



NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

**National Reports to be submitted to the 12th Meeting
of the Conference of the Contracting Parties,
Uruguay, 2015**

Please submit the completed National Report in Microsoft Word format (.doc, 97-2003), as an electronic file (not a printed copy) and preferably by e-mail, to Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Secretariat (dufour@ramsar.org) by **1 September 2014**.

The structure of the COP12 National Report Format

The COP12 National Report Format (NRF) is in four sections:

Section 1 provides the institutional information about the Administrative Authority and National Focal Points for the national implementation of the Convention.

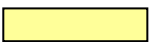
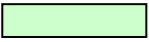
Section 2 is a 'free-text' section in which the Party is invited to provide a summary of various aspects of national implementation progress and recommendations for the future.

Section 3 provides the 66 implementation indicator questions, grouped under each Convention implementation strategy in the Strategic Plan 2009-2015, and with an optional 'free-text' section under each indicator question in which the Contracting Party may, if it wishes, add further information on national implementation of that activity.

Section 4 is an optional annex to allow any Contracting Party that so wishes to provide additional information regarding any or all of its Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

General guidance for completing and submitting the COP12 National Report Format

IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ THIS GUIDANCE SECTION BEFORE STARTING TO COMPLETE THE NATIONAL REPORT FORMAT

1. All Sections of the COP12 NRF should be completed in one of the Convention's official languages (English, French, Spanish).
2. The deadline for submission of the completed NRF is **1 September 2014**. It will not be possible to include information from National Reports received after that date in the analysis and reporting on Convention implementation to COP12.
3. All fields with a pale yellow background  must be filled in.
4. Fields with a pale green background  are free-text fields in which to provide additional information, if the Contracting Party so wishes. Although providing information in these fields is optional, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide such additional information wherever possible and relevant, as it helps us understand Parties' progress and activity more fully, to prepare the best possible global and regional implementation reports to COP.
5. The Format is created as a form in Microsoft Word. You are only able to submit replies and information in the yellow or green boxes, as all other parts of the form are locked to ensure that the structure and wording of indicators will remain uniform and comparable for all Parties.
6. To select a yellow or green field you wish to complete, move the cursor over the relevant part of the form and left-click the mouse. The cursor will automatically move to the next field available.
7. To move down through the sequence of fields, you can also use the 'Tab' key on the computer keyboard.

8. For a 'free-text' field, you can type in whatever information you wish. Note that there is only limited facility within the Microsoft 'form' format to make editorial changes in the 'free-text' box once text has been entered. Therefore, if you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green or yellow 'free-text' box, you should cut and paste the existing text into a separate document, make all the amendments, and then cut and paste the revised text back into the box.
9. Certain keyboard characters interfere with the automatic entry of data into the Secretariat's database. For that reason, please **do not use double quote marks “ ”** in the 'free-text' fields. Please **only use single quote marks ‘ ’**. For the same reason, please **only use simple text in the 'free-text' fields: they cannot accept formatting, colours or objects such as tables and images.**
10. For each of the 'indicator questions' in Section 3, a drop-down menu of answer options is provided. These vary between indicators, depending on the question, but are generally of the form: 'Yes', 'No', 'Partly', 'In progress'. This is necessary so that statistical comparisons can be made of the replies.
11. For each indicator question you can choose only one answer. If you wish to provide further information or clarification, do so in the green additional information box below the relevant indicator question. Please be as concise as possible (**maximum of 500 words** in each free-text box).
12. To select an answer to an indicator question, use the Tab key, or move the cursor over the relevant yellow box and left-click the mouse. The drop-down menu of answer options will appear. Left-click the mouse on the answer option you choose, and this will appear in the centre of the yellow box.
13. An NRF is not usually completed by one person alone: for many indicators it is best for the principal compiler to consult with colleagues in their agency and others within the government and, as appropriate, with NGOs and other stakeholders who might have fuller knowledge of aspects of the Party's overall implementation of the Convention. The principal compiler can save the document at any point and return to it later to continue or to amend answers. Compilers should refer back to the National Report submitted for COP11 to ensure the continuity and consistency of information provided.
14. After each session, **remember to save the file** in Microsoft Word, .doc, 97-2003 format. A recommended filename structure is: COP12NRF [Country] [date], for example: COP12NRFSpain13July2014.doc
15. After the NRF has been completed, please **send it in this format to Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Convention Secretariat, preferably by e-mail (dufour@ramsar.org).**
16. The completed NRF **must be accompanied by a letter or e-mail message in the name of the Head of Administrative Authority, confirming that this is the Contracting Party's official submission of its COP12 National Report.**
17. If you have any questions or problems, please contact the Ramsar Secretariat for advice (e-mail as above).

NATIONAL REPORT TO RAMSAR COP12

SECTION 1: INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

Important note: the responses below will be considered by the Ramsar Secretariat as the definitive list of your focal points, and will be used to update the information it holds. The Secretariat's current information about your focal points is available at www.ramsar.org/contacts_en.

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SECTION 2: GENERAL SUMMARY OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

REMINDER: Please do not use double quote marks “ ”: use single quotes ‘ ’ instead.

In your country, in the past triennium (i.e., since COP11 reporting):

A. What have been the five most successful aspects of implementation of the Convention?

1) Wetland management

The management of wetlands has been an important aspect of Convention implementation in Australia during the current triennium. As indicated in the COP11 National Report, the Australian Ramsar management principles establish a national framework for managing Ramsar listed and other wetlands. The principles aim to promote national standards of management, planning, environmental impact assessment, community involvement and monitoring for Ramsar wetlands in a way that is consistent with Australia's obligations under the Ramsar Convention.

Implementation of tools and guidance has also contributed to improved wetland management. For example, finalised ecological character descriptions (ECDs) prepared consistent with national guidance (see point 3 below) have assisted in collating baseline data and site specific information therefore improving site management. Australia has also developed considerable experience in the application of limits of acceptable change as a tool to assist in monitoring and managing ecological character. Despite the challenges associated with setting limits of acceptable change, the concept has permeated many areas of environmental science and management and contributed to our understanding of the complex interrelationships that must be managed to keep wetlands (and other ecosystems) in good condition.

State governments, responsible for the management of approximately 80 per cent of Australia's Ramsar sites, have also implemented actions targeted at improved management. For example, in October 2013 the Victorian Government released the 'Victorian waterway management strategy' (VWMS). The VWMS adopts an integrated approach for the management of rivers, wetlands and estuaries (waterways) until 2021. Since finalisation of the overarching VWMS, catchment management authorities (CMAs) have commenced development of regional waterway strategies to identify activities for priority waterways.

In Queensland, during the current triennium the state's central website for wetland management information—WetlandInfo has been redeveloped. An important focus of the new phase of the Queensland Wetlands Program (QWP; referred in the COP11 National Report) is engagement to promote uptake of wetland management tools in Great Barrier Reef catchments and in south-east Queensland.

To ensure ongoing improvements in wetland management, Australia has commenced development of an online wetland management toolkit. The toolkit will provide a central portal for information and resources on wetland management; for example, Ramsar Convention guidance, best-practice management plans, relevant policies and legislation, case studies, and national guidance.

2) Wetland restoration and recovery

Restoration programs and projects, a subset of wetland management, are implemented at a range of scales. Nationally, the Australian Government is investing in on-ground projects that contribute to the protection of Ramsar wetlands. Since July 2008, the Australian Government has invested in 177 projects aimed at protecting the ecological values of around 435,968 hectares of Ramsar estate through on-ground actions. These actions include reducing the impact of invasive pest animal and weed species,

rehabilitating native habitat and improving land management practices. These activities have engaged land managers, Indigenous and community groups and volunteers. For more information see: <http://www.nrm.gov.au/about/caring/report-card/2011-12/pubs/2011-12-report-card.pdf>.

As indicated in the COP11 National Report, the Water Act 2007 (Water Act) established the Murray-Darling Basin Authority (Authority) and charged it with preparing a strategic plan, the Basin Plan. Water reform has continued in the current triennium with the 'Basin Plan 2012', made on 22 November 2012, now in effect. The Basin Plan is intended to ensure the sustainable use of the Basin's water resources.

The Basin Plan gives effect to relevant international agreements, including the Ramsar Convention, establishes sustainable diversion limits for surface water and groundwater extraction from Basin water resources, and provides for Basin-wide environmental objectives for water-dependent ecosystems. The Basin Plan promotes the wise use of all Basin resources and the conservation of declared Ramsar wetlands within the Basin, and takes account of the ecological character of these wetlands.

The 'Water quality and salinity management plan', contained in the Basin Plan, has a number of objectives including that the quality of water is sufficient to maintain the ecological character of Ramsar wetlands.

The 'Environmental watering plan', also required by the Water Act and contained in the Basin Plan, has a number of objectives including protecting and restoring declared Ramsar wetlands through the management and delivery of environmental water. The 'Environmental watering plan' sets targets to achieve this objective, including achieving no loss in the condition of Ramsar wetlands, and recognition of declared Ramsar wetlands as environmental assets.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH), also established by the Water Act, manages Commonwealth environmental water holdings – tradeable water rights acquired to contribute to meeting the Basin Plan's long-term average environmentally sustainable diversion limits.

As at 31 May 2014, the Commonwealth's current environmental water holdings total over 1700 gigalitres (GL) of registered water entitlements. Since commencing in 2009 over 3400 GL has been delivered, including to declared Ramsar wetlands. Although the watering programme is in an early stage, targeted short-term monitoring of environmental responses has detected encouraging changes such as better health in river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and better habitat for birds, fish and frogs.

A number of wetland restoration projects are also being implemented by states and territories. For example, the South Australian Government is implementing the Riverine Recovery Project that aims to improve connectivity of Ramsar wetlands located on the Murray River ('Riverland' and Banrock Station). Funding includes more than \$87 million for a range of environmental projects, and \$9.2 million for on-ground works. The project is scheduled to be completed by 31 December 2016.

A number of restoration projects have been implemented at the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site during the current triennium, including: reintroduction of tidal flow and removal of encroaching mangroves from saltmarsh areas; restoration of 300 hectares of degraded wetland; and restoration of wetland values for migratory shorebirds through weed and fox control and revegetation by WetlandCare Australia.

Please refer to question 1.8.2 for information on other restoration projects.

3) National coordination

Australia's National Ramsar Committee, the Wetlands and Aquatic Ecosystems Sub Committee, continues to coordinate the development of national tools and guidance that facilitate consistent and high quality wetland management.

Development of the Australian National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands (National Guidelines) (<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/ramsar-convention-wetlands/australian-national>), referenced in Australia's COP10 and COP11 National Reports, continued during the current triennium. Module 4 of the National Guidelines, 'Australian Ramsar site nomination guidelines', finalised in 2012, provide a nationally consistent framework for Ramsar site nominations in Australia and its offshore territories.

Following completion of the 'National framework and guidance for describing ecological character of Australian wetlands' in 2008, ECDs for more than 80 per cent of Australia's Ramsar sites have been published and are available:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/ramsar-convention-wetlands/implementing-national>.

In 2014, Australia prepared 'Boundary description and mapping guidelines' (an update of Module 1) to improve Ramsar site boundary descriptions and maps. These guidelines assist jurisdictions and site managers prepare accurate and legally defensible boundary demarcations (descriptions, spatial data and map/s,

<http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/wetlands/boundary-description-and-mapping-guidelines-second-edition>). The COP11 National Report advised that Australia would develop management planning guidelines; these are now being progressed as an online wetland management toolkit.

Work continued on the Aquatic Ecosystems Toolkit; a set of good practice tools for identifying and understanding the importance of aquatic ecosystems. The Toolkit provides a nationally consistent framework for mapping and classifying aquatic ecosystems, identifying high ecological value aquatic ecosystems through the systematic application of ecological criteria, and delineating and describing aquatic ecosystems. The Toolkit is being utilised by Australian, state and territory government agencies. Four modules have been completed and the fifth, the 'Integrated ecological condition assessment framework', is being developed and aims to provide the capacity for assessment and reporting at the individual aquatic ecosystem scale or on a number of interconnected aquatic ecosystem types. The Toolkit is available here:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-information/aquatic-ecosystems>.

4) Improved information on wetlands

The quality and accessibility of information available on wetlands (both Ramsar and non-Ramsar listed) has continued to improve. The Australian Wetlands Database continues to be the primary source of information on Australia's Ramsar wetlands (<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/australian-wetlands-database>).

In Western Australia, the Department of Parks and Wildlife has undertaken an Audit of Wetlands, resulting in better information on the location, extent and biodiversity values of wetlands throughout the state.

In Queensland, a significant achievement of the Queensland Wetlands Program is the redevelopment of WetlandInfo – the state's central website for wetland management information. Best practice web design principles were used to redevelop the website following stakeholder consultation. WetlandInfo is now more user friendly, with a new look and feel, improved structure and a number of upgraded tools and technical capabilities.

5) Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA)

CEPA activities by government and non-government organisations continue to improve recognition and awareness of the values of wetlands. Public engagement in wetland activities continues to be a focus. Public consultation is undertaken during the development of wetland management plans, enabling stakeholders to be engaged in planning and management of wetlands. A variety of national, state and local programs

assist communities to be involved in conserving their local wetlands. Australia's 26 Wetland Education Centres involve people of all ages in learning about wetlands and undertaking wetland restoration activities.

Each year to coincide with World Wetlands Day (WWD) the Australia Government, with input from wetland organisations across Australia, compiles the online 'Wetlands Australia' magazine. Each edition features some 40 articles and is distributed to over 4000 people. To coincide with the international WWD theme, the theme of the February 2014 edition of the magazine was 'wetlands and agriculture', recognising that wetlands play an essential role in supporting modern day agriculture by providing water storage, flood buffering, nutrient removal, water purification and erosion control.

During the current triennium publication of the 'Wetlands Australia' magazine has increased to twice a year. The theme of the August 2014 edition was 'wetlands and waterbirds', and highlighted the important role of Australia's wetlands in providing habitat for resident and migratory birds.

WWD on 2 February 2014 was successfully promoted across the country through a variety of activities, a number of which were highlighted in a national calendar of events (<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/world-wetlands-day/list-world-wetlands-day-2014-events>). Activities ranged from a 'breakfast with the birds' at Victoria's Hird Swamp (part of the Kerang Wetlands Ramsar site) to a 'walk and talk' in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) at Jerrabomberra Wetlands.

WWD 2014 also provided an opportunity for Australia to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the designation of the world's first Ramsar site, Cobourg Peninsula in the Northern Territory. This was promoted through a travelling exhibition, a video about Cobourg's special values, an anniversary webpage (<http://www.environment.gov.au/node/35219>) and publication of a series of articles showcasing Australia's Ramsar wetlands.

B. What have been the five greatest difficulties in implementing the Convention?

The difficulties identified in the COP11 National Report continue to pose challenges in Australia. These include: Australia's highly variable and unpredictable climate (both temporally and spatially) and resulting hydrological regimes; understanding, capturing and reflecting natural variability in limits of acceptable change; and managing conflicting demands for water.

1) Wetland management in an unpredictable and changing climate

In Australia's highly variable climate, distinguishing between natural variability, climate change and human-induced change can be challenging. Many Australian wetlands have adapted to naturally variable conditions and are ephemeral in nature, responding to long-term climatic cycles.

Predicted impacts from climate change – such as rising sea levels, reduced rainfall and mangrove encroachment – are expected to cause long-term changes to Australia's wetlands. Coastal wetlands are particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels, which will lead to inundation, accelerated erosion and saline intrusion into coastal waterways and wetlands. For example, in the Sydney region, research has found that increased atmospheric carbon dioxide, temperature and sea-levels promote the growth of mangroves over saltmarsh. The encroachment of mangroves into saltmarshes decreases the utility of saltmarsh for many species of migratory shorebird which occupy saltmarsh as roosting habitat.

Given the above, it can be difficult to develop robust limits of acceptable change for wetlands in Australia. Assessing and reporting on real or potential changes in ecological character is a further challenge. In the future, there may be a need to change management practices and reset baselines in order to allow for wetland adaptation under climate change.

2) Valuing environmental services to ensure 'wise use' of all wetlands

Australia's Ramsar estate is complemented by wetlands that are important at national, state and local levels. For example, the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia includes over 900 wetlands that are considered to be important nationally as: good examples of wetlands in a particular area; important habitats for native species; and/or having outstanding heritage or cultural significance. Many wetlands are within protected areas such as national parks and conservation reserves. Others, on both public and private land, are without such protection but provide a range of valuable ecosystem services, such as the provision of food and clean water, flood and storm mitigation, retention of soil, and cycling of nutrients, making them important for primary production including agriculture, forestry and fisheries. The indiscriminate use of wetlands can lead to a reduction in their environmental, cultural, social and economic values. If wetlands are not managed sustainably, their environmental or production value is diminished.

Improving the valuation and understanding of the services provided by wetlands and promoting the wise use of wetlands will assist in preventing their overuse and degradation. This issue however remains an ongoing challenge.

3) Wetland management and information

As noted in Australia's COP11 National Report, legislative and policy responsibility for natural resource management and the environment rests primarily with respective state and territory governments, whereas the Australian Government is responsible for matters of national interest.

This division of power results in a range of approaches being applied to wetland management and conservation by each jurisdictions. Some jurisdictions have in place comprehensive approaches to the wise use of wetlands, whilst in others, wetland conservation and wise use are not specifically identified as standalone objectives. In these jurisdictions, some wetlands are protected by broader biodiversity conservation or natural resource management objectives, such as reservation in national parks and

nature reserves or through water resource plans. However, these broader policies are usually designed to protect ecosystems or water resources generally, rather than specific wetlands and wetland dependent species.

Despite considerable investment by governments, implementing management activities with limited resources is an ongoing challenge for many landowners and wetland managers in Australia. This includes managers of wetlands on private land, as well as those managed or co-managed by non-government organisations (NGOs), Traditional Owners, and state and territory government agencies.

During the current triennium, the Aquatic Ecosystems Toolkit (see question A above) provided a nationally agreed methodology to classify and identify priority, high value aquatic ecosystems/wetlands. However, due to the scale of the task, the vast number of wetlands in Australia, and the level of data and resourcing required, the methodology is yet to be applied consistently by governments throughout Australia. As a consequence there is incomplete knowledge of all Australia's wetlands.

As noted in point 2 above, lack of acknowledgement of the economic and social values of wetlands and the services they provide can also result in lack of understanding of the value of investment in wetland management by governments.

4) Remoteness

The remoteness of large numbers of Australian Ramsar sites makes site management and monitoring, including the spread of invasive plants and animals, challenging. For example, in the far north of Western Australia, the 141,453 hectare Ord River Floodplain Ramsar site is located in a catchment that covers more than 64,000 square kilometres. It is 8 km east of the town of Wyndham which had a population of 787 in 2011. It is 3229 kilometres from the state's capital city. Regularly (and safely) monitoring bird numbers at the whole of a site that has limited access, in a region so isolated and sparsely populated, requires significant investment. On the other hand, the site's remoteness also contributes to its high conservation value.

5) Pressure on coastal wetlands

More than 80 per cent of the Australian population lives within the coastal zone, which includes coastal wetlands, estuaries, mangroves and other coastal vegetation, coral reefs, heritage areas and threatened species or habitats. These wetlands are under considerable pressure from population growth and residential and industrial development. There are as many as 30 Ramsar wetlands in the coastal and marine zone with many under pressure. This is reflected in the percentage of proposed actions that have been assessed under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) as potentially impacting Ramsar sites; with approximately 75 per cent of referrals and assessments received since 2000 related to coastal Ramsar sites. The Moreton Bay Ramsar site is under the greatest pressure, with more than 170 referrals and assessments related to this site since 2000.

C. What are the five priorities for future implementation of the Convention?

1) Wetlands policy

Australia has commenced the process of developing a National Wetlands Policy. The national policy will address a number of issues including: the wise use principle; raising awareness of wetland values and the ecosystem services they provide; identify knowledge gaps; strategic designation of additional Ramsar sites; and CEPA activities. During preparation of this National Report, stakeholders emphasised the need for ongoing consultation with all relevant sectors.

2) Ramsar site management

Continued investment in best-practice management of Ramsar sites is a high priority. Initiatives and actions to facilitate this include: finalisation of the online wetland

management toolkit; continued on-ground action and landholder engagement to remove threats and restore habitat; incorporation of information on managing water quality for aquatic ecosystems in the revision of the 'Australian and New Zealand Fresh and Marine Water Quality Guidelines'; completion and implementation of Ramsar management plans; continued protection of migratory bird routes; and government funding for wetland management including adaptive management (particularly in response to climate change). As hydrological systems, it is essential that wetlands be managed on a catchment-by-catchment basis.

The Australian Government is committed to implementing the Basin Plan. Investment through the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Programme is the key mechanism to bridging the gap to the sustainable diversion limits in the Basin Plan. Under this programme, water entitlements are recovered and managed by the CEWH (see question A, above, for further information) and contribute to improving the long-term health of Ramsar wetlands within the Basin.

3) Monitoring and evaluation

The Ramsar Rolling Review will be implemented to provide regular information on the status of Ramsar site ecological character; this process will be used to target management actions to highest priority threats. Under the Rolling Review all Ramsar sites are intended to be reviewed once every three years.

The Long-Term Intervention Monitoring Project is being established by the CEWH to detect the longer-term (5 year) cumulative impacts of delivering environmental water on the seven project sites (including some Ramsar sites) that are representative of Commonwealth environmental watering across the Basin. Information about this project is available at: <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/commonwealth-environmental-water-office/monitoring-and-evaluation>.

The Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Rivers Assessment is taking a strategic adaptive management approach to gaining an understanding of the condition of watercourses and catchments, including the rivers, floodplains, overflow channels, lakes and wetlands in the LEB. The assessment is essential for providing a picture of how well the natural resources of the Basin are used and managed.

4) Climate change adaptation

Climate change adaptation will be a focus of future implementation of the Convention in Australia. It is important for wetland management plans to include a description of known impacts from climate change and consideration of climate change adaptation management strategies and targets, climate-ready conservation objectives, as well as identification of research gaps. There may be some circumstances under which wetlands will shift spatially in response to climate change, which has implications for rigid site boundaries. Planning for climate change adaptation is dependent on good wetland information and strategic investment based on threat analysis and values mapping.

5) Research to support ongoing improvements in wetland management

To ensure wetland restoration and management programs are realising identified objectives, a key priority for the next triennium is targeted, coordinated research that assesses the effectiveness of management practices in achieving positive changes in ecological condition. For example, the \$10 million (5 year) Environmental Water Knowledge and Research project for the Basin will improve the capacity to assess incremental changes in ecological condition over time, as a result of environmental watering.

The Integrated Ecological Condition Assessment Framework (IECA) is a management tool for aquatic ecosystems that is being developed to enable the effects of management actions (e.g. environmental watering) to be evaluated, and key threats and critical knowledge gaps to be identified. The IECA will improve the efficiency and effectiveness

of environmental watering, and improve managers' ability to identify and prioritise the threats and impediments that are causing decline or preventing recovery. As a result, it will improve site managers' capacity to undertake adaptive management.

Bird surveys provide important data for monitoring internationally and nationally significant wetlands. The alignment of existing, long-term survey programs (such as the Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey) with those conducted by other agencies, and sharing relevant costs between jurisdictions and other information users, will enable better management of wetlands that are important for waterbirds. This will also be improved by open access to the data, which will create a more comprehensive picture of waterbird movements and numbers across Australia.

D. Do you (AA) have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat?

During the current triennium, the Administrative Authority has received considerable, constructive assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat. This assistance has included feedback on draft Ramsar Information Sheet (RIS) updates and advice from members of the Scientific and Technical Review Panel on Australia's draft 'Boundary description and mapping guidelines'.

E. Do you (AA) have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Convention's International Organisation Partners (IOPs)? (including ongoing partnerships and partnerships to develop)

The Administrative Authority engages with Australian based IOPs on relevant matters, such as development of the National Wetlands Policy, compilation of the 'Wetlands Australia' magazine and preparations ahead of COP meetings. There remains scope to broaden these relationships and to build more broad-based partnerships with Australian IOPs.

F. How can national implementation of the Ramsar Convention be better linked with implementation of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), especially those in the 'biodiversity cluster' (Ramsar, Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), CITES, and World Heritage Convention), and UNCCD and UNFCCC?

As noted in the COP11 National Report, there are a number of existing mechanisms in place to facilitate linkages in the domestic implementation of MEAs.

Australia has put in place Commonwealth environmental legislation, including the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and the Water Act, which give effect to a number of international agreements. For example, the framework established under the EPBC Act is, to a large extent, guided by Australia's international environmental obligations. The Water Act gives effect to the Ramsar Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification and the Convention on Migratory Species.

The Protected Matters Search Tool, developed by the Australian Government Department of the Environment, is a tool that generates reports that detail information on matters of national environmental significance protected by the EPBC Act, such as Ramsar wetlands, World Heritage Areas, threatened species and ecological communities and migratory species protected under international agreements. The tool is a tangible mechanism that integrates implementation of several MEAs.

Implementation across MEAs is further facilitated in part due to national focal points for biodiversity cluster MEAs being located within the same government department, the Australian Government Department of the Environment.

Consultation across focal points on Strategic Plans under development and those being revised under the various conventions takes place as required. This helps to strengthen and improve understanding of different priorities and obligations under other conventions. National coordination of implementation is assisted when the Strategic Plans of MEAs contain similar goals and targets, while remaining focused on their specific role/species. For example, the CMS is currently drafting its Strategic Plan for 2015 – 2023, and, where relevant, it is utilising the Aichi biodiversity targets contained in the CBD Strategic Plan 2011 – 2020. This alignment can assist to focus national and international efforts across the MEAs on key areas/issues, as well as facilitating streamlined reporting.

Whilst formal and informal communication across national focal points happens on a regular basis to facilitate information sharing and to confer and discuss outcomes under various international fora, there is scope to improve this engagement. During consultation on this National Report, one NGO noted there was potential to develop joint work programs across issues relevant to multiple conventions. The example cited as a unifying theme was migratory waders; they are wetland dependent and listed on CMS Appendix 1, and addressing their decline is consistent with CBD Aichi target 12. Greater recognition of mutual objectives across conventions was also identified. For example, greater commitment to migratory bird agreements contributes to meeting Ramsar Convention objectives.

Another mechanism suggested by NGOs to better link MEA implementation was the need for improved consultation with NGOs working to implement the various MEAs.

- G. How can implementation of the Ramsar Convention be better linked with the implementation of water policy/strategy and other strategies in the country (e.g., on sustainable development, energy, extractive industries, poverty reduction, sanitation, food security, biodiversity)?

As indicated under question B, Australia's federal system of government divides powers between the Australian Government and state and territory governments, with primary legislative and policy responsibility for natural resource management and the environment resting with state and territory governments. Australia's National Ramsar Committee, the Wetlands and Aquatic Ecosystems Sub Committee, was noted by NGOs as having an important role in identifying and influencing cross-sectoral strategies. Further information on Australia's governance arrangements was provided in the COP11 National Report.

A key mechanism for achieving the conservation of Ramsar sites across sectors is the EPBC Act. Under this Act, environment assessments are undertaken to enable environment and heritage protection and biodiversity conservation. Before taking an action that could have a significant impact on a declared Ramsar site and its components (e.g. listed threatened species and ecological communities), proponents must refer the proposed action to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment. In relation to the EPBC Act, NGOs advocate greater recognition that Ramsar sites can be impacted by processes that occur outside their boundary.

The EPBC Act provides for accreditation of state approval processes for proposed actions that would otherwise require approval by the Australian Government Minister for the Environment. The Australian Government is currently implementing the One-Stop Shop for environmental approvals, to accredit state approval processes that meet the high standards set out in the EPBC Act. State and territory governments have processes in place for evaluating the environmental impacts of development proposals consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Under the One-Stop Shop policy, the Australian Government remains responsible for ensuring that the objects of the EPBC Act are met.

An important mechanism that integrates implementation of the Ramsar Convention with water/food security policy is the provision of legal entitlements to water for the environment. In Australia this is being achieved via statutory water plans, water savings achieved through infrastructure investment, and other water recoveries as a result of the Water Act and state and territory legislation. Commonwealth environmental water holdings must be used in accordance the 'Environmental watering plan', contained in Chapter 8 of the Basin Plan, for objects including protecting and restoring Ramsar wetlands.

The Water Act was amended in 2013 to provide for the Water for the Environment Special Account (Special Account). The Special Account provides an appropriation of funds of \$1775 million over 10 years to enhance the environmental outcomes that can be achieved by the Basin Plan by acquiring an additional 450 GL of permanent environmental water entitlements and removing constraints on the efficient delivery of environmental water.

These arrangements result in additional water being made available for the environment, including for Ramsar sites.

The current development of the National Wetlands Policy represents an opportunity to strengthen links between the objectives of the Convention and other sectors. Australian NGOs acknowledge the importance of a cohesive national policy framework, but note that unless it is backed up by funds for on-ground work, and Indigenous and community engagement, wetlands will continue to degrade.

For further information refer to questions 1.3.2 and 1.3.4.

H. Do you (AA) have any other general comments on the implementation of the Convention?

Over time there has been an incremental increase in contracting party obligations (both hard and soft) under the Ramsar Convention. This is a concern given that limited resources are available to the Secretariat and contracting parties. One reflection of this, as noted by the Secretary General during the forty-seventh meeting of the Standing Committee, is the number of Ramsar sites for which a RIS has never been submitted and that only a third of contracting parties regularly provide RIS updates.

Whilst the increase in obligations partly reflects improved information and greater efforts to achieve the 'conservation and wise use of all wetlands', acknowledgement of the limited capacity of contracting parties is required. In Australia's view, the focus of additional work by Convention bodies, including contracting parties, needs to be on tasks that will meaningfully contribute to achievement of the Convention's mission.

When considering future work programs of Convention bodies, Australia supports the need to prioritise work. Factors that could inform this prioritisation include:

- the extent to which proposed work implements previously agreed actions that are essential to the ongoing business of the Convention
- whether the work improves the efficiency of Convention processes
- consistency with Convention priorities as articulated in the Strategic Plan
- limiting work that imposes new costs to either contracting parties or the Secretariat
- whether a contracting party/donor has agreed to support implementation of the work.

Improving the efficient and effective administration of the Convention will enable Convention bodies to remain focused on the Convention's strategic direction and mission.

I. Please list the names of the organisations which have been consulted on or have contributed to the information provided in this report:

Australian Government agencies: Department of the Environment; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; Department of Industry; Department of Agriculture; Murray-Darling Basin Authority; National Water Commission; and Department of Defence.


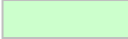
State and territory agencies: ACT Department of Environment and Sustainable Development; New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage; Northern Territory Department of Land Resource Management; Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection; South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources; Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment; Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries; Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife.

NGOs: Australian Wetland Network; WetlandCare Australia; Wetlands International – Oceania; Australasian Waders Study Group; Australian Conservation Foundation; BirdLife Australia; WWF Australia; Inland Rivers Network; National Farmers Federation; and Australian Committee for the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Scientific/technical organisations: Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation; and Murray-Darling Freshwater Research Centre.

SECTION 3: INDICATOR QUESTIONS AND FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION INFORMATION

REMINDER: Guidance for completing this section

1. For each 'indicator question', please select one answer from the 'drop-down' list in the yellow box. 
2. If you wish to add any additional information on a specific indicator, please provide this information in the green 'free-text' boxes below the indicator questions. 
3. If you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green 'free-text' box, you should cut and paste the existing text into a separate file, make the amendments, and then cut and paste the revised text back into the green box.
4. Some characters used in the free text box prevent the automatic data entry into our database National Reports. For that reason, **please do not use double quote marks “ ” in the free text boxes. Use single quotes ‘ ’. Text in the ‘free text’ boxes should be simple text only: they cannot accept formatting, colours or objects such as tables and images.**
5. To help Contracting Parties refer to relevant information they provided in their National Report to COP11, for each appropriate indicator a cross-reference is provided to the equivalent indicator(s) in the COP11 NRF, shown thus: {x.x.x}
6. Where appropriate, a cross-reference is also provided to the relevant Key Result Area (KRA) relating to Contracting Parties implementation in the Strategic Plan 2009-2015.
7. Only Strategic Plan 2009-2015 Strategies and KRAs for which there are significant implementation actions for Contracting Parties are included in this reporting format; those parts of the Strategic Plan that do not refer directly to Parties are omitted.

GOAL 1. THE WISE USE OF WETLANDS

STRATEGY 1.1 Wetland inventory and assessment. *Describe, assess and monitor the extent and condition of all types of wetlands as defined by the Ramsar Convention and wetland resources at relevant scales, in order to inform and underpin implementation of the Convention, in particular in the application of its provisions concerning the wise use of all wetlands.*

1.1.1 Does your country have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory? {1.1.1} KRA 1.1.i	C - In progress
<p>1.1.1 Additional information:</p> <p>Whilst there is a large amount of information on wetlands in Australia, as indicated in the COP11 National Report, there remains no single comprehensive inventory. At the national level, information on Australia's Ramsar wetlands and wetlands listed in 'A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia' (DIWA) is available through the Australian Wetlands Database (AWD). The AWD can be accessed on the Department of the Environment's website: http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/australian-wetlands-database. However, as emphasised by non-government organisations (NGOs) during preparation of the COP12 National Report, the DIWA was last updated and published in 2001 and the online Directory developed in 2005. Australian NGOs have expressed concern that the DIWA lacked scientific rigour when it was first established. The role of a national wetland inventory will be addressed through the development of a National Wetlands Policy.</p> <p>Wetland inventory projects being progressed by state and territory governments, include:</p> <p>In Western Australia (WA), the whole of WA is mapped at the 1:250,000 scale and various parts of the south-west of the state and the Swan Coastal Plain have wetlands mapped at a scale of 1:100,000 or better. The Biodiversity Audit II has also updated wetland information across WA and includes information on wetland values, wetland classification, historical and future threats and current and proposed management actions.</p> <p>In 2013, Victoria updated its 1994 wetland inventory in a new geospatial database. Updated wetland mapping was incorporated from various parts of the state and wetland attributes were assigned following the Australian National Aquatic Ecosystem (ANAE) classification framework (for more information on the ANAE see: http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/aquatic-ecosystems-toolkit-module-2-interim-australian-national-aquatic-ecosystem-anae).</p> <p>In New South Wales (NSW), LiDAR mapping and Digital Elevation Models have been developed for the Gwydir Wetlands and Macquarie Marshes. These are being used as inputs to the development of flow models to inform decisions on the use of environmental flows in these wetlands. The development of a comprehensive inventory of wetlands has been identified as a priority knowledge gap in the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage 'Knowledge Strategy 2013 – 2017'.</p> <p>Queensland has a comprehensive mapping and classification process. The initial mapping was based on wetlands in 2001 (version 1.0) with updates undertaken to 2005 (version 2.0) and 2009 (version 3.0). The mapping is currently being updated to 2013. Information on change in wetland extent can now be obtained using the summary tool on WetlandInfo (http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/). The mapping is being extended to include data on groundwater dependent ecosystems.</p>	
1.1.2 Is wetland inventory data and information maintained and made accessible to all stakeholders? {1.1.2} KRA 1.1.ii	A - Yes
<p>As indicated in the COP11 National Report, information on Australian wetlands is available through the AWD (http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/australian-wetlands-database) and the Protected Matters Search Tool (http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/about-us/legislation/environment-protection-and-biodiversity-conservation-act-1999/protected).</p> <p>Wetland data and information made accessible for use by stakeholders since the COP11 National Report includes:</p> <p>In WA, spatial data is made publically available through a state-wide data sharing platform;</p>	

the Shared Land Information Platform Enabler (Landgate) (<https://www2.landgate.wa.gov.au/web/guest/home;jsessionid=3CB996B2693068EBCA419789E2AD68E2>). Biotic data is made available through Naturemap (<http://naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au/default.aspx>).

Queensland's comprehensive wetlands mapping and classification process is available on WetlandInfo (<http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/>).

The NSW '2010 State of the Catchments – Assessing the extent and condition of wetlands' (<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/soc/20110727ReportAWetlandsTRS.pdf>) (2011) provides data for key NSW wetlands. The NSW Office of Water provides publicly accessible data for over 1200 rivers, streams, dams and groundwater sites across the state. A mobile phone application (NSW Real Time Water Data) is now available to provide real-time data for river levels and flows, salinity, temperature and turbidity (<http://www.water.nsw.gov.au/Home/default.aspx>).

Victorian wetland environments and extent is available through the Victoria Government Data Directory (<http://www.data.vic.gov.au/>). A 2013-14 programme is undertaking further validation of wetland attributes using existing state-wide data sources. An online tool is also being developed to allow wetland managers and natural resource management agencies to propose updates for attributes of individual wetlands.

In the Northern Territory (NT), 'Sites of Conservation Significance' have been identified (wetland values are one of five conservation values considered) and comprehensive information on each can be downloaded from the NT Government's website: <http://www.lrm.nt.gov.au/plants-and-animals/conservation-for-land-managers/sites-of-conservation-significance>.

The Commonwealth Environmental Water Office (CEWO) and Murray-Darling Basin Authority (Authority) have jointly developed an interim (i.e. point in time) classification and typology of aquatic ecosystems across the Murray-Darling Basin (Basin) by adopting the Australian National Aquatic Ecosystem Classification Framework and drawing from various national and Basin state wetland inventories. The data for the classification will be available for download from the Australian Government Department of the Environment's Discover Information Geographically website: <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/science-and-research/databases-and-maps/discover-information-geographically>.

1.1.3 Has the condition* of wetlands in your country, overall, changed since the last triennium? {1.1.3}

- a) Ramsar Sites
- b) wetlands generally

Please comment on the sources of the information on which your answer is based in the green free- text box below. If there is a difference between inland and coastal wetland situations, please describe. If you are able to, please describe the principal driver(s) of the change(s).

* 'Condition' corresponds to ecological character, as defined by the Convention

- a) - No change
- b) - No change

1.1.3 Additional information on a) and/or b):

a) Ramsar sites

Comprehensive information on the condition of Australian Ramsar sites is provided in Section 4.

Significant improvements in water quality and weed coverage have occurred at Lake Mealup in the Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar site in WA as a result of hydrological management to control water levels within the system. A significant improvement in wader habitat has also been achieved at Lake Warden Ramsar site in WA following dewatering. Ongoing waterbird monitoring confirms that waders have responded by using re-exposed beach areas.

Following the 2009 Article 3.2 notification for the NSW Macquarie Marshes Ramsar site, the NSW State Government released the 'Article 3.2 Response Strategy' in March 2013 (<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wetlands/20130104mmrsart32.htm>). The Response Strategy addresses the likely change in the ecological character of the wetland from a semi-permanent to an ephemeral system, as recorded in 2009. The Response Strategy outlines a 10-year plan to restore the resilience of the wetland and increase the system's ability to withstand periods of drought.

In South Australia (SA), the condition of the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland Ramsar site has continued to improve due to significant inflows from the Basin and through environmental restoration activities since 2010. The Australian Government funded the development of a long-term plan for the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, to assist the SA Government in addressing the long-term challenges facing the site. The plan (http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/river-murray/river-restoration-and-environmental-water/Coorong_Lower_Lakes_Murray_Mouth/long-term-recovery-plan) provides a 20-year road map for the future management of the site. Australian governments are currently providing up to \$160 million for the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Recovery Project to support implementation of the long-term plan.

b) wetlands generally

Australia has tens of thousands of wetlands and, as indicated under question 1.1.1, there is currently no comprehensive national inventory in place. It is not possible to definitively state whether the condition of wetlands overall in Australia has improved, deteriorated or stayed the same. Information on the condition of a selection of wetlands is provided below. As discussed in Section 2, question B there is evidence that Australia's wetlands are being affected by the predicted impacts of a changing climate. Coastal and marine wetlands are particularly affected. One consequence of these impacts is mangrove encroachment into saltmarsh.

In the Murray-Darling Basin, Commonwealth environmental water has provided a range of ecological benefits, such as better health in river red gums (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) and improved habitat for birds, fish and frogs. High-level information on environmental outcomes from watering is available in Outcomes Reports, published each year by the

CEWO: <http://www.environment.gov.au/water/cewo/outcomes>.

The annual Eastern Australian Waterbird Survey, which covers the major wetland sites in the Basin, found high waterbird numbers in 2011 and 2012, although populations have fallen in 2013 with recent dry conditions. The survey found recovery of aquatic plant community density, diversity and extent is still ongoing following the millennium drought (2002-09).

Victoria completed two rounds of the assessment of the condition of wetlands in Victoria in 2009-10 and 2010-11. The assessments were conducted using the Index of Wetland Condition (IWC). The first round focused on the condition of high value wetlands, while the second focused on a set of representative wetlands. Information about the IWC and the results are available here: <http://ics.water.vic.gov.au/ics/>. The data provide a baseline for tracking the condition of wetlands in the future.

The newly developed Wetland Field Assessment Tool (WFAT) provides the process and methods to assess Queensland's lacustrine and palustrine wetland environmental values and pressures. More detail about the WFAT and its use is available through WetlandInfo (<http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/>).

STRATEGY 1.3 Policy, legislation and institutions. *Develop and implement policies, legislation, and practices, including growth and development of appropriate institutions, in all Contracting Parties, to ensure that the wise use provisions of the Convention are being effectively applied.*

1.3.1 Is a National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) in place? {1.3.1} KRA 1.3.i
(If 'Yes', please give the title and date of the policy in the green text box)

A - Yes

1.3.1 Additional information:

The Australian Government is currently working with the states and territories, NGOs and other key stakeholders on the development of a National Wetlands Policy. The previous policy, the 'Commonwealth Wetland Policy', was released in 1997. As indicated in the COP11 National Report, most jurisdictions in Australia also have wetland policies in place.

1.3.2 Have wetland issues been incorporated into other national strategies and planning processes, including:

- a) Poverty eradication strategies
- b) Water resource management and water efficiency plans
- c) Coastal and marine resource management plans
- d) National forest programmes
- e) National strategies for sustainable development
- f) National policies or measures on agriculture
- g) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans drawn up under the CBD

{1.3.3} KRA 1.3.i

- a) Z - Not applicable
- b) A - Yes
- c) A - Yes
- d) A - Yes
- e) A - Yes
- f) A - Yes
- g) A - Yes

1.3.2 Additional information:

b) Water resource management and water efficiency plans

The National Water Initiative provides for water sharing plans and the need for them to include stakeholder engagement in their development and review.

In accordance with requirements of the Water Act 2007 (Water Act), the Murray-Darling Basin Authority made the Basin Plan which provides a framework for the integrated and sustainable management of water resources in the Basin. Further information on the Basin Plan and CEWH is provided in Section 2, question A.

The Basin Plan is to be implemented through accredited 'water resource plans' (WRPs). These Basin Plan compliant WRPs will be developed progressively between now and 1 July 2019, with the expectation that all Basin water resources will be covered by Basin Plan compliant WRPs by 1 July 2019, when the Basin-wide sustainable diversion limits commence. The WRPs will be fully consistent with the Basin Plan requirements and objectives including protecting and restoring declared Ramsar wetlands that depend on Basin water resources to maintain their ecological character.

c) Coastal and marine resource management plans

Australia's 'National Cooperative approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management Framework and Implementation Plan', referred to in the COP11 National Report, is still in effect.

d) National forest programmes

Australia's 'Native Vegetation Framework' (2012) sets national directions and priorities to guide actions across government strategies, policies, legislation and programs related to native vegetation management. The framework recognises the benefits of native vegetation in maintaining healthy wetlands, rivers and waterways (<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/australias-native-vegetation-framework>).

e) National strategies for sustainable development

Australia's 'National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development' provides broad strategic directions and framework for governments to direct policy and decision-making and was adopted by all levels of government in 1992. The EPBC Act also requires the promotion of ecologically sustainable development through the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of natural resources. All policies described under this question are relevant to the achievement of sustainable development.

f) National policies on agriculture

The Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) allows farmers and land managers to earn carbon credits by storing carbon or reducing greenhouse gas emissions on their land. These credits can then be sold to people and businesses wishing to offset their emissions. Vegetation and wetland restoration projects are activities recommended for the positive list; a register of abatement activities that are eligible to earn CFI carbon credits. Further information: <http://www.climatechange.gov.au/reducing-carbon/carbon-farming-initiative>.

The Biodiversity Fund assists land managers to store carbon, enhance biodiversity and build greater environmental resilience across the Australian landscape. It provides support for the establishment of native vegetation or better management of existing native vegetation. Further information: <http://www.environment.gov.au/cleanenergyfuture/biodiversity-fund/>.

Landcare is a community-based approach that has played a major role in raising awareness, influencing farming and land management practices and delivering environmental outcomes across Australian landscapes for decades. Protecting Ramsar sites and values is one activity eligible for funding. Further information:

<http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare>.

g) National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plans

Australia's 'Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030' is the overarching policy and guiding framework for national biodiversity conservation in Australia

(<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/australias-biodiversity-conservation-strategy-0>).

The strategy provides a national policy umbrella for more specific policies, including those relating to wetlands.

1.3.3 Are Strategic Environmental Assessment practices applied when reviewing policies, programmes and plans that may impact upon wetlands? {1.3.4} KRA 1.3.ii

C - Partly

1.3.3 Additional information:

Under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act), the Australian Government Minister for the Environment can approve actions which relate to an endorsed policy, plan or programme. These 'strategic assessments' happen early in the planning process and examine the potential impacts of actions which might stem from one or more policy, plan or programme. These may include, but are not limited to: regional-scale development plans and policies; large-scale industrial development and associated infrastructure; fire, vegetation/resource or pest management policies, plans or programs; water extraction/use policies; infrastructure plans and policies; and industry sector policies.

The Australian Government and the Queensland Government are undertaking a comprehensive strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area (GBRWHA) and adjacent coastal zone. This strategic assessment will help identify, plan for and manage existing and emerging risks to ensure ongoing protection and management of the GBRWHA and adjacent coastal zone, which includes the Bowling Green Bay Ramsar site and the Shoalwater and Corio Bays Area Ramsar site. The outcomes of the strategic assessment will inform the 'Reef 2050 Long Term Sustainability Plan', being developed jointly by the Australian and Queensland Governments to guide the protection and management of the GBRWHA to 2050. The Plan includes an initial investment of \$40 million from the Reef Trust

(<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/pages/e40fbc03-3d32-4116-b7bf-fcad4702b2b4/files/reef-trust-investment-strategy.pdf>) to deliver funding to improve water quality and coastal habitat along the Great Barrier Reef, including repairing and protecting coastal ecosystems such as wetlands. More information on the strategic assessment of the Great Barrier Reef is available here:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/environment-protection/strategic-assessments/great-barrier-reef>.

In addition to strategic assessments under the EPBC Act, state and territory legislation may require environmental assessments to be undertaken where wetlands may be impacted. For example, the WA Environmental Protection Authority assesses planning schemes and their amendments and decides on the level of assessment to be applied.

In NSW, environmental assessment practices are in place to ensure that any developments that may impact upon the ecological character of a Ramsar wetland are considered by the planning authority. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service also includes the values and condition of Ramsar wetlands when preparing national park plans of management.

The principles of Strategic Environmental Assessment are reflected in the processes required to gain approval for activities under the relevant Tasmanian legislation, and both formal and informal policy prescriptions are fundamentally informed by the principles of sustainable development, formalised in the Tasmanian Resource Management Planning System. These principles in turn inform development approval processes at local government level. In this context, biodiversity is used as a surrogate for considering all environmental values.

1.3.4 Are Environmental Impact Assessments made for any development projects (such as new buildings, new roads, extractive industry) that may affect wetlands,? {1.3.5} KRA 1.3.iii

C - In some cases

1.3.4 Additional information:

Where a proposed action, such as a development project, has, will have or is likely to have a significant impact on the ecological character of a declared Ramsar wetland, it must be referred under Australia's national legislation, the EPBC Act. In the current triennium referred actions included residential and infrastructure developments, mines, biological control of invasive ants and a forestry thinning trial. The level of compliance required of the proponents was set by the Australian Government Department of the Environment.

In addition to federal legislation, all state and territory governments have planning legislation that requires consideration of environmental factors. For example, Part IV of the WA Environmental Protection Act 1986 establishes the requirement for environmental impact assessment of proposals that are likely to have a significant effect on the environment.

Queensland's environmental protection and planning and assessment policies and legislation require assessment of development impacts on aquatic ecosystems.

In NSW, development projects that may impact upon wetlands are regulated through the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995, the Native Vegetation Act 2003 and the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. An Environmental Impact Statement and development consent is required under the State Environmental Planning Policy No. 14 for all developments that propose to clear, drain or fill coastal wetlands.

Undertaking an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is part of the development assessment process in Tasmania, with more significant developments requiring more substantial assessment. Furthermore, all new activities in public Ramsar sites are subject to the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service's Reserve Activity Assessment system; an EIA system to identify potential impacts on wetland values and how risks will be minimised.

In Victoria, projects with the potential for a long-term change to the ecological character of a Ramsar or DIWA wetland must be referred to the Minister for Planning who determines the need for an Environmental Effects Statement under the Victorian Environmental Effects Act 1978. Victoria's planning provisions also include clauses requiring developers to seek planning approval from local government authorities for certain developments affecting wetlands.

1.3.5 Have any amendments to existing legislation been made to reflect Ramsar commitments? {1.3.6}

A - Yes

1.3.5 Additional information:

Ramsar sites continue to be protected as a matter of national environmental significance under Australia's central piece of environment legislation the EPBC Act. Under the One-Stop Shop policy, the Australian Government is developing bilateral agreements with states and territories to make the environmental approvals process more efficient and effective. These proposed amendments do not specifically reference Ramsar commitments. The EPBC Act sets out the standards that must be met in order to accredit state or territory approval processes. None of the amendments change or reduce the standards that state and territory processes must meet in order to be accredited under bilateral agreements.

Section 21(3) of the Water Act required the Basin Plan to be developed so as to give effect to relevant international agreements (including the Ramsar Convention), and to promote the conservation of declared Ramsar wetlands and the wise use of Basin water resources. The Basin Plan is a legislative instrument enacted in the Australian Parliament.

The Basin Plan includes a number of thematic plans including the 'Environmental watering plan' which aims to protect and restore water-dependent ecosystems of the Basin including by ensuring that declared Ramsar wetlands that depend on Basin water resources maintain their ecological character. An 'Environmental watering strategy' is currently being developed to identify environmental watering priorities and should be released November 2014. The 'Water quality and salinity management plan' includes the objective that the quality of water is sufficient to maintain the ecological character of Ramsar wetlands.

The Water Act was also amended in 2013 to provide for the Water for the Environment Special Account (Special Account). The Special Account provides an appropriation of funds of \$1775 million for the next 10 years. The Act requires the Special Account funds to be used for the purposes of acquiring 450 gegalitres (GL) of water in permanent environmental water entitlements and the removal of physical constraints to the efficient delivery and use of environmental water. Through increasing the volume of permanent environmental water holdings and removing physical constraints, the Special Account will improve the delivery of environmental water to declared Ramsar wetlands.

STRATEGY 1.4: Cross-sectoral recognition of wetland services. *Increase recognition of and attention in decision-making to the significance of wetlands for reasons of biodiversity conservation, water supply, coastal protection, integrated coastal zone management, flood defence, climate change mitigation and/or adaptation, food security, poverty eradication, tourism, cultural heritage, and scientific research, by developing and disseminating methodologies to achieve wise use of wetlands.*

1.4.1 Has an assessment been made of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar Sites? {1.4.1} KRA 1.4.ii

A - Yes

1.4.1 Additional information:

A number of assessments of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar sites have been made this triennium; examples are provided below.

During development of the Basin Plan, the Authority commissioned the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) to identify and quantify the potential ecological and ecosystem services/benefits that are likely to arise from recovering 2800 GL/year of water for the environment in the Basin and, where possible, to elicit the monetary value of those benefits. CSIRO's assessment was intended to be a whole-of-Basin assessment and did not specifically target Ramsar sites (http://www.mdba.gov.au/kid/files/2017-Assessment_Ecological_Economic_Benefits.pdf). The Ramsar sites included in the ecological assessments were: Barmah-Millewa Forest; Gunbower-Koondrook-Perricoota Forest; Hattah Lakes; Riverland-Chowilla Floodplain; Macquarie Marshes; Narran Lakes; Gwydir Wetlands; and the Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland. The assessment reported that the additional Basin-wide value of enhanced habitat ecosystem services – arising from floodplain vegetation, waterbird breeding, native fish and the Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland – is worth between \$3 billion and \$8 billion under the 2800 GL/year scenario compared to the baseline scenario.

A separate assessment for the Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland Ramsar site was undertaken by CSIRO in 2013 for the South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources. The assessment identified the local community's present understanding of ecosystem services provided by the site. This is complemented by a second report by Vandeleur Consulting that seeks to identify the services provided by the site and any evidence to substantiate their provision.

Other studies undertaken for the Authority also estimated the value of environmental services in the Basin; for example, 'Economic benefits and costs of the proposed Basin Plan' (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/kid/files/1500-economic-benefits-cie.pdf>), 'Valuing a multistate river: The case of the River Murray' (<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-8489.2011.00551.x/abstract>), and 'Economic valuation of environmental benefits in the Murray-Darling Basin' (<http://www.mdba.gov.au/kid/files/1282-MDBA-NMV-Report-Morrison-and-Hatton-MacDonald-20Sep2010.pdf>). These studies sought to identify and value a range of social and economic benefits arising from ecosystem services that might be obtained from the use of water for environmental purposes from multiple sites across the Basin, including some which were derived from Ramsar wetlands.

Assessment of ecosystem benefits/services is included in ecological character descriptions (ECDs) prepared for Ramsar sites. Published ECDs are available here: <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/ramsar-convention-wetlands/implementing-national>.

1.4.2 Have wetland programmes or projects that contribute to poverty alleviation objectives or food and water security plans been implemented? {1.4.2} KRA 1.4.i

A - Yes

1.4.2 Additional information:

Australia seeks to maintain its domestic food supplies and contribution to regional and global food security by fostering competitive and productive agricultural industries – including by investing in rural research and development (refer question 1.6.1), maintaining Australia's biosecurity, and promoting the sustainable use of productive natural resources (refer question 1.3.2). For example, the National Water Initiative and Water Act were developed to address the joint objective of food and water security and environmental protection, particularly of aquatic ecosystems.

1.4.3 Have socio-economic and cultural values of wetlands been included in the management planning for Ramsar Sites and other wetlands? {1.4.4} KRA 1.4.iii

A - Yes

1.4.3 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Partly', please indicate, if known, how many Ramsar Sites and their names):

The COP11 National Report provided extensive information on the inclusion of socio-economic and cultural values in management planning of Commonwealth national parks, World Heritage areas, National Heritage places and Ramsar wetlands. The following activities have been progressed in the current triennium.

A review of Indigenous involvement in water planning

(<http://www.nwc.gov.au/publications/topic/water-planning/indigenous-involvement-in-water-planning>), released by the National Water Commission (NWC) in 2013, found that, while approaches are variable, most Australian governments have made significant advances in recognising Indigenous water issues and engaging Indigenous people in water planning and management processes.

The Basin Plan requires the Authority to have regard to Indigenous values and uses as well as the need to optimise social, economic and environmental outcomes when developing the Basin-wide 'Environmental watering strategy', which will guide the use of environmental water throughout the Basin, and the 'annual environmental watering priorities'. Equally the Basin Plan requires that state governments develop long-term environmental watering plans and annual watering priorities at the regional scale and that these instruments take account of socio-economic and cultural values.

State and territory government provisions for recognising socio-economic and cultural values implemented during the current triennium are described below.

Management planning processes in WA include a stakeholder engagement and consultation phase, which includes the identification and description of socio-economic and cultural values of wetlands.

Similarly, in Tasmania management plans for public Ramsar sites take into account social values such as recreation and tourism use, some low impact resource uses such as eel and oyster farming, as well as including Aboriginal and historic cultural values management.

Promoting socio-economic and cultural values of wetlands is a key management priority for Ramsar sites and other wetlands across NSW. The NSW Office of Water recently established the Aboriginal Water Initiative to improve Aboriginal involvement and representation in water planning and management. Further, all Environmental Water Advisory Groups in NSW include Aboriginal membership.

The Riverine Recovery and Coorong Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Recovery projects, funded by the Australian Government, consulted Aboriginal groups (including the Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal people of the River Murray and Mallee region) throughout the wetland management planning process. The wetland management plans detail the historical and spiritual significance of the River Murray and its wetlands to Aboriginal people, and the heritage values of specific wetlands.

In the NT, both the Cobourg Peninsula and Kakadu Ramsar sites are contained within national parks and are jointly-managed by Traditional Owners and the relevant national parks department. Cultural values and local socio-economic values are frequently and carefully considered in planning and management of these two Ramsar sites.

In Victoria, catchment management authorities (CMAs) are developing regional waterway strategies which set out the regional management programme for rivers, wetlands and estuaries over an eight year timeframe. The CMAs use the state-wide standardised risk assessment method based on waterway values which encompasses environmental,

social, cultural and economic values.

A range of projects are in place to include socio-economic and cultural values in management planning; however, NGOs feel more attention could be given to this with Ramsar sites being used to highlight these values of wetlands.

STRATEGY 1.5 Recognition of the role of the Convention. *Raise the profile of the Convention by highlighting its capacity as a unique mechanism for wetland ecosystem management at all levels; promote the usefulness of the Convention as a possible implementation mechanism to meet the goals and targets of other global conventions and processes.*

1.5.1 Since COP11, have you brought the 'Changwon Declaration' (Resolution X.3) to the attention of your:

- a. head of state
- b. parliament
- c. private sector
- d. civil society
{1.5.2}

- a. B - No
- b. B - No
- c. B - No
- d. A - Yes

1.5.1 Additional information:

NGOs have raised the profile of the declaration through the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership.

STRATEGY 1.6 Science-based management of wetlands. *Promote successful implementation of the wise use concept by ensuring that national policies and wetland management plans are based on the best available scientific knowledge, including technical and traditional knowledge.*

1.6.1 Has research to inform wetland policies and plans been undertaken in your country on:

- a. agriculture-wetland interactions
- b. climate change
- c. valuation of ecosystem services
{1.6.1} KRA 1.6.i

- a. A - Yes
- b. A - Yes
- c. A - Yes

1.6.1 Additional information:

a. agriculture-wetland interactions

The NWC commissioned research on trade-offs between competing outcomes for water, such as agricultural production and enhanced environmental values (see 'Tools for water planning: lessons, gaps and adoption': <http://archive.nwc.gov.au/library/waterlines/37>).

The Authority commissioned research on the environmental water needs of the Basin, which included an assessment of the environmental needs of Ramsar sites such as the Macquarie Marshes, Barmah-Millewa Forest and 'Riverland'.

Water sharing (resource) plans are being developed across Murray-Darling Basin states to determine water allocations for environmental and agricultural uses. In NSW these plans are based on rigorous monitoring and informed by models that predict how ecosystems may respond to proposed watering regimes.

An area of particular interest is the interaction between grazing and wetlands with Queensland developing the 'Guidelines for managing coastal wetlands in grazing systems' (available here: <http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/>) and Victoria

conducting a vegetation, land use and grazing study at the Wannon wetlands to determine the effects of reducing grazing pressure on this privately owned wetland system (see: www.charophytes.com/download/WW0wholeReport2013June.pdf).

b. climate change

Studies on the future climate and implications for wetlands include:

- The biennial 'State of the Climate' (CSIRO and Bureau of Meteorology, 2014, <http://www.csiro.au/Outcomes/Climate/Understanding/SOC.aspx>).
- In 2014, CSIRO and an international team of scientists released the outcomes of research on the potential rate and distribution of species (or 'climate migrants') across global regions based on anticipated changes in climate conditions. The report, titled 'Geographical limits to species-range shifts are suggested by climate velocity', was published in the journal Nature.
- 'Incorporating climate change in water allocation planning' (<http://archive.nwc.gov.au/library/topic/availability/incorporating-climate-change-in-water-allocation-planning>) and 'Climate change impact on groundwater resources in Australia' (<http://archive.nwc.gov.au/library/waterlines/67>).
- In 2013, Victoria published a report on the vulnerability of wetlands to climate change across the State, 'Indicative Assessment of Climate Change Vulnerability for Wetlands in Victoria' (<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/water/rivers-estuaries-and-wetlands/wetlands>).
- Several studies relating to wetland management and adaptation were undertaken by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF). Projects included: 'Limits to climate change adaptation in floodplain wetlands: The Macquarie Marshes', 'Adaptive management of Ramsar wetlands', and 'Adaptation policy for the conservation and management of nationally and internationally important wetlands'; see: www.nccarf.edu.au. Australia's approach to wetland conservation was used as a case study in a CSIRO report 'Climate-ready conservation objectives: A scoping study' (<http://www.nccarf.edu.au/publications/climate-ready-conservation-objectives-scoping-study>).

c. valuation of ecosystem services

The Australian Government commissioned a 'Literature Review of the Economic Value of Ecosystem Services that Wetlands Provide', which reviews techniques that can be used for valuing ecosystem services and provides Australian and international case studies (<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/literature-review-economic-value-ecosystem-services-wetlands-provide>).

The NWC commissioned study, 'Recognising the broader benefits of aquatic systems in water planning: an ecosystem services approach', encourages a more comprehensive, systematic and transparent consideration of the multiple benefits of aquatic systems in water planning (<http://archive.nwc.gov.au/library/waterlines/87>).

Refer to question 1.4.1 for information on studies undertaken for the Murray-Darling Basin Authority on the value of environmental services in the Basin. These studies sought to identify and value a range of social/economic benefits arising from ecosystem services that might be obtained from environmental watering at multiple sites across the Basin.

1.6.2 Have all wetland management plans been based on sound scientific research, including research on potential threats to the wetlands? {1.6.2} KRA 1.6.ii

A - Yes

1.6.2 Additional information:

All wetland management plans in Australia are based on available scientific evidence and sound scientific research, including completed ECDs. Plans identify potential threats and appropriate management responses. Examples of specific research which informs wetland management include:

The Lake Eyre Basin (LEB) Rivers Assessment is taking a strategic adaptive management approach to gaining an understanding of the condition of watercourses and catchments, including the rivers, floodplains, overflow channels, lakes and wetlands in the LEB. It will provide information on how well the natural resources of the LEB are used and managed.

The \$6.25 million Great Artesian Basin (GAB) Water Resources Assessment (March 2013), provided a basin-scale investigation of water resources and the potential impacts of climate change and groundwater development to 2070. The assessment contributed to building a national picture of Australia's water resources.

The Peel-Yalgorup System Technical Advisory Group, coordinated by the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council, involves multiple state government agencies, community groups, local government and Australian Government representatives and improves coordination of planning and decisions affecting the ecological values of the wetlands and facilitates partnerships for environmental on-ground activities.

Defence land management plans that incorporate wetland elements are based on best practice and science from initiatives such as the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre regarding pervasive threats to wetlands.

The South Australian (SA) Riverine Recovery Project has undertaken baseline surveys of wetland sites in the SA Murray-Darling Basin to inform management planning processes and to identify values and threats. Management plans resulting from this planning process include for Lakes Merreti and Woolpoolool, part of the 'Riverland' Ramsar site.

Management plans in NSW are designed to address the key threats facing wetlands which include river regulation and water diversion, development and catchment disturbance, introduction of weeds and pest animals, and climate change. During this triennium management plans have been developed for the new extensions of U-block and Cresswell in the Macquarie Marshes Ramsar site.

STRATEGY 1.7 Integrated Water Resources Management. *Ensure that policies and implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), applying an ecosystem-based approach, are included in the planning activities in all Contracting Parties and in their decision-making processes, particularly concerning groundwater management, catchment/river basin management, coastal and nearshore marine zone planning and climate change mitigation and/or adaptation activities.*

1.7.1 Do your country's water governance and management systems treat wetlands as natural water infrastructure integral to water resource management at the scale of river basins?
{1.7.2} KRA 1.7.ii

A - Yes

1.7.1 Additional information:

In the COP11 National Report, information was provided on the National Water Initiative, the Water Act and the regional natural resource management model. Water governance and management arrangements introduced in the current triennium include:

The Basin Plan, as discussed previously, provides for the protection and restoration of wetlands, including Ramsar sites, through the determination of an environmentally sustainable level of extraction for consumptive uses and the development of an 'environmental watering plan' and 'water quality and salinity management plans'. Commonwealth environmental water is delivered in accordance with the Basin Plan, and supports the overarching principle of delivering a 'healthy working Murray-Darling Basin'. The Basin Plan acknowledges that wetlands and other aquatic ecosystems are integral to the achievement of a healthy working basin, by actively recovering water for the environment and establishing a high quality environmental management framework to guide the management of that water across the Basin.

States and territories have in place legislation that requires the development of water resource or water sharing plans. In Queensland, wetlands are considered as environmental assets in the catchment-based water resource planning process. In developing a water resource plan under the Queensland Water Act 2000, the size and nature of the asset/resource is assessed to ensure that water is allocated within sustainable thresholds.

In the NT, water allocation plans are used to ensure sufficient water is available to share between human and environmental needs. They are developed through detailed technical and scientific assessment as well as extensive community consultation to determine the right balance between competing requirements for water. Four plans have been declared and five are in progress.

In NSW, water and natural resource management is coordinated at a catchment-scale. This approach fosters sound governance across a wide range of stakeholders and uses throughout a watershed. NSW has 11 Local Land Services (formally known as CMAs) which engage local communities in key natural resource management issues facing their catchment. The importance of maintaining healthy resilient wetlands is recognised in NSW and environmental water delivery is managed to protect key water resource assets.

1.7.2 Have Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) expertise and tools been incorporated into catchment/river basin planning and management (see [Resolution X.19](#))? {1.7.3}

A - Yes

1.7.2 Additional information:

CEPA tools and expertise are extensively applied by governments and CMAs.

The National Water Initiative provides for water sharing plans to include substantial stakeholder engagement processes in their development and review. These include consideration of environmental flows within and beyond water sources and agreement to rules that ensure that environmental water is delivered.

The CEWO is recruiting six local engagement officers in regional locations of the Basin to work with communities to ensure local knowledge and views are taken into account in environmental water management decisions and to provide communities with greater access to information from the CEWO. CEWO also works closely with communities in relation to environmental water use planning and management by participating in existing local engagement processes established by state agencies and CMAs, such as environmental water advisory groups. The CEWO Scientific Advisory Panel provides advice on methods for determining the relative priority of environmental assets.

The Authority has specialist staff to promote stakeholder communication and engagement, which was an important element in the development of the Basin Plan. The Authority also has a number of advisory committees including the Advisory Committee on Social, Economic and Environmental Sciences to guide incorporation of local engagement into Basin Plan implementation.

The Australian Government's Reef Programme and Reef Trust invest in CEPA activities through regional and directly funded on-ground activities. These include engagement with industry representatives, and landholder and community education, training and awareness-raising. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority's Reef Guardians programme engages landholders and community in awareness raising activities.

Through regional natural resource management organisations, the Australian Government is providing funding for a range of CEPA activities. Examples include:

- public access management including education, barriers and signage to help protect shorebirds and their habitat at the Great Sandy Strait Ramsar site in Queensland where shorebird numbers can reach up 30 000
- in WA the South West Catchments Council 'Rural Nutrient Extension and Fertiliser Action Plan' project provides rural land owners with the skills and knowledge to better manage nutrient inputs and reduce eutrophication in the Vasse-Wonnerup and Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar wetlands.

In Victoria, community participation in waterway management is encouraged through the use of capacity building and social research to shape policy development and programme delivery. See Chapter 5 of the 'Victorian Waterway Management Strategy':

<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/water/rivers-estuaries-and-wetlands/strategy-and-planning>).

Regional waterway strategies also adopt this state-wide direction.

In Tasmania, CEPA is used to support land management within the State Government's conservation estate and more broadly through initiatives such as the Derwent Estuary Programme, a regional partnership between the Tasmanian Government, local governments, commercial and industrial enterprises, and community-based groups to restore and promote the estuary. It coordinates initiatives to reduce water pollution, conserve habitats and species, monitor river health and promote greater use and enjoyment of the foreshore.

Whilst this information demonstrates CEPA expertise and tools are being applied in catchment management processes, Australian NGOs consider more could be done to improve recognition of the value of investment in CEPA.

1.7.3 Has your country established policies or guidelines for enhancing the role of wetlands in mitigating or adapting to climate change? {1.7.5} KRA 1.7.iii	A - Yes
<p>1.7.3 Additional information:</p> <p>As indicated in the COP11 National Report, 'Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030' is a guiding framework for how Australians can protect and manage terrestrial, freshwater aquatic and marine biodiversity, which sets targets for building ecosystem resilience in a changing climate. The Strategy and its targets will be reviewed in 2015. Current targets relevant to building the resilience of wetlands to climate change are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Target 4: By 2015, achieve a national increase of 600 000 square kilometres of native habitat managed primarily for biodiversity conservation across terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments. • Target 5: By 2015, 1000 square kilometres of fragmented landscapes and aquatic systems are being restored to improve ecological connectivity. • Target 7: By 2015, reduce by at least 10 per cent the impacts of invasive species on threatened species and ecological communities in terrestrial, aquatic and marine environments. <p>Tasmania has established water allocation policies that take into account climate change projections; where climate change is predicted to have an impact on water availability, it is considered within water management planning processes. Three projects have developed climate change predictions and reductions in water availability to 2030 and 2100. Two of these projects considered climate change scenarios on ecosystem assets including Ramsar wetlands. These are taken into account in the allocation of water.</p> <p>For information on WA's decision-making framework for adaptation planning for climate change, refer to the NCCARF projects listed in question 1.6.1.</p> <p>The Murray Wetland Carbon Storage project aims to assist landholders rehabilitate wetlands to increase their capacity to store carbon and improve biodiversity. The project is expected to deliver 400 hectares of biodiversity and high-efficiency wetland carbon stores across the NSW Murray River Catchment over its first two years of approved funding from July 2012 to June 2014.</p>	
1.7.4 Has your country formulated plans or projects to sustain and enhance the role of wetlands in supporting and maintaining viable farming systems? {1.7.6} KRA 1.7.v	A - Yes

1.7.4 Additional information:

Australia has in place a number of programs and projects that recognise the role of wetlands in supporting viable farming systems.

Water planning processes throughout Australia are required to take account of multiple objectives. For example, in NSW, water sharing plans establish rules for sharing water between the environmental needs of the river or aquifer and water users, and also between different types of water use such as town supply, rural domestic supply, stock watering, industry and irrigation. Environmental water is used to maintain biodiversity benefits which support social and economic outcomes, such as providing ecosystem services to support viable farming systems.

The Australian Government's Reef Programme encourages landholder management and protection of riparian areas and wetlands through systems repair funding. These investments protect and enhance ecosystems and protect productive assets including agriculture and urban areas (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/reef-rescue/>). The achievements of the first phase are outlined at:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/marine/publications/australian-government-reef-achievements-2008-2013>.

FarmPlan21, a nationally-accredited course to help farmers achieve personal, financial and environmental goals, provides farm planning services to farmers across Victoria. It helps farmers achieve profitable, sustainable farming businesses.

To support the uptake of improved wetland management on farms, the Queensland Government funds the 'Wetland management in agricultural production systems' project. As part of this project, on-farm wetland demonstration sites have been established in the Wet Tropics, Burdekin and Mackay regions. Information on the sites is delivered online through videos and written case studies. Other projects include the 'Guidelines and template for preparing a wetland management plan' and 'Grazing for healthy coastal wetlands: guidelines for managing coastal wetland in grazing systems', and two farming and grazing case studies. Information is available at:

<http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/>.

STRATEGY 1.8 Wetland restoration. *Identify priority wetlands and wetland systems where restoration or rehabilitation would be beneficial and yield long-term environmental, social or economic benefits, and implement the necessary measures to recover these sites and systems.*

1.8.1 Have priority sites for wetland restoration been identified?
{1.8.1} KRA 1.8.i

A - Yes

1.8.1 Additional information:

As indicated in the COP11 National Report, information from Australia's Ramsar Rolling Review, ECDs and assessments of potential change in ecological character is used to inform priorities for the Australian Government's investment in wetlands. The information provided enables identification of those sites under imminent threat and/or priority threats to be targeted under forthcoming investment.

The Basin Plan also identifies Ramsar wetlands as environmental assets, and provides for their protection and restoration through environmental watering initiatives. The Basin Plan also identifies priority environmental assets for environmental watering.

State and territory governments also have processes in place, as described below.

Investment decisions for each of Victoria's Ramsar sites are being guided by spatial analysis of specific site values, for example waterbird roosting and feeding areas, nesting sites, threats to those sites and an assessment of cost-effective management interventions. This approach is helping prioritise Australian Government investment in six Ramsar sites in Victoria. Further, water quality improvement targets have been identified for the Corner Inlet Ramsar site through the development of the Corner Inlet Water Quality Improvement Plan (2014). In addition, Victoria's catchment management authorities are developing regional waterway strategies which identify priority actions to protect or improve river, wetland and estuary values.

In Tasmania, NRM North undertakes an ongoing wetland protection and restoration programme at priority Ramsar sites. Activities are based on recommendations in site ECDs, threats and pressures, and feedback from land managers. In the south of Tasmania, during 2012 NRM South funded Pittwater-Orielton Lagoon working group to review the site's Strategic Foreshore Action Plan. Priority sites and actions were identified and on-ground works undertaken in 2013.

The SA Riverine Recovery Project has developed a list of priority wetlands along the South Australia length of the River Murray that would benefit from management. The prioritisation methodology included integrated modelling of social values, ecological response, cost, and a threat ranking.

In Western Australia, priority sites for investment during 2008-13 include: Ord River Floodplain, Roebuck Bay, Eighty Mile Beach, Lake Toolibin, Vasse-Wonnerup System and the Peel-Yalgorup System.

In Queensland, the Aquatic Conservation Assessment (ACA) has now been undertaken for a large part of the state by using the Aquatic Biodiversity Assessment and Mapping Method (AquaBAMM). The ACA results are used by organisations responsible for planning and implementing restoration/rehabilitation programs. More detail about ACA and AquaBAMM are available here: <http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/>.

1.8.2 Have wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects been implemented? {1.8.2} KRA 1.8.i

A - Yes

1.8.2 Additional information:

Australian restoration/rehabilitation programs are implemented at various scales, by the Australian Government, state and territory governments, and NGOs. The response to this question should be read in conjunction with the response to question A, Section 2.

The Australian Government, through its Reef Programme (2013-18), is providing further investment to improve the ecological function of priority wetland coastal ecosystems of Bowling Green Bay. Under the Reef Programme Systems Repair component, various groups are supported to implement wetland, riparian and mangrove protection and restoration projects (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/reef-rescue/>).

The Basin Plan annual environmental watering priorities, which are developed at the beginning of each water year, identify specific priority watering needs to co-ordinate watering across the Basin, which include watering of priority environmental assets. The 2013-14 priorities included environmental watering of the Gwydir and Macquarie Marshes Ramsar sites.

In addition to the 3400 GL of Commonwealth environmental water delivered to environmental assets since 2009 (refer to question A, Section 2), during 2011-2012 more than 936 GL of environmental water was delivered to NSW rivers and water-dependent ecosystems. Natural flooding and environmental water releases boosted breeding opportunities for waterbirds and frogs, with waterbird numbers reaching levels not observed since 1984.

The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth Recovery Project activities continue following a period of significant low in-flows into the site in SA. In NSW, active wetland restoration projects have been implemented in Macquarie Marshes, Yanga National Park (Lowbidgee wetlands), Toorale National Park (Warrego wetlands), Hunter Estuary Wetlands and Gwydir Wetlands.

Wetland rehabilitation and monitoring demonstration sites have successfully been established in the Mackay-Whitsunday and Lower Burdekin regions in Queensland. Information on the sites is available here: <http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands/>.

Wetlands in WA that have recognised high ecological value are managed to ensure, where possible, that critical components, processes and ecosystem services are maintained. Varying tenures and governance arrangements within wetland catchments contribute to the varying pressures on wetland values and requirements for wetland restoration/rehabilitation works.

In Tasmania, a range of projects have been implemented at different sites. Examples include: the Waterhouse Conservation Area Project, which helped to minimise the impacts of recreational visitors to the Little Waterhouse Lake Ramsar site; addressing key threats to the Flood Plain Lower Ringarooma River Ramsar site; and addressing invasive species threats across 9224 ha of Ramsar sites in southern Tasmania.

The Glenelg River Restoration Project in Victoria has enabled the restoration of nearly 800 km of water frontage over 13 years. As a result of these efforts, the project was awarded the International RiverFoundation's Australian Riverprize in 2013 and is also a finalist for the 2014 International Riverprize.

The Hattah Lakes Environmental Watering Programme is one of Australia's largest environmental works projects, including the construction of a permanent pump station, regulators and environmental levees. On completion in 2013, the project won the Banksia Foundation Water – Our Most Precious Resource Award for increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of environmental water use at the Ramsar-listed Hattah Lakes and improving the flooding frequency of the lakes. More information is available here: <http://www.malleecma.vic.gov.au/>.

Australian NGOs have also contributed to restoration of wetlands. For example, the

Coastal 20 project, funded by the Australian Government and completed by WetlandCare Australia, restored the biodiversity and catchment values of 20 wetlands from Kempsey in NSW to Gladstone in Queensland.

STRATEGY 1.9 Invasive alien species. *Encourage Contracting Parties to develop a national inventory of invasive alien species that currently and/or potentially impact the ecological character of wetlands, especially Ramsar Sites, and ensure mutual supportiveness between the national inventory and IUCN's Global Register on Invasive Species (GRIS); develop guidance and promote procedures and actions to prevent, control or eradicate such species in wetland systems.*

1.9.1 Does your country have a comprehensive national inventory of invasive alien species that currently or potentially impact the ecological character of wetlands? {1.9.1} KRA 1.9.i

C - Partly

1.9.1 Additional information:

As indicated in the COP11 National Report, whilst Australia does not have a national inventory of invasive species developed specifically for the protection of wetlands, national lists of invasive weeds and pest animals to inform surveillance and management are available. Information on a number of other complementary national initiatives was provided in previous National Reports. Relevant initiatives implemented in the current triennium are described below.

The 'Australian Weeds Strategy' addresses issues related to wetlands to the extent that it deals with wetland weeds. Under the 'Australian Weeds Strategy' a number of Weeds of National Significance (WoNS) have been identified based on their invasiveness, potential for spread and environmental, social and economic impacts. A list of 20 WoNS was endorsed in 1999 and a further 12 added in 2012, some of which are aquatic weeds that are a significant threat to wetlands, particularly mimosa and salvinia. The strategy helps managers, developers and decision-makers understand the potential impacts of invasive species and plan for the sustainable development of aquatic ecosystems. The strategy is here:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/publications/strategies/weed-strategy.html>

Benchmark descriptions for 143 wetland ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) present in Victoria identify weed species that pose a high threat (further information available at <http://ics.water.vic.gov.au/ics/>). The presence of high threat weeds is one of the measures used to assess the condition of wetland biota in the Index of Wetland Condition.

1.9.2 Have national policies or guidelines on invasive species control and management been established for wetlands?
{1.9.2} KRa 1.9.iii

C - Partly

1.9.2 Additional information:

In addition to the policies in place for the purposes of invasive species management and control described under question 1.9.1, the Australian Government develops threat abatement plans.

Existing plans of relevance to wetlands include those for feral cats, foxes, pigs, weeds and diseases - such as the root-rot fungus *Phytophthora cinnamomi* and the infection of amphibians with chytrid fungus. In 2012, a threat abatement plan was developed to address the key threatening process 'Ecosystem degradation, habitat loss and species decline due to invasion of northern Australia by introduced gamba grass (*Andropogon gayanus*), para grass (*Urochloa mutica*), olive hymenachne (*Hymenachne amplexicaulis*), mission grass (*Cenchrus polystachios* syn. *Pennisetum polystachion*) and annual mission grass (*Cenchrus pedicellatus* syn. *Pennisetum pedicellatum*)'.

Several Ramsar sites are known to be affected by dieback caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*. The 'Threat abatement plan for disease in natural ecosystems caused by *Phytophthora cinnamomi*' came into force in January 2014.

Since the control of weeds and pest animals is primarily undertaken by state and territory governments, they are also responsible for the relevant management policies and guidelines (including for wetlands). The 'Victorian Waterway Management Strategy' includes policy and actions for the prevention and control of invasive species in Victoria's waterways.

In Tasmania the Weed Management Act 2000 provides the legislative backing to the state's strategic approach to weed management. Following declaration of a weed, a weed management plan for the weed must be prepared within twelve months. The development of the weed management plan also requires a period of public consultation.

Information on other state and territory programs is available here:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/invasive/weeds/government/roles/state.html>.

STRATEGY 1.10 Private sector. *Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

1.10.1 Is the private sector encouraged to apply the Ramsar wise use principle and guidance (Ramsar handbooks for the wise use of wetlands) in its activities and investments concerning wetlands? {1.10.1} KRA 1.10.i

A - Yes

1.10.1 Additional information:

In 2012 the Australian Government developed a fact sheet on the 'Wise use of wetlands in Australia' (<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/wise-use-wetlands-australia-fact-sheet>). This was circulated to a wide range of wetland stakeholders. The EPBC Act also provides some guidance on the wise use principle.

Under the Queensland Wetlands Program (a joint initiative of the Australian and Queensland governments) a number of guides on wetland management were produced for farmers and graziers. In the current triennium these include: 'Constructed (treatment) wetlands' (2013) and case studies of wetland management in various agricultural systems (2013).

The NSW Ramsar Managers Network brings together private and government wetland managers. The group meets twice yearly to discuss current issues, share learning and resources, and to advance sustainable wetland management.

NGOs also work with the private sector to encourage wise use of wetlands and assist with rehabilitation, particularly in the agricultural sector. WetlandCare Australia assists farmers and other landholders to access government funding and builds their capacity to undertake on-ground works restoring wetlands on rural properties.

1.10.2 Has the private sector undertaken activities or actions for the wise use and management of:

a. Ramsar Sites

b. Wetlands in general

{1.10.2} KRA 1.10.ii

a. A - Yes

b. A - Yes

1.10.2 Additional information:

a. Information on a selection of projects undertaken by the private sector for the wise use and management of Ramsar sites is provided below.

In Tasmania, a local Landcare group won a grant to develop a 10 year management plan for the Apsley Marshes Ramsar site, and to undertake some biological surveys to inform management planning. Weed control activities were also undertaken as part of this project.

In SA, private landholders and businesses within the 'Riverland' Ramsar site are working together to remove the threats (pest plants and animals) and to undertake ecological monitoring of wetlands and habitat restoration within the site.

Banrock Station Wetland Complex is a good privately owned demonstration site for the concept of 'wise use'. The site is owned by a wine making company that utilises adjacent land for grape production, while at the same time managing the Ramsar site on their property for conservation. The site provides significant recreational, tourism, educational and scientific research services and benefits.

The private sector is involved in the collaborative management for wise use of Ramsar sites across Western Australia. For example, business interests in the mining and pastoral industries participate in the development of management plans and implement management actions for key threatening processes at the Eighty-Mile Beach Ramsar site in the Kimberley region.

b. The private sector is also involved in projects on wetlands more generally.

Under the Australian Government's Reef Programme, agricultural industries are supported to uptake best management practices to improve water quality, through reduction in sediment, nutrients and pesticide loss from their land (<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/reef-rescue/>). This protects key coastal and marine ecosystems improving their health and resilience in a changing climate.

In Tasmania, wetland vegetation communities are present in covenanted reserves on 96 properties. This consists of 4390 ha, which includes 525 ha of threatened wetland vegetation communities under the Tasmanian Nature Conservation Act 2002, and 365 ha of saltmarsh communities that may be included in the recently listed endangered ecological community, saltmarsh communities under the EPBC Act. These reserves contribute to the national and Tasmanian reserve estate.

Other Tasmanian projects include further investment in stormwater and groundwater management projects at Nyrstar (a major industrial site on the Derwent River) and development and implementation of new oil spill prevention plans at Hydro Tasmania's power stations, including Meadowbank.

In NSW, the private sector is a vital steward for wetlands. Through mechanisms such as bio-banking, conservation agreements and private refuges, private landowners can ensure the protection of wetlands across the state.

Pastoralists in the Barkly Region in the NT are engaged in weed control and grazing management around the Barkly Lakes.

Additional programs, run by organisations such as WetlandCare Australia and Conservation Volunteers, provide opportunities to make a difference to the health of wetlands. An example of a project run by WetlandCare Australia is provided under question 1.8.2.

STRATEGY 1.11: Incentive measures. *Promote incentive measures that encourage the application of the wise use provisions of the Convention.*

1.11.1 Have actions been taken to implement incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands?
{1.11.1} KRA 1.11.i

A - Yes

1.11.1 Additional information:

A wide range of incentive programs continue to operate in Australia.

Under the Australian Government's Reef Programme Systems Repair funding, agricultural landholders and community groups are supported to protect, restore and rehabilitate wetland areas to improve biodiversity and assist in improving the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef. Additionally, Indigenous community groups are engaged to develop and implement Traditional Use of Marine Resources Agreements. These agreements include the sustainable use and management of a range of natural resources and ecosystems within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage area.

The COP11 National Report provided information on the Conservation Revolving Funds Programme, set up by the Australian Government to promote the use of revolving funds for conservation purposes. Funds are used to purchase properties with natural or cultural values and once a covenant is placed on the property's title it is on-sold. The Australian Government now provides funding to an additional not-for-profit group, Forest Conservation Fund in Tasmania, bringing the number to five.

The Moolort Wetlands Project is a partnership between the Trust for Nature in Victoria and the North Central CMA, funded by the Australian Government. The project provides farmers whose properties form part of the Moolort Plains wetland complex with the opportunity to permanently protect their wetlands with Trust for Nature conservation covenants. Since the project started at the end of 2011, 125 ha of wetlands on private land have been identified for protection with on-title conservation covenants. The Glenelg Hopkins CMA Wetland Tender project also protects 492 ha of wetland habitat under 17 agreements with landholders.

The Territory Natural Resource Management Board in Northern Territory brokers Territory Conservation Agreements with landholders to promote wise use of land. Some of these agreements cover wetlands.

In NSW, actions to implement incentive measures which encourage the conservation of wetlands include the bio-banking framework. Bio-banking enables biodiversity credits to be generated by landowners who commit to enhance and protect biodiversity values on their land. These credits can then be sold, generating funds for the management of the site. At a catchment-scale, Local Land Services provide incentives for rehabilitating wetlands through fencing, revegetating, alternative water points and stewardship payments.

The Queensland Government's Everyone's Environment grants programme is a \$12 million community-focused grassroots programme to help individuals and groups carry out activities that tackle environmental degradation and restoration works. Many projects targeting wetland habitats have received funding through the programme. The Indigenous Sea Country Management grants programme provides Queensland Traditional Owner groups with grants ranging from \$15 000 to \$200 000 to support the development of sustainable management practices in relation to dugongs, turtles and other marine resources.

Australian NGOs support the continuation of the Carbon Farming Initiative, establishment of accredited methodologies for restoring wetlands and attracting carbon credits, and funds to train the rural sector in these methods.

Information on other incentive measures is included in the response to question 1.8.2.

1.11.2 Have actions been taken to remove perverse incentive measures which discourage conservation and wise use of wetlands? {1.11.2} KRA 1.11.i

A - Yes

1.11.2 Additional information:

The National Water Initiative and the Water Act were developed to address perverse incentives in the context of water management. The National Water Initiative (NWI) is Australia's enduring blueprint for water reform through which governments across Australia agreed on actions to achieve a more cohesive national approach to the way Australia manages, measures, plans for, prices, and trades water. The NWI sets out to achieve a nationally compatible market, regulatory and planning based system—one that manages surface and groundwater resources for rural and urban use, and optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes. It represents a shared commitment by governments to increase the efficiency of Australia's water use, leading to greater certainty for investment and productivity, for rural and urban communities, and for the environment. In this way the NWI is central to addressing perverse incentives that discourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands.

Information about the Water Act is provided under Section 2, questions A and G and question 1.3.2.

GOAL 2. WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

Note: An optional Annex (Section 4) to this COP12 National Report Format is provided so that a Contracting Party, if it so wishes, can also provide additional information separately on each of its designated Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Sites).

REMINDER: In 'free-text' boxes please do not use double quotes " "; use single quotes ' ' instead.

STRATEGY 2.1 Ramsar Site designation. *Apply the 'Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance' (Handbook 14, 3rd edition).*

2.1.1 Have a national strategy and priorities been established for the further designation of Ramsar Sites, using the *Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List?* {2.1.1} KRA 2.1.i

C - Partly

2.1.1 Additional information:

The National Wetlands Policy, currently being developed, will include advice on the strategy and priorities for the future designation of Ramsar sites in Australia. This advice will be informed by the Convention's 'Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List'.

The Australian Wetland Network secretariat is working with World Wetland Network to develop a tool for NGOs globally to identify, assess and successfully advocate for wetlands to achieve Ramsar listing.

2.1.2 How many Ramsar Site designations are planned for the next triennium (2015-2018)? {2.1.4} KRA 2.1.iii

1 site

2.1.2 Additional information (If possible, please indicate the name(s) of the Site(s) and anticipated year of designation):

Designation of the Lower Glenelg Estuary and Long Swamp as a new Ramsar site is being considered for next triennium. The process of nomination will be in accord with that outlined in the 'Australian Ramsar site nomination guidelines'.

STRATEGY 2.2 Ramsar Site information. *Ensure that the Ramsar Sites Information Service . . . is available and enhanced as a tool for guiding the further designation of wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance and for research and assessment, and is effectively managed by the Secretariat.*

2.2.1 Are the Ramsar Sites Information Service and its tools being used in national identification of further Ramsar Sites to designate? {2.2.1} KRA 2.2.ii

B - No

2.2.1 Additional information:

As indicated in the response to question 1.1.1, Australian governments have considerable information on the environmental, cultural, social and economic values of Australian wetlands. This information is accessed in preference to the Ramsar Sites Information Service.

STRATEGY 2.3 Management planning - new Ramsar Sites. *While recognizing that Ramsar Site designation can act as a stimulus for development of effective site management plans, generally*

encourage the philosophy that all new Ramsar Sites should have effective management planning in place before designation, as well as resources for implementing such management.

2.3.1 Have all sites being prepared for Ramsar designation (2.1.2 above) had adequate management planning processes established? {2.3.1} KRA 2.3.i

A - Yes

2.3.1 Additional information:

The site currently being considered for Ramsar designation, Lower Glenelg Estuary and Long Swamp, has legal protection provided by listing of the Glenelg River Estuary and Victorian sections of the Glenelg River under the Victorian Heritage Rivers Act 1992 and the reservation of the Lower Glenelg National Park and Discovery Bay Coastal Park under the Victorian National Parks Act 1975. Management of the wetlands in the proposed Ramsar site is guided by a number of existing plans, including the Parks Victoria 'Ngootyoong Gunditj Ngootyoong Mara south-west draft management plan 2013', which covers parks and reserves in the far south-west of Victoria, and the 'Glenelg Estuary management plan' (2006). A specific management plan for the proposed Ramsar site will be prepared as part of the nomination process.

STRATEGY 2.4 Ramsar Site ecological character. *Maintain the ecological character of all designated Ramsar Sites, through planning and management.*

2.4.1 How many Ramsar Sites have a management plan? {2.4.1} KRA 2.4.i

56 sites

2.4.2 For how many of the Ramsar Sites with a management plan is the plan being implemented? {2.4.2} KRA 2.4.i

48 sites

2.4.3 For how many Ramsar Sites is a management plan currently being prepared? {2.4.3} KRA 2.4.i

5 sites

2.4.1 – 2.4.3 Additional information:

Site specific information for questions 2.4.1 and 2.4.2 is provided in Section 4 of this National Report.

Commonwealth marine reserves are managed by the Director of National Parks in accordance with the EPBC Act. Three Commonwealth marine reserves contain listed Ramsar sites: Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs (now part of the Lord Howe Commonwealth Marine Reserve); Lihou Reef and Coringa Herald (now part of the Coral Sea Commonwealth Marine Reserve); and Ashmore Reef (part of the Ashmore Reef Commonwealth Marine Reserve).

The Australian Government announced a review of management arrangements for Commonwealth marine reserves in December 2013. The marine reserves are under transitional management arrangements until the review is complete and management plans are in place. Transitional arrangements are consistent with previous management plans and take into account Ramsar wetlands. Australia's obligations under the Ramsar Convention will be considered in the development of management plans for Commonwealth Marine Reserves that contain Ramsar sites.

In Queensland, no single management plan applies to each of the four coastal Ramsar sites. A network of plans and strategies are implemented by various management authorities to ensure wise use and conservation of wetland values.

In Tasmania, the management plan for the one remaining state government managed Ramsar site without a plan, Lavinia State Reserve, is in draft form, to be released for public comment mid 2014.

In NSW, management plans are currently being reviewed for three Ramsar sites.

In WA, management plans are currently being updated or prepared for the Roebuck Bay, Eighty Mile Beach, Lake Warden, Lake Gore and Toolibin Lake Ramsar sites.

The management plan for Cobourg Ramsar site in the NT is in draft form.

In Victoria, management plans for ten of the state's 11 Ramsar sites are being renewed either within regional waterway strategies (currently being developed) or as standalone plans (for Gippsland Lakes, Western Port and Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar sites).

2.4.4 How many Ramsar Sites have a cross-sectoral management committee? {2.4.6} KRA 2.4.iv

26 sites

2.4.4 Additional information (If at least 1 site, please give the name and official number of the site or sites):

Site specific information for question 2.4.4 is provided in Section 4 of this National Report.

In Tasmania, all state government managed Ramsar sites are managed in cooperation and liaison with local government, neighbours and community groups. There is a cross-sectoral management committee for the Pitt Water-Orielton Ramsar site.

In SA, the Coorong, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland Ramsar site has cross sectoral management arrangements in place with a number of SA government agencies and organisations having specific management responsibilities. A specific management committee does not currently exist.

In WA, cross-sectoral management committees exist for Toolibin Lake (Recovery Catchment Team), Peel-Yalgorup (Technical Advisory Group), Roebuck Bay (the management of that portion of the Ramsar site within the Yawuru Nagula Roebuck Bay Marine Park is advised by the Yawuru Park Council), Lake Warden and Lake Gore (Ramsar Management advisory group) and Vasse-Wonnerup (Vasse Estuary Technical Working Group and the Vasse-Wonnerup Technical Advisory Group).

This triennium, an Aboriginal joint management arrangement was signed for the Narran Lake Nature Reserve Ramsar site in NSW. The reserve now has new facilities and a new Memorandum of Understanding to boost Aboriginal collaboration in the management of the reserve. Traditional Owners are also involved in the management of Paroo River Wetlands Ramsar site. Also in NSW, at the Myall Lakes Ramsar site, Aboriginal sites are managed with the support and involvement of the Traditional Owners. Aboriginal Green Teams have been established and are undertaking landscape rehabilitation programmes across the Ramsar site and adjoining reserves.

Cobourg Peninsula and Kakadu Ramsar sites in the NT are both joint-managed by Traditional Owners and the relevant national parks department.

2.4.5 For how many Ramsar Sites has an ecological character description been prepared? {2.4.7} KRA 2.4.v

53 sites

2.4.5 Additional information (If at least 1 site, please give the name and official number of the site or sites):

Site specific information for question 2.4.5 is provided in Section 4 of this National Report.

STRATEGY 2.5 Ramsar Site management effectiveness. *Review all existing Ramsar Sites to determine the effectiveness of management arrangements, in line with the 'Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance'.*

2.5.1 Have any assessments of the effectiveness of Ramsar Site management been made? {2.5.1} KRA 2.5.i

A - Yes

2.5.1 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Some sites', please indicate the year of assessment and the source of the information):

As stated in the COP11 National Report, Schedule 6 of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000 identifies principles for the management of wetlands of international importance, including that

management plans be reviewed at least every seven years. Further examples of assessment of management effectiveness include:

Parks Australia has developed a performance management framework incorporating performance indicators for national park management plans, including for Pulu Keeling National Park Ramsar site and Christmas Island National Park (The Dales and Hosnies Springs Ramsar sites). Assessments using these indicators will be conducted in 2014 for the first time. Future assessments are likely to be linked to future monitoring of the ecological character of these Ramsar sites in accordance with their ecological character descriptions.

As indicated under question 2.4.1, the Australian Government is currently reviewing management arrangements for Commonwealth marine reserves including those that contain three Ramsar sites. Following the review, new management plans will be prepared for these Commonwealth marine reserves. Management plans remain in effect for 10 years (unless revoked earlier) and include a monitoring and review component.

The 'Victorian Waterway Management Strategy sets out the framework for reporting and evaluation of Victoria's Waterway Management Programme. Interim evaluation of progress of the implementation of regional waterway strategies is undertaken after four years of an eight year programme, while a full independent review is undertaken at the end of the programme.

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service has recently established a monitoring and reporting framework to assist evaluating management effectiveness of public Ramsar sites. No assessments of the effectiveness of management plans for Ramsar sites have yet been undertaken. However, the recently approved 'Pitt Water-Orielton management plan' (2013) has a well-developed monitoring and evaluation section, identifying key desired outcomes and performance targets by which future management can be clearly measured.

STRATEGY 2.6 Ramsar Site status. *Monitor the condition of Ramsar Sites and address negative changes in their ecological character, notify the Ramsar Secretariat of changes affecting Ramsar Sites, and apply the Montreux Record, if appropriate, and Ramsar Advisory Mission as tools to address problems.*

2.6.1 Are mechanisms in place for the Administrative Authority to be informed of negative human-induced changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites, pursuant to Article 3.2? {2.6.1} KRA 2.6.i

A - Yes

2.6.1 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Some sites', please summarise the mechanism or mechanisms established):

Australian governments have an agreed approach for making Article 3.2 notifications. The assessment and notification of change in ecological character must be evidence based and undertaken in accordance with the 'National guidance on notifying change in ecological character of Australia's Ramsar wetlands (Article 3.2)'.

The Ramsar Rolling Review provides information on the status of Ramsar sites and helps to identify sites that may require assessment in relation to a possible change in ecological character. Site managers participate in the Rolling Review once every three years.

2.6.2 Have all cases of negative human-induced change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar Sites been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat, pursuant to Article 3.2? {2.6.2} KRA 2.6.i

A - Yes

2.6.2 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Some cases', please indicate for which Ramsar Sites the Administrative Authority has made Article 3.2 reports to the Secretariat, and for which sites such reports of change or likely change have not yet been made):

Once the Australian Government is advised that a possible change in ecological character has or may occur at a Ramsar site, it works with the relevant land manager to investigate the issue and reports any confirmed change to the Ramsar Secretariat in accordance with the 'National guidance on notifying change in ecological character of Australia's Ramsar wetlands (Article 3.2)'.

2.6.3 If applicable, have actions been taken to address the issues for which Ramsar Sites have been listed on the Montreux Record, including requesting a Ramsar Advisory Mission? {2.6.3} KRA 2.6.ii

Z - Not applicable

2.6.3 Additional information (If 'Yes', please indicate the actions taken):

.....

STRATEGY 2.7 Management of other internationally important wetlands. *Appropriate management and wise use achieved for those internationally important wetlands that have not yet been formally designated as Ramsar Sites but have been identified through domestic application of the Strategic Framework or an equivalent process.*

2.7.1 Has the ecological character of internationally important wetlands not yet designated as Ramsar Sites been maintained? {2.7.1} KRA 2.7.i

A - Yes

2.7.1 Additional information:

As indicated under question 2.3.1, there are management arrangements in place to protect the ecological character of the proposed Lower Glenelg Estuary and Long Swamp Ramsar site as the nomination process proceeds.

GOAL 3. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Note: in 'free-text' boxes please do not use double quotes “ ”: use single quotes ‘ ’ instead.

STRATEGY 3.1 Synergies and partnerships with MEAs and IGOs. *Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other intergovernmental agencies (IGOs).*

<p>3.1.1 Are the national focal points of other MEAs invited to participate in the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee? {3.1.2} KRAs 3.1.i & 3.1.iv</p>	C - Partly
<p>3.1.1 Additional information: The national focal point for the Convention on Migratory Species, the migratory bird agreements with Japan, China, and Republic of Korea, and the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership is invited to provide input to and attend meetings of the Wetlands and Aquatic Ecosystem Sub Committee (WAESC), Australia's National Ramsar Committee.</p>	
<p>3.1.2 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of UN and other global and regional bodies and agencies (e.g. UNEP, UNDP, WHO, FAO, UNECE, ITTO)? {3.1.3} KRA 3.1.iv</p>	C - Partly
<p>3.1.2 Additional information: Coordination and cooperation among international conventions in Australia at the national level takes place in a number of ways. The Administrative Authorities/focal points for the biodiversity-related conventions and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification are located within the same Ministry; therefore, implementation of these conventions is overseen by the same Minister. Being situated together facilitates communication, information sharing and engagement across focal areas on issues of mutual interest. Focal points for United Nations and other global and regional bodies are located within three Australian Government departments: Department of the Environment; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade; and Department of Agriculture. The United Nations Environment Programme focal point within the Department of the Environment regularly seeks input from the Ramsar National Focal Point. Formal processes exist to facilitate communication between these agencies/focal points, for example during the current triennium the Department of the Environment established the International Practitioners Forum for senior executives and the International Negotiators Network for officer level staff to improve collaboration amongst national focal points.</p>	

STRATEGY 3.2 Regional initiatives. *Support existing regional arrangements under the Convention and promote additional arrangements.*

3.2.1 Have you (AA) been involved in the development and implementation of a Regional Initiative under the framework of the Convention? {3.2.1} KRA 3.2.i

A - Yes

3.2.1 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Planned', please indicate the regional initiative(s) and the collaborating countries of each initiative):

Australia continues to play a leadership role in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership, a Ramsar Convention Regional initiative. This initiative also benefits from significant involvement from Australian wetland NGOs. The Australian Government currently chairs the Partnership's Seabird Working Group, and Australian NGOs currently chair the Shorebird Working Group and occupy a position on the Management Committee.

3.2.2 Has your country supported or participated in the development of other regional (i.e., covering more than one country) wetland training and research centres? {3.2.2}

B - No

3.2.2 Additional information (If 'Yes', please indicate the name(s) of the centre(s):

.....

STRATEGY 3.3 International assistance. *Promote international assistance to support the conservation and wise use of wetlands, while ensuring that environmental safeguards and assessments are an integral component of all development projects that affect wetlands, including foreign and domestic investments.*

3.3.1 [For Contracting Parties with a development assistance agency only ('donor countries')]: Has the agency provided funding to support wetland conservation and management in other countries? {3.3.1} KRA 3.3.i	A - Yes
<p>3.3.1 Additional information (If 'Yes', please indicate the countries supported since COP11):</p> <p>Australia provides core funding to the Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP) to assist in the implementation of their strategic priorities, which include biodiversity conservation and coordination of implementation of MEAs, including the Ramsar Convention, in the Pacific region.</p> <p>An example of a programme relevant to wetlands supported by Australia's aid agency is the provision of up to \$18 million (2011-17) for the Climate Change and Coastal Ecosystems Programme in partnership with the Government of Vietnam and GIZ (a German Government enterprise that works on international cooperation for sustainable development). The programme is providing support to five Vietnamese provinces to develop practical solutions to protect coastal ecosystems, including wetlands, and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Australia's support has improved the resilience of coastal environments to climate change through rehabilitation of over 40 ha of mangroves, increased the biodiversity of wetlands with improved water management policies, and supported new livelihood opportunities for communities that rely on these ecosystems, such as growing salt tolerant crops and sustainable aquaculture. This programme is supported in recognition that Vietnam's coastal environment, on which millions of people depend for their livelihoods, is under pressure from population growth, deforestation, erosion, flooding and the impacts of climate change. This is having serious impacts on the livelihoods of the poor. As a result, Australia's support will help reduce the negative impacts of climate change and other environmental degradation on poor people.</p>	
3.3.2 [For Contracting Parties with a development assistance agency only ('donor countries')]: Have environmental safeguards and assessments been included in development proposals proposed by the agency? {3.3.2} KRA 3.3.ii	A - Yes
<p>3.3.2 Additional information:</p> <p>The 'Environment Management Guide for Australia's Aid Programme 2012' supports the integration of environment considerations across Australia's aid programme. The Guide sets out the environmental management system for the aid programme, outlining what is required for Australia to meet its policy obligations and how to apply best practice in environmental management to Australian aid programme activities. The guide also describes the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's legal responsibilities under the EPBC Act.</p>	
3.3.3 [For Contracting Parties that have received development assistance only ('recipient countries')]: Has funding support been received from development assistance agencies specifically for in-country wetland conservation and management? {3.3.3}	Z - Not applicable
<p>3.3.3 Additional information (If 'Yes', please indicate from which countries/agencies since COP11):</p> <p>.....</p>	

STRATEGY 3.4 Sharing information and expertise. *Promote the sharing of expertise and information concerning the conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

3.4.1 Have networks, including twinning arrangements, been established, nationally or internationally, for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands that share common features? {3.4.1}

A - Yes

3.4.1 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Partly', please indicate the networks and wetlands involved):

The Affiliation Agreement between the City of Narashino in Japan and Brisbane City Council in relation to the Yatsu Higata Tidelandsa in Japan and Boondall Wetlands (Moreton Bay Ramsar site) in Queensland continued during the current triennium. Activities under the agreement focus on raising awareness, understanding and appreciation of migratory shorebirds and wetlands in order to encourage environmentally aware behaviours.

A twinning arrangement between Hunter Wetlands Centre (at the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site) and Kushiro wetlands dating back to 1994 has seen new activity since COP11 and involved other NGOs.

The Australasian Wader Study Group and Shorebirds 2020 support monitoring of shorebirds and training in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

3.4.2 Has information about your country's wetlands and/or Ramsar Sites and their status been made public (e.g., through publications or a website)? {3.4.2} KRA 3.4.iv

A - Yes

3.4.2 Additional information:

Information on Australian wetlands, including Ramsar sites, is made publicly available through a range of mechanisms. In particular, websites of relevant Australian and state/territory agencies are useful sources of information. These include:

- Australian Government Department of the Environment:
<http://www.environment.gov.au/node/33403>
- New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage:
<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/wetlands/riversandwetlands.htm>
- Queensland Department of Environment and Heritage Protection:
<http://wetlandinfo.ehp.qld.gov.au/wetlands>
- South Australian Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources:
<http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/managing-natural-resources/wetlands>
- Western Australian Department of Parks and Wildlife:
<http://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/management/wetlands>
- Tasmanian Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment:
<http://dpipwe.tas.gov.au/conservation/flora-of-tasmania/tasmanian-vegetation-types/about-tasmanias-wetlands> and Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service:
<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=3232>
- Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries:
<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au/water/rivers-estuaries-and-wetlands>

Publications that contain information about Australia's Ramsar sites and wetlands

more generally include 'Wetlands Australia', a biennial magazine containing articles written by and for the wetlands community (<http://www.environment.gov.au/resource/wetlands-australia>). It promotes information sharing between wetland managers, researchers and policy makers.

3.4.3 Has information about your country's wetlands and/or Ramsar Sites been transmitted to the Ramsar Secretariat for dissemination? {3.4.3} KRA 3.4.ii

A - Yes

3.4.3 Additional information:

Australia's national focal point and CEPA national focal point communicate regularly with the Ramsar Secretariat. In general this correspondence relates to site documentation, such as RIS updates, ECDs or information on site status. During 2014 there has been considerable correspondence regarding the fortieth anniversary of the listing of Cobourg Peninsula Ramsar site in 1974.

STRATEGY 3.5 Shared wetlands, river basins and migratory species. *Promote inventory and cooperation for the management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species.*

3.5.1 Have all transboundary wetland systems been identified? {3.5.1} KRA 3.5.i

Z - Not applicable

3.5.1 Additional information:

Australia has no wetlands that extend across national borders. Australia does participate in regional migratory bird agreements. See question 3.5.3 for further information.

3.5.2 Is effective cooperative management in place for shared wetland systems (for example, in shared river basins and coastal zones)? {3.5.2} KRA 3.5.ii

A - Yes

3.5.2 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Partly', please indicate for which wetland systems such management is in place):

In Australia there are a number of management arrangements in place that support catchment or basin scale management. A description of many of these was provided in Australia's COP11 National Report; the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement and regional natural resource management model described in the COP11 National Report are ongoing.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority works closely with jurisdictions and communities throughout the Basin at both a broad Basin scale for the implementation of the Basin Plan and to facilitate active operational coordination of water management (including environmental water) along the River Murray. In addition, the Authority is cooperating with the relevant Australian states in developing water resource plans for the 36 catchments within the Basin. The plans are required to be consistent with the Basin Plan's objectives which, among other things, include protecting and restoring declared Ramsar wetlands that depend on Basin water resources to maintain their ecological character.

3.5.3 Does your country participate in regional networks or initiatives for wetland-dependent migratory species? {3.5.3} KRA 3.5.iii

A - Yes

3.5.3 Additional information:

As indicated in the COP11 National Report, Australia has in place three bilateral migratory bird agreements that contribute to the conservation of migratory birds of the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. The agreements are:

- Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
- China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
- Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement.

All migratory bird species listed in the annexes to these bilateral agreements are protected in Australia as matters of national environmental significance under the EPBC Act.

GOAL 4. IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

Note: in 'free-text' boxes please do not use double quotes “ ”: use single quotes ‘ ’ instead.

STRATEGY 4.1 CEPA. *Support, and assist in implementing at all levels, where appropriate, the Convention's Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness Programme (Resolution X.8) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through communication, education, participation and awareness (CEPA) and work towards wider awareness of the Convention's goals, mechanisms, and key findings.*

4.1.1 Has an action plan (or plans) for wetland CEPA been established? {4.1.1} KRA 4.1.i

- a) At the national level
- b) Sub-national level
- c) Catchment/basin level
- d) Local/site level

- a) A - Yes
- b) A - Yes
- c) A - Yes
- d) A - Yes

(Even if no CEPA plans have been developed, if broad CEPA objectives for CEPA actions have been established, please indicate this in the Additional information section below)

4.1.1 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'In progress' to one or more of the four questions above, for each please describe the mechanism, who is responsible and identify if it has involved CEPA NFPs):

a) At the national level

In 2001, Australia developed a 'CEPA National Action Plan 2001-2005'. Whilst the plan has not been updated since 2002, some of its strategies are still implemented by the Australian Government. CEPA issues are proposed to be addressed in the National Wetlands Policy currently being developed by Australian governments. In the interim Australia's national CEPA action is guided by the 'Ramsar Strategic Plan 2009-2015' and draws on Convention CEPA resources and World Wetlands Day materials.

See also the response to question 1.7.2.

b) Sub-national level

States and territories also have in place CEPA plans, for example, in 2010 the NSW Government outlined its approach to CEPA in 'Delivering the Ramsar Convention in NSW: Responsibilities and Roles of Stakeholders in Managing Ramsar Wetlands in NSW'. The 'Victorian Waterway Management Strategy' includes policy and actions for community participation in the management of Victoria's waterways.

See also the response to question 1.7.2.

c) Catchment/basin level

See response provided to question 1.7.2.

d) Local/site level

In Australia, all ECDs for Ramsar wetlands set out CEPA messages and actions to guide the conservation, wise use and management of each site.

In NSW, the Hunter Wetlands Centre (Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site) has a strategic plan outlining community education, conservation and tourism objectives in line with Ramsar CEPA guidance. Also in NSW, many national park

plans of management (e.g. the 'Myall Lakes National Park Plan of Management') contain strategic actions for promoting community awareness and appreciation of the Ramsar site values.

- 4.1.2 How many centres (visitor centres, interpretation centres, education centres) have been established? {4.1.2} KRA 4.1.ii
- a) at Ramsar Sites
 - b) at other wetlands

a) 10 centres
b) 29 centres

4.1.2 Additional information (If centres are part of national or international networks, please describe the networks):

Detailed information for all Ramsar sites is provided in Section 4 of this National Report.

a) Wetland education centres at Ramsar sites: Hunter Wetlands Environmental Education Centre (Hunter Estuary); Botany Bay Environmental Education Centre (Towra Point); Bowali Visitors Centre and other facilities (Kakadu National Park); Banrock Station Wetland and Wine Centre (Banrock Station Wetland Complex); Edithvale-Seaford Wetland Education Centre; Broome Bird Observatory (Roebuck Bay); Lakes Hubs (The Coorong, Lake Alexandrina & Lake Albert Wetland); and centres at Moreton Bay, Cobourg Peninsula and Fivebough and Tuckerbil Swamps.

There are also a variety of information and interpretation facilities at other sites (such as Myall Lakes).

b) There are 17 education centres and 12 marine discovery centres at other wetlands/sites. Examples include: a visitor centre featuring wetlands at Tamar Island, Tasmania; three centres in WA (the Cockburn Wetland Education Centre (<http://cockburnwetlandcentre.wordpress.com/>); WA Gould League's centre at Herdsman Lake (<http://www.wagouldleague.com.au/about-us/wa-gould-league>) and the Piney Lakes Environmental Education Centre (<http://www.melvillecity.com.au/index.php/component/alfrescocontent/?nodeid=4fd40f8f-ada2-4058-bf78-0e8a2bd245ea>)); and a visitor centre at Window on the Wetlands and visitor facilities at Fogg Dam, both on the Adelaide River floodplain south of Darwin in the NT. In Victoria, the Winton Wetlands Visitor Hub and Café is scheduled for completion in November 2014.

4.1.3 Does the Contracting Party:

- a) promote stakeholder participation in decision-making on wetland planning and management
- b) specifically involve local stakeholders in the selection of new Ramsar Sites and in Ramsar Site management?

a) A - Yes

b) A - Yes

{4.1.3} KRA 4.1.iii

4.1.3 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Partly', please provide information about the ways in which stakeholders are involved):

a) As explained in previous National Reports, there are a range of mechanisms to enable stakeholders to contribute to decision-making processes. For example, for Australian Government reserves covering Ramsar wetlands, the preparation of national park management plans involves a formal public comment period (as outlined under the EPBC Act), as well as consultation with key stakeholders and local communities. For example, the 'Christmas Island National Park management plan' was discussed with and endorsed by the Christmas Island Tourism Association.

During the development of management plans for Department of Defence properties, key external stakeholders such as state government agencies, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and local Indigenous people are consulted.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority promotes stakeholder participation through the requirements of the Basin Plan and undertakes regular consultation with: Indigenous peoples; regional water advisory groups; scientific and academic community; irrigators, landholders and local community representatives; local and state/territory governments (whose jurisdictions fall within the Basin); and conservation organisations.

The CEWO works closely with communities in relation to environmental water use planning and management by participating in existing local engagement processes established by state agencies and CMAs. The CEWO Scientific Advisory Panel provides advice on methods for determining the relative priority of environmental assets. The six local engagement officers currently being recruited by the CEWO will work with communities to ensure local knowledge and views are taken into account in environmental water management decisions.

Examples of state and territory government processes that require public participation in wetlands planning and management are provided below. In NSW, there are five Environmental Water Advisory Groups that play an important role in advising the state government on environmental water management activities. They provide a unique forum for drawing on expert knowledge, including local knowledge and experience.

In Victoria, seasonal watering plans are developed by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder in consultation with key stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement is outlined in each of the seasonal plans, for example the Seasonal Watering Plan 2013-14 (<http://www.vewh.vic.gov.au/news-and-resources/resource-library/seasonal-watering-plan>).

Within the Riverland Ramsar site and the Coorong, Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland Ramsar site in SA, landholders come together to share ideas and collaborate on on-ground works and actions. Community groups are also involved in monitoring different wetlands along the length of the River Murray in SA and other wetlands in the state.

The Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Recovery Project incorporates community and Indigenous involvement in restoration activities, as well as providing education to the community on the Ramsar site. This includes a community advisory panel (CAP), established in early 2012 with a wide range of community stakeholders, to provide advice and guidance on management of the site and the implementation of the Long-Term Plan for the region. In accordance with International Association for Public Participation community engagement principles, the CAP enables community involvement, ownership and involvement in decision making.

b) Public consultation is a key component of the selection process for all new Ramsar sites as outlined in the 'Australian Ramsar Site Nomination Guidelines'. Local stakeholders, including councils and Indigenous people are consulted regarding the designation of new sites and their management. Public interest groups and individuals are able to nominate eligible wetlands for consideration; many Ramsar listings have resulted from public support and leadership.

<p>4.1.4 Has an assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention been made? {4.1.4} KRAs 4.1.iv & 4.1.viii</p>	C - Partly
<p>4.1.4 Additional information:</p> <p>In 2012 in order to identify training needs for Australian Government staff a needs analysis was undertaken. This resulted in a series of three courses being delivered to 63 participants in May and June 2012. The courses covered wetland ecology, environmental monitoring and wetland management planning and consultation.</p> <p>Under the Australian Government's One-Stop Shop policy, the Australian Government has committed to providing transitional support for states and territories in the form of embedded officers. This will enhance the existing state and territory processes for evaluating the environmental impacts of proposals, and ensure that Australia continues to meet its obligations under the Ramsar Convention.</p> <p>According to one Australian NGO, there is potential to commence an assessment of training need, given the strong network of wetland centres and university-based wetland programmes, involving academics with a wide range of specialisations. These assets could support a strategy to assess training needs and implement some pilot initiatives.</p>	
<p>4.1.5 How many opportunities for wetland site manager training have been provided since COP11? {4.1.5} KRA 4.1.iv</p> <p>a) at Ramsar Sites</p> <p>b) at other wetlands</p>	<p>Number of opportunities:</p> <p>a) 10</p> <p>b) 8</p>
<p>4.1.5 Additional information (including whether the Ramsar Wise Use Handbooks were used in the training):</p> <p>Comprehensive information on the number of training opportunities for site managers is not available. The above figures are likely to under estimate the number of opportunities available.</p> <p>Government staff involved in the management of wetlands, including Ramsar sites, have regular access to training. For example, in SA staff attend training and conferences to update skills on wetland management, monitoring, ecology and to share ideas and compare projects. In Tasmania, staff are assisted to attend national and regional training seminars and workshops. As indicated under question 4.1.4, Australian Government staff accessed wetland training in 2012. While no specific wetland training has been undertaken, biodiversity management training for reserve managers at Pulu Keeling National Park and Christmas Island National Park has been undertaken that covers relevant issues such as biodiversity monitoring and invasive species control.</p> <p>Since COP11, the NSW Ramsar Managers Network met twice yearly to participate in training and networking opportunities for Ramsar managers. The NSW Government has provided funding to support the Network since 2003.</p> <p>General wetland training courses delivered during the current triennium included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian Water School (6 March 2013) by eWater in Sydney • Australian Water School (15-17 May 2013) at the Gold Coast, Queensland • Floodplain Ecology Course (run in spring each year, 14-18 October 2013) Barmah Forest Ramsar site • Lowland Wetlands Ecology Course (18-21 November 2013) at Kilcunda South 	

Gippsland, Victoria

- 2014 WA Wetland Management Conference (31 January 2014) at Cockburn Wetlands Education Centre, Perth, Western Australia
- Wetlands for Blue Carbon: Obligations and Opportunities Workshop (30 June 2014) in Sydney

Also, an eBook training manual was published by the Sydney Olympic Park Authority 'Workbook for Managing Urban Wetlands in Australia'. Available here:

http://www.sopa.nsw.gov.au/resource_centre/wet_ebook_workbook_for_managing_urban_wetlands_in_australia.

The University of Melbourne supported by the Victorian Department of Environment and Primary Industries offers a Graduate Certificate in River Health Management. The course is accredited as a 12 month part-time course designed for rural and urban waterway management professionals.

4.1.6 Do you have an operational cross-sectoral National Ramsar/Wetlands Committee or equivalent body? {4.1.6} KRA 4.3.v

A - Yes

4.1.6 Additional information (If 'Yes', indicate a) its membership; b) number of meetings since COP11; and c) what responsibilities the Committee has):

Australia's National Ramsar Committee, the Wetlands and Aquatic Ecosystems Sub Committee, comprises representatives from the Australian Administrative Authority, state and territory governments, the National Water Commission and the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. Specific organisations and individuals, including representatives of NGOs and scientific/technical organisations, are invited to attend meetings where relevant. The Sub Committee generally meets twice a year.

4.1.7 Are other communication mechanisms (apart from a national committee) in place to share Ramsar implementation guidelines and other information between the Administrative Authority and:

- Ramsar Site managers
- other MEA national focal points
- other ministries, departments and agencies

a) A - Yes
b) A - Yes
c) A - Yes

{4.1.7} KRA 4.1.vi

4.1.7 Additional information (If 'Yes' or 'Partly', please describe what mechanisms are in place):

a) There are regular, direct communications between the Australian Government Department of the Environment and site managers relating to nomination and management of Ramsar sites.

The Australian Government has made significant investment in developing tools and site-specific information to support management of Ramsar sites. For example, the 'Australian National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands' draw on Ramsar guidance (see: <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/ramsar-convention-wetlands/australian-national>). The Department is currently developing an online management toolkit.

For further information on communication mechanisms used by the Administrative Authority see responses to questions 4.1.8 and 4.1.9.

Despite existing mechanisms, there is scope for improved communication with site managers. NGOs have suggested there would be value in a communication mechanism to connect all Ramsar site managers.

b) As indicated in response to question 3.1.2, there are both formal and informal mechanisms in place to facilitate communication between MEA national focal points.

c) The Administrative Authority works collaboratively with relevant Australian, state and territory government departments and agencies, including those managing Ramsar sites. The nature and frequency of this interaction depends on the issue.

4.1.8 Have Ramsar-branded World Wetlands Day activities (whether on 2 February or at another time of year), either government and NGO-led or both, been carried out in the country since COP11? {4.1.8}

A - Yes

4.1.8 Additional information:

Each year in Australia, World Wetlands Day (WWD) activities are carried out by Australian, state, territory and local governments, as well as a variety of community organisations. A calendar of events is hosted on the Australian Government Department of the Environment website:

<http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/world-wetlands-day/list-world-wetlands-day-2014-events>.

Australian Government WWD activities include an annual 'Wetlands Australia' magazine, videos, fact sheets, brochures and displays. Details of these activities and materials are here: <http://www.environment.gov.au/topics/water/water-our-environment/wetlands/world-wetlands-day>

At least one event is held in SA each year. In 2013, the SA Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources presented at a WWD community forum in Renmark. In addition a 'Sharing science, monitoring and discovery from the Lakes and Coorong' forum provided the opportunity for the community to learn from and talk with researchers about aquatic, ecological, and abiotic (water quality and soil) monitoring and research, and how it is used to manage the Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland Ramsar site. Community members were also able to share their knowledge and observations with the scientists.

Every year Queensland communities host wetland themed activities marking WWD. In 2014, Townsville hosted a Wetland Expo at the Townsville Cultural Centre, coordinated by WetlandCare Australia. The event was held with partners including the Australian Government's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Reef HQ Aquarium, Townsville City Council, Queensland Department of Forestry and Fisheries (QDAFF), the Queensland Wetlands Program (QWP) and Conservation Volunteers Australia. The activities and information presented at the Expo complemented the WWD theme of Wetlands and Agriculture: Partners for Growth.

In 2012 the QWP sponsored WetlandCare Australia's National Art and Photography Competition with \$5000 towards the newly established Indigenous Open Art category. In total, an estimated 1800 visitors viewed the exhibition at five venues including at the river management conference, the International Riversymposium.

Many of the ten catchment management authorities in Victoria organise WWD events. Examples in 2014 included: 'breakfast with the birds' held at Hirds Swamp in the Kerang Wetlands Ramsar site; the Edithvale-Seaford Wetland Education

Centre Community open day; and WWD at the Western Treatment Plant in the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula Ramsar site.

NGOs suggest there would be value in evaluating WWD activities undertaken by governments and NGOs to investigate audiences and impacts. There is also potential to establish partnerships to customise Ramsar messages for Australia.

4.1.9 Have campaigns, programmes, and projects (other than for World Wetlands Day-related activities) been carried out since COP11 to raise awareness of the importance of wetlands to people and wildlife and the ecosystem benefits/services provided by wetlands? {4.1.9}

A - Yes

4.1.9 Additional information (If these and other CEPA activities have been undertaken by other organizations, please indicate this):

The Australian Wetland Network (AWN) is a national network of NGOs. The AWN has 30 members representing peak organisations and national organisations, regional and local groups involved in advocacy, education and wetland management. The AWN supports Australian NGOs working on the wise use and conservation of wetlands. It provides a communication platform for people working in wetland management via an email list for correspondence, forums and other avenues.

In addition to activities to commemorate WWD, the Australian Government has undertaken a variety of activities to raise awareness of wetlands during the current triennium, including publication and distribution of a brochure on 'Australia's amazing wetlands', the online publication of an issues paper on 'The role of wetlands in the carbon cycle' and online publication of a 'Literature review of the economic value of ecosystem services that wetlands provide'. Fact sheets were also produced on a range of issues, including urban wetlands, and wetlands and agriculture.

In 2014, Australia celebrated the fortieth anniversary of Cobourg Peninsula being designated as the world's first Ramsar wetland – including a touring exhibition, short video, web pages and articles promoting the values of Cobourg and other Ramsar wetlands (see: <http://www.environment.gov.au/node/35219>).

The QWP, in partnership with the Australian Government's Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, produced a range of interactive education and awareness-raising products to build community understanding of the importance of wetland ecosystems. Products include the Wetland Education Toolkit, a classroom teaching resource providing a collection of ideas, information and activities to support effective wetland education. The Toolkit is aligned to the Australian Curriculum for Science and Geography.

The NSW Office of Environment and Heritage has produced four short videos about the delivery of environmental water. The videos outline how delivery of environmental water in partnership with landholders is benefitting vegetation, birds, frogs and native fish (<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/environmentalwater/watergallery.htm>).

At the Riverland Ramsar site in SA, one-on-one meetings were held with landholders to plan on-ground works to control threats within the Ramsar site. This involved discussions on the biodiversity benefits and importance of the wetlands. Community barbecues have also been held as information sessions on the Ramsar wetland. An 'Ecosystem Benefits and Community Values Survey' was undertaken in conjunction with the CSIRO to contribute a community perspective to the ecological character description of the Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina

and Albert Wetland Ramsar site. Results will be fundamental to set future management directions.

In Tasmania, CEPA programs included: 'Discovery Ranger' activities for reserve visitors at Waterhouse Conservation Area; an innovative presentation on the 2013 waterbird count at Moulting Lagoon Ramsar site; and a short video clip with music and count data posted on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVAWGgAryq4>).

Pulu Keeling National Park has provided information about wetland conservation through the local Cocos Keeling Island's paper, the Atoll.

STRATEGY 4.2 Convention financial capacity. *Provide the financial resources necessary for the Convention's governance, mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expectations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties, within the availability of existing resources and by the effective use of such resources; explore and enable options and mechanism for mobilization of new and additional resources for implementation of the Convention.*

4.2.1

a) Have Ramsar contributions been paid in full for 2012, 2013 and 2014? {4.2.1} KRA 4.2.i

A - Yes

b) If 'No' in 4.2.1 a), please clarify what plan is in place to ensure future prompt payment:

.....

4.2.2 Has any additional financial support been provided through voluntary contributions to non-core funded Convention activities? {4.2.2} KRA 4.2.i

A - Yes

4.2.2 Additional information (If 'Yes' please state the amounts, and for which activities):

In 2013 Australia provided a contribution to SPREP to enable the updating of wetland inventories for Oceania contracting parties. The successful consultants have also delivered wetland training in participating countries.

In 2014 Australia provided funding support for the sixth Oceania regional meeting.

STRATEGY 4.3 Convention bodies' effectiveness. *Ensure that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Secretariat are operating at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness to support the implementation of the Convention.*

4.3.1 Have you (AA) used your previous Ramsar National Reports in monitoring implementation of the Convention? {4.3.1} KRA 4.3.ii

A - Yes

4.3.1 Additional information (If 'Yes', please indicate how the Reports have been used for monitoring):

On a number of occasions during the triennium the Administrative Authority has

analysed Australia's implementation of the Ramsar Strategic Plan. One input to these analyses is previous National Reports.

STRATEGY 4.4 Working with IOPs and others. *Maximize the benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs*) and others.*

* The IOPs are: BirdLife International, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature), Wetlands International, and WWF International.

4.4.1 Has your country received assistance from one or more of the Convention's IOPs in its implementation of the Convention? {4.4.1} KRA 4.4.iii

A - Yes

4.4.1 Additional information (If 'Yes' please name the IOP (or IOPs) and the type of assistance received):

Australian IOPs have provided input to and advice on the development of government policy including the National Wetlands Policy and Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds. Australian IOPs also contributed to this National Report and provide advice to the Australian Government on draft resolutions to be considered by COP.

4.4.2 Has your country provided assistance to one or more of the Convention's IOPs? {4.4.2} KRA 4.4.iii

A - Yes

4.4.2 Additional information (If 'Yes' please name the IOP (or IOPs) and the type of assistance provided):

The Australian Government, through its Caring for our Country program, has continued to support BirdLife Australia in the current triennium. Funding has been provided for: the Shorebirds 2020 project; Beach-nesting birds project; and Woodland birds for Biodiversity project. These projects improve awareness and understanding of Australia's birds (including migratory species), improve management and decision-making, provide increased protection for threatened species and involve communities in conservation.

In 2013 Australia provided funding to SPREP to support the updating of wetland inventories for Oceania contracting parties. Wetlands International – Oceania was involved in the delivery of the project.