



Natural Resources Commission

Summary report  
**Audit of Local Land Services’  
implementation of local strategic plans**

November 2019



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## List of acronyms

The Commission	Natural Resources Commission
IPART	Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal
KPI	Key performance indicator
LLS	Local Land Services
MERI	Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement
NSW	New South Wales

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Document No. D19/4985

ISBN: 978 1 925204 47 6

The Natural Resource Commission acknowledges and pays respect to all the Traditional Owners and their Nations of the areas covered by this report. The Commission recognises and acknowledges that the Traditional Owners have a deep cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to their lands and waters. We recognise their knowledge of natural resource management and the contributions of earlier generations, including the Elders, are valued and respected.

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## Summary

The Natural Resources Commission (the Commission) has completed the three-year audits of Local Land Services (LLS) local strategic plans.<sup>1</sup> Individual audit reports have been provided for each region. In addition, the Commission has developed this report to summarise the findings of the audits and highlight broader issues that may impact on regions' ability to deliver local strategic plans.

In relation to the delivery of actions and outcomes under the plans, the Commission found that:

- regions are delivering in line with their local strategic plans, although the assessment of local strategic plan outcomes is currently very limited
- all LLS regions have progressed most deliverables under their plans
- outcomes are being delivered despite funding constraints, with particular funding pressures in the areas of natural resource management, biosecurity and travelling stock reserves
- limited funding has impacted the extent of achievement of local strategic plan outcomes and is likely to impact achievement of outcomes into the future.

The Commission also identified the following opportunities to improve the systems supporting the implementation of plans:

- LLS regions should consider whether their local strategic plans adequately represent and articulate current regional needs. There are a number of options for regions to simplify and improve local strategic plans, if required.
- LLS regions should ensure that local strategic plans are driving day-to-day planning, supported by robust operational plans.
- While governance systems generally support local strategic plan implementation, the appropriateness of current community advisory groups to inform decision-making and meet legislative requirements should be reviewed in some LLS regions.
- Monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) frameworks should be developed as a priority so progress towards outcomes can be measured and reported and continuous improvement processes can be integrated into business operations.
- Reporting should be streamlined to focus on outcomes.
- Regional collaboration should be expanded to share lessons, leverage funding and streamline resources for cross-regional issues.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Local Land Services Act 2013* requires local boards to prepare a local strategic plan. The purpose of a local strategic plan is to 'set the vision, priorities and strategy in respect of the delivery of local land services in the region, with a focus on appropriate economic, social and environmental outcomes'. The Act also requires the Commission to undertake an audit of local strategic plans within three years of its approval by the Minister.

# 1 Introduction

The Commission has completed its audits of the local strategic plans of each of the eleven LLS regions. The local strategic plans were developed by each LLS region and approved in 2016 by the then Minister for Primary Industries, as required by the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. The Commission's audit was also a requirement of the Act, which states that each plan is to be audited within three years of its approval.

The Commission assessed the implementation of each LLS region's plan through interviews with LLS staff and a document review. The audit focussed on:

- the extent to which the outcomes of each plan were achieved in the set timeframes
- whether systems and processes are in place to support the implementation of the plans
- how outcomes were reported and whether this was in line with requirements and effective.

The Commission identified what was working well and areas that could be improved in each region, as well as the constraints that may be impacting performance. The Commission conducted each audit separately and produced a separate audit report for each region in line with its legislative requirements. These are available on the Commission's website.

This report summarises the key findings across the audits and provides additional insights on broader challenges and opportunities that the Commission considers are relevant to the ongoing implementation of LLS local strategic plans. This report:

- gives a broad idea of how local strategic plans are being implemented across the state
- highlights key issues that are impacting LLS regions more broadly
- recommends the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales (NSW) increases funding for natural resource management, biosecurity and travelling stock reserves
- shares examples of good practice across regions.

Specific recommendations for each LLS region are provided in the individual audit reports and recommendations broadly applicable across regions are summarised in this report.

## 2 LLS regions are delivering in line with local strategic plans

All regions demonstrated progress in implementing their local strategic plans.

Across all regional audits, the Commission found that:

- all LLS regions have made progress against most of their strategic plan deliverables:
  - Four LLS regions have completed or achieved between 60 and 84 percent of their strategic plan deliverables.<sup>2</sup>
  - Three LLS regions have made some progress, completing or achieving between 19 and 26 percent of their strategic plan deliverables.
  - Four LLS regions have made progress but not completed any of their strategic plan deliverables.
- five LLS regions have one or more strategic plan deliverables for which no progress has been made. However, for each of those regions, these represent less than 10 percent of the total deliverables for the region.

While the deliverables recorded against local strategic plans are likely to contribute to local strategic plan outcomes, assessment of outcomes across the LLS regions is limited. More can be done to improve the assessment of progress towards strategic plan outcomes (discussed further in **Section 4.4**).

Specific details on the progress and key successes for each region are outlined in the individual audit reports. Local strategic plan actions were not progressed or delivered due to:

- outcomes or actions no longer being relevant due to changing regional or organisational focus
- drought impacting on the focus of projects, for example, focussing on establishing stock management areas to maintain groundcover instead of new tree planting projects that were unlikely to be successful in dry conditions
- delays in the release of state-wide LLS guidance, particularly the state-wide travelling stock reserve management plan (which is in draft).<sup>3</sup>

Drought was a significant contextual factor across all LLS regions in the audit period. In response to significant customer demand in this area, regions adapted to focus on drought support. This was provided through formal workshops and training days, catch ups at LLS offices, on-farm engagements, phone advice and written information. There has been positive community feedback regarding regional LLS drought support programs and some LLS regions have used follow-up surveys to demonstrate the on-ground impact that LLS work is having.

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<sup>2</sup> Each local strategic plan sets out goals and measures progress differently. 'Deliverables' refer to the range of progress measures across the LLS regions; for example, actions, outcomes, regional priorities, strategies and performance measures. The Commission notes that deliverables are not directly comparable between LLS regions but have been broadly considered to give an overall sense of progress towards strategic plan outcomes.

<sup>3</sup> Many local strategic plans include an action to develop a regional travelling stock reserve plan of management. In the audit period, several LLS regions did not deliver this action, with several noting that development had been delayed due to a delay in the release of the state-wide LLS travelling stock reserve plan of management, which is still in draft. Some regions – after a period of delay – have developed temporary travelling stock reserve management plans.

### 3 Funding constraints have impacted the extent of regional outcomes

All LLS regions have delivered quality work despite a decline in funding and resources. More can be done to support LLS regions to achieve outcomes, including by ensuring natural resource management, travelling stock reserves and biosecurity are adequately funded.

#### 3.1 Natural resource management funding has declined

Despite being a core function of LLS, natural resource management funding through Catchment Action NSW has been significantly reduced from \$30 million per year in 2013/14 to \$11 million per year in 2018/19.

While the NSW Government has invested significant funds beyond LLS natural resource management funding (through the \$238 million Biodiversity Conservation Trust land conservation program and the \$100 million Saving our Species Program) these are highly targeted environmental programs that do not replace the ongoing work undertaken within Catchment Action NSW.

To meet their funding requirements, LLS regions have applied for funding from the National Landcare Program Phase Two. However, funding to LLS under this program has also decreased 37 percent from \$27 million in 2017/18 to \$17 million in 2018/19.

Some LLS regions are also applying for and securing funding through other avenues such as Environmental Trust programs and leveraging available funding through partnerships.

This major decline in funding has limited the number of projects that can be implemented and has resulted in the loss of skilled personnel. It has also reduced efficiency. Applying for external funding – which is often short-term and focussed on variable investor priorities – redirects already limited funding from on-ground work, adds complexity to strategic planning and impacts the continuity of investment in long-term projects.

Although regions are delivering quality work within current funding constraints, achieving the longer-term natural resource management outcomes of local strategic plans is likely to be significantly limited without further investment.

**Recommendation:**

**NSW Government should increase Catchment Action NSW funding to ensure LLS regions have adequate funding to deliver long-term, landscape-scale outcomes.**

### 3.2 The biosecurity funding model is not proportionate to the risk

The minimum property size for LLS rates (40 hectares in the Western region and 10 hectares in other regions) does not provide adequate funding to manage biosecurity risks. This particularly impacts some coastal regions where the majority of landholders have properties less than 10 hectares. For example, the Greater Sydney region has a rates base of 6,000 landholders, the funding from which is required to manage biosecurity across 40,000 additional landholders on less than 10 hectares.

Replacing the pest insect special purpose rate with the special purpose pest management rate in 2018 provided more funding for broader pest management activities in LLS regions but biosecurity is underfunded overall and this may result in key risks not being adequately managed, including a major risk of weed outbreaks once the drought breaks.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has previously recommended a reduction in the LLS minimum rateable land area to increase the pool of funds available for LLS. These additional funds would be for managing biosecurity risks associated with smaller landowners with small bush blocks, weekend getaways or non-commercial livestock. IPART recommended that a reduction from 10 hectares to 2 hectares, and acknowledged that a 40 hectares rateable land area may be more appropriate for Western LLS.<sup>4</sup>

**Recommendation:**

**Decrease the LLS minimum rateable area to ensure biosecurity risks can be adequately addressed.**

### 3.3 Travelling stock reserve fees do not cover required expenditure

LLS regions are responsible for the management of travelling stock reserves, which are public land traditionally reserved for use by travelling stock for grazing and as emergency refuges during times of drought, bushfire and flooding. While still used for these purposes, these reserves are increasingly valued for conservation benefits, recreation, apiary and Aboriginal heritage. LLS is the only public land manager that does not receive dedicated and recurrent public funds to manage public land for which they are responsible.

Current management is funded by revenue from licences and permits, as well as *ad hoc* grants from competitive government funding programs, including the National Landcare Program Phase Two. There are ongoing discussions between LLS and the Biodiversity Conservation Trust regarding funding for travelling stock reserves that primarily support conservation values.

In this audit, some LLS regions raised concerns that revenue from travelling stock reserves does not cover the cost of management, in particular management for environmental outcomes, which is a component of the LLS travelling stock reserves plan of management.

Many LLS regions acknowledged that increasing fees for travelling stock reserve services is an option but the number of users may decrease as a result of increased fees. As such, this

<sup>4</sup> IPART (2013) *Review of funding framework for Local Land Services NSW*, pp. 73-75. Available at: [https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/website/trimholdingbay/draft\\_report\\_-\\_review\\_of\\_funding\\_framework\\_for\\_local\\_land\\_services\\_nsw\\_-\\_september\\_2013.pdf](https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/website/trimholdingbay/draft_report_-_review_of_funding_framework_for_local_land_services_nsw_-_september_2013.pdf).

approach may not result in a net increase in available funds to achieve broader public benefit objectives. IPART previously identified that government funding is the most appropriate funding mechanism for travelling stock reserves on the basis of equity and economic efficiency.<sup>5</sup>

**Recommendation:**

**Make adequate ongoing government funding available to LLS for the management of travelling stock reserves for the purpose of achieving public benefits, particularly biodiversity conservation.**

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<sup>5</sup> IPART (2013) *Review of funding framework for Local Land Services NSW*, p. 23. Available at: [https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/website/trimholdingbay/draft\\_report\\_-\\_review\\_of\\_funding\\_framework\\_for\\_local\\_land\\_services\\_nsw\\_-\\_september\\_2013.pdf](https://www.ipart.nsw.gov.au/files/sharedassets/website/trimholdingbay/draft_report_-_review_of_funding_framework_for_local_land_services_nsw_-_september_2013.pdf).

## 4 There are opportunities to improve support systems and reporting

This section summarises the broader findings across the LLS regional audits and the recommendations provided to individual regions.

Overall, LLS regions have planning and governance systems in place to support the implementation of activities day-to-day. LLS regions should ensure their local strategic plans reflect current regional priorities to underpin these systems. The extent to which local strategic plans are driving planning is variable across the LLS regions and there should be a clear line of sight between local strategic plans and day-to-day activities.

The majority of regions do not have MERI frameworks, which are critical for tracking and improving outcomes. MERI frameworks should be developed as a priority.

The majority of regions do not report on progress towards achieving local strategic plan outcomes. Reporting should be streamlined to focus on key outcomes and be regularly reported to the board.

The Commission supports regional collaboration where regions consider it adds value to share lessons, leverage funding and streamline resources for cross-regional issues.

### 4.1 Local strategic plans should reflect current regional priorities

The Commission acknowledges that, in some cases, regions may consider that their local strategic plans no longer clearly articulate current regional priorities.

When the local strategic plans were developed, LLS was a new organisation comprised of a number of existing agencies, each of which had its own strategic plans and priorities. While sufficient at the time, strategic plans generally reflected an amalgamation of previous plans inherited from former organisations and early understandings of strategic priorities. This resulted in many plans having a large number and broad range of deliverables including activities, priorities, outputs and outcomes.

Since the local strategic plans were developed, LLS regions have undergone significant change and there is now greater clarity around their roles and strategic priorities. Local priorities may also have changed due to contextual factors, broader changes in LLS organisational structure and functional arrangements, staffing levels and funding, and legislative responsibilities (for example, new responsibilities around biosecurity and the regionalisation of the sustainable land management unit).

The Commission noted in its review of local strategic plans in 2016 that, while the plans generally complied with key legislative requirements, regions should continually review and revise plans to ensure they remain targeted, strategic and relevant to regional needs. This aligns with the requirements of the *Local Land Services Act 2013*.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Local Land Services Act 2013*, Section 54(1).

LLS regions should consider whether their local strategic plans adequately represent and articulate current and future regional needs. Regions undertook extensive work in preparation for this audit and the momentum from this process provides a good opportunity to do this.

There are a number of options for regions to simplify and improve local strategic plans, if required, depending on regional capacity. There is provision under the *Local Land Services Act 2013* to amend plans before they expire in 2021.<sup>7</sup> Alternatively, regions could develop clearer guidance on priorities without formally amending the local strategic plan, so long as there is a clear line of sight between any new guidance and the plan.

North Coast LLS has complemented its local strategic plan with a 'Plan on a Page', which better articulates regional needs and provides more targeted guidance and direction for the organisation (see **Box 1** below).

Local strategic plans should clearly articulate key performance indicators (KPIs) for each outcome. A set of KPIs should span LLS' functional areas but reflect a small number of specific regional priorities. These should be tailored to each region's specific strategic outcomes. For example, KPIs could monitor:

- improvements in riparian vegetation, native vegetation, target habitat health or corridors
- customer service
- ground cover
- soil health
- practice change (through adoption of best management practices)
- pest activity impacts on agriculture, native flora or native fauna
- biosecurity
- Aboriginal participation.

These should sit alongside standard, 'business as usual' KPIs that monitor financial matters, safety, regulatory performance and the delivery of shared responsibilities with the Department of Primary Industries (for example, biosecurity and emergency management responsibilities).

An expanded suite of KPIs with more specific targets (for example, for different pest species or for different habitats) may sit within functional area plans, depending on regional priorities.

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<sup>7</sup> *Local Land Services Act*, Section 53(1).

### **Box 1: Spotlight on good practice – North Coast LLS Plan on a Page**

As part of its 'Think, Change, Achieve' program, North Coast LLS has developed its three-year (2018-2021) Plan on a Page, which articulates local strategic plan outcomes and how they will be achieved more clearly and succinctly.

The Plan on a Page has not replaced the local strategic plan, instead it simplifies it, replacing 12 strategies and 43 actions with five streamlined priority programs. Each program identifies three to five key focus areas accompanied by a small number of success measures.

The Plan on a Page is now the primary guidance document for North Coast LLS to deliver its local strategic plan. It provides clarity for LLS staff and the board, focusses monitoring and reporting and improves day-to-day implementation of the local strategic plan. Actions are not included in the Plan on a Page, as they are covered in program plans and work plans.

## **4.2 Local strategic plans should drive day-to-day planning**

While local strategic plans set the high-level outcomes for LLS regions, business planning processes translate these outcomes to day-to-day activities. For most regions these include functional area plans to guide delivery of key service areas over a number of years, business plans that outline annual budgets and priorities for the region, and project plans that provide detailed guidance at the project level.

Planning processes generally support the implementation of on-ground activities. However, as regions are increasingly required to seek external funding (particularly for natural resource management and agricultural advice), business planning is increasingly driven by investor priorities instead of local strategic plans.

Most regions have developed or are developing functional area plans to operationalise the local strategic plan. The Commission supports the completion and implementation of these plans, ensuring that they link into regional MERI frameworks by defining baselines, setting targets for identified measures and outlining program logics. Regions should also consider including needs assessments, funding options assessments, prioritisation of key issues and communications strategies into these plans.

Business plans set out the projects and programs to be undertaken for each LLS region and are currently undertaken on an annual basis. Business plans have changed in format and timeframe since the local strategic plans were approved. Most regions have adopted or are planning to adopt the state-wide annual business plan template. This template currently does not allow for business plans to align with local strategic plans and is focussed on state-wide goals and standard outputs. The Commission supports North Coast LLS' approach to slightly adjust the standard template to include linkages back to its own local strategic plan.

### 4.3 Governance systems support strategic plan implementation

Regional governance systems generally support strategic plan implementation. Local boards have been successful in managing regions through the challenges of being a new organisation and periods of major change, including structural changes and reductions in core funding. Local boards and board sub-committees provide local knowledge, diverse skills and independent thinking to guide strategic decision-making.

The majority of LLS regions have Aboriginal community advisory groups and regional committees for specific issues such as pests and weeds. However, a number of LLS regions do not currently have a general community advisory group, which is a group that is representative of the broader community required under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*.

Many LLS regions are actively considering the appropriateness and effectiveness of their community advisory group arrangements and intend to establish a general community advisory group. The Commission is supportive of this and considers that all regions should review community advisory group arrangements as required to ensure they adequately represent the broader community across a range of issues, in line with legislative requirements.

### 4.4 Regional MERI frameworks should be developed as a priority

Although LLS regions are delivering on-ground work, the majority of regions have not yet developed MERI frameworks to demonstrate the achievement of strategic plan outcomes. Developing and implementing these frameworks was a key recommendation of the Commission's review of local strategic plans in 2016, as they underpin good strategic planning, demonstrate achievement and support continuous improvement.

Current MERI approaches are broadly focussed on monitoring and reporting on State LLS outputs and investor-specified metrics for individual projects.

Many regions indicated that they delayed developing MERI frameworks because they understood that State LLS would be developing a state-wide MERI framework that would identify key indicators across LLS as a whole. This intent is reflected in most regional strategic plans. However, this framework has not yet been developed and some regions have begun developing their regional frameworks.

The Commission supports the development of regional MERI frameworks as a priority. There may be an opportunity for regions to collaborate with each other. State LLS should provide engagement and strategic support as required, while also giving regions the flexibility to develop frameworks that suit regional needs and allow progress to be tracked against local strategic plan outcomes.

State LLS should also engage regions as part of its development of the state-wide IT system (myLAND) to ensure it has the flexibility and functionality to allow region-specific indicators to be tracked.

Regional MERI frameworks should align with best practice and:

- focus on a small number of clear and simple indicators accompanied by measures that can be monitored at a reasonable cost, which are SMART and aligned to local strategic plans
- prioritise developing baseline measures and targets for key outcomes

- use program logics (at the project, program or functional area level) to clearly articulate:
  - how activities contribute to local strategic plan outcomes
  - the assumptions that underpin links between activities and outcomes
  - what will be monitored directly - noting that direct outcome measurement should be prioritised for long-term, high-cost or more experimental projects
- be supported by adequate funding and resources for long-term monitoring
- encourage cross-regional collaboration and partnerships with external parties on long-term outcome monitoring at the landscape scale
- facilitate the sharing of lessons and continuous improvement within and between regions
- identify targets and data sources so it is clear how each KPI is being tracked
- identify reporting frequency for each audience with board reporting on strategic plan outcomes being at least bi-annually
- be continually reviewed and revised based on changing conditions and new knowledge.

There are numerous examples of good practice in specific aspects of MERI across the regions, which may also be referred to when developing regional frameworks. **Box 2** outlines these examples.

#### Box 2: Spotlight on good practice - MERI

- **Hunter LLS MERI Strategy and Action Plan:** Hunter LLS revised and published their MERI Strategy and Action Plan in 2017. The strategy has increased the region's focus on outcome reporting and continuous improvement. The plan's use of program logics to link day-to-day activities with the local strategic plan ensures work is aligned with the region's strategic goals. A focus on outcomes monitoring streamlines reporting. The plan drives continuous improvement through clear guidance on undertaking evaluations, as well as through less resource-intensive 'continuous improvement and learning reviews' that are completed more regularly and reported in one- to two-page reports covering what went well and what could be improved.
- **North Coast LLS monthly monitoring and reporting on agricultural advice:** Phone advice is an important aspect of agricultural advice provided by all regions but which is generally not well documented or measured. North Coast LLS has developed a monthly reporting system to track phone advice, which assesses the types and locations of stakeholders calling and the questions being asked. This reporting has allowed North Coast LLS to be more strategic in its approach and adaptive to regional needs. It allows them to understand their customers and target their services to their needs. It also informs the local board on the type of agricultural advice being provided, so they can provide advice on whether this aligns with the strategic goals of LLS.
- **Murray LLS long-term biodiversity monitoring on travelling stock reserves:** Despite core funding being no longer available for long-term, outcomes-focussed monitoring, Murray LLS has undertaken landscape-scale biodiversity monitoring since 2007. This was made possible through a partnership with the Australian National University. Monitoring includes landscape-scale benchmarks to track changes to vegetation condition across 70 travelling stock reserves. Murray LLS has also invested in woodland bird benchmarking and monitoring across its travelling stock reserves as a measure of ecosystem diversity, and as a surrogate for environmental health and sustainable land use.
- **Monitoring travelling stock reserves:**
  - Riverina LLS use GPS tracking collars and telemetry at water points to remotely monitor travelling stock reserves. This has reduced the need for on-site inspections, increased compliance and improved communications with neighbours.

- Murray LLS developed a rapid assessment and monitoring method that can be used by land managers with a basic botanical and scientific skillset and limited time to determine travelling stock reserve condition. Other LLS regions have adopted this approach.
- **Monitoring pests:** Thermal imaging has been trialled in a number of regions to inform pest animal control activities (particularly pigs and deer) by assessing population size. Aerial surveys have been used to establish GPS coordinates for rabbit warrens, which has enabled more efficient and effective control, while the use of drones for small and medium sized surveys has reduced costs.

## 4.5 Reporting should be streamlined to focus on outcomes

LLS regions regularly report to their local boards on the implementation of activities relevant to local strategic plans, often aligned with annual business plans. However, reports generally do not focus on progress towards strategic plan outcomes. Current board reporting should be refocussed and streamlined to clearly demonstrate the cumulative status of key local strategic plan outcomes, as well as highlighting key risks to outcomes.

Given local boards are ultimately responsible for the implementation of local strategic plans, information on key outcomes should be reported to the board at least bi-annually to ensure board members have best available information to understand progress, identify risks and make strategic decisions. This information should be provided in an easy-to-understand format (for example, a 'traffic light' reporting system).

The Commission acknowledges that regions undertake a significant amount of reporting already, with increasing reporting demands from State LLS and external investors, and limited resources to meet these requirements. Regular reporting of outcomes to the board should not create additional reporting requirements and instead should replace activity-focussed reporting as soon as it is practical to do so. Issues related to activity-level monitoring and operations should be reported to the board by exception when important issues are identified. Northern Tablelands LLS has begun reporting on progress towards its strategic plan outcomes (see **Box 3** below).

Public reporting is not a requirement of the *Local Land Services Act 2013* or any local strategic plans. However, the *Local Land Services Act 2013* did require community consultation to be undertaken as part of the development of the local strategic plans. By extension, LLS regions should publicly report on the implementation of local strategic plans. All LLS regions report on output-based metrics required by State LLS, which contribute to a five-year state-wide achievements report that is publicly available. There is currently limited public reporting on outcomes and streamlined reporting on local strategic plan outcomes should be made publicly available.

**Box 3: Spotlight on good practice – Northern Tablelands reports on achievement of local strategic plan KPIs**

Northern Tablelands LLS' board reporting is integrated into the planning framework, is transparent and highlights key risks.

An Operational Plan Review and Report is presented to the board each year that includes qualitative information on core priorities and quantitative results against KPIs set out in its local strategic plan, with clear links to local strategic plan outcomes and cumulative progress towards these outcomes. The report provides transparency around results, including justification for ratings where required and statements confirming planned activities have been completed.

The report also documents key risks to local strategic plan outcomes, proposed corrective actions, and good practice and key learnings from previous programs. This gives the board good awareness of issues and tactics to meet regional outcomes.

## 4.6 Regional collaboration should be expanded

Increasing the sharing of lessons learned – including good practice – is likely to increase efficiency and effectiveness. The Commission supports LLS regional collaboration to more effectively to leverage funding for larger scale projects and better use resources to address cross-border issues. Regional staff have consistently stated that they are open to collaboration across regions, for example, having regular catch-ups with people in the same functional roles. There are some good examples of regional collaboration already, which are outlined in **Box 4**.

### **Box 4: Spotlight on good practice – Regional collaboration**

Although collaboration can be improved, there are examples where regions are working together to improve delivery and results, including:

- North Coast LLS has secured \$10 million in funding from the former Department of Industry for a major marine estate management pilot project which will be implemented in collaboration with Hunter and South East LLS. The project focuses on the Richmond catchment and is aimed at reducing erosion and sediment impacts via bank protection, riparian restoration and road surface maintenance works. This partnership allowed regions to apply for larger grants and manage larger projects. Shared project management also reduced administration costs.
- Central West and Central Tablelands LLS are currently working together in a number of areas including the development of a regional-level MERI framework.
- Hunter LLS provides GIS mapping services to a number of regions including North Coast and Central West.