

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK STAGE 2

NSW WESTERN REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS

27 AUGUST 2001

**Brigalow Belt
South**

Resource and Conservation
Assessment Council

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Objectives	3
Context	5
Process	6
Outcomes	10
Appendix 1	
Chart Part A - Reporting Structure of WRA and RACAC	12
Chart Part B - Western Regional Assessment Stage 2 - Brigalow Belt South Bioregion	13
Appendix 2	
Steering Committee - Terms of Reference	14
Appendix 3	
Stakeholder Technical Representatives - Terms of Reference	17
Appendix 4	
Data Management Group - Terms of Reference	19
Appendix 5	
Integration Technical Working Group - Terms of Reference	22
Appendix 6	
Project Themes / Areas	23
Appendix 7	
Project Specification Approval Process	28

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK STAGE 2

BRIGALOW BELT SOUTH BIOREGION

INTRODUCTION

In October 1999 the NSW government requested that a Regional Forest Assessment be undertaken in the Brigalow Belt South bioregion, with special focus on the Pilliga and Goonoo groups of State Forests. The emphasis of the assessment was to determine whether the two groups of State Forests were able to provide sufficient timber to supply charcoal to a silicon plant planned for Lithgow. The government has now requested that a more detailed Regional Assessment be undertaken, to build on the Stage 1 assessment.

This Strategic Framework addresses the objectives, process and expected outcomes of the BBSB Regional Assessment. In finalising this framework, the agencies have considered the views of stakeholder organisations and local interest groups that have a role in the assessment.

Vision

The NSW Government has initiated a regional assessment of western NSW to guide future planning and encourage partnerships to protect the environment. The assessment involves State Government agencies – including Urban Affairs and Planning, State Forests of NSW, National Parks and Wildlife Service, Department of Land and Water Conservation, the Department of Mineral Resources and other agencies - as well as local and regional stakeholders and Aboriginal communities.

The Western Regional Assessments will bring together data on forested areas, and provide additional data, for improved land use decisions in the west. The assessment will consider environmental, economic and social values of forests and woodlands, for conservation, land management, and regional planning.

Formal negotiations on land allocations will focus on public land, although the assessments will include a range of tenures. Much of the additional information collected on other tenures will provide a context for negotiations, and could support a range of separate planning processes. These would include the State Biodiversity Strategy, salinity research, vegetation and resource assessment, catchment planning, water management and regional planning. Private land holders may, on a voluntary basis, choose to utilise assessment information or seek advice for considering land use options on private land.

The WRA recognises that the land and its resources were traditionally owned by, and are of spiritual, social, cultural and economic importance to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal self-determination, rights and interests, protected by agreed protocols, are to be delivered through culturally appropriate involvement in projects, opportunities, and processes.

It is not intended that the Western region be subject to the same assessment which has occurred in the east. Rather, a process that examines the particular needs of the Western region has been developed.

The vision of the Western Regional Assessment is to:

- ❑ Enhance partnerships between natural resource agencies and interest groups to increase sharing of information and to reduce duplication
- ❑ Assist agencies and programs to fill data gaps to inform regional land use planning and economic development opportunities
- ❑ Identify a comprehensive, adequate and representative network of protected and managed landscapes and reserves, and culturally significant sites in the west.

Studies commissioned by RACAC in 1999 show deficiencies in data coverage and data quality for land-use planning, and duplication of planning efforts in western NSW.

The Regional Assessment will address deficiencies in data coverage and will avoid duplication by working within existing strategies for natural resource management.

The Brigalow Belt South (BBS) Bioregional Assessment is aimed for completion during 2002.

Principles

The Western Regional Assessment is guided by the following principles:

- ❑ Improved conservation, landscape management, and management of biodiversity, that integrates production and conservation
- ❑ Community and stakeholder ownership of policies and decisions
- ❑ Transparency and fair access to information
- ❑ Data sharing and cooperation that supports and complements existing processes without duplication of efforts
- ❑ Ecologically sustainable development, forest management and land management.
- ❑ Landscape assessment across all tenures, in collaboration with landholders
- ❑ Ongoing review and adoption of current and emerging technologies
- ❑ Involvement of Aboriginal communities in the assessments.

OBJECTIVES

Stage 2 aims to achieve the following objectives, in conjunction and agreement with other regional planning processes.

Land management

Inform land management and regional planning through the development of principles and indicators of ecologically sustainable forest management (ESFM) and ecologically sustainable land management (ESLM), which encompass Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Conservation

Protection, enhancement and conservation management of biodiversity, natural and cultural values through a range of conservation options including:

- a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system;
- joint management arrangements;
- conservation measures and voluntary plans that encourage consistent management of public and private lands; and
- Aboriginal management of culturally significant sites.

Economic and Social opportunities

Economic and social opportunities within a dynamic environment with special emphasis on:

- continued access for exploration and development of mineral and energy deposits and extractive resources;
- viable cypress pine, hardwood, apiary and other forest industries in the region;
- improved and increased involvement of Aboriginal communities in land management; and
- diverse agricultural industries.

Consultation

Stakeholder and community involvement in the process through:

- utilisation of existing communication and committee structures in the region where possible; and
- other targeted approaches.

Forestry and National Park Estate Act 1998

One legislative basis of the regional assessments is the *Forestry and National Park Estate Act 1998* which provides for :

- ❑ Forest agreements between relevant Ministers
- ❑ Integrated Forestry Operations Approvals (IFOAs)
- ❑ Transfer of certain State Forest and other Crown lands to the national park estate or Aboriginal ownership.

However, the Western Regional Assessment is not limited to forestry decisions on public land. It considers numerous issues in unison with a range of legislative provisions, agreements and principles for managing whole landscapes, regardless of tenure.

Mandate and Government Policy

Under the *Forestry and National Park Estate Act 1998*, a regional assessment conducted by or on behalf of RACAC is required before making a 'forest agreement' and subsequently issuing an 'integrated forestry operations approval' within the bioregion.

Forest agreements and integrated forestry operations approvals (IFOAs) integrate regulatory regimes for environmental planning and assessment, for the protection of the environment and for threatened species conservation for future forestry operations on State forests and other Crown-timber lands.

A regional assessment can provide significant progress in implementing the National Forest Policy Statement and the National Strategy For The Conservation Of Australia's Biological Diversity, to which NSW is a signatory.

A regional assessment can make a substantial contribution to achieving the core objectives of the NSW Biodiversity Strategy.

The NSW Government undertakes the regional assessment as proposed to progress NSW obligations under national agreements, to allow making of a forest agreement and IFOA for forestry operations on Crown land, and to underpin and advance implementation of the state biodiversity strategy.

The 2001 Environment Statement commits the Government to balancing conservation needs with economic and social needs of the region, including balancing environmental protection with local jobs and industry.

Western NSW is now the focus of a \$7.9 million acquisition program for suitable lands to be included in the reserve system (if on the market for purchase).

On completion of the BBS Bioregion assessment the Government will develop an "integrated landscape conservation network, including new national parks and reserves, new conservation measures in State forests and voluntary and commercial initiatives to maximise protection of conservation values on privately owned land". The Government is keen to develop a landscape approach to this, rather than simply reserving key areas.

The Government recognises the important contribution made by the timber industry to small towns in the west and is committed to an industry adjustment package to help to maintain and promote a sustainable and value-adding timber industry in the region, and plantations development.

The NSW Government affirms that it is essential for government to work with the farming community on conservation issues.

CONTEXT

The Brigalow Belt South Regional Assessment will be complemented by a range of initiatives already progressing in the region. Data gathering and data sharing in the BBSB will enable communities, councils and government agencies to make informed, transparent, coordinated land use and conservation decisions.

Planning in the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion is undertaken at a number of levels, including regionally, catchments, shires, Local Government Areas and individual land parcels across the landscape through a suite of natural resource and land use plans and strategies. These plans help communities, councils and government agencies determine their priorities and plan their actions for natural resource management.

Regional-level planning initiatives include:

- Catchment Management Plans – to be developed over the next 12 months by Catchment Management Boards and recommended to the Government for adoption. These plans cover a range of natural resource management issues including salinity. They will contain end of valley salinity targets, management targets and a suite of delivery mechanisms tailored to meet the needs of the catchment. They also highlight priority areas for action and investment across the catchment. The Catchment Management Boards in the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion are those for the Central West, Namoi and Gwydir. The lead agency is Department of Land and Water Conservation (DLWC).
- Regional Vegetation Management Plans – being developed by Regional Vegetation Committees (RVCs) which are established under the *Native Vegetation Conservation Act, 1997*. These plans identify priorities and best practice for the sustainable management of the region's native vegetation, identify where vegetation controls on clearing are required, target opportunities for incentives and provide tools to assist management at a property level. The lead agency is DLWC.
- Water Management Plans – being developed by Water Management Committees. These plans provide directions for the sustainable management of rivers and groundwater systems including river flow, water quality and groundwater management. The lead agency is DLWC.
- Environmental planning instruments under the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act, 1979 such as Regional Environmental Plans and Local Environmental Plans. The lead agency is Department of Urban Affairs and Planning (DUAP).
- Projects funded under the State Biodiversity Strategy (SBS) 1999. The Brigalow Belt South assessment is contributing to the SBS objective of implementing bioregional assessment and planning throughout NSW. The outcomes could

inform the establishment of a CAR reserve system and protected area network. The lead agency is National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

All of the plans noted above include a requirement for appropriate social and economic impact assessments.

PROCESS

The process for achieving the objectives will involve agency, stakeholder and community involvement and will include the following components:

Strategic Framework :

A framework will be developed by which the Western Regional Assessment will be undertaken within the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion. This will require development of a draft framework by NSW State agencies for further development in consultation with stakeholders at a workshop, and approval of the final Framework by RACAC. A detailed technical framework (or frameworks) will be developed to guide specific project areas.

Reporting Structure :

The reporting structure (Appendix 1) provides a model for the appropriate exchange of information between the Steering Committee and all parties involved in the Western Regional Assessment process. Central in the reporting structure is the Steering Committee (see Appendix 2 for Terms of Reference), which is comprised of representatives from NSW State agencies, and reports directly to RACAC.

The Steering Committee will interact with the NSW State agencies through their representatives, the Stakeholder Technical Representatives (see Appendix 3 for Terms of Reference), the Aboriginal Management Committees, the Independent Experts (assisting specific projects), the Data Management Group, Integration Technical Working Group, Project Managers and RACD on all issues of relevance, including project development, project progress, communication, data and report dissemination, budgets, timelines, feedback from and decisions made by RACAC, and all information and communications that were initiated out-of-session. The Communication Strategy will outline the mechanisms by which these will be undertaken.

Project Development :

Appendix 6 identifies project themes/areas from which project specifications or briefs will be prepared. The table links each theme to the other themes and expected outcomes of the assessment, and provides a prioritisation of project themes for RACAC funding. A detailed Technical Framework will be developed by the Steering Committee, with reference to, and feedback from, the NSW State agencies, the Stakeholder Technical Representatives, the Aboriginal Management Committees, the Independent Experts, and RACAC. Once the Technical Framework has been endorsed, project areas will be discussed by the Steering Committee, and it will decide which agency, non-government organisation or consultant would be best placed to prepare a project specification or brief. The specification or brief would then be submitted to the Steering Committee for review. The Steering Committee may then

decide to seek advice from one or more Independent Experts as outlined in the Project Specification Approval Process (Appendix 7).

The Steering Committee must provide a copy of any draft project specification to each Stakeholder Technical Representative, who has fifteen working days to provide comments. Once the Steering Committee has considered any advice and comments from the Independent Experts and the Stakeholder Technical Representatives, it may recommend the project specification to RACAC for approval, or ask for further modification before recommending approval. If modifications are required, these will be made by the agency, non-government organisation or consultant who prepared the specification or brief. Revised specifications or briefs will then be either accepted by the Steering Committee and recommended to RACAC for approval, or returned for further modifications.

If RACAC does not endorse a project specification or brief, reasons and/or comments will be supplied to the Steering Committee by RACAC. The Steering Committee will then decide on what the appropriate action should be, which may include asking for alterations to be made to comply with RACAC's comments, or rejecting the project and seeking new specifications or briefs for the project area.

Projects will be funded by RACAC with cash and in-kind contributions from agencies. Appendix 7 details the project specification approval process. Some projects may go through a tendering process if thought necessary by the Steering Committee.

Scientific / Professional Rigour :

The WRA needs to be based on scientifically rigorous information, and a transparent process. To achieve this, independent professional scientists, economists, social researchers and other experts may be consulted by the Steering Committee on a project basis. They will assist in areas of disagreement within the Steering Committee, or when there is insufficient expertise available from within the agencies represented on the Steering Committee. The Independent Experts may review documents, project specifications (or elements of specifications) or final reports, and provide advice as requested by the Steering Committee.

Three independent expert advisory panels will report directly to RACAC. These are the Expert Socio-Economic Advisory Panel, the Expert Scientific Advisory Panel, and the Aboriginal Advisory Committee.

Communication :

A communication strategy will be developed which defines the groups to which assessment information is disseminated and the methods used (e.g. workshops, interest group briefings, public information sessions, newsletters, email, CD ROM), as well as consultation before and after exhibition. Funding assistance to offset actual travel costs may be considered to promote participation.

The communication strategy will be based on the consultation principles and recommendations outlined in the report 'Development of a Community Consultation

Framework'. The suggested consultation framework, which is broadly defined in Appendix 1, includes:

- Clearly documented communication, information exchange and reporting linkages between RACAC, the Steering Committee and all relevant community/scientific/government groups and agencies supporting the assessment process;
- RACD to act as a clearinghouse for information exchange between community/scientific/government groups and agencies supporting the assessment process;
- Stakeholder technical input to be through the Stakeholder Technical Representatives;
- The Steering Committee is to provide the Stakeholder Technical Representatives with progress reports and key outcomes/minutes from RACAC and community/scientific/government groups supporting the assessment process, and will be given the opportunity to comment on project proposals and report on information as required;
- There will be a nominated contact person for each of the community/scientific/government groups and agencies supporting the assessment process.

Data :

A Data Manual is to be developed by the Data Management Group (see Terms of Reference in Appendix 4) specifically for the Western Regional Assessments. Data produced from the projects outlined in the Strategic Framework, and other data relevant to the assessment, will be managed in a manner which is consistent with the standards and protocols outlined in the Data Manual. The Manual will include standards for data preparation, metadata, access, and custodianship. It will also include protocols for the distribution of draft and final data to agencies and stakeholder groups via the Stakeholder Technical Representatives. It will provide the protocols for the sign off of final data by the Steering Committee (that the data meets the project specifications) and the Data Management Group (that it meets the data specifications from the data manual).

The Data Manual will provide protocols for the distribution, or withholding, of confidential data which is under license to any government agency, non-government organisation or consultant who undertakes a project under the Western Regional Assessment process. The Data Manual will provide protocols for the distribution, or withholding, of confidential data which is of a sensitive nature to the Aboriginal communities involved in the Western Regional Assessment process. The Data Manual will provide protocols for the distribution, or withholding, of confidential data which is of a sensitive nature under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*.

Data Analysis and Assessment :

Data from each project will need to be combined, analysed and assessed to produce value added data layers and information which will be of use to the Western Regional Assessment process. Value added data layers and information will feed into

complementary regional planning processes. This information will be made available by the Steering Committee to agencies and stakeholder groups where appropriate, in a useable form drawn from all relevant project areas.

Data Familiarisation :

Final data and reports associated with the assessment projects will be made available to agencies and stakeholders as soon as the Steering Committee approves their dissemination. There will be a period of 12 weeks in which agencies and stakeholders can become familiar with the data prior to any formulation of recommendations to the Government.

Data Integration

The Steering Committee will establish an Integration Technical Working Group to advise on data integration and negotiations for 2002.

Negotiation and Recommendations:

Recommendations will be made to the NSW Government after all projects have been completed and the data associated with those projects has been made available to the agencies and stakeholders/community representatives for a period of 12 weeks. Stakeholders and community representatives will be involved in discussions as determined by the Steering Committee while draft recommendations are developed by agencies in a period of negotiations. The Stakeholders and community representatives will then be actively consulted individually to discuss the issues that they feel are important and examine the areas of agreement and disagreement with the State position. The State position may then be modified to accommodate these issues, and a final set of recommendations will then be signed off by agencies.

The agencies and stakeholders/community representatives will negotiate on how the objectives can best be met given the level of information available from the projects and other existing information. Stakeholders and community representatives include those listed in Appendix 3.

Exhibition :

Following the negotiation period the recommendations will be put on public exhibition for a minimum period of 6 weeks after which time public comment will be reviewed and any appropriate modifications will be made.

OUTCOMES

The outcomes will satisfy the objectives through a range of mechanisms including:

Forest Agreement

The Forest Agreement will include details of, but will not be limited to, provisions with respect to the sustainable cypress pine and hardwood logging industry within the area covered by the agreement, provisions that promote ecological sustainable forest management, provisions with respect to community consultation on forestry operations and other matters covered by the agreement, provisions with respect to arrangements made or to be made relating to native title rights and interests or Aboriginal land claims, conservation options for management of State Forests, joint management agreements between NSW Government agencies and Aboriginal Communities, land transfer and conservation options available for State forests and Crown land, and would initiate the need for an Integrated Forestry Operations Approval (IFOA) for the area covered by the agreement.

IFOA

An Integrated Forestry Operations Approval specifies the environmental conditions under which forestry operations can take place on State forests, and integrates the regulatory regimes for environmental planning and assessment, for the protection of the environment and for threatened species conservation. The IFOA produced in Stage 1 will be replaced to include management prescriptions appropriate to the agreement in Stage 2.

Integrated Regional Planning

Stage 2 will provide key data to inform local and regional planning and the development of principles for land use and resources management through the collaborative regional framework being developed across natural resource Government agencies, Catchment Management Boards and Regional Vegetation Management Plans.

Private Land Management

There will be development of conservation management mechanisms and opportunities (e.g. carbon credits, salinity credits, biodiversity credits) consistent with government policy. Voluntary Conservation Agreements and other conservation management measures will also be encouraged.

Conservation

Improved conservation management across the bioregion including:

- an improvement in community and landholders knowledge of biodiversity, natural, and cultural heritage values, conservation principles, and conservation management measures;
- development of a range of conservation options including development of an *integrated landscape conservation network*, including new national parks and reserves, new conservation measures in State forests, and voluntary and commercial initiatives to maximise protection of conservation values on privately owned land;
- assisting maintenance of biodiversity and ecological processes across the bioregion.

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Consultation

Outcomes include:

- protection and management of Indigenous Cultural Heritage values;
- an understanding of the relationship between Cultural and Natural Heritage values; and
- involvement of Aboriginal communities in the assessment of the bioregion and management of the national park estate, State forests and Crown land.

Minerals and Energy

Security of reasonable access to important mineral and fuel deposits, extractive industries and to mineral and fuel exploration in the region.

Socioeconomic

Outcomes include:

- an understanding of the socio-economic characteristics of the region's economy and communities (including dependencies between industries and competing land uses);
- identification of potential development opportunities, including the encouragement of sustainable and/or alternate land use practices, Aboriginal opportunities and wider economic infrastructure needs; and
- a means of assessing the changes expected in local communities and regional economies flowing from a change in land use.

Summary Report

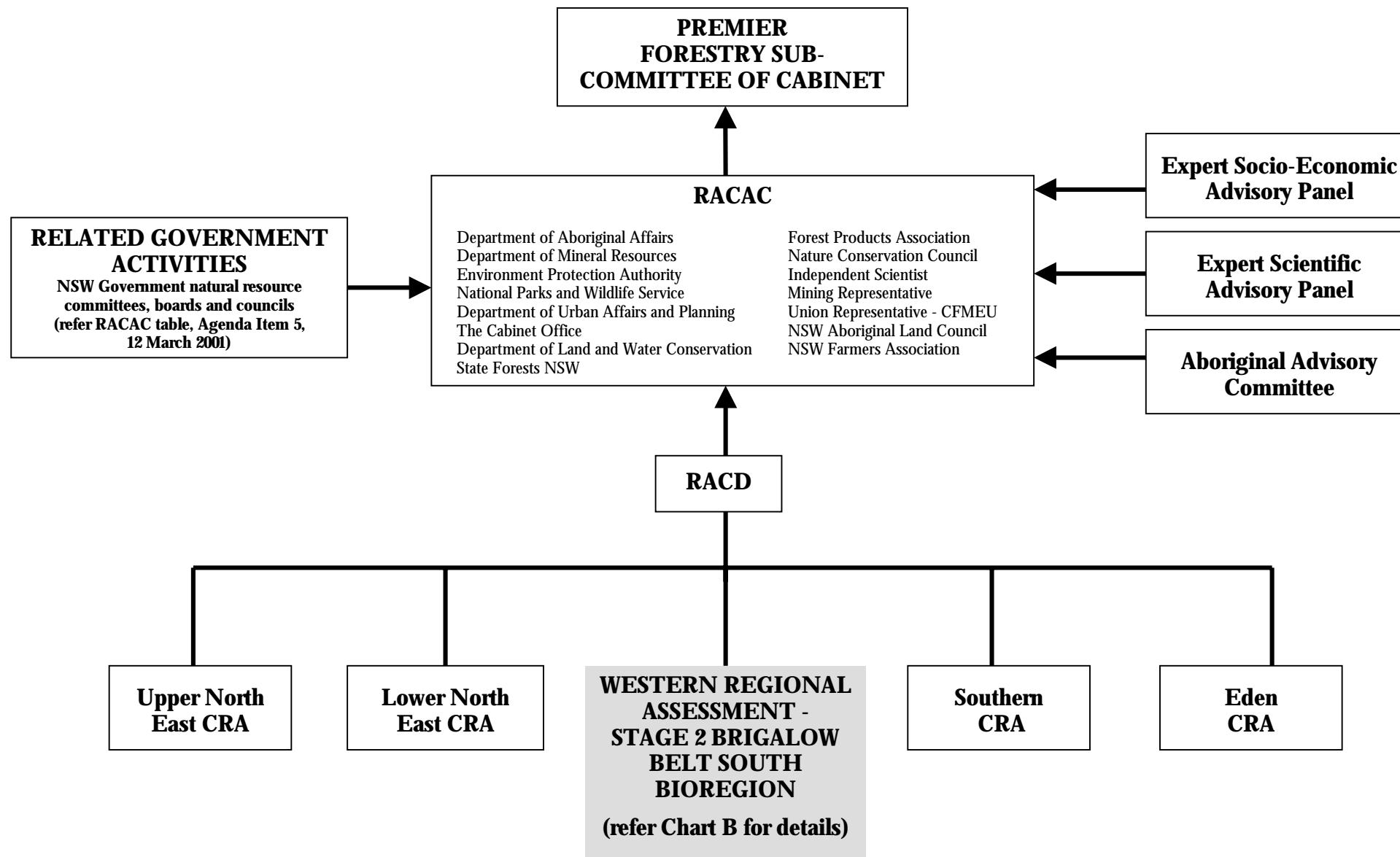
A report that summarises the outcomes, decisions, agreements, data, guidelines and recommendations resulting from the Brigalow Belt South Bioregional Assessment.

Timeframe

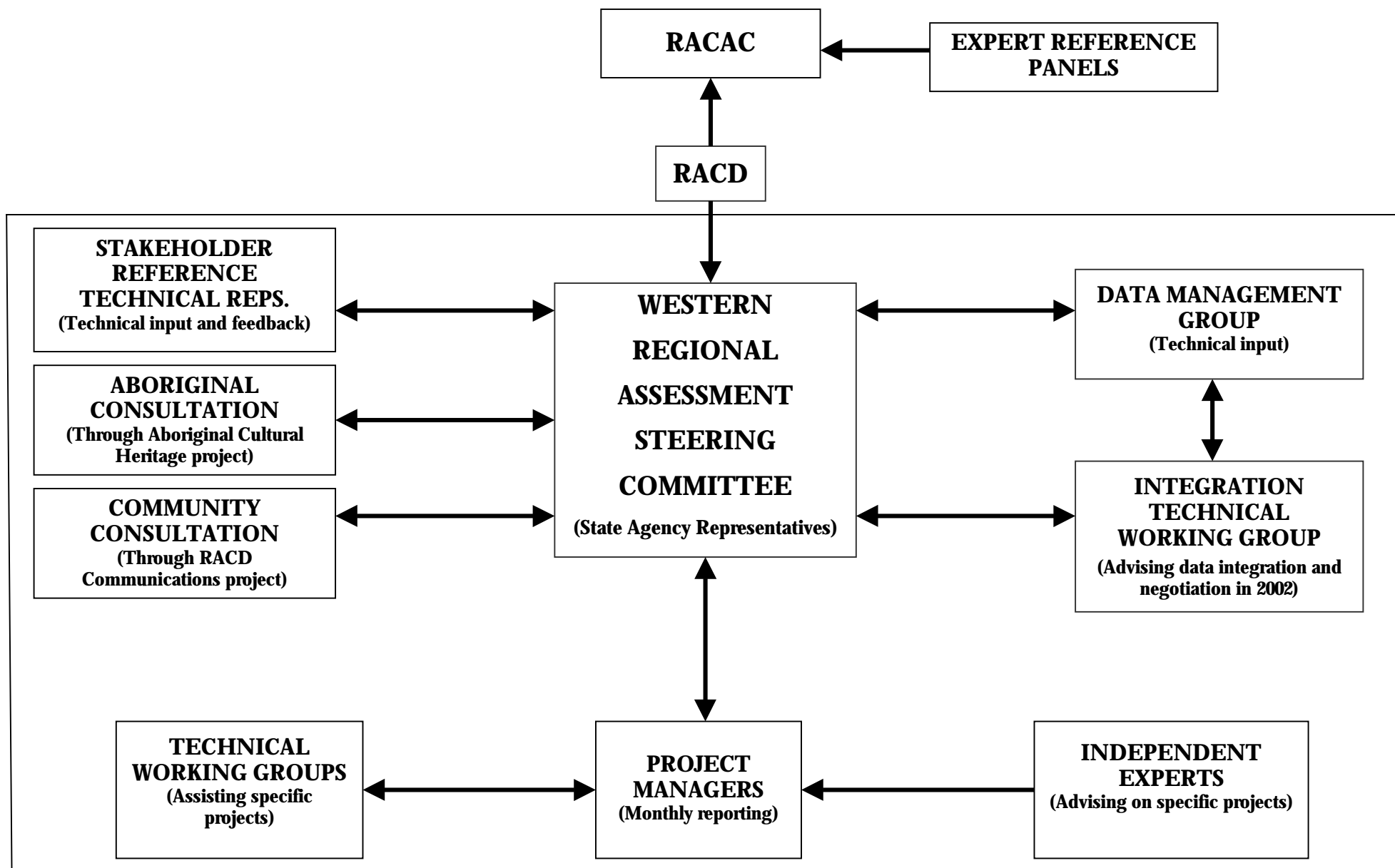
The expected completion date of assessment projects is the end of July 2002. This will be followed by periods of data familiarisation, negotiations, formulation of recommendations, public exhibition of recommendations and opportunity for public comment. It is expected that announcements of the outcomes would be made by the Government in early 2003.

APPENDIX 1

CHART PART A - REPORTING STRUCTURE OF WRA AND RACAC



**CHART PART B - WESTERN REGIONAL ASSESSMENT
STAGE 2 - BRIGALOW BELT SOUTH BIOREGION**



APPENDIX 2

STEERING COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Role

The primary role of the Western Regional Assessment Steering Committee (WRASC) is to coordinate the Regional Assessment for the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion.

The Steering Committee is responsible for ensuring the Regional Assessment is completed according to agreed time lines and covers the issues, projects and assessments which are defined in the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion Strategic Framework. This will involve:

- approving broad Regional Assessment methods;
- assessing the merits of projects submitted for approval;
- resolving issues in dispute;
- agreeing on the ownership of all data and priorities for data exchange;
- recommending project specifications or briefs to RACAC for approval;
- recommending written reports for approval by RACAC;
- developing and implementing a public consultation strategy;
- clearly defining roles and tasks for itself and for the committees and groups responsible to the Steering Committee.

It is implicit in these roles that the Steering Committee has particular responsibility for:

- overall policy;
- financial and budgetary control;
- timeline setting and monitoring;
- project coordination at a regional level; and,
- the formulation of State Position(s), and alternatives through negotiations.

In order to carry out these functions the Steering Committee may form sub-committees or working groups and may delegate functions to individuals or groups.

All members of the Steering Committee will report back to their respective organisations and other constituencies as necessary.

Operation

The Steering Committee will operate in a collaborative manner with the aim of reaching consensus, whereby matters are resolved to all agencies satisfaction, while recognising that consensus is not always possible. To ensure timely decision making, all policy matters in dispute will first be referred to the Executive Director RACD for resolution, and then to RACAC if resolution is not possible. Where technical

disagreement occurs the Steering Committee will consider engaging an Independent Expert or Experts to advise on the matter.

RACD will act as a clearing house for material (including minutes, technical information, general communication) coming from / to the Steering Committee to / from Stakeholder Technical Representatives, Data management Group, Independent Experts, project managers, Aboriginal Management Committees, RACAC and any other group (eg Regional Vegetation Management Committees) or individuals.

Reporting

The Steering Committee reports to RACAC in matters of overall assessment policy, updates on timelines, project progress and budgetary matters. The Steering Committee will also refer all projects approved at the Steering Committee for endorsement by RACAC.

The Steering Committee will also facilitate close co-ordination and communication between all of the following groups/individuals (including approving terms of Reference for their involvement):

- RACAC and RACD
- Independent Experts
- Data Management Group
- Stakeholder Technical Representatives
- Project managers
- Aboriginal Management Committees

Frequency and Location of Meetings

Meetings will generally be held on a monthly basis, but may need to be held more frequently on occasions. Meetings will generally be held in Sydney, but may also be held in other locations such as Dubbo or in other regional NSW towns. On occasions it may be necessary to hold out of session meetings by telephone conference.

Chair and Secretariat Support

The responsibility for arranging meetings, providing a venue, agenda and chairing meetings and providing secretariat support will be the responsibility of the Resource and Conservation Division of DUAP (RACD). A draft meeting agenda will be circulated to members well in advance of meetings and a final agenda and meeting papers should be provided at least three working days in advance. All decisions will be documented and draft minutes of meetings should be circulated to Steering Committee members within three working days following meetings. Agreed minutes will be circulated to Stakeholder Technical Representatives by RACD as soon as practicable.

Membership

- 3 RACD (Chair + 2)
- 2 NPWS
- 1 DUAP
- 1 Department of Aboriginal Affairs
- 1 NSW Tourism
- 1 EPA (when necessary)
- 2 State Forests of NSW
- 2 DLWC
- 1 Department of Agriculture
- 1 Department of Mineral Resources
- 1 State and Regional Development
- 1 NSW Fisheries (when necessary)

Agencies may have observers at Steering Committee meetings if approved in advance by the Chair. Observers may engage in general discussion but shall not be responsible for determining an agency's position on any matter. This will be the responsibility of Steering Committee members.

Stakeholder Technical Representatives or Independent Experts may be invited by the Chair to attend specific sessions of Steering Committee meetings to provide advice on relevant issues being discussed.

Conduct

Steering Committee members must:

- act with impartiality and integrity, conscientiousness and loyalty to the public interest;
- absolutely ensure the security of confidential information dealt with by the Steering Committee;
- act in good faith, that is honestly, for proper purposes and without exceeding their powers; and
- be frank and honest in their official dealings with each other.

Each member of the WRA Steering Committee will:

- Focus on the issue
- Be open to possibilities and opportunities
- Aim to satisfy the interests of other groups as well as their own
- Be polite and show respect for other members and observers of the Steering Committee

APPENDIX 3

STAKEHOLDER TECHNICAL REPRESENTATIVES

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Role

Peak stakeholder organisations and local interest groups provide a regional focus and technical advice to assist the Steering Committee to carry out the regional assessments. Such organisations will nominate a Stakeholder Technical Representative who will have the opportunity to input to the assessments through a range of mechanisms including:

- *direct communication with Steering Committee* and opportunity to provide regional context and review of progress on projects. Communication with the Steering Committee will be through RACD.
- *technical input* to projects before approval by providing substantive comments on project specifications before being considered for approval by the RACAC. Project specifications submitted for approval will be forwarded to nominated technical representatives of stakeholder organisations and local interest groups for technical comment within 10 working days. Technical advice from stakeholder's own experts is encouraged (see Project Approval Procedure for further detail). Comments shall be forwarded to the Steering Committee through RACD.
- *opportunity to discuss and experience projects* (e.g. field demonstrations) with project managers by arrangement through the Steering Committee. This may include one to one or group discussions with individual project managers to discuss data interpretation or data outputs. It may also involve field demonstration of survey methods or sampling techniques. Such arrangements will be dependent entirely on project manager availability.

The role of the Stakeholder Technical Representatives is to have input into the policy development and implementation process of the Brigalow Belt South Regional Assessment - Stage 2. Parallel with this process, the general community, including regional stakeholders will be consulted according to the Brigalow Belt South Communication Strategy.

Formal Reporting

The Stakeholder Technical Representatives will report to the Steering Committee via RACD, which will act as a clearing house for material going both to and from Stakeholder Technical Representatives.

The Stakeholder Technical Representatives will not meet formally as a group. One nominee from each stakeholder organisation will receive (and distribute to other members as appropriate) all correspondence and project specifications for comment. The nominee will also represent their organisation in providing comment back to the Steering Committee (via RACD). Where possible, comments to the Steering Committee will be in electronic/digital format and RACD will circulate these to other Stakeholder Technical Representatives and members of the Steering Committee.

It is the responsibility of all Stakeholder Technical Representatives to report back to their respective organisations and other constituencies.

Membership

- NSW Farmers Association
- Minerals Council
- Nature Conservation Council
- Rural Lands Protection Board
- Friends of Pilliga
- Construction, Forest, Mining & Energy Union
- Greening Australia
- National Parks Association
- Local Government and Shires Association
- NSW Aboriginal Land Council
- Forest Products Association
- NSW Apiarists Association
- Dubbo Field Naturalists
- Landcare
- Institute of Foresters
- Petroleum Exploration Society

Conduct

- Where material is confidential, this will be clearly indicated to the Stakeholder Technical Representatives.
- Information available to members must not be used to obtain any advantage, whether direct or indirect, for themselves or any other person or body.
- Where confidential information is provided to a member, care must be taken to ensure that the information is kept secure. If such information is to be disposed of by a Stakeholder Technical Representative, it must be destroyed.
- Stakeholder Technical Representatives must take care not to use their position on the Group to attempt to improperly or unlawfully influence any other members, Steering Committee members or RACD in the performance of their duties or functions, for the purpose of obtaining any advantage for themselves or any other person, whether the advantage is direct or indirect. It is noted that legitimately representing the interests of an organisation, or its members through proper means is integral to the process.

APPENDIX 4

DATA MANAGEMENT GROUP – TERMS OF REFERENCE

Role and Reporting

The Data Management Group coordinates the development and implementation of standards and guidelines for the management and use of data and information for the Western Regional Assessment.

A Data Manual is to be developed by the Data Management Group specifically for the Western Regional Assessment. Data produced from the projects outlined in the Strategic Framework, and other data relevant to the assessment, will be managed in a manner which is consistent with the standards and protocols outlined below.

Under the direction of the Steering Committee, the Data Management Group will:

- coordinate the development and implementation of standards and guidelines for:
 - the management and use of data and information for the Western Regional Assessment;
 - data audit across all regions;
 - data access and use, including the distribution of data and ownership issues related to new data layers;
 - data documentation and metadata preparation;
 - geographic information systems (GIS) and data, including spatial data, transfer standards;
 - data version control;
 - archiving all data used in the Assessment at the end of the process;
 - the publication of data including standards for map production;
 - identifying appropriate custodians of composite data/data layers developed for the Assessment;
 - stakeholder access to data and GIS and other technology (including specialised software); and
 - hardware and software including current access, needs and compatibilities.
- provide advice on:
 - the efficiencies of data acquisition (collection and collation) and analysis; and
 - the data components of all WRA/FA assessments and projects.
- coordinate the approach to data management issues between assessments and agencies participating in the Assessment;
- achieve coordinated positions and papers on data management issues for the Steering Committee;
- disseminate the necessary information to all interested parties;

- develop protocols, in consultation with Aboriginal communities, for the preparation, access classification, distribution and use of Aboriginal data; and
- conduct any other tasks as referred to it by the Steering Committee.

Acceptance of Data

The DMG will produce a Data Manual which contains the protocols and standards for data preparation, access and dissemination. The Data Manual will be used by project managers to assist them in preparing their assessment data before forwarding it to the Data Clearing House at RACD (or other agency if appropriate). The Data Clearing House will ensure that the data meets the technical requirements of a data checklist developed by the DMG, and will advise the Steering Committee as to whether the data is consistent with that which is outlined in the project specification.

If the data meets the technical and project specification requirements then the Steering Committee may approve dissemination of the data to agencies and stakeholder as appropriate. If the technical requirements are not met, the Data Clearing House will liaise with the project manager to determine how the requirements can be met. Where the data provided is not consistent with that specified in the project specification the Data Clearing House shall report the inconsistencies to the Steering Committee.

The Data Manual will also include protocols for the distribution of draft and final data to agencies and Stakeholder groups via their Stakeholder Technical Representatives. It will provide the protocols for the sign-off of final data by the Steering Committee based on the recommendations of the Data Clearing House and the Data Management Group.

The Data Manual will also provide protocols for the distribution, or withholding, of confidential data which is under license to any government agency, non-government organisation or consultant who undertakes a project under the Western Regional Assessment process. The Data Manual will provide protocols for the distribution, or withholding, of confidential data which is of a sensitive nature to the Aboriginal communities involved in the Western Regional Assessment process. The Data Manual will provide protocols for the distribution, or withholding, of confidential data which is of a sensitive nature under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.

Membership

The Data Management Group will have membership covering Head Office and Regional agency needs. The Chair will be elected at the first meeting of the Group. Representatives will be drawn from the following agencies:

- 1 RACD
- 2 NPWS (1 HO and 1 Regional)
- 2 SFNSW (1 HO and 1 Regional)
- 2 DLWC (1 HO and 1 Regional)
- 1 DMR

27 AUGUST 2001

- also EPA, NSW Fisheries, Dept. Agric., DAA and Aboriginal Management Committee representatives should be invited to sit on the committee. It should be left to those representatives to determine when attendance is appropriate.

Frequency and Venue of Meetings

The Data Management Group will meet as required in Sydney, or in Dubbo or other regional centres if appropriate.

27 AUGUST 2001

APPENDIX 5
INTEGRATION TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP
TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference are being finalised.

APPENDIX 6 - PROJECT THEMES / AREAS

	Conservation Theme/Project area	How does it contribute to objectives	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC funding
1.	Native Ecosystems	Provides the basis for conservation planning. Elements of this project area include vegetation mapping, native ecosystem derivation, evaluation and of environmental and geographical patterns of biological variation within and between vegetation types, and formulation of conservation requirements.	Conservation, Regional Planning, Private Land Management, Forest Agreement, IFOA	Conservation 2,3, 5,6,7,8 ESF/LM 2,3 E&S 1	High – immediate start for veg mapping (incl LANDSAT evaluation). Priority for other components yet to be determined.
2.	Fauna and Flora Assessments	Provides information on threatened species and species distribution and aids in identification of areas of special conservation significance. Information includes data derived from systematic and targeted fauna, plot-based and targeted flora surveys, assessment of aquatic vertebrates and macro-invertebrates, monitoring sites, genetic diversity, and formulation of conservation requirements for flora and fauna.	Conservation, Regional Planning, Private Land Management, Forest Agreement	Conservation 1,5,6,7,8 ESF/LM 2,3 E&S 1	High – immediate start for flora and fauna surveys. Priority for other components yet to be determined
3.	Growth Stages	Assists with determining the relative age and structural condition of forest stands and the significance of past canopy disturbance.	Conservation, Private Land Management, Forest Agreement	Conservation 1,4,6,7,8 ESF/LM 2,3 E&S 1	Medium – linked to API mapping
4.	Wilderness	Delineates high quality wilderness areas.	Conservation Forest Agreement	Conservation 1,3,6,7,8	Low – part of NPWS core business
5.	Fauna, Flora and Ecosystem Modelling	Provides a basis for defining and extrapolating the distribution of potential high quality habitat and critical habitat for species/assemblages of conservation concern across unsurveyed ecosystems.	Conservation, Private Land Management, Forest Agreement, Regional Planning	Conservation 1,2	Medium – can commence later in Assessment
6.	Response to Disturbance	Provides information for specifying appropriate types of management for ecosystems, fauna and flora. Includes collation and mapping of disturbance information.	Conservation, Private Land Management, Forest Agreement, Regional Planning	Conservation 1,2,3,4,5,7,8	High – but can come later in Assessment and not high cost

7.	Development of Conservation Criteria	Provides criteria for determining areas of high conservation value suitable for reservation and other conservation options.	Conservation, Private Land management, Regional Planning, Forest Agreement	All Conservation themes	High – essential for selecting areas for reservation / conservation etc.
8.	Formulation of general principles for designing reserve network	Provides general reserve design principles and rules to guide formulation of recommendations for land tenure changes.	Conservation, Forest Agreement	All Conservation	Low – can be done undertaken using existing agency resources
9.	Indigenous Cultural Heritage and Communication Projects	Provides information on Indigenous cultural heritage values and their links to natural heritage, and supports the communication requirements of Aborigines through continued involvement through Aboriginal Management Committees and Aboriginal community consultation.	Conservation, Regional Planning, Socio-economic, Forest Agreement, Private land Management	All conservation, Socio-economic, communication	High – especially support of Aboriginal Management Committees

	Ecologically Sustainable Forest and Land Management (ESF/LM) Theme/Project area	How does it contribute to objective	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC funding
1	Decision Support Systems/Tools for applying/demonstrating opportunities, regulations and best practice across the landscape	Contributes to ESF/LM and communication objectives. Demonstrates application and consequences of ESF/LM regulations and best practice across the landscape. Facilitates stakeholder/community involvement through a simple, transparent tool. Communicates benefits and opportunities to all participants. Guide to obtaining funds for land/forest management/conservation opportunities.	Private Land Management Regional Planning	All Conservation, ESF/LM, E&S and Communication themes.	Low – duplication of other processes
2	Principles of ecologically sustainable management	Developing regionally appropriate principles of SM is the core of ESF/LM Objective. Provides framework for meeting Objectives 1 and 2.	Private Land Management Regional Planning	ESF/LM 3	Low – can be undertaken using agency resources
3	Criteria and indicators for ESFM	Based on Montreal C&I these are required to meet ESFM objective and monitor Conservation and E&S. Establishment of region appropriate C&I and monitoring processes is essential to the assessment and achievement of ESFM.	IFOA, Forest Agreement reporting requirements	ESF/LM 2	Low – can be undertaken using agency resources

	Economic and Social Theme/Project Area	How does it contribute to objective	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC Funding
1.	Wood Resources	Provide quantitative data to inform decisions about opportunities to maintain viable forest based (cypress and hardwood) industries in the region. This requires collection of inventory, growth and yield data pertaining to current and future wood volumes (including delineation of net harvestable area and input from Aboriginal Forest Management Committees relating to protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites).	Forest Agreement, IFOA, Aboriginal Forest Management Committees	ESF/LM 2,3	High
2.	Regional Economic Profile	Provide information on current state and extent of timber, agricultural, apiary, recreation, tourism and other industries in the region. Assist in informing decisions impacting current land uses and associated industries.	Regional Planning, Forest Agreement	All E&S	Low – can use existing info and agency resources
3.	Regional Social Profile	Provide information on both Aboriginal and wider local communities, assist in identifying regional issues important to informed regional planning.	Regional Planning, Forest Agreement	E&S 2	Low – can use using existing info and agency resources
4.	Development Opportunities	Provide an assessment of current land uses (economic and community based) and potential development opportunities, including alternate land uses and recommendations regarding infrastructure needs	Forest Agreement Regional Planning Regional Development	E&S 1,2 ESF/LM 2,3	High
5.	Mineral potential - Exploration and Development	Provide an assessment of mineral, fuel and extractive resources and resource potential to inform negotiations and local and regional planning.	Regional Planning, Private land management, Amendments to F&NPE Act through negotiated tenure changes	E&S 2	High
6.	Plantation Potential	Provide data and inform decisions on opportunities to develop/enhance forest industry based on plantation species	Forest Agreement, Regional Planning, Private Land Management.	E&S 1,2 ESF/LM 2,3	High
7.	Water Resources	Profile industries utilising the region's water resources and provide info. on challenges faced by the multiple users of this shared resource.	Regional Planning, Private Land Management, IFOA.	E&S 2	Low – covered by existing programs

	Economic and Social Theme/Project Area (continued)	How does it contribute to objective	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC Funding
1.	Interaction Between Competing Land Uses	Utilising the information compiled as part of the above studies, assess the inter-relationships and cumulative economic and social impacts generated as a result of industries sharing common resources	Forest Agreement Regional Planning Private Land Management	E&S 1,2 ESF/LM 2,3	Low

	Communication Theme/Project Area	How does it contribute to objective ?	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC Funding
1.	Communication Strategy	Fulfils objective to promote stakeholder involvement in process	Forest Agreement	all	High – imperative to any form of Assessment

	Data Integration Projects	How does it contribute to objective ?	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC funding
	Range of projects including integration of data, development of conservation planning tools and derivation of planning units	Allows preparation, modelling and analysis of conservation, socioeconomic and land management options.	all	all	High

	Fundamental Datasets	How does it contribute to objective ?	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC funding
	Tenure and Boundary	Required as the base layer for all Assessment data.	all	all	High – needed to any form of Assessment
	Geology	Required as base layer for mineral resource and mineral potential assessments, conservation assessments, and useful for general land use assessment and environmental stratification during survey design and gap identification.	Mineral Resources Conservation	all	High

	Fundamental Datasets (continued)	How does it contribute to objective ?	Link to Outcomes	Link to Themes	Priority for RACAC funding
	Soil Landscapes	Mapped soil attributes (incl. Depth, fertility, water holding capacity and stability) and a classification map of lithology are fundamental, essential and urgently required inputs to many modelling projects within the Assessment process.	Conservation	All	High
	Hydrology	Provides hydrological systems and pathways information within the bioregion to assist in assessing impacts of clearing or further alteration of native vegetation.	Conservation	All	Low – covered by DLWC programs

APPENDIX 7

PROJECT SPECIFICATION APPROVAL PROCESS

General

The Strategic Framework for the Brigalow Belt South Bioregion – Stage 2, guides the information needs to satisfy the objectives of the Western Regional Assessments. Projects will be discussed and included in a Technical Framework developed by the Steering Committee, who will decide which NSW Government agency, or other organisation, or individual should be requested to prepare a project specification. The Steering Committee may also determine that a project brief be put out to tender for some projects. In such cases agencies will provide information necessary to prepare a project scope for tender. Once prepared, the project specification will be forwarded to the Steering Committee for consideration, before being sent to RACAC for approval.

Stakeholder Input

- The Steering Committee will discuss the merits of the project specification and ask for any modifications to be made before forwarding a copy to each nominated Stakeholder Technical Representative (STR).
- Each STR will then be given ten working days to provide or seek expert technical advice from within their organisation or from an external expert employed by their organisation. Comments should be restricted to substantive technical issues and justified on a scientific / professional basis.
- All substantive technical comments submitted by STRs will be considered by the Steering Committee before project specifications are submitted to RACAC for approval. The STRs will be forwarded a copy of the final approved project specification once approved by RACAC.
- The STRs will be updated regularly on project progress by the Steering Committee (via RACD).
- Opportunity may also arise for STRs to discuss projects with project managers by arrangement through the Steering Committee. This may include one to one or group discussions with individual project managers to discuss methodology, data interpretation or data outputs. It may also involve field demonstration of survey methods or sampling techniques. Such arrangements will be dependent entirely on project manager availability.

Independent Experts

- From time to time the Steering Committee may decide that one or more Independent Experts are required to assist the Committee by providing technical, methodological, statistical or other expert advice.
- These instances may arise where there is:
 - insufficient technical expertise within the Steering Committee (and the agencies represented on the Committee) to be able to make a decision on an issue;
 - disagreement in the Steering Committee on a technical issue; or
 - a need for an Independent Expert to provide peer review or validation of project data.
- In such cases the Steering Committee will consider the range of suitable experts and reach consensus as to which expert will be chosen.
- The Steering Committee will issue the Independent Expert/s with terms of reference specific to the information to be provided or the issue to be resolved.

Approval Process

- Once the Steering Committee has considered any expert advice from Independent Experts and the comments of the STRs it may recommend the project specification to RACAC for approval, or ask for further modification before recommending approval.
- If modifications are required, these will be made by the agency, non-government organisation or consultant who prepared the specification or brief. Revised specifications or briefs will then be either accepted by the Steering Committee and recommended to RACAC for approval, or returned for further modifications.
- The Steering Committee will then seek approval from RACAC for the project specification. If RACAC does not endorse a project specification or brief, reasons and/or comments will be supplied to the Steering Committee by RACAC. The Steering Committee will then decide on what the appropriate action should be, which may include asking for alterations to be made to comply with RACAC's comments, or rejecting the project and seeking new specifications or briefs for the project area.
- If the Steering Committee determines that a project should be put out to tender then endorsement by RACAC for this to occur shall be sought prior to the tendering process. RACD will assign a project manager in such cases.

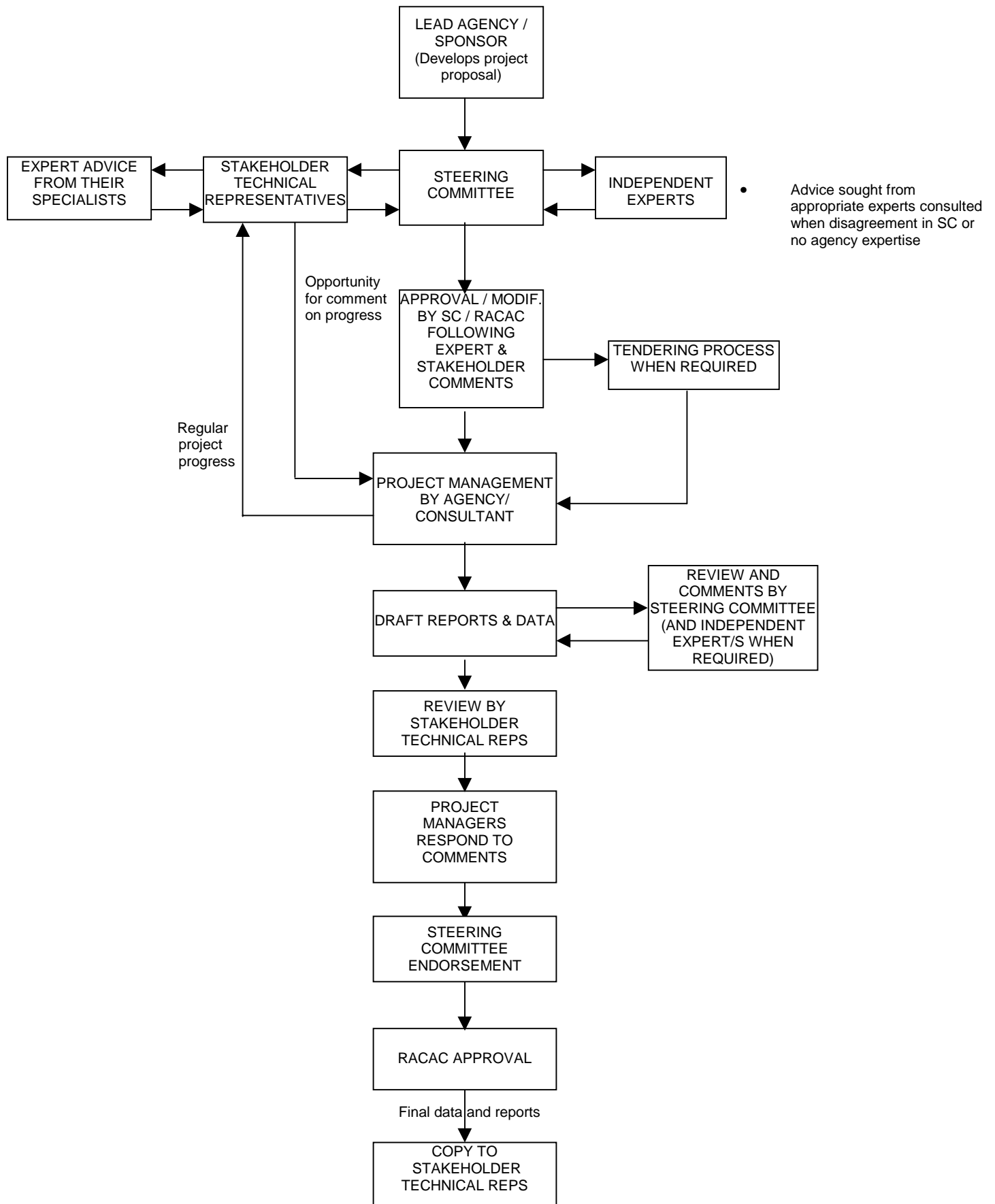
Project Management

- When a project manager is assigned by the Steering Committee, whether it be an agency, non-government organisation or consultant, updates of the project will be given to the Steering Committee and the STRs when considered appropriate by the Steering Committee.
- Regular progress reports, including financial reports, will be prepared and provided to RACD for distribution on each project by the project manager every 6 months.

Report and Data Approval

- Draft Reports will be submitted to the Steering Committee for review and comment.
- Independent Experts may be consulted to provide information to the Steering Committee to assist their decision.
- After review and comment by the Steering Committee and Independent Experts any necessary changes will be made and forwarded to the Stakeholder technical Representatives for comment. Project Managers will then respond to these comments in a report to the Steering Committee.
- The Steering Committee will then consider the Draft Report for endorsement in light of Stakeholder Technical Representative comments and the response from the Project Manager.
- Once Draft reports are endorsed by the Steering Committee, they will go to RACAC for approval.
- After approval of final reports, they will be forwarded to agencies, Aboriginal Management Committees and the STRs for information.
- Project data will be approved by the Steering Committee (to meet project specifications) and the Data Management Group (to meet data preparation standards) before it is supplied to agencies, Aboriginal Management Committees and the STRs.

WRA Project Approval and Implementation Process



27 AUGUST 2001