



**DRAFT GUIDE FOR MULTI-
PROPERTY VEGETATION
PLANS**

September 2006



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SEPTEMBER 2006

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List of acronyms

CAP	Catchment Action Plan
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
MER	Monitoring, evaluation and reporting
NRC	Natural Resources Commission
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSW	New South Wales
PVP	Property Vegetation Plan

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1 Introduction

This *Guide for multi-property vegetation plans* (the Guide) explains how Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) can promote and assess landscape scale vegetation plans where they extend across multiple properties.

Its purpose is to help CMAs and landholders plan land-use and management of native vegetation at the landscape scale in order to better:

- implement the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* (the Act), including ending broadscale clearing of remnant native vegetation¹ unless it improves or maintains environmental outcomes, and to encourage revegetation and rehabilitation of native vegetation
- contribute to agreed targets in the CMA's Catchment Action Plan (CAP) and at the state level to improve the condition of our natural resources and the ecosystems and communities that they support
- allow landholders more flexibility to maximise their economic and productive outcomes within these constraints.

1.1 What is a landscape and how do we manage at a landscape scale?

In the Guide, the terms 'landscape' and 'managing at a landscape scale' are defined as follows:

- **landscapes** consist of natural resources, their ecosystem and productive uses, and the communities that live within them and depend on them. They are characterised by the interrelationships between these components and the functions they provide. As described in the NSW Government's aspirational goal for Natural Resources Management (NRM), a resilient landscape:
 - *maintains basic functions at all space scales including nutrient cycling, water cycling, provision of food and shelter for biota*
 - *maintains viable populations of all native species of plants and animals at appropriate space and time scales*
 - *reliably meets the long-term needs (material, aesthetic and spiritual) of people and communities.*²
- **managing at a landscape scale** is about taking account of the interactions between all of a landscape's components and their functions in an integrated way at any scale with the aim of achieving resilient landscapes.

¹ Remnant native vegetation is defined in section 9 (1) of the Act as any native vegetation other than regrowth. Regrowth is native vegetation that has regrown since dates specified in the Act. In this paper the NRC generally refers to remnant native vegetation as native vegetation.

² Natural Resources Commission (2005) *Recommendations – State-wide Standard and Targets*, September 2005.

1.2 Potential benefits of managing vegetation at a landscape scale

There is strong evidence that managing vegetation more explicitly within its landscape context creates the potential to:

- better align land-use with biophysical capacity and processes
- allow more flexibility to optimise agricultural production through time
- help target NRM investment.

Examples of potential benefits of managing vegetation at a landscape scale include increased potential to:

- manage ecosystem function at the optimal scale
- achieve integrated environmental, economic and social benefits
- optimise land-use across the landscape
- realise the value of environmental assets and services
- realise economies of scale
- optimise outcomes by creating greater choice
- increase environmental stewardship
- make greater progress towards regional, state and national resource condition targets.³

1.3 Using the Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management

The standard⁴ is a practical tool that can be used to assess the quality and adequacy of NRM processes. It was adopted by the NSW Government in May 2005 for use by CMAs as well as NSW Government agencies. It sets out seven components that, when applied together, deliver high quality NRM outcomes.

The standard components and their required outcomes are given in Table 1.1.

The standard has been considered in the development of the Guide. The Guide shows CMAs how to apply the standard to manage native vegetation at a landscape scale in order to comply with the Act, promote CAP targets and maximise productive outcomes.

The importance and relevance of each component of the standard to managing vegetation at a landscape scale are outlined in Attachment 1.

³ Natural Resources Commission (2006) *Managing Vegetation at the Landscape Scale*, Draft Report, August 2006, Chapter 2.

⁴ The standard is available from the NRC's website and more background to its development and application can be found in Natural Resources Commission (2005) *Recommendations – State-wide Standard and Targets*, September 2005.

Table 1.1: The Standard for Quality Natural Resource Management

Component of Standard	Required outcome
Collection and use of knowledge	Use of the best available knowledge to inform decisions in a structured and transparent manner.
Determination of scale	Management of natural resource issues at the optimal spatial, temporal and institutional scale to maximise effective contribution to broader goals, deliver integrated outcomes and prevent or minimise adverse consequences.
Opportunities for collaboration	Collaboration with other parties to maximise gains, share or minimise costs or deliver multiple benefits is explored and pursued wherever possible.
Community engagement	Implementation of strategies sufficient to meaningfully engage the participation of the community in the planning, implementation and review of natural resource management strategies and the achievement of identified goals and targets.
Risk management	Consideration and management of all identifiable risks and impacts to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, ensure success and avoid, minimise or control adverse impacts.
Monitoring and evaluation	Quantification and demonstration of progress towards goals and targets by means of regular monitoring, measuring, evaluation and reporting of organisational and project performance and the use of the results to guide improved practice.
Information management	Management of information in a manner that meets user needs and satisfies formal security, accountability and transparency requirements.

1.4 Managing landscapes to link on-ground actions to CAP targets

Our goals for landscapes have evolved over time as land managers, communities and governments have agreed on the need to manage our natural resources to support environmental, economic and social values for the long term. They are now expressed through national⁵, state⁶ and regional priorities and consolidated into CMAs' CAP targets.

CMAs are developing spatial maps and plans that sit underneath their CAPs and show their NRM investment priorities between and within particular sub-catchments. These spatial maps provide the context for managing resources at a landscape scale and help establish explicit links between regional scale outcomes and management at the property level.

⁵ The Australian Government has expressed its priorities for investment in natural resources through a range of policy initiatives including the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Framework for Standards and Targets. See Natural Resource Management Standing Committee (2002) *National Framework for NRM Standards and Targets*, agreed at 6 September 2002 Meeting.

⁶ Consistent with the National Framework, the NSW Government has now adopted the standard and 13 state-wide targets that align well with the National 'matters for targets'.

2 Multi-property vegetation plans

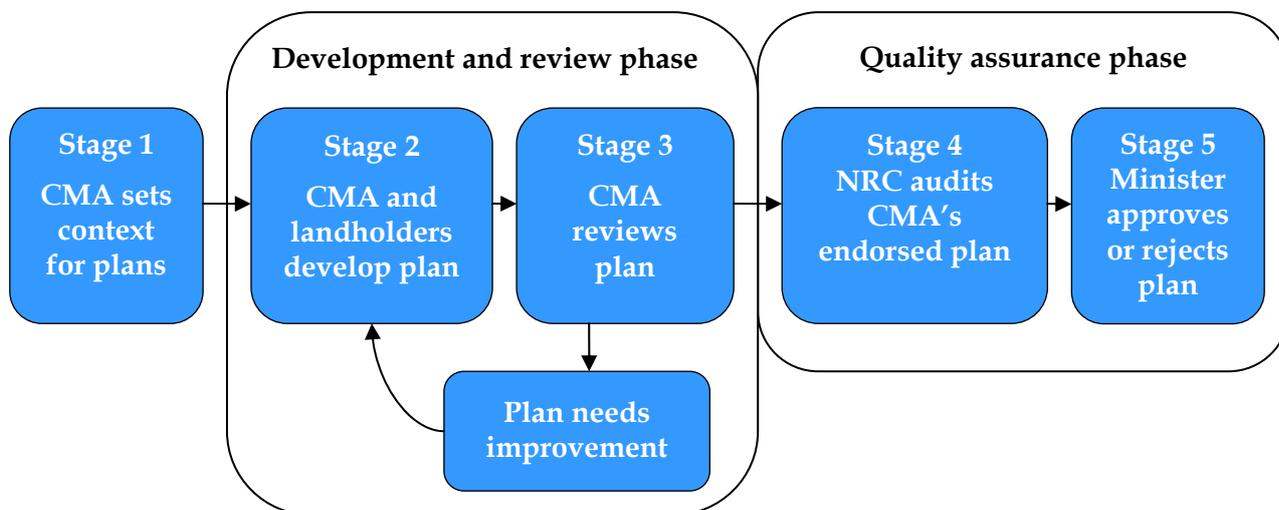
Multi-property vegetation plans may be an effective mechanism to manage vegetation at the landscape scale where:

- a group of landholders have common objectives and their properties cover a sufficiently large area that it is possible within the plan to manage NRM issues at an appropriate scale
- the costs and benefits of the plan can be shared among landholders in a way that each remains financially viable and committed to implementing the plan over time
- adequate governance arrangements can be agreed and enforced to provide security to the landholders, CMA and other stakeholders that all members of the group will implement the plan.

The importance, complexity and likely uniqueness of each multi-property vegetation plan suggest that an expert-based assessment framework with significant discretion is appropriate. Effectively each multi-property vegetation plan will be assessed as a one-off detailed review based on science, analysis and consultations particular to the issues and circumstances at hand.

This process is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Process for developing and approving multi-property vegetation plans



The Guide requires CMAs to use the standard and their CAP targets to review proposed multi-property vegetation plans. It explains the:

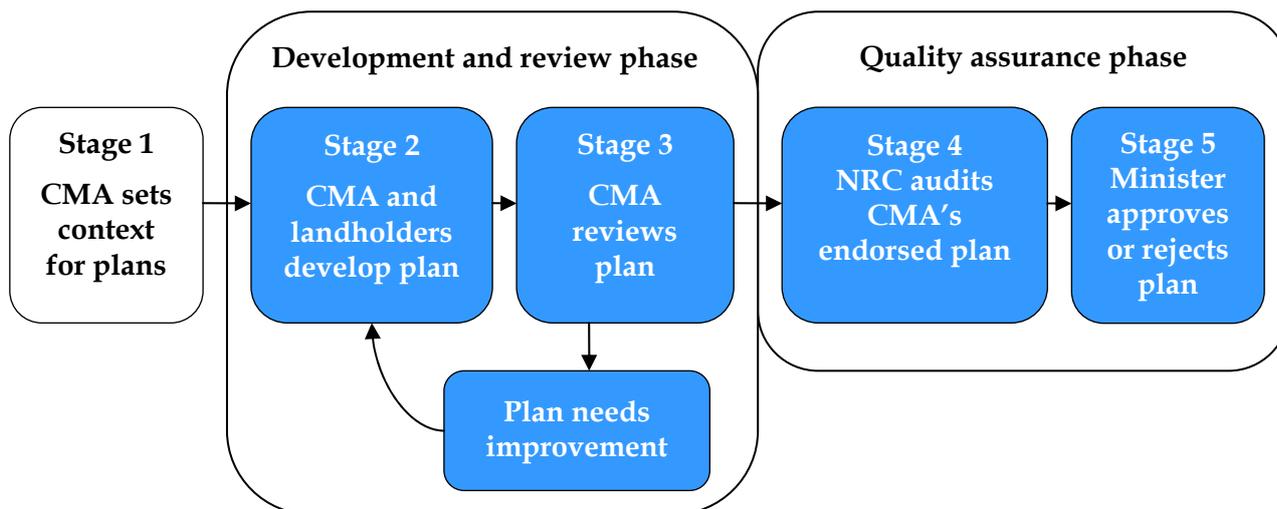
- processes that the CMA, landholders and Natural Resource Commission (NRC) need to follow (or improve upon)
- templates the CMA should use to complete the main steps in each process
- criteria that the CMA needs to apply in endorsing the plan to the Minister
- evidence that landholders or the CMA must retain
- peer review, auditing and reporting requirements to ensure the quality of recommended plans.

The following sections discuss each stage in Figure 2.1 in more detail.

3 Stage 1 - Landscape context for plans

The purpose of this stage is for the CMA to ensure interested community members can easily understand how they can contribute towards the CMA’s CAP targets and priorities (including investment priorities) within their local area or catchment and how achieving important land-use change or improved management is in their locality, relative to change in other locations.

Figure 3.1: Process for developing and approving multi-property vegetation plans



Application of the ‘Community Engagement’ component of the standard is of particular relevance in setting the context for multi-property vegetation plans. A CMA can build upon their existing strategies to engage their communities and participating landholders on:

- legislative and state policy requirements, such as the need to improve or maintain environmental outcomes
- CAP targets and priorities and the CMA’s investment and funding priorities, such as priorities targeting revegetation of riparian areas
- opportunities to contribute to other landscape planning initiatives, such as those implemented by other land managers in the local area
- any vegetation management actions which the CMA considers will not be approved, such as significant clearing of good quality endangered ecological communities.

The criteria that the CMA will apply to assess proposed plans need to be clearly available. A CMA needs to establish ways to assist groups of landholders to rapidly gauge whether there is any prospect of successfully developing a multi-property vegetation plan that would comply with relevant legislation and be supported by the CMA as contributing sufficiently towards its CAP targets and priorities. The landholders and CMA would only progress to Stage 2 (see Chapter 4 of the Guide) if the CMA was satisfied that there was a reasonable chance of success.

3.1 Process to set the landscape context for plans

The CMA should:

1. Communicate to the community its broad approach and criteria for reviewing multi-property vegetation plans.
2. Establish a standard set of information that will include:
 - landscape planning priorities illustrated through spatial maps and other tools
 - CAP targets and priorities
 - CMA investment and funding priorities
 - non-negotiable matters, such as vegetation management actions that the CMA would not be able to approve under the Act
 - relevant legislative and policy requirements
 - likely governance and accountability requirements landholders may need to agree to if a plan were to be approved.
3. Provide the opportunity for landholders to provide detail on their expectations and objectives for the proposed multi-property vegetation plan. At this early stage, landholders may only be able to provide high level detail on these matters.
4. Explore and understand landholders' expectations and objectives, as well as their level of commitment to the multi-property vegetation plan process.
5. Explore the opportunity to engage with other stakeholders, such as Local Government or Landcare groups, in addition to the landholders pursuing the multi-property vegetation plan.

This process should be followed unless the CMA can demonstrate that an alternate process will more effectively achieve the purpose of Stage 1, comply with the standard and promote CAP targets.

3.2 Outputs to produce and evidence to be retained

By implementing these processes, the CMA should produce:

- a standard set of information that is available to engage with landholders, and provide details on the approach and criteria to reviewing multi-property vegetation plans
- records of landholders' expectations, objectives and commitment to the process, and an assessment of the probable success of developing a multi-property vegetation plan that would comply with relevant legislation and be supported by the CMA as contributing sufficiently towards its CAP targets.

The CMA review (Stage 3) and quality assurance phase (Stages 4 and 5) will assess these products and the quality of the process used to develop them.

4 Stage 2 - Helping landholders develop the plan

The purpose of this stage is for CMA staff, landholders and appropriate experts to:

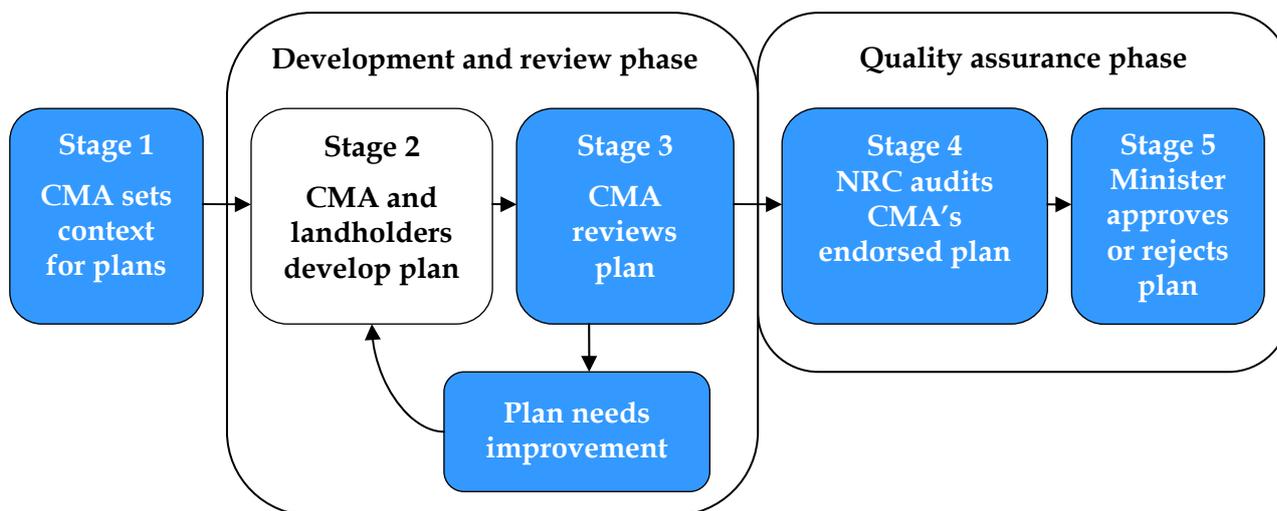
- conduct fieldwork and research, and use best available information, models, tools and datasets to better understand the landscape proposed to be covered, its natural resource assets, current pressures on these, and the land’s productive capacity
- develop and iteratively test planning scenarios to optimise the configuration of land-use and management actions against relevant detailed prescriptions representing Government’s policy positions on certain issues, the landholders’ objectives, landscape planning priorities and landscape function, and the CAP targets and priorities.

The ultimate outcome of this will be that landholders submit an optimised plan that identifies vegetation management options consistent with the above and that would improve or maintain environmental outcomes and be economically sustainable in the long term.

The process requires the practical integration of key knowledge and expertise on such matters as understanding of specific landscapes, land capability, land-use and land management. This should be a highly detailed and information rich process, with key interactions between landholders, CMAs and relevant experts to deliver sustainable outcomes across a range of relevant issues.

Given this process and the importance of interaction and integration of CMA, landholder and expert knowledge, the requirements outlined in this chapter represent joint obligations on the CMA and landholders developing the plan.

Figure 4.1: Process for developing and approving multi-property vegetation plans



This stage applies all components of the standard, and the CMA will need to ensure adequate consideration of the requirements of the standard and its CAP targets. The quality assurance phase will assess whether the CMA has appropriately applied the standard and its CAP targets to the process in the Guide.

Of particular importance in Stage 2 are the “Collection and use of knowledge”, “Determination of scale” and “Risk management” components of the standard. In meeting these, the CMA will need to:

- use the best available knowledge to inform development of the plan, noting that managing at a landscape scale requires an understanding of the inter-relationships between parts of the landscape, how landscapes function and options for management. CMAs need to draw on the best available information from a range of scales
- manage natural resource issues at the optimal spatial, temporal and institutional scale to facilitate landscape scale decisions that drive integrated and optimal environmental, economic and social outcomes. This informs understanding of the impacts and inter-relationships of actions in one part of a landscape on others and underpins linking action at a property scale to outcomes at regional, state and national scales
- consider and manage all identifiable risks and impacts, since as the geographical scale and overall complexity of a plan increases, the risks to its successful implementation may also increase. There are also risks in ‘locking-in’ plans in an environment where new science and information becomes available to better inform decisions.

4.1 Criteria for plan development and assessment

The CMA, landholders and any relevant experts must demonstrate that any multi-property vegetation plan meets the following criteria:

1. Be based on the best available scientific understanding of landscape function.
2. Improves or maintains environmental outcomes.
3. Contributes sufficiently strongly towards CAP targets and priorities
4. Be financially feasible and supported by robust governance arrangements to sustain outcomes in the long-term
5. Be designed so management actions can be continually improved over time to achieve the plan’s objectives.

4.2 Process to help landholders develop the plan

The following steps should be followed unless the CMA and landholders can demonstrate that an alternate process will more effectively achieve the purpose and meet the criteria in Stage 2, comply with the standard and promote CAP targets. The process sets out joint obligations for the CMA, landholders and experts (as required).

4.2.1 Initial planning and interaction

Landholders and the CMA should:

1. Review material provided in the CMA’s standard information set.
2. Undertake a preliminary onsite visit of the properties proposed to be covered in the plan.
3. Identify and engage the relevant scientific and other experts.
4. Agree on how landholders, outside experts and CMA staff will exchange information during the development of the plan.

5. Identify gaps in scientific understanding of the relevant landscape functions and agree timeframes to resolve these gaps.
6. Identify the extent to which wider collaboration could leverage additional resources and whether this will create further management opportunities to optimise the plan.

4.2.2 Detailed research and information gathering

Landholders, the CMA and appropriate experts (as required) should:

1. Undertake fieldwork and research, and use appropriate models, tools and datasets to better understand the landscape, its natural resource assets and biophysical characteristics, current pressures on these and the land's productive capacity. At a minimum the datasets associated with the PVP Developer need to be considered as part of this process.
2. Undertake research and analysis to ensure scale is appropriately considered in development of the proposed plan and issues are managed at the appropriate scale.
3. Consider relevant risks and unacceptable impacts on the plan participants and other parties, how these influence the appropriate scale of the plan and how to manage these risks and impacts.
4. Consider the extent to which community support for the proposed plan needs to be promoted and opportunities for capturing greater benefits, for example, whether additional properties should be part of the proposed plan.
5. Engage with relevant agencies to identify their needs and issues.

4.2.3 Preparing the plan

Landholders, the CMA and appropriate experts (as required) should:

1. Develop planning scenarios and iteratively test these to optimise the configuration of land-use and management actions against:
 - the criteria specified in section 4.1, that is:
 1. Be based on the best available scientific understanding of landscape function.
 2. Improve or maintain environmental outcomes.
 3. Contributes sufficiently strongly towards CAP targets and priorities
 4. Be financially feasible and supported by robust governance arrangements to sustain outcomes in the long-term.
 5. be designed so management actions can be continually improved over time to achieve the plan's objectives.
 - the landholders' objectives.

In doing so the Landholders, the CMA and appropriate experts (as required) should:

- not allow reduced biodiversity outcomes to be traded for improvements in other natural resource themes
- not allow clearing of very high conservation value vegetation, relative to the landscape context of that vegetation, regardless of the offsets proposed.

Draft Guide discussion note

In addition to the 'headline' current requirement that environmental outcomes be improved or maintained, there are potentially further detailed prescriptions on how this should be assessed. This pilot process will test how this should be done and the NRC will make recommendations to Government on these issues in its Final Report. Potential prescriptions that are raised in more detail in the NRC's report *Managing Vegetation at the Landscape Scale* include:

- specifying trading ratios:
 - between offset credits and trading losses (these are already defined in the PVP Developer)
 - between non-equivalent outcomes
- defining 'no-go' areas where it is considered that no offset will be sufficient to compensate for the loss or there is too great a risk that unique values will be lost
- determining the extent to which trading is limited to 'like-for-like' outcomes
- incorporating weightings or other links with targets and priorities in CAPs.

2. Consider the potential actions of other local natural resource managers.
3. Analyse costs and benefits of the proposed plan and how these will be shared among participants.
4. Minimise transaction costs when considering the proposed plan's:
 - impacts on other stakeholders
 - monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework
 - governance and contractual arrangements.
5. Design a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework appropriate to the proposed plan.
6. Identify and include information and data management required to inform adaptive management of the plan over time to ensure continued progress towards CAP targets.
7. Include triggers for amendment of the plan.
8. Establish the formal governance and contractual arrangements of the plan.

4.3 Outputs to produce and evidence to be retained

CMAs and landholders will be assessed against the above requirements. The key product will be a proposed multi-property vegetation plan to be submitted to the CMA for review, plus supporting material sufficient to allow the required peer review of the plan.

Box 4.1 discusses key strategic elements of a multi-property vegetation plan. While this does not set out the structure for a multi-property vegetation plan, it provides guidance on the type of information that such a plan and its supporting material should cover.

The CMA review (Stage 3) or quality assurance phase (Stages 4 and 5) will assess the proposed plan and the quality of the process used to develop it.

Box 4.1 Key strategic elements of a multi-property vegetation plan

There are key strategic elements that contribute to making a multi-property vegetation plan an effective document to manage vegetation at the landscape scale and meet landholders' objectives. The elements of a good multi-property vegetation plan include:

- **Objectives** - vision, values and objectives of participating landholders
- **Status of the properties** - landscape function, biophysical, productive and human characteristics of the participating properties and associated pressures/issues
- **Operating environment** - relationship with relevant landscape priorities, CAP targets and priorities, CMA investment and funding priorities; relationship with legislative and policy requirements; governance arrangements of the participating landholders
- **Stakeholders** - how others have influenced the plan, i.e. wider collaborative arrangements; community engagement undertaken
- **Identification, discussion and prioritisation of issues** - process for identifying and managing issues at correct scale and making appropriate trade-offs
- **Management actions and targets** - how to achieve the plan's objectives; information that underpins the actions and targets; roles and responsibilities of participant landholders
- **Risk assessment and management** - risk identification and appropriate management strategies
- **Monitoring, evaluation and reporting** - evaluate progress towards objectives and targets; roles and responsibilities of participant landholders support the MER framework; and an adaptive management framework to support the plan over time.

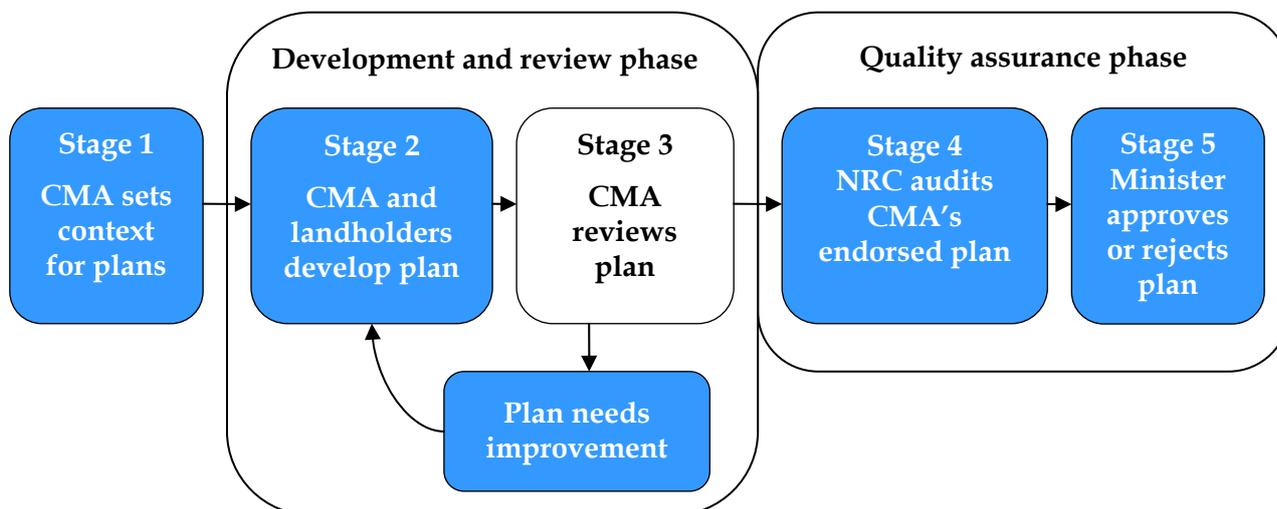
5 CMA Review

The purpose of this stage is for the CMA Board to assess whether the proposed plan complies with the Act and Regulation by meeting the criteria in the Guide. In completing its review, the CMA will need to consider whether the:

- processes specified for Stages 1 and 2 have been applied (or alternate processes that more effectively meet the purposes of those stages)
- plan meets the criteria set out in section 4.1, that is:
 1. Be based on the best available scientific understanding of landscape function.
 2. Improve or maintain environmental outcomes.
 3. Contributes sufficiently strongly towards CAP targets and priorities to justify any incentive contribution sought from the CMA.
 4. Be financially feasible and supported by robust governance arrangements to sustain outcomes in the long- term.
 5. Be designed so management actions can be continually improved over time to achieve the plan’s objectives.

A particularly important aspect of this assessment will be the plan’s contribution to CAP targets and priorities, especially where the plan involves CMA funding. The CMA will want to assure itself that the plan makes a sufficiently strong contribution so as to justify any funding (if necessary) of the plan over other alternatives.

Figure 5.1: Process for developing and approving multi-property vegetation plans



This stage should be led by a CMA Board member or their delegate, and a staff member with relevant expertise who has not been involved in developing the plan. The process will include engagement of independent experts to undertake a scientific peer review of the plan against the Guide and public exhibition of the plan. This will occur before the CMA Board member or their delegate undertakes a high level review of the proposed plan and supporting material and a final endorsement of the plan is made to the Board.

This overall process is illustrated in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.2: CMA review of proposed multi-property vegetation plan



5.1 Process for CMA to review the plan

The CMA must:

1. Undertake an initial (staff member) review of the proposed plan and supporting material against the requirements imposed in the Guide (Attachment 2 includes a proposed checklist for this review).
2. Engage experts to undertake an independent scientific peer review of the proposed plan against the Guide (Attachment 3 includes a proposed terms of reference for this engagement).
3. Publicly exhibit the proposed plan and peer review, and consider and report on any submissions in making final recommendations to the Minister.
4. Undertake a final high level review of the proposed plan and supporting material to be carried out by a CMA Board member or their delegate (Attachment 2 includes a proposed checklist for this review).
5. Make a final Board decision on whether to endorse (and potentially fund) the proposed plan. Where it does so, the CMA must submit a report (and other information as it sees relevant) to the NRC and Minister outlining the reasons for its endorsement of the proposed plan.

This process should be followed unless the CMA can demonstrate that an alternate process will more effectively achieve the purpose of Stage 3, comply with the standard and promote CAP targets.

5.2 Output to produce and evidence to be retained

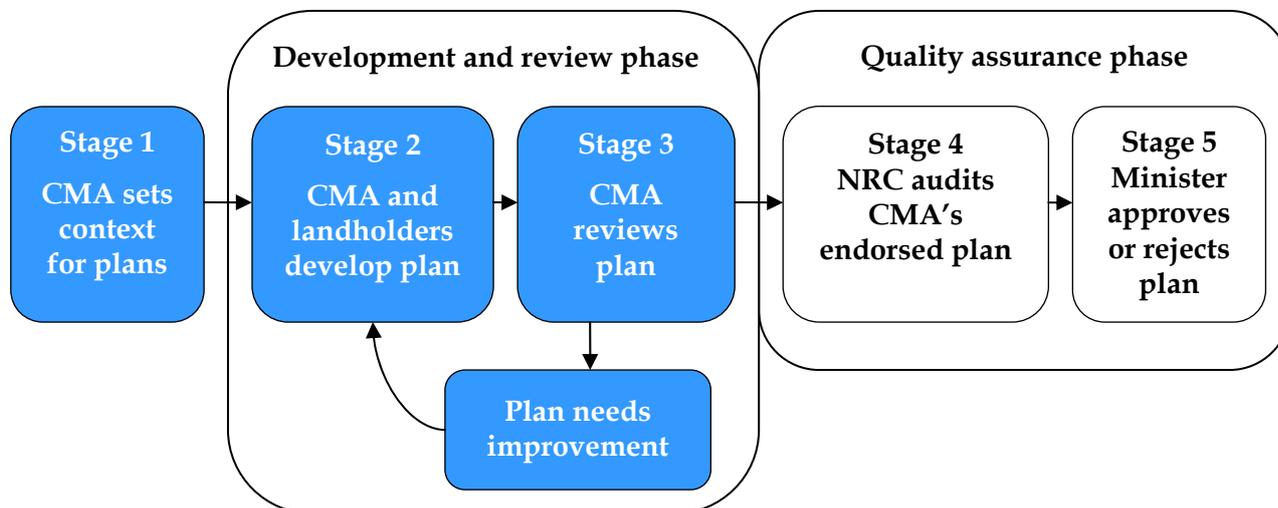
CMAs will be assessed against the above process requirements. The following products should be retained:

- CMA staff member review
- report from independent experts
- details on public exhibition undertaken and submissions received
- CMA Board member or their delegate's review
- final decision and report from CMA Board.

As relevant, the quality assurance phase (Stages 4 and 5) will assess these products and the quality of the process used to develop them.

6 Quality assurance

Figure 6.1: Process for developing and approving multi-property vegetation plan



6.1 NRC Audit

The NRC audit will not reassess the detail of the proposed plan, which has been assessed by the CMA and an independent peer review. The NRC will audit whether the processes followed by the CMA and landholders were sufficient to comply with the Act, Regulation and the Guide (and hence the standard).

To assist in the audit process, the CMA must provide the NRC with:

- the landholders' proposed plan and any supplementary information supporting the plan
- the CMA's information set provided to the experts engaged to undertake the independent peer review
- the report from the independent peer review
- the CMA report to the Minister on its review of the proposed plan.

6.2 Minister's decision

The Minister will make the final decision on whether the proposed plan complies with the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* and should be approved.

Attachment 1 Using the Standard to manage at landscape scale

Component of Standard	Why this is important to managing at a landscape scale
<p>Collection and use of knowledge <i>Use of the best available knowledge to inform decisions in a structured and transparent manner</i></p>	<p>Managing at a landscape scale requires an understanding of the inter-relationships between parts of the landscape, how landscapes function and options for management. CMAs need to draw on the best available information at a range of scales. The types of knowledge required include legislative and policy requirements, sound scientific and practical understanding of landscape functions, and knowledge of the communities' priorities for landscapes.</p>
<p>Determination of scale <i>Management of natural resource issues at the optimal spatial, temporal and institutional scale to maximise effective contribution to broader goals, deliver integrated outcomes and prevent or minimise adverse consequences</i></p>	<p>Consideration of scale facilitates landscape scale decisions that drive integrated and optimal environmental, economic and social outcomes. It informs understanding of the impacts and inter-relationships of actions in one part of a landscape on others and underpins linking action at a property scale to outcomes at regional, state and national scales. It facilitates application of state and national policies and legislation in practical ways at a local scale.</p>
<p>Opportunities for collaboration <i>Collaboration with other parties to maximise gains, share or minimise costs or deliver multiple benefits is explored and pursued wherever possible</i></p>	<p>Managing at a landscape scale requires cooperation, negotiation and sound participatory processes. It can facilitate appropriate distribution of costs and responsibilities, leverage investment and help develop practical management options. It can also promote shared learning about the landscape and may result in increased environmental stewardship.</p>
<p>Community engagement <i>Implementation of strategies sufficient to meaningfully engage the participation of the community in the planning, implementation and review of natural resource management strategies and the achievement of identified goals and targets</i></p>	<p>Community engagement is critical to understanding the goals and priorities for landscapes, how action by landholders can contribute to these and what investment the community is prepared to contribute to achieving the goals. It can also reduce transaction costs by promoting change and adoption of new management options.</p>
<p>Risk management <i>Consideration and management of all identifiable risks and impacts to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, ensure success and avoid, minimise or control adverse impacts</i></p>	<p>As the geographic scale and overall complexity of a plan increases, the risks to its successful implementation may increase. There are also risks associated with 'locking-in' plans developed using data with high levels of uncertainty and in dynamic ecological environments subject to influences such as climate change.</p>
<p>Monitoring and evaluation <i>Quantification and demonstration of progress towards goals and targets by means of regular monitoring, measuring, evaluation and reporting of organisational and project performance and the use of the results to guide improved practice</i></p>	<p>Landscape planning is constrained by knowledge gaps and uncertainty associated with natural systems. Monitoring and evaluation is essential for continuing to build understanding of landscapes, their functions, and how best to manage them, for assessing effectiveness of management actions and to inform responses in an adaptive management framework.</p>
<p>Information management <i>Management of information in a manner that meets user needs and satisfies formal security, accountability and transparency requirements</i></p>	<p>Managing at a landscape scale is likely to involve more participants and greater information management needs to publicly demonstrate the quality of management while respecting privacy and protecting commercial interests.</p>

Attachment 2 CMA checklist for reviewing multi-property vegetation plans

This checklist has been developed to assist CMA's through Stage 3: CMA review. It brings together the specific criteria used to assess whether the plan improves or maintains environmental outcomes (see Section 4.1) and more broadly the requirements of the Guide. The checklist includes:

- a template for a CMA staff member who has not been involved in the development of the plan. This template will assist the staff member in undertaking a "bottom up" assessment of the proposed plan
- a template for a CMA Board Member. This template will assist the Board Member in undertaking a "top down" assessment of the plan to establish its consistency with the broader objectives of the CMA.

These checklists are *not* mandatory requirements. The CMA can develop and use its own system for reviewing multi-property vegetation plans. However, any system that is used needs to ensure that the requirements detailed in the Guide have been met.

The checklist will assist the CMA in identifying the necessary information that should have been used in developing the multi-property vegetation plan. However, the checklist will not provide a tool for measuring the quality of the information used and the resulting plan. CMAs must satisfy themselves on these issues and demonstrate this to their Board, in the NRC audit and ultimately to the Minister.

CMA staff member checklist

Collection and use of knowledge

Requirement	Plan reference/details	Questions to follow up
Does the plan describe landholder expectations and objectives?		
Is the plan consistent with the landscape function, i.e. biophysical and productive characteristics of the landscape, covered by the plan?		
Does the plan contribute to landscape priorities, CAP targets and priorities, and CMA investment and funding priorities?		
Is the plan consistent with the CMA's non-negotiable matters?		
Is the plan consistent with relevant Government legislative and policy requirements?		
Has the plan been informed by use of sound science and expertise from within the CMA and externally?		
Has the plan been informed by use of appropriate models, tools and datasets?		
Has the plan been informed by an appropriate level of fieldwork?		

Finding

Does the plan give confidence that the best available knowledge has been used to inform the development of the plan in a structured and transparent manner such that the plan is consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Determination of scale

Requirement	Plan reference/details	Questions to follow up
Does the plan give confidence that an appropriate understanding of scale has informed decisions?		
Has the plan been developed at the optimal landscape scale?		
Does the plan recognise the interrelationships between all components of landscapes (not just vegetation) and the functions they provide?		
Does the plan facilitate integrated and sustainable environmental and economic outcomes and have these benefits been maximised?		
Does the plan identify risks, indicate how these have influenced the scale of the plan and		

appropriately manage these risks?

Does the plan identify how costs and benefits will be shared among participating landholders and is this sustainable?

Finding

Has the plan been developed at the optimal spatial, temporal and institutional scale to maximise contribution to catchment and state-wide goals, deliver integrated outcomes and minimise adverse consequences such that the plan is consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Opportunities for collaboration

Requirement	Plan reference/details	Questions to follow up
Does the plan describe cost sharing arrangements and are they sustainable?		
Does the plan identify individual responsibilities of participating landholders?		
Has the plan explored all relevant collaborations to further maximise benefits?		

Finding

Has the plan explored and pursued opportunities to collaborate with other parties to maximise gains, share or minimise costs or deliver multiple benefits such that the plan is consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Community engagement

Requirement	Plan reference/details	Questions to follow up
Does the plan identify interested parties that have been engaged in the development of the plan?		
Is the community supportive of the plan?		
Has the plan been publicly exhibited and interested parties given the opportunity to comment?		
Have relevant agencies been engaged and have their needs and issues been identified and considered in the plan?		
Does the plan discuss other landholders and groups involved in NRM that have influenced the plan?		

Finding

Has the community been appropriately engaged in the planning and development of the plan such that the plan is consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Risk management

Requirement	Plan reference/details	Questions to follow up
Does the plan identify unacceptable impacts and risks on participating landholders and other stakeholders and manage these appropriately?		
Does the plan include robust governance and contractual arrangements between participating landholders that will manage the identified risks and sustain the plan in the long term?		

Finding

Does the plan consider and manage all identifiable risks and impacts to maximise efficiency and effectiveness, ensure success and avoid, minimise or control adverse impacts such that the plan is consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Monitoring and evaluation

Requirement	Plan reference/details	Questions to follow up
Does the plan detail a robust monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) framework?		
Does the plan identify management actions and targets for achieving the plans objectives?		
Does the plan describe how progress towards targets will be measured with performance indicators?		
Does the plan identify baseline information?		
Does the plan identify roles and responsibilities for MER?		
Does the plan describe how the MER framework will inform the adaptive management of the plan?		
Does the MER framework account for both on farm and off farm impacts?		

Finding

Does the plan propose a monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework to quantify and demonstrate progress towards its goals and targets and guide improved practice such that the plan is consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Information management

Requirement	Plan reference/details	Questions to follow up
Does the plan identify triggers for amendment?		
Does the plan describe how information and data will be managed?		
Does the plan describe how information and data will inform adaptive management of the plan?		
Does the plan provide an evidence trail of knowledge used to underpin management actions and targets?		

Finding

Does the plan propose to manage information in a manner that meets user needs and satisfies formal security, accountability and transparency requirements such as the plan is consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Conclusion

Overall, has the plan been developed consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Specifically, does the plan meet the following criteria:

1. Be based on the best available scientific understanding of landscape function.
2. Improve or maintain environmental outcomes.
3. Contributes sufficiently strongly towards CAP targets and priorities
4. Be financially feasible and supported by robust governance arrangements to sustain outcomes in the long-term.

5. Be designed to be continually improved over time.

CMA Board member checklist

Requirements	Plan details/reference
Where is the plan located in the catchment?	
Does the plan address the landscape priorities in this part of the catchment?	
Will the actions identified in the plan contribute to the CAP targets and priorities?	
Will the plan contribute to the CMA's investment and funding priorities, and does the plan require CMA funding?	
Have trade offs between environmental themes been appropriately made?	
Has there been explanation of the importance of scale and its place in determining the preferred scenario?	
Will the contractual arrangements of the plan ensure its long term viability?	
Has the community been effectively engaged and all opportunities for collaboration to maximise contribution to catchment objectives explored?	
Does the plan identify risks in its implementation on both landholders and other stakeholders and measures to manage these risks?	
Will the monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework proposed in the plan contribute to measuring performance against the plan's objectives and targets, contribute to measuring performance of CAP targets and promote adaptive management of the plan over time?	

Conclusion

Overall, has the plan been developed consistent with the Guide and hence the objectives of the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*?

Specifically, does the plan meet the following criteria:

1. Be based on the best available scientific understanding of landscape function.

2. Improve or maintain environmental outcomes.

3. Contributes sufficiently strongly towards CAP targets and priorities

4. Be financially feasible and supported by robust governance arrangements to sustain

outcomes in the long-term.

5. Be designed to be continually improved over time.

Attachment 3 Terms of reference for independent peer review

This attachment has been developed to assist CMAs to engage independent experts to undertake a scientific peer review of the proposed multi-property vegetation plan.

The aim of the peer review is to provide an independent assessment of the proposed multi-property vegetation plan against the requirements of the Guide. In effect, the peer reviewers will be reviewing the preliminary assessment made by the CMA to approve the plan.

The CMA is required to engage independent experts that have not been involved in the planning and development of the proposed multi-property vegetation plan. Experts can be used from a range of fields and industries but their expertise must be relevant to the specifics of the proposed plan.

There may also be a need to conduct peer reviews to address other issues, such as legal and governance arrangements, in addition to the science underpinning the plan.

The proposed terms of reference for the scientific peer review is detailed below.

Peer review of CMA decision on multi-property vegetation plan

Terms of reference

Catchment Management Authorities (CMAs) play a fundamental role in natural resource management in NSW. One key role they have is to review proposed multi-farm property vegetation plans against the requirements of the *Guide for Multi-Property Vegetation Plans* (the Guide).

The purpose of this peer review is to assess the proposed multi-property vegetation plan against the requirements of the Guide.

In doing so, the peer review will also be assessing the preliminary decision of the CMA to recommend approval of the proposed plan. In completing its review, the peer reviewers will be able to consider:

- the landholders proposed plan and supporting material
- the CMA's information set documenting its preliminary decision on the proposed plan.

The peer reviewer is required to:

1. Assess the proposed plan against the criteria of the Guide, that is, that the plan:
 - be based on the best available scientific understanding of landscape function
 - improves or maintains environmental outcomes
 - contributes sufficiently strongly towards CAP targets and priorities to justify any incentive contribution sought from the CMA
 - is financially feasible and supported by robust governance arrangements to sustain outcomes in the long term
 - is designed to be continually improved over time.
2. Report findings and recommendations of the peer review to the CMA, including options to improve the plan if so identified.

