



Our Mutual Agreement – An agreement between Local Government and the NRM Board to manage a region’s natural resources

Murray & Mallee Local Government Association

South Australian Murray-Darling Basin
Natural Resources Management Board

6th August 2010

NOTE: this document builds on the work undertaken by SE NRM Board and a range of SE councils on 05 March 2009.

The document is designed to be read in two parts:

1. The Overview and signatories
2. A Framework for Action Planning on a council by council basis.
This has been developed around the themes of communication, partnership & planning, operations, finance and governance (that are consistent with the LGA's Local Government and Natural Resources Management Boards - Relationship project (prepared by Strategic Matters 2008)

ABOUT THE DOCUMENT

The document is divided into two parts:

PART 1 - A (philosophical) agreement to be signed by the regional Local Government Association and the Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board; and

PART 2 - Operational component (Action Plan) to be signed by the NRM Board and the constituent councils.

To assist this process, the NRM Board will work through the corresponding Action Plan with each of its constituent councils to ascertain those tasks that are relevant and can be committed to.

Part 1 - Agreement

PREAMBLE

This MOU, referred to as ***Our Mutual Agreement (OMA)*** documents a set of agreements and expectations between Local councils, the Murray & Mallee Local Government Association and the SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management (NRM) Board. It expresses a common agreement between the parties, indicating intended common values, principles and actions. It is not intended to impress legal obligations on any party. The OMA has been established in recognition that all parties contribute significantly to the sustainable management of natural resources (NRM)¹ through direct investment, planning, regulation and implementation of on ground works.

- Local Government has responsibilities to local natural resource management as land manager, local planning authority, and service provider.
- The NRM Board has responsibilities as regional coordinator and promoter of integrated and sustainable natural resources management programs and policies across its region.

Our Mutual Agreement recognises that an agreed commitment is fundamental to the effective management of natural resources. It has been developed to facilitate and promote cooperation.

OBJECTIVE OF OUR MUTUAL AGREEMENT

To create a more integrated and transparent commitment to the regional management of natural resources

VALUES

In achieving this objective, the parties are committed to the following values:

- Inclusiveness;
- Transparency;
- Accessibility.

¹ Natural Resources Management recognises and protects the intrinsic value of natural resources (land, water, marine and biological systems), and manages them in a sustainable manner.

PRINCIPLES

In order to work collaboratively and with mutual respect, the parties agree to cooperate through:

- Adopting local approaches to address issues that impact on NRM;
- Working together to achieve improvements in policy, planning and on-ground investment;
- Building capacity at a local level to effectively manage the natural resources of communities;
- Partnering to achieve joint Local Government and Board objectives and targets;
- Freely share information that could potentially be of interest to the other party. This exchange should occur in a timely manner to ensure neither party is disadvantaged through a lack of information; and
- Increasing the prominence of natural resource projects.

IMPLEMENTATION / LOGISTICS

The OMA is intended to complement (not replace) Strategic and Annual Plans of Local Government and the NRM Board.

The parties agree that the life of *Our Mutual Agreement* is for a period of three (3) years from the date of signing.

The parties agree to work collaboratively towards the “signing-up” of all Murray & Mallee LGA Councils to an Action Plan (part two of *Our Mutual Agreement*) with the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board within six (6) months of signing this Part 1 of *Our Mutual Agreement* (ie. by 6th February 2011).

The Member Councils of the Murray & Mallee LGA are as follows:

- Berri Barmera Council
- Coorong District Council
- District Council of Karoonda East Murray
- District Council of Loxton Waikerie
- Mid Murray Council
- Rural City of Murray Bridge
- District Council of Renmark Paringa
- Southern Mallee District Council

If agreement on an Action Plan cannot be reached with a particular Council, the reasons for this shall be formally communicated to the Murray & Mallee LGA by the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board.

The parties agree that the Action Plan (part two of *Our Mutual Agreement*) will be reviewed on an 18 month basis. This review will be coordinated by the regional Local Government Association and the NRM Board.

The parties agree that *Our Mutual Agreement* will appear on the agenda of all parties at least once a year and will be reviewed by councils annually by November to inform the Murray & Mallee LGA final year meeting. Information from this meeting will directly inform the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board’s *Investment Strategy*².

Our Mutual Agreement can only be amended with the agreement of the parties. The parties agree to formally review this agreement no later than one month from its expiry date.

RESOLVING DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN THE PARTIES

The parties will take reasonable steps to resolve any arising disagreements.

If an agreement cannot be reached within a reasonable time, the parties agree to:

- Appoint an agreed facilitator to assist in discussion and agreement about the matter(s) of concern; and
- Abide by the agreements reached through discussion.

SIGNATORIES / EXECUTORS

This Mutual Agreement is between the Murray & Mallee Local Government Association and the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board on this day the

6th August 2010

It is binding for the period of three (3) years.

Original signed

.....

Councillor Leon Stasinowsky

President

Murray & Mallee Local Government Association

Original signed

.....

Mr Bill Paterson

Presiding Member

SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board

Date 6th August, 2010

Date 6th August, 2010

² The Board’s *Investment Strategy* is developed when the Board decides how to apply money that has been raised (by the Levy and any funds received) to projects across the region. This process occurs on an annual basis.



Part 2 – Operational Component

ACTION PLAN – COUNCIL BY COUNCIL BASIS

All items are to be discussed with the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board and corresponding Councils and jointly agreed to or modified as need be.

The matrix will demonstrate where the Councils and the NRM Board can jointly agree to advance an issue. This means that a tick “✓” on the matrix will denote where the NRM Board and the Councils can jointly commit to an activity.

- It is intended that the matrix be filled with reference to a Short [**S**], Medium [**M**] or Long [**L**] timeframe.
Where Short = less than 12 months, Medium = 1 – 3 years, Long = 3 – 10 years
- It is intended that the matrix provide a summary only, and that the “Action Plan” with each Council (a separate document) provide more detailed and Council-specific information on the agreement with the SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board.
- It is intended that the “Action Plan” is reviewed every 18 months and revised (if need be) at three (3) yearly intervals.

Suggested Actions (commitments)	Berri Barmera Council	Coorong District Council	District Council of Karoonda East Murray	District Council of Loxton Waikerie	Mid Murray Council	Rural City of Murray Bridge	District Council of Renmark Paringa	Southern Mallee District Council
Communication								
- 6-monthly briefings / update sessions involving Mayors and CEOs (LG) and Presiding Members and GMs from NRM Board								
- Develop reciprocated communication through NRM / LG media (eg publications, web, signage, brochures)								
- Develop agreed protocols and exchange relating to Board and Local Government meeting minutes and papers								
- Develop NRM and LG directory/ies of services and contact lists								

Suggested Actions (commitments)	Berri Barmera Council	Coorong District Council	District Council of Karoonda East Murray	District Council of Loxton Waikerie	Mid Murray Council	Rural City of Murray Bridge	District Council of Renmark Paranga	Southern Mallee District Council
- Jointly develop Fact sheets that take the thinking out of “do I need to consider NRM?” (ie what are the trigger points / how to reduce cumulative impacts of activities on Natural resources ?)								
- Relevant Regional Local Government Staff forums to host an NRM session twice a year. NRM Board commit to sending a range of staff as part of capacity building and relationship building. Such Regional Forums currently include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o ‘Murray Mallee Local Government Inspectorate Group’, and o Central Branch of the ‘South Australian Local Government Works Supervisors Association’ 								
Partnerships and Planning								
- Invitation from NRM Boards for councils to input annually to the regional NRM investment process								
- Invitation from Councils for NRM Board to participate in Local Government’s Strategic Planning & Development Planning processes								
- Jointly participate in regional NRM planning including providing feedback on the strategic directions outlined in draft documents								
- Jointly examine NRM policy needs of the region and develop appropriate policy. (eg WSUD, policy gaps in DPs, referral processes)								

Suggested Actions (commitments)	Berri Barmera Council	Coorong District Council	District Council of Karoonda East Murray	District Council of Loxton Waikerie	Mid Murray Council	Rural City of Murray Bridge	District Council of Renmark Paranga	Southern Mallee District Council
Operations								
- NRM Board to assist with increased regional training of Local Government operational staff (eg on issues such as: weed spraying, machinery hygiene, respective roles of Landholder/Council/NRM Board in pest plant and animal control and compliance processes)								
- NRM Board and councils to jointly facilitate education / information sessions on land management issues								
- Jointly develop processes to increase the shared used of infrastructure at and across depots and plants								
- Develop a shared spatial resource base eg mapping / GIS								
Finance								
- Jointly participate in development of funding applications for natural resource management projects / initiatives through opportunities identified through the NRM Board's External Investment Program and any wider NRM funding opportunities available to Local Government.								

Suggested Actions (commitments)	Berri Barmera Council	Coorong District Council	District Council of Karoonda East Murray	District Council of Loxton Waikerie	Mid Murray Council	Rural City of Murray Bridge	District Council of Renmark Paringa	Southern Mallee District Council
Governance								
- Develop an agreed process for regional NRM bids (eg regional LGA to take adopt coordination role / Board to act as broker / Local Government to take lead on individual basis)								
- Develop a collective approach to emergency management on issues such as fire, flood, disease, coastal development								
- Jointly develop a training process / program for the Members (Council, Board and Groups) on items such as application of NRM, NRM governance structure and regional NRM partnership opportunities								

“Our Mutual Agreement” is cognisant of the following strategic planning frameworks:

- ***The NRM Act (2004)*** which provides the framework for assisting in the achievement of ecologically sustainable development in the State. Broadly speaking, this includes promoting the use and management of natural resources, protecting the intrinsic values of natural resources, supporting sustainable primary and other economic production systems, and promoting educational initiatives and mechanisms to encourage people to be involved in the management of natural resources.
- ***The South Australian Government (State Government) and Local Government Agreement (2004)*** that aims to improve consultation processes, communication practices and collaborative working relationships between State and Local Government. This Agreement, first produced in 2004, was reviewed in 2006 and joint priorities were developed in 2007.
- ***The Local Government Act 1999 (SA)***, and the ***Local Government (Elections) Act 1999 (SA)***, that provide the legal framework within which Local Government operates and the four-yearly election process which underpins the representative nature of Local Government Councils (LGA website).
- ***The SA Local Government Association NRM Implementation Plan (2008)*** that highlights key NRM issues that impact on the Local Government sector and actions for addressing these. The NRM Implementation Plan is the key strategic planning NRM document for the SA LGA.