have a sense of the total quantity of salt in the system. For example, if a river has high flow salt concentration (EC) can be low

but the salt load can still be very high. Salt loads also indicate the potential rate of salt build up in places where salt might accumulate, such as wetlands and depressions on floodplains. Load estimates are important in predicting the impacts of salinity further downstream in the system as well.

Salt, salts

Salt causing salinity is actually a mixture of several types of chemical 'salts'. This includes common table salt (sodium chloride). Other calcium potassium and magnesium salts, such as gypsum (CaSO₄) cause hardness in water and other problems. The sulphate salts are very corrosive to cement.

Sewage

The waterborne wastes of a community.

Sewerage

A physical arrangement of pipes and plant for the collection removal, treatment and disposal of liquid waste.

Stream Flow Management Plan

A plan developed with community input to ensure that the water resources of the area are managed sustainably.

Sub-Surface Drainage

The Sub-Surface Drainage Program aims to achieve its goal in agricultural, urban and industrial areas, or areas of significant environmental value, which are affected by, or at risk of, salinisation, through providing sub-surface drainage. These works will, at the least, provide adequate leaching of applied salt loads, optimise the productive use of pumped groundwater and ensure a favourable salt balance.

The program will achieve its goal through encouragement of the installation and use of Public (G-MW owned) and Private groundwater pumps in the pasture-based agricultural area as well as tile drains and low volume groundwater pumps in horticultural areas.

Sunk Cost

Capital costs that are not expected to be recovered at a certain point in time.

Triple-bottom-line

Integrated approach to the achievement of environmental, social and economic outcomes.

Urban salinity

Salinisation in urban areas caused by mobilisation of salt due to raised groundwater levels and exposure of saline soils and rock. Raised groundwater levels result from clearing vegetation; the application of additional quantities of water via watering gardens and parks, leaking water sewerage and drainage pipes; and

the obstruction or modification of natural surface and sub-surface drainage paths. Exposure of saline soils and rock can occur during construction activities.

Water Cycle

The circuit of water movement from the oceans to the atmosphere and to the earth and return to the atmosphere through various stages and processes such as precipitation, interception, run-off, infiltration, percolation, storage, evaporation and transportation.

Water Entitlement

The volume of water authorised to be used under a licence to take and use water or a water right.

Water Right

Rights to water held by irrigators in an irrigation district.

Waterlogging

Where the surface soil is saturated with water from rising groundwater or surface run-off collecting in low areas.

Watertable

The level below which the ground is saturated with water.

Wetlands

A wetland is an area which is covered with water for at least part of the year to a depth of less than two metres. Wetlands are scattered throughout the region, and vary from old salt lakes and stream beds to freshwater meadows and marshes.

Wetlands contribute to the overall health of the SIR. They conserve native plants and wildlife, enhance agricultural productivity, improve water quality and sustain genetic diversity.

For most purposes irrigation pastures are not considered wetlands, even though they can be valuable feeding habitat for waterbirds.

Whole Farm Plans

A whole farm plan is a plan of a farm showing existing features and details of the improvements to be made on the property including the improved irrigation management practices .

A whole farm plan is a tool that can be used in the development of a property and allows these improvements to be done in stages with the knowledge that each stage is complementary to all other stages.

The preparation of a whole farm plan combines farm management, engineering, environmental, agronomic and financial considerations.

Whole farm planning is the essential prerequisite for implementing salinity control works and expenditure of Salinity Program funds on farms.

Yield

The quantity of water that a storage or aquifer produces.

Interviewees

- Peter Alexander, Hydro Environmental, Melbourne, 19 November 2003.
- Don Blackmore, Murray-Darling Basin Commission, Canberra, 1 December 2003.
- Stuart Brown, Farmanco, Toolamba, 6 November 2003.
- Darrel Brewin, Torquay, 20 February 2004.
- Keith Collett, Sinclair Knight Mertz, Melbourne, 12 November 2003.
- Pam Collins, Tatura, 4 November 2003.
- John Dainton, Shepparton, various in 2003 and 2004.
- Donna Dainton, Melbourne, 5 December 2003.
- Doug Dainton, Seymour, 5 December 2003.
- Graeme David, Geelong, 20 February 2004.
- David Dole, Murray-Darling Basin Commission, Canberra, 12 March 2004.
- David Earle, Agrilink, Shepparton, 28 November 2003.
- Peter Ross Edwards, Shepparton, 25 November 2003.
- Ian Elder, Benalla, 5 November 2003.
- Denis Flett, Goulburn-Murray Water, Tatura, 28 November 2003.
- Mervyn Ford, Tallygaroopna, 1 December 2003.
- Brian Garrett, Violet Town, 23 February 2004.
- Jeremy Gaylard, GAP Agrifood Exports Pty Ltd, Shepparton, 9 March 2004.
- Kevin Holland, Kialla, 21 November 2003.
- Angus Howell, Warrenbayne, 24 November 2003.
- Graham Hunter, Greening Australia, Melbourne, 19 November 2003.
- Gwen Jensen, Mooroopna, 8 December 2003.
- Penny Jones, Benalla, 12 December 2003.
- Kevin Jordan, Shepparton, 9 December 2003.
- Joan Kirner, Melbourne, 15 March 2004.
- Dr John Langford, Melbourne, 27 November 2003.
- Don Leslie, Gold Coast, 4 May 2004.
- Bruce Lloyd, Bunbartha, 26 November 2003.
- Col McCracken, Arcadia, 26 November 2003.
- Erin McDermott, Shepparton, 7 November 2003.
- Athol McDonald, Girgarre, 21 November 2003.
- Don McKenzie, Shepparton, 9 December 2003.
- Keith McLarty, Seymour, 10 March 2004.
- Dan McMullan, Shepparton, 21 November 2003.
- Don McPherson, Shepparton, 5 November 2003.
- Ross & Dianne McPherson, Shepparton, 4 December 2003.
- Craig Madden, Avenel, 10 December 2003.
- Lisa Miller, Geelong, 10 March 2004.
- Stephen Mills, Shepparton, 18 March 2004.
- Norm Mitchelmore, Shepparton, 25 November 2003.
- Ian Norman, Tongala, 18 November 2003.
- Bill O’Kane, Shepparton, 3 December 2003.
- Danny O’Neil, Melbourne, 9 December 2003.
- Des O’Shea, Shepparton, 23 February 2004.
- Tom Perry, Tatura, 1 December 2003.
- John Pettigrew, Bunbartha, 10 November 2003
- Pamela Jean Robinson OAM, Melbourne, 16 February 2004.
- Noel Russell, Tatura, 24 November 2003.
- Michael Ryan, Dookie, 25 November 2003.
- Ken Sampson, Tatura, 9 December 2003.
- Geoff Spencer, World Bank: ABC “Water Files”.
- Roger Standen, RMCG, Bendigo, 20 November 2003.
- Peter Sutherland, Melbourne, 11 December 2003.
- Bill Trehwella, Mooroopna, 2 December 2003.
- David Wauchope, Towambo, 1 March 2004.
- Ken Whan, Benalla, 22 November 2003.
- Bob Wildes, Tatura, 24 November 2003.
- John Williams, Chief of CSIRO Land & Water, Canberra, ABC “Water Files”.
- Karen Wood, Melbourne, 11 December 2003.

Index of Key Persons

Stuart Brown	61, 80, 86, 89, 91, 96, 105, 106, 138
--------------	---------------------------------------

Keith Collett	45, 63, 64, 91, 94, 95, 96, 114, 226
---------------	--------------------------------------

Denis Flett	190, 191, 192, 221
-------------	--------------------

Jeremy Gaylard	4, 12, 27, 85, 86, 93, 97, 110, 129, 130, 131, 136, 138, 139, 140, 144, 149, 152, 166, 175, 196, 220, 230, 231
----------------	--

Angus Howell	4, 27, 48, 49, 57, 66, 98, 99, 100, 129
--------------	---

Graham Hunter	46, 52, 58, 73, 94, 111, 124, 125, 164, 229
---------------	---

Joan Kirner	13, 46, 51, 55, 57, 58, 73, 86, 98, 99, 112, 145, 155, 156
-------------	--

Don Leslie	91, 114, 119
------------	--------------

Athol McDonald	27, 129, 149, 177, 186
----------------	------------------------

Dianne McPherson	4, 57, 129, 134, 149, 177, 212
------------------	--------------------------------

Bill O'Kane	4, 13, 56, 61, 77, 86, 89, 101, 103, 105, 106, 136, 138, 152, 177, 191, 196, 204, 209, 220
-------------	--

Pam Robinson	4, 27, 48, 55, 56, 57, 66, 84, 142
--------------	------------------------------------

Evan Walker	44, 45, 46, 51, 55, 58, 63, 86, 87, 98, 99, 112, 125, 145, 226
-------------	--

Bob Wildes	65, 91, 96, 97, 98, 130
------------	-------------------------

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About the Author



In late 1988, John Northage met many community leaders of the Goulburn Broken for the first time. These encounters provided him with vital background to what became the first Australian study of the role of local government

in salinity control. His report, co-authored with Tom Fricke from Gutteridge, Haskens and Davey, covered a wide range of technical and regulatory issues. John took diverse findings on board to develop options for a regional approach to the governance, cost-sharing, administration and inter-agency arrangements for remedying the impacts of salinity.

Involvement in this ground-breaking study was a predictable extension to his considerable experience in the design, establishment and management of regional organisations. In the Whitlam era, he had been the Director of the Albury-Wodonga and Victorian Growth Centres in the Cities Commission from 1973-75. This intensive policy formulation and implementation in regional planning and development led into his career as a consultant. Clients included the fledging Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation, the Geelong Regional Commission and the Bathurst-Orange Development Corporation.

In 1984 he joined the Latrobe Regional Commission as its founding CEO. During his service there until 1987 he gained an appreciation of the changing scene among Victorian government agencies. This was helpful in his initial consultancy on the role of local government in relation to salinity a year or so later.

With the accumulation of insights and expertise in relation to the economic, social and infrastructure impacts in resource areas, he was commissioned

by various Victorian, New South Wales and South Australian government agencies to undertake research into public sector approaches and performance in regions such as the Bowen Basin, Hunter Valley, Latrobe Valley and the Iron Triangle in South Australia. He also became something of a mentor to various mining companies and government agencies struggling with the pressures of accelerated development.

Then late in 1994 he was included in the team headed up by Stuart Brown of Farmanco Pty Ltd that reported to the Goulburn Broken Catchment Community Reference Group on the Transition to an Integrated Approach in Natural Resource Management. Before that year was out, he was also engaged to prepare a Draft Business (Corporate) Plan, the first of such plans for the new Goulburn Broken Catchment Land Protection Board. Later in 1997, as the impressive evolution of catchment organisations in Victoria progressed, he contributed again to the gathering pace. He was engaged to lead the team to develop a strategy for the integration of natural resource management in the Goulburn Broken Catchment. This report facilitated the establishment of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority – the generally acknowledged doyen of catchment bodies in Victoria, if not in Australia.

By this time John had become conversant with a variety of regional situations in Australia where government agencies, private sector corporations and community bodies had worked together, with varying degrees of success, to meet extraordinary challenges. These challenges commonly had economic, community and environmental dimensions.

John and his wife of 58 years, Venice, have lived in Cairns for more than 40 years. They have four children and eleven grandchildren.

SPPAC and SPAC Members and Key Agency and Other Personnel

Shepparton Pilot Program Advisory Council (SPPAC; 1986-1991)



John Dainton



Leon Heath



Ian Elder



Angus Howell



Henry Vegter



Penny Jones



Keith McLarty



Menon Parameswaran



Max Moor



Tom Ryan



Don McPherson¹



Jack Regan²



Pam Robinson³



Michael Ryan



Kevin Holland



Tom Perry¹



Geoff Witten²



Nan Oates³



Jeremy Gaylard³

¹ Tom Perry replaced Don

² Geoff replaced Jack

³ Jeremy replaced Nan who replaced Pam

Shepparton Program Advisory Council (SPAC; original membership 1991)



The new Salinity Program Advisory Council. Back row, from left: Mr Ian Robinson, Cr Jeremy Gaylard, Mr John Dainton (chairman), Mr Jock Wallis and Mr Ian Wardrop. Centre row, from left: Mr Ken Whan, Mr John Pettigrew, Mrs Gwen Jensen, Mr Craig Madden and Mr Gordon Weller. Front row, from left: Mr Athol McDonald, Cr Allen Canobie, Ms Dianne McPherson, Mr Angus Howell and Mr Ian Elder. (Photograph from Country News, February 21, 1991)

Key government agency and other personnel

Department of Agriculture



Stuart Brown



Graeme David



Darrell Brewin



Bill O'Kane



Bob Wildes

Rural Water Commission



Bill Trehella



Keith Collett



David Dole



Peter Alexander

Key government agency and other personnel (cont.)

Department of Conservation, Forests and Lands



Brian Garrett

Department of Premier and Cabinet



Graham Hunter

Dwyer Leslie Pty Ltd



Don Leslie



The Honourable Patrick McNamara, MP (Minister for Agriculture and Resources), Jeremy Gaylard (Victorian Catchment Management Council Chairman), the Honourable Marie Tehan, MP (Minister for Conservation and Land Management), John Dainton (Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Chairman) at the launch of the Goulburn Broken Catchment Strategy 1997.



John Dainton (Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority Chairman), The Honourable John Howard (Prime Minister), and Sharman Stone (Federal Member for Murray) at the commissioning of Stage One of the Muckatah Surface Water Management Project in 1999.

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