



**LAKE EYRE BASIN
MINISTERIAL FORUM**

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

WORK PLAN #1

February 2004

With progress reported as at May 2004



Purpose and Operation of the CAC

The Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee (CAC) has been formed under the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement to provide community advice, representation and feedback to the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum.

This work plan sets out the purpose, core principles and strategic goals for the work of the CAC, and the ways those goals will be achieved over the next 12 months. Further details on the operational procedures and protocols of the CAC are provided separately in the CAC Work Procedures.

Policy Foundations

The Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement brings together the Australian, Queensland and South Australian governments to ensure the sustainability of the Lake Eyre Basin river systems, in particular to avoid or eliminate cross-border impacts. The Agreement was signed by Australian and State Government Ministers in October 2000, and has been enacted in the Australian, Queensland and South Australian Parliaments.

Figure 1 shows the shared knowledge and assumptions that form the foundation of the management approach in the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement. The most fundamental assumptions of the Agreement are that:

- sustainability of the multiple values of the Lake Eyre Basin depends on the continued health of the river systems and associated natural resources in the basin
- a cooperative approach between the Australian Government and the states of Queensland and South Australia is critical to ensuring the continued health of the river systems.

In addition to these, a number of more detailed assumptions form the basis of the Agreement:

- that naturally variable flows are important
- that high water quality is essential
- that flooding is beneficial
- that precautionary approaches are needed
- that water for the environment should be maintained
- that groundwater and surface water are linked and should be managed in an integrated way
- that the best available information should be used, including scientific/technical information and collective local knowledge and experience.



Agreed starting points

Naturally variable flow is important

High water quality is essential

Flooding is beneficial

Precautionary approaches are needed

Maintain water for the environment

Ground water and surface water are linked

Best available information—scientific/technical AND local knowledge and experience

Cooperative approach between Queensland, South Australia and the Australian

Continued LEB river system health, including catchment

MULTIPLE VALUES OF LAKE EYRE BASIN

- Sustainable pastoral industry
- Viable tourism industry
- Areas of ecological and environmental significance
- Strong communities; quality of life
- Areas and places of cultural and heritage significance (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal)
- Sustainable oil and gas industry
- Sustainable mining industry

Agreed starting points

Figure 1 Foundations of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement



The Role of the CAC

Against this policy background, the CAC has been formed to provide community advice, representation and feedback to the Lake Eyre Basin Ministerial Forum on matters relevant to the Agreement.

Figure 2 shows the composition and function of the CAC alongside the Scientific Advisory Panel (the SAP) and the Ministerial Forum. Both advisory groups, the CAC and the SAP, have been formed to assist the Ministerial forum to implement the Agreement. The Ministerial Forum in turn has responsibility for implementing the Agreement by developing or adopting policies and strategies about water and related natural resources of the Lake Eyre Basin, to avoid or eliminate cross-border impacts.

A secondary role of the CAC is to communicate the decisions and initiatives of the Ministerial Forum to the community.

Clearly, the role of the CAC is essentially a communications role. This work plan is therefore primarily a communications strategy.

Strategic Goals

The main communication roles of the CAC, and associated strategic goals, are shown in Figure 3. The CAC faces three important communication challenges:

1. to ensure that it has access to as wide a range of feedback and information from the basin community as possible. If the CAC does not meet this challenge, its advice to the Ministerial Forum will not reflect community opinion and feedback.
2. to maintain well functioning relationships both with the Ministerial Forum and with associated Australian Government and State Government Agencies that have responsibility for land and water management in the basin. If the CAC does not meet this challenge, its ability to contribute in a constructive and positive way to implementation of the Agreement in all jurisdictions will be severely constrained.
3. to maintain its awareness of relevant technical information on Lake Eyre Basin issues, and where possible to provide its advice and feedback in the context of that information. If the CAC does not meet this challenge, its advice may diverge from or contradict important knowledge in the scientific and technical community about basin issues.

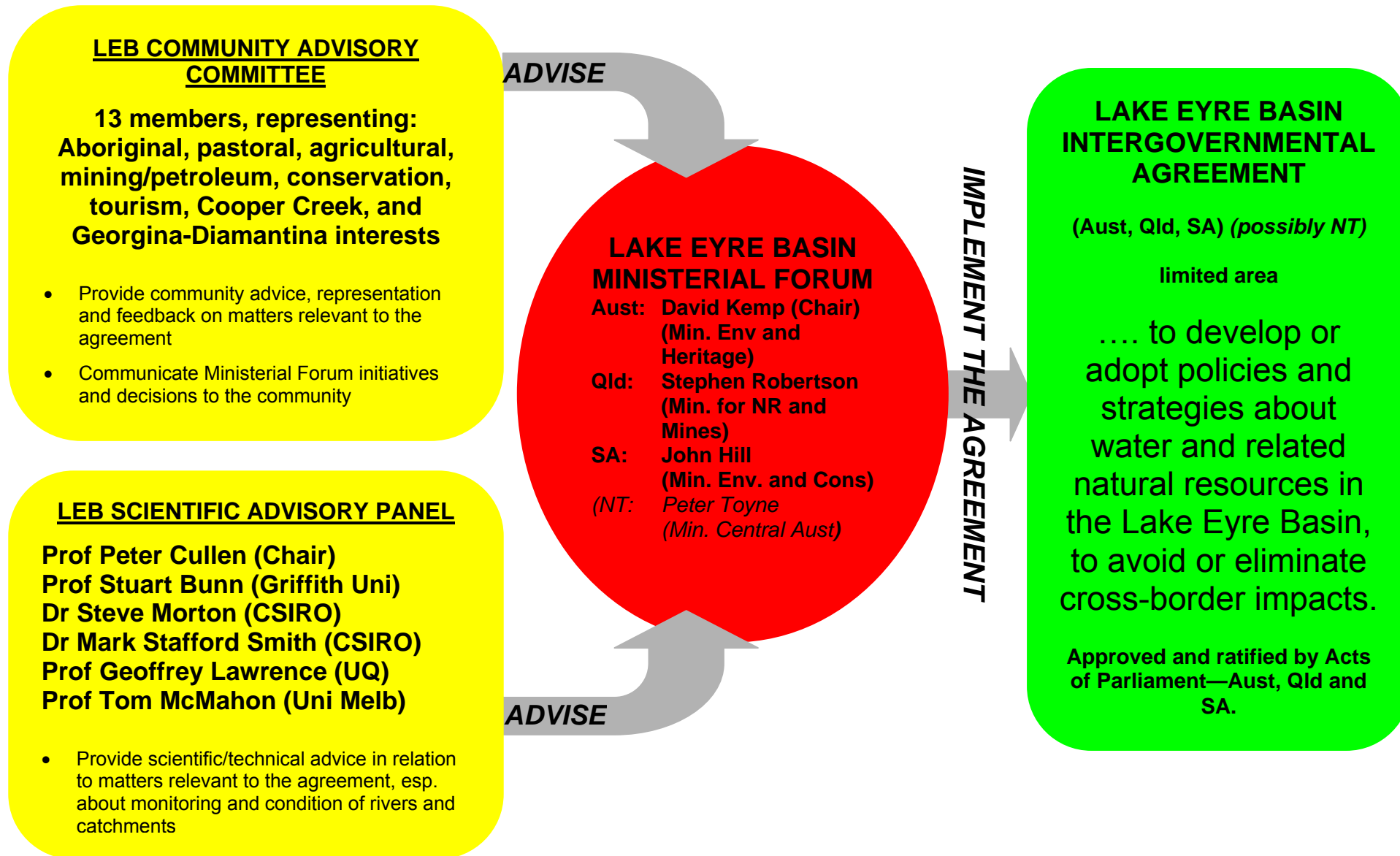


Figure 2 Lake Eyre Basin Agreement Process

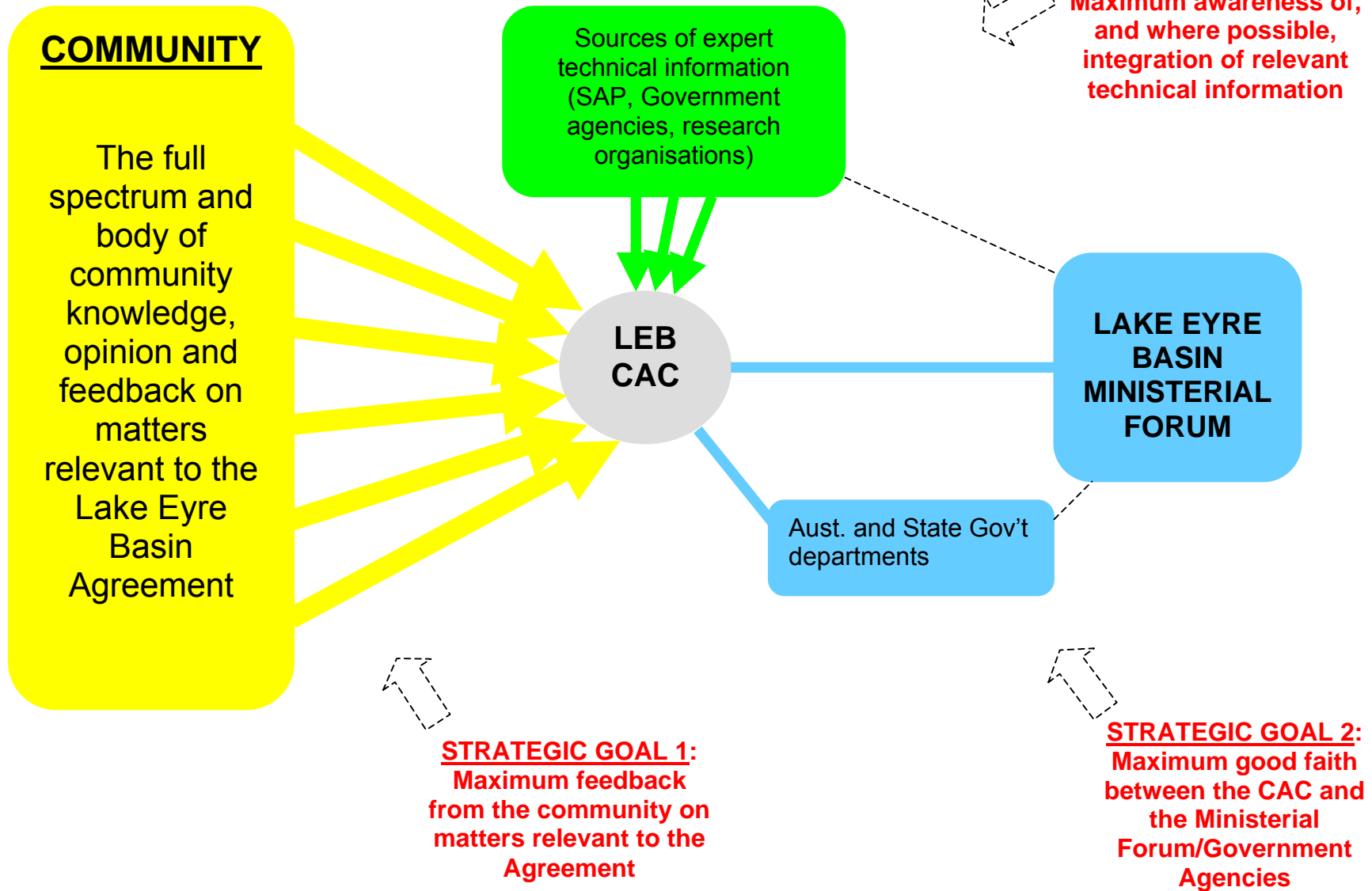


Figure 3 Communication challenges and strategic goals of the CAC



These three challenges form the basis of the three Strategic goals of this plan:

STRATEGIC GOAL 1: Maximise feedback from the all sectors of the basin community on matters relevant to the Agreement

STRATEGIC GOAL 2: Maximise good faith between the CAC and the Ministerial Forum/Government Agencies

STRATEGIC GOAL 3: Maximise awareness of, and where possible, integration of relevant technical information into the CAC's discussions and advice

Later sections of this plan are set out under these goals as headings.

Communication network

Maintaining active and healthy communication networks rests on several key principles:

- **INCLUSIVENESS**: communication by the CAC must be as wide as possible, so that interested people and groups feel they can approach the CAC for information or assistance in making their concerns known.
- **TRUST AND OPENNESS**: all communication by the CAC needs to be open, in order to build genuine trust with all groups including government and community.
- **RECIPROCAL BENEFIT**: People and groups will maintain their contact and links with the CAC to the extent that they receive benefit from the relationship. This benefit will be primarily seen when people and groups see their concerns and feedback being passed on to the Ministerial Forum with integrity, and ultimately when circumstances in the basin change as a result of this communication. The CAC has a responsibility to keep a record of the results of its activities, and to make this record available to its key contact groups.

Figures 4 and 5 show the communication network of the CAC in more detail.

Figure 4 shows the primary groups that the CAC maintains strong links with:

- the Ministerial Forum and associated government agencies in each jurisdiction;
- the Scientific Advisory Panel, as a prime source of technical information;
- the three Regional Natural Resource Management Groups in Queensland, South Australia and the Northern Territory, with responsibility for regional NRM planning and NHT2 investment in each jurisdiction;
- the two cross-border catchment committees (Cooper's Creek and Georgina-Diamantina), and the Desert Uplands Strategy Committee;

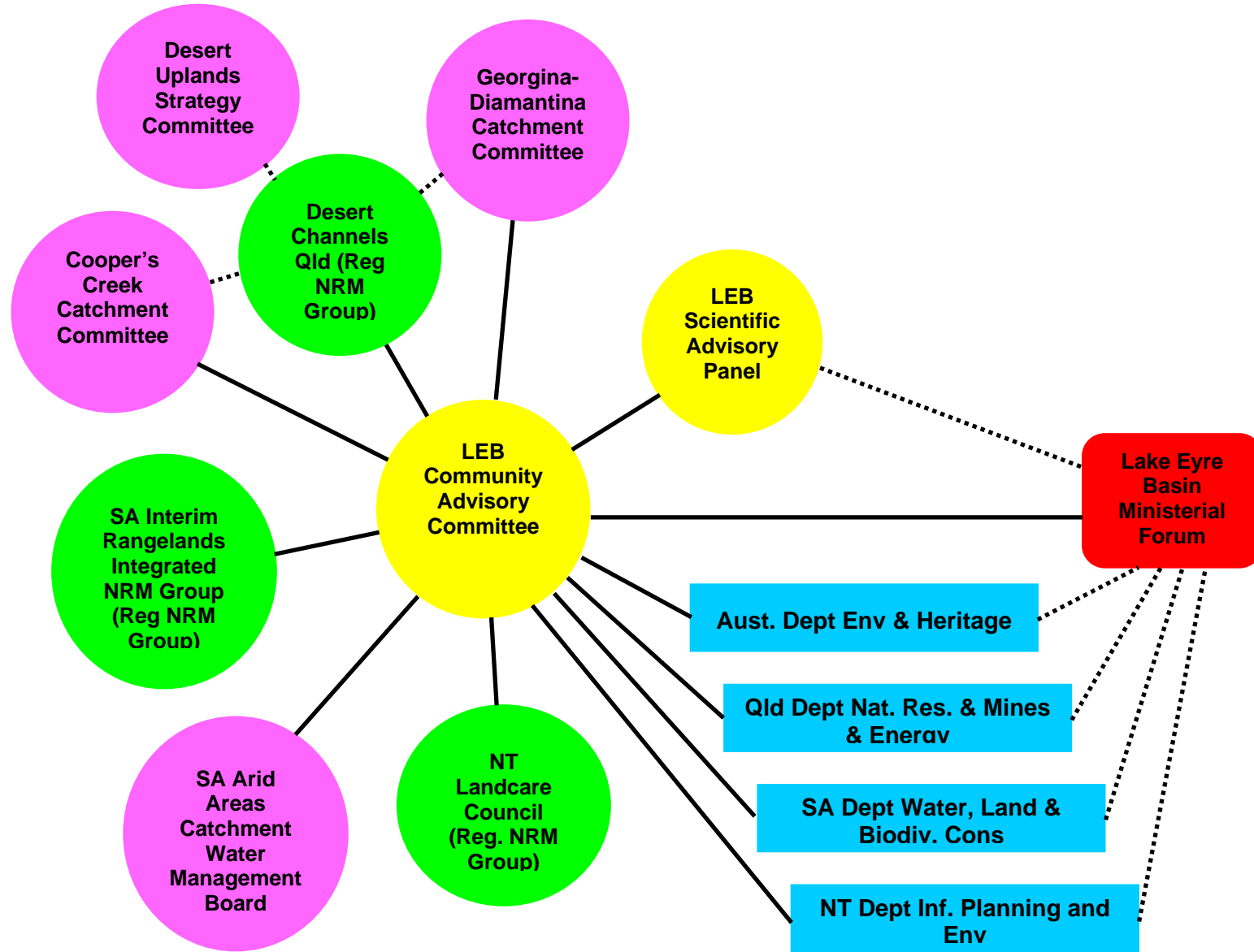
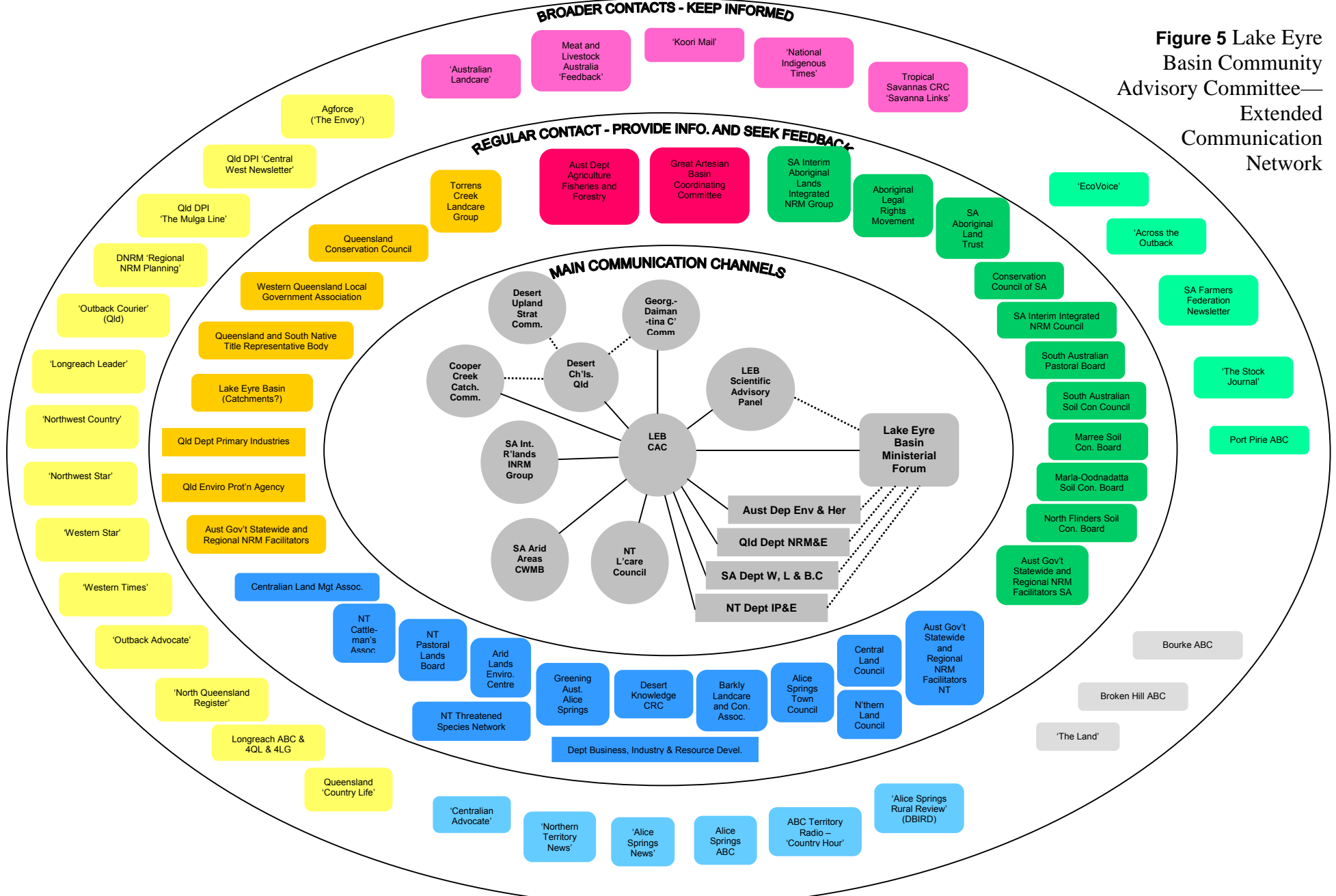


Figure 4 Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee—Main Communication Channels



Figure 5 Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee—Extended Communication Network





- the Arid Areas Catchment Water Management Board in South Australia, with responsibility for managing water resources in the South Australian portion of the lower basin.

Each of these groups plays a significant role in cross-border or basin-wide management, and strong links with them are critical for the CAC.

Figure 5 shows the extended communication network in three layers:




1. the inner core groups of figure 4, with whom the CAC maintains strong links
2. a middle layer of groups active in the management of various resources of the basin, and representing various stakeholder groups. The CAC provides regular information to these groups and seeks regular feedback from them.
3. an outer layer of publications, newsletters and media outlets, that provide opportunities for the CAC to communicate to a maximum number of people in the basin. The CAC will provide regular information on its activities and on Ministerial Forum initiatives through these outlets.

The groups in Figure 5 are arranged by jurisdiction. Northern Territory groups are included in light of the possibility that the Northern Territory may come a party to the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement in future. New South Wales is unlikely to become a party to the Agreement, however several media outlets in Western New South Wales reach parts of the Lake Eyre Basin community, so they have been included in the diagram.

The number and role of groups in Figures 4 and 5 will change with time, and it is important for the CAC to keep track of these changes and maintain its links with relevant groups.

Strategies

The following sections contain strategies under each of the three strategic goals. Coloured progress indicators have been include as follows:

- those strategies for which work is on track (green )
- those strategies for which progress is slow (yellow )
- those strategies for which work has yet to begin (red )





Strategic Goal 1: Maximise feedback from all sectors of the community

The CAC is seeking to create widespread understanding and minimal confusion in the community in regard to management of the basin and the role of the LEB Agreement and the CAC, and to engage the maximum number of people in discussions about basin issues. This will increase the number of community members and groups actively utilising the CAC to communicate concerns and feedback to the Ministerial Forum on LEB issues, and to seek information about Ministerial Forum decisions and initiatives. The CAC has an obligation to actively communicate with community members, and to frame its advice to the Ministerial Forum to represent what it believes to be the spread of community opinion in the basin on natural resource management issues.

Newsletters

Hard copy information is a critical part of effective communication for the CAC. Many of the stakeholders in the basin live in remote locations, and hard copy written material remains a preferred means of receiving information for many of these people.

Staff resources are currently not sufficient to publish a regular, full newsletter exclusively for CAC news, so the CAC will make use of existing newsletters and journals already being distributed throughout the basin.

Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
Newsletter information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Publish written updates on CAC business, meetings, recommendations and activity, through existing news outlets in the basin. Target multiple newsletters and newspapers in all jurisdictions.	 (g)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reassess the need for a basin-wide newsletter covering CAC business and the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, following several months of utilising existing news outlets.	 (g)

Web site

A web site for the CAC will serve the following purposes:


- Optimise the accessibility of the information available on Lake Eyre Basin issues and initiatives, in appropriate language, to people who:
 - wish to have an input to basin management issues



- make management decisions about natural resources in the Lake Eyre Basin
 - are otherwise interested in basin issues.
- Increase the likelihood that people will participate in discussion and debate about Lake Eyre Basin issues.
 - Encourage participation in Lake Eyre Basin natural resource management programs by conveying a positive, forward-looking approach to basin issues.
 - Contribute to a relationship of trust between the CAC, the Ministerial Forum and its corresponding Australian Government and State Government Agencies.
 - Contribute to a relationship of trust between the CAC and the community groups and constituencies that it represents.

The target audience for a CAC web site will be:

- community groups, especially natural resource management groups
- landholders and land managers
- government agencies
- local councils
- students
- general readers/audience

Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
Web site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a web site appropriate for the target audiences, to meet the purposes described above. The site should include the following information: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Explanation of the LEB Agreement – roles of the Ministerial Forum, the CAC and the SAP – all policies and strategies of the Ministerial Forum – contacts details and biographical information for all CAC members – Relationship between the LEB process and the regional NRM process under NHT2 – Links to web sites for other organisations and 	 (g)




Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
	<p>groups involved in natural resource management in the basin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – brief background and history of the Lake Eyre Basin process – minutes and summaries of CAC meetings and advice and recommendations to the Ministerial Forum – bulletin board to allow web users to provide feedback on basin issues to the CAC 	

Aboriginal involvement

Aboriginal issues will be integral to all matters discussed by the CAC. These might be grouped under two headings:

- mainstream or common natural resource management issues for which Aboriginal people will have equally valid points of view (e.g. water quantity, quality, erosion, vegetation clearing); and
- issues that are specifically Aboriginal in nature (e.g. cultural heritage sites, story places, sacred ground, violent contact locations etc).

The CAC approach to Aboriginal consultation will need to facilitate Aboriginal input in regard to both these kinds of issues.



Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
Aboriginal involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a budgeted program of Aboriginal consultation and involvement, guided by Aboriginal people and organisations with an interest in the basin, to ensure that Aboriginal views on basin issues are canvassed effectively and communicated to the Ministerial Forum. The program should be consistent with and should complement the activities of other groups who are consulting Aboriginal people on natural resource issues in the basin. The program should also be mindful of existing government guidelines and policies on Aboriginal reconciliation and engagement in natural resource management. 	 (g)



Regional NRM plans

Since completion of the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement, the nature of government involvement in natural resource management in Australia has undergone major changes. Regional Natural Resource Management Groups have been established nationally as the major means of delivery of Natural Heritage Trust funds for environmental and natural resource management work. Funding and program delivery will be based on regional plans and investment strategies compiled by Regional NRM Groups and accredited by government.


There are three Regional NRM groups whose areas fall partly or wholly within the Lake Eyre Basin: Desert Channels Queensland, the Interim Rangelands Integrated Natural Resource Management Group in SA, and the Northern Territory Landcare Council.

Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
Regional NRM planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work closely with regional NRM Groups in the basin during compilation and implementation of their NRM plans and investment strategies, to identify issues, projects and programs with basin-wide implications.	 (g)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assist regional groups to address such issues by communicating them to the Ministerial Forum with clarity and integrity, and by highlighting potential areas for policy and strategy development by the Ministerial Forum under the Lake Eyre Basin Agreement.	 (g)







Formal submissions on draft plans and strategies

A number of plans and strategies are being and will continue to be developed and reviewed for different parts of the basin. These include the Georgina-Diamantina draft Water Management Plan, the Cooper Creek Water Management Plan, the Arid Areas Catchment Water Management Plan, and the Regional NRM Plans and Investment Strategies for NHT2 regions. The Lake Eyre Basin CAC is in a unique position to provide a whole-of-basin perspective in regard to early drafts of plans such as these, particularly with regard to the spread of community opinion from across the basin. The CAC has an obligation to pass these perspectives on to the Ministerial Forum with clarity and integrity.



Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
Submissions on draft plans and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review, discuss and provide feedback to the Ministerial Forum on draft plans and strategies dealing with the management of natural resources of the basin, that are made available for public comment. This feedback should focus on whole-of-basin implications, and should convey the spread of community opinion from across the basin. 	 (g)

Other communication strategies





Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
CAC member networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All CAC members to actively communicate with their stakeholder groups in regard to basin issues, to enable them to bring a spread of community feedback to the table. 	 (g)
Formal networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitator to actively disseminate information and updates on CAC business to all stakeholder groups, via email and postal correspondence. 	 (g)
Cross-membership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to make use of cross-membership of CAC members on other key groups in the basin (e.g. catchment committees, water boards etc) to increase the effectiveness of communication with these groups. 	 (g)
Meeting attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAC Facilitator and/or Chair to regularly attend meetings of key natural resource or land management groups in the basin, in the company of CAC members in different regions, to communicate CAC business to community groups and representatives, and to seek feedback on basin issues. 	 (g)
Local Government contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAC Facilitator and/or Chair to periodically visit basin communities to discuss basin issues with local government representatives and regional and remote staff of state agencies. 	 (y)
Phone surveys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Potential strategy:</i> annual random phone surveys of the basin community to seek feedback on basin issues and effectiveness of CAC programs. 	 (r)



Strategic Goal 2: Maximise good faith between the CAC and the Ministerial Forum/associated Government Agencies

The CAC will know it is successful when Ministers actively seek the advice of the CAC on specific issues, and when there is evidence that Ministers listen to and act on the feedback and advice provided by the CAC.

To increase the probability of this happening, the CAC needs to maintain well functioning relationships both with the Ministerial Forum and with associated Australian Government and State Government Agencies that have responsibility for land and water management in the basin.

Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
Cooperation with State Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CAC meetings to continue to be attended by government observers from all jurisdictions whenever possible.	 (g)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CAC Facilitator (and Chair?) to continue to be involved in regular High Level Group discussions between senior officials in all jurisdictions	 (y)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• CAC Chair and Facilitator to maintain routine, regular contact with relevant officials and contact officers in all jurisdictions, including face-to-face meetings when opportunities allow.	 (g)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Compilation of all CAC material (e.g. Ministerial Forum advice, correspondence, web site material, newsletter) to utilise professional, impartial language and to adhere to principles of openness, honesty and integrity.	 (g)









Strategic Goal 3: Maximise awareness and integration of technical information



While the role of the CAC is not to provide technical or scientific advice to the Ministerial Forum, it nevertheless has an obligation to remain familiar with the range of scientific and technical work being undertaken on basin issues. This will allow the CAC to:

- a. frame its community advice to the Ministerial Forum in the context of current knowledge of basin issues; and
- b. seek and pass on feedback from the community both on gaps in existing knowledge and research, and on the usefulness and relevance of research currently being done.

The ability of the CAC to do this well will depend on its links with people and organisations currently doing scientific and technical work on resource management issues in the basin.

Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
Strong links with the SAP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate routinely with the SAP in regard to all advice provided to the Ministerial Forum, to ensure that the CAC and the SAP provide cohesive and, where possible, complementary advice. 	 (g)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share all position papers, information papers and minutes with the SAP, to ensure they are aware of CAC discussions and business. 	 (g)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene regular joint meetings with the SAP, to exchange views and progress joint work. 	 (g)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue the practice of the Chairs of the SAP and CAC attending each other's meetings as observers. 	 (g)
Scientific representation on the CAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and discuss the potential benefits of including a science representative on the CAC, with broad, multidisciplinary knowledge on basin issues. 	 (y)
Observers and presentations to the CAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to welcome government observers to CAC meetings, and to utilise their knowledge of current technical and scientific programs relevant to basin issues. 	 (g)



Activity area	Strategy	Progress (May 2004)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Where appropriate, invite presentations to the CAC on critical information and research, from available experts in relevant fields.	 (g)
Networks to include scientists and technicians	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicate CAC position papers, information papers, minutes and agendas to key research and technical staff in relevant fields, to ensure they are aware of CAC discussions and business, and to invite constructive input.	 (g)
