

# Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-19: Mid-life review

## Stakeholder feedback

### 1. Agriculture Victoria (AV) - Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR)

#### a. Agriculture research

**AV representative:** Roger Armstrong (Senior Scientist/Adjunct Professor)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Tony Baker (Statutory and Strategy Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 29 September 2016

The RCS is not always front and centre for agricultural research as new research is often driven by funding (e.g. Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), Commonwealth Department of Agriculture etc). At present there is a lack of interest from funders in things like soil carbon mitigation and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) emissions research.

There is a growing focus for research in understanding resilience in marginal areas. Things have changed, for example, the heavy clay soils of the Kalkee Plains seem to be more marginal in a drying climate. Mixed livestock systems or other system adaptations may be required to build more resilience.

There is lots of research going on to help deal with things like extreme heat, frost and promoting desirable breeding traits (funded by GRDC). Assumptions need to be tested in the paddock. This aligns well with the Carbon Ready Plan.

#### b. Land Health Program

**AV representative:** Rob O'Shannessy (Regional Manager - Grains South West)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Luke Austin (Operational Delivery Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 2 December 2016

AV use the RCS to help inform the development and delivery of their Land Health Program. The RCS is linked to and used to justify the Wimmera Transect project. They also link to goals, objectives and assets.

Rob queried how many end users have accessed the document and suggested that there is potential to break up the key messages, assets and objectives to develop fact sheets that could be used on social media and online. This would help to link local actions taken by landholders to big picture regional objectives.

On new and emerging issues, the current RCS covers climate change and landscape change. Agriculture impacts include the quality of grain production.

A positive of the RCS is that it is high level so it can be adaptable and flexible.

AV's Land health Program undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for soil assets. Most of their projects are conducted in partnership with Wimmera CMA and regional farmer groups. AV's activities have primarily involved:

- Supporting landholders to protect and enhance soils through extension and incentives, for example installing and managing stock containment areas,
- Conducting research and monitoring in relation to cropping trials and engaging farmers to disseminate learnings,
- Annually monitoring land use and changes in land use across the catchment via two transect surveys.

AV's Land Health Program provided information about most of their activities that are included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## c. Agriculture Services and Biosecurity Operations (ASBO)

**AV representative:** Mark Farrer (Biosecurity Manager)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Tony Baker (Statutory and Strategy Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 14 October 2016

The Wimmera Invasive Plant and Animal Management Strategy (WIPAMS) is a key document that directs state government (AV - DEDJTR) investment in invasive plant and animal management in the Wimmera. AV's annual invasive plant and animal projects are planned and implemented guided by the WIPAMS' priorities. This is especially the case for protecting priority assets from the impacts of established invasive species such as rabbits.

WIPAMS requires a review to update and consider any new and emerging invasive plant and animal management issues and to ensure alignment with the RCS and state government policy directions.

New information and emerging issues to consider when the RCS is renewed include:

- The frequency of incursions of new exotic plant pests and diseases and invasive plant and animal species is increasing. The state government is building capability to be more flexible in its ability to respond to these new threats. The community and industry need to do the same.
- New challenges are arising in dealing with these new incursions, including:
  - Freeing of global trade markets and greater movement of goods,
  - Increased human travel both international and interstate,
  - Information technology provides for quick trades as well as access to new products and species from overseas,
  - International syndicated crime involvement in illegal trade of exotic species,
  - Social media platforms enable informal ad hoc trade of invasive plants and animals,
  - Continuing demographic change is occurring with more life-style property owners bringing higher biosecurity risks,
  - Greater corporate ownership of larger farms means less eyes and ears on the ground for surveillance and connection to local social networks.
- Due to changing climate:
  - The increased frequency, size and impact of fires (mega fires) and floods brings a higher risk of introducing new invasive species on response and recovery equipment and activities. As well as a decrease in ecosystem resilience to allow easier exotic species invasion and impact.
  - There is likely to be increases in the range of some invasive species and decreases in others, an ongoing dynamic risk assessment of impact and consequence is required.
  - The importation and/or introduction of new plant species is occurring and likely to continue to occur via the nursery, garden and agronomic industries for more drought tolerant plants such as exotic grasses.
  - New large regional renewable energy infrastructure projects including wind farms are occurring. This increases the risk of invasives spreading via intra and interstate as well as international movement of equipment and goods.
- As regional infrastructure ages, we are seeing more new large road, rail and water projects. This is increasing the risk of invasive species spreading via intra and interstate as well as international movement of equipment and goods.
- There is increasing community and consumer concern regarding how food and fibre is produced, focussing on issues like animal welfare, chemical use, cultural heritage and off-target impacts. This poses increased considerations on how invasive plant and animal control programs are undertaken, potentially making them more expensive and challenging.
- Some regional communities are gradually becoming more culturally diverse. This could present future challenges regarding implementation of engagement methods for effective biosecurity programs.
- The planned introduction of the new rabbit haemorrhagic disease virus strain, RHDV K5, in autumn 2017 may provide a periodic window of opportunity to assist in reducing the environmental and economic impacts of European rabbits in the Wimmera. Rabbit population knock-down is initially expected to be somewhere between zero and forty percent, depending on the location and susceptibility of the rabbit population.

AV implements invasive plant and animal management programs in the Wimmera as directed by state government policy and guided by the WIPAMS and RCS. These activities help implement some of the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation, threatened plant and animal, rivers and streams and wetland assets. Activities have included:

- Implementing the fox and wild dog bounty,
- Eradication and surveillance of high risk invasive plants and animals,

- Containment of Regionally Prohibited Weeds, particularly Serrated Tussock,
- Maintaining Victoria's long-term rabbit monitoring program,
- Providing advice as well as actions to build community capacity regarding best practice invasive plant and animal management,
- Extension and compliance activities to support community-led action and protect high priority assets from the impacts of Serrated Tussock, Rabbits, Gorse, Blackberry and other Regionally Prohibited Weeds,
- Assisting municipal councils to develop and implement their roadside weed and rabbit control plans.

AV have provided information about these activities that is included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 2. Barengi Gadjin Land Council (BGLC)

**BGLC representative:** Michael Stewart (Executive Officer)

**Wimmera CMA representatives:** Joel Boyd (Manager - Community Delivery) and Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 18 October 2016

While BGLC do not directly refer to the RCS, they regularly meet with Wimmera CMA staff to discuss ideas and CMA staff relate these ideas to the RCS.

BGLC felt that implementation of the RCS' goals for indigenous participation is progressing positively:

- BGLC Director attendance at Wimmera CMA Board meetings,
- BGLC and Wimmera CMA staff have regular meetings and strong relationships. Wimmera CMA has two Wotjobaluk staff members,
- BGLC has received invaluable ongoing support for employment, training and development opportunities regarding its works crew program,
- Wimmera CMA and Landcare are involved in country planning, supporting traditional owners to establish their priorities. These priorities will help inform the renewed RCS in 2019,
- A number of projects have been delivered in partnership with Wimmera CMA as well as other natural resource management organisations.

BGLC is still in the process of changing the attitudes of some organisations and individuals regarding engagement. For example, BGLC experiences many approaches from people seeking "ticks of approval" as opposed to seeking to work with them.

The "Indigenous participation" section of the RCS should be updated to:

- Change the goal, "promoting the establishment of Indigenous Landcare groups," to instead promote relationships between traditional owners and Landcare groups. This better reflects current relationships and likely future actions,
- Reflect that Lake Hindmarsh is BGLC's highest priority area. Native title and cultural flows are important,
- Recognise that education of Wotjobaluk children is a high priority for the local community,
- Replace references to "indigenous people" with "Wotjobaluk people", and "bush tucker" with "native food", and
- Highlight on the map showing regional cultural assets that the Grampians National Park is the premier place for rock art sites in Victoria.

The "Hindmarsh Shire" section of the RCS should be updated to recognise that important Wotjobaluk assets exist around Lake Hindmarsh and Lake Albacutya, BGLC's properties at Antwerp and Dimboola and the Little Desert National Park.

BGLC are in the early stages of discussions with the Country Fire Authority (CFA), Parks Victoria (PV) and Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) regarding opportunities for traditional burning programs to occur in the near future, including on private land. The RCS' Fire Management section could be updated to reflect BGLC's aspirations to be involved with cultural and ecological burning in the region.

Other considerations include:

- BGLC promote revegetation with native plants as a means to control weeds and minimise soil disturbance.

- BGLC are interested in getting involved with threatened plant and animal management for species with cultural significance such as edible plants. For example, greenhood orchids were once prolific along the Wimmera River and quolls are important.
- BGLC are interested in use of successional theory for revegetation and increasing the diversity of plants used, focussing on culturally relevant species, parallel to the above point but in general terms and not simply aligned to threatened species work.

Another issue of interest is investigation into water levels above the Dimboola weir. BGLC hope to commence discussions soon with Parks Victoria, DELWP, Hindmarsh Shire, Dimboola Ski Club and the Dimboola Rowing Club. The Ski Club commissioned a report a year or two ago with regard to bank stabilisation due to erosion issues. The issues remain and are impacting on cultural heritage sites, hence BGLC are hoping for a mutually agreeable solution.

### 3. Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

#### a. Environment and Natural Resources

**DELWP representatives:** Geoff Miller (Healthy Landscapes Program Manager, Grampians Region) and Pauline Rudolph (Senior Biodiversity Officer)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 11 November 2016

Ten years ago, the department was more highly attuned to the RCS. Now, the department's corporate plan establishes objectives for biodiversity that inform regional plans which, in turn, guide individual performance and work plans. Current focuses include building a healthy and resilient environment, assisting with developments like wind farms, and effective fire management. Project objectives for threatened plants and animals are aligned with the RCS. However, Action Plans and Recovery Plans for individual species drive DELWP's activities more than the RCS.

The Victorian Government has made clear that the community is very important and at the centre of everything we do. The Victorian Government's Biodiversity Plan is being developed. It is likely to lead to regional implementation plans that should interact with the RCS. Indications are that the plan will include a strong human element and focus on getting people in touch with nature. This should be a future focus of the RCS.

DELWP's "strategic management priorities" work has mapped priority areas for on-ground management to benefit native species. The emphasis is on achieving benefits for multiple species.

It would be beneficial to see a formalised group or groups established that meet to coordinate activities for each asset, align goals and focus on actions for achieving RCS objectives and management measures. Opportunities to add value and support each other's work are more effectively identified when communication is effective. A conservation management network model could be considered.

The objectives and management measures for the RCS' Threatened Plants and Animals asset are worded broadly enough to capture and address the necessary key actions and issues. Comments include:

- Objective 1 is very bold. When the RCS is renewed, consider softening the goal to improve the status of 20% of listed species.
- DELWP's State Wide Integrated Flora and Fauna Teams provide a network for sharing biodiversity information and their activities contribute to implementing objective 2.
- Objective 3 is wordy. Implementation has been limited. Funding has declined. It would be beneficial to create a forum that facilitates communication, information sharing and coordination of actions.
- There has been no action to implement management measure 8 around maintaining a regional threatened species advisory committee.
- Management measure 4 regarding approaches to address disease threats is addressed by DELWP's site environmental management plans that seek to prevent the spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* via things like good vehicle management and boot hygiene. This also addresses management measure 3 for native vegetation assets.
- Community awareness activities to implement management measure 5 have wound back due to decreased funding.
- With regard to implementation of management measure 9, fire managers use "eMap" to identify areas of burning risk and mitigation measures. Local governments can use the Biodiversity Interactive Map available online to identify locations for threatened flora and fauna. They can register to receive site-

specific information and access DELWP staff for further information. A new web portal called Visualising Victoria's Biodiversity has recently been released, providing access to information from some natural values data repositories such as the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas and the Atlas of Living Australia. It is intended to provide a "one stop shop" for natural values data.

With regard to native vegetation:

- The RCS renewal process in 2019 should review the threat rating for "Development (non-agricultural)" regarding things like wind farms and mineral sand mining which are potentially expanding the region.
- There is no Native Vegetation Plan for management measure 1. There are biodiversity assessment guidelines.

Challenges and emerging issues include:

- Highly invasive Sallow Wattle is posing a big threat to areas of the Grampians National Park and adjacent private property affected by bushfires in recent years. Sallow Wattle has the potential to cause ecosystem change as it prevents the seeds of other species from germinating.
- Exploration for mineral resources is set to occur over large areas on the fringes of the Grampians National Park and in other parts of the region.
- Victoria's renewable energy targets of twenty-five per cent by 2020 and forty per cent by 2025 are likely to stimulate a substantial increase in wind turbines. The Wimmera is part of a hotspot for turbine development extending to Mildura and further east. There may be implications for any native vegetation present at turbine sites, roadside vegetation and wildlife like Wedge-tailed Eagles and other birds. There is also a possibility that solar energy will become more in vogue.
- South African weed-orchid is a problem weed that is spreading across the catchment. It may be too late to prevent this. Veldt grass is also widespread. Buffel grass is in the early stages of spreading into Victoria, but may not be in the Wimmera yet.
- Native vegetation loss continuing to occur as developments happen. Offsets are happening, but they are more often than not improving the quality of existing vegetation rather than establishing new areas. There are no mechanisms for preventing further fragmentation of native vegetation. For example, development on the fringe of the Grampians National Park incrementally fragments vegetation leading to "death by one thousand cuts."
- There are instances of illegal clearing reported to local governments and DELWP. The cost of seeking a local government planning permit has increased, which may provide a disincentive for seeking a permit to remove vegetation. Prosecution rarely occurs.
- Scattered trees in the landscape are continuing to decline. The main drivers of paddock tree loss are changes to agricultural practices such as the use of precision agriculture and larger machinery, and changing land use from stock grazing to cropping. New technology could be explored that allows trees to be maintained in the landscape.
- Discussions are occurring between relevant agencies regarding the potential for managed burns on private land.
- People are continuing to dump rubbish on Crown land.

DELWP undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation and threatened plant and animal assets. In particular, DELWP implemented the Victorian Biodiversity Assessment Guidelines. This included:

- Providing input into statutory planning referrals and proposed new developments involving the removal of native vegetation, and
- Assisting local government authorities to investigate reports of illegal clearing.

DELWP also worked in partnership with Wimmera CMA and other organisations to implement actions to benefit threatened plants and animals.

## b. Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMV)

**DELWP FFMV representatives:** Russell Manning (Wimmera District Manager) and Glenn Rudolph (Senior Fuel Management Officer)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 6 December 2016

This "Fire management" section of the RCS needs updating as a lot has changed since the RCS was completed:

- The department's name has changed from Department of Environment and Primary Industries to DELWP and fire is managed by Forest Fire Management Victoria.
- The Inspector-General for Emergency Management completed a "Review of Performance Targets for Fuel Management on Public Land" which made a number of recommendation, including moving from a hectare-based performance target to a risk reduction target.
- Following this, the Victorian Government released its "Safer Together" initiative which is a new approach to reducing the risk of bushfire.
- DELWP's bushfire risk landscapes project provides a strategic bushfire management planning framework that, with the help of communities, identifies values to be protected from bushfire, assesses bushfire risk to those values and sets out strategies to manage this risk. This project is important for integrated fire management and will provide focus for where fire management work is done.

FFMV are working through how Safer Together will be delivered.

The wording of the objectives needs tightening up so that the goal is clear.

Regarding objective 1's focus on conducting managed burns on private land, Russell and Glenn are supportive of this. It is occurring in some areas, however it is ad hoc and takes a lot of effort. It needs to become a routine part of doing business. There are issues that need to be resolved including resources, cost and who pays and legal implications. Conservation Volunteers Australia have expressed their interest regarding the block they own in the Little Desert.

Management measure 1 is a motherhood statement. It is easy to say that opportunities to take a more integrated approach to managing burns have been investigated, for example through discussions engaged in during the Little Desert fire conference. The next iteration of the RCS should consider how we get to the doing stage and have clearer actions. Management measure 1 is consistent with Safer Together, however should be revised to implementation.

It is worth stating the role the Country Fire Authority has in burning private property. They are critical partners in any cross-tenure burning and will need to be involved in any discussion and planning around burning on private property.

Wimmera CMA does have a role in facilitating burns on private land with landholders through management agreements. However, it comes down to the ability to make it happen and there are issues with resourcing, costs and who pays and legal implications that need to be overcome.

A suggestion was made to consider adding an additional objective and management measure regarding cultural burning and involving traditional owners in fire management.

#### 4. Grampians Wimmera Mallee Water (GMMWater)

**GMMWater representatives:** Dean Robertson (Environmental Officer), Bernie Dunn (Recreation and Water Strategy) and Nigel Binney (Manager Assets and Planning)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 25 October 2016

Feedback was that they do not use the RCS as there are no real actions that have a direct bearing on GMMWater, except for at a very high level. GMMWater participated in the development of the draft RCS, had minimal comment and hence have not had a need to use it since then. While there is nothing specific in the RCS for GMMWater to implement, there are a lot of actions taken consistent with the intention of the RCS. For example, the capital works program adds value to cultural heritage via the development of cultural heritage management plans and GMMWater treats pest plants and animals across its areas of management.

The RCS is generally a good document. It is well presented and provides a good summary of regional catchment management. There could be opportunities to increase community knowledge and make it more accessible.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues to consider for the next iteration of the RCS include:

- Providing the community with recreation opportunities has been a big focus in recent years. Water for recreation is becoming less of a "nice to have" and more important for the community. The next iteration of the RCS should consider water for multiple benefits and the role of recreational water in improving regional "liveability". The Victorian water strategy includes a chapter on it.

- Given the importance of recreation, and in the context of climate change, communities will need to examine ways of providing more sustainable recreation outcomes. For example, this could include reconfiguring recreational lakes like Lake Wallace, Natimuk Lake and Lake Toolondo to bank off areas on the water inlet side for recreational outcomes.
- Climate change as a big driver for investment. GWMWater is reviewing its urban water strategy and looking at supply out to 2065. This includes investigating inflows under different climate scenarios.
- Providing an indication of what's been occurring with groundwater levels and salinity, particularly around the Antwerp area and lower Wimmera River.
- Flooding is topical. A good outcome has been achieved at Rupanyup. GWMWater has been approached by a small number of landholders regarding the Dunmunkle Creek and Burnt Creek following decommissioning of the channel network, raising concerns about drainage and flooding impacts.
- Redundant storages throughout the region could provide an opportunity for artificial wetlands. A good example is the multiple benefits achieved at Yaapeet. Another example is Pine Lake where there is potential for wetland development if embankments were removed. Issues to resolve include finding an investor and someone committed to manage and maintain the wetlands over time.
- The RCS' section on wetlands assets should be updated to reflect that wetlands are connected to the Wimmera Mallee Pipeline and receiving environmental water. The spatial importance of these wetlands is understated. Potential exists to connect additional wetlands to the pipeline as water is not being used. Funding is required for infrastructure to connect the wetlands as well as purchasing the water.
- There is potential for reclaimed water to supplement river flows or be sold to the community.
- Fire management is topical. GWMWater has recently installed standpipes and tanks for fire-fighting purposes and water carting during dry times. This should relieve pressure on water carting from rivers during dry periods. A research priority is the management of catchments and addressing the lack of data around protecting water supply from wildfire and fire management.
- Feasibility studies will be conducted for potential developments to extend water supply pipelines to the Ararat Rural City, Pyrenees Shire and West Wimmera Shire Council areas.

## 5. Greening Australia (GA)

**GA representative:** Jess Gardner (Ecologist)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 28 October 2016

Jess indicated that she used the RCS in the following ways:

- The RCS provided a basis for Conservation Action Planning undertaken for the Habitat 141 project.
- The RCS is a reference document for most applications seeking funding for projects. Many applications require proponents to state how their projects align with strategies and documents. The RCS provides clear information for this purpose.
- During recent discussions with Bank Australia to demonstrate how their activities relate to the RCS.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- Difficulties experienced with finalising a voluntary carbon deal due to the time taken to permanently protect the site via a conservation covenant. Are there viable faster options for permanently protecting native vegetation? Voluntary carbon is a viable option and presents big opportunities for native vegetation establishment and protection. There is interest by landholders. It would be great to have a prospectus ready to go when buyers are interested.
- Knowledge gaps, particularly around monitoring the benefits of environmental works beyond the site level. For example, are corridors being used by species? Are they of benefit? This information would help to support and improve future management practices.
- Social strategies including training and support for Landcare network board members regarding their role. For example, focusing on the strategic elements rather than the details of project delivery.
- Ongoing management of protected areas of native vegetation after project funding finishes. These areas require ongoing management of firebreaks, tracks and weeds and pest animals.
- Conflicts between land managed for conservation and neighbouring private land. For example, Jess has received complaints regarding increases in kangaroo populations. Fire management is also a concern. Can research help inform effective ways of reducing fire risk from conservation land?
- Any review of pest plant and animal strategies should consider deer as populations are increasing, causing damage at several sites including losses following planting and damage to wetland areas. Also, South African weed orchid is getting out of hand in several areas.

GA undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation and threatened plant and animal assets. This includes revegetating areas with native species and managing sites over time, progressing the Habitat 141 project, conducting weed and rabbit control, facilitating and managing native vegetation carbon offsets and facilitating research. GA have provided information about their activities which is included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 6. Hindmarsh Shire Council (HSC)

**Hindmarsh Shire Council staff representative:** Garry Salt (Works Delivery Officer)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 20 September 2016

Garry does not use the RCS regularly, but finds it to be an accessible document that captured the attributes of Hindmarsh Shire well.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- A spillway was installed at Jeparit after the flood investigation was completed. The effect of the spillway during flooding are unknown.
- River condition at Jeparit is an ongoing issue. Saltwater enters the river around Antwerp and Tarranyurk. The weir at Jeparit museum could be improved by using pipeline water to keep the river at a particular level.
- Concerned about how full Grampians storages are and lowering heights to alleviate floods.
- Pest plants and weeds are an issue on roadsides around the east side of Lake Hindmarsh. Have discussed cultural heritage considerations with BGLC.
- Speed boats have caused erosion in the Wimmera River at Dimboola, resulting in big trees falling in.
- It is difficult to find native vegetation offsets. A bank would be useful.
- African lovegrass is going to be an issue. Slashing of roadsides and carting away material by some organisations has spread seeds along roadsides.

HSC undertakes activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly that benefit native vegetation and threatened plant and animal assets on roadsides. This includes providing funding to Landcare Groups to subsidise rabbit baiting programs and get extra farmers involved, mainly north of Nhill. South of Nhill the focus has mainly been on white snail control in areas with limestone roads. HSC has also engaged a contractor to manage weeds on roadsides and worked closely with West Wimmera Shire Council to control rabbits in the Telopea Downs area. HSC have provided information about their activities which is included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 7. Horsham Rural City Council (HRCC)

**Horsham Rural City Council staff representative:** Steve Talbot (Recreation and Natural Resources Planner)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor) and Kathryn Walker (GIS Analyst (Graduate))

**Date of meeting:** 16 September 2016

Steve indicated that he has used the RCS as a reference to see what local government's role is. The RCS does not state much of a role for local government and there should be as they are a major land manager. Steve indicated that he does not use the RCS enough. It provides good links to pest plant and animal management. The WIPAMS is more relevant to local governments. HRCC has a roadside management plan (2006-07) and comprehensive environment management plan.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- Providing recreational lakes for community wellbeing.
- Channel decommissioning and how water is moving through the landscape as a result.
- Sensitive urban design for water management.
- Changing climate and how to manage water for multiple benefits, including to benefit regional and local economies (eg. where to put water to provide "the best bang for its buck").
- Illegal vegetation removal. Precinct planning is an option that could be explored with regard to protecting paddock trees.

- Difficulties finding native vegetation offsets. There could be an opportunity explored around using state parks as offset sites.

HRCC undertakes some activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly that benefit native vegetation and threatened plant and animal assets. This includes managing rabbits and weeds on roadsides, avoiding impacts on native vegetation when conducting works on roadsides, managing stormwater and HRCC's rural revegetation program which provides low cost native plants to rural landholders. HRCC is also the boating authority for waterways within the municipality. HRCC have provided information about their weed and rabbit control activities which are included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 8. Landcare Facilitator - Hindmarsh

**Landcare Facilitator:** Jonathan Starks

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Joel Boyd (Manager - Community Delivery)

**Date of meeting:** 20 October 2016

Jon refers to the RCS and finds it useful in his role as a Landcare facilitator. Aligning funding applications with the RCS is important to strengthen applications and link Hindmarsh Landcare activities with broader activities at a regional scale. His focus for funding applications has been revegetation, protection and enhancement of native vegetation and the RCS is useful for this theme. Volunteers, including Hindmarsh Landcare Network's board members, rely on Jon to provide direction for applications and activities and consider all relevant aspects including the need to align with the RCS and other strategies driving investment.

Jon finds it easier to find biodiversity priorities and measures in the RCS than measures for sustainable agriculture and pest plants and animals. The RCS is less relevant for activities and funding applications for these areas. However, the core focus of Landcare is sustainable agriculture and pest plant and animal control, so perhaps there's an opportunity to ramp up the links there. For example, Nhill South Landcare Group's main interest is snails and there is very little in the RCS that's useful for them.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- Carbon markets – they are not drivers of Landcare revegetation activities because of the uncertainty around the domestic offset market. However, there are international markets. Jon queried whether there is an opportunity for Wimmera CMA to promote opportunities for farmers to benefit from international carbon markets. After all, they are exporting their products to a world market.
- The Landcare network has had lots of recent success funding revegetation works. But there has not been as much activity around sustainable agriculture which is more relevant for broad acre farmers.
- Maintaining biodiversity in agricultural land does not have to mean installing shelterbelts and fencing off old timber, it is more about soil conservation, stubble retention (etc.). There are other models for incentives and activities to help maintain biodiversity in agricultural landscapes that could be highlighted through an RCS review. For example, pollinator plots, beetle banks and paddock tree incentives (English sustainable agriculture examples).
- Sand mining in Hindmarsh Shire is not considered a major driver of NRM priorities and activities.

## 9. Landcare Facilitator - Horsham

**Landcare Facilitator:** Wendy McInnes

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor) and Kathryn Walker (GIS Analyst (Graduate))

**Date of meeting:** 6 September 2016

Wendy indicated that she does not use the RCS very often. Wendy was unsure whether her strategies, plans, projects and approaches aligned with the RCS. However, she indicated that grants programs she had participated in that were run by Wimmera CMA aligned with the RCS. Wendy works closely with CMA staff, particularly Bruce McInnes and Joel Boyd. She relies on them to ensure that activities align with the RCS. Wendy's main focus is on garnering community involvement, introducing Landcare to people and focusing on "the basics". Wendy felt that the RCS is too high level to talk about to people in the general community.

Wendy indicated that the RCS is not too big and is a size that is "quite readable".

Wendy undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation, rivers and streams, and threatened plant and animal assets. Wendy's activities have primarily involved:

- Supporting Landcare groups,
- Organising and assisting with events that educate the community about natural assets,
- Assisting Landcare groups to revegetate areas and control rabbits and weeds like Sallow Wattle.

Wendy provided information about her activities that are included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 10. Landcare Facilitator – Kowree Farm Tree Group

**Landcare Facilitator:** Annette Jones

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor) and Kathryn Walker (GIS Analyst (Graduate))

Gill Bradshaw (West Wimmera Shire Council Planning and Environment Manager) and Lisa Oliver (Regional Landcare Facilitator – West Wimmera) were also present. Their feedback is summarised elsewhere.

**Date of meeting:** 18 October 2016

Annette indicated that she use the RCS recently when preparing a prospectus for purchasing land for environmental use for carbon offsets. She found it a useful document for this purpose. Annette also uses the RCS to provide justification to support applications for funding for projects. Annette's feedback was that, in order to align with grant funding opportunities, the RCS needs to be "infinitely flexible" and include statements that can be quoted. To this end, Annette found it difficult to find strategic support in the RCS for threatened species projects as the species of interest were not mentioned. The section about West Wimmera Shire lists a small number of threatened plants and animals, but does not state that there are a broader range of species present in the municipality. A suggestion for when the RCS is updated is to make clear that there are more threatened species present using words that are broader, general and capture everything.

Annette queried what process was in place to ensure that RCS implementation occurred effectively and commented that it would be useful to have a funding stream so that a clear action plan could be developed for all natural resource assets.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- The group discussed loss of native vegetation via illegal clearing and exemptions and difficulties in quantifying the amount of vegetation lost. Annette commented that the amount of native vegetation being lost needs to be reflected in the RCS. It is being lost through illegal clearing and exemptions in the regulations. However, vegetation lost through these processes is not recorded and therefore difficult to quantify. People can on-sell trees cleared under exemptions for firewood, sometimes providing an incentive to clear more.
- Annette commented that targets focused on rabbit control is from a farming perspective. The group discussed that rabbits also impact on native vegetation.
- Cats are a big problem. Perhaps a bounty on feral cats could be an option for reducing numbers.
- The next iteration of the RCS could consider adding information about ecotourism in the section discussing the "Region's economy."
- Annette queried what role Wimmera CMA plays in carbon offsets.
- The group discussed dry climate and its impacts. Annette commented that climate has been dry for a long period and climate change is facilitating land use change as cropping is extending into areas where it has never been before. Machinery such as boom sprays are wide and impacting on paddock trees.

## 11. Landcare Facilitator - Yarrilinks

**Landcare Facilitator:** Tim Inkster

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

Geoff Harvey was also present. His feedback is included elsewhere.

**Date of meeting:** 25 October 2016

Tim finds the RCS handy to use to support funding applications and can refer to specific pages.

With regard to the section on Yarriambiack Shire Council, the next iteration of the RCS should include an increased focus on Dunmunkle Creek as it is important to some community members.

The section on the native vegetation asset includes a box discussing "Weeds of local concern." It is good that the RCS mentions this as it helps Landcare to access funding.

The section on native vegetation discusses paddock tree loss. The RCS could talk about management options like replacing them in the corners of paddocks. Paddock trees may not be important in the grand scheme, but they can be significant for some flora and fauna.

Challenges and emerging issues include:

- Some wetlands are receiving water from the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline. The community have identified more wetlands that could be added.
- Earthworks potentially occurring on Dunmunkle Creek.
- It is difficult for Landcare to do revegetation and native vegetation protection projects due to requirements placed on funding. For example, funders are looking for large areas and numbers of people involved. This makes it hard to find funding for smaller projects.
- Engaging community members in events when there are lots of things on and people are spread thin. For example, Tim did not run many workshops in 2015-16 as there were lots of events organised with drought relief funding.
- Interest from Landcare group members has dropped off. People lost interest during the drought and now they are busy preparing for harvest.

## 12. Northern Grampians Shire Council (NGSC)

**Representative:** Justine Watt (Acting Manager Economic Growth)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 6 December 2016

The RCS is reviewed as part of NGSC's planning scheme review process. A review of the challenges identified in the RCS for NGSC can be used to amend local planning policies, particularly the 'environment and landscape value' policy and Municipal Strategic Statement.

Challenges and emerging issues include:

- Loss of native vegetation under the Bushfire Management Overlay in vegetated areas where there is pressure for residential development to occur. For example, development of small lots around Halls Gap is leading to native vegetation being cleared under the overlay. One way to decrease vegetation loss could be to change the zoning of this area from the General Residential Zone to the Neighbourhood Residential Zone.
- The amount of vegetation removed is unknown as it is not all required to be registered.
- There is potential for planning controls to help address some issues regarding vegetation removal. For example, by applying significant landscape overlays or vegetation protection overlays.
- When the RCS is renewed in 2019, it is worth considering whether it would be helpful to flag issues that could be linked to reviews of municipal strategic statements to justify rezoning of areas and other changes to planning schemes.
- The next iteration of the RCS should consider adding management measures for the rivers and streams asset to address the threat of farm dams. Management measures to consider include:
  - Ensure approvals for farm dams are avoided in high value riparian environments.
  - Ensure planning applications for farm dams are monitored in order to measure their cumulative impact on flow regimes.
- An additional management measure should also be considered in response to the threat of inappropriate development on floodplains and planning deficiencies: Facilitate and support the introduction of floodplain development controls into planning schemes.

NGSC undertakes some activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly that benefit native vegetation and threatened plant and animal assets. This includes protecting significant natural assets and managing floodplains via the planning scheme and managing rabbits and weeds on roadsides.

## 13. Parks Victoria (PV)

### a. Gariwerd / Grampians Management Unit

**PV representatives:** Dave Roberts (Area Chief Ranger) and Ryan Duffy (Program Coordinator – Biodiversity and Heritage)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Luke Austin (Operational Delivery Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 25 October 2016

PV use the RCS as a reference document to support investment by demonstrating alignment with regional priorities. It is also used reactively for cross-referencing when developing funding bids and other documents. Using the RCS is a challenge for Grampians PV because the Grampians National Park lies within both the Wimmera CMA and Glenelg-Hopkins CMA regions.

New information, evidence and emerging issues to consider going forward include fire management such as not burning through gullies, riparian zones and wetlands and community engagement and education.

The next iteration of the RCS should reference PV's fire ecology strategy. "State of the Parks" reporting also provides good information.

### b. Lake Albacutya and northern Wimmera

**PV representatives:** Justin Oakley and Jeremy Downs

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Luke Austin (Operational Delivery Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 25 October 2016

Projects undertaken by PV align with the priorities outlined in the RCS. Justin and Jeremy are new to the role, hence the meeting with Luke was the first time they had seen the RCS.

### c. Wimmera (Little Desert and reserves)

**PV representative:** Zoe Wilkinson

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Luke Austin (Operational Delivery Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 11 November 2016

In general, PV's environment, land and water program aligns with the RCS. PV's regional program development team use the RCS as an input to be considered when developing PV's annual programs. It is also used to support bids for funding such as under the Good Neighbour Program.

New information to be considered when the RCS is renewed includes the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy as a new policy input. Also, a new PV Wimmera Conservation Action Plan is under development to guide PV conservation programs locally.

PV undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation, wetland, river and stream, and threatened plant and animal assets. Their activities primarily involved managing natural assets within parks and reserves by:

- Surveying and assessing areas and controlling weeds and pest animals,
- Conducting revegetation and habitat restoration, and
- Conducting actions to aid threatened species.

PV provided information about these activities, which are included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 14. Perennial Pasture Systems (PPS)

**PPS representative:** Rob Shea (Project Manager)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Joel Boyd (Manager - Community Delivery)

**Date of meeting:** 12 October 2016

PPS use the RCS as a reference document for their group's plans and projects. PPS endeavour to align to strategies in the RCS to assist with seeking funding to improve the understanding of the role of perennial plants in farming systems. In particular, PPS use the section on soil assets, regarding trials and extension of best management techniques for soil conservation and productivity benefits, including water erosion, water use and minimising any nutrient run off by understanding soils and plants better. They also seek to protect soils by maintaining ground cover.

The current format of the RCS is reasonably user friendly without being too detailed. It provides a place to begin discussions and understanding in working closely with Wimmera CMA staff.

Looking to the next RCS, the PPS group considers climate variability to be the biggest threat to the farming environment and are keen to understand the perennial plants and management systems they will need to adopt to remain productive.

PPS undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for soil and rivers and streams assets. Their activities primarily involved conducting research into perennial pastures through on-farm trials and providing information on productive pasture management to their members via events and publications. Rob provided information about PPS's activities which is included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 15. Project Platypus Landcare Network (PP)

**PP representative:** Amanda Kilpatrick (Manager)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Luke Austin (Operational Delivery Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 1 October 2016

PP use the RCS when preparing funding applications to check and demonstrate that the proposed works align with regional priorities. PP also use the RCS as a reference to see if their priorities and aims align with regional priorities and objectives. Amanda indicated that the layout of the RCS works well as it is easy to navigate to relevant information and easy to understand and read the document.

Corporate farming is a potential emerging issue, including how to engage with them as larger landholders.

PP undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation and threatened plant and animal assets. Their activities have primarily involved:

- Supporting Landcare groups,
- Educating the community about natural assets and their management by producing newsletters, media articles and other publications and by running workshops, farm tours and other events,
- Revegetating areas of private land, including via their annual community and schools planting events,
- Controlling weeds and rabbits in partnership with Landcare groups, Parks Victoria and local governments,
- Running planning workshops to prepare for future activities.

PP provided written information about their activities which are included in the "RCS implementation" section of the RCS review report.

## 16. Regional Landcare Facilitator – West Wimmera

**Regional Landcare Facilitator:** Lisa Oliver

**Wimmera CMA representatives:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor) and Kathryn Walker (GIS Analyst (Graduate))

Gill Bradshaw (West Wimmera Shire Council Planning and Environment Manager) and Annette Jones (WWSC Mayor and Landcare Facilitator – Kowree Farm Tree Group) were also present. Their feedback is summarised elsewhere.

**Date of meeting:** 18 October 2016

Lisa indicated that she used the RCS as a basis for writing grants.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- The group discussed loss of native vegetation via illegal clearing and exemptions and difficulties in quantifying the amount of vegetation lost.
- There is a lack of Landcare groups in the West Wimmera, partly due to low population.
- It's worth considering rolling out phone apps like FeralScan and Weeds Ute Guide to increase awareness and help collect information on where pest plants and animal problems are. Goats and Deer are also problems in some areas.
- The group discussed dry climate and its impacts such as cropping moving into areas that have always been pasture. Lisa commented that crops are taking more water out of the environment and queried whether there was any information about the effects that crops have compared to pasture in terms of water capture and uptake. For example, there has been reduced runoff to fill Lake Wallace.
- Lisa commented that, now there has been a wet year, the impacts of waterlogging soils and salinity in the Mosquito Creek Catchment is an issue to watch. This may impact on the risk rating for water logging soils in the RCS' Soils asset section.

Lisa undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation, wetlands and threatened plant and animal assets. Activities primarily involve:

- Revegetating areas in conjunction with Greening Australia under the 20 Million Trees Programme in the Mosquito Creek and Kojjak Creek area,
- Two new groups are running for women and kids,
- Supporting the Friends of Lake Wallace group. They are interested in the health of the lake and surrounding area and in there being a useful amount of water in the lake. The group is planning to produce two booklets with an ecotourism focus,
- Working with WWSC to implement a fox baiting program in 2016-17, and
- Implemented a fox and rabbit control competition in 2015.

## 17. Trust for Nature (TfN)

**TfN representative:** Adam Blake (Area Manager: Southwest)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 26 August 2016

- Adam indicated that he is very familiar with the RCS and has a good grasp of it.
- Adam uses the RCS for:
  - Reporting back to TfN and to the CMA.
  - Ensuring that funded projects address RCS targets. TfN's Wimmera covenant program is funded by Wimmera CMA's projects.
  - With regard to TfN's stewardship program which provides landholders with custodial support for existing covenants, the RCS is used as a guide for assessing risk (for example, considering priority waterways, threatened species, pests and weeds etc).
  - TfN's Statewide Conservation Plan has pretty good alignment with the RCS. The plan includes finer scale mapping for focal landscapes to deliver on objectives.
- Forward-looking, the RCS is an "okay" document. It's bold in a couple of areas, which is not necessarily a negative as it's based on science. Impediments to delivery include external factors such as funding and lack of will. The RCS can be delivered with good relationships, coordination, will, etc.
- New information, evidence or emerging issues:

- Most threatened species records in the Wimmera are on private land and there are opportunities for improvement. Recordings of threatened species have increased. For example, Bardick Snake and Wimmera Woodruff were found at Snape Reserve in recent years.
- Voluntary covenants have declined. TfN is not able to service/fund all “goodwill” covenants that come their way if they do not meet a CMA project objective, National Landcare Programme and/or Victorian Government targets and objectives. They are unable to be funded, even though it is a statutory requirement of TfN to deliver them and they meet the objectives of the RCS as well as the TfN's conservation plan.
- Emergence of African lovegrass is an issue. Adam knew of four or five places where it occurred two years ago. Now it is much more widespread, having spread along roadsides across the region. It tends to take over roadside vegetation.
- Sallow Wattle has emerged as a big problem weed on private and public land in the northern Grampians region following fires.
- An emerging opportunity is exploring partnership approaches that complement and build on Bank Australia's private investment in the Wimmera. Bank Australia manage around one thousand hectares in the region.
- TfN undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation, wetland and threatened plant and animal assets. Their activities primarily involve:
  - Protecting and managing high value assets by working with private landholders to implement conservation covenants and manage these areas over time,
  - Running and participating in collaborative planning events, Managing Snape Reserve and Mount Elgin Swamp,
  - Conducting revegetation,
  - Controlling pest plants and animals, and
  - Conducting surveys and other actions to aid threatened species.
- Adam provided information about TfN's activities that are included in the “RCS implementation” section of the RCS review report.

## 18. Victorian No-Till Farmers Association (Vic No-Till)

**Vic No-Till representative:** Kerry Grigg (Executive Officer)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

**Date of meeting:** 21 October 2016

Kerry does not necessarily refer to the RCS but is mindful of it when framing up projects. The RCS is useful in that it is easy to identify regional priorities for soils and the RCs is high level enough to accommodate changes in practices.

Vic No-Till's knowledge, understanding and priorities are more advanced since the RCS was completed in 2013. Their mindset has advanced based on knowledge gained from international experts and a core group in Australia implementing principles and making significant inroads based on a whole farming system approach and the least soil disturbance possible. Best practice is changing and Vic No-Till is challenging it to move forward. Current best practice does not lead to sustainable systems.

With regard to the RCS's objectives for soils, productive capacity and organic matter and biological activity are Vic No-Till's top priorities although they are focused on all management practices mentioned. The next iteration of the RCS should consider adding in language around “adapting” and “improving” management practices.

The next iteration of the RCS should consider adding some farming practices as threats to soil health. For example, increasing use of fungicides and herbicides are big threats to soil health, contributing to loss of biodiversity and increased weed pressure.

Vic No-Till undertakes a number of activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for soil assets. This includes increasing farmer's knowledge and awareness of farming practices by running events, producing publications and using social media.

## 19. West Wimmera Shire Council (WWSC)

**WWSC representative:** Gill Bradshaw (Manager – Planning and Environment)

**Wimmera CMA representatives:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor) and Kathryn Walker (GIS Analyst (Graduate))

Annette Jones (WWSC Mayor and Landcare Facilitator – Kowree Farm Tree Group) and Lisa Oliver (Regional Landcare Facilitator – West Wimmera) were also present. Their feedback is summarised elsewhere.

**Date of meeting:** 18 October 2016

Gill indicated that she uses the RCS as a reference document. Most of WWSC's work and activities are in line with the RCS. In particular, Gill uses the RCS when preparing planning scheme amendments to see if the RCS can help to add support and strategic justification for progressing the amendment. Examples include schedules to Vegetation Protection Overlays for threatened plants including Jumping-jack Wattle, Forked Spyridium, Spiny Rice-flower and Wimmera Bottlebrush. The section of the RCS that discusses West Wimmera Shire is pretty good.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- The group discussed loss of native vegetation via illegal clearing and exemptions and difficulties in quantifying the amount of vegetation lost. Gill commented that vegetation removal under WWSC's maintenance works are recorded and reported to DELWP under a Memorandum of Understanding. However, information about clearing along fence lines on private land, for example, is not recorded. It would be helpful to record this somewhere like DELWP's Native Vegetation Information Management system. Trees removed from private land could be taken to the mill and sold if not required for fence posts.
- In the Halls Gap area a Canadian company has bought a small number of properties and required the landowner to remove native vegetation before they leave the property. Where landowners were fined for removing trees illegally, the company paid the fine for them. The fine was not a large enough disincentive for the company.
- Council have worked with the Telopea Landcare Group to destroy rabbit burrows on roadsides. They have engaged a contractor from Dimboola who has developed a new method for ripping burrows that has been very successful in destroying burrows with minimal impacts on native vegetation.
- The group discussed dry climate and its impacts such as cropping moving into areas that have always been pasture. Gill commented that some people have moved drains and put up earth walls, changing the way that water stays in the landscape and drain through the landscape. As a result, water seems to be taking a long time to get into Lake Wallace. Another potential impact is algal blooms occurring now that Lake Wallace has some water in it. Algal blooms could occur as a result of drains being "cleaned out", reducing filtration of nutrients as water drains off paddocks.
- The group expressed concern about the use of groundwater as a public resource, especially in drought years. GWMMWater regulates groundwater. The RCS does not address ground water – perhaps it should, especially in terms of interactions with wetlands.

WWSC undertakes activities that implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation, wetlands and threatened plant and animal assets. Their activities primarily involve:

- Implementing weed, fox and rabbit control programs on roadsides through contractors and providing support to Landcare groups,
- Supported Kowree Farm Tree Group to control weeds on roadsides to benefit threatened Spiny Rice-flower,
- Working with the CFA to undertake controlled burns on roadsides.

## 20. Wimmera Development Association (WDA)

**WDA representative:** Mark Fletcher (Project Officer)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Tony Baker (Statutory and Strategy Manager)

**Date of meeting:** 28 September 2016

- Mark indicated that WDA do not really use the RCS. He did not really know if WDA's strategies, plans, projects and approaches aligned with the RCS, although WDA have been working with Wimmera CMA on a number of projects.
- Mark was not really sure whether WDA had contributed to implementation of any of the RCS' objectives and management measures.

- Tony suggested that their farming resilience program contributes to implementation of management measure 8 for the soils asset: "Improving partnerships between landholders and soil health agencies." WDA have a monthly newsletter that informs landholder about all the relevant events in the region, including those run by agencies. WDA have also run a number of events for landholders and agencies to get together.

## 21. Yarriambiack Shire Council

**Horsham Rural City Council staff representative:** Geoff Harvey (Sustainability/Environmental Officer)

**Wimmera CMA representative:** Jacqui Norris (Planning and Policy Advisor)

Tim Inkster, Landcare Facilitator – Yarrilinks, was also present. His feedback is included elsewhere.

**Date of meeting:** 25 October 2016

The information included in the RCS is reasonable and provides nothing to argue about. Yarriambiack Shire Council is more involved with action statements as they are more relevant.

Challenges, opportunities and emerging issues include:

- Vegetation along Yarriambiack Creek is pretty good compared to other waterways in the state. The creek needs regular flows and a structure in place to facilitate this.
- Planting vegetation in dry years as it is impossible to water large sites and ensure reasonable plant survival.
- Illegal clearing is occurring with little incentive to prosecute and small penalties.

Yarriambiack Shire Council completed activities that help implement the RCS's management measures and objectives, particularly for native vegetation. This included rabbit control on roadsides and engaging a Green Army that planted 7,000 trees on roadsides, treated around 4,000 cactus plants along Yarriambiack Creek and removed rubbish from the creek.