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**NORTH EAST
CATCHMENT
MANAGEMENT
AUTHORITY**

25th September 2015

Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Agriculture and Industry
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Dear Committee Secretary

Inquiry into Agricultural Innovation

The North East Catchment Management Authority (CMA) is responsible for facilitating and coordinating the management of land, biodiversity and water resources in an integrated and sustainable manner in the North East region of Victoria by:

- Taking a sustainable approach by balancing social, economic and environment outcomes;
- Promotes and adopts an adaptive approach to integrated catchment management, including continuous review, innovation and improvement;
- Plans and makes decisions within an integrated catchment management context.

The *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act) specifies that each Victorian CMA must prepare a regional catchment strategy for its region and coordinate and monitor its implementation. The *North East Regional Catchment Strategy (2013)* is the primary integrated planning framework for land, water and biodiversity management, and aims to provide focused, integrated and coordinated direction for all natural resource management activities in the North East.

Key agricultural innovations the North East CMA are supporting include:

- **Blackberry Action Groups**, a community driven network of land managers working towards removing blackberries from the landscape;
- Trailing the **release of dung beetle** in Kiewa Valley for improve soil health;
- The **development of a biochar unit** to enable to production of char from waste products such as willow heaps following waterway management activities;
- Managing the land for **increased soil carbon** levels;
- The development of **virtual fencing** an innovation that can be used to control domestic livestock in areas where there are a number of agricultural challenges such as floodplains;
- **Collaborative governance models** such as the Springhurst Rabbit Roundtable that is bring together all the relevant agencies, community and stakeholders to solve the problem of rabbit management collaboratively.

The North East region has a number of key agricultural challenges as outlined in the *North East Regional Catchment Strategy (2013)* including:

- Changing climate;
- Changing fire regime;
- Aging demographic;
- Remote communities;
- Working with communities to remain connected;
- Enterprise profitability;
- Inappropriate floodplain/gully/waterway use and farming practices;
- Invasive plant and animal species;
- Conflicts in land uses;
- Loss of remnant vegetation and wetlands.

As highlighted earlier, there is a lot of agricultural innovation happening within the North East region of Victoria. As the organisation responsible for facilitating and coordinating the management of land, biodiversity and water resources in an integrated and sustainable manner, the North East CMA would like to invite the Standing Committee for a field trip to the North East of Victoria to see first-hand the agricultural innovation that is being supported.

If you would like further information on anything raised within the submission please don't hesitate to contact Ms Jane Young, Manager – Leadership and Strategy

Yours sincerely

per Neil McCarthy
Chief Executive Officer