1.2 Process of development

The development of the West Gippsland Salinity Management Plan was managed by the West Gippsland CMA. A Steering Committee was established for the project consisting of representatives from the West Gippsland CMA (including Board representation), the Wellington Implementation Committee (representing the community), the Department of Sustainability and Environment and the Department of Primary Industries. The Steering Committee provided high level direction on the plan's development and provided comments and feedback throughout the process.

Two 'technical working groups' were formed to provide more detailed comment on the development of the plan. The "Dryland Technical Working Group" focussed on developing and analysing options for the dryland salinity occurring in the South Gippsland and Bengworden regions. The "Irrigation Technical Working Group" focussed on options for the Macalister Irrigation District and irrigated areas around Yarram and Bengworden. Both groups had representation from the West Gippsland CMA, the Department of Primary Industries, Southern Rural Water and the Wellington Implementation Committee (representing the community). The working groups met on a regular basis either separately or together depending on the issues being discussed. The West Gippsland Salinity Management Plan was written by Sinclair Knight Merz on behalf of the West Gippsland CMA.

The process of development began by formally reviewing the Lake Wellington Catchment Salinity Management Plan to determine the key strengths, weaknesses and achievements of the plan since accreditation in 1995 (Nolan ITU, 2001). This was part of a Statewide process for reviewing all accredited salinity management plans as recommended in the Victorian Salinity Management Framework (2000). An informal review was conducted of the draft South Gippsland Salinity Management Strategy as part of the development of the management options in this plan.

An initial draft of the West Gippsland Salinity Management Plan was developed by Nolan ITU (2002). The draft plan included an analysis of the extent and threat of salinity in the region and detailed appropriate salinity management options. The management options documented in Nolan ITU (2002) were further developed to provide a costed plan for salinity management in the region over the next 5 years. The Nolan ITU (2002) draft plan involved considerable community consultation, the outcomes of which have been used in this plan.

This plan extends the assets based approach adopted in the West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy (WCGMA, 2004) to ensure a consistency with the overall approach to natural resource management across the region. Assets that are threatened by salinity processes are explicitly considered in the planning process and management actions are tailored to improve our

understanding and/or address the needs of specific threatened assets. Assets are also considered in setting outcomes and targets to measure the success of plan implementation. The choice of management action was based on the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of action versus non-action in protecting the asset from salinity. The analysis of costs and benefits of management actions also included the effects on other natural resource management issues such as nutrients, water quality and water resource management. Some of the key processes and inputs are provided in Table 1.

- **Table 1: Key processes and inputs into the development of the Plan**

Task	Input/Method
Review of existing salinity management plans (Lake Wellington and South Gippsland)	Use existing review of Lake Wellington Salinity Management Plan plus carry out review of South Gippsland Salinity Management Strategy
Characterising the region's assets	The West Gippsland Regional Catchment Strategy
Determining which assets are vulnerable to salinity	Technical Working Groups using a multi-criteria analysis
Where and how vulnerable assets are exposed to salinity	Depth to water table and land salinity maps overlain on maps of key vulnerable assets
Determining the economic, social and environmental costs of salinity to the key vulnerable assets and prioritisation of assets for protection	Qualitative assessment by Technical Working Groups Quantitative economic assessment
Determining the likely future economic, social and environmental costs of salinity without a salinity plan	Macalister Irrigation District: Use of groundwater modelling to determine future depth to water table South Gippsland and Bengworden areas: projection of historical groundwater level trends to determine future depth to water table Future depth to water table maps overlain on maps of key vulnerable assets
Outlining a "vision" and "aspirational targets" for the long term management of salinity in the region	Steering Committee Technical Working Groups
Determining the cause of salinity	Previous research and investigations Technical Working Group
Analysis of management options to determine effectiveness, feasibility and barriers to adoption.	Previous research and investigations Technical Working Group
Determining the key knowledge gaps that prevent appropriate management actions being recommended or adopted	Previous research and investigations Technical Working Groups
Developing management actions in line with vision and addressing barriers to adoption and knowledge gaps	Technical Working Groups
Economic, social and environmental costs and benefits of management actions used to prioritise management actions	Qualitative Risk-Benefit analysis conducted by the Technical Working Groups. Quantitative economic analysis of the key management options
Prioritisation of the management options and setting of "management action targets"	Technical Working Groups
Setting of "resource condition targets" quantifying the change to asset condition over 30 years	Previous research and investigations Technical Working Groups
Establishing an appropriate cost sharing framework for the implementation of the management actions	Government guidelines on cost sharing principles; Technical Working Groups
Establishing a monitoring and evaluation program to determine whether the resource condition targets are being met	Technical Working Groups