Introduction

Central West NSW is a vibrant and diverse region. It is an area rich in Aboriginal and European history. Our water, land, biodiversity and communities are unique, valuable and productive.

However our natural resources and communities still face many challenges. Our environment is constantly changing and there are a range of environmental threats that continue to affect our catchment.

Since 2004, the Central West Catchment Management Authority has worked with the community to implement over 3000 on ground projects — investing over $60 million into practical natural resource management (NRM) in partnership with landholders, other organisations and the wider community. This body of work has made a real difference to the health of our catchment and communities.

This publication has been created to:
• showcase why our catchment is unique and important
• identify our environmental assets and threats to their health
• recognise the achievements of the community, our partners and the Central West CMA in meeting challenges of our catchment.

It is important to celebrate our success in managing and improving our environment. We can build on these positive outcomes and continue to work with our communities and stakeholders to make a real difference to our catchment.
Message from the Chairman and General Manager

The Central West CMA has made a real difference to the management of the natural resources and to the communities of our catchment.

Since the regional CMA model was implemented in 2004, our organisation has grown to be dynamic, practical and functional.

Over this time, the Central West CMA has played a pivotal role in building networks and capacity, and has established itself as a broker for change in a rapidly shifting environment.

This document outlines the environment we operate in, our challenges and achievements since the CMA’s inception.

We also profile a series of on ground projects that have made real improvements to our land, water, biodiversity and communities. These case studies show the faces behind this work and the impact that our actions can have.

It is important to recognise that these milestones and achievements have been reached in partnership with landholders and communities across our region, and in collaboration with a range of other organisations.

Our organisation recognises the value of engaging our stakeholders and we have strived to show good faith and build trust.

Congratulations and thanks to those who have worked with us on these achievements. Without your support none of this would have been possible.

Although there are still challenges and threats in our catchment, we are confident that the commitment and dedication shown in the past will equip us well for the future.
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About the Central West Catchment

Location
The Central West Catchment is located in Central West NSW and includes the Castlereagh, Bogan and Macquarie River valleys. It covers an area of approximately 84,842km² and is home to 183,302 people. Major townships include Orange, Bathurst, Dubbo, Wellington, Mudgee, Nyngan and Oberon.
The landscape

The landscape of the Central West Catchment varies markedly from east to west and can be split into three general divisions:

The Plains
The plains area is home to flat landscapes and the occasional rocky range outcrop. The land flattens to the west, with wetlands and rich alluvial river flats associated with braided channels and many effluent streams. The water flows slowly, largely due to extensive silt deposits. Vegetation is dominated by semi-arid grassy woodlands such as black box-coolabah and myall on floodplains, with semi-arid shrubby woodlands on the peneplain. There are smaller areas of grasslands, forested wetlands and shrublands.

The Slopes
The slopes have undulating to hilly cleared lands, graduating to flatter areas, with some pockets of remnant vegetation. Extensive grassy woodlands such as white box-yellow box-Blakely’s red gum on fertile soils have been cleared to establish the sheep-wheat belt of south-eastern Australia. Dry sclerophyll forests occur on the ranges and less fertile soils.

The Tablelands
The tablelands are characterised by fast to moderately flowing streams with sandy and pebbly beds and steep, densely vegetated ranges to extensively cleared grazing lands. Vegetation formations include a variety of dry sclerophyll forests and grassy woodlands. This diversity is indicated by the presence of several bioregions including a small part of the Sydney Basin.
Social & industry profile
The major Aboriginal nations that the Central West Catchment area overlies are the Wiradjuri, Kawambarai, Weilwan, Wongaibon. These nations extend into other Catchment Management Authority areas also. Small parts of the Aboriginal nations of the Dharuk, Darkinung and the Gamilaroi also extend into Central West CMA region.

The catchment supports a diverse range of industry, from agriculture to agribusiness, tourism, mining and viticulture. The total population of the Central West Catchment, based on the 2006 Census, was 183,302, including an Indigenous population of 13,088 people or 9% of the total population of the catchment.

Employment
According to the 2006 Census, 79,625 people were employed in the catchment. The unemployment rate for the catchment was 6%, on par with the NSW average. Indigenous unemployment in 2006 stood at 22%, which was 3% higher than the NSW average.

Agricultural industry
Agriculturally, the region is highly diverse, adding to the complexity of natural resource management issues. Total agricultural land ownership in the catchment in 2006 was 7,243,769ha. Most significant land use was dedicated for grazing at 71% followed by land under broad acre crops at 17% and land under remnant vegetation and fallow land, both at 5%.

In 2009 there were 786 irrigating agricultural businesses operating in the Central West, with a total of 43,388ha under irrigation (1% of agricultural land).

State of the catchment
Major threats to the health of natural resources in the Central West Catchment include dryland salinity, declining surface water quality, declining health and abundance of native vegetation, degradation of riparian and wetland ecosystems and deterioration of the soil.
Planning for our catchment’s health
The key planning tool to guide the Central West CMA and community in addressing pressures on the catchment is the Catchment Action Plan (CAP), developed through extensive community consultation in 2005.

The CAP sets the direction over the 10 years from 2006 to 2016 for investment in natural resource management in the Central West Catchment. It also outlines a number of Catchment and Management Targets to improve our natural assets such as water, soil, native vegetation, cultural heritage and biodiversity. The CAP also addresses issues such as salinity and promotes the value of people and communities in the catchment.

A major review of the CAP will be completed in 2010.

Engaging with the community to better understand awareness and attitudes to natural resource management
In November 2007, the Central West CMA undertook a survey to benchmark community awareness, attitudes and beliefs in relation to natural resource management and the CMA. The information has helped guide our community engagement and capacity building initiatives to support implementation of the CAP.

The survey found:
- The average size of rural properties was found to be 691ha, although there was considerable variation across the region.
- Properties were considered by landholders to be healthier now when compared to 10 years ago, except in the Macquarie Bogan, where there was no change.
- Amongst landholders the three most commonly reported environmental issues on properties were weeds (67%), introduced pests (51%) and erosion from wind and water (40%).
- Amongst urban residents the three most commonly identified environmental issues were weeds (75%), introduced pests (54%) and erosion from wind and water (52%).
- Across the region the majority of residents believed more could be done to improve the efficiency of water use in urban areas and on farms.
- Across all residents in the region there was agreement that the health and condition of native vegetation was declining.
- Nearly two thirds (61%) of landholders indicated a willingness to accept funding or assistance to protect cultural heritage on their property.
- Across the region, 23% of residents indicated they had participated in organised natural resource management meetings or activities, including Landcare.
- At the time of the survey, 33% of residents were aware of the Central West CMA and 10% had been in contact with the Central West CMA.

The survey will run again in late 2010. For further information and detailed results, visit www.cw.cma.nsw.gov.au or see the accompanying DVD.

Working with natural resource management groups
There are 120 Landcare and community groups throughout the Central West Catchment.

For further information on how to contact your local community group, visit www.cw.cma.nsw.gov.au or see the accompanying DVD.

Key natural resource management groups operating in our catchment are:
- Central Tablelands Landcare Committee
- CANFA (Conservation Agriculture and No Till Farming Association)
- Coonabarabran and Upper Castlereagh Landcare Group
- Dunedoo Coolah Landcare
- Little River Landcare Group
- Macquarie 2100
- Mid Macquarie Landcare
- Parkes and District Landcare Steering Committee
- Sustainable Nyngan Agriculture group
- STIPA (Stipa Native Grasses Association)
- Watershed Landcare.

There are also other community based groups that focus on natural resource management issues, such as the Carbon Coalition.

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About the Central West Catchment Management Authority

The Central West CMA is one of 13 organisations established under the Catchment Management Authorities Act 2003 by the NSW Government in 2004 to engage the regional communities in key issues to restore and improve the state’s natural resources. CMAs are responsible for ensuring that decisions about how best to operate and invest in the future of natural resources are made within the catchment.

Central West CMA is responsible for:
• preparing and implementing catchment action plans and associated investment strategies
• recommending and managing incentive programs to implement catchment action plans and maximise environmental outcomes
• consulting with regional and local committees and catchment communities in developing and implementing catchment action plans.

The Central West CMA is also a consent authority under the Native Vegetation Act 2003.

Our values
• Leadership—we are committed to, and will lead, natural resource management improvements in the catchment
• Integrity—we are accountable, ethical, honest, fair, courageous and loyal
• Transparency—we communicate well and are open, accessible and accountable internally and to our stakeholders and customers
• Focus—we deliver on our commitments internally and to our stakeholders and customers
• Quality—we are strategic, innovative and continually improve
• Collaboration—we operate in partnership internally and with our stakeholders and customers
• Enjoyment—we recognise our successes and provide a safe, rewarding and family friendly workplace.

Our sustainable competitive advantage
Our ability to negotiate, work in partnership and deliver cost effectively.

Our commitment to quality and ongoing improvement
The Central West CMA is committed to improving the way we do things and to effectively manage our natural resources.

We are currently undergoing a major review of our Catchment Action Plan (CAP). This review is part of a pilot process being tested by the Natural Resources Commission (NRC) in partnership with the Central West and Namoi CMAs.

The Central West CMA is using two frameworks to review its CAP. The first is the Investment Framework for Environmental Resources (INFFER) and the second is resilience thinking using resilience analysis.

The first stage of the CAP review is complete and involved using INFFER to identify the catchments assets, threats and values from a range of stakeholders. This work included 12 community workshops to give the Central West community the opportunity to identify what they value in their natural environment.

Proud Achievements

Tim Ferraro, General Manager

‘The NRC Audit was a quality check of all the good work Central West CMA staff and Board Members have put in since day one that has provided a great set of outcomes.

The NRC audit confirmed we are on the right track and performing better than many. We have done lots of great things in the last five years and just need to continually refine and improve.

It is yet another great example of everyone in the Central West CMA working on an important project in a short timeframe and delivering fantastically well.’
Workshops were also conducted with local government, the Aboriginal community, Landcare groups and State agencies. This work has built a database of over 500 assets which are mapped and described in terms of their condition, threats and values (social, economic and environmental).

The next stage of the CAP review will involve the use of resilience analysis to determine how social and ecological systems are functioning and whether their health is improving or getting worse. Resilience is basically a measure of a system’s capacity to cope with shocks and undergo change while retaining essentially the same structure and function. As resilience declines, it takes progressively smaller disturbances to push a system into a different less desirable state.

The purpose of the resilience analysis is to help us understand the specific and general processes that are operating in and around our natural resource systems. This will help us to identify exactly where we need to focus our attention to ensure our natural assets are in a healthy state and able to be ‘resilient’ when challenged with change.

The Central West CMA also recognises the importance of having an effective Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement (MERI) program to continually improve our operations.

This program undertakes a systematic and objective review of CMA activities and is an integral component of Central West CMA operations.

Our MERI program is driven by the following guiding principles:
• We are an organisation that will adaptively manage our business to achieve our desired outcomes.
• We are able to measure and report our performance against our desired outcomes.
• We will use evaluation findings to assist in strategic investment decisions.

Through MERI, we can ensure our projects and programs remain appropriate, efficient and effective.
Our Board...

The Central West CMA is a community driven organisation directed by a Board that is appointed by and reports directly to the Minister for Climate Change and the Environment. The Board is responsible for overall control and direction of the Central West CMA by setting the strategic direction and policies that will allow it to support the development of vibrant communities and healthy landscapes. The General Manager reports directly to the Board, which has sub-committees for:

- natural resources management
- finance, risk and audit
- human resources.

Board members cover a diverse range of skills and expertise. They share a strong commitment to the health and future of the catchment. The Board meets six times a year at different towns in the catchment.

Board meetings and other community consultation forums are a good way for the community to interact with the Board.

TOM GAVEL (CHAIRMAN)
BOARD MEMBER
since July 2004

Tom owns and manages a mixed farm near Molong, he is well known in the Central West and is committed to engaging the community in natural resource management that will create vibrant communities and healthy landscapes.

IAN ROGAN
BOARD MEMBER
since July 2010

Ian has lived in the Central West for over 30 years and is passionate about NRM. His background includes local government, private industry and the CMA’s predecessor, the Catchment Management Board.

and Management Team

The Central West CMA Management Team leads the day-to-day operations of the organisation. The General Manager is responsible for implementing strategy, policy and management and reports directly to the Board. He is supported by three branch managers.

Proud Achievement

Lynne Hawkes, Public Relations & Media Officer

‘It has been extremely rewarding to be charged with the responsibility of promoting and marketing the activities, progress and achievements of a dynamic and committed organisation for the past five years.

The diversity and innovation of the natural resource management projects designed and implemented has been impressive, the dedication of the staff staggering. As a team, we have initiated a variety of methods and techniques to communicate and engage effectively with the community. The role of Public Relations and Media Officer has always been challenging and varied.’
PETER WESTON
BOARD MEMBER
since July 2004
Peter is a landholder with a long family history of land management in the Nyngan area. Peter brings a wealth of natural resource management experience from the western parts of the catchment and is passionate about the management of woody weeds regrowth to ensure profitable farming along with biodiversity outcomes.

BILL GILLOOLY AM
BOARD MEMBER
since August 2004
Bill is a great believer that the farming community has much to offer in natural resource management. He understands that a balanced approach to conservation is the way forward, and that the Central West CMA must work towards balancing competing interests to achieve a ‘win win’ situation for all.

DR ANNE KERLE
BOARD MEMBER
since January 2009
Anne lives in Dubbo, is an ecologist with some thirty years experience and has been involved in a range of environmental and natural resource management issues across the Central West Catchment.

REG KIDD
BOARD MEMBER
since July 2004
Reg lives in Orange, is a farmer, agricultural consultant and a conservationist who has been involved in natural resource management for many years. Reg is a member of the Orange Shire Council and a member of the Central West Management Board which developed the Catchment Blueprint.

TIM FERRARO
GENERAL MANAGER
Tim joined the Central West CMA in 2004 after serving as Executive Officer with WEST 2000 Plus, a structural adjustment program in the Western Division of NSW. Tim has also worked in a range of natural resource management positions at the State and regional scale and is held in high regard throughout the catchment.

CAROLYN RAINE
PROGRAM MANAGER – STRATEGY & PLANNING
Carolyn has been with the Central West CMA from its inception in 2004. She possesses extensive experience and specialist expertise in the management of natural resources, strengthened through her experience in the public and educational sectors and local government.

CHRIS AMBLER
BUSINESS MANAGER
Chris joined the Central West CMA from the Western CMA in February 2008. He has extensive experience in financial, administration and employee services management through a variety of roles in the public and educational sectors.

JANE CHRYSAL
PROGRAM MANAGER – IMPLEMENTATION
Jane came to the Central West CMA in 2006 as a knowledge broker and joined the Management Team in May 2008. She has extensive experience in agriculture, environmental management and business development, gained through a variety of roles in the public and private sectors.