



Review of *Catchment Action NSW*  
2013-14 funding allocations to  
Catchment Management  
Authorities

May 2013

## Enquiries

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## List of acronyms

CAP	Catchment Action Plan
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
NRC	Natural Resources Commission
NSW	New South Wales

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# 1 Executive summary

Under Part A of the Ministerial request (included as **Attachment 1**), the Minister for Primary Industries (the Minister) has requested that the NRC:

- recommend a potential funding profile for allocating *Catchment Action NSW* funds between the Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) for 2013-14 by 8 May 2013
- review differences between the current and potential CMA funding profile and advise on related risks that should be considered by the Government in making final funding allocation decisions.

In determining recommendations under Part A of the Ministerial request, the NRC has applied the same six-stage decision-making process used to guide *Catchment Action NSW* funding allocations over the last five years.

However, the operating environment for this review has changed due to a shift from 13 to 11 CMAs, and will continue to evolve in 2014 when Local Land Services take responsibility for *Catchment Action NSW* funds. Given these institutional changes, and the timeframe available for this review, the NRC consulted with CMAs, the Department of Primary Industries and Treasury to agree on an approach to this funding allocation process. Details of the review scope and approach are provided in the remainder of this report.

Under Part A of the Ministerial request, the NRC recommends that:

- 1 The Minister should adopt the recommended funding profile in **Figure 1** for *Catchment Action NSW* funding to CMAs for 2013-14 (refer to **Attachment 2** for complete allocation figures for the recommended funding profile)
- 2 When Local Land Services are established part-way through 2013-14, the Minister should adopt a revised funding profile for the proportion of *Catchment Action NSW* funding that will be directed to these new organisations, informed by the NRC's advice on 30 September 2013 as per Part B of the Ministerial request.

**Figure 2** shows that if \$30 million funding is allocated via the recommended profile, all CMAs experience an increase in funding in 2013-14 compared with their 2012-13 allocations. Transitional funding has also been provided to maintain community engagement and project delivery in amalgamated CMA regions. Residual risks associated with the recommended funding profile relate to data limitations within the assessment criteria. The NRC is confident these risks will not have a significant impact on Government's return on investment.

In addition to providing advice on 2013-14 allocations, the Minister has also requested that the NRC conduct a more comprehensive review of the funding methodology and recommend how it can be refined and applied to Local Land Services by 30 September 2013 (see Part B in **Attachment 1**). The methodology and *Catchment Action NSW* allocation profile will need to be revised to reflect the new boundaries and arrangements agreed upon for Local Land Services. Further, there will be the opportunity to review the principles, assumptions and data inputs of the methodology.

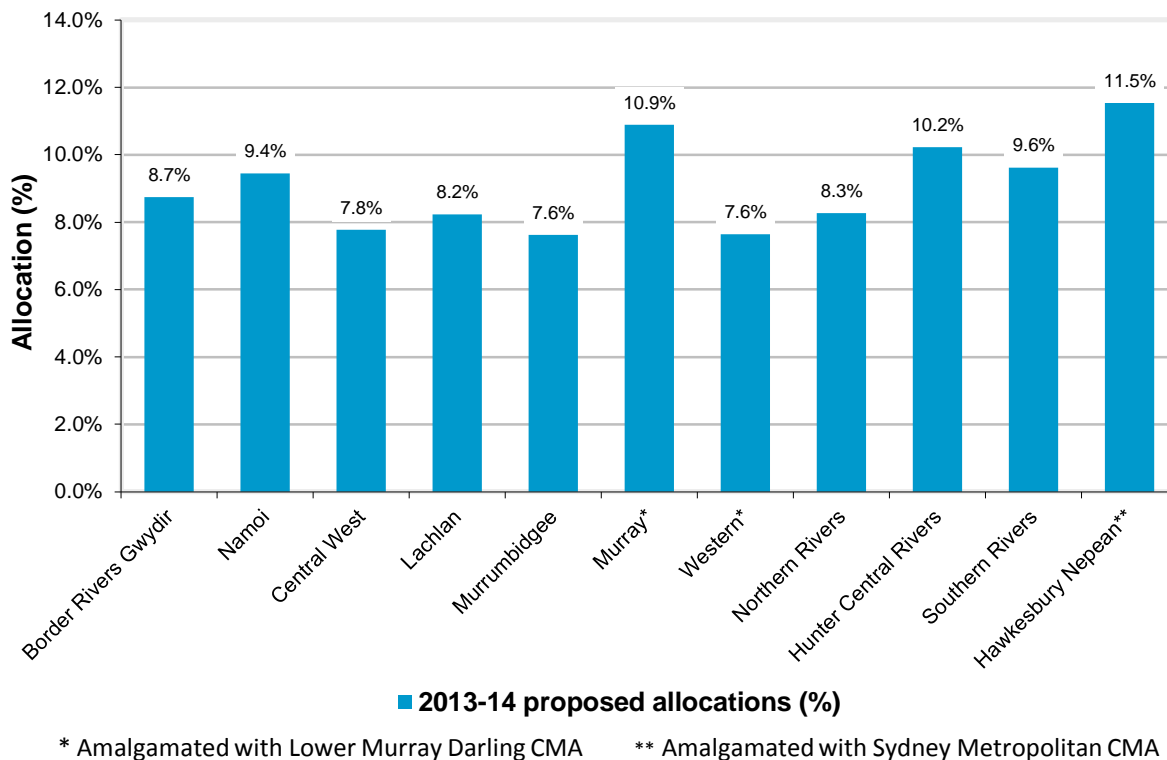


Figure 1: 2013-14 proposed proportional allocation per CMA based on *priorities and effectiveness*<sup>1</sup>

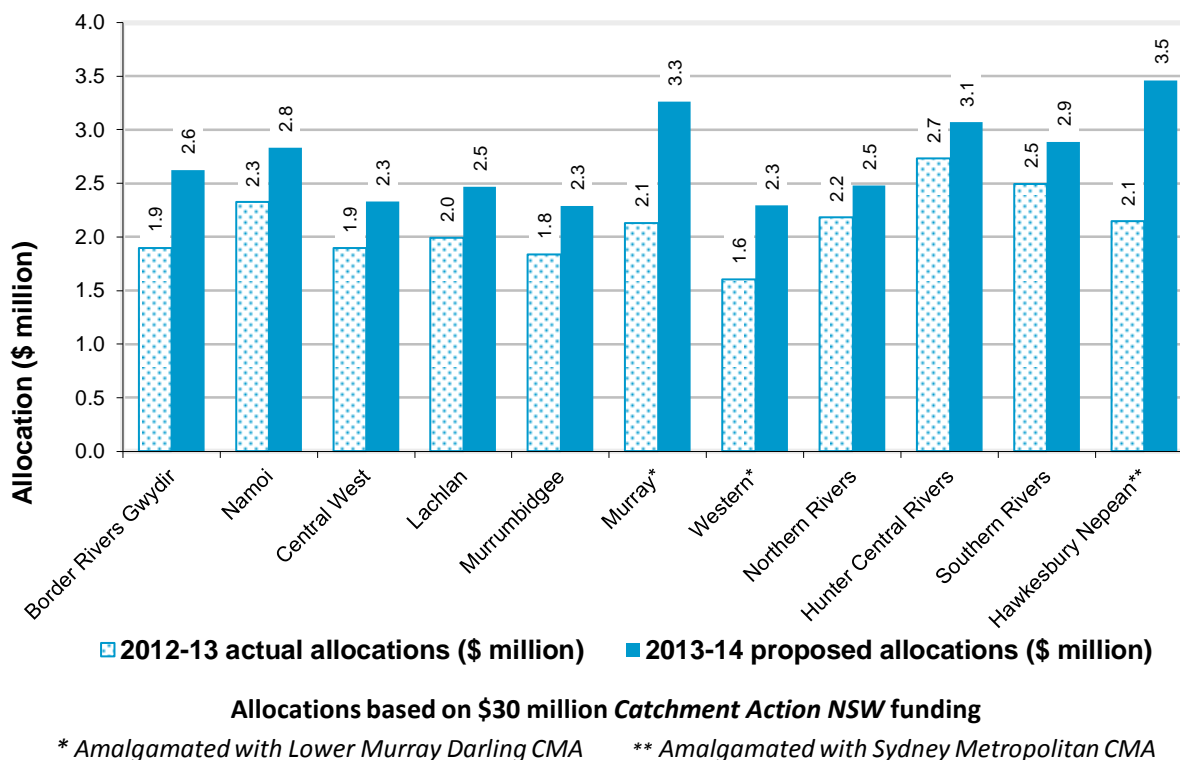


Figure 2: Comparison of 2012-13 actual allocations and 2013-14 proposed allocations for \$30 million *Catchment Action NSW* funding<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Allocations provided in Figures 1 and 2 do not add to 100 per cent or \$30 million due to rounding. Complete allocation figures underpinning the recommended funding profile are provided in **Attachment 2**.

## 2 Overview

### 2.1 Six stage decision-making process

For the past five years, *Catchment Action NSW* investment funds have been allocated using a six-stage decision-making process. This process is designed to allocate funding in a way that maximises return on investment and the likelihood of improving natural resource condition across NSW.

Figure 3 sets out the six-stages within the funding allocation decision-making process.

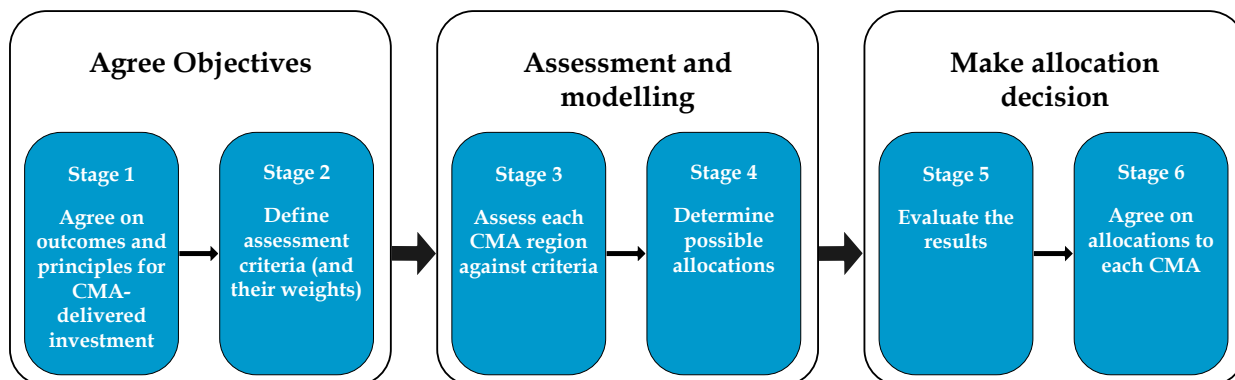


Figure 3: Decision-making process for allocating funding to CMAs

In 2008, Government agreed on the following investment principles for *Catchment Action NSW* funding to CMAs:

- **Invest in priority natural resource issues (*priorities*)**  
To invest where the natural resources are under the greatest threat, in the best condition and where they are most valued by local, state and national communities, and where CMA-delivered funding can have the most impact.
- **Invest cost effectively and provide incentives to perform effectively (*effectiveness*)**  
To generate the greatest improvement for a given amount of funding.

These two investment principles inform the multi-criteria analysis decision support tool that the NRC developed to assist in Stages 2, 3 and 4 of the process. Figure 4 sets out the analytical framework for this decision support tool, including details about assessment criteria and their relative weightings.

For more information about the six-stage decision-making process and decision support tool please refer to the NRC's 2010 report *Review of Catchment Action NSW funding allocation to Catchment Management Authorities*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Natural Resources Commission (2010), *Review of Catchment Action NSW funding allocations to Catchment Management Authorities*, October. Available via the NRC website at: <http://nrc.nsw.gov.au/Workwedo/Fundingallocation/CatchmentActionNSWFundingAllocationToCatchmentManagementAuthorities.aspx>

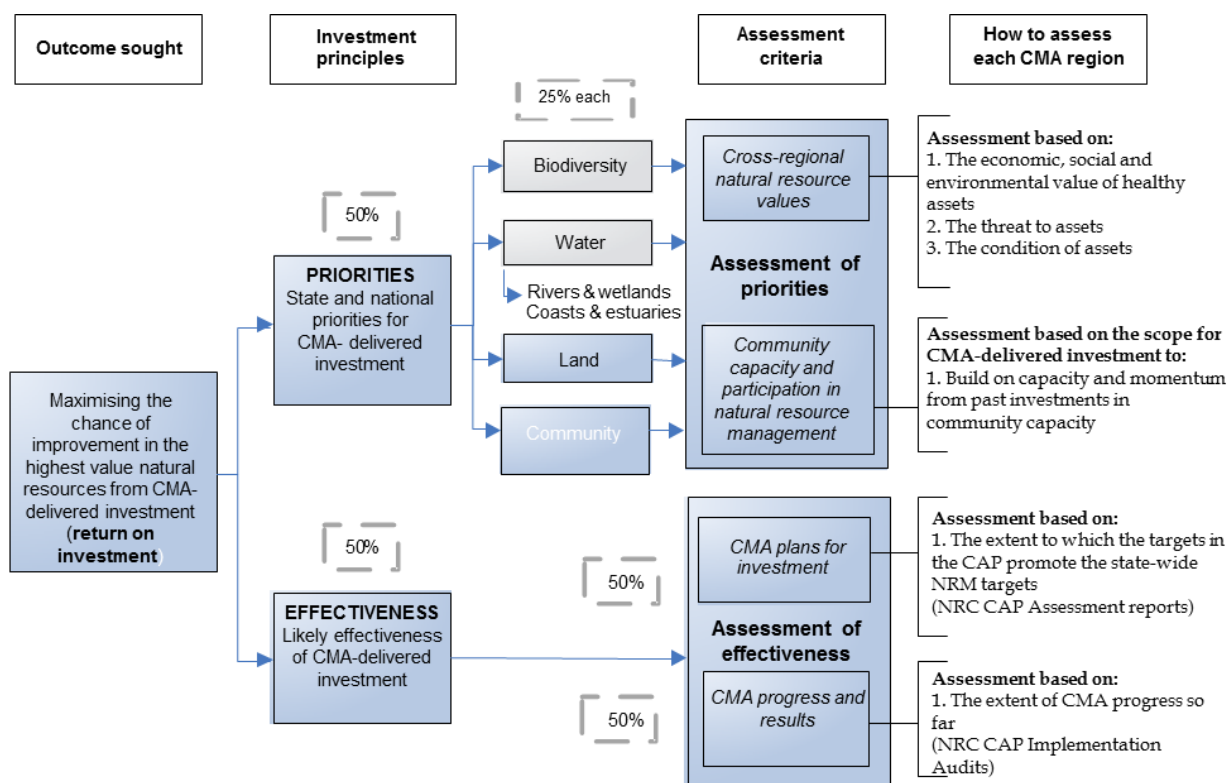


Figure 4: Analytical framework within the multi-criteria analysis decision support tool

## 2.2 Approach to this review

The NRC, after consulting with CMAs, the Department of Primary Industries and Treasury, has adopted an approach to allocating the 2013-2014 funding that is appropriate for the period of transition to Local Land Services. The approach taken was influenced by the following factors:

- **timeframe** – the NRC needed to provide advice to the Minister on *Catchment Action NSW* funding allocations to CMAs in 2013-2014 by 8 May 2013
- **institutional change** – NSW is in the midst of a period of significant change in the institutional arrangements for natural resource management; for example, in October 2012 the number of CMAs changed from 13 to 11, and from January 2014 Local Land Services are expected to take responsibility for *Catchment Action NSW* funds
- **availability of new data** – the limited availability of updated or new data within the review timeframe, for example:
  - *effectiveness* – not all upgraded Catchment Action Plan assessments will have been completed by the NRC and submitted for approval by the Minister within the timeframe of this review
  - *priorities* – State of the Catchment reporting has not been updated since the 2010 funding allocation review.
- **comprehensive review of funding allocation methodology** – the Minister has asked the NRC to conduct a more detailed review of the funding allocation methodology and how it could be refined and applied to Local Land Services by 30 September 2013. As **Section 3.2.3** explains, the new boundaries and arrangements agreed upon for Local Land Services will require an updated funding allocation profile for *Catchment Action NSW* funds.

In light of these contextual factors, the NRC, in consultation with CMAs and agencies, determined a series of principles that have guided the 2013-2014 funding allocation process. **Table 1** sets out these agreed principles, and explains what they mean in terms of the NRC's decision-making process for 2013-14 *Catchment Action NSW* funding.

**Table 1: Principles guiding the funding allocation process and their impact on the 2013-14 review**

	Principles	Outcomes for this review
1	Investment principles Invest in priority natural resource issues, invest cost effectively and provide performance incentives.	Government representatives reaffirmed support for the current investment principles.
2	Impact of CMA amalgamation The funding allocation should recognise that Lower Murray Darling and Sydney Metropolitan CMAs no longer exist, and that these regions have been amalgamated into Western, Murray and Hawkesbury Nepean CMAs.	Lower Murray Darling and Sydney Metropolitan <i>effectiveness</i> scores were excluded from any analysis as these organisations no longer exist.  The recommended profile includes transitional funding for amalgamated CMAs, recognising the expanded <i>priorities</i> of these CMAs.
3	<i>Priorities</i> assessment for biodiversity, land, water and community Best available information should be used where possible, although issues of funding continuity and resources required in data analysis and consultation should also be considered.	New State of the Catchment data is not available, although some other new data, including State of the Environment data, was identified.  As this is a transitional year, and the NRC will soon conduct a more detailed review, it was decided not to update <i>priorities</i> data for 2013-14.  <b>Attachment 3</b> provides more details about the NRC's analysis of potential new <i>priorities</i> data sources and their feasibility for use within this review.
4	<i>Effectiveness</i> assessment for CMA progress and results (CMA audits) The funding profile should recognise CMAs that have improved their performance. However, maintaining equity between CMAs requires that <i>CMA progress and results</i> scores only be updated if the new audit is carried out along common lines of inquiry, or once all CMAs have had the opportunity to be audited along any new lines of inquiry.	Border Rivers-Gwydir's <i>CMA progress and results</i> score has been updated to reflect its most recent audit result, as this audit was carried out along the same lines of inquiry as previous audits (see <b>Section 3.3.1</b> for more details).
5	<i>Effectiveness</i> assessment for CMA plans for investment (CAP assessments) The funding profile should recognise CMAs that have improved their planning ability. However, maintaining equity between CMAs requires that <i>CMA plans for investment</i> scores can only be updated if all CMAs have had the opportunity to upgrade their Catchment Action Plans.	As at 8 May, the NRC will not have finalised its assessment of all updated Catchment Action Plans, and the Minister will not have considered all plans for approval. Therefore, the <i>effectiveness</i> assessment for <i>CMA plans for investment</i> should not be updated for this allocation.
6	Weightings within the analytical framework Weightings in the analytical framework should reflect the relative importance of each principle or criteria, as well as the level of confidence in the data informing each principle or criteria.	Weightings within the analytical framework are to remain as per <b>Figure 4</b> , as confidence in the data for each assessment is unchanged.



### 3 Recommendations

This Chapter provides more information about the NRC’s recommended funding profile for *Catchment Action NSW* funding to CMAs in 2013-14, and discusses the risks Government should consider when making final funding allocation decisions.

#### 3.1 Recommended funding profile

The funding profile presented in **Figure 1** (on Page 2) reflects the NRC’s best estimate of proportional funding allocations between CMAs, based on a \$30 million quantum of *Catchment Action NSW* funding and the principles that:

- investment should be driven by *priorities* and *effectiveness*
- the funding allocation process should address the recent amalgamation of CMA regions.

In line with the principles set out in **Table 1**, the recommended funding profile was generated by carrying over the assessment criteria and input data from the 2012-13 *Catchment Action NSW* funding allocation process<sup>3</sup>, and then updating the decision-making tool to include:

- 2012 audit results for Border Rivers Gwydir CMA *effectiveness – CMA progress and results*
- modifications to address the shift from 13 to 11 CMAs, including transitional arrangements for amalgamated CMAs.

##### 3.1.1 Updating Border Rivers Gwydir CMA’s *effectiveness* score

Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA’s 2012 audit results have been incorporated into the *effectiveness – progress and results* component of the model, in line with Principle 4 in **Table 1**. The change in Border Rivers Gwydir CMA’s score is shown in **Table 2**.

**Table 2: Change in effectiveness – progress and results score for Border Rivers Gwydir**

NRC audit lines of inquiry	2009	2012
Prioritising investments	<i>Low</i>	<i>Good</i>
Delivering projects	<i>Good</i>	<i>Good</i>
Community engagement	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Good</i>
Adaptive management	<i>Low</i>	<i>Good</i>
<b><i>Effectiveness – CMA progress and results score:</i></b>	<b><i>Fair</i></b>	<b><i>High</i></b>

<sup>3</sup> The 2012-13 allocation was as per the recommendations in the NRC’s 2010 funding allocation report *Review of Catchment Action NSW funding allocations to Catchment Management Authorities*, with the addition of an updated audit score for Murray CMA in the *effectiveness* assessment for *CMA progress and results* (from ‘Fair’ to ‘High’).

### 3.1.2 Addressing recent CMA amalgamations

A series of CMA amalgamations took place in October 2012:

- the Sydney Metropolitan region was incorporated into Hawkesbury Nepean CMA
- the Lower Murray Darling region was incorporated into Western and Murray CMAs.

As per Principle 2 in **Table 1**, the NRC, CMAs and agency representatives identified that this round of funding allocation:

- should not reflect the *effectiveness* of Sydney Metropolitan and Lower Murray Darling CMAs, as these organisations no longer exist
- should recognise existing land, water, biodiversity and community *priorities* within the former Sydney Metropolitan and Lower Murray Darling CMA areas, to maintain community engagement and project delivery in these regions in this transitional year.

**Table 3** explains how the NRC has adapted the decision-making tool to allocate funding to 11, rather than 13 CMAs, while still reflecting the amalgamated CMA regions' *priorities* assessments based on the regions' natural resource values, threat and condition.

**Table 3: Adaptations to the decision-making tool to address CMA amalgamations**

CMA	<i>Priorities</i> assessment	<i>Effectiveness</i> assessment
Un-amalgamated CMA regions	Retain previous <i>priorities</i> scores	Retain previous <i>effectiveness</i> scores (except Border Rivers Gwydir, as per <b>Section 3.1.1</b> )
Hawkesbury Nepean CMA	Given a new <i>priorities</i> score, based on the addition of the previous <i>priorities</i> scores of both the Hawkesbury Nepean and Sydney Metropolitan CMAs	Retains previous <i>effectiveness</i> score for Hawkesbury Nepean CMA
Murray CMA	Given a new <i>priorities</i> score, based on the addition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the previous <i>priorities</i> score of Murray CMA</li> <li>▪ 70 per cent of the previous <i>priorities</i> score of the Lower Murray Darling CMA*</li> </ul>	Retains previous <i>effectiveness</i> score for Murray CMA
Western CMA	Given a new <i>priorities</i> score, based on the addition of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ the previous <i>priorities</i> score of Western CMA</li> <li>▪ 30 per cent of the previous <i>priorities</i> score of the Lower Murray Darling CMA*</li> </ul>	Retains previous <i>effectiveness</i> score for Western CMA

\* Percentage split based on consideration of the areas of the Lower Murray Darling region that were incorporated into Murray and Western CMAs, and discussions with Murray and Western CMAs. Murray and Western CMAs previously negotiated a 70:30 (respectively) split of the former Lower Murray Darling CMA's cash balances, and support this being applied in the 2013-14 funding allocation process.

Additional funding is being given to amalgamated CMAs to maintain investment in land, water, biodiversity and community *priorities* in the former Sydney Metropolitan and Lower Murray Darling CMA areas in 2013-14. For \$30 million funding over the 2013-14 financial year:

- Hawkesbury Nepean CMA receives approximately \$883,000
- Murray CMA receives approximately \$698,000
- Western CMA receives approximately \$299,000.

It is up to each CMA board to prioritise investment in on-ground activities in line with their Catchment Action Plans. However, the transitional funding figures above should serve as a guide for the minimum investment expected in the former Sydney Metropolitan and Lower Murray Darling CMA areas.

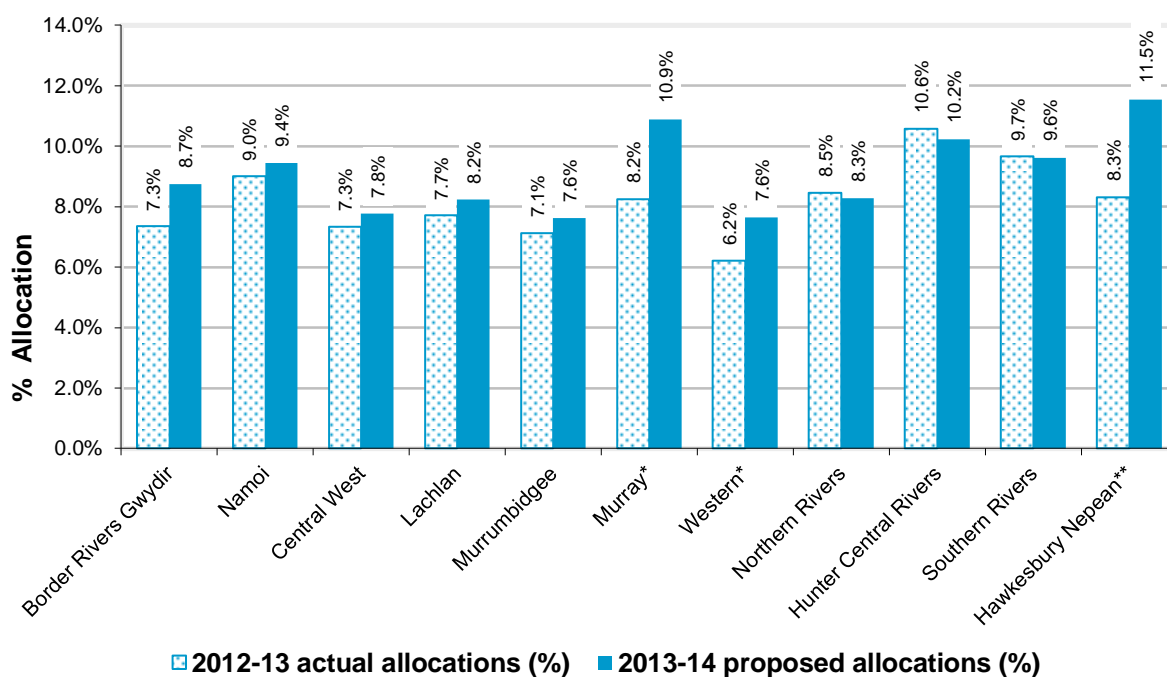
The transitional funding mechanisms used to address recent CMA amalgamations should not be applied in subsequent funding allocations. As per Part B of the Ministerial request, by 30 September 2013 the NRC will provide advice on a new funding profile that should be applied when CMA regions undergo the major transition to Local Land Services.

## 3.2 Risks

### 3.2.1 Risks associated with the recommended profile

Figure 5 shows the changes in proportional funding allocations between 2012–13 and 2013–14 if the recommended funding profile is applied for 2013-14. Changes in the CMAs’ proportional allocations are being driven by the:

- shift from 13 to 11 CMAs, meaning there are less CMAs with a share in the funding pool
- exclusion of Lower Murray Darling and Sydney Metropolitan CMAs’ *effectiveness* scores, which has reduced the spread of scores for *effectiveness* by removing the two scores that were lowest in previous assessments
- inclusion of Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA’s 2012 audit results, which has meant Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA has moved from a lower to higher *effectiveness* score
- use of Lower Murray Darling and Sydney Metropolitan *priorities* scores to maintain continuity of project delivery and community engagement in the amalgamated CMA regions during this transitional period.



\* Amalgamated with Lower Murray Darling CMA      \*\* Amalgamated with Sydney Metropolitan CMA

Figure 5: 2012–13 actual proportional allocations and 2013–14 proposed proportional allocations

However, it is the quantum of funding available, rather than the change in a CMA's proportional allocation, that often determines the risks when making funding allocation decisions. Changes to the quantum of funding may drive significant funding gains or losses for CMAs, over and above those caused by smaller changes in CMAs' proportional allocations.

*Catchment Action NSW* funding for 2013-14 is \$30 million. **Figure 2** (on Page 2) shows that for \$30 million funding allocated via the recommended profile in **Figure 1**:

- all CMAs experience an increase in funding compared with their 2012-13 *Catchment Action NSW* funding allocation
- the three amalgamated CMAs will receive additional funding to support community and project momentum across their expanded regions in this transitional year.

For funding of \$30 million, the remaining risks associated with the recommended funding profile relate to data limitations and assessment uncertainty within the decision-making tool. The NRC is confident these risks will not have a significant impact on Government's return on investment, providing the recommended funding profile is only applied in the 2013-14 transitional year (see **Section 3.2.2** below).

### **3.2.2 Risks associated with applying this funding profile after 2013-14**

As described in **Section 2.2**, the scope and approach of this review were influenced by a range of contextual issues. While the NRC and CMAs consider that the approach taken is appropriate for the 2013-14 transitional year, the following caveats apply:

- any funding profile applied after 1 January 2014 should be updated to reflect the results of the upgraded *Catchment Action Plan* assessments
- the principle of transitional funding for amalgamated CMAs should not set a precedent for any subsequent CMA or Local Land Services funding profiles.

### **3.2.3 Risks associated with the transition to LLSs**

The transition to Local Land Services presents a unique set of risks and challenges for *Catchment Action NSW* funding allocation in 2013-14, and for CMAs in how they allocate funds internally.

The Local Land Services are likely to have significantly different boundary areas to the 11 CMA regions in place at present. In the funding allocation decision-making process, assessments of *priorities* and *effectiveness* are based on evidence specifically related to the existing CMA regional boundaries and organisations.

In order to maximise return on investment, the NRC advises that the funding allocation profile should be updated when Local Land Services are established to reflect the new boundaries, as well as any new investment principles and necessary transitional arrangements agreed upon for these new organisations and their regions. The new funding allocation profile should then be applied to the proportion of 2013-14 *Catchment Action NSW* funding that the Minister decides will be carried over to Local Land Services for the remainder of the financial year.

The NRC recognises that changing an organisation's funding profile mid-financial year would usually lead to an unacceptable degree of uncertainty for the organisations involved. For example, in this case CMAs have already raised concerns about their ability to hire staff at the present time if there is no funding certainty after six months.

However, in the context of the CMAs' transition to Local Land Services, the NRC considers it is appropriate to adjust the allocation of *Catchment Action NSW* funding to reflect the new institutional arrangements that will be in place in 2014 under the Local Land Services reforms.

The NRC's advice on a proposed allocation profile for *Catchment Action NSW* funding to Local Land Services will be provided to the Minister by 30 September 2013, meaning there will be some time for CMAs to adjust their budget and plans ahead of the transition in 2014.

### **3.2.4 Risks associated with broader CMA funding arrangements**

The NRC's allocation of *Catchment Action NSW* funding does not currently take into account the impact of changes within other funding programs. However, during consultation for this report, CMAs identified risks that relate to their broader funding arrangements. In particular, the Murrumbidgee and Murray CMAs raised concerns about negative community impacts arising from the conclusion of Land and Water Management Plan funding in 2012-13. By the end of 2012-13, the NSW Government will have met all NSW's funding obligations under this program. This joint Australian and State Government funding program has been in place for the previous five years, and was worth over \$1 million in 2012-13.

## **3.3 Next steps**

### **3.3.1 Allocation of 2013-14 *Catchment Action NSW* funding**

Informed by the recommendations in this report, the Minister for Primary Industries will make a final decision about CMAs' proportional allocations. CMAs' actual monetary allocations for 2013-14 will be determined by applying the Minister's chosen funding profile to the quantum of *Catchment Action NSW* funding announced in the 2013-14 budget.

### **3.3.2 NRC review of funding methodology**

Under Part B of the Ministerial request, the NRC is due to commence a more comprehensive process to:

- review the NRC's funding methodology and recommend how the methodology can be refined and applied to Local Land Services by 30 September 2013
- recommend a potential funding profile for allocating *Catchment Action NSW* funds between the Local Land Services in 2014-15 and 2015-16 by 30 September 2013
- review differences between the current and potential Local Land Services funding profile and advise on related risks that should be considered by the Government in making final funding allocation decisions.

As part of this review, the NRC may consider the following:

- what updated *priorities* and *effectiveness* data is available to inform the decision-making process?
- what information sources are likely to be available in light of new state-wide monitoring, evaluation and reporting arrangements?

**Attachment 1 - Ministerial request**



Part B of this request recognises that once the LLS boundaries and CAPs have been finalised a comprehensive review can be undertaken for 2014-15 and the forward years.

I have asked that Ms Kerryn Richardson be available to discuss this matter further with you. Ms Richardson may be contacted on 02 6391 3383. I look forward to receiving your advice on Part A of this project by 8 May 2013.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Katrina Hodgkinson', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

**Katrina Hodgkinson MP**  
**Minister for Primary Industries**



## Attachment 2 – Complete allocation figures for recommended funding profile

CMA	Proportional allocation (%)	Allocation based on \$30 million <i>Catchment Action NSW</i> funding (\$)
Border Rivers Gwydir	8.74822456%	\$ 2,624,467.37
Namoi	9.44656251%	\$ 2,833,968.75
Central West	7.76394807%	\$ 2,329,184.42
Lachlan	8.22680721%	\$ 2,468,042.16
Murrumbidgee	7.62378212%	\$ 2,287,134.63
Murray	10.88491441%	\$ 3,265,474.32
Western	7.64253320%	\$ 2,292,759.96
Northern Rivers	8.26854551%	\$ 2,480,563.66
Hunter Central Rivers	10.23149186%	\$ 3,069,447.56
Southern Rivers	9.62286013%	\$ 2,886,858.04
Hawkesbury Nepean	11.54033042%	\$ 3,462,099.13
Total	100.00000000%	\$ 30,000,000.00

## Attachment 3 – Review of inputs for *priorities* assessments

In 2010 the *priorities* assessment for biodiversity, land, water and community was updated based on 32 data sources, many of which were drawn from the 2010 State of the Catchment reports.

In fulfilling Part A of the Ministerial request, the NRC conducted a rapid review to identify whether there are any new or updated *priorities* datasets that have become available since the publication of the 2010 funding allocation review, and whether any of these should be used to inform the NRC's 2013-14 funding allocation review.

The ability to include any new or updated data sources by 8 May 2013 depended on whether data was available in a suitable format, whether State and national scale data could be adjusted to fit CMA regional boundaries, and on the ability of the data custodians to provide this data within the required timeframes. In addition, inclusion of the proposed new and updated data sources would require consultation with CMAs.

### Outcomes of the NRC's review of inputs for *priorities* assessments

New State of the Catchment data is not available. However, 17 of the 32 data sources used in the 2010 funding allocation review have been updated, and there are six new data sets that may be considered for inclusion in the *priorities* assessments.

Out of the potential 17 updated and six new data sources, the NRC is aware of only **four** datasets that could have realistically been incorporated into the assessment by 8 May 2013:

- proportion of under-reserved IBRAs within CMA
- number of Ramsar Wetlands per CMA
- pressures on NSW Estuaries and Coastal Lakes
- condition of NSW Estuaries and Coastal Lakes.

The inclusion of this small number of updated data sets is likely to have a low impact on the funding profiles. In addition, the value and condition of biodiversity, water, land and communities does not change significantly over relatively short timeframes, and therefore any updated data is unlikely to have a major impact on the *priorities* assessments.

A teleconference was held on 24 April 2013 with CMAs and the Department of Primary Industries to discuss these findings. It was agreed that the data inputs for the *priorities* assessment should remain the same as those used in the NRC's 2010 report *Review of Catchment Action NSW funding allocation to Catchment Management Authorities*.<sup>4</sup>

The NRC has, however, identified that up to 21 updated or new data sources may potentially be available within the September timeframe of the review under Part B of the Ministerial request. This review will allow a more comprehensive assessment of data inputs.

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<sup>4</sup> Natural Resources Commission (2010), *Review of Catchment Action NSW funding allocations to Catchment Management Authorities*, October. Available via the NRC website at: <http://nrc.nsw.gov.au/Workwedo/Fundingallocation/CatchmentActionNSWFundingAllocationToCatchmentManagementAuthorities.aspx>

