



NATIONAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RAMSAR CONVENTION ON WETLANDS

**National Reports to be submitted to the 10th Meeting
of the Conference of the Contracting Parties,
Republic of Korea, 28 October – 4 November 2008**

Please submit the completed National Report, in electronic (Microsoft Word) format, and preferably by e-mail, to the Ramsar Secretariat by **31 March 2008**.

National Reports should be sent to: Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Secretariat (dufour@ramsar.org)

Introduction & background

1. This Ramsar COP10 National Report Format (NRF) has been approved by the Standing Committee for the Ramsar Convention’s Contracting Parties to complete as their national reporting to the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties of the Convention (Republic of Korea, October/November 2008).
2. Following Standing Committee discussions at its 35th meeting in February 2007, and its Decisions SC35-22, -23 and -24, this COP10 National Report Format has been significantly revised and simplified in comparison with the National Report Formats provided to previous recent COPs.
3. In particular this National Report Format provides a much smaller number (66) of implementation “indicator” questions, compared with the much larger suite of questions on all aspects of national implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan 2003-2008 included in previous NRFs.
4. The COP10 NRF indicators include, with the agreement of the Standing Committee (Decision SC35-24), certain indicators specifically requested to be included by the Convention’s Scientific & Technical Review Panel (STRP) and CEPA Oversight Panel, in order to facilitate their information gathering and reporting on key aspects of scientific, technical and CEPA implementation under the Convention.
5. The 66 indicator questions are grouped under each of the implementation “Strategies” approved by the Parties at COP9 (Resolution IX.8) in the Convention’s “A Framework for the implementation of the Convention’s Strategic Plan 2003-2008 in the 2006 -2008 period” (www.ramsar.org/res/key_res_ix_08_e.htm). The indicators have been selected so as to provide information on key aspects of the implementation of the Convention under each of its Strategies.
6. In addition, for each Strategy the option is provided for a Contracting Party, if it so wishes, to supply **additional information** concerning its implementation under each indicator and, more generally, on implementation of other aspects of each Strategy.

The purposes and uses of national reporting to the Conference of the Contracting Parties

7. National Reports from Contracting Parties are official documents of the Convention, and are made publicly available through their posting on the Convention’s Web site.
8. There are six main purposes for the Convention’s National Reports. These are to:
 - i) provide data and information on how the Convention is being implemented;
 - ii) capture lessons/experience, so as to allow Parties to develop future action;
 - iii) identify emerging issues and implementation challenges faced by Parties that may require further attention through Convention processes;
 - iv) provide a means for Parties to be accountable against their obligations under the Convention;
 - v) provide each Party with a tool to help it assess and monitor its progress in implementation, and plan for its future implementation and priorities; and
 - vi) provide an opportunity for Parties to draw attention to their achievements during the triennium.
9. In addition, the data and information provided by Parties in their COP10 National Reports now have another important purpose, since a number of the indicators in the National Reports on Parties’ implementation will provide key sources of information for the analysis and assessment of the “ecological outcome-oriented indicators of effectiveness of the implementation of the Convention” currently being further developed by the Scientific and Technical Review Panel for Standing Committee and COP10 consideration.

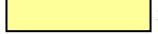
10. To facilitate the analysis and onward use of the data and information provided by Contracting Parties in their National Reports, once received and verified by the Ramsar Secretariat all information is entered and held by the Secretariat in a database, which then facilitates extraction and analysis of the information for a number of purposes.
11. The Convention's National Reports are used in a number of ways. These include:
 - i) providing the basis for reporting by the Secretariat to each COP on the global and regional implementation, and progress in implementation, of the Convention. This is provided to Parties at COP as a series of Information Papers including:
 - the Report of the Secretary General on the implementation of the Convention at the global level (see, e.g., COP9 DOC 5);
 - the Report of the Secretary General pursuant to Article 8.2 (b), (c), and (d) concerning the List of Wetlands of International Importance (see, e.g., COP9 DOC 6); and
 - the reports providing regional overviews of the implementation of the Convention and its Strategic Plan in each Ramsar region (see, e.g., COP9 DOCs 10-13);
 - ii) providing information on specific implementation issues in support of the provision of advice and decisions by Parties at COP. Examples at CO9 included:
 - Resolution IX.15, *The status of sites in the Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance*, and
 - Information Papers on *Issues and scenarios concerning Ramsar sites or parts of sites which cease to meet or never met the Ramsar Criteria* (COP9 DOC 15) and *Implementation of the Convention's CEPA Programme for the period 2003-2005* (COP9 DOC 25);
 - iii) providing the source of time-series assessments of progress on specific aspects in the implementation of the Convention, included in other Convention products. An example is the summary of progress since COP3 (Regina, 1997) in the development of National Wetland Policies, included as Table 1 in Ramsar Wise Use Handbook 2 (3rd edition, 2007); and
 - iv) providing information for reporting to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) on the national-level implementation of the CBD/Ramsar Joint Work Plan and the Ramsar Convention's lead implementation role for the CBD for wetlands.

The structure of the COP10 National Report Format

12. In line with Standing Committee Decisions SC35-21 and SC35-22, the COP10 National Report Format is in three sections.
13. **Section 1** provides the Institutional Information about the Administrative Authority and National Focal Points for the national implementation of the Convention.
14. **Section 2** is a “free-text” section in which to provide a summary of various aspects of national implementation progress and recommendations for the future.
15. **Section 3** provides the 66 implementation indicator questions, grouped under each Convention implementation strategy, and with a “free-text” section under each Strategy in which the Contracting Party may, if it wishes, add further information on national implementation of the Strategy and its indicators.

Guidance for filling in and submitting the COP10 National Report Format

IMPORTANT – READ THIS SECTION OF GUIDANCE BEFORE STARTING TO FILL IN THE NATIONAL REPORT FORMAT

16. All three Sections of the COP10 National Report Format should be filled in, in one of the Convention's official languages (English, French, Spanish).
17. The deadline for submission of the completed National Report Format is **31 March 2008**. It will not be possible to include information from National Reports received from Parties after that date in the analysis and reporting on Convention implementation to COP10.
18. All fields with a pale yellow background  must be filled in.
19. 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 in the COP10 NRF is optional, Contracting Parties are encouraged to provide such additional information wherever possible and relevant, since it is the experience of the Secretariat that such explanatory information is very valuable in ensuring a full understanding of implementation progress and activity, notably in informing the preparation of global and regional implementation reports to COP.
20. In order to assist Contracting Parties in their provision of such additional information, for a number of indicator questions some particularly helpful types of such information are suggested. However, of course, Parties are free to add any other relevant information they wish in any of the “Additional implementation information” fields.
21. The Format is created as a “Form” in Microsoft Word. You are only able to move to, and between, each of the yellow or green boxes to give your replies and information. All other parts of the form are locked.
22. To go to a yellow or green field you wish to fill in, 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.
23. To move down the sequence of fields to fill in, you can also use the “Tab” key on the computer keyboard.
24. For a “free-text” field, you can type in whatever information you wish. If you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green or yellow “free-text” box, it is recommended that you 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. This is because within the “Form” format there is limited facility to make editorial changes within the “free-text” box once text has been entered.
25. 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 asked in the indicator, but are in general of the form: “Yes”, “No”, “Partly”, “In progress”, etc.
26. For each indicator question you can choose only one answer. If you wish to provide further information or clarifications concerning your answer, you can provide this in the green additional information box below the relevant indicator question.
27. 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.

28. The NRF is not intended normally to be filled in by one person alone – for many indicators it would seem best for the principal compiler to consult with colleagues in the same and other agencies within the government who might have fuller knowledge of the Party's overall implementation of the Convention. The principal compiler can save the work at any point in the process and return to it subsequently to continue or to amend answers previously given.
29. After each session working on the NRF, remember to save the file! A recommended filename structure is: COP10NRF [Country] [date].
30. After the NRF has been completed, please send the completed National Report to the Ramsar Secretariat, preferably by email, to Alexia Dufour, Regional Affairs Officer, Ramsar Convention Secretariat, email: dufour@ramsar.org. The Secretariat must receive your completed National Report in electronic (Microsoft Word) format.
31. When the completed National Report is submitted by the Party, **it must be accompanied by a letter or e-mail message in the name of the Administrative Authority, confirming that this is that Contracting Party's official submission of its COP10 National Report.**
32. If you have any questions or problems concerning filling in the COP10 NRF, please contact the Ramsar Secretariat for advice (e-mail as above).

SECTION 1: INSTITUTIONAL INFORMATION

NAME OF CONTRACTING PARTY: AUSTRALIA	
DESIGNATED RAMSAR ADMINISTRATIVE AUTHORITY	
Name of Administrative Authority:	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
Head of Administrative Authority - name and title:	Mr David Borthwick Secretary
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Email:	
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DESIGNATED NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO STRP (SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANEL)	
Name and title of focal point:	Ms Deb Callister Director Wetlands Section
Name of organisation:	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
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DESIGNATED GOVERNMENT NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO THE CEPA PROGRAMME ON COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS	
Name and title of focal point:	Mr Ian Krebs
Name of organisation:	Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts
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DESIGNATED NON-GOVERNMENT NATIONAL FOCAL POINT FOR MATTERS RELATING TO THE CEPA PROGRAMME ON COMMUNICATION, EDUCATION AND PUBLIC AWARENESS	
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SECTION 2: GENERAL SUMMARY OF NATIONAL IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

In your country, in the past triennium (i.e., since COP9 reporting):

A. What new steps have been taken to implement the Convention?

Australia has been implementing the Ramsar Convention in the following ways:

Paroo River Wetlands Ramsar site

On 13 September 2007, Australia's 65th Ramsar site, the Paroo River Wetlands, was designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention. The 138,304 ha Ramsar site is on the Paroo River, the last remaining free-flowing river in the northern Murray-Darling Basin. The Paroo River's wetlands include large lakes, tree-lined creeks and waterholes, lignum, canegrass swamps, and artesian mound springs. The Ramsar site contains one of the last remaining unregulated wetland systems in New South Wales (NSW).

The Paroo River Wetlands support a number of threatened plant and animal species, migratory birds and significant native fish communities. The Ramsar site has significant cultural value for the region's two major indigenous groups, the Baakandji and Budjiti people, who were closely involved in the development of the listing. The site meets six of the Ramsar Convention's nine nomination criteria.

'Riverland' Ramsar site boundary change

In 2003, a consultation process was initiated around the development of a management plan for the "Riverland" Ramsar site in South Australia. Concerns were raised from the community about the appropriateness of the boundary of the Ramsar site. The original boundary of the site included elevated areas of private land used for horticultural and agricultural purposes with little or no wetland value. Following these concerns being raised, an extensive community consultation process was initiated, which investigated options for any boundary change that would be consistent with Ramsar Convention guidance.

On 11 September 2007, Australia designated a change to the boundary of the Riverland site. The change added areas of wetland and floodplain, and removed some non-wetland areas from the Ramsar site.

In considering the boundary change, Australia drew on guidance from Ramsar Convention Article 2.5, 4.2 and Resolutions VIII.20, VIII.21, VIII.22 and particularly IX.6. One of the scenarios outlined in Resolution IX.6 is where "A set of linear boundaries has been used to define the Ramsar site boundaries which do not relate to the eco-geography of the wetlands and their associated catchments". This equates to the Riverland situation, where roads had been used for the boundary, rather than a management unit which better fits the extent of the wetland floodplain — in this instance the 1956 floodline.

National Water Reforms

The Water Act 2007 (the Act) commenced on 3 March 2008. The Act will enable water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin to be managed in the national interest, optimising environmental, economic and social outcomes. The objectives of the Act include: to

manage Murray-Darling Basin water resources in a way that gives effect to relevant international agreements and to protect, restore and provide for the ecological values and ecosystem services of the Murray-Darling Basin.

The Act establishes an independent Murray-Darling Basin Authority with the functions and powers, including enforcement powers, needed to ensure that Basin water resources are managed in an integrated and sustainable way.

The Act requires the Authority to prepare a strategic plan for the integrated and sustainable management of water resources in the Murray-Darling Basin. This plan is referred to as the Basin Plan. The Act establishes mandatory content for the Basin Plan, including:

- limits on the amount of water (both surface water and groundwater) that can be taken from Basin water resources on a sustainable basis – known as long-term average sustainable diversion limits. These limits will be set for Basin water resources as a whole and for individual water resources;
- identification of risks to Basin water resources, such as climate change, and strategies to manage those risks;
- requirements that a water resource plan will need to comply with if it is to be accredited under the Act;
- an environmental watering plan to optimise environmental outcomes for the Basin by specifying environmental objectives, watering priorities and targets for Basin water resources;
- a water quality and salinity management plan which may include targets; and
- rules about trading of water rights in relation to Basin water resources.

The Basin Plan will help to give effect to relevant international agreements (to the extent that those agreements are relevant to the use and management of Basin water resources) and to balance environmental, social and economic considerations as they relate to the integrated management of Basin water resources. Relevant international agreements include; the Ramsar Convention, the Biodiversity Convention, the Desertification Convention, the Bonn Convention, CAMBA, JAMBA, ROKAMBA and the Climate Change Convention.

The Act establishes a Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder (CEWH). The CEWH will manage the Commonwealth's environmental water to protect and restore the environmental assets of the Murray-Darling Basin, and outside the Basin where the Commonwealth owns water.

Funding for water reform: Water for the Future

In April 2008, the Australian Government announced an investment of AU\$12.9 billion over ten years to support water reform. Water for the Future is built on four key priorities that integrate what all levels of government in Australia should be striving to achieve in the area of water:

- taking action on climate change,
- using water wisely,
- securing water supplies; and
- supporting healthy rivers.

The Australian Government's water holdings will include its share of water savings made through the programs under Water for the Future.

In the Murray-Darling Basin, these holdings will be managed consistent with the

Environmental Watering Plan that will be developed by the Murray-Darling Basin Authority. The Environmental Watering Plan will be part of the Basin Plan and will be developed in consultation with state governments and stakeholders. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority will coordinate its activities with other holders of environmental water in the Basin.

Existing state environmental water entitlements will be held separately to the Australian Government entitlements. Protocols will be developed among holders of environmental water to enable this water to be managed in a coordinated manner.

AU\$50 million from Water for the Future has been allocated in 2007-08 to enable the CEWH to purchase water entitlements from willing sellers. In the Murray-Darling Basin, these entitlements will be managed consistently with the Environmental Watering Plan that forms part of the Basin Plan. Outside the Basin, the CEWH will manage its water holding to protect and restore environmental assets such as Ramsar listed wetlands and to water water-dependent ecosystems with threatened species.

The Water Act 2007 and the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, combine to establish a robust legislative framework for the protection and wise use of Australia's Ramsar wetlands.

The National Water Initiative:

The National Water Initiative (NWI) is Australia's blueprint for national water reform. The NWI Agreement was signed by all governments at the 25 June 2004 Council of Australian Governments meeting (with the exception of Tasmania which signed the Agreement on 3 June 2005 and Western Australia which signed the Agreement on 6 April 2006).

The NWI builds on the previous Council of Australian Governments (COAG) framework for water reform signed by the Australian Government and all state and territory governments in 1994. Since 1994, national reform agreements of this kind have proved important in Australia for guiding the shape of water reform and maintaining the pace of water reform.

The NWI represents the Australian Government's and state and territory governments' shared commitment to water reform in recognition of:

- the continuing national imperative to increase the productivity and efficiency of Australia's water use;
- the need to service rural and urban communities; and
- ensuring the health of river and groundwater systems, including by establishing clear pathways to return all systems to environmentally sustainable levels of extraction (paragraph 5, NWI).

The National Water Initiative signifies:

- a commitment to identifying over-allocated water systems, and restoring those systems to sustainable levels;
- the expansion of the trade in water resulting in more profitable use of water and more cost-effective and flexible recovery of water to achieve environmental outcomes;
- more confidence for those investing in the water industry due to more secure water access entitlements, better registry arrangements, monitoring, reporting and accounting of water use, and improved public access to information; and
- more sophisticated, transparent and comprehensive water planning, and better and more efficient management of water in urban environments, for example through the increased use of recycled water and stormwater.

The Living Murray Initiative:

The Living Murray Initiative was initiated in 2004 and has a total commitment of AU\$700 million over five years to recover an annual average of up to 500 gigalitres of water for environmental use at six icon sites, which include parts of the following Ramsar sites:

- 'Riverland', South Australia;
- New South Wales Central Murray State Forests;
- Barmah Forest, Victoria;
- Gunbower Forest, Victoria;
- Hattah-Kulkyne Lakes, Victoria; and
- The Coorong, and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Wetland, South Australia.

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission has a complementary investment stream under the Living Murray Environmental Works and Measures Program. This Program facilitates effective application of recovered water through the design and construction of site-specific infrastructure and other measures.

Queensland Wild Rivers Act 2005:

The Wild Rivers Act 2005 was established to preserve the natural values of wild rivers within the state of Queensland. Six wild river declarations took effect on 28 February 2007. Community consultation for the nomination of three additional river basins began in June 2008.

Once a wild river area is declared, certain types of new development and other activities within the river, its major tributaries and catchment area will be prohibited, while other types must be assessed against the Wild River Code. Each wild river declaration identifies these developments and other activities.

The natural values to be preserved through a wild river declaration are:

- hydrological processes (unimpeded runoff, stream flow, aquifer recharge and spring discharge);
- geomorphic processes (unimpaired movement of sediments along the river system resulting in stable bed and banks and sediment delivery to estuaries, floodplains and downstream reaches);
- water quality (of sufficient physical, chemical and biological quality to meet human and ecological needs);
- riparian function (intact riparian trees, shrubs and sedges to protect stream banks and to provide food and habitat for native animals); and
- wildlife corridors (sufficient areas of natural habitat within and along the river system to allow native fauna to migrate within their natural ranges).

Queensland Wetlands Program:

The Queensland Wetlands Program (QWP) is a five year, AU\$23 million program funded by the Australian and Queensland governments to underpin better management of Queensland Wetlands. Significant achievements to date include:

- over 40 on-ground wetland projects in the Great Barrier Reef catchment;
- a decision support tool to prioritise wetlands for investment;
- wetland education products;
- wetland rehabilitation guidelines;
- wetland mapping and classification;
- wetland management profiles;

- web-based wetlands mapserver;
- ecological character descriptions for two Ramsar sites; and
- a comprehensive wetlands information website (WetlandInfo).

A component of QWP, the Great Barrier Reef Coastal Wetlands Protection Program, aims to halt and reverse the decline in the quality of water entering the Great Barrier Reef by developing and implementing measures for the long term conservation and management of priority wetlands in the Great Barrier Reef Catchment.

Reef Water Quality Protection Plan

In order to address the decline in water quality entering the Great Barrier Reef, the Australian and Queensland Governments, in partnership with a wide range of industry and community groups, developed the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan (Reef Plan).

The Reef Plan's focus areas are addressing the factors that affect water quality through:

- improving decision making in landuse planning;
- adopting sustainable production systems;
- rehabilitating damaged wetland and riparian areas; and
- conserving existing wetland and riparian areas.

The Reef Plan is seeking to build on existing government policies and industry and community initiatives that will assist in halting and reversing the decline in the quality of water entering the Reef. It identifies actions, mechanisms and partnerships to do this, focusing on relatively low cost measures to encourage good planning and to assist land managers in adopting best management practices that are both profitable and environmentally sustainable.

The NSW Wetlands Recovery Program

The NSW Wetland Recovery Program (total funds AU\$26.8 million) is a suite of projects that aim to restore the ecological health of the Gwydir Wetlands and the Macquarie Marshes. The Australian Government contribution (AU\$13.4 million) will ensure best use of environmental water in NSW; it will target projects to improve the science, water delivery and community engagement aspects of environmental water management.

The Program consists of four sub-projects:

- acquisition and management of water for environmental benefit;
- enabling better use of environmental water by modelling, monitoring and decision support system;
- ensuring better delivery of environmental water through works and river management measures; and
- boosting the benefits of environmental water on private land through conservation agreements, and recording Aboriginal culturally significant wetland activities.

The Program will build on the NSW Wetland Recovery project previously funded through the Water Smart Australia Programme and expand the NSW Governments Riverbank Initiative.

NSW Rivers Environmental Restoration Program (RERP)

The NSW Rivers and Environmental Restoration Program will build on the NSW Wetland Recovery program previously funded through the Water Smart Australia Program and

expand the NSW Government's Riverbank Initiative. RERP (NSW Government AU\$101.5 million and Australian Government AU\$ 71.7 million) supports threatened environments, primarily through the purchase and delivery of greater volumes of water. Specifically, the program purchases water access licences through the existing water market and directs this water to the targeted wetlands.

Under the RERP, funding is available for water purchase and the costs associated with the management and use of water licences. Australian Government funds will also be used to ensure that the benefits of the acquired water are secured, maximised and demonstrated. In particular, it will:

- help to build a better understanding of the eco-systems we are trying to support through various research projects and the development of management tools;
- invest in the infrastructure needed to maximise the benefits of water delivered for these systems; and
- communicate and seek partnerships with landholders, whose co-operation and commitment is required to ensure the success of the program.

Administrative Framework: Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce

As the Administrative Authority for the implementation of the Ramsar Convention, the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) has been working towards improved administrative arrangements for implementing the Ramsar Convention. In most cases, this is undertaken by the Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce (WWTF), which is chaired by the Administrative Authority and draws its membership from representatives from each of the State and Territory Governments.

New activities undertaken by the WWTF include:

1. Review of Australia's Ramsar Estate - The Ramsar Snapshot:

An initial snapshot of Australia's Ramsar estate was undertaken in 2007 to assess the current status of Ramsar documentation, assess major threats and management issues facing Australia's Ramsar sites and make recommendations to inform the development of a long-term Rolling Review of Australia's Ramsar estate. The Administrative Authority is aiming to have the full and Summary Report to the Ramsar Snapshot available on its website in the second half of 2008.

2. Development of Australian National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands – Implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia:

The aim of the guidelines is to facilitate improved management of Ramsar sites and maintenance of ecological character, in line with Australia's commitments under the Ramsar Convention and responsibilities under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act). The EPBC Act includes specific Ramsar provisions. The guidelines will provide a more coherent framework for Ramsar implementation in Australia and provide jurisdictions and other interested parties with clear guidance on related policies and procedures.

The guidelines are being developed as a series of modules, or chapters, on topics including: introduction to the Ramsar Convention; process for nominating Ramsar wetlands; developing Ecological Character Descriptions (ECDs); requirements for mapping Ramsar wetlands; and management planning guidelines. The two modules below have recently been endorsed for national adoption by the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council.

Mapping Specifications for Australian Ramsar Wetlands:

The mapping specifications outline the standards for delineation of boundaries, data capture and management, and map production for Australia's Ramsar wetlands. They are based on the interpretation of Ramsar Guidance on mapping of wetlands and are intended to provide guidance to managers of Ramsar wetlands and agencies that have a role in the preparation and approval of documentation for Ramsar wetlands. They will also be useful in an EPBC Act context, by ensuring adequate and accurate mapping of Ramsar site boundaries.

National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands:

This framework provides a national standard method for describing the ecological character of Ramsar wetlands, including minimum essential elements. The ECD of a wetland provides the baseline description of the wetland at a given point in time, which can be used to assess change in the ecological character of these sites. It provides information about the environmental features and ecosystem services, components and processes of the site especially those relating to the Ramsar Criteria met by the site and the limits of acceptable change for those services, components and processes.

It forms the reference for the following activities:

- development and implementation of a management plan designed to maintain the ecological character of the site;
- the design of a monitoring program to detect change in ecological character;
- assist in reporting to the Australian Government and the Ramsar Convention about any changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites; and
- environmental impact assessment of the likely impact on ecological character of proposed actions, including that required under the EPBC Act.

3. Development of an Australian Wetlands Inventory:

A framework for developing an Australian Wetlands Inventory has been agreed by the WWTF. The Australian Wetland Inventory and Mapping Project is underway and will provide recommendations on national standards and methodologies for wetland inventory and wetlands-related data and information. Comprehensive mapping of wetlands, which is a first step in inventory has been substantially progressed in Queensland, the second largest provincial jurisdiction in Australia, under the Queensland Wetlands Programme. This will provide a model of wetland mapping protocols and approaches for potential application in other jurisdictions.

4. Wetland Indicators:

A set of Draft National Wetland Indicators, for monitoring and reporting on wetland extent, distribution and condition, has been agreed by the WWTF. The draft indicators are being trialled through a number of projects being conducted by state and territory governments which are being coordinated by the National Land and Water Resources Audit.

In 2005, Victoria developed a provisional Index of Wetland Condition (IWC), a rapid assessment method for assessing the condition of naturally occurring, non-marine-influenced wetlands in Victoria. The IWC is currently being tested. It broadly aligns with the national indicators framework.

Ramsar Management Planning Program (RaMPP):

The Administrative Authority has established a funding program- the Ramsar Management Planning Program (RaMPP) - to assist in meeting Ramsar Convention obligations that are outlined in the EPBC Act. Activities that may be supported under the

program include the development of modules of the national Ramsar Guidelines, and preparation of Ramsar site nomination documentation, site management plans, Ramsar Information Sheets and Ecological Character Descriptions.

New initiatives to protect Migratory Shorebirds:

Australia's first two bilateral agreements relating to the conservation of migratory birds were formed between the Japanese and Chinese Governments in 1974 and 1986, respectively. The JAMBA and CAMBA agreements list terrestrial and wetland birds (including shorebirds) which migrate between our countries.

1. ROKAMBA

In April 2002, Australia and the Republic of Korea agreed to develop a bilateral migratory bird agreement similar to JAMBA and CAMBA. The ROKAMBA (Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement) was signed in Canberra on 6 December 2006 and entered into force on 13 July 2007. The ROKAMBA formalises Australia's relationship with the Republic of Korea in respect to migratory bird conservation and provides a basis for collaboration on the protection of migratory shorebirds and their habitat.

2. The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership:

The Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway (Flyway Partnership), which was launched in Bogor, Indonesia on 6 November 2006, represents an important new step in international efforts to conserve migratory waterbirds and their habitats in the flyway. The Ramsar Convention Secretariat is a Partner, and the Partnership has been recognised as a Regional Initiative contributing to the Ramsar Convention.

The development of the Flyway Partnership was led by the Governments of Australia and Japan and Wetlands International as a partnership initiative of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (see 2.6.1). It succeeds and builds on the considerable achievements of the Asia Pacific Migratory Waterbird Conservation Strategy and the action plans for Cranes, Anatidae and Shorebirds, which have facilitated cooperation on migratory waterbird conservation in the Asia Pacific region since 1996. The Flyway Partnership represents the major international framework for the conservation of migratory waterbirds and their habitat in the Flyway, promoting dialogue, cooperation and collaboration between a range of stakeholders. Such international cooperation is essential for the conservation of migratory waterbirds by providing for their protection throughout the Flyway.

3. Australia's Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds:

At the national level, Commonwealth legislation in the form of the EPBC Act, provides for protection of migratory waterbirds in Australia as a matter of national environmental significance. The Act also provides for the development of plans to conserve listed species, of which the Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds was the first to be made under the Act in February 2006. The Plan was prepared in consultation with relevant stakeholders and outlines the research and management activities to be implemented over the next 5 years in support of the conservation of the 36 species of migratory shorebirds that visit Australia each year.

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

- a. Development of the National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia's Ramsar Wetlands.
- b. The successful listing of the Paroo River Wetlands as Australia's 65th Ramsar site.
- c. The successful boundary rationalisation to the 'Riverland' Ramsar site.
- d. Continued operation of the EPBC Act. The Act provides a framework for management

- of Australia's wetlands through the Ramsar management principles which have been set out in the regulations and cover matters relevant to the preparation of management plans and environmental assessment of actions that may affect Ramsar sites.
- e. The signing of the Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Birds Agreement (ROKAMBA)
 - f. The East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership
 - g. Australia's Wildlife Conservation Plan for Migratory Shorebirds
 - h. Continued functioning of the New South Wales Ramsar Managers Network (for managers of privately owned Ramsar sites, to gain support and improve communication)
 - i. Programs funded by State and Commonwealth Governments that support the implementation of the Ramsar Convention include: Natural Heritage Trust, Queensland Wetlands Programme, New South Wales Wetland Recovery Program and Rivers Environmental Restoration Program.

C. What have been the greatest difficulties in implementing the Convention?

The greatest difficulty in implementing the Convention in this triennium has been providing adequate volumes of water to Ramsar sites. This has meant that many Ramsar sites are under stress and the challenge of managing sites for wise use when there is insufficient water to meet human, agricultural and environmental needs has been significant.

Balancing these demands and supplying sites with sufficient water to meet their ecological needs in the context of historical water-use practices requires management and reform within catchments. This continues to be a complex and contentious process. The ongoing record drought conditions are exacerbating the pressure being placed on these already stressed systems.

Wise use of our water resources in the face of long-term climate change is also a key challenge for Australia. Australia is one of the driest inhabited continents on earth and is more vulnerable to climate change than many other industrialised nations. The Australian Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO's) Murray-Darling Basin Sustainable Yields Project has forecast, under a median climate change scenario, that there will be far less water available in 2030 in most Murray-Darling Basin catchments. Australia will continue to work to conserve the values of Ramsar wetlands in areas affected by climate change.

See also section 3, 1.1.4.

Another difficulty continues to be securing sufficient human and financial resources to implement the Convention consistently and effectively across all sites and across all jurisdictions.

A project currently underway to trial draft national indicators of wetland extent, distribution and condition and to prepare guidance on developing an Australian Wetlands Inventory will assist in measures to improve monitoring of sites, which should in turn improve planning around how best to manage Ramsar sites. Similarly, current activity to prepare or update ecological character descriptions for Australian Ramsar sites will help to provide data on the threats and pressures facing these sites as well as identifying the knowledge gaps that prevent site managers from gaining a comprehensive understanding of how sites function. These projects will inform management planning and on-ground action to preserve the ecological character of Australian Ramsar sites.

D. What proposals and priorities are there for future implementation of the Convention?

- a. Implementation of the Water Act 2007 (see 2A);

- b. Recovery of additional water for important aquatic ecosystems, including some Ramsar sites;
- c. Development and implementation of methodologies to identify High Conservation Value Aquatic Ecosystems;
- d. Completion of the remaining modules of the Australian National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands – Implementing the Ramsar Convention in Australia (see 2A);
- e. Implementation of the two completed modules of the Australian National Guidelines for Ramsar Wetlands: the National Framework and Guidance for Describing the Ecological Character of Australia’s Ramsar Wetlands and Mapping Specifications for Australian Ramsar Wetlands (see 2A);
- f. Establishment of the Australian Wetland Inventory including standards for mapping and inventory collection (see 2A);
- g. Development and implementation of the Ramsar Rolling Review (see 2A);
- h. Implementation of the Ramsar Management Planning Program- ensuring that all necessary Ramsar documents are up to date (see 2A);
- i. Finalisation of a set of National Wetland Indicators for monitoring wetland extent, distribution and condition based on conceptual models which synthesise the science on how wetlands function (see 2A); and
- j. Delivery of Caring for Our Country program which will be a key component of the future implementation of the Ramsar Convention. The Australian Government will invest AU\$2.25 billion over five years on this new program to restore the health of Australia’s environment and build on improved land management practices. The program will focus on the key goals of a healthier environment, which is better-protected, well-managed and more resilient against the challenges of climate change. It will invest in projects which match six national priorities:
 - Australia’s national reserve system;
 - biodiversity and natural icons (including weeds, feral animals and threatened species);
 - coasts and critical aquatic habitats;
 - sustainable farm practices and Landcare;
 - natural resource management in remote and northern Australia; and
 - community skills, knowledge and engagement.

E. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Ramsar Secretariat?

Yes.

The Ramsar web site is an invaluable tool with which contracting parties can access important resources, guidance, tools; and network to assist their implementation of the convention. However, navigating through the web site is sometimes difficult and is not as intuitive as might be expected. A review of the web site by the Secretariat with a view to enhancing the web sites accessibility and performance, would further assist Contracting Parties to implement the convention.

Ramsar National Report

The COP10 National Report Format (NRF) was locked against copying text. Since Item 24 of the NRF guidance warns against modifying text within boxes, a new document was created to fulfil the necessary consultation and modification process. The time-consuming need to manually transcribe questions would have been avoided if text from the NRF could be copied.

- F. Does the Contracting Party have any recommendations concerning implementation assistance from the Convention's International Organisation Partners (IOPs)?

No

The Australian Administrative Authority has a positive working relationship with the IOPs.

- G. 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?

In the Australian context such linkages are already in place and are made possible by the fact that the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, is the Administrative Authority for MEAs in the biodiversity cluster. As such, structural and process arrangements within the Administrative Authority allow for better linking of implementation of these MEAs.

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

Australia is taking steps to build these linkages in the following ways:

- Through legislative frameworks such as the Water Act 2007 and EPBC Act 1999;
- Through structural and process arrangements within and across government agencies with responsibility for such strategies.

- I. Does the Contracting Party have any other general comments on the implementation of the Convention?

No

SECTION 3: INDICATOR QUESTIONS & FURTHER IMPLEMENTATION INFORMATION

Guidance for filling in 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 either one or more of the specific indicators for each strategy, and/or for other aspects of the national implementation of this strategy, please provide this information in the green “free-text” boxes below the indicator questions for each Strategy.
3. If you wish to amend any of the text you have put in a green “free-text” box, it is recommended that you 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. So as to assist Contracting Parties in referring to relevant information they provided in their National Report to COP9, for each indicator below (where appropriate) a cross-reference is provided to the equivalent indicator(s) in the COP9 NRF, shown thus: {x.x.x}

GOAL 1. THE WISE USE OF WETLANDS

STRATEGY 1.1: *Describe, assess and monitor the extent and condition of wetland resources at relevant scales, in order to inform and underpin implementation of the Convention, in particular in the application of the wise use principle.*

Indicator questions:

1.1.1 Does your country have a comprehensive National Wetland Inventory? {1.1.1}	C - In progress
1.1.2 Is the wetland inventory data and information maintained and made accessible to all stakeholders? {1.1.3; 1.1.6}	C - Partly
1.1.3 Does your country have information about the status and trends of the ecological character of wetlands (Ramsar sites and/or wetlands generally)? {1.2.2} [if “Yes”, please indicate in Additional implementation information below, from where or from whom this information can be accessed]	A - Yes
1.1.4 If the answer is “Yes” in 1.1.3, does this information indicate that the need to address adverse change in the ecological character of wetlands is now greater, the same, or less than in the previous triennium, for: a) Ramsar sites b) wetlands generally	---

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.1.1 – 1.1.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “1.1.3: [.. additional information ...]”

1.1.1

A range of wetland inventory data are available in Australia, but not all areas / wetlands are covered and the data are not integrated into a single inventory. A framework for developing an Australian Wetlands Inventory is being progressed. A project is underway to provide recommendations on national standards and methodologies for wetland inventory and wetlands-related data and information. Comprehensive mapping of wetlands, which is a first step in inventory, has been substantially progressed in Queensland, the second largest provincial jurisdiction in Australia, under the Queensland Wetlands Program. This will provide a model of wetland mapping protocols and approaches for potential application in other jurisdictions.

Data about wetlands is held at the state level by the relevant jurisdiction, whilst national level data and maps associated with Australia's Ramsar and other important wetlands are held in the Australian Wetlands Database referred to in 1.1.2 below.

1.1.2

The Australian Wetlands Database lists all wetlands that have been designated as either Internationally Important (Ramsar Wetlands) or Nationally Important, and is available online (<http://www.environment.gov.au/water/publications/environmental/wetlands/database/index.html>). The database currently contains information on Australia's 65 Ramsar sites and 905 Nationally Important Wetlands. Ramsar Information Sheets and descriptions of Nationally Important wetlands are available for each site.

Metadata records for existing geospatial datasets (including datasets owned by State governments and other jurisdictions) are accessible via the Australian Spatial Data Directory, an online searchable database (<http://asdd.ga.gov.au>). PDF files of wetland areas already mapped in Queensland are available through the WetlandInfo website at: (<http://www.epa.qld.gov.au/wetlandinfo/site/index.html>).

1.1.3

Ecological Character Descriptions (ECDs) are progressively being produced for all Australian Ramsar sites. An ongoing Rolling Review process for Ramsar sites is under development. A draft set of national indicators for wetland extent, distribution and condition has been agreed and is being trialled. Information about Ramsar site status, threats and recommended actions to address these threats are also included in Ramsar site management plans.

Information about the status of the ecological character of wetlands is also collected through site specific research, site monitoring, through targeted research to inform management planning and other scientific research, monitoring and assessment projects.

1.1.4

Concerns have been raised about the ecological character of several Ramsar sites, particularly sites in the Murray-Darling Basin. Major projects have been funded to improve the management and understanding of wetlands, such as the AUS\$26.8 million New South Wales Wetland Recovery Program. Target areas for this program include Ramsar sites in the Macquarie Marshes and Gwydir wetlands.

Existing threats continue to influence the ecological character of some Ramsar sites. These threats may have eased or increased over the triennium, depending on the site. In the current triennium, Australia made an Article 3.2 notification regarding the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site (see 2.4.2). Actions to address adverse change are a continuation of those underway in the previous triennium. Threats which are of concern include drought, salination, increasing agricultural and urban water demands and the exacerbating

influence of climate change. Acid sulfate soils have emerged as a new issue.

In early 2008, a significant concern arose in relation to the Coorong and Lake Alexandrina and Albert Ramsar site (Coorong Ramsar site). The threat of most immediate concern is declining water levels and the resultant exposure of acid sulfate soils (ASS). The site is located at the mouth of the River Murray in the Murray-Darling Basin, which during the last seven years has experienced the second driest seven-year period on record and record low inflows. Emergency pumping of water from Lake Alexandrina to the smaller Lake Albert commenced in May 2008 and is currently preventing further exposure of ASS and the acidification of Lake Albert.

The Australian and South Australian Governments are working with the Murray-Darling Basin Commission to develop a range of short, medium and long term options for the management of the Coorong Ramsar site. The Australian Government is also providing \$200 million to South Australia to support the development of a long term management response for this site.

Further information will be provided in Australia's National Report for the 2008-2011 triennium.

Australia recognised that better information is needed on the status of wetlands and trends in their condition. Efforts are underway to improve the information base for monitoring and management of wetlands through the preparation of ECDs, a Rolling Review of Ramsar sites, and the trialling of nationally agreed indicators on wetland extent, distribution and condition.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.1 national implementation:

STRATEGY 1.2: *Develop, review, amend when necessary, and implement national or supranational policies, legislation, institutions and practices, including impact assessment and valuation, in all Contracting Parties, to ensure that the wise use principle of the Convention is being effectively applied, where possible specifying the appropriate policy instrument(s) in each Contracting Party which ensures wise use of wetlands.*

Indicator questions:

1.2.1 Is a National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) in place? {2.1.1} [If "Yes", please give the title and date of the policy in Additional implementation information]	A - Yes
1.2.2 Does the National Wetland Policy (or equivalent instrument) incorporate any World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) targets and actions? {2.1.2}	A - Yes
1.2.3 Have wetland issues been incorporated into national strategies for sustainable development (including National Poverty Reduction Plans called for by the WSSD and water resources management and water efficiency plans)? {2.1.2}	A - Yes

1.2.4 Has the quantity and quality of water available to, and required by, wetlands been assessed?	C - Partly
1.2.5 Are Strategic Environmental Assessment practices applied when reviewing policies, programmes and plans that may impact upon wetlands? {2.2.2}	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.2.1 – 1.2.5 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “1.2.3: [.. additional information ...]”

1.2.1

Wetland policies are in place in individual government jurisdictions across Australia:

- Commonwealth: Commonwealth Wetlands Policy, 1997;
- Queensland: Strategy for the Conservation and Management of Queensland Wetlands, 1999;
- Victoria: Victoria's Biodiversity Strategy, 1997;
- New South Wales: Wetlands Management Strategy, 1996;
- South Australia: Wetlands Strategy for South Australian, 2003;
- Tasmania: Tasmanian Wetlands Strategy, 2000;
- Western Australia: Wetlands Conservation Policy for Western Australia, 1997;
- Northern Territory: A Strategy for the Conservation of Biological Diversity of the Wetlands of the Northern Territory of Australia, 2000; and
- Australian Capital Territory: Think water , act water - a strategy for sustainable water resources management, 2004.

1.2.2

The Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (2.6.1) was formed as a WSSD Type II Partnership initiative and supports the implementation of components of Part IV of the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

1.2.3

Australia has a range of initiatives in place that incorporate wetland issues into delivering sustainable development. These include:

- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999;
- The Water Act 2007;
- the National Water Quality Management Strategy (NWQMS);
- The National Water Initiative; and
- Queensland Water Resource Plans and Resource Operations Plans aim to equitably manage water for social, environmental and economic needs.

1.2.4

Under the National Water Initiative (2004), all water allocation plans prepared require water allocations for the environment, based on an estimate of environmental water requirements. The methodologies for these estimates vary. Water quality is not always assessed under these plans.

One of the requirements of the Basin Plan of the Water Act 2007 is the preparation of an environmental watering plan for the Murray-Darling Basin, to optimise environmental outcomes for the Basin (see 2A).

The Australian Government is investigating the watering needs of nationally and internationally important wetlands in the Murray Darling Basin. The outcomes of this project will further inform the allocation of water within the Basin.

Under the NSW Wetland Recovery Program, the water requirements of and water availability to the Gwydir Wetlands and the Macquarie Marshes Ramsar sites are being assessed, in order to guide management and optimise environmental outcomes. See also 2A.

Victoria's Food Bowl Modernisation Project will assess the water requirements for rivers and wetlands in the Goulburn and Murray regions.

The Living Murray Initiative (see 2A) includes an assessment of the water requirements, of six icon sites along the River Murray and the watering regimes required (including volume, timing,

frequency, duration) to meet the environmental objectives for these six icon sites.

In Queensland, Water Resource Plans prepared under the Queensland Water Act 2000 provide a blueprint for future sustainability by establishing a framework to share water 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.

1.2.5

Under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, the Commonwealth Environment Minister may agree to conduct a strategic assessment of actions that may be carried out under a proposed policy, program or plan. This will allow for the early assessment of the cumulative impacts of relevant actions under that policy, program or plan.

In all states and territories there is legislation that requires environmental impact assessment for certain types of development, land use change or in relation to ecosystems of particular conservation concern.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.2 national implementation:

STRATEGY 1.3: Increase recognition of the significance of wetlands for reasons of water supply, coastal protection, flood defence, climate change mitigation, food security, poverty reduction, cultural heritage, and scientific research, with a focus on under-represented ecosystem types, through developing and disseminating methodology to achieve wise use of wetlands.

Indicator questions:

1.3.1 Has an assessment been conducted of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by Ramsar sites? {3.3.1} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in the Additional implementation information below, the year of assessment and from where or from whom this information can be obtained]	C - Partly
1.3.2 Have wise use wetland programmes and/or projects that contribute to poverty alleviation objectives and/or food and water security plans been implemented? {3.3.4}	A - Yes
1.3.3 Has national action been taken to implement the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands (Resolution VIII.17)? {3.2.1}	B - No
1.3.4 Has national action been taken to apply the guiding principles on cultural values of wetlands (Resolutions VIII.19 and IX.21)? {3.3.3}	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.3.1 – 1.3.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "1.3.3: [.. additional information ...]"

1.3.1

Assessment of the ecosystem benefits/services of Ramsar sites is undertaken as part of the development of the Ecological Character Description (ECD) for each site. A phased approach is being taken to develop ECDs for all Australian Ramsar wetlands. ECDs have been completed or are under development for 44 (68%) of Australia's 65 Ramsar sites.

1.3.2

Examples include:

- National Water Initiative (2004);
- The Water Act 2007;
- Queensland Wetlands Program; and
- Queensland Water Resource Plans

1.3.3

Peatlands form a small portion of Australia's wetlands. Nonetheless, seven of Australia's 65 Ramsar sites are listed as containing peat ecosystems. Action to implement the Guidelines for Global Action on Peatlands has been undertaken at a site level rather than nationally. For example:

- The Namadgi Sphagnum bog project- recovery and rehabilitation of Sphagnum bogs damaged in fires in January 2003 (Parks Conservation and Lands, Australian Capital Territory).
- Restoration of Bogong High Plains mossbeds damaged by fire and grazing (Victorian Department of Sustainability and Environment, Bogong High Plains Restoration Alliance, North East Catchment Management Authority).

1.3.4

Paragraph 25 of the National Water Initiative requires that all water access entitlements and planning frameworks recognise indigenous needs in relation to water access and management.

Schedule 6 to the Environment and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000, includes the following general principles for managing wetlands of international importance:

" 1.02 Wetland management should provide for public consultation on decisions and actions that may have a significant impact on the wetland.

1.03 Wetland management should make special provision, if appropriate, for the involvement of people who:

- (a) have a particular interest in the wetland; and
- (b) may be affected by the management of the wetland.

1.04 Wetland management should provide for continuing community and technical input."

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.3 national implementation:

STRATEGY 1.4: Integrate policies on the conservation and wise use of wetlands in the planning activities in all Contracting Parties and in decision-making processes at national, regional, provincial and local levels, particularly concerning territorial management, groundwater management, catchment/river basin management, coastal and marine zone planning, and responses to climate change, all in the context of implementing Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM).

Indicator questions:

1.4.1 Has the Convention's water-related guidance (see Resolution IX.1. Annex C) been used/applied in decision-making related to water resource planning and management? {3.4.2 – r3.4.xiv}

B - No

1.4.2 Have CEPA expertise and tools been incorporated into catchment/river basin planning and management?	C - Partly
1.4.3 Has the Convention's guidance on wetlands and coastal zone management (Annex to Resolution VIII.4) been used/applied in Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) planning and decision-making? {3.4.5}	C - Partly
1.4.4 Have the implications for wetland conservation and wise use of national implementation of the Kyoto Protocol been assessed? {3.4.9}	B - No

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.4.1 – 1.4.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “1.4.3: [.. additional information ...]”

1.4.1

The Convention's water-related guidance was not specifically used in decision-making, however water reform in Australia is broadly compatible with this advice. Both the National Water Initiative and the Water Act 2007, and associated plans and programs, recognise that functioning wetland ecosystems are a prerequisite for clean water systems. Both recognise the need for allocation of water to the environment.

1.4.2

Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations are responsible for delivery of CEPA expertise across the suite of NRM issues, including those affecting wetlands. These organisations typically develop promotional materials, run information sessions and activities and act as conduits for information dissemination on NRM issues for the public. They receive funding from the Australian Government as well as from State and Territory Governments. However, there is no clear mechanism for monitoring the level of implementation or delivery.

The Australian Government has supported several CEPA initiatives:

Funding has been produced through the Natural Heritage Trust to:

(a) Wetland Management Solutions - a consortium of four partner organisations: 1. Wetlands International - Oceania (to provide a roving wetland specialist for remote areas), 2. Wetlands.edu (delivery of training courses designed to provide nationwide capacity building and training for regional and community investments in wetland related planning and actions), 3. Shore Bird Project (site-specific shorebird conservation activities) and 4. WetlandLink (provides wetland information via a website as well as newsletters).

(b) Wetlands Australia: National Wetlands Update - an annual publication bringing together information and resources from across Australia relating to wetlands conservation, management and education.

(c) WetlandInfo, where information about the Queensland Wetlands Program can be accessed on the internet.

1.4.3

Australia's “National Cooperative Approach to Integrated Coastal Zone Management Framework and Implementation Plan” (2006) recognises the importance of wetland components and functions such as freshwater flows in estuarine ecosystems, and water quality.

1.4.4

While the implications of ratifying the Kyoto Protocol were carefully examined, this did not extend to the specific consideration of wetland issues. Nevertheless, climate change is integrated into policy frameworks affecting wetlands, including the “National Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan 2004-07” and water resource planning.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.4 national implementation:

STRATEGY 1.5: Identify priority wetlands 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.

Indicator questions:

1.5.1 Have wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects been implemented? {4.1.2} [If "Yes", please identify any major programmes or projects in Additional implementation information]	A - Yes
1.5.2 Has the Convention's guidance on wetland restoration (Annex to Resolution VIII.16; Wise Use Handbook 15, 3rd edition) been used/applied in designing and implementing wetland restoration/rehabilitation programmes or projects? {4.1.2}	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.5.1 – 1.5.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “1.5.2: [.. additional information ...]”

1.5.1

Examples include:

- Projects under the AU\$8 million Australian Government-funded Great Barrier Reef Coastal Wetlands Protection Program, a component of the Queensland Wetlands Programme;
- Joint Australian and New South Wales (NSW) Government funded NSW Wetland Recovery Programme;
- Local and regional restoration/rehabilitation programs undertaken by Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations, for example Sustainable Wetlands on NSW Coastal Landscapes program to undertake wetland mapping, prioritisation and onground rehabilitation in priority wetlands across two Catchment Management Authorities;
- Local restoration of dunes on the edge of Lake Alexandrina under the Australian Government’s Working on Country program; and
- Revive our Wetlands – A national wetland rehabilitation program funded by BHP Billiton and implemented by Conservation Volunteers Australia to work on priority wetlands around the country, with particular emphasis on engaging and informing local communities about the importance of wetlands. Approximately AU\$5 million has been spent over 9 years.

1.5.2

The wetland rehabilitation programs underway in Australia are generally compliant with the Ramsar guidance. For example, in developing wetland rehabilitation guidelines, the Queensland Wetland Programme used the Ramsar Guidance of Wetland Restoration. Conservation Volunteers Australia, WetlandCare Australia and the Queensland Wetland Programme have also used wise-use principals in all their on-ground restoration works - and sought appropriate local advice.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.5 national implementation:

STRATEGY 1.6: Develop guidance and promote protocols and actions to prevent, control or eradicate invasive alien species in wetland systems.

Indicator questions:

1.6.1 Have national policies, strategies and management responses to threats from invasive species, particularly in wetlands, been developed and implemented? {r5.1.ii}	A - Yes
1.6.2 Have such policies, strategies and management responses been carried out in cooperation with the focal points of other conventions and international organisations/processes? {r5.1.ii}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 1.6.1 – 1.6.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “1.6.2: [.. additional information ...]”

1.6.1

The Australian Government has been working with Australian states and territories to develop a comprehensive biosecurity system integrated across environmental and primary production interests. During 2008, a draft intergovernmental agreement is being considered for signing and implementation by all governments. In 2007, the Australian Government and states and territories endorsed a revised Australian Weeds Strategy and a new Australian Pest Animal Strategy. While these approaches do not specifically address wetlands, they provide comprehensive frameworks for actions against weeds and pests in Australian ecosystems. Potential for weediness, including in wetlands, is considered as part of the risk assessment process for release of new genetically modified organisms under the Gene Technology Act 2000.

Several major weeds of wetlands, including *Hymenachne amplexicaulis* and *Eichhornia crassipes*, are declared Weeds of National Significance and as such receive priority for funding assistance to wetland managers for eradication/control.

1.6.2

The strategies are developed and agreed on a whole of government basis.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 1.6 national implementation:

GOAL 2. WETLANDS OF INTERNATIONAL IMPORTANCE

STRATEGY 2.1 *Apply the Strategic Framework and guidelines for the future development of the List of Wetlands of International Importance (Handbook 7, 2nd edition; Handbook 14, 3rd edition).*

Indicator questions:

2.1.1 Have a strategy and priorities been established for any further designation of Ramsar sites, using the Strategic Framework for the Ramsar List? {10.1.1}

[If further Ramsar site designations are planned, please indicate in Additional implementation information, the number of sites and anticipated year of designation]

C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicator 2.1.1

Some states have developed priority lists. For instance, Western Australia has developed a list of candidate Ramsar sites which have been prioritised on number of criteria met.

A national approach will be developed following work which recently agreed to an appropriate bioregionalisation strategy, which is needed as a key input for implementing the Strategic Framework.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.1 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.2 *Maintain the Ramsar Sites Information Service and constantly update it with the best available information, and use the Ramsar Sites Database as a tool for guiding the further designation of wetlands for the List of Wetlands of International Importance.*

Indicator questions:

2.2.1 Have all required updates of the Information Sheet on Ramsar Wetlands been submitted to the Ramsar Secretariat? {10.2.3}

B - No

2.2.2 Are the Ramsar Sites Information Service and its database used in national implementation of the Convention concerning Ramsar site issues?

B - No

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.2.1 – 2.2.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “2.2.1: [.. additional information ...]”

2.2.1

A recent review of Australia's Ramsar estate and associated documentation has clarified which RISs require updating. 31 of Australia's 65 Ramsar sites have a RIS older than six years. The RaMPP (see 2A) will provide funding to prepare RISs identified as a priority for updating. RISs are also being updated as Ecological Character Descriptions are prepared.

2.2.2

Australia has an Australian Wetlands Database which is often accessed instead of the Ramsar Sites Information Service. A recent audit has found discrepancies between the data held on the Australian database and that held on the Ramsar site information service, which the Administrative Authority will now seek to rectify.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.2 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.3 *Maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites.*

Indicator questions:

2.3.1 Have the measures required to maintain the ecological character of all Ramsar sites been defined and applied? {11.1.1}	C - Partly
2.3.2 Have management plans/strategies been developed and implemented at all Ramsar sites? {11.1.2} [If "Yes" or "Some sites", please indicate, in Additional implementation information below, for how many sites have plans/strategies been developed but not implemented; for how many are plans/strategies in preparation; and for how many are plans/strategies being reviewed or revised]	C - Some sites
2.3.3 Have cross-sectoral site management committees been established at Ramsar sites? {11.1.5} [If "Yes" or "Some sites", please name the sites in Additional implementation information]	C - Some sites
2.3.4 Has any assessment of Ramsar site management effectiveness been carried out? [if "Yes" or "Some sites", please indicate in Additional implementation information below the year of assessment and from whom, or from where, the information is available]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.3.1 – 2.3.4 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "2.3.3: [... additional information ...]"

2.3.1

Through ECD preparation and Ramsar site management planning processes.

2.3.2

85 per cent of Australia's Ramsar sites have Management Plans in operation (55 of 65 sites, based on findings of recent Ramsar Snapshot report); an additional 5 sites have management plans in preparation.

Efforts are underway to improve management planning for Ramsar sites. For example, a current project will contribute significantly to the management of WA's internationally important Ramsar Wetlands by developing Ramsar site management plans, and implementing critical actions to reverse condition decline and maintain biodiversity.

Part one of the project focuses on the development of new ecological character descriptions (ECDs) and management plans, and input into current management planning processes or revision of management plans for Ramsar sites currently without accredited plans.

Part two of the project, which in some instances will occur in conjunction with part 1 above, will involve the implementation of critical actions to bring about a halt in condition decline or high priority actions to maintain biodiversity. This will differ between Ramsar sites but will include monitoring of key indicators of wetland condition at all 12 Western Australian Ramsar sites.

2.3.3

The structure and membership of management committees for Ramsar sites varies between sites, and complete data are unavailable. Some examples of sites with cross-sectoral committees are:

- Kakadu Board of Management;
- The Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands Trust, which is an incorporated not-for-profit community group that manages the Fivebough and Tuckerbil Wetlands Ramsar site; and
- The South East Queensland Healthy Waterways Partnership, which works to improve catchment management and waterways health in South East Queensland. It is a collaboration between government, industry, research institutions and the community. The Moreton Bay Ramsar site is within in the Partnership's catchments and benefits from the Partnership's Healthy Waterways Strategy outcomes.

2.3.4

The Ramsar Snapshot (December 2007) provides an overview of the management status of each of Australia's Ramsar sites. The Ramsar Snapshot was undertaken to:

- assess the current status of Ramsar documentation for Australian Ramsar wetlands (e.g. currency of RIS, site maps, management plans);
- analyse the financial investment in Australia's Ramsar estate to date;
- assess major threats and management issues facing the sites; and
- make recommendations to inform the development of a long-term rolling review of Australia's Ramsar estate.

In 2006 the Western Australian Auditor General released a report on an audit of the management of Western Australia's Ramsar wetlands. It is available from the Office of the Auditor General for Western Australia.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.3 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.4 Monitor the condition of Ramsar sites, notify the Ramsar Secretariat without delay of changes affecting Ramsar sites as required by Article 3.2, and apply the Montreux Record and Ramsar Advisory Mission as tools to address problems.

Indicator questions:

<p>2.4.1 Are arrangements in place for the Administrative Authority to be informed of changes or likely changes in the ecological character of Ramsar sites, pursuant to Article 3.2? {r11.2.iv}</p> <p>[If "Yes" or "Some sites", please summarise the mechanism(s) established in Additional implementation information]</p>	A - Yes
<p>2.4.2 Have all cases of change or likely change in the ecological character of Ramsar sites been reported to the Ramsar Secretariat, pursuant to Article 3.2.? {11.2.4}</p> <p>[If "Yes" or "Some sites", please indicate in Additional implementation information below for which Ramsar sites Article 3.2 reports have been made by the Administrative Authority to the Secretariat, and for which sites such reports of change or likely change have not yet been made]</p>	C - Some cases
<p>2.4.3 If applicable, have actions been taken to address the issues for which Ramsar sites have been listed on the Montreux Record? {r11.2.viii}</p> <p>[If "Yes" or "Partly", please provide in Additional implementation information information about the actions taken]</p>	D - Not applicable

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.4.1 – 2.4.3 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "2.4.3: [.. additional information ...]"

2.4.1

The Administrative Authority is currently using Ecological Character Descriptions (see 2A) as the principal information source on changes in ecological character. The Rolling Review (under development; see 2A) will assist further with this issue. Officers of the Administrative Authority liaise regularly with their counterparts in state/territory governments regarding the ecological character of Ramsar sites.

2.4.2

Australia's Administrative Authority has notified the Ramsar Secretariat of changes in ecological character of the Coorong and Lakes Alexandrina and Albert, and the Gwydir Wetlands Ramsar sites.

The Moreton Bay Ramsar site has been reported by a third party to the Secretariat as having experienced a change in ecological character. An ECD will be prepared shortly which will allow a determination of the veracity of the third party report.

The Administrative Authority will continue to make Article 3.2 notifications where this can be supported with credible scientific information and analysis, such as the findings of an ECD.

However, it is likely that other Australian Ramsar sites have changed their ecological character. A more robust framework will be developed to ensure that the Administrative Authority is better able to capture data on site changes and make the necessary Article 3.2 notifications. This will include clarifying the responsibilities of site managers and relevant agencies and identifying the level of information required to support the assessment of change or likely change of ecological character.

2.4.3

No sites are listed on the Montreux Record.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.4 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.5 Promote inventory and integrated management of shared wetlands and hydrological basins, including cooperative monitoring and management of shared wetland-dependent species.

Indicator questions:

2.5.1 Have all transboundary/shared wetland systems been identified? {12.1.1}	D - Not applicable
2.5.2 Is effective cooperative management in place for shared wetland systems (including regional site and waterbird flyway networks)? {12.1.2; 12.2.2} <small>[If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information below for which wetland systems such management is in place]</small>	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 2.5.1 – 2.5.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “2.5.1: [.. additional information ...]”

2.5.1

Australia is an island continent, and other than migratory water-bird agreements (see below), shared wetland ecosystems is not relevant.

2.5.2

While Australia has no shared wetlands with other countries, it does have mechanisms for management of river basins across State/Territory jurisdictions in Australia. For example, the Murray-Darling Basin crossing five jurisdictions, and the Lake Eyre Basin crossing four. Cross state-border water management arrangements are in places, not consistent. The Australian Government is currently attempting to rectify this situation for the Murray-Darling Basin via the new Water Act 2007 and Water for the Future initiative. See 2A.

Australia has three international treaties covering the protection of migratory bird habitat:

1. Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (JAMBA, 1974).
2. China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (CAMBA, 1986).
3. Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (ROKAMBA; 2002).

Australia currently has 17 internationally important sites participating in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway Site Network. Further information -

<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/migratory/waterbirds/flyway-partnership/network.html>

See also 2A and 2.6.1.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.5 national implementation:

STRATEGY 2.6 *Support existing regional arrangements under the Convention and promote additional arrangements.*

Indicator questions:

2.6.1 Has the Contracting Party been involved in the development of a regional initiative under the framework of the Convention? {12.3.2} [If "Yes" or "Planned", please indicate in Additional implementation information below the name(s) and collaborating countries of each regional initiative]	A - Yes
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Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicator 2.6.1

Australia played a key role in the development of the Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway, and has migratory bird treaties with Japan, China and Korea (see 2A).

Australia also plays a substantial role in coordinating and facilitating collaborations between Oceania countries in the lead up to Ramsar meetings, including the 2008 Oceania Regional Preparatory meeting for CoP10. Australia, in collaboration with the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), is working on a project to streamline reporting by Pacific Island countries (PICs) to the biodiversity-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including the Ramsar Convention. Work is progressing to determine the feasibility for PICs to report to a consolidated reporting template for the biodiversity-related MEAs.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 2.6 national implementation:

Australia provided financial assistance for the Oceania Regional Preparatory Meeting for CoP10, in Apia, Samoa; April 2008.

GOAL 3. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

STRATEGY 3.1 *Collaboration with other institutions: Work as partners with international and regional multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and other agencies.*

Indicator questions:

3.1.1 Are mechanisms in place at the national level for collaboration between the Ramsar Administrative Authority and the focal points of other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs)? {13.1.1}	A - Yes
3.1.2 Are the national focal points of other MEAs invited to participate in the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee? {13.1.iii}	B - No
3.1.3 [For African Contracting Parties only] Has the Contracting Party participated in the implementation of the wetland programme under NEPAD? {13.1.6}	E - Not applicable

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 3.1.1 – 3.1.3 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “3.1.3: [.. additional information ...]”

3.1.1

Australia's MEA focal points (except UNFCCC) are all located within the one government agency (Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts) and are required to provide advice through the Department's International Steering Committee (ISC), on work planning priorities for their respective MEAs. The ISC provides strategic oversight and coordination of the Department's international workplan. There is also strong whole-of-government cooperation between the Department of Climate Change and DEWHA.

3.1.2

National focal points for other MEAs are not members of the National Ramsar/Wetland Committee (Wetlands and Waterbirds Task Force), but have input into Task Force deliberations as required.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 3.1 national implementation:

STRATEGY 3.2 *Sharing of expertise and information: Promote the sharing of expertise and information.*

Indicator questions:

3.2.1 Have networks, including twinning arrangements, been established, nationally or internationally, for knowledge sharing and training for wetlands that share common features? {14.1.3} [If “Yes” or “Partly”, please indicate in Additional implementation information below the networks and wetlands involved]	A - Yes
3.2.2 Has information about the country's wetlands and/or Ramsar sites and their status been made publicly available (e.g., through publications or a Web site)? {14.1.1}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 3.2.1-3.2.2

3.2.1

Examples include:

- Australasian Wader Studies Group - A special interest group of Birds Australia dedicated to studying shorebirds throughout the East-Asian Australasian Flyway. The AWSG has formed a Partnership with Birds Korea to complete a 3 year population survey of 3 estuaries on the west coast of Korea. This involves various CEPA programs and published information.
- Hunter Wetlands Centre Australia and Kushiro International Wetlands Centre, Japan, have been twinned (in 1994). This arrangement was renewed in 2004 with support from local government authorities and the Australian Government.
- Boondall Wetlands (which form part of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site in Queensland), has been twinned with Yatsu Higata Tidelands Ramsar site in Japan for a decade.
- Australian Government Natural Resource Management Facilitators are based in all states/territories and share information related to wetland conservation, wise use and management.
- The Australian Government has funded the establishment of a consortium of wetland NGOs who are delivering national wetland projects. The consortium operates under the name Wetland Management Solutions and meets twice yearly to share information on their projects, confer on wetland issues and look for opportunities for collaboration.
- The Flyway Site Network is a key part of the Flyway Partnership (see Partnership for the Conservation of Migratory Waterbirds and the Sustainable Use of their Habitats in the East Asian – Australasian Flyway above). Network participants in this Regional Initiative can share expertise and resources to improve wetland site management. Eg., Meeting of Ramsar Site Managers via the Australian and New Zealand Site Managers Workshop, 2007.

3.2.2

Information on Australia's Ramsar estate is available on the Department of the Environment Water, Heritage and the Arts website, and on websites of state management agencies.

The Australian Government produces stickers, magnets, bookmarks, posters and a post card to promote World Wetlands Day, as well as the publication Wetlands Australia – National Wetlands Update.

Additionally, the Queensland Government, in partnership with the Australian Government (through the Queensland Wetlands Programme) has produced WetlandInfo, a website with information on Queensland wetland types; wetland management, monitoring and assessment; education material; and legislation. Comprehensive maps of wetlands are also available on the site. As the information base grows more information will be added to the site.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 3.2 national implementation:

GOAL 4. IMPLEMENTATION CAPACITY

STRATEGY 4.1 Local communities, indigenous people, and cultural values: Encourage active and informed participation of local communities and indigenous people, including women and youth, in the conservation and wise use of wetlands, including in relation to understanding the dynamics of cultural values.

Indicator questions:

4.1.1 Has resource information been compiled on local communities' and indigenous people's participation in wetland management? {6.1.5}	A - Yes
4.1.2 Have traditional knowledge and management practices in relation to wetlands been documented and their application encouraged? {6.1.2}	A - Yes
4.1.3 Does the Contracting Party promote public participation in decision-making (with respect to wetlands), especially with local stakeholder involvement in the selection of new Ramsar sites and in Ramsar site management? {6.1.4}	A - Yes
4.1.4 Have educational and training activities been developed concerning cultural aspects of wetlands? {r6.1.vii}	A - Yes
4.1.5 Have cultural values of wetlands been included in the management planning of Ramsar sites and other wetlands? {r6.1.vi} [if "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate, if known, how many Ramsar sites and their names in Additional implementation information below]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.1.1 – 4.1.5 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “4.1.3: [.. additional information ...]”

4.1.1

Wetlands Australia: National Wetlands Update 2008, see 1.4.2 (a).

NRM regional organisations, state/territory governments and NGOs hold information regarding local communities' involvement in wetland management, such as participation in revegetation or weed removal programs.

Indigenous participation in wetland management is covered in 4.1.2.

4.1.2

The Australian Government's Indigenous Protected Areas Programme and Working on Country program support the use of traditional knowledge and management practices.

Indigenous knowledge of wetland management is being increasingly documented (particularly in northern Australia), some examples include:

- Australian Government's Indigenous Protected Areas Program.
- As part of the northern Australian 'Burning for Biodiversity' project, CSIRO, the Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist (eriss), Parks Australia North and the Bushfire Collaborative Research Centre are working with a family of traditional owners in Kakadu National Park to examine the biodiversity and cultural benefits of Aboriginal fire management as it is re-applied to floodplains associated with the South Alligator River (Boggy Plain and Yellow Waters).
- Also in Kakadu National Park, Bininj/Mungguy and park managers have worked together since proclamation of the park to reduce the number of hot fires at the end of the dry season and to return to fire regimes more similar to those that occurred prior to European arrival. Indigenous knowledge and the involvement of traditional owners is fundamental to this activity.
- Regional Natural Resource Management organisations have also been successful in providing support for the re-establishment of traditional knowledge and management practices relative to wetlands where it has become fragmented, for example in parts of South-east Australia.

See also 1.3.4.

4.1.3

Many of the Ramsar sites listed in recent years have had strong support from and involvement of local stakeholders. Following approval of the listing, local stakeholders have continued to be involved in on-going management of the sites. Australia has a number of Ramsar sites that are managed partly or wholly by the local community. For example, Shortland Wetlands (part of the Hunter Estuary Wetlands Ramsar site) is totally owned and managed by a not-for-profit company owned by members.

See also 1.3.4 and 2.3.3.

4.1.4

Wetlands.edu ,a training body, has produced 17 wetland training modules, some of which have dealt with the cultural aspects of wetlands - for example: "Multi-stakeholder management planning".

4.1.5

Australian Ramsar Management Principles (ARMP), under regulations to the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, provides for the general principle that "Wetland management should make special provision, if appropriate, for the involvement of people who:

- (a) have a particular interest in the wetland; and
- (b) may be affected by the management of the wetland."

This principle is reflected in the listing of Australia's latest Ramsar site, the Paroo River Wetlands. The Paroo has significant cultural and spiritual values to the traditional Indigenous owners of the

Paroo River country, the Baakandji and Budjiti people. A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed by the Baakandji and Budjiti people and the National Parks managers of the Ramsar site, to recognise the input of the traditional owners in the site's nomination and establish a mechanism for their ongoing management in the wetlands.

Some Ramsar sites are also important recreation areas, for example Lake Argyle and The Gippsland Lakes.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.1 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.2 *Promote the involvement of the private sector in the conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

Indicator questions:

4.2.1 Is the private sector encouraged to apply the wise use principle in activities and investments concerning wetlands? {7.1.1}	A - Yes
4.2.2 Have private-sector "Friends of Wetlands" fora or similar mechanisms been established? {7.1.4} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information below the private sector companies involved]	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.2.1 – 4.2.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.2.2: [.. additional information ...]"

4.2.1

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) establishes a framework for managing Ramsar wetlands, which is in accordance with the Ramsar Convention. Developers must comply with the Act to gain development consent for their projects. In all states and territories there is legislation that requires environmental impact assessment for certain types of development, land use change or in relation to ecosystems of particular conservation concern.

Positive incentives for the private sector to apply the wise use principle include government and non-government programs for ecosystem conservation. For example, the provision of financial incentives to private landowners for actions that protect or rehabilitate wetlands, such as fencing off wetlands to enable better livestock management, and undertaking weed control.

A Nature Refuge established under the Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1995 is a voluntary agreement between a landholder and the Queensland Government that acknowledges a commitment to preserve land with significant natural and/or cultural heritage values in perpetuity. It allows activities ranging from grazing to recreation, so long as those activities are managed sustainably and are appropriate for the protection of the values of the Refuge. The Queensland Wetlands Programme funds a project officer to increase the number of wetlands protected as Nature Refuges.

BHP Billiton funds a national wetland rehabilitation program implemented by Conservation Volunteers Australia to work on priority wetlands around the country with particular emphasis on engaging and informing local communities about the importance of wetlands. Approximately AU\$5 million has been spent over 9 years.

The Australian Government, through the Maintaining Australia's Biodiversity Hotspots program, provides financial assistance to environmental non-government organisations to purchase properties and deliver stewardship projects in areas where wetlands can be an important component of the biophysical landscape.

4.2.2

Numerous "Friends of Wetlands" and "Friends of Bushland" groups are established across Australia. These are usually grass roots community groups consisting of local people interested in caring for and learning about their local wetlands.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.2 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.3 Promote measures which encourage the application of the wise use principle.

Indicator questions:

4.3.1 Have actions been taken to promote incentive measures which encourage the conservation and wise use of wetlands? {8.1.1}	A - Yes
4.3.2 Have actions been taken to remove perverse incentive measures which discourage conservation and wise use of wetlands? {8.1.1}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.3.1 – 4.3.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.3.2: [.. additional information ...]"

4.3.1

Incentive measures described in 4.2.1 are promoted through websites and CEPA activities of the various organisations. For example the website: marketbasedinstruments.gov.au provides information on what market based instruments for beneficial environmental and sustainable natural resource management (NRM) practices are, how to do them and what is currently available.

4.3.2

Ongoing implementation of the National Water Initiative (NWI)

The overall objective of the National Water Initiative is to achieve a nationally compatible market, regulatory and planning based system of managing surface and groundwater resources for rural and urban use that optimises economic, social and environmental outcomes. Ongoing implementation of the NWI will assist in removing perverse incentives that act against conservation and wise use of wetlands. See also 2A.

Establishment of the Water Act 2007

Under the Water Act 2007, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) is provided with a key role in developing and enforcing water charge and water market rules along the lines agreed in the National Water Initiative. The aim of these new functions is to ensure that water markets are able to operate freely across state boundaries and that perverse outcomes from inconsistent water charging arrangements are avoided. See also 2A.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.3 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.4 *Support, and assist in implementing at all levels, the Convention's Communication, Education, and Public Awareness Programme (Resolution VIII.31) for promoting the conservation and wise use of wetlands through public participation and communication, education, and public awareness (CEPA).*

Indicator questions:

4.4.1 Has a mechanism for planning and implementing wetland CEPA (National Ramsar/Wetland Committee or other mechanism) been established with both CEPA Government and NGO National Focal Point (NFP) involvement? {r9.iii.ii} [If "Yes" or "Partly", please describe in Additional implementation information below the mechanism]	C - Partly
4.4.2 Has a National Action Plan (or plans at the subnational, catchment or local level) for wetland CEPA been developed? {r.9.iii.iii} [Even if a National Action Plan has not yet been developed, if broad CEPA objectives for national CEPA actions have been established please indicate this in the Additional implementation information section for Strategy 4.4]	A - Yes
4.4.3 Have actions been taken to communicate and share information cross-sectorally on wetland issues amongst relevant ministries, departments and agencies? {r9.iii.v}	A - Yes

<p>4.4.4 Have national campaigns, programmes, and projects been carried out to raise community awareness of the ecosystem benefits/services provided by wetlands? {r9.vi.i}</p> <p>[If:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) support has been provided for the delivery of these and other CEPA activities by other organisations; and/or b) these have included awareness-raising for social, economic and/or cultural values, <p>please indicate this in the Additional implementation information section for Strategy 4.4 below]</p>	A - Yes
<p>4.4.5 Have World Wetlands Day activities in the country, either government and NGO-led or both, been carried out? {r9.vi.ii}</p>	A - Yes
<p>4.4.6 Have education centres been established at Ramsar sites and other wetlands? {r9.viii.i}</p> <p>[If any such centres are part of the Wetland Link International (WLI) Programme of the Wildfowl & Wetland Trust, UK, please indicate this in the Additional implementation information section for Strategy 4.4 below]</p>	C - Some sites

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.4.1 – 4.4.6 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “4.4.3: [.. additional information ...]”

4.4.1

Communication between the CEPA NGO Focal Point and the CEPA Government Focal Point is on-going but intermittent. There is no national CEPA Task Force operating at this time, but there is some potential for the Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce (WWTF) (see 4.8.2) to play a role in CEPA planning.

4.4.2

Australia's National CEPA Action Plan was developed in 2001 with assistance from lead NGOs. The plan was developed with a 3 year implementation phase and a limited budget. National funding schemes for the environment, current at that time, provided some additional support for delivery of a number of landmark CEPA initiatives.

However, while the key objectives of the first national CEPA Action plan still have some relevance, they are now too generic to be useful to the range of stakeholders who could support delivery of CEPA outcomes. A review of the plan has been recommended by key stakeholders to assure its relevance to the current issues for Australian wetlands, the delivery of NRM objectives and the associated funding schemes that are available. If this is not viable then a review of existing mechanisms that could take on a National CEPA advisory role, such as through the WWTF, could be considered.

There are three key objectives to the National CEPA plan:

1. To provide a national focus - developing a coordinated national focus will establish a mandate for wetland education in Australia and build a framework for delivery that supports all people involved in wetland education activities.
2. To develop networks - through sharing knowledge and experience and developing relationships, which foster effective communication, education and public awareness, the network will build the capacity of the Australian community to conserve, repair and use wetlands wisely.
3. To develop guidelines and tools - through the provision of appropriate guidelines and tools, CEPA deliverers across Australia will deliver activities and develop initiatives that motivate and empower the community to engage in wetland conservation and wise use.

4.4.3

See also 3.1.2.

The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has a Water Reform Division which deals with many of these issues. Sections within this Division liaise with NGOs and other Australian state and territory government departments on issues relevant to water/wetlands/Ramsar site issues as they occur.

'Wetlands Australia-National Wetlands Update' magazine is produced annually to provide a platform for wetlands groups across Australia to present their projects, thus providing information about wetland projects to a large audience.

4.4.4

Most of the work being carried out on wetlands nationally, mentioned elsewhere in this report, can be used to raise awareness of ecosystem services/benefits.

It is a matter of developing complimentary CEPA products to explicitly reinforce the ecosystem services/benefits that underpin the rationale for the work.

See also 3.2.1 and 3.2.2.

Governments provide funding for CEPA activities through multiple channels, to numerous agencies and organisations. These include awareness raising for social, economic and/or cultural values as appropriate. However, there is limited scope and no accepted mechanism for

coordination, integration or collaboration among those activities. There is potential to develop or identify mechanisms for coordination under some agreed objectives that could be linked to funding programs or guidelines for Natural Resource Management authorities.

4.4.5

World Wetlands Day is commemorated in all states and territories, and WWD materials from the Ramsar Secretariat are made available to interested groups. See also 3.2.2.

In 2008, WetlandCare Australia ran a World Wetlands Day National Art Competition with a number of categories in art and photography. This attracted sponsors from around Australia, both Government and private sector. Many other WWD activities are carried out each year by a range of organisations, across Australia.

WetlandCare Australia ran a number of awareness raising events including two large field based workshops in the Hawkesbury catchment, with funding from the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority (CMA). Another, a boat-tour of significant wetlands in the Macleay catchment, was held in conjunction with the New South Wales Department of Environment and Climate Change and the Northern Rivers CMA.

4.4.6

Australia has over 40 Wetland Centres, 18 of which are dedicated to wetland education. Only a few of those are located at or near Ramsar sites. Other related centres near Ramsar sites, such as Broome Bird Observatory, and many environmental education centres in Queensland and New South Wales play an important role in promoting wetlands and Ramsar sites.

Both of the centres mentioned above are members of Wetland Link International. In 2003 Hunter Wetlands Centre worked with WLI in the UK to establish a national network of wetland centres, WLI Australia. This network is still operating and maintains communication among approximately 15 wetland centres. Hunter Wetlands Centre has also contributed to the development of WLI Asia and has initiated discussions with centres in New Zealand on the concept of WLI-Oceania.

The Queensland Wetlands Programme has established interactive Wetland Kiosks at several locations along the Great Barrier Reef catchment. A wetlands curriculum for primary schools has also been developed.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.4 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.5 *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.*

Indicator questions:

<p>4.5.1 [For Contracting Parties with development assistance agencies only] Has funding support been provided from the development assistance agency for wetland conservation and management in other countries? {15.1.1}</p> <p>[If "Yes" or "Some countries", please indicate in Additional implementation the countries supported since COP9]</p>	A - Yes
<p>4.5.2 [For Contracting Parties in receipt of development assistance only] Has funding support been mobilized from development assistance agencies specifically for in-country wetland conservation and management? {15.1.8}</p> <p>[If "Yes" or "Some countries", please indicate in Additional implementation the agencies from which support has been received since COP9]</p>	D - Not applicable

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.5.1 – 4.5.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.5.2: [... additional information ...]"

4.5.1

AusAID is the Australian Government agency responsible for managing Australia's overseas aid program.

AusAid has developed an environment strategy for Australian aid called 'Aid and the Environment – building resilience, sustaining growth'. This strategy signals a significant increase in Australia's environment-related support in the Asia-Pacific region. Three themes have been identified – they are: climate change, water and environmental governance.

In order to support this strategy, the Australian Government and AusAID have undertaken a five-year, AU\$24.6 million initiative: Australia China Environment Development Program (ACEDP), which commenced in July 2007. The Australian Government, AusAID partnership has the objective of supporting and improving policy development in China in the area of environmental protection and natural resources management. The program will initially focus on water resources and river basin management.

ACEDP has allocated AU\$600,000 to support a Wetlands Management Policy, Guidelines and Capacity Building Activity for the period 2008-10. The intervention aims to strengthen China's capacities in multi-agency coordination for RAMSAR sites and in developing policy guidelines for better wetlands management. The project will be implemented in collaboration with an Australian partner agency (tbd) at several locations in China.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.5 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.6 Provide the financial resources required for the Convention's governance, mechanisms and programmes to achieve the expectations of the Conference of the Contracting Parties.

Indicator questions:

4.6.1 {16.1.1}	
<p>a) For the last triennium have Ramsar contributions been paid in full and in a timely manner (by 31 March of calendar year)?</p>	A - Yes
<p>b) If "No" in 4.6.1 a), please clarify what plan is in place to ensure future prompt payment:</p>	

4.6.2 {16.1.2}	A - Yes
a) Has any additional financial support been provided through voluntary contributions to the Ramsar Small Grants Fund or other non-core funded Convention activity?	
b) If yes, please state the amounts:	
<p>Australia provided funding of AU\$30 000 for Oceania Region Preparatory Meetings' in the lead up to both COP9 and COP10, as well as providing assistance with streamlining of reporting for MEAs. See also 2.6.1.</p> <p>The total Pacific Governance Support Program (PGSP) funding provided in 2007 for the streamlining reporting project was AU\$71,604. Further funding of AU\$199,527 plus GST has been provided by AusAID under the PGSP to continue work on this project until 31 December 2008.</p>	

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.6.1 – 4.6.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “4.6.2: [...] additional information ...]”

see above

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.6 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.7 *Ensure that the Conference of the Contracting Parties, Standing Committee, Scientific and Technical Review Panel, and Ramsar Secretariat are operating at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness to support implementation of this Framework.*

Indicator questions:

4.7.1 Has the Contracting Party used its previous Ramsar National Reports in monitoring its implementation of the Convention? [If “Yes” or “Partly”, please indicate in Additional implementation information how the Reports have been used for monitoring]	B - No
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Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicator 4.7.1

STRATEGY 4.8 *Develop the capacity within, and promote cooperation among, institutions in Contracting Parties to achieve conservation and wise use of wetlands.*

Indicator questions:

<p>4.8.1 Has a review of national institutions responsible for the conservation and wise use of wetlands been completed? {18.1.1}</p> <p>[If "Yes" or "Partly", please indicate in Additional implementation information if this has led to proposals for, or implementation of, any changes in institutional responsibilities]</p>	B - No
<p>4.8.2 Is a National Ramsar/Wetlands cross-sectoral Committee (or equivalent body) in place and operational? {18.1.2}</p> <p>[If "Yes", please summarise in Additional implementation information its membership and frequency of meetings]</p>	C - Partly

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.8.1 – 4.8.2 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. "4.8.2: [.. additional information ...]"

4.8.2

The Wetlands and Waterbirds Taskforce is the national committee that advises governments on actions to implement the Ramsar Convention. The WWTF is comprised of representatives from the Administrative Authority and state/territory government agencies with a role in wetland policy and management. The input of non-government stakeholders is routinely sought, for example in developing national guidelines or in preparing for CoPs. The WWTF meets at least twice yearly and often more frequently than this. A number of other wetland committees exist including:

- Australian Wetlands Alliance - an umbrella organisation for wetland non-government organisations.
- The New South Wales Ramsar Managers Network- including government and private Ramar site managers, State and Australian Government agencies and non-government organisations.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.8 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.9 Maximize the benefits of working with the Convention's International Organization Partners (IOPs*) and others.

Indicator question:

<p>4.9.1 Has your country received assistance from one or more of the Convention's IOPs* in its implementation of the Convention?</p> <p>[If "Yes", please provide in Additional implementation information the name(s) of the IOP(s) and the type of assistance provided]</p>	A - Yes
<p>4.9.2 Has your country provided assistance to one or more of the Convention's IOPs*?</p> <p>[If "Yes", please provide in Additional implementation information the name(s) of the IOP(s) and the type of assistance provided]</p>	A - Yes

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

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.9.1-4.9.2

4.9.1

The Administrative Authority participates in regular discussions with WWF and Wetlands International-Oceania on wetland-related issues.

Wetlands International-Oceania have been contracted to provide a number of wetland-related projects for state and Australian government agencies.

4.9.2

See 4.9.1.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.9 national implementation:

STRATEGY 4.10 *Identify the training needs of institutions and individuals concerned with the conservation and wise use of wetlands, particularly in developing countries and countries in transition, and implement appropriate responses.*

Indicator questions:

4.10.1 Has your country provided support to, or participated in, the development of regional (i.e., covering more than one country) wetland training and research centres? [If "Yes", please indicate in Additional implementation information the name(s) of the centre(s)]	A - Yes
4.10.2 Has an assessment of national and local training needs for the implementation of the Convention, including in the use of the Wise Use Handbooks, been made? {20.1.2}	C - Partly
4.10.3 Have opportunities for wetland site manager training in the country been provided? {20.1.6}	A - Yes

Additional implementation information:

A): on Indicators 4.10.1 – 4.10.3 For each piece of additional information text, please clearly identify to which indicator number it refers – e.g. “4.10.3: [.. additional information ...]”

4.10.1

See twinning arrangements between wetland centres discussed in 3.2.1. These twinning arrangements have also involved exchanges between wetland specialists.

4.10.2

A comprehensive, wetland-management training needs assessment (with all of the 56 Natural Resource Management authorities in Australia), was carried out in 2006-07 as part of the wetlands.edu project.

4.10.3

The Australian Government has supported the development and implementation of 17 training modules for wetland managers under the wetlands.edu project. This project is being delivered by a consortium of wetland specialists that includes wetland professionals, wetland educators and wetland centres as the training hubs.

A workshop for Australian and New Zealand Site Managers of key shorebird sites in the East Asian - Australasian Flyway was funded by the Australian Government and run by Wetlands International - Oceania.

B): on any other aspects of Strategy 4.10 national implementation: