

***The Wetlands Policy
of the Commonwealth Government
of Australia***

JANUARY 1997

**THE WETLANDS POLICY
OF THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT
OF AUSTRALIA**

Inside front cover

The Biodiversity Group of Environment Australia is the Administrative Authority for the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in Australia. Further information can be obtained by writing to the Wetlands, Waterways and Waterbirds Unit of the Biodiversity Group at GPO Box 636, Canberra ACT 2601 or through the internet site at:
<http://www.anca.gov.au/index.htm>

Front cover photograph:

*Sabina Point, Shoalwater Bay, Queensland
Photograph by: Samantha Hampton, Biodiversity Group - Environment Australia*

FOREWORD

Over the past twenty years, the world has come to appreciate that wetlands are not wastelands. Studies showing the many values of wetlands have resulted in an appreciation that we need to take greater care with how we manage our water resources. The efforts of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, otherwise known as the Ramsar Convention, have also been instrumental in this new found international appreciation of wetlands. Australia was the first country to join the Ramsar Convention when the Gorton Government signed the Convention in 1971.

In March 1996, 123 countries were represented at the Sixth Ramsar Conference in Brisbane, where the global agenda for wetlands conservation and management was set for the next six years. The Conference was notable because it endorsed the preparation of several more tools designed to show how we can manage our wetlands to maintain them in good condition while continuing to benefit from the many special functions wetlands perform. This is what Ramsar calls 'wise use' - using, but protecting, our wetlands.

The Wetlands Policy of the Commonwealth Government of Australia, and the strategies it details, seek to ensure that the activities of the Commonwealth Government promote the conservation, ecologically sustainable use and where possible enhancement, of wetland functions.

The development of this Policy was inspired by the Ramsar Convention promoting the wise use principle and developing guidelines for its application, and in response to the Government's responsibilities under Agenda 21. The Policy demonstrates that Australia's Commonwealth Government recognises the special role of wetlands in the well-being of present and future generations of Australians and is committed to the management of wetland resources for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

The Commonwealth Government is committed to the implementation of this Policy as an important first step towards the development of a national framework of wetland policies and strategies. The Government acknowledges that development of a detailed Implementation Plan will underpin the achievement of the goals and objectives of the Policy.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE WETLANDS POLICY OF THE COMMONWEALTH GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA

In 1995 the Biodiversity Group of Environment Australia (formerly the Australian Nature Conservation Agency), as the designated administrative authority for implementation in Australia of the Ramsar Convention, began the process of preparing this Policy. The Agency was responding to encouragement for signatory governments to develop such policy instruments, as a means of pursuing the global agenda of halting the worldwide loss of wetlands. A principle aim was to ensure that the Commonwealth Government's actions would be consistent with those expected under the Convention and, in particular, to promote the adoption of Ramsar's 'wise use' principles for managing wetlands (refer to Appendix E). The Convention defines 'wise use' as:

sustainable utilisation [of wetlands] for the benefit of humankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem.

The Policy has been developed within the framework of, and should be read in conjunction with, the goal, objectives and guiding principles of the existing *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development*.

The Wetlands Policy of the Commonwealth Government of Australia contains a goal, objectives and a number of guiding principles. These provide specific direction for the Commonwealth's actions that directly or indirectly affect wetlands. The objectives and principles recognise the national importance of wetlands and will serve to ensure that there is a consistent approach to wetlands management by all Commonwealth organisations with responsibilities in this area.

As one means of ensuring that a broad range of community views was taken into account in the development of this Policy, the National Wetlands Advisory Committee was established in July 1995. The Committee, whose Terms of Reference and membership are given in Appendix A, was charged with advising the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment on the most appropriate scope of the Policy.

From 4 to 6 December 1995, 75 wetland experts and key stakeholders attended a workshop in Canberra convened by the Biodiversity Group of Environment Australia. The aim of the workshop was to provide input to the development of the Policy. The group resoundingly endorsed the development of a Commonwealth Policy and contributed significantly to the development of this document.

Fifty-one submissions were received after public comments were invited on a draft of this Policy in February 1996. These submissions, together with those from all relevant Commonwealth Departments, led to a number of amendments to the draft Policy before its adoption by the Commonwealth Government.

The Policy includes strategies with accompanying priority actions specifying how the Commonwealth Government will proceed. The strategies cover the following six major areas:

1. Managing wetlands on Commonwealth lands and waters.
2. Implementing Commonwealth policies and legislation and delivering Commonwealth programs.
3. Involving the Australian people in wetlands management.
4. Working in partnership with State/Territory and local Governments.
5. Ensuring a sound scientific basis for policy and management.
6. International actions.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 What are Wetlands?

'Wetland' is the general and more modern name for what we call swamps, billabongs, lakes, saltmarshes, mudflats and mangroves. Wetlands are simply areas that have acquired special characteristics from being wet on a regular or semi-regular basis. The term also applies to depressions in the landscape of our more arid regions that only occasionally hold water but which, when they do, teem with life and become environmental focal points. A definition of 'wetland', based on that used by the Ramsar Convention and as it is applied in the Policy, is given in the Glossary.

1.2 Why a Commonwealth Wetlands Policy is Needed

The Commonwealth Government has direct management responsibility for significant areas of Australia's wetlands and also administers a range of social, economic and environmental programs that impact on wetland conservation and use throughout the country. The Commonwealth is a signatory to several international treaties relating to wetlands and must accordingly ensure that its obligations under these treaties are met. Through this Policy, the Commonwealth aims to provide leadership in the conservation and wise use of wetlands. The range of relevant international treaties is given in Section 6.

Australia is a strong and active supporter of the global efforts to acknowledge the importance of wetlands and modify human practices so that these areas are retained for future generations. The Ramsar Convention of 1971 was the first global intergovernmental treaty which promoted the conservation and wise use of natural assets. Australia was the first Contracting Party to the Ramsar Convention and in March 1996 hosted the Sixth Conference of the Contracting Parties.

The Ramsar Convention's broad aims are to halt the worldwide loss and degradation of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain (refer to following page for more details). With Australia's support and involvement, the Convention has developed *Guidelines for the Wise Use of Wetlands* which equate to the principles of ecologically sustainable development (refer to Appendix E).

The Commonwealth Government sees its role in wetland conservation as best performed through cooperation and partnership with other governments, the business sector and the community. The Government intends to lead by example and is committed to assisting national and international efforts in wetland conservation and management through the demonstration of best practice and the provision of models, tools and expertise to guide management.

THE RAMSAR CONVENTION

The Convention's broad aims are to halt the worldwide loss of wetlands and to conserve, through wise use and management, those that remain.

On 2 February 1971, representatives of 18 nations met together in the small Iranian town of Ramsar to put their signatures to the text of a remarkable treaty. The Ramsar Convention aims to conserve wetlands, one of the most threatened groups of habitats. (Refer to Glossary for definition.)

The Ramsar Convention has developed guidelines for the wise use of wetlands. This concept of 'wise use' seeks to modify human use of wetlands so that there is continuous benefit to present generations, while at the same time the natural properties, such as food webs and other ecological processes, are maintained for future generations.

Countries which are Parties to the Ramsar Convention promote wetland conservation through a range of actions such as:

- completing wetland inventories, preparing policies and promoting the 'wise use' of all wetlands within their territory;
- nominating specific sites to the List of Wetlands of International Importance which will then be managed to ensure that they retain their special ecological characteristics;
- promoting capacity building and technology transfer through the training of wetland managers; and
- consulting with each other, particularly in the case of shared wetlands, water systems or resources such as migratory waterbirds.

1.3 Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of *The Wetlands Policy of the Commonwealth Government of Australia* is to build wetland conservation, within the broader context of environmental management, into the daily business of the Commonwealth Government. In recognition of the special role of wetlands, it aims to provide those responsible for administering relevant Commonwealth Government activities with guidelines and processes to ensure wetlands are managed in accordance with the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development. Further, the Policy aims to set a standard of excellence in this area for other spheres of Government and the private sector to emulate, and to act as a catalyst, stimulating and enabling Australians to participate in a collective effort.

At a national level, it is recognised that Australia is not without policy direction in regard to the use of its natural assets. The *National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development* (ESD Strategy), the *National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity* (Biodiversity Strategy), the *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment*, the *Greenhouse 21C Strategy*, the *National Weeds Strategy*, the *National Forest Policy Statement*, *Towards a Sustainable Future - the ESD Policy for Australia's Development Cooperation Program* and the *Commonwealth Coastal Policy* are key overview documents in this regard. In addition, a number of issue specific policies have been developed to ensure real results are achieved, such as the *National Water Quality Management Strategy*, the *National Decade of Landcare Plan* and the draft *National Strategy on the Conservation of Australian Species and Ecological Communities Threatened with Extinction*.

The Commonwealth's Wetlands Policy has been developed with full recognition of the need to harmonise it with these existing policy instruments and, as appropriate, to amplify the goals, objectives and strategies of these policies. Working primarily through existing programs and decision making mechanisms, this Policy is designed to advance wetland conservation as an integral part of efficient and environmentally responsible delivery of Commonwealth services.

The Natural Heritage Trust of Australia provides the Commonwealth with an ideal vehicle for the development of cooperative arrangements with States, Territories and local Governments and the community. It is anticipated that through this vehicle, streamlined delivery of programs will stimulate integration of many of the types of on-ground and policy actions at the local, regional, State/Territory and national levels which this Policy recognises as necessary to achieve its goal and objectives.

1.4 Actions through Partnership and Cooperation

The Commonwealth Government is committed to working cooperatively, and in partnership, with all spheres of government to achieve sound wetland management outcomes. It also recognises the day to day roles and responsibilities of State/Territory and local Governments in wetland management. Considerable benefits can be gained from governments working together to share approaches, solutions and resources for achieving common outcomes.

The success of this Policy is reliant upon the development of a cooperative partnership approach with all spheres of government, community groups, private landholders and the business sector. The Policy does not provide the comprehensive national response needed to overcome all of the problems of wetland loss and degradation; rather, it starts the process by getting the Commonwealth's house in order and setting a framework for working cooperatively with these other players to meet a common goal.

Apart from encouraging stakeholders to work in partnership with the Commonwealth Government, it is hoped that the Policy will provide a model for Australia's State/Territory and local Governments to follow in developing similar policies or strategies to govern their own actions.

Shared experience can be used to develop management responses at local and regional levels. Only by working in partnership can the Australian people overcome the continuing loss and degradation of wetlands.

2 POLICY

2.1 The Importance of the Wetlands Resource

Wetlands are a vital element of national and global ecosystems and economies. At the most fundamental level, wetlands are a key part of the water cycle, playing critical roles in maintaining the general health of Australia's rivers, estuaries and coastal waters. Wetlands protect our shoreline from wave action, mitigate the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and provide habitats for animals and plants, including a number of species that are threatened or endangered.

Wetlands are also critical to maintaining and improving our quality of life. They provide tangible benefits to the Australian economy, such as employment opportunities. Wetlands purify our water and are a focal point for recreational activities. They form nurseries for fish and other freshwater and marine life and as such are of critical importance to Australia's commercial and recreational fishing industries. In some areas, wetlands support grazing, forestry and cropping.

Despite a growing understanding of their many values and functions, wetlands remain one of our most threatened resources. They continue to be regarded by many as wastelands and their destruction continues. Where wetlands were once abundant, they have been destroyed or altered, without recognition of the long-term impacts these actions will have on our quality of life.

In summary, wetlands are ecologically, economically and socially important for the following reasons:

- biodiversity conservation;
- nursery and breeding grounds, especially for fish and waterbirds;
- improved water quality;
- biological productivity;
- aesthetic, cultural and heritage values;
- recreation;
- nutrient cycling;
- flood mitigation through water storage and retention;
- water storage;
- ground water recharge;
- scientific research;
- education;
- foreshore protection from wave action and erosion;
- soil and water conservation; and
- grazing, forestry and cropping.

Technological advances in recent years now mean that purpose built wetlands can be constructed as management tools for dealing with the problems of wastewater management and pollution control. These artificial systems, while not duplicating natural wetlands, will increasingly assist with water management in Australia and also serve some useful amenity functions.

2.2 Threats to our Wetlands

The threats to Australia's wetlands are many and varied and in most instances can be found acting in concert to degrade or destroy sites. By far the greatest threat, even today, remains ignorance of the importance of wetlands and the roles they play. This is exacerbated in Australia where many wetlands are ephemeral, remaining dry for years, or parts of the year, and filling during wet seasons or after rain.

It is estimated that since European settlement approximately 50% of Australia's wetlands have been converted to other uses. In some regions the rate of loss has been even higher. For example, on the Swan Coastal Plain of Western Australia 75% of the wetlands have been filled or drained and in south-east South Australia 89% have been destroyed.

The distinction between wetland loss and wetland degradation is not absolute. Continued degradation may result in the complete loss of wetland functions and values. However, it is useful to make a distinction between loss, which is normally the result of deliberate intent, and degradation, which may be an indirect and unanticipated consequence of actions within wetlands and their catchments.

Historically, the development of urban areas has regularly involved the filling of wetlands for industrial, commercial, housing and waste disposal and for the provision of playing fields and other recreational facilities. Many watercourses in urban areas have been converted to drains lined with concrete resulting in loss of in-stream habitat, fringing wetlands and streamside vegetation. In Australia, due to the nature of the environment and the distribution of the human population, losses of this type have been concentrated in estuaries and in the permanent wetlands of the coastal lowlands of southern Australia.

Historically, agricultural development has involved substantial loss of wetlands on the floodplains of coastal rivers. Drainage and conversion of wetlands for agricultural activities has been a major cause of wetland loss worldwide. However, agricultural management and maintenance of wetlands can be compatible, and agriculture need not involve complete loss of wetland function and values. Sustainable natural resource management necessarily involves wetlands management as part of a whole systems approach.

Direct loss of wetlands from extractive industries is relatively uncommon, but may be significant for some wetlands such as peat swamps. Indirect loss may result from the overuse of groundwater, thereby leading to the loss of springs and similar wetlands. Development of aquaculture has had substantial impacts on wetlands overseas, both from direct destruction of habitat and indirectly through effects on water quality and native biota. As a growing industry in Australia aquaculture will have to be carefully managed to avoid similar impacts here.

Apart from outright destruction through conversion for other uses, the major long term factors leading to wetland degradation and loss are:

Changes to water flow patterns and water quality - The flows of most of our waterways are now regulated by dams and weirs, which change the flows received by wetlands. The volumes and timing of flows to wetlands are now very different to natural flows and this can lead to sudden or gradual degradation. Land clearing or water diversions can similarly impact on water flows and water quality and, in turn, on the wetlands of the floodplain.

Pollution - Pollution is a particular threat as pollutants tend to accumulate and concentrate in wetlands. On a local scale, wetlands are threatened by both acute and chronic pollution. Acute pollution generally arises from accidents, such as oil spills from shipping, road or industrial accidents. Chronic pollution may arise from both local and widespread sources. Catchment run-off carries nutrients, sediments and pollutants into waterways and eventually wetlands. Excess nutrients cause eutrophication, resulting in changes to the biological and chemical processes within wetlands.

Invasive species - Like virtually all ecosystems, Australia's wetlands are adversely affected by introduced plants and animals. Some extremely aggressive noxious plants, such as *Eichhornia crassipes*, *Mimosa pigra* and *Ludwigia peruviana*, have invaded wetlands in Australia. Invasive animals such as pigs, cane toads and European carp are well known for their destructive impacts on wetland areas. The threats are not only from species already introduced into the wild in Australia. There is also the constant risk of new introductions of ponded exotic pasture, aquarium and garden species, and ballast water and hull transport of exotic marine pests.

2.3 Goal

Recognising:

- that wetlands are a vital component of the natural environment and have a special role in relation to the Australian way of life;
- that Australia's wetlands are unique and their ecological characteristics have intrinsic value;
- that steps must be taken to stop the degradation and destruction of wetlands while recognising there will be ongoing human uses of these areas that must be managed for long-term ecological sustainability; and that
- we have the technical capacity to repair many wetland areas and such restoration is an integral part of managing this continent in the long-term interests of the environment, the economy and our way of life

and **acknowledging** the goal, core objectives and guiding principles of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development,

The Goal of the Wetlands Policy of the Commonwealth Government of Australia is to conserve, repair and manage wetlands wisely.

2.4 Objectives

To achieve the goal of this Policy, the Commonwealth Government will strive, in cooperation with State/Territory and local Governments and the Australian people, to:

- conserve Australia's wetlands particularly through the promotion of their ecological, cultural, economic and social values;
- manage wetlands in an ecologically sustainable way and within a framework of integrated catchment management;
- achieve informed community and private sector participation in the management of wetlands through appropriate mechanisms;
- raise community and visitor awareness of the values, benefits and range of types of wetlands;
- develop a shared vision between all spheres of Government and promote the application of best practice in relation to wetland management and conservation;
- ensure a sound scientific and technological basis for the conservation, repair and ecologically sustainable development of wetlands; and
- meet Australia's commitments, as a signatory to relevant international treaties, in relation to the management of wetlands.

***Ecologically Sustainable Development: goal, objectives and guiding principles -
An excerpt from Australia's National Strategy
for Ecologically Sustainable Development***

The goal is:

Development that improves the total quality of life, both now and in the future, in a way that maintains the ecological processes on which life depends.

The core objectives are:

- to enhance individual and community well-being and welfare by following a path of economic development that safeguards the welfare of future generations;
- to provide for equity within and between generations; and
- to protect biological diversity and maintain essential ecological processes and life-support systems.

The guiding principles are:

- decision-making processes should effectively integrate both long and short-term economic, environmental, social and equity considerations;
- where there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation;
- the global dimension of environmental impacts of actions and policies should be recognised and considered;
- the need to develop a strong, growing and diversified economy which can enhance the capacity for environmental protection should be recognised;
- the need to maintain and enhance international competitiveness in an environmentally sound manner should be recognised;
- cost effective and flexible policy instruments should be adopted, such as improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms; and
- decisions and actions should provide for broad community involvement on issues which affect them.

2.5 Guiding Principles

In pursuing the goal and objectives of this Policy the Commonwealth Government has adopted the following guiding principles. All are critical to this Policy.

- Decisions concerning the future management of Commonwealth wetland sites should be made with due consideration of their ecological, economic and social values and in accordance with the precautionary principle.
- A coordinated and cooperative approach to wetland conservation and management is important and must involve all spheres of government, the community, local and indigenous groups and the private sector.
- Promotion and achievement of positive attitudes and perceptions amongst all Australians towards wetlands is an important prerequisite for effective wetland conservation and management.
- Recognising the importance of the knowledge, innovations and practices of Indigenous people in relation to wetlands and the contribution that these can provide, the Commonwealth will promote a cooperative approach to wetland management and conservation with Indigenous Australians.
- Private landholders should be empowered to act as responsible long-term custodians of wetlands.
- The wise use of wetlands, in accordance with the Ramsar Convention's definition and guidelines, is an important component in Australia's achievement of the goal of the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development.
- Wetland functions and values should be conserved within a context of integrated natural resource and land-use management regimes which may include multiple and sequential land use principles.
- While it is recognised that purpose built wetlands can offer opportunities for applying wetland functions to address specific environmental management issues, they should not be used as substitutes for natural wetlands without expert supporting advice.
- The repair of degraded wetlands should be undertaken where ecologically beneficial, feasible and cost effective.
- Ongoing research into wetland processes, dynamics and management, and the dissemination of these findings in a readily useable form, is important to the conservation and ecologically sustainable use of wetlands.
- The importance of Australia's wetlands and our international environmental obligations should be recognised in the management of wetlands.
- Nothing in this Policy should be used to compromise human health and safety considerations or actions the Commonwealth identifies as of national interest.

3 STRATEGIES

The Wetlands Policy of the Commonwealth Government of Australia has six strategies to provide for the conservation, repair and wise use of wetlands:

1. Managing wetlands on Commonwealth lands and waters.
2. Implementing Commonwealth policies and legislation and delivering Commonwealth programs.
3. Involving the Australian people in wetlands management.
4. Working in partnership with State/Territory and local Governments.
5. Ensuring a sound scientific basis for policy and management.
6. International actions.

These strategies are designed to work in concert with other ongoing initiatives for nature conservation and natural resource management. They aim to provide a framework and the tools for program managers to put the Commonwealth's house in order. They also aim to ensure the appropriate management of Commonwealth wetlands, to support effective wetland science and public awareness actions, both nationally and internationally, and to provide a range of measures leading to improved cooperative partnerships between the three tiers of government and the private sector to meet a common goal.

All six strategies are considered to be equally important to the success of the Policy. The measures indicated under each are not considered exhaustive but they are believed to be highest priorities for action. The Implementation Plan, when prepared, will prescribe a wider range of actions under each strategy and provide timeframes for pursuing each (refer to Section 4).

STRATEGY 1

MANAGING WETLANDS ON COMMONWEALTH LANDS AND WATERS

Develop and apply model practices in wetland conservation and ecologically sustainable use on all Commonwealth lands and waters.

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Consistent with clause 2.2.3 of the *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment*, the Commonwealth will continue to take responsibility for management of wetlands on land which the Commonwealth owns or which it occupies for its own use.

1.1 Documenting the extent of the Commonwealth's wetlands and priorities for conservation action and rehabilitation

- As a priority, develop and maintain a comprehensive inventory of wetlands on Commonwealth lands and waters, areas leased by Commonwealth agencies and areas under co-management arrangements involving the Commonwealth, such as where Commonwealth Departments support private land owners in management of protected areas.
- Ensure that wetlands from the above inventory which qualify against the respective criteria are:
 - nominated as Wetlands of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention;
 - included in forthcoming editions of *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia* (refer to Glossary);
 - nominated for inclusion on the Register of the National Estate;
 - added, as resources allow, to the national system of reserves and protected areas;
 - nominated as Endangered Ecological Communities (refer to Glossary) under the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*; and/or
 - added to the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network (refer to Glossary).

Where these actions are being considered and relate to non-Commonwealth and/or private landholdings the Commonwealth will seek the prior support of the landholders.

- As part of the above process, establish if the Commonwealth Government is proposing to divest itself of the management responsibility of any of the areas with significant wetlands and seek to retain such areas and/or introduce suitable long-term protective management arrangements.
- Identify Commonwealth wetland areas where rehabilitation will be ecologically advantageous and feasible. Factor such works into site management plans (refer to Strategy 1.2) and escalate efforts to undertake these activities.

1.2 Managing Commonwealth lands and waters in a manner consistent with the objectives of this Policy

- Prepare environmental management plans or Plans of Management for Commonwealth areas with significant wetlands. Ensure that these plans take account of the Ramsar Convention's wise use principles and management planning guidelines and that they also complement regional or catchment-based management plans where these exist.
- Review, and modify as necessary, the existing environmental management plans and practices for Commonwealth wetland areas to ensure they are consistent with the objectives of this Policy. As part of this process consult with those areas of the Government and private sectors which have expertise in wetland management.
- Ensure that an environmental impact assessment is conducted for proposals which may affect the environment to a significant extent on Commonwealth owned or managed lands. The level of assessment will be determined with appropriate reference to the *ANZECC Guidelines and Criteria for Determining the Need for and Level of Environment Impact Assessment in Australia*.
- Where security provisions allow, encourage the involvement of nominated community representatives in the development of Plans of Management for Commonwealth wetland areas.

1.3 Improving training and support arrangements for Commonwealth land and water managers

- Identify the competencies needed by Commonwealth land and water managers in meeting the obligations of this Policy and establish an appropriately tailored training program (refer also to Strategy 3.2).
- Ensure that Commonwealth wetland managers have ready access to the results of management-related research funded through, for example, the National Wetlands Research and Development Program (refer also to Strategy 5.2) and are regularly provided with information on international best practice in wetland management.

STRATEGY 2

IMPLEMENTING COMMONWEALTH POLICIES AND LEGISLATION AND DELIVERING COMMONWEALTH PROGRAMS

Incorporate wetland conservation and ecologically sustainable use principles into Commonwealth policies, legislation, strategies and programs.

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2.1 Ensuring this Policy and other related Commonwealth policies and strategies are implemented in a coordinated manner

- As a matter of priority, develop an Implementation Plan to ensure effective application of this Policy. The process by which implementation will be coordinated is outlined in Section 4. The minimum actions in developing the Plan will include:
 - reviewing existing, and developing, Commonwealth policies and strategies to establish those with related objectives and mechanisms in order to harmonise their implementation with this Policy;
 - preparation of guidelines and provision of training opportunities on implementing this Policy for Commonwealth land/water managers;
 - establishing formal mechanisms between the relevant Commonwealth Departments to coordinate the delivery of wetland related programs;
 - ensuring that the conservation and wise use of wetlands is encouraged through integrated environmental and natural resource management including total catchment management; and
 - reviewing the skills and competencies of Commonwealth-funded natural resource and nature conservation extension officers to ensure they can adequately advise on achieving the conservation and wise use of wetlands through integrated environmental and natural resource management. As necessary provide training opportunities to these personnel.
- At the discretion of the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment, review the Terms of Reference and membership for the National Wetlands Advisory Committee to ensure it has appropriate government and community representation.

2.2 Managing Commonwealth legislation to allow the objectives of this Policy to be met

- Examine the scope of relevant Commonwealth legislation and associated administrative procedures to ensure these are operating to allow this Policy to be effectively implemented.
- Consistent with Australia's international trade and environment obligations, ensure that the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982*, and associated quarantine screening practices, continue to restrict entry into Australia of any plant or animal species which may have the potential to negatively impact on natural wetland systems (refer also to Strategy 5.2).
- Consistent with Strategy 1.1, using the procedures of the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992*, identify and nominate endangered or vulnerable wetland species and endangered ecological communities and the processes threatening them, and then proceed to develop and implement Recovery and Threat Abatement Plans for the same.
- Provide Commonwealth Ministers and their Departments with access to the information needed to ensure they comply with Section 30 of the *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975*.

2.3 Managing Commonwealth programs

- Ensure that Commonwealth funds provided to State/Territory or local Governments are only for projects which are consistent with this Policy.

STRATEGY 3

INVOLVING THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE IN WETLANDS MANAGEMENT

Promote public awareness and understanding of the wetland resource in Australia and actively encourage participation of the community, including Indigenous Australians, other private landholders, the business sector and non-government organisations in achieving the goal of this Policy.

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3.1 Working towards greater community awareness and understanding of wetland values

- Develop and implement a targeted national community awareness and education program about wetlands, their values and management models.
- Encourage the establishment of educational and interpretive facilities at wetlands around Australia.
- Support and develop initiatives which educate wetland managers about the principles of integrated environmental and natural resource management and thereby promote the principles of Ecologically Sustainable Development.
- In cooperation with Indigenous people, develop educational materials which will assist their management of impacts on wetlands that have been introduced by other cultures.
- Support activities, such as those of the Waterwatch Australia Program, which promote the concepts of integrated catchment management and creation of empathy between rural and urban dwelling Australians in water and land management.

3.2 Empowering the community to take responsibility for using wetlands wisely

- Ensure the relevant Commonwealth programs offer opportunities, through appropriate mechanisms, for the participation of the community and local and indigenous groups in wetland conservation, rehabilitation and management projects.
- Facilitate the exchange of management-related information and data between on-ground wetland managers in the private sector and government agencies and departments. Encourage the use of this information and data in the development and implementation of integrated regional plans.
- Encourage the adoption of management practices that use and demonstrate the traditional wetland management knowledge of Indigenous Australians and consider measures to encourage the equitable sharing of benefits arising from utilisation of such knowledge.
- Assist and support, as resources allow, private landholders and other community members to gain access to training in wetlands conservation and management within a broader context of environmental and natural resource management.
- Invite the active participation of appropriate stakeholder representatives on the advisory, assessment and other committees of relevant Commonwealth programs.

3.3 Supporting mechanisms to encourage wetland conservation and wise use

- Document and promote a range of economic, voluntary, educational and other measures to encourage wetland conservation activities by the private sector.
- Undertake a broader review of economic policy instruments for biodiversity conservation outside protected areas to ensure that, where feasible and where consistent with national taxation and fiscal policy, there are incentives and, conversely, no disincentives for wetland conservation activities by private landowners.
- Document the economic importance of the Australian commercial and recreational fishing industries and their reliance on wetland habitats and establish a range of measures for the protection, rehabilitation and restoration of these areas.

STRATEGY 4

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH STATE/TERRITORY AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

Continue to be a partner in cooperative activities and agreements with State/Territory and local Governments to advance wetland management and conservation in accordance with this Policy.

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4.1 Working in partnership with State/Territory Governments

- Work cooperatively and in partnership with the State/Territory Governments to assist with their development of wetland policies or strategies for their jurisdictions. Draw upon these policies or strategies in establishing the strategic and long-term priorities for the programs funded through the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia.
- Identify measures to strengthen the links between the relevant ministerial councils and other Commonwealth-State/Territory consultative fora, with the intention of promoting a more integrated approach to wetland conservation and management within a total watershed framework.
- Continue the Commonwealth's support for the implementation of the water policy reform processes of the Council of Australian Governments which are being implemented by the States and Territories, and which recognise the environment as a legitimate user of water and require jurisdictions to give priority to formally determining allocations or entitlements to water, including allocations for the environment.
- Facilitate the development of a partnership approach to coordinate actions between jurisdictions where wetlands and/or wetland catchment boundaries cross administrative boundaries.
- Through the broader context of the programs funded by the Natural Heritage Trust of Australia, support the dissemination of information on best practice wetland management and conservation principles to wetland managers and decision makers in all spheres of government.
- Seek the participation of State/Territory Governments in the development of training and education initiatives in the various areas of wetland management and conservation from on-ground management activities to policy development.
- Support the compilation of further editions of *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia* as a cooperative mechanism for the identification and description of Australia's nationally important wetlands. Support the escalation of this project into a national wetland inventory (refer also to Strategies 1.1 and 5.1).

- Provide support, as appropriate, to State/Territory Governments in the identification, designation and development of management plans for Wetlands of International Importance within their jurisdictions.

4.2 Promote and support local government efforts in wetlands conservation and management

- In fostering integration of environmental and natural resource management at the regional level, encourage local governments to prepare wetland policies or strategies complementary to those of their respective State or Territory (refer also to Strategy 4.1).
- In consultation with the Australian Local Government Association and relevant Commonwealth-funded programs, prepare and distribute materials to raise the awareness and understanding of local governments to the values of natural and purpose-built wetlands and to the avenues through which they can seek expert advice, resource materials and training opportunities for personnel.
- Distribute resource materials concerning wetland management issues through established mechanisms such as CouncilNet and the networks of the relevant environmental, conservation, sustainable agriculture and natural resource management programs.
- Support the provision of opportunities for the wetland management expertise of local government to be recognised and made accessible to wetland managers in all spheres of government and the private sector.
- Give priority, through training and education initiatives, to capacity building for local governments in the various areas of wetland management and conservation from on-ground management activities to policy development.

STRATEGY 5

ENSURING A SOUND SCIENTIFIC BASIS FOR POLICY AND MANAGEMENT

Support and promote the development of expertise for a sound technical and scientific basis for wetland conservation and management, ensuring the information necessary for making decisions regarding wetlands is disseminated as appropriate to all spheres of government, the community and the private sector.

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5.1 Monitoring the state of wetlands

- Work in partnership with the State/Territory Governments, and private landowners as appropriate, to compile and regularly update a national wetlands inventory which includes the wetland resources on Commonwealth lands and waters (refer also to Strategy 1.1).
- In consultation with scientific experts, government agencies, nominated community groups and private landholders, establish national guidelines, protocols and benchmarks for the short and long-term monitoring of Australia's wetlands.
- Seek cooperative arrangements with State/Territory and local Governments and support community groups and the scientific community to ensure regular monitoring of wetlands.
- Provide specific details of the extent and condition of Australia's wetland resource in future State of the Environment Reports.

5.2 Developing and supporting a strategic and coordinated wetlands research effort

- Continue to develop a strategic and coordinated approach to Commonwealth funded wetland-related research through, for example, the National Wetlands Research and Development Program. Seek to engage a broad range of joint venture partners in this Program from other government sectors and the private sector.

- Through the above, foster research into the priority areas to address wetland management issues. This should include, but not be limited to, research to:
 - identify the full range of threatening processes for wetlands and establish how to manage these and other known threats facing wetlands, such as water flow patterns and water quality, pollution and invasive species;
 - define the role of wetlands in the hydrologic cycle;
 - develop suitable environmentally sensitive control methods and planning mechanisms to avoid nuisance insect problems for urban wetlands;
 - determine the impacts of the peat harvesting industry in Australia and recommend appropriate steps for the Commonwealth Government to take, such as the use of artificial plant propagation media in all Commonwealth-run and funded activities and projects;
 - establish strategies for managing visitor impacts on wetlands;
 - devise robust economic valuation techniques for wetlands;
 - document guidelines for achieving the wise use management of wetlands;
 - clarify the taxonomy and distribution of wetland dependent species; and
 - improve information held on the migration and distribution patterns of migratory waterbirds, focusing on the East Asian-Australasian Flyway, through the development of appropriate colour marking protocols and habitat studies, particularly with the assistance of the Australian Bird and Bat Banding Scheme.
- Review the screening procedures of all relevant Commonwealth agencies for plant and animal introductions into Australia to ensure that the precautionary principle is exercised in decisions that may impact on wetland systems.
- Support research into purpose built wetlands and encourage the application of this technology in accordance with the Guiding Principles of this Policy.

5.3 Supporting mechanisms to encourage the understanding and application of research findings

- Ensure that results of research are widely disseminated in a user-friendly form to those with wetland management and conservation responsibilities in both government and non-government sectors, here and internationally.
- Monitor international advances in wetland management and draw them to the attention of the Australian research community and others who can apply these locally.

STRATEGY 6

INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS

Promote conservation and ecologically sustainable use of wetlands and wetland resources internationally, and encourage the involvement of other nations and international organisations in wetland conservation efforts.

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6.1 Continuing support from Australia's international aid programs

- Continue to ensure that Australia's international aid activities are planned and implemented within the context of ecologically sustainable development. All wetland development proposals will continue to undergo rigorous environmental assessment as set out in AusAID's *Environmental Assessment Guidelines for Australia's Aid Program* including referrals of environmentally significant projects to Environment Australia under the *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974*.
- Ensure that Commonwealth international aid projects are consistent with the obligations of the Ramsar Convention Strategic Plan 1997-2002.
- In response to priority requests from developing countries, continue to provide support for bilateral and regional aid activities in the areas of policy development, capacity building, training and technology transfer in the sustainable use, conservation and rehabilitation of wetlands.
- Strengthen existing consultative arrangements between the Commonwealth and non-government organisations to promote and facilitate actions for meeting the regional and global goals of the Ramsar Convention.

6.2 Monitoring and regulating trade in products derived from wetlands

- Review all exports of products derived from wetlands and ensure they are consistent with the provisions of the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982* and with Australia's international obligations including those under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora and the Convention on Biological Diversity, particularly Articles 10 (sustainable use) and 22 (relationship with other international conventions).
- Review all imports of products derived from wetlands and ensure, where these are listed under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, that they are consistent with the provisions of the *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Imports and Exports) Act 1982*.
- As appropriate, seek to amend the Appendices under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora to ensure the effective implementation of this Policy.

6.3 Encouraging foreign investment activities consistent with this Policy

- Through the relevant Commonwealth legislation, ensure that foreign investment proposals in Australia are consistent with this Policy.
- Support initiatives to incorporate this Policy in any future development or revision of all voluntary industry codes of environmental management.
- Prepare and disseminate an information package to inform Australian businesses and companies operating overseas about the wise use principles and guidelines of the Ramsar Convention and the importance and sensitivity of wetlands. Where applicable, encourage dialogue between these businesses and companies and the Ramsar Administrative Authorities in these countries.

6.4 Progressing regional and global partnerships

- Work cooperatively, particularly with the countries of the Asia-Pacific region, to progress regional and global wetland conservation and management agendas in the areas of training, capacity building, technology transfer and community empowerment. Give priority to the development of the Asia-Pacific Wetland Managers' Training Program (refer to Glossary) and the East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network, taking into account the priorities and needs of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region.
- Where appropriate, encourage international funding bodies, such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), to support wetland conservation and wise use projects in the developing world in accordance with the GEF Operational Strategy as agreed under the Convention on Biological Diversity.

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY

As a matter of priority, the Commonwealth Government will develop an Implementation Plan to accompany this Policy. Developing this Plan will provide an important step towards ensuring the actions outlined in the Policy are addressed systematically and effectively, and within realistic and appropriate timeframes.

The development of the Implementation Plan will be undertaken through an appropriate consultation process which will involve a range of government and non-government stakeholders. The Plan will provide suitable and regular opportunities for public input to the evaluation of the Commonwealth Government's performance in implementing this Policy.

The Implementation Plan will emphasise performance measures for the actions and initiatives outlined in the Policy, which can then be used to gauge the overall progress towards conservation and ecologically sustainable use of Australia's wetlands. It may also introduce administrative arrangements which are not specifically mentioned here but are considered of high priority for achieving the goal and objectives of this Policy.

Mechanisms to monitor and regularly review the Policy will be included in the Implementation Plan as will consultative, transparent and regular reporting and review processes. Performance measures will be built into the review processes to document the success of the Commonwealth in implementing this Policy.

5 GLOSSARY

The following terms and acronyms are used in this Policy. A general definition of each is presented here as a guide to readers of this document.

ANZECC

ANZECC is the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council. It consists of the Commonwealth, State/Territory and New Zealand Ministers responsible for environment and conservation. The relevant Minister from Papua New Guinea has observer status in this forum.

Asia-Pacific Wetland Managers' Training Program

The *Asia-Pacific Wetland Managers' Training Program* aims to:

- provide people with the skills to manage wetlands in an ecologically sustainable way; and
- help Australia meet its domestic and international cooperation obligations, such as those arising from the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and its Strategic Plan 1997-2002.

For further information on the Program, contact the Wetlands, Waterways and Waterbirds Unit of Environment Australia - Biodiversity Group.

COAG

COAG is the Council of Australian Governments. It comprises the Prime Minister, the State/Territory Premiers or Chief Ministers and the President of the Local Government Association of Australia.

Conservation

In this Policy the term 'conservation' is interpreted to mean management of a wetland in a way that protects its ecological processes and values. When used in this Policy 'conservation' is not intended to mean preservation; the latter term being equated to management in a way that excludes consumptive or exploitative uses.

East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network

The East Asian-Australasian Shorebird Reserve Network was launched at the March 1996 Ramsar Convention Conference in Brisbane. It aims to provide an informal multilateral regional framework for shorebird conservation, building a network of both people and wetland sites important for shorebirds along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway. There are at present 19 sites included by their respective governments in the network. These include sites in Japan, the People's Republic of China, the United Kingdom (Hong Kong), Philippines, Indonesia, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and Australia. For Australia the sites are; Kakadu National Park (NT), Thompson's Lake (WA), Parry's Lagoon (WA), Moreton Bay (Qld), Kooragang Nature Reserve (NSW), Corner Inlet (Vic), The Coorong (SA), Orielton Lagoon (Tas) and Logan Lagoon (Tas). Most of the flyway sites included are already listed as Ramsar sites. Recognition as a flyway network site imposes no additional management responsibilities on the respective jurisdictions.

Ecological Character

Under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands the term 'ecological character' is used to describe the key attributes of a wetland which qualify it as a Wetland of International Importance.

The working definition adopted by the Sixth Ramsar Conference was as follows:

The 'ecological character' is the structure and inter-relationships between biological, chemical and physical components of the wetland. These derive from the interactions of individual processes, functions, attributes and values of the ecosystem(s).

Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)

In this Policy the terms 'ESD' and 'wise use' are considered synonymous. Relevant excerpts from the National Strategy for ESD are given in the Policy section and at Appendix B.

Endangered Ecological Communities

Under the *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992* an ecological community is defined as:

an integrated assemblage of native species that inhabits a particular area in nature, and meets the additional criteria specified in the regulations (if any) made for the purposes of this definition.

Criteria for determining 'endangered ecological communities' have been developed by the Scientific Sub committee of the Endangered Species Advisory Committee and are under consideration by the Commonwealth Environment Minister at the time of adoption of this Policy.

Functions

When used in this Policy the term 'functions' means the natural processes and derivation of benefits and values associated with wetland ecosystems. This includes economic production, fish and wildlife habitat, organic carbon storage, water supply and purification (groundwater recharge, flood control, maintenance of flow regimes, shoreline erosion buffering), and soil and water conservation, as well as tourism, heritage, recreational, educational, scientific and aesthetic opportunities.

Internationally Important Wetlands (Ramsar Sites)

Ramsar sites are wetlands which qualify against the criteria established by the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands for designation as Wetlands of International Importance. Appendix D details these criteria and guidelines for their interpretation.

Nationally Important Wetlands

Sites included in the 1996 edition of *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia* as published by the Biodiversity Group of Environment Australia (formerly the Australian Nature Conservation Agency). The first edition was published in 1993. This publication is a cooperative exercise involving the Australian ANZECC agencies whereby each provides details of those wetlands which qualify against agreed national criteria. Sites included in the Directory are now known commonly as 'nationally important'.

It is important to note that the criteria used for including sites in *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia* differ from those used by the Ramsar Convention to indicate internationally important sites (see above). The Directory should not be considered definitive, as several States/Territories are yet to complete wetland inventories. Also, in some cases caveats are placed on the information provided by the State or Territory and care should be taken when referring to the Directory. Due to the expectation for mapping this data, grid references are supplied for each site. In some cases this is quite inappropriate as the wetland systems are extensive and artificial boundaries have to be introduced across the continuum.

Appendix F details the criteria for identifying sites for inclusion in the Directory.

Precautionary Principle

At the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, 'The Earth Summit', held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, a series of principles on environment and development were adopted (the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development). This included Principle 15, commonly known as the 'precautionary principle':

In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by the States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Subsection 3.5.1 of the *Intergovernmental Agreement on the Environment*, in addition to including the above definition, adds the following as a means of clarifying Australia's application of the precautionary principle:

In the application of the precautionary principle, public and private decisions should be guided by:

- 1) careful evaluation to avoid, wherever practicable, serious or irreversible damage to the environment; and
- 2) an assessment of the risk-weighted consequence of various options.

Ramsar Convention (The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat)

When used in the text of this document, this term refers to The Convention on Wetlands of International Importance, especially as Waterfowl Habitat itself and the

Recommendations and Resolutions from all Conferences of Contracting Parties. It should be noted that it is the Convention text itself which imposes binding obligations upon Contracting Parties. In relation to subsequent Recommendations and Resolutions of Conferences of the Parties, the Convention requires the following:

The Contracting Parties shall ensure that those responsible at all levels for wetlands management shall be informed of, and take into consideration, recommendations of such Conferences concerning the conservation, management and wise use of wetlands and their flora and fauna.

Repair/Rehabilitation/Restoration of Wetlands

The term 'repair' in reference to wetlands refers to the rehabilitation or restoration of degraded wetlands.

Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention has adopted a broad definition of the term 'wetlands'. Article 1.1 of the Convention defines wetlands as:

areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres.

In addition, Article 2.1 of the Convention provides that wetlands:

may incorporate riparian and coastal zones adjacent to the wetlands, and islands or bodies of marine water deeper than six metres at low tide lying within the wetlands.

As a result of these provisions, the coverage of the Convention extends to a wide variety of habitat types including rivers, shallow coastal waters and even coral reefs, but not deep sea. Further, at the sixth Ramsar Conference in Brisbane, Australia in March 1996, 'karst system wetlands' were formally recognised within the Convention's classification system.

Under the Convention, wetland types are divided into five system forms as follows:

- Marine (coastal wetlands including rocky shore)
- Riverine (wetlands along rivers and streams)
- Estuarine (including deltas, tidal marshes and mangrove swamps)
- Lacustrine (wetlands associated with lakes)
- Palustrine (marshes, swamps and bogs)

Purpose built wetlands such as fish and shrimp ponds, irrigated agricultural land, salt evaporation pans, reservoirs, gravel pits, sewage farms and canals may also be listed under the Convention, provided they meet the selection criteria.

The above definitions were developed under the Ramsar Convention to meet the needs of the international community. As a companion, the Convention has also adopted a classification system which provides for a wide range of wetland types. When developing *A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia*, the ANZECC agencies modified this classification slightly to suit Australian conditions. This classification system is given in Appendix F. In addition, the following conditions have been introduced to make this classification system compatible with the expectations of the Commonwealth's Wetlands Policy.

For the purposes of the Commonwealth's Wetlands Policy:

- 'Rocky marine shores, including rocky offshore islands and sea cliffs' are **not** considered as wetlands unless they form an integral part of a larger wetland continuum associated with one of the other marine and coastal wetland types listed in the classification;
- the main in-channel elements of 'permanent rivers and streams, including waterfalls' are **not** considered wetlands; and
- 'Human-made wetlands' are acknowledged as being capable of providing valuable functions and addressing specific environmental management issues and their creation should be encouraged where suitable technology is available and it is not possible to restore previously existing wetlands. However, human-made, or purpose-built wetlands, should **not** be considered as replacement, or compensation, for natural wetlands proposed for destruction without expert supporting advice. Except where such purpose-built wetlands qualify as wetlands of international or national importance, the conservation of these sites is of secondary importance to the conservation of natural wetlands.

Wise Use - see also Ecologically Sustainable Development above

Article 3.1 of the Ramsar Convention states that the Contracting Parties 'shall formulate and implement their planning so as to promote the conservation of the wetlands included in the List, and as far as possible the wise use of wetlands in their territory '.

The Third Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in Regina, Canada from 27 May to 5 June 1987, adopted the following definition of wise use of wetlands:

The wise use of wetlands is their sustainable utilisation for the benefit of humankind in a way compatible with the maintenance of the natural properties of the ecosystem.

From this definition the Conference of Contracting Parties developed guidelines (Recommendation C.4.10) and additional guidance (Resolution C.5.6) to assist member states with the implementation of the wise use concept. These are reproduced as Appendix E of this Policy.

The wise use provisions apply to all wetlands and their support systems within the territory of a Contracting Party, both those wetlands designated for the List of Wetlands of International Importance, and all other wetlands. The concept of wise use seeks both the formulation and implementation of general wetland policies, and wise use of specific wetlands. These activities are integral parts of ecologically sustainable development.

6 FURTHER READING

Relevant Commonwealth Legislation

- *World Heritage Properties Conservation Act 1973.*
- *Environment Protection (Impact of Proposals) Act 1974.*
- *Australian Heritage Commission Act 1975.*
- *Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act 1975.*
- *National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act 1975.*
- *Whale Protection Act 1980.*
- *Wildlife Protection (Regulation of Exports and Imports) Act 1982 and schedules.*
- *Telecommunications Act 1991.*
- *Endangered Species Protection Act 1992.*
- *Native Title Act 1993.*

Relevant International Conventions

- Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar Convention) 1971.
- Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention) 1979.
- Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) 1973.
- Convention on Conservation of Nature in the South Pacific (Apia Convention) 1976.
- Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of Japan for the Protection of Migratory Birds and Birds in Danger of Extinction and their Environment (JAMBA) 1974.
- Agreement between the Government of Australia and the People's Republic of China for the Protection of Migratory Birds and their Environment (CAMBA) 1986.
- Convention on Biological Diversity 1992.
- United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) 1982.
- Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage 1972.

General Reading

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