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Response due	

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7 August 2014

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

Dear Minister Hunter,

I refer to recent correspondence from the Premier regarding the review of SA Government Boards and Committees. The Board considered this matter at our meeting on 29 July 2014 and resolved that I should write to you and provide advice for the retention of the Northern and Yorke NRM Board and Groups.

Firstly, the Board commends the intent of the Premier in undertaking a review to ensure that the community is engaged and contributing to the wise and sustainable use of natural resources in the Northern and Yorke Region and across the State more generally.

The Board are concerned that considerable effort has been invested in NRM and that the role and function of the Board and their subsidiary NRM Groups is now being well accepted and understood in the Region. There is potential for that momentum to be lost should the current structural arrangements be abandoned or compromised.

It is worth reflecting that considerable efficiencies have already been achieved as the NRM Boards are in essence, a consolidation of former Catchment Management Boards, Soil Conservation Boards and Animal and Plant Control Boards.

One of the very real strengths of our Board is that they serve as an effective conduit of communication between the Government and the community and are accountable to the community and Government for the utilisation of the NRM levy, which as you are aware, is collected across this Region. There is potential for a significant adverse reaction from the community if there was not a community based Board in place with a direct relationship to this Region to set priorities and accept accountability for the wise use of the NRM levy.

You are well aware that across the country, the Australian Government utilise the 56 NRM Boards and





Catchment Management Authorities to disseminate resources to the community. There is potential for the State to be disadvantaged should the current Regional Board and Group structural arrangements be changed.

Another of the strengths of the current arrangement is the direct communication channel to the Government and you are well aware that I am able to discuss with you directly any NRM issues that are of concern to the Board or the community. The membership of our Board ensures that we are well connected to farming communities and producer groups who directly make use of soil and water resources of the Region.

Through the Yorke and Mid North Regional Alliance we enjoy a collaborative relationship with Regional Development Australia and Central Region Local Government Association. The relationship with Local Government is an important one given their role in the collection of the NRM levy and accordingly, our Board give priority to engaging and partnering with Local Government.

Further, the Board believes that it has the potential to leverage resources from the industry sector much more readily than a Government agency could do. This has been demonstrated by the Board working with a coalition of local winemakers on the successful Annie's Lane NRM project.

The Northern and Yorke NRM Board have adopted the Conservation Action Planning (CAP) process as an innovative mechanism for harnessing local community values and knowledge and combining that with contemporary scientific expertise in determining NRM priorities across the Region. Our Region's CAP process was the recipient of the Premier's NRM Award in 2013. Our NRM Groups are already engaged in the CAP process and the Board are currently considering ways that this can be further consolidated. Linked to the CAP process is a Memorandum of Understanding with 14 partner organisations in the Region – again a demonstration of the effective community engagement and dialogue that exists in the Northern and Yorke Region.

Note that our Board actively provides volunteering opportunities for the community to make direct contributions to natural resources management in the Region and we believe that our Board is best placed to provide ongoing support and vital recognition of the fine work undertaken by those volunteers as evidenced by our recent Volunteer Celebration event.

The Board consider that they adopt a balanced response to NRM issues that would otherwise be potentially problematic for Government given the rise of vocal minority groups that have emerged in the rural sector in recent years.

An option for consolidation or merging of existing NRM Board's was discussed but it was considered that the geographic spread of the Region is already significant, given we range from Stenhouse Bay on the toe of the Yorke Peninsula to Hawker in the Flinders Ranges.





In accordance with the drive for efficiencies and business improvement, the Board identified the prudence in the disbandment of the three Technical Advisory Panels that it maintained. However, the Board considered that the current Board and Group structure should continue.

Our Board maintains four sub-committees, namely Governance & Finance, Planning & Strategy, Performance & Evaluation and Aboriginal Engagement. Correspondence has been received by Chairs of such committees, however we believe that they are no more than the committees required under Division 7 section 35 of the Act. In effect, they are considered sub-committees of the Board, and would cease to exist if the Board was abolished. As such, we have decided that a separate response is unwarranted. However, we are happy to discuss this if our view is not supported.

The Northern and Yorke Natural Resources Management Board look forward to receiving your ongoing support regarding the Premier's review in order for us to continue the good work and positive outcomes that occur in this Region, particularly in regard to the Government's priority of Premium Food from a Clean Environment.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further with you should clarification be required.

Yours Sincerely,



**Caroline Schaefer**  
**PRESIDING MEMBER**  
**NORTHERN AND YORKE NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT BOARD**

