

NRA Corporate Plan



2000–2001 to 2002–2003

UPDATED JULY 2002



What is the National Registration Authority?

The National Registration Authority for Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (NRA) is the Australian agency responsible for the assessment and registration of agricultural and veterinary chemical products prior to sale and their regulation up to and including the point of retail sale.

What is our role?

The NRA administers the National Registration Scheme in partnership with the States and Territories and with the active involvement of other Commonwealth agencies.

Our role within the scheme is to assess the safety and performance of products, determine whether their use is likely to jeopardise trade, and to regulate the supply of agricultural and veterinary chemicals onto the Australian market by approving product labels and specifying conditions of use.

The work of the NRA therefore protects the health and safety of people, animals and the environment, and supports Australian agriculture by allowing the supply of only approved crop protection and animal health products.

Our independent, scientific evaluation of chemical products determines whether they meet strict requirements for safety and performance and how they should be used. Only products that meet these high standards will be registered for supply onto the market.

Chemicals are not registered forever. The NRA reviews older chemicals to determine whether they meet contemporary standards and, if necessary, change the conditions of registration or withdraw the chemical from the market. We also monitor agricultural and veterinary chemicals in the marketplace to ensure they are registered and conform to the standards set at registration.

State/Territory agriculture, health or environment departments are responsible for the use of chemicals, including aerial spraying and licensing of pest control operators.

Key stakeholders

The NRA's key stakeholders include:

- the Commonwealth Government,
- State and Territory Governments,
- the agrichemical industry,
- farmers,
- other users of chemicals, and
- the general community.

Legislative objectives

As a Commonwealth statutory authority with a regulatory role, the NRA operates in accordance with its governing legislation.

Our principal responsibilities are described in the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Act 1992* and the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act 1994*.

The Administration Act establishes the NRA and confers powers to administer the National Registration Scheme.

The Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code Act makes provision for the NRA to:

- evaluate, approve and control the supply of active constituents for proposed or existing agricultural or veterinary chemical products; and
- evaluate, register and control the manufacture and supply of agricultural and veterinary chemical products.

The legislation also presents criteria that are at the core of the NRA's decision making whenever we approve active constituents, register products or review existing chemicals.

The criteria stipulate that the active constituent or product should:

- pose no undue hazard to the safety of people exposed to it during handling or using anything containing their residues;
- would not be likely to have an effect that is harmful to human beings;
- would not be likely to have an unintended effect that is harmful to animals, plants, things or to the environment; and
- would not unduly prejudice trade or commerce between Australia and places outside Australia.

The legislation also requires the NRA to assess whether chemical products will be effective when used according to approved recommendations.

Factors affecting operations

The following factors have a bearing on the NRA's operations:

Government requirements

- The NRA is required to recover its operational costs from the agricultural and veterinary chemicals industry through a range of fees and levies.
- The government seeks to reduce the regulatory burden on industry, particularly small business.
- Efficiency of regulation requires the NRA to operate on risk management principles.
- Government policies for the regulation of gene technology, data protection, food safety and other emerging issues will have an impact on the NRA.
- The Government has released *Management of Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals: A National Strategy*. This is an important context for our operations.



Community views

- Diverse views as to the degree of risk that is acceptable in the use of agricultural and veterinary chemicals.
- A need to use chemicals in farming to protect animals and crops and be competitive in a market that demands quality commodities at a reasonable price.
- Processes should be open and transparent, with opportunity for meaningful consultation.

International developments

- Improved cooperation between the NRA and overseas agencies for registration and review of chemical products has potential to create efficiencies and reduce costs for industry.
- Chemicals and the way they are regulated are becoming increasingly important to countries that import Australian commodities.
- Globalisation of chemical companies brings pressure on regulators in Australia and overseas to harmonise regulatory requirements.

Management framework

Two factors crucial to the organisation's realisation of its principal goals will be effective business management achieved through appropriate corporate structures and services and the quality contributions made by the NRA's valued and highly trained people.

Effective business management involves:

- The achievement of high standards of corporate governance through sound financial, legal and management practices and
- The implementation of a communications strategy that builds confidence in the NRA's programs through consultation, provision of useful information, management of emerging issues and response to inquiries.

The NRA is developing its quality people through:

- The implementation of a human resources development program that builds capabilities, fosters performance and encourages commitment to corporate goals.

The Corporate Plan is supported by:

- The NRA Operational Plan
- The NRA Human Resources Development Program – *NRA People Plan*.

Measuring outcomes

The NRA's operational effectiveness is measured through the performance indicators stated in our corporate and operational plans.

In addition, a range of surveys and monitoring for chemical residues, air and water quality, worker safety and

public health, undertaken by other Commonwealth and State agencies, gives confidence that the National Registration Scheme is effective and contributes to the productivity of Australia's agricultural industries.

Through its State/Territory partners in the National Registration Scheme, the NRA receives feedback on surveys and monitoring activities and this helps assess the overall effectiveness of regulatory activities.

Corporate governance statement

Section 3 of the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Act 1992* (the Act) states that the statutory objective of the Act is to establish a National Registration Authority (NRA) to administer laws relating to agricultural and veterinary products.

Section 7(1A) of the Act states that the functions of the NRA include:

- assessment of the suitability for sale and evaluation of active constituents for proposed or existing chemical products and labels for chemical products;
- keeping a register of approvals and licences granted;
- providing information to government and the public in relation to chemical products;
- facilitating a consistent national approach to the procedures for the assessment and control of chemicals and to develop codes of practice, guidelines and standards in relation to the use of chemical products.

In the performance of its functions the NRA is obliged to have regard to the principle of ecologically sustainable development and the need to use, conserve and enhance the community's resources.

Section 12 of the Act establishes the NRA as a body corporate and Section 13 provides that it shall consist of a Chairperson and 8 other directors. The NRA Board meets on a regular basis to determine policy that complies with the statutory objective, monitor performance in achieving the objective and to implement the strategies set out in the NRA's approved plans.

The planning and reporting requirements of the NRA are set out in Part 6 of the Act. Section 50(4) provides that the NRA, in formulating its Corporate Plan, shall define the goals of the NRA, provide a broad outline of its strategies, set out its assessment of factors that may affect its performance and include such performance indicators as it thinks appropriate.

The Commonwealth Authorities and Companies Act 1997 (CAC Act) and Orders (CACO) require the Corporate Plan to show outcomes, outputs, objectives and strategies aligned directly with the statutory objective.

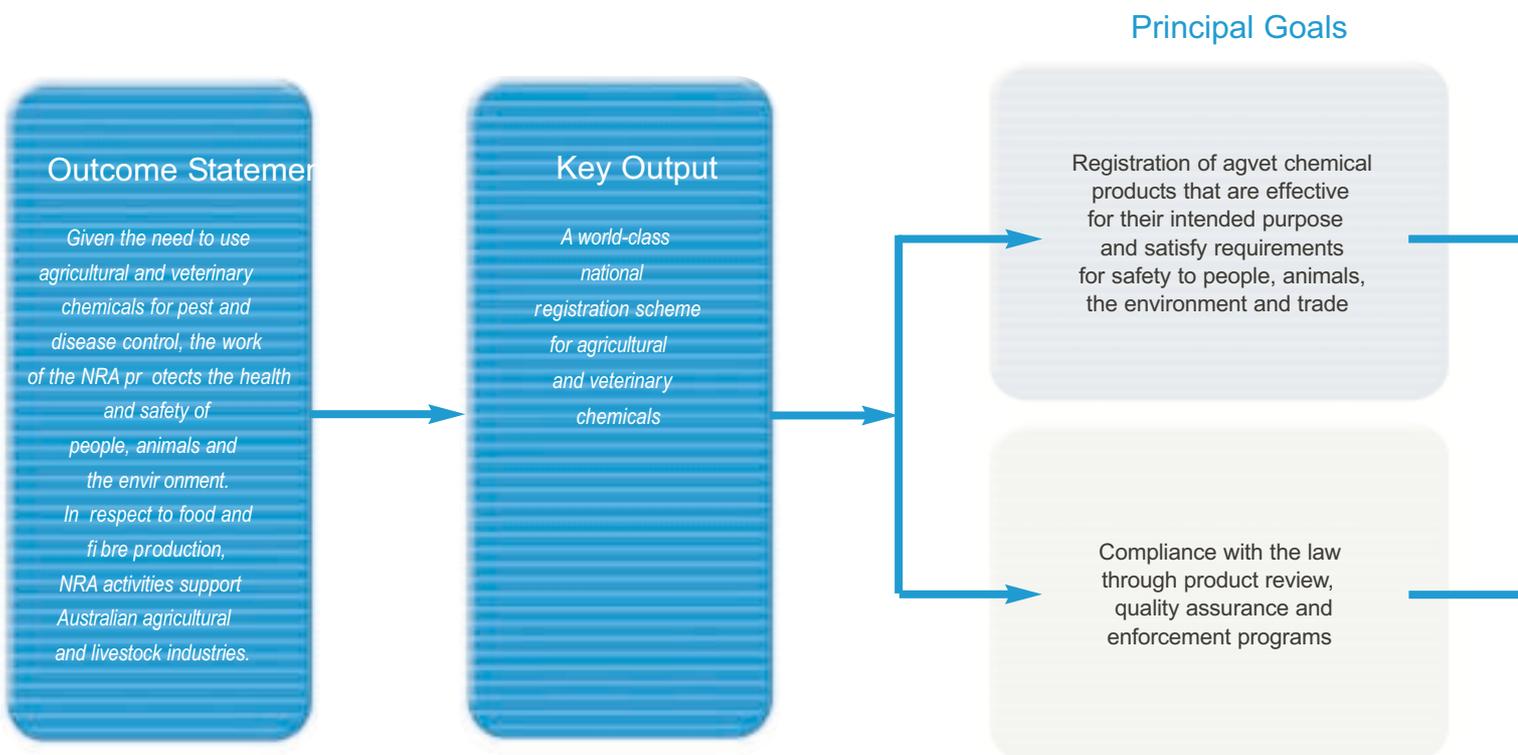


In determining the strategic direction for the NRA the Board has reviewed the statutory objective, consulted with key stakeholders and established key performance indicators which are used to measure the NRA's success in achieving its desired outcomes thus enabling an assessment of the NRA's effectiveness.

The NRA's programs are described in detail in the Annual Operational Plan and show how the NRA will maximise outputs from available resources to meet its outcomes. It will enable the Board to assess the efficiency of the NRA and its management. The Board determines the allocation of resources during the life of the Annual Operational Plan.

The Board plays a key role in the planning process by ensuring that the Corporate Plan and the Annual Operating Plan meet the requirements of the Act and the CAC Act and produce outcomes that are in line with the statutory objective. The Board regularly reviews management progress in achieving Plan objectives through both formal and informal contact with management and key stakeholders. Quantitative and qualitative key performance indicators are used in the review process.

The NRA has traditionally used the accrual accounting approach to budgeting and planning and thus complied with the Commonwealth's Annual Information Management System.





Strategies

Provide quality, timely registration and related information services supported by sound process management and increased overseas cooperation.

Improve the technical, legal and risk management expertise underpinning registration decisions.

Support agricultural and animal industries through appropriate chemical regulation and standards, with particular recognition of 'minor uses'.

Performance Indicators

Improved industry compliance with registration requirements due to better information and feedback.

Decisions about active constituents and chemical products are made within statutory timeframes.

Registered products in the marketplace meet legislative requirements for performance and safety due to sound decision making.

Achieve compliance through prevention, investigation and enforcement.

Ensure existing chemicals meet contemporary standards, by rigorous and timely review and appropriate regulatory activity.

Encourage good product quality through appropriate manufacturing, accreditation and licensing.

Chemical manufacturers and retailers comply with their responsibilities under the Code.

Reports of non-compliance and suspected adverse experiences linked to veterinary chemical products are recorded, investigated and responded to according to risk-management principles.

Existing chemical products reviewed against current requirements for performance and safety.



Five commitments apply to everything we do

1. Legislation

We fulfil the responsibilities in our legislation using risk management principles

2. Quality

Our work upholds the quality and integrity of the National Registration Scheme

3. Partnerships

We value our partnership with the States and Territories, and input from industry, rural sector, community and government stakeholders

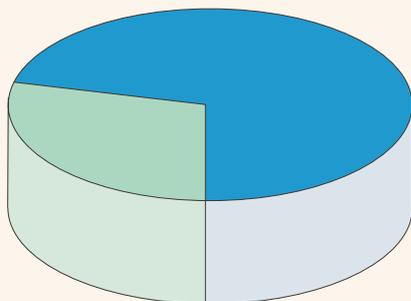
4. People

We value and develop our people so they do their jobs well

5. Performance

We work efficiently and effectively, pursuing continuous improvement and stakeholder satisfaction

Distribution of NRA's budget towards meeting outputs (\$'000)



- Registration of agvet chemical products: \$16,019
- Compliance, product review and quality assurance: \$4,005

Total Expenditure Budget for 2002–2003: \$20,024



Summary of NRA People Plan

The NRA relies on its people to meet the challenging responsibilities set out in our legislation and to achieve continuous improvement. In an ever changing work environment, the NRA aims to be recognised as a high performing organisation, and acknowledged as a **good** place to work. We will achieve this through a concerted effort from everyone, combined with effective leadership which enables and encourages us to do our best and uphold our professionalism and integrity.

Our strategy has three stages of development

Great foundations
Best available
Moving beyond

Policies that support good management practices
Improve people management practices so they rank with Australia's best
Look beyond Canberra and the Australian Public Service to seek out new ideas and go one better on the best available.

Key Result Areas	Build Capabilities	Foster Performance	Moving Forward Together
Goals	To attract, develop and retain the capabilities we need in our people	To develop and manage our culture and programs so that everyone can perform to their best and to the standards expected in the NRA	To build an organisation where staff understand and are committed to the NRA meeting its corporate plan commitments and contribute to the plan's further development
Great Foundation	Dedicated training funds Workplace diversity policy (encompassing EEO) NRA People Plan	Implement new performance management scheme Code of conduct	Staff and section meetings Corporate planning process NRA Staff Consultative Committee Implementation of 2001– 2004 Certified Agreement
Best Available	New Individual Development Plans Individual Development Awards On the job training improved Managing workloads and priorities Succession planning Development program for Band 6 employees	Ongoing review of People Management Practices Enhanced Rewards and recognition scheme Development of a management and leadership training program Enhanced study encouragement scheme Rotation of staff	Corporate briefings Quality Planning and Management Review Expand involvement of Band 6 staff in strategic planning Staff newsletter Staff surveys Implement self serve HR System (Kiosk) Implementation of knowledge management framework
Beyond	Targeted rural recruitment Needs assessment and gap analysis Develop a program to retain access to services of retired staff	Survey of customer service performance	International search for better people practices

* The NRA People Plan is the NRA's Human Resources Development Program referred to in section 48 of the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Administration) Act 1992

Useful Contacts

Registration Inquiry Line	02 6272 5852
Agricultural evaluation	02 6271 6384
Veterinary evaluation	02 6272 3744
Chemistry evaluation	02 6272 3212
Chemical residue evaluation	02 6272 3795
Permits	02 6272 3726
Chemical Review	02 6272 3213
Compliance/reports of unregistered product	02 6272 3992
Manufacturers' licensing	02 6272 3409
Reporting adverse experience with veterinary chemicals	02 6272 3651
FOI inquiries	02 6272 3756
General/student inquiries	02 6272 3727
Publications	02 6272 3794
Media inquiries	02 6272 3797

There is much more information available about the NRA. Just visit our website at:

www.nra.gov.au

where you will also find a list of all registered products, the NRA gazette, fact sheets and links to other agencies the NRA works with under the National Registration Scheme.



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