

National Needs and Gap Analysis of Community Engagement in Waterwatch

SUMMARY REPORT



Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia

An Australian Government Initiative



November 2004

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I hope that this Gap/Needs Analysis goes a small way towards contributing to the fantastic resource that is Waterwatch and that Waterwatch can continue to build its reputation and strengthen its position as a key natural resource management tool.

Don Thomson
Mt Lonarch, Victoria
October 2004

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The extension of the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) from phase 1 (NHT1) to phase 2 (NHT2) in 2002 has resulted in changes to the delivery of funding from a national 'program' basis to strategic investment basis through accredited regional plans.

Under NHT 1, Waterwatch Australia was managed as one of 21 discrete programs and had a budget of around \$2.5 million per year. These funds were distributed via the National Waterwatch Office to Waterwatch programs at a State, regional and local level to primarily employ facilitators and provide a small operating budget to assist communities to be active in sustainable water management. Funding was matched by cash and in kind on at least a 1:1 basis within each State or Territory. Waterwatch Australia was guided by national and State Strategic Plans and Steering Committees comprising key stakeholders.

While Waterwatch Australia is no longer a specific funding 'Program', there is an existing Government election commitment to '...continue to support more than 50,000 volunteers in every State and Territory in the monitoring of Australia's waterways via Waterwatch Australia'. In October 2003, Minister Kemp made an announcement to fund an additional 15 Waterwatch positions to encourage a Waterwatch facilitator presence in all NRM regions across Australia.

Waterwatch is currently supported at the national level by two staff members within the Joint Natural Resource Management (NRM) Team, Capacity Building Section, who have responsibilities for strategic direction, national partnerships and the development of tools and resources to support community involvement in sustainable water management. The Australian Government NRM Facilitator Network, particularly the State-based Rivercare Facilitators, support Waterwatch from a strategic and policy perspective also. The Capacity Building Team has overall responsibility for managing the facilitator and coordinator network funded by the Australian Government.

Although Waterwatch operates under different names in some States and regions (e.g. Ribbons of Blue in Western Australia, Streamwatch in parts of NSW), throughout this report we use 'Waterwatch' as an overarching term encompassing community-based water monitoring activities. These activities involve, to varying degrees, an education and capacity building focus, and/or a 'monitoring' or data collection focus.

1.2 Purpose of the Gap/Needs Analysis

This Gap/Needs Analysis was instigated to evaluate the performance of Waterwatch Australia and identify current gaps, future needs and opportunities to facilitate community engagement in sustainable water management via the Rivercare Program under the Natural Heritage Trust extension.

The primary purpose of the Gap/Needs Analysis is to provide an opportunity for participants and partners to express their needs for future involvement, tools and resources, support and direction. The transition to regional delivery under the extension of NHT (and also NAP) has significant implications for the sustainability of community-based monitoring and capacity-building initiatives such as Waterwatch. A principal aim of the Gap/Needs Analysis is to identify what support is needed, at a national level, to facilitate the transition to regional delivery.

There is also a small review component of the current study, covering the period of June 1999 (date of Mid Term NHT Review) until June 2004 to build on the 1999 NHT Mid Term Waterwatch review.

The Gap/Needs Analysis builds on previous reviews, including the Waterwatch Australia Needs/Gap Analysis of School Education Activities (2000), the 2003 Evaluation of the NHT Phase 1 Facilitator, Coordinator and Community Support Networks (Hassall & Associates, 2003) and recent State Waterwatch reviews (Stamfords 2003, Landscape & Social Research 2004).

The target audience for the Gap/Needs Analysis includes existing participants (students, teachers, Landcare and environment groups, individuals) and program partners (regional NRM bodies, local government, non government organisations, State and Australian government).

1.3 Method

Developing a methodology for this review was complex because of the diversity of Waterwatch across Australia. Because of this diversity, there was likely to be variable perceptions about what Waterwatch is, or should be, in each region.

An evaluation framework was developed to help answer the following key questions:

1. What are the critical enabling and constraining factors (or critical success factors - CSF) for Waterwatch at local, State and national scales?
2. To what degree are these critical success factors common within and between States/Territories and regions, and do different stakeholders have common perceptions of these CSF?
3. What is the status of each State/Territory and region in relation to these 'critical success factors'?
4. How can regions meet these 'critical success factors' and what role does the National Waterwatch office have in facilitating this process?

Two data collection methods were adopted to provide data against this framework. A quantitative survey of Waterwatch coordinators, supporters and proponents was distributed to:

- o identify the most important 'critical success factors' for community-based water monitoring and community engagement in river health issues;
- o provide a snapshot of the current 'condition' of regions and States/Territories on each of these 'critical success factors'

- o identify key dates that have influenced the condition of these 'critical success factors' in each region; and,
- o identify current trends in relation to each 'critical success factor' to identify if conditions are improving, declining or static.

The survey was distributed to 260 people around Australia as a Microsoft® Excel™ spreadsheet and 67 responses were received (see response rates by State/Territory in Table 2).

The key component of the Gap/Needs Analysis, however, was a qualitative assessment of the perceptions of a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties about the purpose and performance of Waterwatch, particularly since the extension of NHT after 2002. The main focus of this qualitative component of the research were State and regional Rivercare and Waterwatch facilitators/coordinators. In keeping with the grass-roots emphasis of Waterwatch, community monitors were included in the review process to the extent possible within the time-lines and resources available.

The main component of the consultation process was to conduct 'focus groups' in each State/Territory involving Waterwatch coordinators, representatives of NRM agencies, community monitors, to:

- o review lessons from period between the date of mid-term NHT review (1999) to end of NHT1 (June 2002);
- o discuss the impact of changes to institutional and funding arrangements under NHT2;
- o identify gaps and key roles and responsibilities relating to National Waterwatch initiative; and,
- o document perceptions of critical success factors in engaging the community in Rivercare.

Table 1 provides an overview of the focus groups, their locations and the number of participants at each session.

Another component of the consultation process was to interview key informants. Interviews were conducted in-person, mainly before and after the focus group sessions. Some interviews were conducted by telephone. Forty-eight people were interviewed during the conduct of the study. These ranged from short discussions to one-hour meetings.

In addition, State meetings of Waterwatch/Rivercare coordinators and facilitators were attended by the principal investigator in Western Australia (2 days), Queensland (2 days), NSW (1 day) and South Australia (1 day). The reviewer also participated in a two-day forum of all State Waterwatch and Rivercare coordinators in Canberra. These meetings/workshops were invaluable in gaining an understanding of the state of Waterwatch in all States/Territories and the issues facing coordinators, hosts, sponsors and regional NRM authority staff in relation to delivering the objectives of Waterwatch and Rivercare.

Table 1: Focus Group Session Details

State	Date	Location	No. Participants
Western Australia	26 May 2004	Fairbridge	7
Northern Territory	31 May 2004	Palmerston (Darwin)	6
Northern Territory	2 June 2004	Alice Springs	3
National	9 June 2004	Canberra	14
Queensland	17 June 2004	Indooroopilly	27
South Australia	21 June 2004	Adelaide	9
New South Wales	24 June 2004	Sydney	20
Victoria	28 June 2004	Melbourne	4
Australian Capital Territory	30 June 2004	Canberra	6
Tasmania	1 July 2004	Launceston	10
Tasmania	2 July 2004	Hobart	6
Total:			112

Table 2: Response Rates - Survey of Coordinators

State	No. Surveys Sent	No. Responses (usable)	Response Rate
Australian Capital Territory	19	1	5.3%
New South Wales	24	15	62.5%
Northern Territory	32	4	12.5%
Queensland	23	8	34.8%
South Australia	44	4	9.1%
Tasmania	19	9	47.4%
Victoria	42	14	33.3%
Western Australia	63	10	15.9%
TOTALS	266	65	24.4%

Where possible, Waterwatch participants were included in the consultation process (i.e. the focus groups and interviews), but there was insufficient scope within this study to include a large number of community participants. Therefore, it was deemed appropriate to undertake a smaller survey of some Waterwatch participants. Because contact lists were not available for Waterwatch participants, regional coordinators in 4 States were asked to distribute the survey to a random sample of participants in their Waterwatch programs. Table 3 provides an overview of the number of surveys returned in each of the States sampled.

Table 3: Community Survey Responses by State

State	No. Responses (usable)	Proportion of Respondents
New South Wales	29	44.7%
South Australia	8	12.3%
Tasmania	22	33.8%
Western Australia	6	9.2%
TOTALS	65	100.0%

2 RESULTS OF GAP/NEEDS ANALYSIS

2.1 Recognising the value of Waterwatch

The focus groups and surveys conducted as part of this investigation have both highlighted the diversity that exists in the delivery of community-based water monitoring and community education about water issues at the regional delivery. There is much diversity in the way Waterwatch is delivered: a wide range of organisations 'host' Waterwatch coordinators and an even wider range of organisations contribute, in kind and in cash terms, to its operation. Waterwatch also has a range of emphases in different regions. In some regions Waterwatch is primarily a community engagement and environmental education 'tool'. In other regions, Waterwatch coordinators and volunteers collect quality data to contribute to local and regional decision-making. Some regions successfully balance both 'environmental education' and 'monitoring' aspects. This diversity is an outcome of the flexibility inherent in Waterwatch over the past 12 years: Waterwatch Australia was never prescriptive about how Waterwatch should be run at the State and regional level. However, the overarching agreed objectives of Waterwatch Australia have been adopted at State and regional levels, ensuring complementary visions and goals across Australia.

However, the diversity of Waterwatch, and scope of activities it encompasses, means that there are also a very wide range of perceptions about the role or purpose of Waterwatch. This is primarily because only a few people fully appreciate the wide range of activities and 'services' Waterwatch encompasses. So, while the diversity of Waterwatch has many advantages, it can also have some disadvantages.

The key advantages of the diversity of Waterwatch is that it is flexible enough to be relevant in every region – even where water is scarce – and to be delivered by a wide range of proponent organisations, from local government to Water authorities. This flexibility is a key reason behind the success of the initiative across socially and biophysically diverse regions.

The key disadvantage of the flexibility and diversity of Waterwatch is that key people within institutions who might be suitable hosts/proponents do not always recognise the potential of Waterwatch because they have perhaps only experienced a part of it. Furthermore, if the elements of Waterwatch these people have experienced do not match the requirements of the regional investment plan, it is unlikely Waterwatch will be seen as relevant.

For these reasons, the shift to regional NRM delivery under NHT2 has raised important challenges for Waterwatch. Perhaps the key issue, because it threatens the sustainability and integrity of the Waterwatch network, is that Waterwatch will not be included in regional NRM investment strategies, and therefore not funded, unless regional NRM authorities recognise and appreciate the value of Waterwatch as a tool that can help them achieve their objectives. This Gap/Needs Analysis, through the surveys and focus groups, has highlighted that this recognition of the value of Waterwatch is not sufficient in many regions

to enable its future to be assured. In many regions, Waterwatch coordinators have faced significant challenges getting across a case for including Waterwatch in regional NRM plans.

These challenges of getting Waterwatch included into regional NRM investment strategies raise some important policy and communications challenges for Waterwatch. Despite the efforts of the national Waterwatch office back in 2000 to communicate the then up-coming changes to federal NRM funding, it is evident from the survey and the focus groups that the shift to regional delivery has not happened in many regions, and that the potential advantages of the new funding model have not been realised.

The focus group sessions highlighted that there is a need for national support to secure a larger role for Waterwatch within regional NRM delivery.

The focus groups highlighted that the difficulties associated with making the shift to regional delivery are, on the whole, not a result of a lack of awareness of what regional delivery is or how it works, but the difficulties Waterwatch coordinators and their proponents (under NHT1) have had in engaging with the process of developing regional NRM investment strategies.

Regional delivery has the potential to provide more security than ever because of the longer investment cycles (3 to 5 years). This has been the experience of Victorian regional Waterwatch initiatives, which have gone from strength to strength since being brought under the wings of Catchment Management Authorities (Victoria's regional NRM authorities).

There is a need to ensure that the educational value of Waterwatch is not lost as regional NRM authorities develop and implement their regional investment plans. This requires national-level support and promotion to ensure that regional authorities feel comfortable including educational programs within their investment plans.

2.2 The role of Waterwatch under Regional Delivery

Under regional delivery, all investments must be strategic, integrated and outcomes focussed. In the past, Waterwatch has not quantified or demonstrated its impact. Monitoring of Waterwatch has traditionally been limited to monitoring the number of groups and individuals participating and sites being monitored. This has not enabled Waterwatch to demonstrate its influence in terms of attitudinal and behavioural change and its impact in empowering people to participate in wider NRM initiatives. The potential of Waterwatch as a capacity building and community engagement tool has therefore not been recognised except by the people who have had direct experience of Waterwatch activities over a period of time.

While the community engagement and capacity building areas are likely to be the key areas for Waterwatch within regional NRM delivery, there are also opportunities for Waterwatch 'products and services' to contribute to regional authorities abilities to monitor progress in relation to management action targets and resource condition targets. This Gap/Needs Analysis has also identified that

there is a need for resources to ensure that regional NRM authorities gain a more holistic understanding of how Waterwatch can assist in relation to these key issues.

This Gap/Needs Analysis has identified that one of the key ways in which Waterwatch can market itself to regional authorities is to place more emphasis on the 'products' and 'services' that are the core elements of Waterwatch than on the employment of coordinators to deliver these products and services.

Box 1: Examples of Waterwatch Products and Services

<p>Examples of Waterwatch products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Technical manual, sampling and monitoring techniques, data quality/control protocols, activity sheets/products such as catchment models. <p>Examples of Waterwatch 'services':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Environmental education for school and adult groups, capacity building (water and riparian habitat monitoring, sample testing, data interpretation, all of which equip community members to contribute to NRM planning processes in a more informed manner), community engagement, strategic data collection.
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This is not to suggest that employing people to deliver these products and services is unimportant: the surveys conducted as part of this Gap/Needs Analysis has identified that this is a key need. However, the advantage of this tact is that it opens up opportunities to have a wider range of coordinators of other regional programs trained to deliver Waterwatch products and services, thus enhancing the opportunities for community engagement and capacity building, and minimises the chances of regional authorities perceiving Waterwatch as a resource-hungry program reliant on employing people.

This has important implications for the 'shape' of Waterwatch at regional, State and national levels.

2.3 The Implications for the Structure of Waterwatch

Waterwatch needs to be seen as relevant and useful to all regions if the integrity of the Waterwatch network is to remain intact and the significant investment by many hundreds of people around Australia over the past decade or more in developing and refining tools and methods to engage the community in water monitoring and river health issues is not to be lost. It was clearly identified from the focus groups and from analysing previous reviews of Waterwatch that Waterwatch methods, products and services provide opportunities to meaningfully engage communities in understanding their local environment and contributing to NRM decision-making processes. However, this Gap/Needs Analysis has identified that:

- o There is a need to collate examples of the ways in which Waterwatch products and services can be integrated with other regional NRM programs,

to help NRM authorities realise the potential of Waterwatch as a community engagement tool.

- o There is a need to provide mechanisms for training the coordinators/staff of other regional NRM programs in Waterwatch services and products. This will enhance the integration of NRM actions and enhance the exposure of a broader community to Waterwatch activities.
- o Whilst there are advantages in having dedicated 'Waterwatch coordinators' to develop and deliver Waterwatch 'products and services', the impact and potential of Waterwatch would be considerably enhanced if coordinators of other regional programs were trained to deliver Waterwatch as part of their other duties.

There are many examples around Australia of coordinators of other programs delivering Waterwatch products and services, such as Landcare facilitators and Indigenous Rangers, enhancing opportunities for the integration of water and river health issues with other NRM issues such as pest plant and animal control.

One of the most important implications of regional delivery and the recommended focus on the delivery of Waterwatch products and services to regional groups is the need to assure the quality of Waterwatch as a product. The findings of this Gap/Needs Analysis in relation to **branding and marketing** are summarised below:

- o There is significant support among current and former Waterwatch coordinators, hosts, proponents and community participants in Waterwatch, right across Australia, to maintain the Waterwatch name and logo.
- o Dropping the Waterwatch name and/or logo would result in significant loss of good will, identity and support for Waterwatch. Community participants are critical of governments at all levels frequently changing names of departments and programs and they do not want to see the identity of Waterwatch, built up over the last 10-12 years, lost.
- o The network of coordinators – the people who deliver Waterwatch products and services – is an important component of the identity of Waterwatch. It is important that Waterwatch is delivered at the local level by dedicated, skilled coordinators. However, these people may not necessarily be called 'Waterwatch coordinators'. This is increasingly the case under regional delivery.
- o Being a part of a national network is an important 'selling point' for Waterwatch and also a key motivation for community volunteers in their participation.
- o The Waterwatch 'products' and 'services', most of which currently carry the 'Waterwatch' brand (logo) are also key components of the identity of Waterwatch.
- o Being able to identify yourself as a part of a national initiative is a big 'selling point' for promoting participation of individuals, groups and institutions in Waterwatch.

- o Because of the increasing diversity in the way in which Waterwatch is delivered currently, and could be in the future, under the regional NRM processes, it is important that the 'network of coordinators' be maintained and enhanced in order to enhance this key aspect of the identity of Waterwatch.
- o There is a need to secure the brand of Waterwatch and/or the logo as a trademark.
- o Associated with the identified need of protecting the Waterwatch name and logo is the need to clarify naming and branding rights and expectations.
- o There is a need to develop guidelines/protocols for regional delivery of Waterwatch, outlining minimum expectations in key areas of community engagement, capacity building, data confidence, etc.
- o Under regional delivery, there is an even greater need to maintain and enhance the production of Waterwatch promotional products to maintain and enhance the identity of Waterwatch.

Regional delivery raises many issues in relation to the support and coordination required at State and national levels to ensure the integrity of Waterwatch network and Waterwatch products and services. The key findings of the Gap/Needs Analysis in relation to **support** are summarised below:

- o State/Territory-level support is variable across Australia – some States/Territories have a high level of State support, others have very little, depending upon the degree to which the State/Territory is prepared to invest in 'Waterwatch-type' programs. This is the outcome of changes to federal funding of coordinators under NHT2/NAP and has implications for what can be reasonably expected from State-level support in the future.
- o There are some key areas in which support is universally perceived as necessary, such as: facilitating communication across the network of 'Waterwatch' coordinators to ensure network integrity and identity; training, mentoring and induction; development of overarching technical manuals, methods and protocols; guidance on data confidence (QA/QC) systems; coordination of events; support in negotiations about the inclusion of community monitoring as a community engagement and capacity building component of regional investment plans.
- o Focus group participants had varying perceptions about the 'best' level (State or federal) at which various types of support should be provided.
- o It would be appropriate for QA/QC and data management support to be provided at a State/Territory level because this would facilitate the integration of community-collected data (to known standards) with other NRM data, therefore facilitating wider data use.
- o There is significant scope to 'outsource' some support roles, particularly in the areas of training, to the Waterwatch network, or beyond (private or public sector).
- o Data management support (WADM database development/enhancement and data management tools) is required at a national level as a back-up for

regions/States that do not have their own data management systems for community-based monitoring programs. However, the development of data management tools can be outsourced (to the Waterwatch network and/or the private and public sector).

- o Support for the development of technical manuals and other resources (e.g. tool-kit, case-studies) etc. should be provided at a national level. However, all such products should be developed in consultation with regional Waterwatch programs to ensure they are flexible enough to be relevant at the local scale.
- o Because of the variability in State-level support, there is a need for network support (communication) to be provided at a national level. The success of this approach will depend on making strategic investments in a national web-site, a 'national network facilitator' position and a 'registration system' to manage network membership.
- o Some support for securing resources for regional Waterwatch within regional plans needs to be provided at a national level. The AG NRM Facilitator network and Waterwatch staff within the Joint NRM Team Capacity building Section would play key roles in this regard. Such support would be provided on a needs basis – i.e. when requested by regions.

Good communications is a key to implementing changes in the way Waterwatch is delivered and supported. The outcomes of the Gap/Needs Analysis in relation to **communications** are:

- o Effectively communicating the identity and purpose of Waterwatch is essential to maximise the opportunities for community water monitoring within regional NRM delivery.
- o There is a need for key communication products such as 'case studies' to illustrate the purpose of Waterwatch, to enable local coordinators and proponents to communicate the purpose and potential of Waterwatch, particularly to sponsors and regional NRM authorities.
- o Ensuring the integrity of the network of 'Waterwatch' coordinators and participants is essential for the long-term sustainability of Waterwatch, and is dependent on promoting the network and facilitating communications between members of the network.
- o A national communication network, facilitated by a national web-site and a Newsletter is required to facilitate communications among the network.
- o National conferences are seen as invaluable by Waterwatch coordinators, participants and supporters for sharing ideas, enhancing knowledge, networking and building a sense of belonging to a national initiative.
- o There is a need for a National Waterwatch Network Facilitator and national-level support to drive these key communication initiatives
- o There is an immediate need for communications from the national support team to highlight that Waterwatch is still here, is supported nationally by the Australian Government, and has much to offer regional NRM authorities and communities. Some more general communications are required across all

NHT and NAP regions, and some specific communications with particular regions may be required to facilitate the inclusion of Waterwatch within regional plans.

Being able to demonstrate the impact of Waterwatch products and services in the context of regional delivery will be increasingly important. It will also be necessary for the Australian Government to monitor the 'condition' of the Waterwatch network and to identify changes in a timely manner to enable policy and resource adjustments to be made. Therefore, a new Monitoring & Evaluation framework is required. Key findings of the Gap/Needs Analysis in relation to **monitoring and evaluation** are:

- o Under the old Waterwatch Program, monitoring was limited to measures of activity (or the size and scope of the program). Under NHT2/NAP and regional delivery, there is an increasing focus on assessing outcomes. This makes monitoring and evaluation more complex for initiatives like Waterwatch because measuring changes in 'community capacity' and behaviour is difficult.
- o Increasingly, regional NRM authorities will need to be able to assess the impact of Waterwatch-type initiatives to assess the impact of such activities on NRM outcomes, including capacity building.
- o There may be a need for national support in assisting regional Waterwatch initiatives to develop monitoring and evaluation frameworks so that they can demonstrate their impact to regional NRM authorities.
- o There is a need to develop a new monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework that reflects the new NRM structure under NHT/NAP.

The surveys and focus groups highlighted significant variance in people's perceptions about the current state of 'Waterwatch'. This is partly because different regions across Australia are at various stages in the implementation of their regional NRM investment planning processes.

Box 2: Core Elements of a Successful Regional Waterwatch Program
(top ranking items when sorted by 'importance')

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Regional and local 'coordinators' to deliver community-based water monitoring and education/capacity building initiatives. o Coordinators with skills in community engagement and education to deliver water monitoring and education activities. o Coordinators with skills in building and enhancing networks. o Security of tenure for coordinators, thus ensuring continuity, maximising successful engagement with community. o Support among regional NRM authorities and partner agencies. |
|--|

- o **A data quality control/assurance system that is well understood and supported by volunteer monitors and data users.**
- o **A network of keen volunteer monitors who are well trained and supported.**
- o **Monitoring programs that are sensitive to the level of commitment and availability of community volunteers.**

2.4 Conclusion of Gaps/Needs Analysis

Under NHT1 (Figure 1), Waterwatch operated quite independently of other programs from an administrative perspective. Integration of Waterwatch with other programs occurred to some degree at the State level, but mainly at the regional and local (on-ground) level, through the development of partnerships. Whilst there was significant integration in places and at times, the success of this integration was very dependent on the capacity and interests of coordinators and managers within partner agencies. Also under NHT1, the character and focus of local Waterwatch programs were shaped, to a large degree, by the people associated with Waterwatch – the coordinators, proponents and local steering committees.

With the introduction of NHT2 and regional delivery (see Figure 2), significant changes have taken place in the Waterwatch structure. This has had particular and more immediate impacts at national and State levels (not in all States/Territories), but at the regional level there is much insecurity, particularly during the interim period while regional investment strategies are being prepared. The delivery of Waterwatch at the regional level is proceeding in most regions, but essentially under the same model as under NHT1 – in that there is a focus on employing 'Waterwatch coordinators'. The implementation of the regional delivery model is creating some uncertainty at the regional level about the level and security of funding so regional authorities are reluctant to commit to programs that 'require' them to employ people, especially where the benefits of the investment are not clearly identifiable or quantifiable.

While Waterwatch does have a 'feel-good' quality about it, it is much more than that: Waterwatch is a worthwhile community-based monitoring initiative that has significant potential to meet regional NRM authorities' community engagement and capacity building needs. The sustainability of Waterwatch-type initiatives under regional delivery is dependent upon remodelling the Waterwatch network and support mechanisms. This Gap/Needs Analysis has identified the key areas that need to be addressed under any 'new' Waterwatch model.

This Gap/Needs Analysis has highlighted that regional delivery is (currently) a challenge for Waterwatch, particularly in terms of identifying a purpose for Waterwatch in regional NRM delivery. Attention has been drawn to how Waterwatch needs to market itself so that regional NRM authorities see a need for it, therefore increasing the chances that Waterwatch will be funded in the regions in the future.

People associated with Waterwatch are also reconsidering the need for, and appropriate structure to facilitate, State- and national-level support. Participants in this Gap/Needs Analysis know what support and coordination they would like, but not necessarily who should provide it, or at what level. This uncertainty is partly due to the timing of this Gap/Needs Analysis in relation to the timing of the development of regional NRM strategies. Many focus group participants had been 'thrown in the deep end' and have already had to adapt and develop some innovative ways to securing the funding and resources required to deliver community-based water monitoring programs. This has opened their eyes to other possibilities for support.

There is a need to ensure that the educational value of Waterwatch is not lost as regional NRM authorities develop and implement their regional investment plans. This requires national-level support and promotion to ensure that regional authorities feel comfortable including educational programs within their investment plans.

Another key theme to emerge from the consultation process of this Gap/Needs Analysis is the branding issue, which is intimately related to the marketing and purpose of Waterwatch. It is important that the quality and integrity of Waterwatch products and services are assured in the long-term, so measures must be introduced to safeguard Waterwatch from the potential fragmentation that regional delivery could cause.

Regional delivery has the potential to see Waterwatch play a much bigger role in natural resource management in the future, particularly in regional capacity building and community engagement. There are more opportunities to develop partnerships and therefore wider ownership of Waterwatch at the local and regional scale under the regional delivery model. Significantly, the problem of short-term funding cycles under NHT1 contributing to a lack of security of tenure for Waterwatch coordinators has the potential to be resolved through regional delivery because of the longer funding cycles.

Figure 1: Simplified Structure of Waterwatch under NHT1

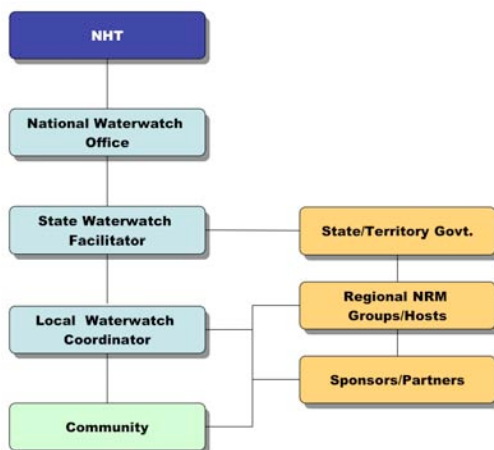


Figure 2: Simplified Current Structure of Waterwatch



3 FUTURE OPTIONS FOR WATERWATCH DELIVERY

3.1 Introduction

Waterwatch is characterised by the inherent goodwill and non-competitiveness of its coordinators, participants and supporters. This spirit has been a key driver in the establishment, over the years, of a significant 'knowledge-bank' of ideas, methods, know-how and experience in engaging communities in river health and catchment management initiatives. The long-term success of Waterwatch is dependent on the continuing ability of people involved in Waterwatch to share ideas and knowledge and to constantly refine the way they work in response to new challenges.

It is timely to now put in place systems and protocols to safeguard the 'key ingredients' of Waterwatch whilst maximising the opportunities for Waterwatch under the regional delivery model.

Waterwatch needs to become more outcomes focussed and flexible to remain relevant at the regional level. This means that at the national scale, Waterwatch needs to encourage innovation and be willing to evolve organically into something that regions can shape to achieve their desired outcomes. There cannot be control from above, but there does need to be systems and protocols in place to assure the quality and integrity of Waterwatch products and services and the network itself. There are many opportunities for Waterwatch to grow and expand its influence if the opportunities of regional delivery are embraced.

3.2 Overview of a Suggested Model for Waterwatch at the National Level

It is time to build the capacity of regional programs to embrace the potential of Waterwatch as a capacity building and community engagement tool. This will be done most effectively by giving regional NRM authorities the support and the tools to more fully understand the potential of Waterwatch and to enhance the capacity of regional coordinators by linking them up with the real power of Waterwatch – the collective knowledge of the network of coordinators.

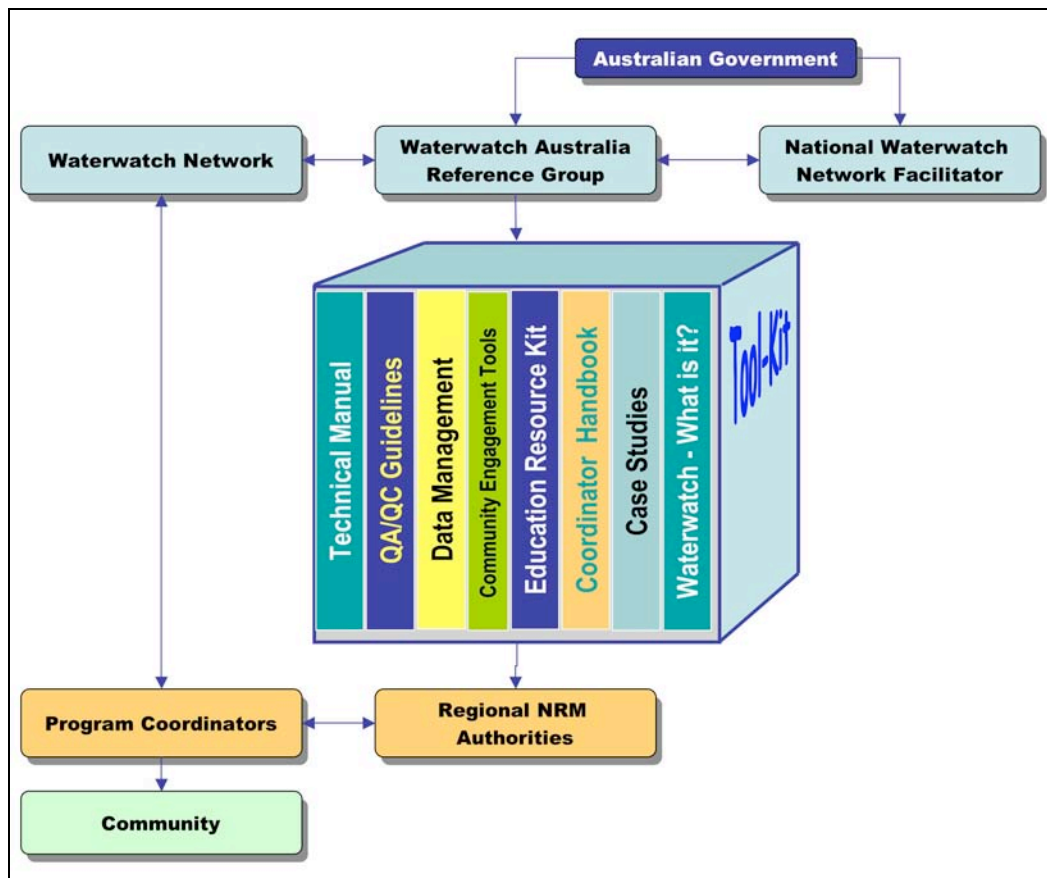
This gap/needs analysis has identified that the core elements of Waterwatch are the 'products' and 'services' that have been developed over the past decade or more, the network of coordinators and their collective skills and experience and the identity of the 'Waterwatch' name and logo. The suggested model for Waterwatch builds on these core elements.

The key difference of the suggested model is that emphasis is placed on Waterwatch 'products' and 'services', rather than coordinators (see Figure 3). This is not to say that coordinators are not important: it is critical that skilled, dedicated people deliver these products and services and have security of tenure to do this. However, they don't necessarily need to be 'badged' as 'Waterwatch coordinators'.

By emphasising products and services, Waterwatch can more effectively market itself as a 'tool', which can be adopted by regional NRM authorities to help them deliver community engagement and capacity building components of their regional plans. By investing at the national level in developing Waterwatch as a 'tool-kit', regional authorities will find Waterwatch 'easier' to adopt because the hard work of designing these products and services will have been done for them. This approach will also facilitate the broader adoption of Waterwatch by a wide range of environmental awareness and education programs, such as ICLEI's Water Campaign, Clean Up Australia, etc. and also the adoption of Waterwatch monitoring tools and techniques in community-based scientific research programs.

Marketing of the Waterwatch 'tool-kit' to regional NRM authorities would emphasise that the Waterwatch products and services need to be delivered by coordinators/facilitators, but that these coordinators may or may not be called 'Waterwatch coordinators'. The advantage of this approach is that it changes the emphasis away from a 'need' to employ Waterwatch coordinators.

Figure 3: A Waterwatch 'Tool-kit', which can be readily adopted in whole or in part, by regional NRM authorities, is the core of the 'new' Waterwatch model.



Another key emphasis of the marketing of the Waterwatch 'tool-kit' is that the 'products and services' are supported by a national network of coordinators, a reference group and a National Network Facilitator. By adopting the Waterwatch 'tool-kit' at the regional scale, NRM authorities are 'purchasing' the 'intellectual property' of the network.

Importantly, emphasising the 'tool-kit' simplifies the branding issues associated with Waterwatch. Under the proposed model, the products and services within the 'tool-kit' would carry the Waterwatch brand and logo. Coordinators delivering these products and services would not have to be labelled 'Waterwatch' coordinators, but could be if regions wished to. Waterwatch is so entrenched in many communities now that coordinators are likely to become known within the community as Waterwatch coordinators, in any case.

Taking the emphasis off employing Waterwatch coordinators also increases the opportunities for coordinators of other programs to be trained in, and deliver, Waterwatch products and services. This significantly increases the effectiveness of Waterwatch as a community engagement and capacity building tool. However, to assure the quality of Waterwatch 'products' and 'services', people delivering Waterwatch 'products and services' would need to register with a national 'network register' and meet minimum competency standards.

The 'register' of approved 'Waterwatch coordinators' forms the basis of the national 'Waterwatch Network'. The Waterwatch Network as a whole would contribute continuously to developing and refining the Waterwatch-branded tool-kit (comprising products, systems and services) and assure the quality and integrity of the 'tool-kit'. The Waterwatch Network would also provide mentoring and training and play an important role in 'grass-roots' marketing of Waterwatch.

The Waterwatch Network would be supported at the national level by a "National Waterwatch Network Facilitator" who would work with the Network and the Australian Government NRM Facilitator Network to ensure Waterwatch is seen as relevant to, and equipped to respond to, regional NRM investment. This model opens up opportunities for Waterwatch to be incorporated in a range of NRM initiatives at the regional level, and thus expands the opportunities for community engagement in river and catchment health.

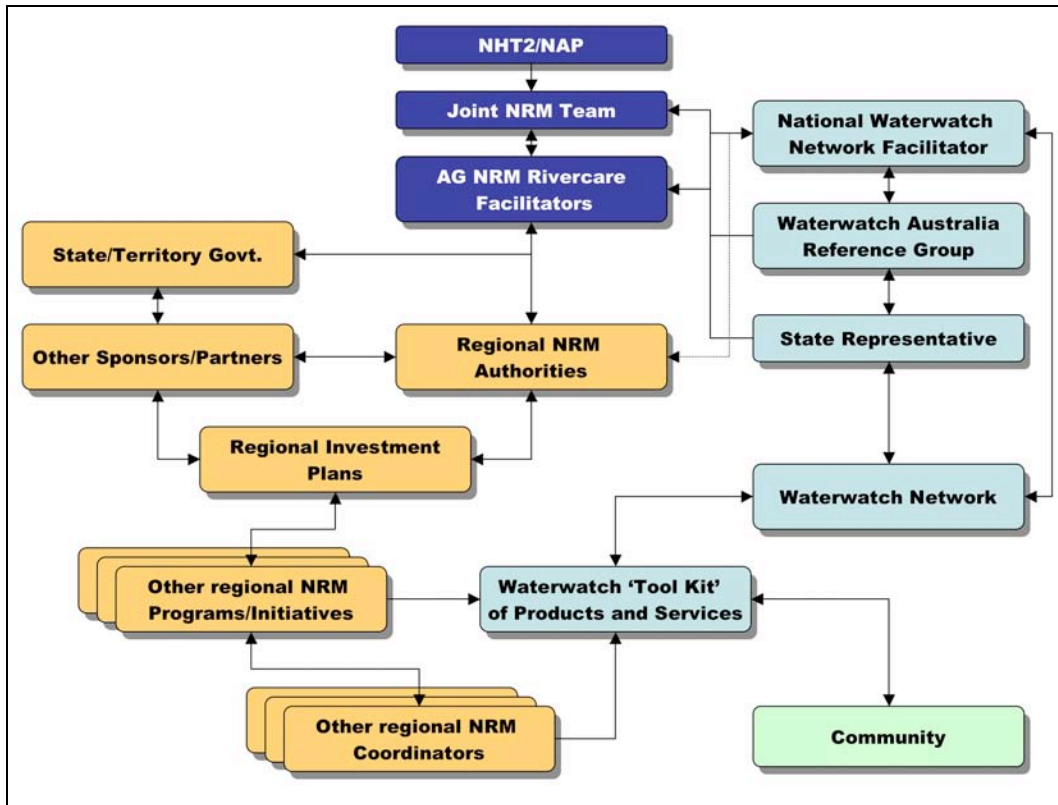
This model is designed to ensure that regions have autonomy in deciding how they can best utilise Waterwatch products and services, whilst having access to support (and evidence of the outcomes Waterwatch contributes to) to enable an informed decision to be made about how Waterwatch might be able to fulfil needs in relation to community engagement and capacity building.

However, this proposed Waterwatch delivery model does not leave decisions about Waterwatch entirely reliant on the perceptions regional authorities have about Waterwatch. Mechanisms to ensure that Waterwatch has opportunities to engage with the AG NRM Facilitator network and the Joint NRM team are suggested, to enhance strategic partnerships at this key level. The National Waterwatch Network Facilitator position could be slightly separated¹ from the

¹ The National Landcare Facilitator position is an appropriate model for the 'National Waterwatch Network Facilitator' position – it is a contracted 'package', and could be located anywhere in Australia.

Joint NRM Team and act as executive officer for the Waterwatch Reference Group. This would maintain close ties with the Australian Government and ensure the incumbent is accessible to the Waterwatch Network.

Figure 4 Recommended Structure of Waterwatch



The activities of current Waterwatch coordinators would not change greatly under this model. Coordinators would continue to work with the staff of other regional NRM programs and with the community to deliver Waterwatch products and services. The relative emphasis or 'balance' between the different components of these products and services (e.g. monitoring, environmental education in schools, etc.) would be dependent upon agreed regional priorities and regional NRM plans.

The current location of the National Waterwatch support staff within the Joint NRM Team Capacity Building Section is highly appropriate for Waterwatch because Waterwatch is a key capacity building initiative.

3.3 Specific Elements of the Proposed Structure

The core elements of the proposed structure of Waterwatch delivery are now discussed in more detail.

3.3.1 The Waterwatch 'Tool-kit' and MOU

The Waterwatch 'Tool-kit' would comprise a toolbox of Waterwatch-branded 'products' and 'services', like a 'pick-list', from which regional authorities could gain an understanding of how Waterwatch could be utilised to deliver on their objectives.

The options for adopting Waterwatch as a key component of the delivery of regional NRM strategies could be structured in terms of how Waterwatch can assist in relation to:

- o monitoring progress in relation to management action targets;
- o monitoring progress in relation to resource condition targets; and,
- o community engagement and capacity building.

Importantly, this 'tool-kit' forms the basis of the Waterwatch brand. Under the proposed structure, it is the 'products' and 'services', as described in the 'tool-kit' that *are* Waterwatch. To be able to utilise the 'tool-kit', regional NRM authorities (and other institutions) would have to sign a Memorandum of Understanding, which outlines a set of minimum standards and expectations about key elements and principles, such as:

- o minimum competency standards for people delivering Waterwatch products and services;
- o agreement to register with and contribute to the 'National Waterwatch Network';
- o guidelines about the use of, and contribution towards, the 'intellectual property' invested in Waterwatch products and services;
- o Use of the Waterwatch brand (branding and naming rules/guidelines);
- o Expectations for data confidence standards;
- o Guidelines for data management;
- o OH&S minimum standards; etc.

Importantly, this 'tool-kit' would form the basis of the marketing plan for Waterwatch nationally.

3.3.2 Case Studies

To support the broader marketing strategy for Waterwatch, a set of case studies need to be prepared outlining how Waterwatch has in the past, and could in the future, assist in the achieving regional NRM outcomes. These case studies would be integrated with the 'tool-kit' (i.e. illustrate how the components of the tool-kit work), and these two products would be used jointly to market Waterwatch to regional NRM authorities and other interested agencies/institutions.

3.3.3 A National Waterwatch Network Facilitator

There was very clear support among participants in this Gap/Needs Analysis for national coordination and support, and this was commonly perceived to be best served by a 'national facilitator'-type role.

A National Waterwatch Network Facilitator would work primarily with the network of Waterwatch 'coordinators' and with the AG NRM Facilitator network, particularly the Rivercare facilitators. The position would be of a strategic nature, supported at an operational level by support staff within the Joint NRM Team Capacity Building Section (see section 3.3.6). The role would involve building and enhancing national and State-level partnerships and assisting regional 'coordinators' in their own partnership-building endeavours.

The key tasks of the National Waterwatch Facilitator would be:

- o Oversee communications across network (newsletter, website, the maintenance of contacts lists etc.)
- o Coordinate communications between State and regional Waterwatch coordinators and AG NRM Facilitator Network.
- o Oversee the 'Register' of 'Waterwatch' coordinators and ensure minimum competency standards are adhered to.
- o Act as executive officer for a Waterwatch Australia Reference Group.
- o Ensure integrity of Waterwatch the brand/trade mark.
- o Oversee the production of resources to minimise duplication at the local/regional level.
- o Coordinate the development of the Waterwatch 'tool-kit' and 'case studies'.
- o Oversee the marketing of the Waterwatch brand to regional NRM authorities by developing 'tool-kits' and other resources, including communication material, and visiting regions where requested to facilitate the inclusion of Waterwatch within regional investment processes.
- o Provide assistance and support in seeking sponsorship² for local initiatives.

The National Waterwatch Network Facilitator position could be structured similarly to the National Landcare Facilitator – i.e. contracted out on a skills basis to an individual or company, for a fixed period (then re-tendered).

3.3.4 National Waterwatch 'Reference Committee'

It is recommended that the Waterwatch Australia Steering Committee (WASC) be formally reinstated, either using its current name or probably more appropriately re-labelled as a reference committee (the network as a whole should 'steer' Waterwatch). Membership would comprise AG NRM Facilitators – Rivercare and a State Waterwatch representative (either the State/Territory 'Waterwatch' Coordinator or a nominated regional-level coordinator). The National

² Opportunities for corporate sponsorship for Waterwatch at the national level would be restricted unless a separate incorporated entity was established.

Waterwatch Network Facilitator would perform executive officer roles with WARC chaired by a senior staff member within the Joint NRM Team.

Roles would be slightly different to WASC, in that more emphasis would be placed on the maintenance of Waterwatch identity and 'intellectual property', strategic planning (mainly identifying gaps and needs in light of policy shifts etc.).

Funding would be required to support the attendance of WARC members at meetings and to generally ensure the functioning of the committee. A component of the National Waterwatch Network Facilitator's contract would be nominated for executive support for the WARC.

One of the key initial tasks of the WARC would be to oversee the development of the Waterwatch 'tool-kit'.

3.3.5 Special Committees

In addition to the 'Reference Committee', special committees, comprising representatives of WARC, other members of the broader Waterwatch Network and technical experts, would be convened for special purposes, such as developing and up-dating resource material, promotional material, etc.

A separate funding allocation should be considered for special committees, to allow sufficient funding for the development of these core materials and resources.

3.3.6 National Support from the Joint NRM Team, Capacity Building Section

Support staff within the Joint NRM Team, Capacity Building Section would provide administrative and logistic support for the Waterwatch Network and the National Waterwatch Network Facilitator, particularly to:

- o Maintain the infrastructure for communication across the network and between community and NRM groups and the Waterwatch network (primarily through the Website, contacts list, etc.).
- o Administer contracts for the delivery of goods and services such as the National Waterwatch Network Facilitator contract, contracts for the provision of training, information technology, production and printing of publications etc., as required.
- o Brokering and coordinating communications between the NRM Facilitator Network, Australian Government and State agencies and the National Waterwatch Network Facilitator, etc.
- o General support for the National Waterwatch Network Facilitator.

Under the proposed model, the national support team (including the National Waterwatch Network Facilitator) would not undertake large roles in any of the following:

- o Management of QA/QC systems
- o Data management (i.e. database)

- o Technical Manuals (except for arranging the production and distribution of these)
- o Training delivery.

Instead, the broader knowledge-bank that is the Waterwatch Australia Network would be drawn upon to develop guidelines, protocols, manuals of procedure etc. that are overarching (to maintain integrity and assure standards) but flexible enough to allow for regional adaptation.

See 3.3.8 below for the recommended model for provision of these 'products' and 'services'

3.3.7 State-level support

Support and coordination at the State/Territory level is required and justified. There are three key areas for State-level support and coordination

- o Management of QA/QC systems
- o Data management
- o Communications between national and regional levels in the NRM and Waterwatch network hierarchies.

Services in these areas would not necessarily be provided by State government, but there are many reasons why this should be encouraged:

- o Ensuring consistency in QA/QC, parameters, monitoring protocols etc. between Waterwatch data and data collected by others (e.g. State agencies, water authorities, statutory bodies etc.) across regions within the State.
- o Integration of Waterwatch and other data (therefore enhancing the reputation and use of Waterwatch data)

Corporate or education-sector institutions that operate at the State level may be interested in providing such services if State/Territory governments are not.

In terms of communications at the State-level, a State/Territory-funded coordinator would be an advantage for ensuring integration with other State-level programs and initiatives. The AG NRM Facilitator Network 'Strategic Regional Positions' could also play key roles in supporting State-wide and inter-regional support, for example in the identification of training needs.

As a fall-back position, if no State-level support is provided Regional Waterwatch coordinators could nominate a representative to act as a State-level coordinator. Funding such a role would have to be negotiated between regions and/or State/Territory government.

3.3.8 Outsourcing

The production of manuals, protocols and other resources; the production of promotional material and resources; and, the delivery of training, would be outsourced, but offered to Waterwatch programs in all regions and States to express interest in. This would further assist in the funding of regional Waterwatch delivery by offering another income stream. It would also promote

excellence in the development and documentation of Waterwatch activities, methods and protocols.

There may be legal reasons to also invite other organisations/companies to tender for such work.

3.4 Short-Term Actions List

Recommended list of short-term actions, in order of priority:

1. Re-establish WASC as a 'Waterwatch Australia Reference Committee' (WARC) (or use WASC or an alternative name).
2. Register Waterwatch (or Waterwatch Australia³) brand name and secure registration of the Waterwatch logo as a Trade Mark.
3. Instigate a tender process to establish the 'National Waterwatch Network Facilitator' position.
4. Develop a web-based registration system to facilitate communications between, and monitoring of, the Waterwatch Network. Continue to develop the Waterwatch groups and sites (or 'activity') web-site ideas as presented at the June 2004 Waterwatch/Rivercare Forum.
5. Clarify the range of activities that Waterwatch encompasses and key 'purposes' to which they could be put in a regional context. Distinguish between 'products' and 'services'. This is a key planning stage in the development of the Waterwatch 'tool-kit'.
6. The 'National Waterwatch Network Facilitator' work with WARC and the Joint NRM Capacity Building Team to develop case studies illustrating how Waterwatch can contribute to regional NRM investment planning processes.
7. The 'National Waterwatch Network Facilitator' work with WARC to develop a comprehensive list of achievements of Waterwatch within various regions to highlight the broad scope of Waterwatch activities and the impact the program has. This information forms a key part of the 'case', or 'evidence', for Waterwatch that would support the next steps⁴.
8. Develop a Waterwatch 'tool-kit' for regional delivery of Waterwatch products and services, and a MOU.
9. Produce a new Waterwatch Network Charter and promotional material. This promotional material should be structured on the core elements of the tool-kit (see 5).
10. Launch the 'Waterwatch tool-kit', explaining how Waterwatch products and services can be delivered either as specific Waterwatch 'programs' or through other programs, such as indigenous facilitators/Rangers, Landcare, etc.

³ WARC should be involved in deciding which name to register – e.g. 'Waterwatch', 'Waterwatch Australia', 'Waterwatch Network'. The reviewers opinion is that 'Waterwatch' is the most appropriate.

⁴ Through this review process hundreds of examples of innovative, exciting and transferable ideas and resources were cited or referred to. It is beyond the scope of this study to produce a summary of these initiatives, but doing so would be an extremely valuable marketing tool.

11. Market the Waterwatch 'tool-kit' to AG NRM Facilitator network.
12. Market the Waterwatch 'tool-kit' to regional NRM boards, State government.
13. Ensure that the strength of Waterwatch as an education program not be lost by promoting school and community education as important community engagement and capacity building components of regional NRM investment plans.

Strategically, it is important to find a means of increasing State support for Waterwatch, particularly in those States/Territories where State-level support is currently limited. There is a perception among some people in the regions, and at a State level, that regional delivery has bypassed State/Territory governments in respect to Waterwatch. Therefore, clear articulation about how important State-level support is for the success of regional Waterwatch initiatives is necessary. Creating a demand from regional NRM authorities and the broader community of Waterwatch participants for State/Territory support will also help. Enhancing communications throughout the Waterwatch network could facilitate this 'grass-roots' support.