



Native Vegetation Council

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Contact: Melanie Carson
Telephone: 8303 9705

Soil & Water Environs Ctr,
Entry 4, Waite Rd,
Urrbrae SA 5064

GPO Box 1047,
Adelaide SA 5001

Ph| 08 8303 9777
Fx| 08 8303 9780

nvc@sa.gov.au

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Hon Ian Hunter MLC
Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation
GPO Box 1047
Adelaide SA 5001

Dear Minister

I am writing to you in response to correspondence received by me from the Hon Jay Weatherill MP in relation to reforming South Australian government boards and committees.

As invited, I would like to address several functions of the Native Vegetation Council (NVC) giving necessity to the requirement that the NVC remain as a separate statutory body from government:

- The current NVC model enables stakeholder engagement and buy-in. It brings opportunities for regional and local participation to meet regional and local needs and objectives.
- The statutory authority status of the NVC provides a degree of independence.
- Members on the Council are selected from specified peak bodies/organisations that have a direct involvement with native vegetation management in the State.
- The NVC provides a broad range of views of those likely to be affected by administration of the Native Vegetation Act.
- The NVC provides community buy in and ownership in relation to native vegetation management in the State.
- The management of the native vegetation fund by an independent of government body ensures avoidance of conflict of interest i.e. Grants, community incentives.
- Continuation of the NVC, an independent of government body would ensure objectivity and transparency in applications for clearance of native vegetation for development and mining.
- The NVC contributes per annum \$1,175,350.00 towards salaries for government employees (11.5FTE) assisting in the administration of the *Native Vegetation Act 1991*.
- A significant proportion of Council's operational costs are recovered through application fees, fines and penalties.
- The NVC provides for equal representation by different interest groups and allows for independent and apolitical decision making.

To ensure that government continues to receive high quality advice in new and innovative ways the NVC welcomes the opportunity to further help shape the institutional and governance arrangements of the NVC to deliver the objects of the *Native Vegetation Act 1991* and present to you alternative ways for the conduction of business. The NVC acknowledges that the successful delivery of the recommended reforms will require an even

stronger role and focus from the NVC. The NVC recommend that there would be significant changes to capacity and capability to deliver under this option. The NVC submit Option 1 and 2 for your consideration:

Option1:

- The Native Vegetation Council continue with internal reform in line with its own Strategic Planning.
- The functions of the Native Vegetation Council Grants Committee are amalgamated into the Native Vegetation Assessment Panel.
- The Native Vegetation Council Fire Committee be abolished and absorbed into the Fire Management Unit of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.
- Review conducted in twelve months to determine the efficiencies of this reform.

Option 2:

- The Native Vegetation Council continue with internal reform in line with its own Strategic Planning.
- The functions of the Native Vegetation Assessment Panel continue.
- The functions of the Native Vegetation Council Grants Committee continue.
- The Native Vegetation Council Fire Committee be abolished and absorbed into the Fire Management Unit of the Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources.
- Review conducted in twelve months to determine the efficiencies of this reform.

These recommendations are a result of a thorough analysis of the current institutional and governance arrangements within the Native Vegetation Council. In addition to this letter I present to you the *Report of the Native Vegetation Council on Reform* for your consideration (Attachment 1 and 2).

These recommended reforms will enable the South Australian Government to be confident that the Native Vegetation Council is both **efficient** and **independent** and of high benefit to the State.

Yours sincerely

Melanie Carson
A/Principal Advisor
for

Caroline Schaefer
Presiding Member
NATIVE VEGETATION COUNCIL