



NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

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Strategy, Policy and Communications Division



Translating government priorities and industry needs into the Department's policy and corporate agenda

Nature and scope of activities

The Strategy, Policy and Communications Division plays a lead role in translating government priorities and industry needs into the Department's policy and corporate agenda. The Division coordinates whole-of-government approaches and manages strategic and contentious issues. It also facilitates strategic communications and promotes the work of the department and primary industries.

- The division comprises six branches:
- **Policy and Legislation Coordination**
 - **Water and Resources Policy**
 - **Economic Policy and Analysis**
 - **Corporate Strategy and Organisational Development**
 - **Public Affairs and Media**
 - **Communications**

Major outcomes achieved

A strong voice for primary industries

Policy (State Plan P1, P6)

The division led policy development, formulated the NSW DPI position on strategic and contentious issues and supported key state and national policy forums.

We worked closely with a range of advisory bodies and peak groups and, in doing so, increased our understanding of stakeholder concerns. Groups included ministerial advisory councils for various industry sectors, the NSW Farmers' Association, the Local Government and Shires Associations of NSW and the NSW DPI Aboriginal Reference Group.

Our major achievements for the year were:

- negotiating agreement on the introduction of a NSW licensing regime for industrial hemp production
- lifting the general prohibition on commercial production of genetically modified food crops to allow production under strict conditions
- extension of general occupational health and safety requirements to the mining industry
- expansion of the cloud seeding trial in the Snowy Mountains over an extended area and time period.

In the area of Indigenous policy, we led the development of the 'NSW DPI Aboriginal Employment Strategy' and the establishment of an internal Aboriginal staff network to encourage Indigenous employment and career development. Additionally, we were instrumental in developing policies on Aboriginal heritage mapping and management, cultural access to water, and cultural resource use in marine parks.

Natural resource management policy (State Plan E1, E3, E4)

NSW DPI established a new divisional branch — Water and Resources Policy, in June 2007. It is responsible for presenting a scientifically and economically robust case for primary industries on a number of issues including:

- water management
- climate change
- clean coal and related technologies
- land-use planning
- native vegetation
- biodiversity
- threatened species.

Along with the other climate change initiatives documented in this report, NSW DPI worked with the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and the NSW Department of Environment and Climate Change (DECC) to prepare the NSW Government's responses to Professor Garnaut's discussion paper on options for a Commonwealth emissions trading scheme.

NSW DPI represented stakeholder interests in state-level deliberations concerning the federal *Water Act 2007*, Murray-

Darling Basin reform and the Water for the Future program. We also advised on how major natural resource issues such as the ongoing drought were affecting primary industries.

Working with DPC, DECC, and the Australian Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, we articulated the important role primary industries play in managing biodiversity in the *NSW Biodiversity Strategy Discussion Paper* and the *NSW Invasive Species Plan*. As industry advocates we contributed to development of strategic programs to align with the "Caring for Our Country" program, the new national natural resource management funding program replacing the Natural Heritage Trust.

Legislation program (State Plan P3)

The division drove the NSW DPI legislative program, including application of the *Better Regulation Guidelines* and investigation of opportunities to reduce red tape. In 2007–08 the program involved coordinating the preparation and passage of 10 Bills and 23 regulation review, amendment and renewal processes. Highlights included:

- amendment of the *Gene Technology (GM Crop Moratorium) Act 2003* to allow production of GM crops under strict conditions
- amendment of the *Snowy Mountains Cloud Seeding Trial Act 2004* to extend the area and duration of the trial for a further five years
- introduction of the *Hemp Industry Act 2008* to allow hemp to be grown commercially in NSW
- introduction of the *Clean Coal Administration Act 2008*, which establishes the Clean Coal Council and a Clean Coal Fund
- amendment of the *Exotic Diseases of Animals Act 1991* to implement improvements to the efficiency and effectiveness of emergency disease responses identified during the Equine Influenza outbreak
- establishment of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (General) Amendment (Laying Fowl) Regulation 2007, which imposes additional animal welfare requirements on egg producers.

Socio-economic analyses (State Plan S8, P6, E4)

NSW DPI kept key government, industry and community stakeholders informed through socio-economic analyses to support efficient and inclusive policy and program outcomes. For example we:

- coordinated the preparation of information and analysis for the Australian Government's Exceptional Circumstances program as well as the extension reviews for more than 28 NSW regions which remained seriously affected by the ongoing drought. This contributed to eligible producers and small businesses in rural communities qualifying for assistance
- advised on and helped fund further development of the National Agricultural Monitoring System, which has contributed to a more streamlined Exceptional Circumstances process
- developed approaches for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on natural resource decisions and their potential contribution to economic sustainability and social well-being

- negotiated new governance arrangements and continued funding contributions to the Rural Financial Counselling Program, which enables farming families to adjust to drought and water shortages and underpins early recovery.

External information services (State Plan S8, P1, P6, E1, E4)

More than 400 publications were prepared and distributed during the year.

Publishing highlights included:

- fact sheets, posters, displays, advertisements and other materials supporting the equine influenza control program
- six ecologically sustainable forest management plans covering both native and planted forests
- a vertebrate pest control manual and associated booklets about monitoring techniques for the major pest animal species
- the Bush Telegraph and Minfo, the flagship magazines for the forest industry and mining industry respectively.

Electronic information delivery gained further momentum with monthly NSW DPI internet page views reaching a record 2.4 million in May 2008. Consolidation of divisional websites into a central web content management system is progressing according to plan, with completion expected before the end of 2008.

NSW DPI also provided website management and hosting services for a number of smaller NSW government entities, thereby helping to consolidate website systems and improve inter-agency links as required under Better Government Access Program.

Supporting rural women

The NSW DPI Rural Women’s Network partners with individuals, groups and non-government and government agencies to promote information exchange and stimulate action on rural women’s issues. In 2007– 08 the network:

- provided support and information for women and families who continue to struggle with drought
- facilitated 11 Shaping Our Futures Together (SOFT) workshops, which gave rural women leadership training in their own communities
- employed a project officer to strengthen indigenous networks and involvement in indigenous activities
- gave \$30 000 to support the annual NSW Women’s Gathering hosted by women from the Hay community
- coordinated the Rural Women’s Award for NSW, sponsored by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation. Tracey Knowland, a horticulturalist from Brooklet on the north coast, was the 2008 award winner.

Public affairs and media

The year’s principal public affairs issue was the equine influenza outbreak. Details on our successful communication campaign to gain the awareness and compliance of NSW horse owners and industry appear in the major case study earlier in this report.

Drought and climate change were the other big issues. Agriculture Today, NSW DPI’s newspaper published with “The Land” monthly, highlighted advice and initiatives to assist farmers in managing climate change and the impacts of the ongoing



A focus on science and in particular the science behind the EI campaign attracted thousands of visitors to NSW DPI’s award winning stand at the 2008 Sydney Royal Easter Show.

Schools education (State Plan S8, P7)

Several state and national initiatives of which NSW DPI is part are changing how NSW school children learn about primary industries. This year we were involved in:

- implementing ‘LandLearn NSW’ in conjunction with NSW Farmers and the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW. This major initiative included creating the web hub www.landlearnsw.org.au
- actively assisting establishment of the national Primary Industries Education Foundation, which will support state and national schools education programs.

drought across much of NSW.

NSW DPI public information campaigns also addressed the December floods, and the subsequent January fish kill in the Richmond River, and outbreaks of anthrax and tick fever in cattle in the Hunter and Tweed regions respectively.

Community events (State Plan S8)

Although media attention in 2007– 08 centred on the ongoing drought, 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.

By participating in over 100 community events, we were able to interact directly with stakeholders across NSW. Events ranged from small community festivities and industry-specific conferences through to regional field days and metropolitan events such as the Sydney International Boat Show and the Royal Easter Show. At the latter we showcased our research on sustainable industry development, including research on low emissions coal technologies and carbon capture in forests.

NSW DPI was an event sponsor as well as an event participant in 2007–08. Our sponsorships included:

- the Beef Spectacular in Dubbo. NSW DPI support covered, among other activities, a Women's Day event to celebrate women's contribution to the beef industry
- the Royal Easter Show where we upgraded to a 'Grand Champion' sponsorship in recognition of the impact of equine influenza on show operations
- the 2007 Farming Small Areas Expo held at the Hawkesbury Showground.

Excellence in people, innovation and service delivery

Sound corporate governance

This year NSW DPI reviewed corporate outcomes and strategies to ensure alignment with the State Plan, under which we are a partner agency for seven priority areas. As a result, we revised the corporate plan to include outcomes relating to climate change and natural resource and environmental management. While we had demonstrably worked on these issues in the past, the changes give us clearer forward direction.

Further improvement will result from the preparation of a corporate business plan. The plan, which is still in development, will enhance decision-making through greater emphasis on performance-based reporting. When finalised, it will replace the seven divisional plans and form the basis of quarterly reporting in 2008–09.

2007–08 also witnessed greater input by the senior management team to the governance framework through two special meetings. The team considered both corporate direction, in particular meeting the challenges posed by climate change, and better service delivery to our staff, customers and stakeholders.

We commenced a review of the risk management framework with a view to streamlining the process. See appendix 9 for details.

Support for and recognition of staff

InSite, our restructured intranet, went live on 1 July 2007. The new site boasts significantly improved content and navigation. Its quality was recognised in January 2008 when internet and intranet usability experts the Neilson-Norman group named InSite as one of the best 10 intranets in the world.

With departmental resources focused on managing equine influenza, the planned internal communications review was put on hold. The review, now scheduled for 2008–09, will assess staff views on internal communications and provide a basis for ongoing improvement.

In October the third annual Staff Achievement Awards recognised outstanding performance and helped promote the quality work of the organisation.

Significant issues

- The socio-economic implications of a wide range of resource management issues together with the socio-economic capability of NSW DPI were increasingly recognised across government.
- The development of greenhouse gas abatement policy and programs emerged as a major issue that will challenge the sector, particularly given the current problems with drought and water shortages.
- Media interest in the minerals portfolio remained firmly on clean coal. In response NSW DPI is promoting the state's commitment to reducing greenhouse gas emissions while maintaining a strong and sustainable mining sector.
- Australian Government reviews of Exceptional Circumstances drought declarations over most of NSW will have significant implications for primary producers. NSW DPI provides updated seasonal and production information on a regional basis to support these reviews.

Future directions

Next year the division will contribute to key projects with a national focus such as:

- a NSW and national position on the role of agriculture and forestry in a national emissions trading scheme
- NSW water projects under the federal Water for the Future program, which will ensure equitable access to funding for NSW primary industries within the Murray Darling Basin
- NSW natural resource management projects that align with the six national priorities identified under the Caring for Our Country program.

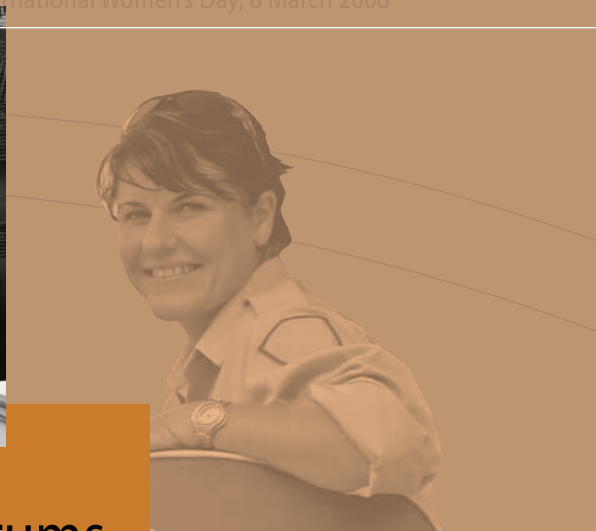
We will also:

- complete socio-economic analyses of the state's drought recovery status and other issues to ensure policy and programs meet the needs of rural communities
- contribute to the design and delivery of more efficient assistance programs for primary industries and rural communities, including drought support and commercial fisheries structural adjustment
- consult with key stakeholders and experts on the NSW Biodiversity Strategy Discussion Paper, a joint responsibility of NSW DPI and DECC
- review the NSW DPI legislation portfolio to determine where further red tape reductions can be made for the benefit of primary industry stakeholders
- conduct a stakeholder audit and develop a stakeholder engagement plan
- review the risk management framework to re-assess high level corporate risks and streamline the risk management process

WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY

PROMOTING EQUITY, DIVERSITY
& OPPORTUNITY

2006 to 2009

Launched by Barry Buffier, Director-General, NSW DPI,
on International Women's Day, 8 March 2006Case study: **Women's regional forums**

The Women's Employment Strategy was developed in 2006 to improve the career management skills of the Department's women and to help them achieve their full career potential. A Women's Consultative Group was established to implement the strategy. Among other actions, the group delivered four women's forums across the State between August and November 2007, in collaboration with Regional Relations Teams and Regional Directors.

Forums were held, at Tocal, Coffs Harbour, Yanco and Dubbo, giving women from very different regions of NSW the opportunity to attend. Overall, 220 women participated, coming from all divisions of the Department.

The forums had several goals. They provided an opportunity for women to network across the Department. They also gave those attending a broader view of the Department's role and responsibilities. Break-out sessions focused on financial planning, aboriginal culture and physical and mental health.

The Department has many functions in its different areas of responsibility, and the talks addressing these gave many a first time insight into them. For everyone, the opportunity to meet and share experiences with their colleagues gave them a much broader sense of the NSW DPI family.

Women reported that the forums were successful, useful and enjoyable.