

**NATURAL RESOURCE
MANAGEMENT
MINISTERIAL
COUNCIL****PRIMARY
INDUSTRIES
MINISTERIAL
COUNCIL**

Background to the Councils

The Australian Constitution confers certain specific powers on the Australian Government. All other powers not so conferred reside with the individual State/Territory Governments.

The Constitution provides that the Australian Government may make laws with respect to trade and commerce with other countries and among the States/Territories. It also provides that trade among the States/Territories shall be "absolutely free".

The States/Territories, on the other hand, have sovereign powers in matters affecting their rural industries, such as the regulation of agricultural production and marketing within their borders, land tenure, land use and water supply.

This division of Constitutional powers, coupled with a desire on the part of the Australian/State/Territory governments to discuss agricultural matters generally, was the catalyst for the creation, in 1934, of the Australian Agricultural Council. For similar reasons Ministerial Councils dealing with a wide range of issues, including forestry and fisheries matters, have been established over the years.

During 1999-2000 the debate on the impact of natural resource degradation in Australia began in earnest. Amongst other things, this resulted in the establishment of a new Natural Resources Management Ministerial Council (NRMMC). As a consequence of this, all natural resource management issues previously dealt with by existing Councils such as the Australia New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council (ANZECC), the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ) and the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA) were transferred to the new NRMMC.

The residual "industry-related" issues of these latter two Councils were brought together under a new Primary Industries Ministerial Council (PIMC).

NRMMC is supported by one Standing Committee, the Natural Resource Management Standing Committee. Likewise, the PIMC is supported by a single Standing Committee, the Primary Industries Standing Committee. These Standing Committees comprise the chief executive officers of the relevant Australian/State/Territory and New Zealand government agencies responsible for policy in these areas.

ANZECC

Australia New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council

ANZECC was formed in July 1991 by amalgamation of the former Australian Environment Council (AEC) and the former Council of Nature Conservation Ministers (CONCOM). AEC and CONCOM were established in 1972 and 1974 respectively by agreement between the Prime Minister and the State Premiers. New Zealand was admitted to full membership of AEC and CONCOM in July 1989, and Papua New Guinea to full membership of ANZECC in December 1998.

ANZECC provided a forum for member governments to exchange information and experience and develop coordinated policies in relation to national and international environment and conservation issues. Its membership comprised the Australian, State, Territory, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea Ministers responsible for the environment and conservation. The Australian Government was represented on the Council by the Environment Minister and the Minister responsible for the CSIRO.

The Council was supported by two Standing Committees of senior officials, the Standing Committee on Environment Protection (SCEP) and the Standing Committee on Conservation (SCC).

ANZECC met 22 times between July 1991 and August 2001.

ARMCANZ

Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand

In early 1992 the then Australian Government Minister for Primary Industries and Energy, who Chaired the Australian Agricultural Council (the AAC), proposed the amalgamation of the AAC with the then Australian Soil Conservation Council and the Australian Water Resources Council, the two natural resource management Ministerial Councils. The objective was to implement an institutional reform to complement the changes in the behaviour of resource owners and managers being encouraged at that time.

In August 1992, these Ministers formally considered and agreed to this proposition and in October 1992 the new Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand was created. It first met in Alice Springs in July 1993.

In June 1993, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reviewed and rationalised certain other Ministerial Councils and as a result added the responsibilities of the Rural Adjustment Scheme Ministers' Meeting to those of the new ARMCANZ.

ARMCANZ was supported by the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Resource Management (SCARM) which comprised the chief executive officers of the relevant Australian/State/Territory and New Zealand government agencies responsible for policy in these areas.

ARMCANZ met 21 times between July 1993 and August 2001.

MCFFA

Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture

In June 1993, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reviewed and rationalised certain Ministerial Councils. One outcome of this review was the establishment of the Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture (MCFFA) from the amalgamation of the Australian Forestry Council with the Australian and New Zealand Fisheries and Aquaculture Council. MCFFA first met in January 1994.

The Council comprised the Australian/State/Territory and New Zealand government Ministers responsible for forestry, fisheries and aquaculture. The Papua New Guinea Ministers for forestry, fisheries and aquaculture were invited to attend regular Council meetings as observers.

The Council was supported by two Standing Committees, the Standing Committee on Forestry (SCF) and the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture (SCFA). The Council last met in 2000.

AAC

Australian Agricultural Council

Prior to 1934, the need to coordinate agricultural research had been felt necessary, and this became a pressing consideration when the Executive Committee of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) assumed office in 1926. This resulted in the minister for CSIR appointing an Australian/State/Territory Standing Committee on Agriculture in May 1927 comprising the Permanent Heads of the State Departments of Agriculture and representatives of the Council of CSIR (later to become the Commonwealth

Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation - CSIRO). The prime function of the Standing Committee was to act as an advisory and consultative body on matters related to agricultural and livestock research undertaken by the Australian Government.

Matters of concern to the Australian/State/Territory agriculture agencies, however, continued to be handled by correspondence or at ad hoc conferences of State/Territory and, at times, Australian Government Ministers.

The conference on 3 December 1934 was chaired by the then Minister for Commerce, the late Sir Earle Page. In opening the conference he stated that it had been convened to discuss the following four matters:

- means to make it possible for Australia to speak with one voice on agricultural and marketing matters;
- determination of a definite policy in regard to international marketing relations;
- formulation of a definite policy on wheat, both immediate and ultimate; and
- the finalising of a basis of a rural rehabilitation scheme through relief of farmers debts.

The Chairman also referred to the work done by the Executive Committee of CSIR, the Secretary of Commerce and the Director-General of Health, who constituted the then Standing Committee on Agriculture. He referred to the volume of data on research and economic activities collected by the Standing Committee but which was not being fully utilised. He proposed that a continuing organisation, a Ministerial Council, could ensure that this data was properly utilised and suggested that the Standing Committee on Agriculture draft the Constitution for the Council by which continuous consultation between the Australian/State/Territory governments would be assured.

The conference resolved unanimously that a Ministerial organisation, to be known as the Australian Agricultural Council, should be formed to provide a basis for continuous consultation amongst Australian governments on the economic aspects of primary production. Initially, the Council would consist of the Federal Minister for Commerce, the Minister in charge of Development and the State Ministers concerned in these matters. The Council would have the power to co-opt the services of other Australian, State and Territory Ministers as the necessity arose, and the then Department of Commerce, would provide secretariat assistance for the Council.

A sub-committee which was formed to make recommendations to the conference on the functions of Council reported that it had taken the term "primary production" to mean "agriculture in the widest sense", so that mining, fisheries or forestry were not included. The sub-committee recommended that the Council function permanently as a body with the objective "to promote the welfare of the agricultural industries and foster the adoption of national agricultural policies". It recognised that at times the Council would be called on to consider special problems, the handling of which would necessitate the inclusion in the membership of Ministers controlling departments other than Agriculture.

The sub-committee also recommended the establishment of the *Standing Committee on Agriculture* as a permanent technical committee to advise the Council in order that the Council might adequately perform its functions.

The conference unanimously accepted these recommendations, together with the functions of the Council and the Standing Committee as proposed.

Virtually from its inception, New Zealand attended meetings of the Council as an observer. In 1991 New Zealand was invited to participate as a full member of Council. Following acceptance of full membership it was agreed (at the February 1992 meeting) to change the name to the *Agricultural Council of Australia and New Zealand*. The only meeting held under this name was in July 1992 in Mackay.

Prior to the creation of the new Council, the Australian Agricultural Council/Agricultural Council of Australia and New Zealand met on 138 occasions, spanning 58 years.

ASCC**Australian Soil Conservation Council**

Under the Australian Constitution responsibility for the use and management of land rests primarily with the States and Territories. However, in the interest of national prosperity, because of its need to ensure the maintenance of the agricultural resource base, the Australian Government has an important role to play in soil conservation.

The Standing Committee on Soil Conservation (SCSC) comprising relevant officials was established by a decision of the Premiers' Conference on 24 January 1946 to act as the Australian/State/Territory government coordinating body on soil conservation, to examine and recommend on soil conservation legislation, to arrange training for appropriate personnel and to facilitate exchange of information and other forms of mutual assistance between the various governments in Australia.

The Standing Committee reported to the Australian Agricultural Council (AAC) and in 1967 the AAC determined that as a matter of procedure SCSC report to AAC through Standing Committee on Agriculture (SCA).

In February 1985, AAC reconsidered these arrangements and noted that there were disadvantages which constrained opportunities to achieve the stated objectives of SCSC of coordinating soil conservation activities between the Australian/State/Territory governments. Under the then current structure of SCSC, SCA and AAC, there was no body which clearly provided, through its membership, representation of all government organisations and persons ultimately responsible for soil conservation policy in Australia. The three bodies then existing either lacked representation or had representation at an inappropriately low level to effectively formulate and recommend policy aspects of soil conservation and land degradation. In addition, the then SCSC's term of reference did not define a role for SCSC to play in policy formulation.

In response to these issues, AAC agreed to support the establishment of an Australian Soil Conservation Council (ASCC) to provide a means of continuing consultation and coordination between the Australian/State/Territory governments and to act as an advisory body on all aspects of soil conservation and land degradation policy, administration and management. The formation of ASCC was subsequently agreed by correspondence between the Prime Minister and State Premiers/Northern Territory Chief Minister. As part of these changed arrangements, the SCSC was also given new terms of reference and membership.

The ASCC had met on eight occasions prior to the creation of the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ).

AWRC**Australian Water Resources Council**

The Australian Water Resources Council was established in 1963. The main responsibilities were to provide a national focus for the Australian water industry and to provide a peak forum for consultation, cooperation and liaison for the development of water industry policy at international and Australian/State/Territory government levels. Objectives of the Council were to enhance the long-term management of the water industry and water resources for the benefit of the community and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the water industry and the services it provided.

The AWRC Standing Committee's objectives were to support AWRC in the achievement of its objectives and to develop cooperative and coordinated approaches by the Australian/State/Territory governments to matters of broad concern to the water industry.

The AWRC had met on 33 occasions prior to the creation of the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ).

RAS**Rural Adjustment Scheme Ministers' Meeting**

Ministers responsible for the Rural Adjustment Scheme met on an ad hoc basis since 1988. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG), at its meeting in June 1993, decided that RAS Ministers should combine with the Agriculture and Resource Management Council of

Australia and New Zealand (ARMCANZ).

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URL <http://www.mincos.gov.au/background.htm>

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