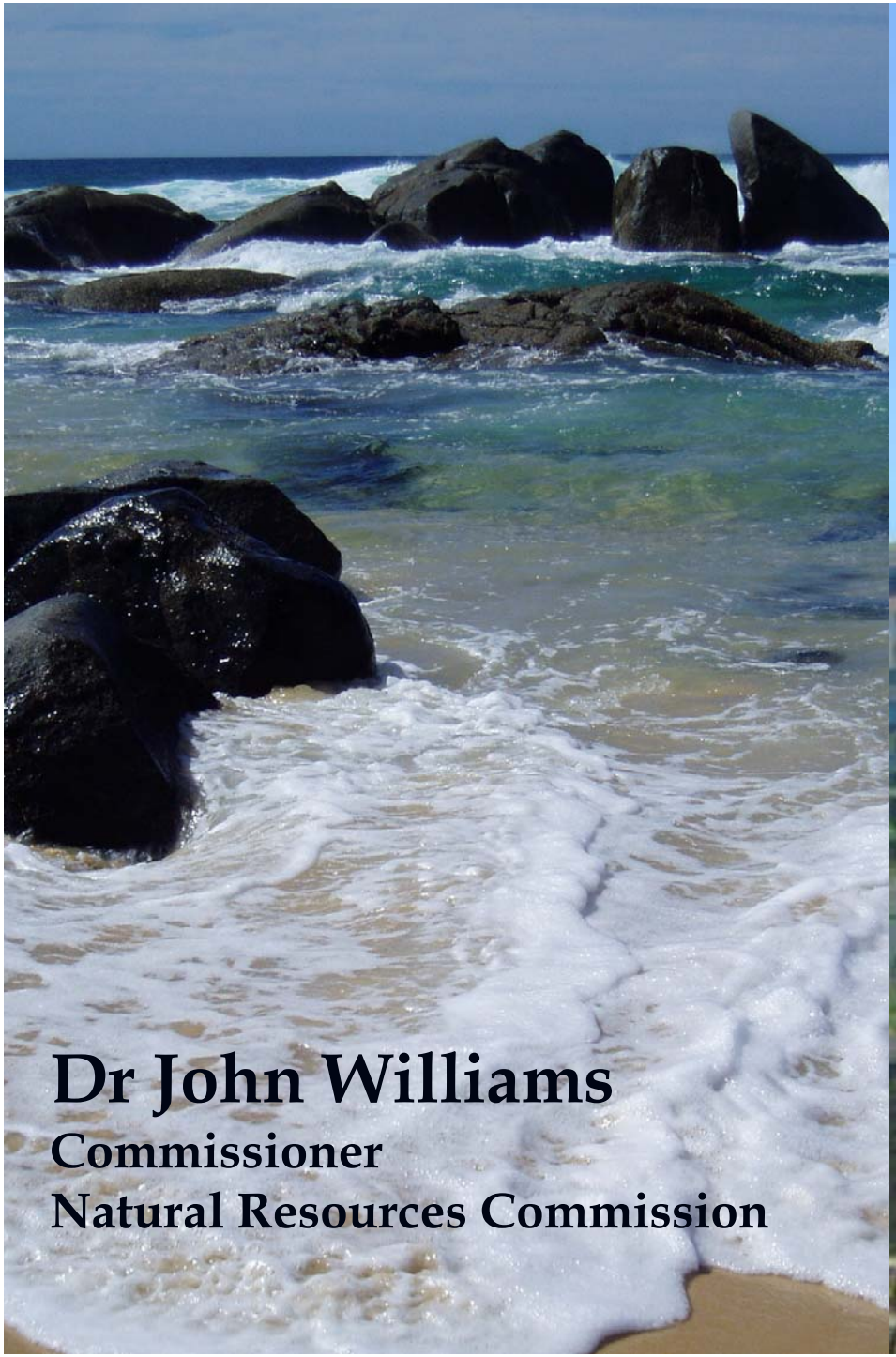
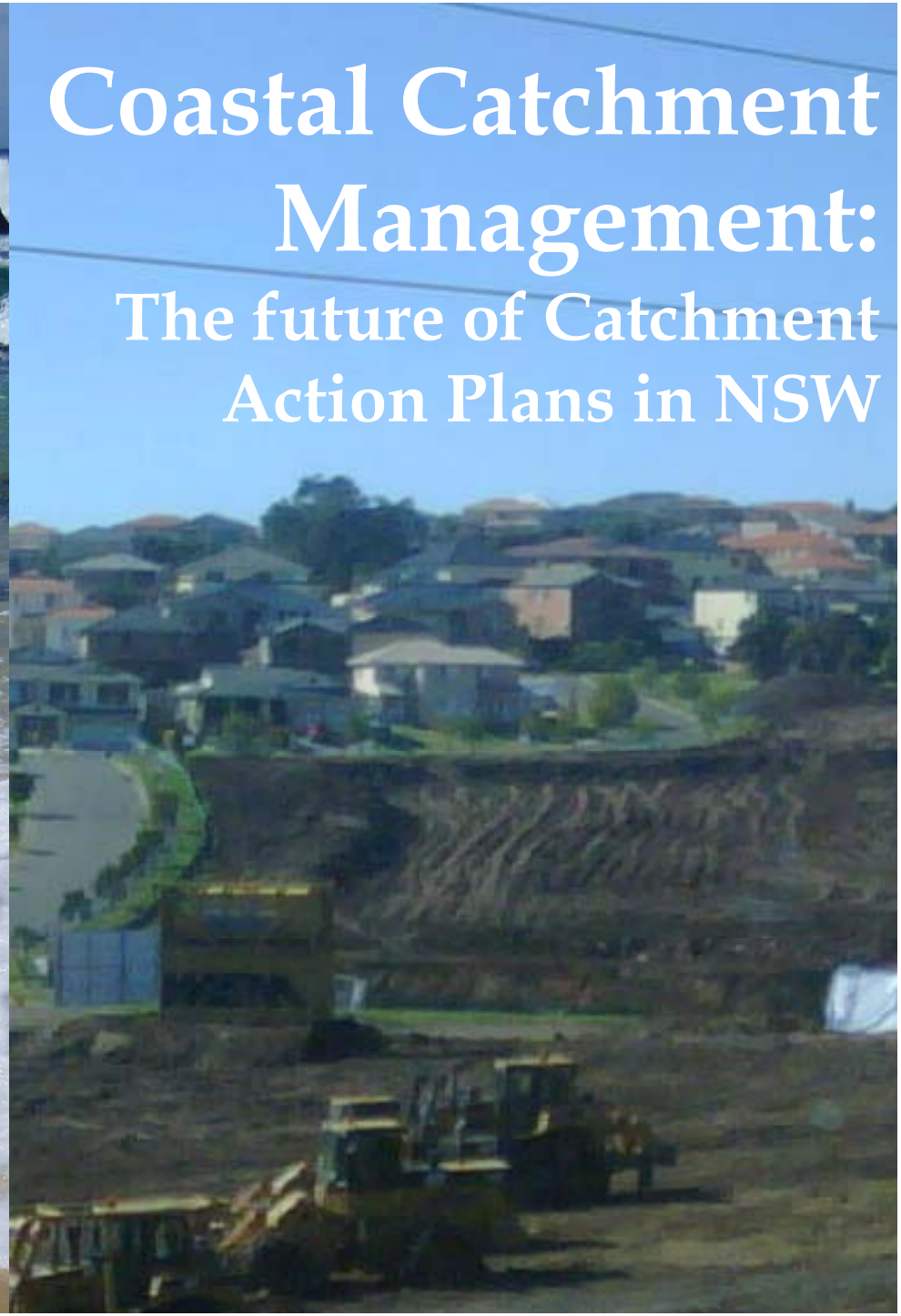


Coastal Catchment Management:

The future of Catchment Action Plans in NSW



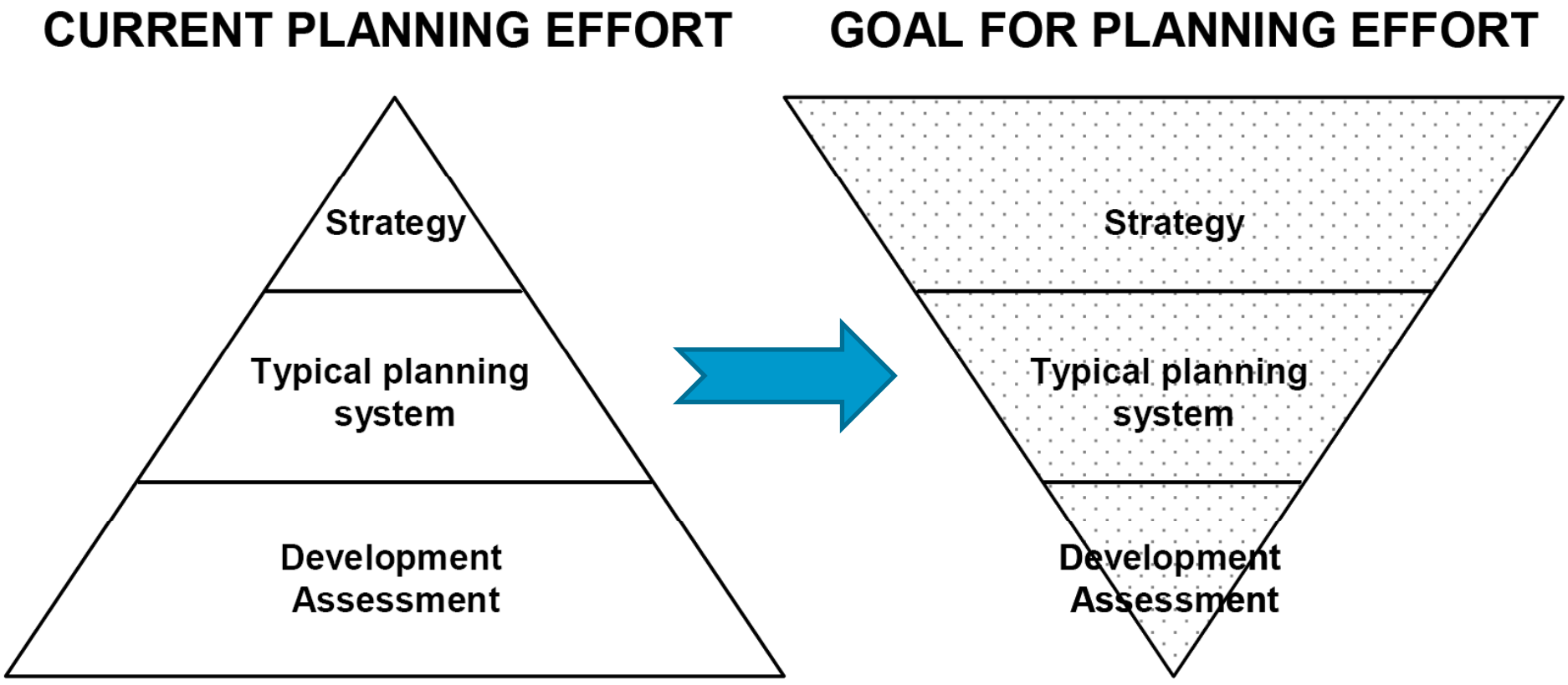
Dr John Williams
Commissioner
Natural Resources Commission

A complex landscape means complex challenges…

Image sourced from the Australian Greenhouse Office, Copyright Commonwealth of Australia 2004

- Population growth
- Land-use change
- Climate change and variability
- Sea level rise

Thinking strategically about coastal planning



(Source: Planning Institute of Australia)

What have we learned from SEPP 71?

- **Individual decisions are being made at the development scale**

- **NSW runs the risk of:**
  - cumulative development impacts
  - missed opportunities to maximise landscape functionality.

Solution: a more co-ordinated, strategic approach to coastal development

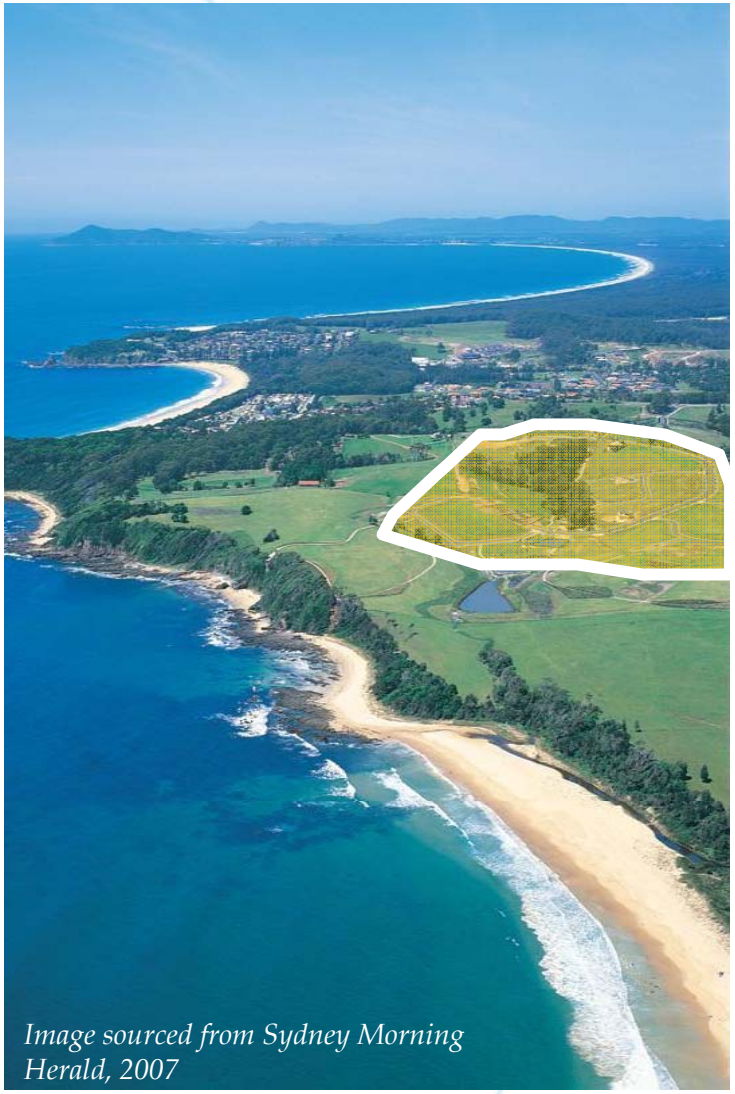
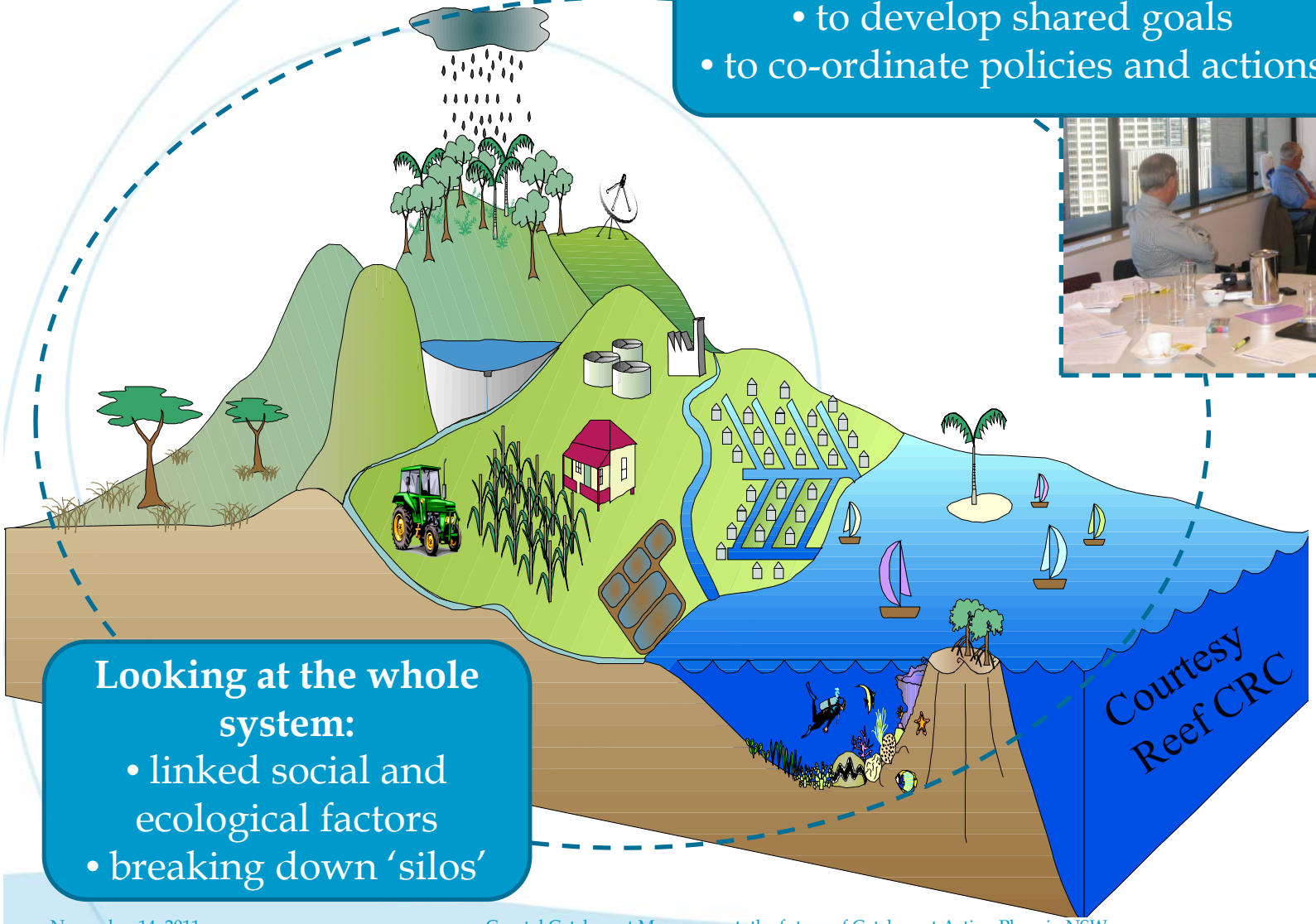


Image sourced from Sydney Morning Herald, 2007

Changing our approach to coastal planning

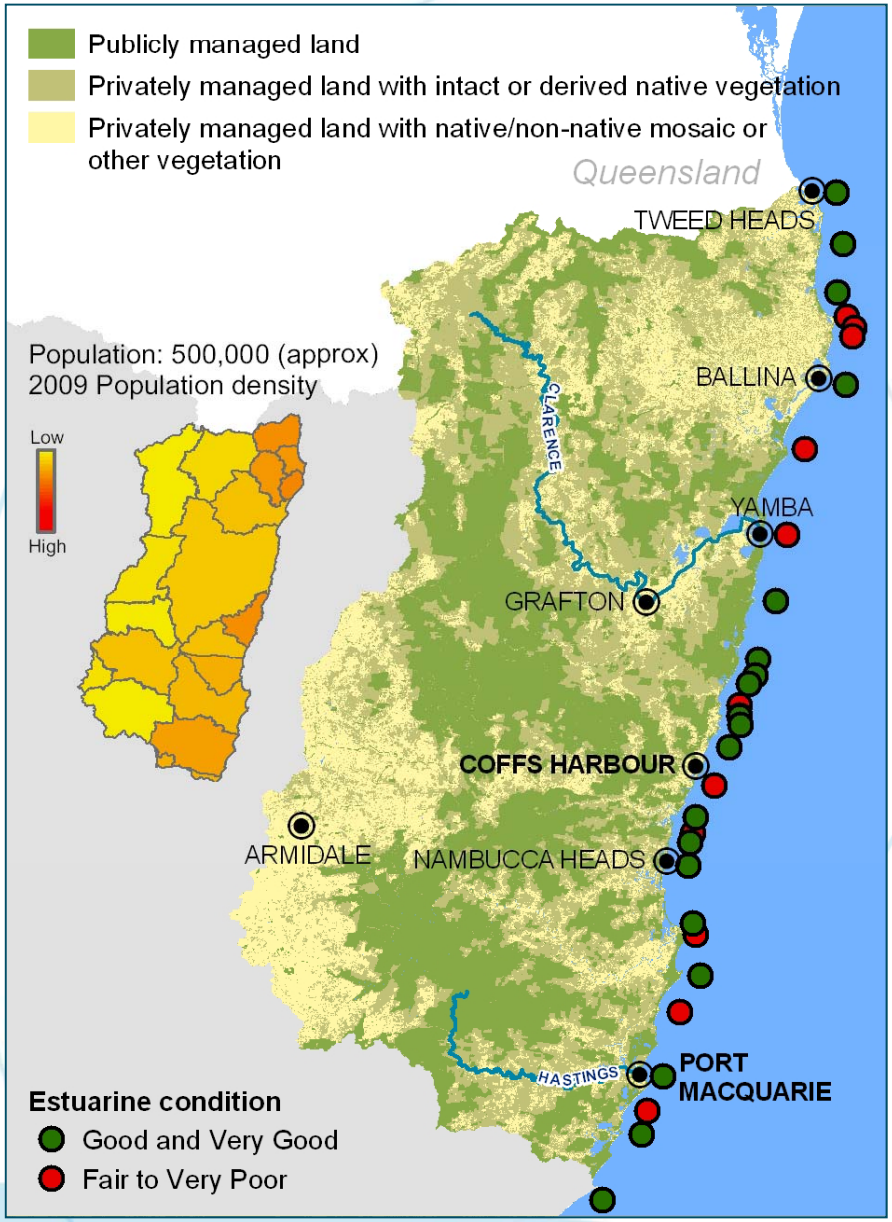
natural resources commission

Bringing stakeholders together :
- to develop shared goals
- to co-ordinate policies and actions



Looking at the whole system:
- linked social and ecological factors
- breaking down 'silos'

Challenges in Northern Rivers



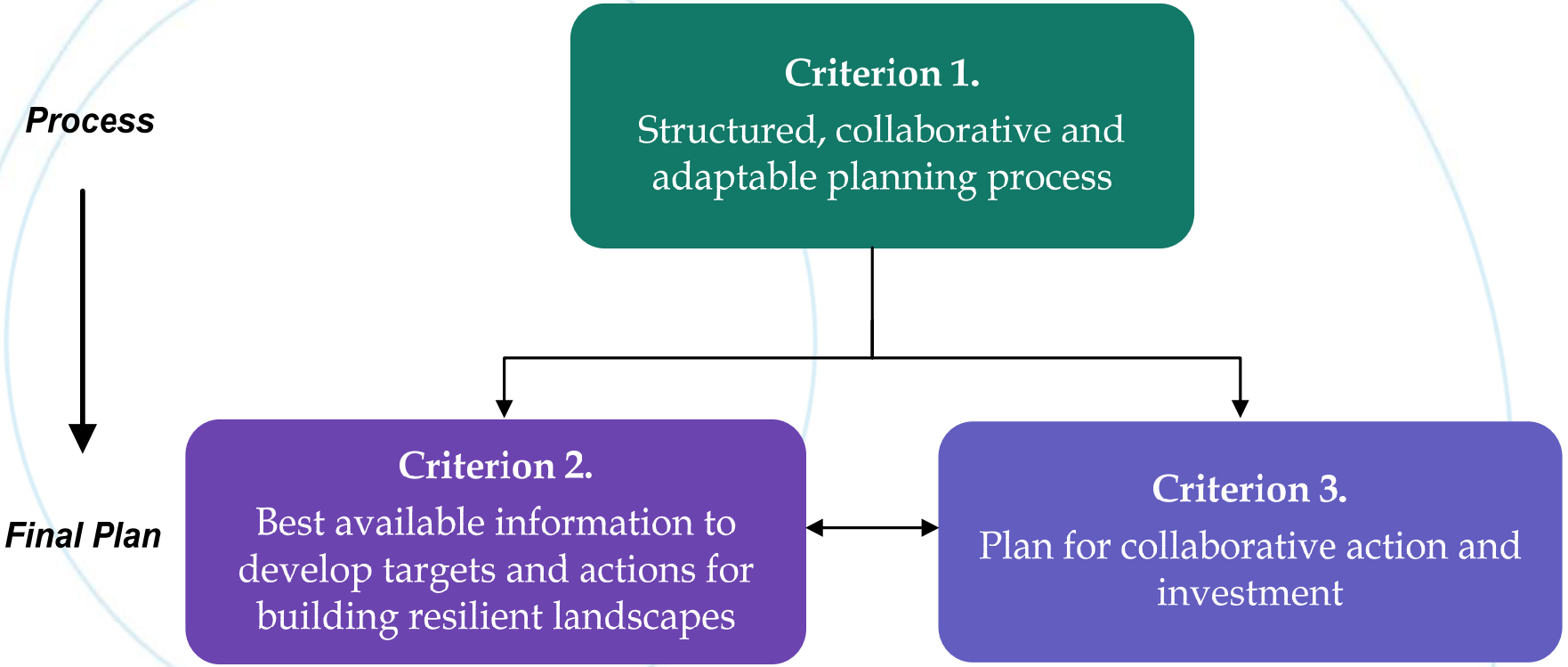
NRM and planning strategies:

- **NSW Government**
  - Far North Coast Regional Strategy
  - Mid North Coast Regional Strategy
  - Northern Rivers Catchment Action Plan
  - 11 Water Sharing Plans
  - Draft Regional Conservation Plan
  - Draft NSW Biodiversity Strategy
  - Upcoming - Strategic Regional Land Use Plans
- **Australian Government and NSW Government**
  - Northern Rivers Regional Biodiversity Management Plans
- **NSW Local Government**
  - Community Strategic Plans
  - 22 Estuary Management Plans

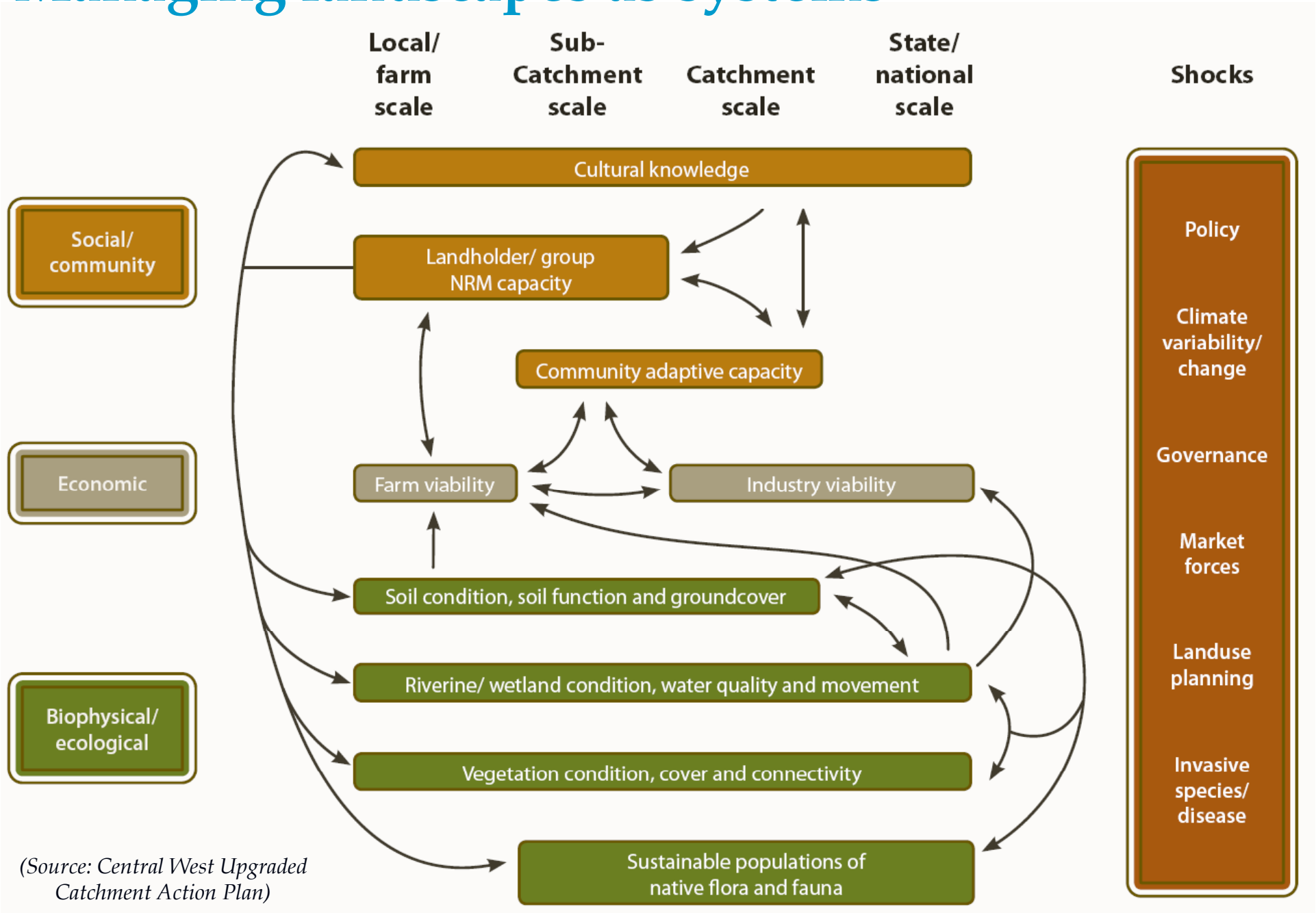
How can catchment action plans help?

- Considering current and desired landscape trajectories
- Understanding landscape systems and function
- Identifying shared goals and priorities
- Co-ordinating investment and actions

Upgrading catchment action plans

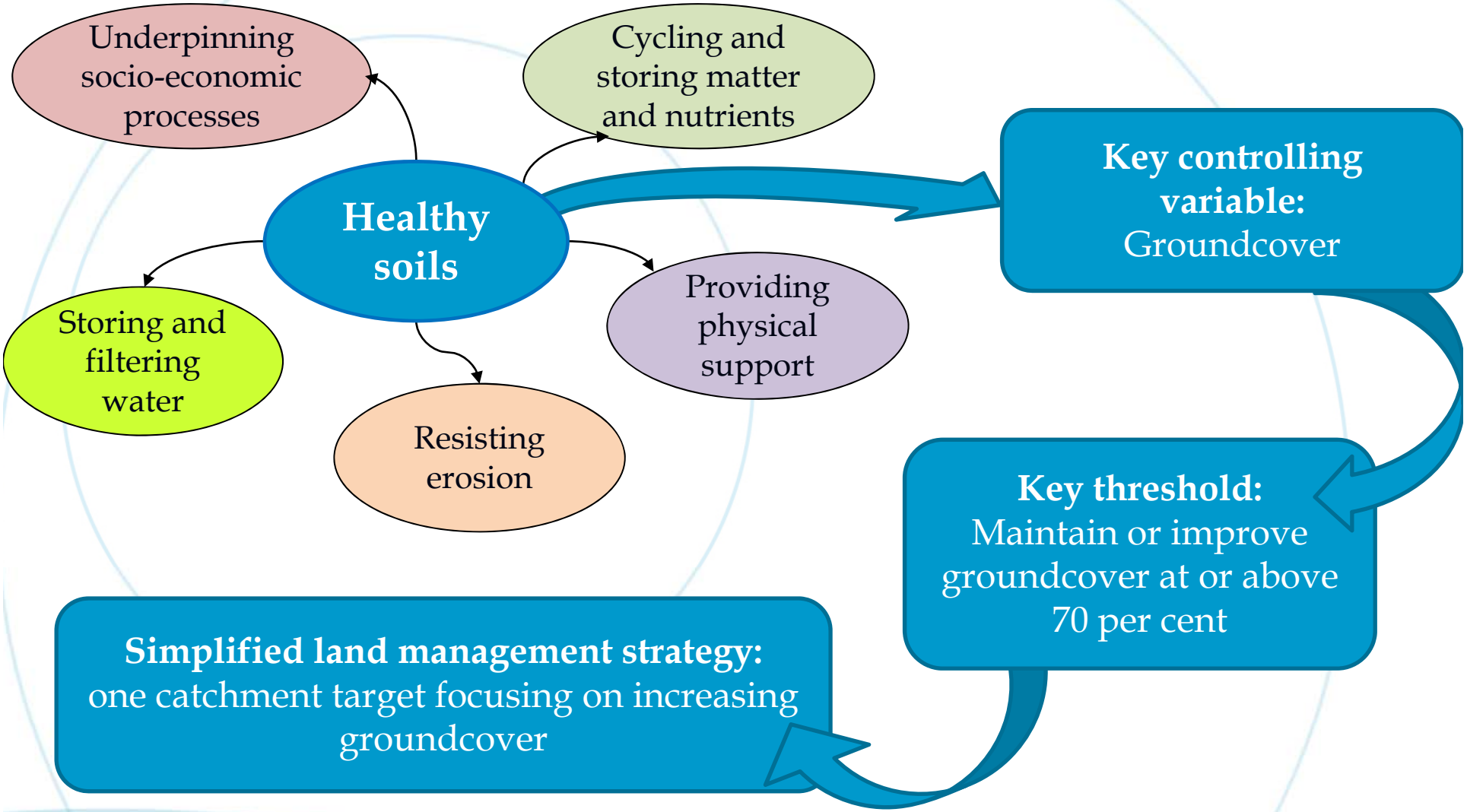


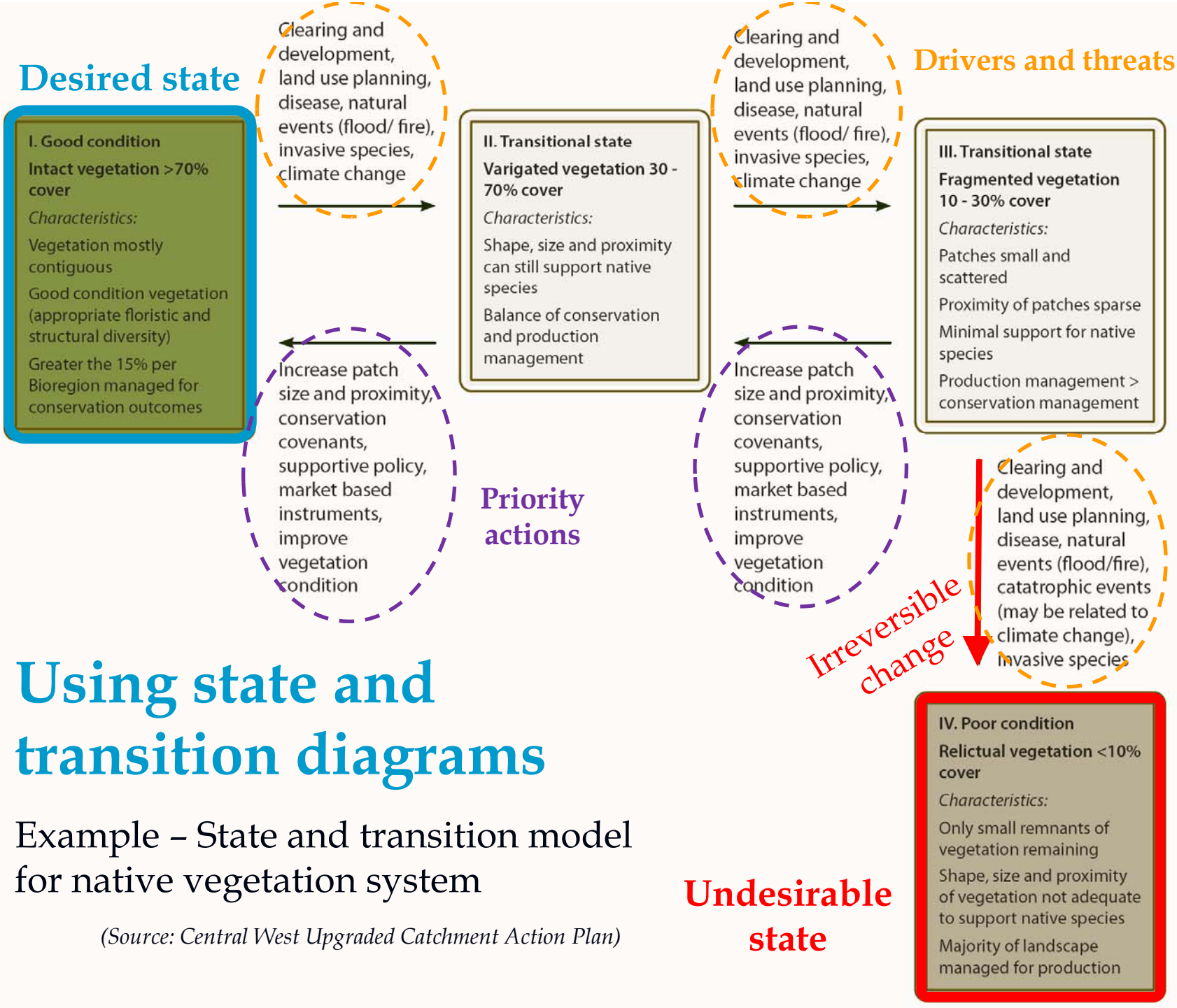
Managing landscapes as systems



(Source: Central West Upgraded Catchment Action Plan)

Using resilience to focus on what is really important





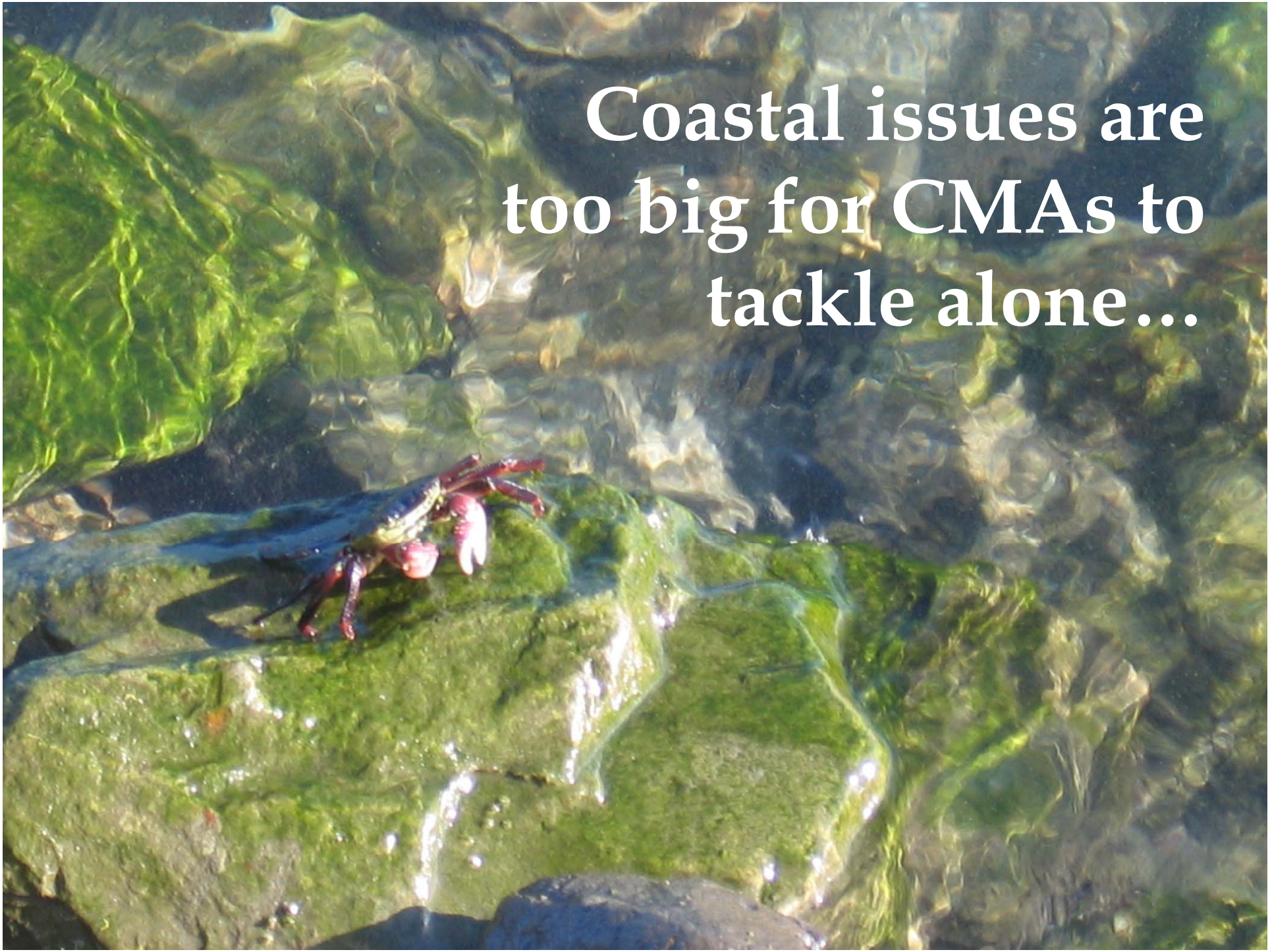
Using state and transition diagrams

Example – State and transition model for native vegetation system

(Source: Central West Upgraded Catchment Action Plan)

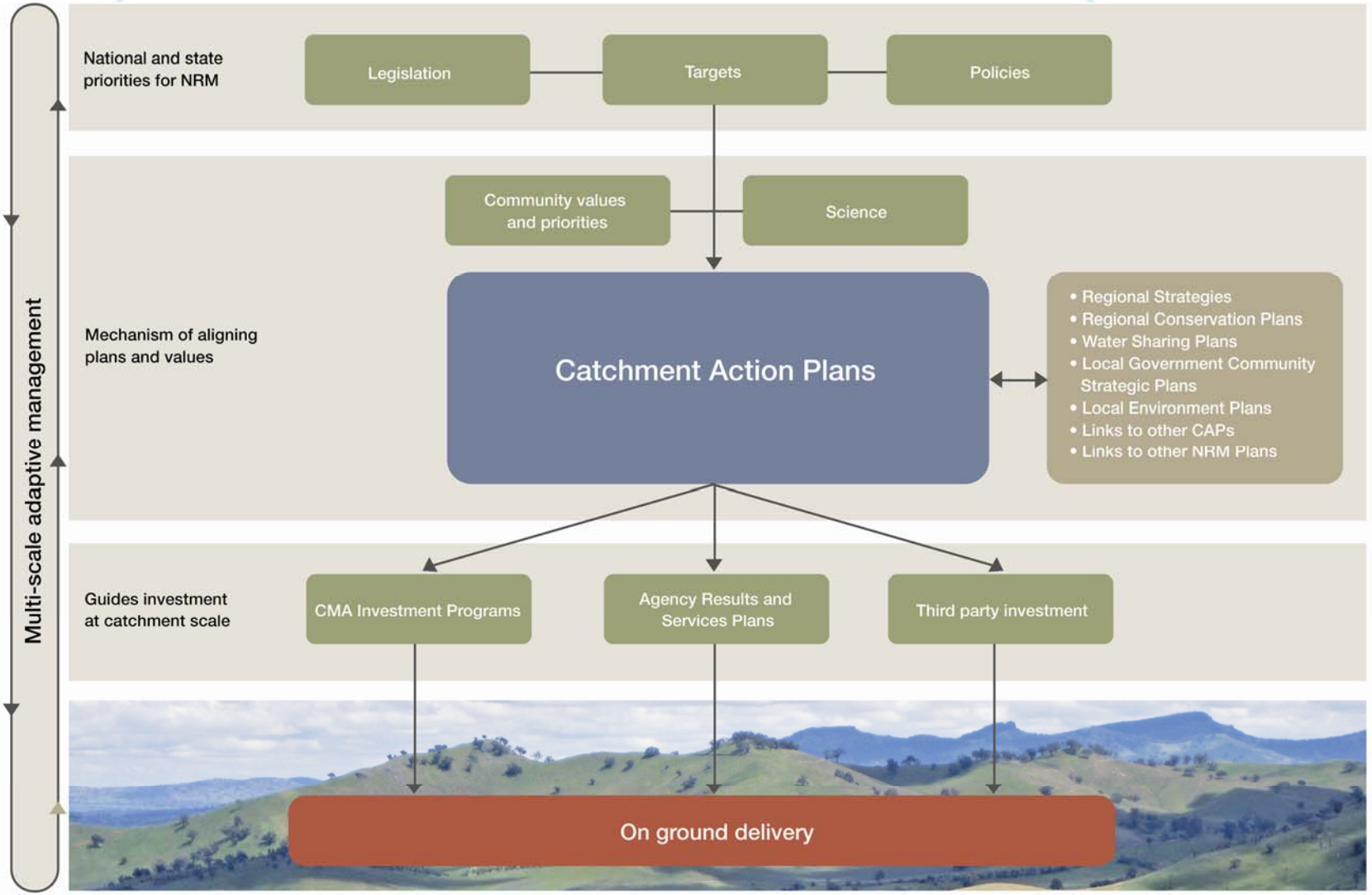
Image sourced from Southern Rivers CMA

Challenge: What does a coastal system look like?


Coastal issues are
too big for CMAs to
tackle alone…

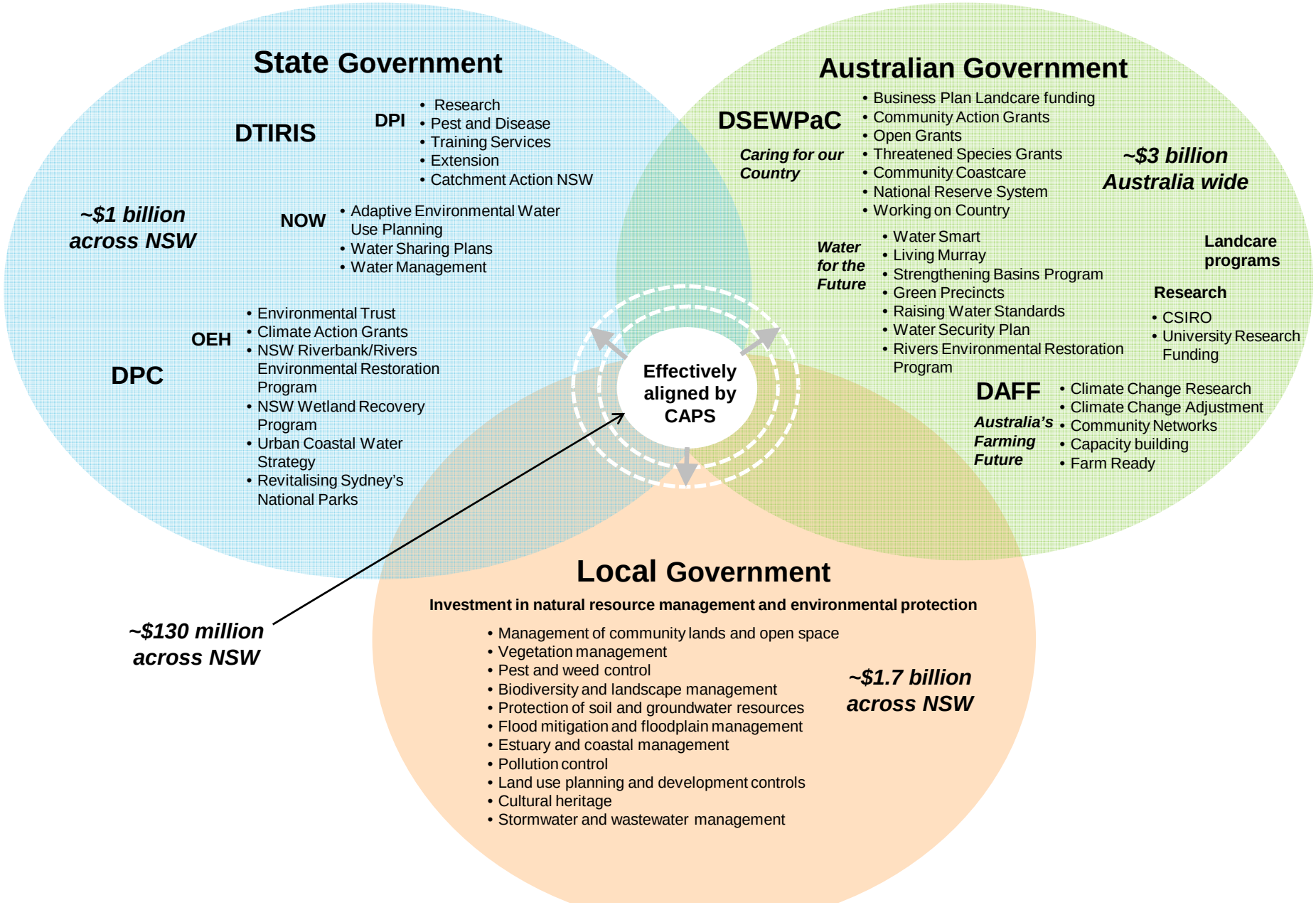
Coordinating actions and investments

Our vision for catchment action plans



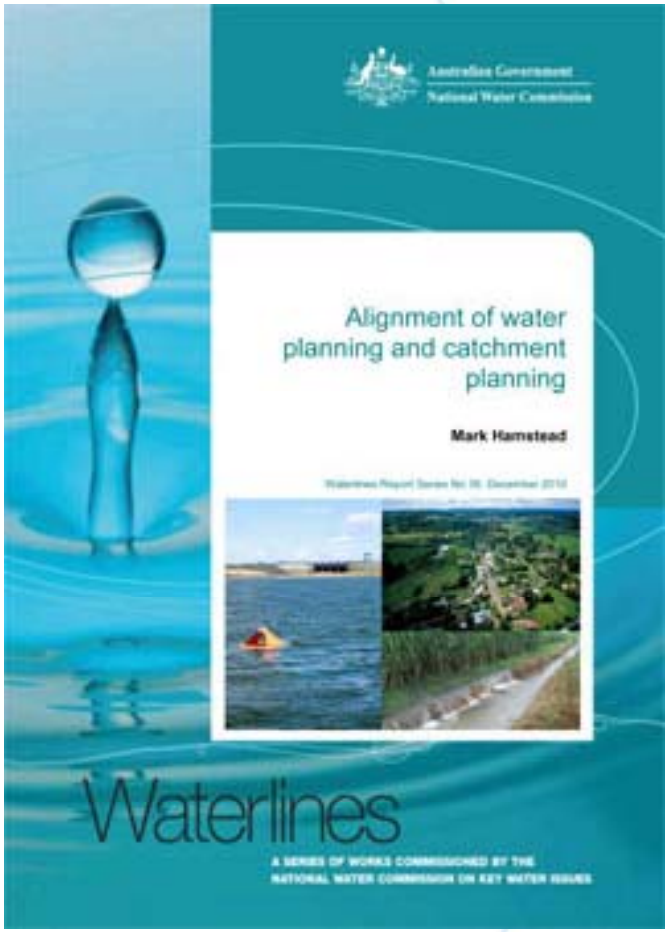
Alignment opportunities

natural resources commission



Alignment in action – water planning and catchment planning in Hunter-Central Rivers region

- Co-operation between water and catchment planners
- Strong 'alignment' possible
- Plans based on common values, information and risk assessments
- Solving state issues at local scale



Identifying common goals

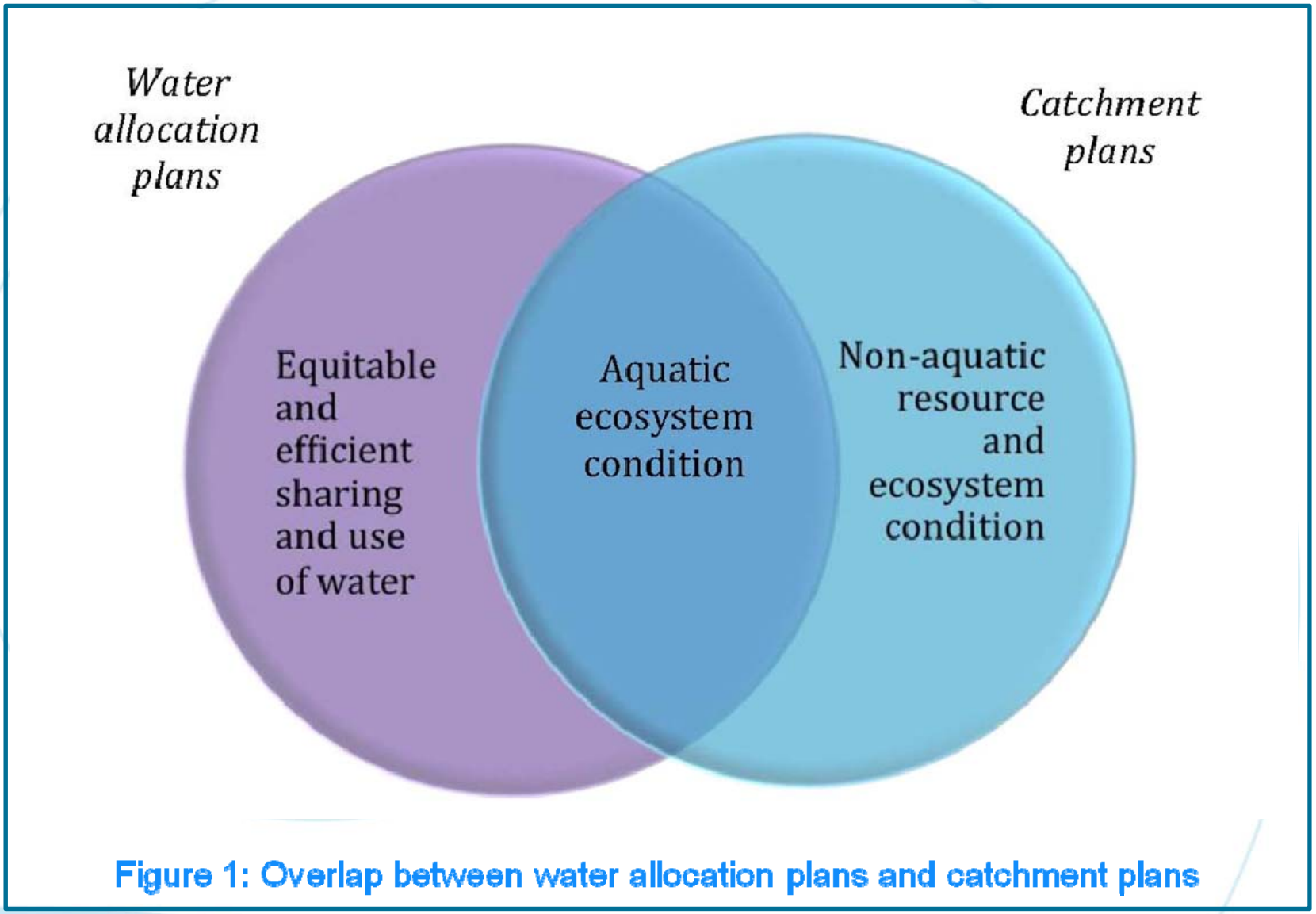
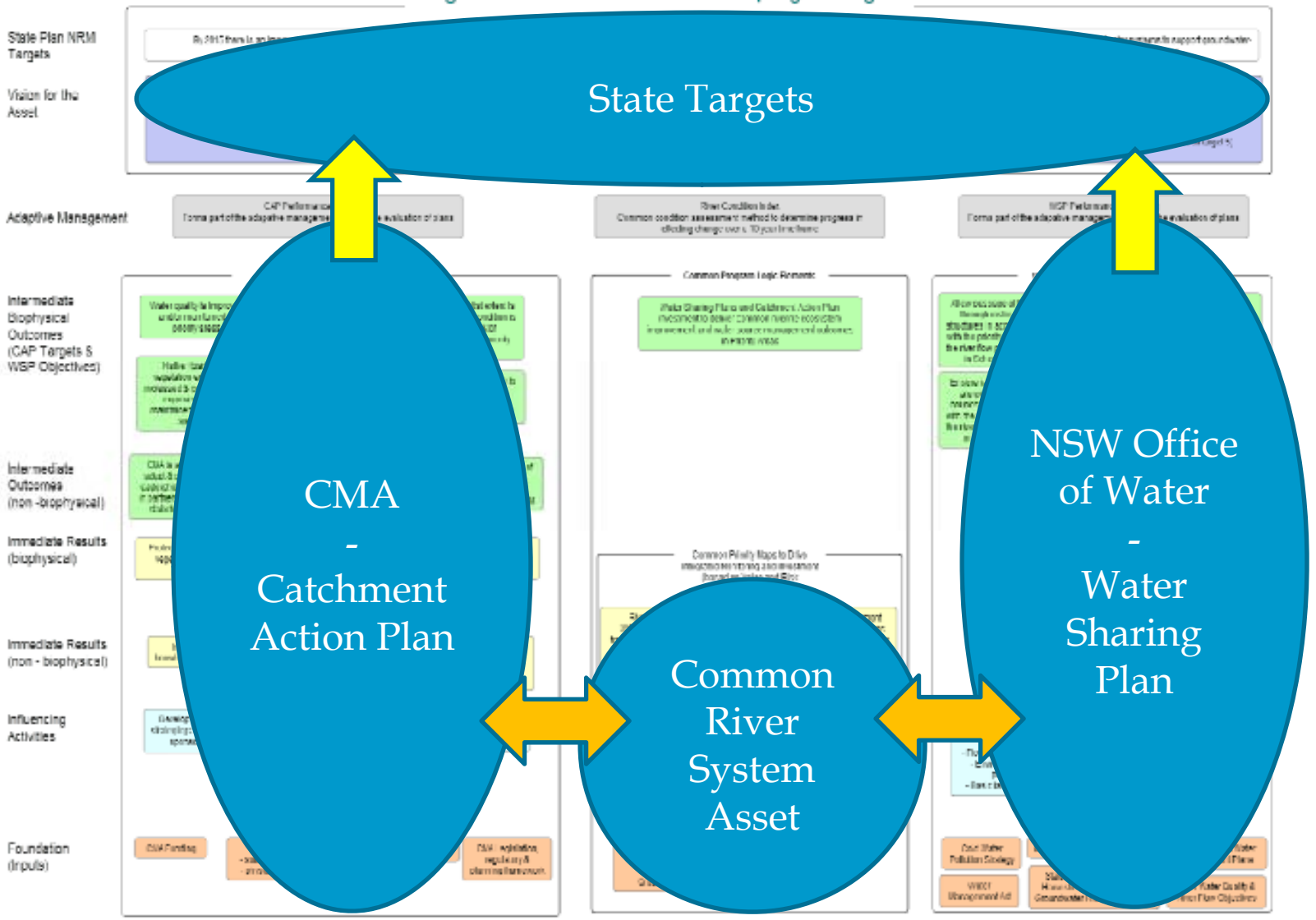


Figure 1: Overlap between water allocation plans and catchment plans

Figure 18: Linked WSP and CAP program logic



WATERLINES - ALIGNMENT OF WATER PLANNING AND CATCHMENT PLANNING 57

The decisions we all make today will open or close the opportunities that may be available to us in the future…

Get involved in upgrading your coastal catchment action plan to help determine your region's future.