



A new direction for salinity management in Western Australia: a consultative review. Summary of submissions

24 September 2019

Key points from submissions received from approximately 50 groups or individuals have been summarised against the four main pillars recognised by the Report 'New Directions for Salinity management in Western Australia: A Consultative review'. These points have been paraphrased from the individual submissions in order to capture the intent of the submitter's comments.

The Report in response to the Office of the Auditor General Performance audit (May 2018).

The New Directions report recommended two overarching actions:

1. Immediately update data on the extent and impacts of dryland salinity
2. Target investment of public and private funds in four key areas: Information, Governance, Innovation and Investment.

All submissions have their comments allocated to the four key areas (pillars) and an 'Other' to capture general comments.

A panel of agency officers has read all submissions, and is writing a report for Government in response.

Information

- Review drainage effectiveness by analysis of crop monitoring technology to avoid reliance on anecdotal evidence
- Provide mapping and data on saline land extent and trends including transient salinity; on a free GIS platform; including remote sensing information
- DPIRD to release saltland mapping and data each year.
- DPIRD to do landscape assessment for carbon farming
- Supply more information on carbon farming on saline land
- Saline land management information to include tried and tested salinity management
- Allow industry and community to collect saltland extent information
- Use improved water use to prevent recharge and salinisation ('high water use' systems)
- Provide a salinity situation statement
- A new review of public assets under threat from salinity

- Provide information on how climate change affects salinity risk
- Release the Catchment Demonstration Initiative documents
- More information on RegenAg and permanent groundcover affecting salinity (high water use)
- Provide case studies of saltland management
- Educate farm business advisers about salinity management
- Document and provide information on salinity management failures
- Use NGOs as information deliverers and knowledge brokers (Greening Australia, NRMs, Gillamii etc.)
- Provide economic analyses of costs and benefits of saltland management
- Provide more information on management of non-saline areas to prevent salinisation

Governance

- Strengthen regulatory controls of clearing (DWER) and land degradation (SLCA – Commissioner). Conventional agriculture that results in salinisation should be held accountable under SLCA.
- Strengthen cross-agency role of the State NRM Office
- Supports SLCC function
- Supports DWER function
- Supports DBCA function
- There is DPIRD conflict between production focus and resource management activities
- Provide more enabling policy
- Continuity of salinity leadership is a problem in government – suggesting leadership by Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Use existing trusted non-government groups
- Increase the role of NRM WA and WA Landcare Network
- Establish a WA Landcare Advisory Council, which reports to WA Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council
- Establish a technical team and advisory group to oversee implementation of the Wheatbelt Catchment Alliances proposal
- Create drainage management bodies: specifically an inland drainage management authority
- Allow Regional NRMs to manage salinity in the regions, rather than DPIRD being responsible
- Allow local governance of salinity management
- Engage more with university expertise
- Improve mechanisms for cross-sector dialogue and engagement

Innovation

- Use banking and mining industry partnerships to attract investment
- Make more use of carbon farming and bioenergy for increased saltland management
- Use revegetated saltland 'arteries' for recreation

- Allow carbon offsets for industry to fund saltland revegetation
- Develop new technologies: Innovative monitoring technology; R&D
- Combine desalination with solar thermal microgrids
- Use solar thermal-gradient ponds
- Increase use of summer crops to use soil water that may lead to increase saltland
- Require qualifications and training for landcare advisers and officers
- Provide rewards for good management (instead of compliance prosecution)
- Government to resume saline land

Investment

- Provide a knowledge database or portal
- A new review of mitigation effectiveness (based on State salinity strategy); evaluation of successful management
- Analyse the cost-benefit of site specific saltland management; economic assessment of marginal lands
- Subsidise on-ground implementation (with an adaptation focus); subsidising farmer expenses for salinity management
- Increase reforestation, agroforestry, revegetation, integrated dryland forestry (target revegetation of 1 million ha of saline land within 10 years) and strategic revegetation of 30% of the Wheatbelt.
- Assess biodiversity risk; species protection, conservation; recovery catchments; review of recovery catchments (support to DBCA)
- Carbon farming and carbon farming payments (not DPIRD; leave to private companies)
- Encourage use of bioenergy, which uses vegetation that uses more water
- Support self-sustaining communities with capacity to manage salinity locally
- Provide \$100 million from State Government to support landholders managing saline land
- Provide \$30 million pa to reinstate State NRM Grants Program for salinity management
- Fund sub-regional groups as salinity service providers
- Fund core costs of local landcare groups
- Fund at least 50 part time landcare coordinators
- Provide or support local salinity management officers
- Resource the Commissioner's Office to ensure compliance with legislation and regulations
- Foster conditions for innovation by industry and growers
- Establish saline-land management demonstrations
- Provide training and coordination for landcare groups
- Provide seed-funding for arterial drainage
- Construct arterial drains on public and private land
- Provide tax concessions for regional drainage
- Provide tax concessions to mining for C offset revegetation on saltland (\$150-225 million pa?)
- Establish more drainage trials (6 suggested) at specified wheatbelt locations

- Provide rewards for best practice
- Increase DPIRD R&D on salinity management
- Release the GHD assessment of the oil mallee system for salinity management
- Balance target asset and other saltland investment
- More R&D for better saltland plants and farming systems
- Government to resume saline land and carry out remediation
- More research on chemical use, soil biota and salinity interactions
- Fund development of a business plan and investor consultancy for regional salinity management
- Targeted monitoring of salinity using existing technology and practice

Other submission points

- Information and knowledge are not barriers to action
- Collaboration with industry and community for on-ground action vital
- Minerals and Energy sector and banking have expertise in C farming investment
- Salinity is only part of broader environmental concerns – needs to be at system level
- Support but do not direct community and private sector
- Private investment in saltland management is many times higher than government investment
- DPIRD production focus a conflict with sustainable resource management
- Salinity has serious physical and mental health effects on farmers; farmers feeling beaten down but not giving up, and need help
- Vegetation corridors can act as ‘drains’ and biodiversity habitats
- Needs holistic landscape management
- Still a large community of Wheatbelt drainage supporters; and WISALTS supporters
- Large areas of natural diversity outside of the recovery catchments
- Many case studies available
- Loss of corporate knowledge and trained people in saltland management
- NRM Framework and salinity management need to be linked

Contact

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