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STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Social research undertaken by NACC in 2007 indicated key natural resource management (NRM) concepts such as “biodiversity”, “natural resource management”, “sustainability”, “biosecurity” as well as the role and function of NACC were poorly understood by our target audiences (farmers and land managers). These studies examined “NRM literacy” and fell into the broader field termed “Human Dimensions” of NRM.

The process of using social research to ground, and later evaluate, an NRM intervention is arguably the first instance of an evidence-based social marketing campaign on NRM in Australia.

Having identified low NRM literacy as a barrier to NRM delivery a baseline study measuring knowledge, attitudes, practices and aspirations was undertaken. The intervention (a series of TV commercials run over 9 weeks) was followed by a follow survey. (Both the pre and post intervention were also used to gather data on a range of NRM and related topics).

One of the first steps in NACC's strategy was the NRM literacy Study (see Project Flow Chart on flipside) conducted to explore meanings and understanding of key concepts such as biodiversity, biosecurity, sustainability, NRM and NACC's role and functions. At the 2007 Dowerin Field Day a short qualitative questionnaire invited respondents to articulate what they

understood by these key concepts. These responses were coded and analysed and additionally, responses were coded against model or commonly used definitions.

Findings suggested knowledge of key concepts was fragmentary and that NACC's role and purpose was poorly understood. In addition biodiversity and sustainability were commonly defined by participants as relating only to farming, i.e. there was no “big picture”.

SOCIAL MARKETING

Following the NRM literacy study a Social Marketing Strategy was developed that in part involved the airing of four 30 seconds commercials titled “What is biodiversity?”, “What is NACC?”, “What is sustainability?”, “What makes a Good Farmer?”. To assist script development, a small group of NAR farmers were interviewed to identify those values they ascribed to being a “good farmer”. To add credence to the message these values are alluded to in the content of the commercials.

Prior to running the commercials a questionnaire was mailed to a random sample of 1495 residents living in the NAR who belonged to one of three groups, farmers, non-farming residents, and NACC members.

On measures of knowledge, positive attitudes towards NRM and behaviour, the results displayed strongly significant differences between NACC members and the non farmers





and farmers on almost all items and significant differences between non farmers and farmers on most items. These findings demonstrate:

- a.) there is still considerable work to be done in communicating NRM messages to our target audiences and
- b.) engagement with NRM delivery agencies (such as NACC) is strongly associated with higher levels of NRM literacy and positive NRM attitudes.

Early returns from the follow up survey suggest a possible link between exposure to the commercials and better understanding of key concepts.

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Project Flow Chart

