

STRATEGY, POLICY AND COMMUNICATION DIVISION



Nature and scope of activities

The Strategy, Policy and Communications Division plays a leading role in translating government priorities and industry needs into NSW DPI's corporate agenda. It also coordinates whole-of-government approaches on primary industry issues, manages contentious issues and publicises achievements.

The division comprises six branches:

Industry Analysis

Corporate Strategy and Organisational Development

Policy and Legislation Coordination

Water and Resources Policy

Communications

Public Affairs and Media

Major outcomes achieved

Policy, regulation and advice based on sound knowledge and analysis

Policy (State Plan: E1, E3, E4)

Along with the other climate change initiatives documented in this report NSW DPI worked with the NSW Greenhouse Office to conduct roundtable meetings in Wagga Wagga and Tamworth to inform and consult with rural interest groups on climate change issues. NSW DPI also provided advice to the Government on climate change initiatives including carbon capture and storage projects and biofuels.

NSW DPI represented stakeholder interests in state level deliberations concerning the Commonwealth's National Plan for Water Security and provided advice on primary industry impacts associated with major natural resource management issues and projects, including the establishment of the desalination plant at Kurnell.

Significant support was also provided to the Audit Office of NSW in undertaking its performance audit of DPI's activities aimed at improving the efficiency of irrigation water use on farms. Regional visits were organised and a significant amount of information was provided on DPI's research and extension activities.

The Division managed NSW DPI's contributions to major land use planning policies and projects put forward by other NSW Government agencies, such as national park management plans and the review of the Local Environmental Plan template. NSW DPI also provided detailed assessments of primary industry issues in relation to 53 Aboriginal land claims.

Legislation Program (State Plan: P3)

The Division manages the Department's legislative and regulatory program, including Act reviews, regulatory impact assessment and the remaking of regulations. NSW DPI administers 75 Acts and the regulations under these Acts. During the reporting period, the Division managed the passage of the following bills through Parliament:

- the *Apiaries Amendment Act 2006* which introduced a set of useful and practical changes to the administration of beekeeping;
- the *Deer Act 2006* which clarified the ownership and management of captive deer and introduced mechanisms to control wild deer; and
- the Rural Lands Protection Amendment Bill 2006 which simplified administrative requirements of rural lands protection boards.

NSW DPI coordinated the making and amendment of 21 regulations. Highlights include:

- reviews of the operation of the Non-Indigenous Animals Regulation 1997 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

(General) Regulation 1996 and their remake in 2006 with amendments;

- the preparation of the Coal Mine Health and Safety Regulation 2006 to enable the commencement of the *Coal Mine Health and Safety Act 2002*; and
- the gazettal of the Veterinary Practice Regulation 2006.

In accordance, with State Plan priority P3, Cutting Red Tape, NSW DPI commenced an internal analysis of the Acts and regulations that the Department administers to identify projects that will reduce red tape for primary industry stakeholders.

Socio-economic analysis (State Plan: S8, P1 P6, E1, E4)

NSW DPI continued to use socio-economic analysis in developing effective policies and offering sound advice. In 2006-07 economic analyses underpinned numerous DPI initiatives:

- Preparation of Exceptional Circumstances applications and rollover reviews for more than 30 regions in NSW which remain seriously affected by drought. This work was vital in helping industries and rural communities gain much-needed financial assistance
- Further development of the National Agricultural Monitoring System, resulting in a more streamlined process for Exceptional Circumstances applications and providing information to further encourage risk management and drought preparedness
- provision of funding and advice to the Rural Financial Counselling Services Programme which helps farming families make informed decisions in the face of worsening drought and water shortages
- Development of an Implementation Plan for Target 12 and 13 of the Natural Resource Commission's Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Strategy. This work will help to ensure that natural resource decisions contribute to improving or maintaining economic sustainability and social wellbeing and that natural resource managers have increased capacity to contribute to regional natural resource management.
- A major review of the pricing of publicly owned native forests and hardwood plantation logs which will enhance the sustainability of public forest operations and the economic performance of forest industries
- Completion of an inter-agency review of the NSW Shellfish Program which enabled oyster growers to reduce their financial contribution to the program.
- Completion of a series of case studies to ensure the costing of DPI services remains aligned with the distribution of industry and public benefits
- Completion of a new statistical publication on the contribution of primary industries to the NSW economy.

A stronger voice for primary industries in government decision-making (State Plan: P1, P6, E1, E4)

The Division plays a key role in supporting the Director-General in his role as a member of the Natural Resources and Environment CEO Cluster Group, the Water Chief Executive Officers' Committee, the Metropolitan Water Chief Executive Officers' Committee and the Natural Resources Advisory Council. Through these forums, NSW DPI influences the development of policies that affect primary industry stakeholders.

To enable more efficient and sustainable access to natural resources, and a greater impact in policy discussion, a specialist Water and Resources Policy Branch has been established within the Division. The new branch is responsible for presenting a scientifically and economically robust case for primary industries on a number of issues, including water management, clean coal and related technologies, native vegetation, biodiversity, biobanking and threatened species.

Service delivery aligned with stakeholder priorities

The Division coordinates the provision of DPI advice to the Minister in relation to the Ministerial Council on Mineral and Petroleum Resources, the Primary Industries Ministerial Council, the Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council. These are important forums where issues of national significance to primary industries are dealt with.

NSW DPI established a high-level Aboriginal Reference Group to advise the Minister for Primary Industries and the Department on policy issues including engagement with Aboriginal communities. We also worked closely with the existing industry councils advising the Minister on minerals, seafood, agriculture and forest products.

Sound corporate governance

Our emphasis this year was on ensuring that NSW DPI's corporate directions are aligned with the priorities in the State Plan. To this end, we contributed to the development of priority delivery plans under the State Plan. NSW DPI is recognised as a partner agency for seven priority areas in the State Plan – three of these under the theme *Growing Prosperity across NSW* and four under the theme *Environment for Living*. The division played the lead role in coordinating NSW DPI input into each of the seven Priority Delivery Plans, and will continue to coordinate reporting against the plans. We also reviewed our Results and Services Plan to ensure that State Plan priorities are correctly and adequately incorporated.

Based on the findings of an assessment conducted last financial year, NSW DPI developed a business continuity plan to keep core business functions operating in the event of a disaster.

To improve risk management, NSW DPI reviewed corporate risks arising from climate change and commenced development of an action plan. We also implemented risk management policies and procedures under the supervision of a cross-organisation

group that will monitor and report on progress and identify any shifts in our risk profile. See appendix 13 for details.

A skilled and cohesive workforce operating in a safe, satisfying and fair work environment

Internal communications

Implementation of the internal communications plan was completed with the redevelopment of the NSW DPI intranet site, which now boasts significantly improved content and navigation. Consistent branding ensured instant recognition of all internal communication tools.

The next step in improving internal communications will be a review. Building upon the baseline study conducted two years ago, the review will assess changes in staff views on internal communications and solicit ideas for ongoing improvement.



Internal communication tools are consistently branded.

Aboriginal employment

As stated in our corporate plan, NSW DPI is committed to nurturing a skilled and cohesive workforce operating in a safe, satisfying and fair work environment. Preparation of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy during 2006-07 – which is detailed in a case study in this report, will bring achievement of that outcome closer.

Community confidence in primary industries

In 2006-07 media attention again centred on the ongoing drought. Regional media coverage and regular articles in NSW DPI's own monthly newspaper, *Agriculture Today*, highlighted advice and initiatives designed to assist farmers to manage the inevitable impacts of continuing dry conditions across NSW.

On a more positive note, widespread coverage in regional and Sydney media of events such as the annual NSW Farmer of the Year and Rural Women's Award helped to publicise the

achievements of primary producers. The Royal Agricultural Society and Rural Press, publishers of The Land newspaper, were welcomed on board as additional sponsors for the NSW Farmer of the Year, which will further boost the award's profile.

Maximising the exposure of the Department's expertise and initiatives was also achieved through participation at more than 100 events spread across the state. These events ranged from small community festivities and industry-specific conferences through to agricultural field days and metropolitan-centred events such as the Sydney International Boat Show. 'Primary industries, more than you imagine' was the theme of the department's stand at the 2007 Sydney Royal Easter Show. The urban community discovered the role primary industries and NSW DPI play in everyday life in a colourful and interactive display.

City children will learn more about the origins of everyday foods through the jointly produced NSW DPI/Royal Agricultural Society video, *Where does our food come from?* The video was launched at the 2007 Royal Easter Show and will be distributed to Sydney schools.

Additionally, the department supported many events and programs through sponsorships, including:

- Support for the inaugural Beef Spectacular held in Dubbo in March. An event which showcased the region's finest cattle, from paddock to plate. NSW DPI provided support and resources for the region and its community to celebrate this important rural industry.
- Sponsorship of the District Exhibits at the 2007 Sydney Royal Easter Show. The artistic display of NSW hand-picked produce captures the attention of all visitors to the show.
- Being the major sponsor of the 2006 Farming Small Areas Expo, held at Hawkesbury Showground. NSW DPI staff offered farmers and the local community a 'one-stop shop' to obtain information and services for managing small acreage farms. With a significant number of small landholdings in the region, NSW DPI is keen to ensure farmers have the best information available to ensure sustainability of their enterprises.
- Supporting the horticultural industry through sponsorship, presentations and a display at the Australian Vegetable Industry conference in Sydney in May. NSW DPI was pleased to support this event, highlighting the role of NSW DPI's science and extension services in supporting growers to provide best quality produce to consumers.



DPI stand at Beef Spectacular, Dubbo.

Service delivery models, systems and processes based on innovative solutions

Corporate communication and branding (State Plan: S8)

NSW DPI developed its latest corporate communication strategy, which articulates the major communication messages and activities necessary to support the Department's corporate direction and initiatives.

The first major action within the strategy was also completed, namely market research into community awareness of and attitudes to primary industries. The principal findings, which will inform future communications, were that people recognise the value of primary industries but only put primary industries on the mental forefront when there is a major disruption in services.

The NSW DPI corporate brand was strengthened by the adoption of a corporate look across all publications and staff uptake of the voluntary corporate uniform introduced last financial year.

High quality information (State Plan: S8, P1, P6, E1, E4)

Publishing highlights for the year included:

- *Daring to Dream*, a high quality book featuring the inspirational stories of women in primary industries published by the Rural Women's Network
- *Managing Drought*, a comprehensive manual for the rural sector
- *Minfo*, the flagship minerals industry newsletter
- the 2006 Coal Industry Profile.

NSW DPI's substantial publishing output also included hundreds of informative fact sheets (Primefacts), guides and brochures.

Electronic information delivery gained further momentum with monthly NSW DPI internet page views reaching a record 1.5 million in June 2007 and issue of many Primefacts in electronic form only. Our ability to maintain current content on the internet will be enhanced when the implementation of a web management system is complete in 2008.

Schools education (State Plan: S8, P7)

NSW DPI was part of several important state and national initiatives that will change how NSW school children learn about primary industries. Our role entailed:

- signing an agreement with the Victorian Department of Primary Industries for access to the Landlearn program. Together with partners the Royal Agriculture Society and NSW Farmers, we will be now be able to adapt the Landlearn educational models and products for the NSW school system
- progressing establishment of a national organisation to promote agriculture in schools via a working party chaired by the principal of Tocal College. This organisation will act as a funding conduit for state-based education initiatives.

Supporting rural women

The NSW DPI Rural Women's Network partners individuals, groups and non-government and government agencies to promote information exchange and stimulate action on priority rural women's issues. This year the network:

- organised a successful drought event for International Women's Day in Dubbo which one of the largest women's gatherings in NSW for many years
- coordinated the Rural Women's Award for NSW, sponsored by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Eleanor Cook, a community fundraiser and tourism promoter from Coolah, received the 2007 award at a gala dinner hosted by the Minister
- produced and distributed three issues of the Country Web.



Sonia Muir with members of NSW DPI's Women's Consultative Committee at the 2007 International Women's Day special Drought Event

Significant issues

Until rains in the last quarter of the financial year, over 90 per cent of the state was affected by the worst drought on record. The prevailing conditions made drought support high on the agenda for NSW DPI as a whole and also for the division in terms of helping producers gain financial assistance, supplying data to the Australian Government, publishing drought management advice and handling media enquiries.

Future directions

Major goals for 2007-08 are to:

- ensure the efficient administration of Exceptional Circumstances applications for drought relief and rollover reviews (State Plan: S8, P6)
- contribute to the design and delivery of more efficient assistance programs for primary industries, including drought support and commercial fisheries structural adjustment (State Plan: S8, P6)
- ensure more efficient access by primary industries to publicly owned natural resources through the design of better policy mechanisms in areas such as resource rent settings, tender processes and cost recovery (State Plan: S8, E1, E4, E8)
- continue the further development of an Implementation Plan for Target 12 and 13 of the Natural Resource Commission's Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Strategy (State Plan: E4)
- review the NSW DPI corporate plan to ensure alignment with the State Plan priorities
- build on market research results to promote the value of primary industries to the NSW community
- continue work on establishing a national entity for primary industries schools education. (State Plan: P7)



CASE STUDY

“Our success in projects in China has provided a solid foundation for extending NSW DPI linkages beyond agriculture”

Promoting sustainable practices abroad: NSW DPI and northern China

There have been many success stories in the 25 years since NSW first started to share agricultural know-how with China through our sister relationship with Guangdong Province. These include rehabilitating degraded tropical grasslands, developing livestock industries and improving citrus production in south China through a series of projects that have focussed on low-cost technologies and practical advice to producers.

In the 1990s NSW DPI has shifted collaboration to help poverty stricken households in Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang and Gansu provinces to develop sustainable cropping and grazing on seriously degraded grasslands. With funding from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, scientists at the Graham Centre at Wagga Wagga promoted conservation tillage, stubble retention and integration of pulses into wheat rotation planting.

Since wind erosion caused by overgrazing is also a huge problem in north China, the focus has widened to include grassland rehabilitation. Scientists from Orange Agricultural Institute and Charles Sturt University (Orange campus) are working on a whole-of-system approach to identify better livestock feed systems and develop annual feed year calendars to improve production efficiency. Back at home, NSW DPI is using the same approach to assist producers in the Lachlan and Central West catchments.

Through these and other projects NSW DPI has gained a reputation for proving sound advice on change to reduce resource degradation and, in the process, has attracted funding support from a number of aid agencies, including the World Bank.

In 2005 the relationship between Gansu province and the Department was put on a more formal footing with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between NSW DPI and the Gansu Bureau of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. Under the agreement, NSW DPI will prepare training programs for provincial officers, technicians and students on sustainable development of the province's livestock and wine industries.

Our success in projects in China has provided a solid foundation for extending NSW DPI linkages beyond agriculture. Mine safety, for example, is a critical issue in China, and based on our strong record in mining safety, an opportunity exists for NSW DPI to assist China develop mine safety policies and practices.

NSW DPI is developing an integrated China Strategy to identify priorities for current and future research, extension and training programs.

The next phase of cooperation begins.

CORPORATE SERVICES DIVISION



Nature and scope of activities

The Corporate Services Division provides the necessary professional support to enable staff in all other NSW DPI divisions to do their work efficiently and effectively. The division comprises five branches:

- Finance and Administration
- Human Resources
- Assets
- Information and Communication Technology
- Legal.

Major outcomes achieved

Innovative solutions

Two different developments in 2006-07 illustrate NSW DPI's progress towards the desired corporate outcome of service delivery models, systems and processes based on innovative solutions.

Introduction of GPS technology at our Trangie and Condobolin research stations will result in both efficiency and sustainability gains. By using the technology, the research stations are able to implement industry best practice farming techniques to maximise the use of scarce resources such as water and reduce costs such as fuel, fertiliser and chemicals by approximately 5 per cent. At the same time they are able to minimise the impact of agricultural activities on the environment, for example, the impact of soil compaction and the potential for soil erosion.

Better integration of corporate finance and human resources (HR) systems moved a step closer with a project that will improve the current employee self service capability, provide more detailed and timely HR information to managers, and expand on the capability to track occupational health and safety issues.

2006-07 marked the introduction of a new internal financial management and reporting methodology. Based on the NSW Government model, the methodology brings a more holistic approach to managing finances and promotes optimum use of financial resources.

A safe, satisfying and fair work environment

NSW DPI promoted equity, diversity and opportunity in the workplace for Aborigines and Women with the launch of the Aboriginal Employment Strategy and the Women's Employment Strategy action plan. The former aims to increase the employment of Aboriginal people within the organisation and enhance the capabilities of existing aboriginal staff. Details on development of the strategy appear in a case study in this chapter.

Other significant workplace management developments over the year included the establishment of the NSW DPI Human Resources Committee to advise the Board of Management on human resources issues that impact across the organisation. The committee, which includes representatives from each division, is working on such issues as the creation of an 'Employer of Choice' culture and implementation of a new performance management system.

The department recognised the significant contributions of staff through the Staff Achievement Awards. The 2006 Awards recognised the professionalism and dedication of staff, as well as the cooperative approach that staff take to work projects and responses to situations such as drought management.

The NSW DPI and NSW Public Service Association Joint Consultative Committee successfully resolved all industrial issues within the agreed consultative framework. There were no matters referred to the NSW Industrial Relations Commission. The committee considered a variety of issues including an agreement on a revised travelling compensation policy, the transfer of staff between various government departments, and revision of employment delegations.

In 2006-07 the NSW DPI Board of Management established the Occupational Health and Safety Committee. The committee oversees the comprehensive occupational health and safety management system approved by the Board in early 2006.

We also reviewed and implemented a number of policies, including those dealing with harassment and bullying, staff development, employment delegations, secondary employment, complaint handling and gifts and benefits.

NSW DPI's Training Committee continued to identify corporate training priorities and produce a training calendar. Over the year, 2 275 staff attended over 150 different courses.

Managing physical assets to meet business priorities

Measures to ensure that asset availability aligns with current and future business priorities included:

- disposal of seven properties for a total of \$1 965 000, including the former NSW Agriculture office at Singleton and various rehabilitated dip sites on the north coast.
- \$3.3 million worth of construction comprising: a laboratory for the Oilseeds Research and Evaluation at Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute; a shared building for NSW DPI and the Marine Parks Authority at Port Stephens Fisheries Centre; and a plant and soil research facility at the Tamworth Centre for Crop Improvement
- refurbishment of a heritage building into a modern laboratory at the Cronulla Fisheries Centre for \$1.1 million.

Following a successful application by NSW DPI, the Camden Park Estate and Belgenny Farm at Camden were listed on the State Heritage Register in December 2006. The Department's Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute occupies a significant portion of the Camden Park Estate.

Rationalisation of office accommodation continued with the relocation of Agriculture and Fisheries Division staff from Brooklyn and The Entrance to the Horticultural Research Institute at Gosford. The relocation will yield operational savings of \$86 500 per annum.

Safeguarding the interests of primary industries

To ensure that government policies and regulation took account of the interests of NSW primary industries, the Department's legal action included:

- providing advice, drafting and advocacy skills in 30 mine safety prosecutions

- enforcing fisheries legislation on matters such as unauthorised reclamation of land, taking of protected fish, and exceeding the bag limit for fish species, especially abalone
- enforcing sustainable fishing practices through, for example, defending appeals against decisions imposing licence conditions and prosecuting offences
- amending and drafting legislation to meet stakeholder interests and client needs, notably the preparation of five fishery share management plans

Further details of the legislative program appear in the appendices of this report.

In other activities to safeguard the interests of primary industries, we succeeded in gaining ISO14000 accreditation in environmental management for Trangie Agricultural Research Centre and Wagga Wagga Agricultural Institute. The accreditation will improve our capacity to attract future research funding.

Dynamic and integrated ICT infrastructure

Integration of information and communications technology (ICT) systems is critical to a large and physically segmented organisation such as NSW DPI. This year we progressed integration with:

- completion of a single email system
- implementation of a PC standard
- replacement of different reporting systems with one to provide reporting capabilities over a wide range of databases and software applications
- rationalisation of different remote access systems into a single system for travelling staff.

Among infrastructure enhancements were:

- upgrades and expansions to file servers, host systems and telephone systems to improve their serviceability and cater for continued growth of data storage
- electronic systems to allow all staff to lodge travel requests and purchase requisitions, reducing the processing load on head office
- upgrades of 500 regional databases across 60 sites to improve their longevity and support within the organisation.

Due to initiatives designed to bring the Department's up to industry best-practice standards, we have achieved a certification to the international standard ISO27001 - Information Security Management System.

Electronic service delivery

Employee self-service systems were progressively introduced and now enable NSW DPI staff at all sites to electronically request travel approval and to lodge purchase requisitions, leave requests and requests for higher duties.

Significant issues

Drought (State Plan: S8, P6)

The extensive drought caused significant setbacks in breeding and agronomy programs at the Department's research institutes. A total of 30 354 claims were paid under the Drought Transport Subsidy Scheme to drought affected farmers during the year. On average each claim was paid within two weeks of receipt.

Data management

Ongoing growth in the amount of data we collect each year, including geospatial data, has increased our dependence on data storage and back-up facilities. NSW DPI therefore continued to use the TRIM records management system across larger sites, enabling better management of documents including emails. In addition, we began implementing a strategy to centralise and catalogue geospatial data.

Library services

Implementation of the recommendations from a review of library services resulted in a 12 per cent reduction in annual service provision costs.

Future directions

Major goals for 2007-08 are to:

- Under our commitment to reinvest money from property sales in research, we will use proceeds from the sale of the rezoned Narara Horticultural Research Station at Gosford to build a state-of-the-art research facility. This will be located on NSW DPI land at Somersby, near Gosford.
- From 2009-08 we will apply our newly developed office accommodation policy to all construction and refurbishment of owned or leased premises.
- In the coming year NSW DPI will install a single TRIM records management system platform, thereby completing the integration/amalgamation of the three separate TRIM platforms inherited, and closely align our ICT technical directions with those set in the NSW Government's People First policy statement.
- NSW DPI will assist in drawing up legislative amendments to finalise the Coal Compensation Scheme and closure of the Coal Compensation Board; support creation of a manual for Agriculture and Fisheries Division prosecutions; and complete transfer of responsibility for the *Agricultural Tenancies Act 1990* to the Department of Commerce.
- NSW DPI's activity-based costing system which has been used to date to cost the activities of the Corporate Services Division and Mine Safety Branch and will be progressively applied across all areas of operation.

CASE STUDY



“Strategy development involved the convening of a working group that brought together staff from the Aboriginal Liaison and Cultural Heritage Unit and Human Resources Branch”

Strategy promotes Aboriginal employment

Over millennia, Aboriginal people have shared a unique relationship with the Australian environment. Today, as NSW DPI plans and manages for sustainable and profitable primary industries, our Aboriginal employees are becoming an increasingly important resource.

Yet while we are a significant rural employer and primary industry generates many jobs in rural locations, the level of employment of Aboriginal people is often low. The Aboriginal Employment Strategy developed by NSW DPI in 2006-07 should however make a difference.

Strategy development involved the convening of a working group that brought together staff from the Aboriginal Liaison and Cultural Heritage Unit and Human Resources Branch. All Aboriginal staff were invited to make input.

The final strategy identifies five key outcomes as follows:

- an increase in Aboriginal staff to 2 per cent or more of the NSW DPI staff total by 31 December 2008
- increased career opportunities for Aboriginal people within the department
- greater Aboriginal representation in departmental decision-making
- establishment of a support network for Aboriginal employees to ensure strong support for the Aboriginal Employment Strategy.

The working group additionally developed an implementation plan with specific timeframes to ensure the outcomes are achieved.

The next steps were to commission Aboriginal artwork so that the printed strategy was immediately recognisable as addressing Aboriginal employment, and to refer the strategy to our external Aboriginal Reference Group.

After endorsement by the group, the Director-General released the strategy to staff in March 2007. We also sent copies to other agencies and external contacts.

While the next months will involve many tasks and challenges, the Aboriginal Employment Strategy provides an important platform to increase Aboriginal employment in NSW DPI and better support our Aboriginal staff.