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ALLIANCES IN THE RANGELANDS – LEB & OTHER EXAMPLES: THE RANGELANDS NRM GROUPS NETWORK

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INTRODUCTION

When the state-based approach to management of Australia's natural resources under the second round of the Natural Heritage Trust came into being in 2003, it was recognised that the rangelands NRM groups were divided in their influence. They operated in the backblocks of four states and the NT, small in voice and far from the centres of power. Most of the groups were also in non NAP regions which meant that they were modestly funded -particularly given the large areas and scattered population they had to deal with.

EARLY EFFORTS TO FORM A NETWORK

Overcoming this problem was raised in cross border discussions between Desert Channels Queensland and the South Australian Rangelands INRM Group. To this end it was resolved to hold a meeting in mid 2004 in Alice Springs, to discuss the potential of organising a Rangelands NRM Groups Network.

Key points covered at that meeting included:

- Improving information exchange between groups;
- Assisting each other with planning issues;
- Developing the potential for collaborative projects;
- Improving research linkages;
- Avoiding duplication of issues; and
- Collectively using a voice to raise issues.

At the time most NRM groups were heavily engaged in planning and, while the concept was well received, the focus was for everyone to get their investments plans approved and underway. Two years on, the groups have operational NRM plans and investment strategies in place and are busy implementing on-ground works, so the time is ripe to activate a network.

WHERE TO NOW?

Desert Channels Queensland and the South Australian Arid Lands NRM Board are keen to reactivate the idea of a network. There are around a dozen rangelands NRM groups in QLD, NSW, SA, NT and WA that could be involved. Currently we have a website space to host a network. The idea could be to include links to all interested groups, as well as information on the network. To this end it is proposed to host a discussion at the ARS/LEB Conference in Renmark to refine the idea and move forward.