

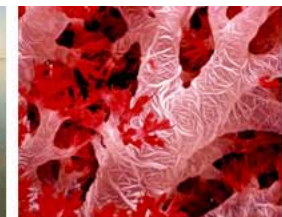
A River Runs Through It

Sometimes

**Protected Areas and
freshwater conservation:
lessons from Australia**

Dr Stuart Blanch
Freshwater Manager

Skukuza, October 2006





Australia's natural water infrastructure assets



3 M km rivers & creeks

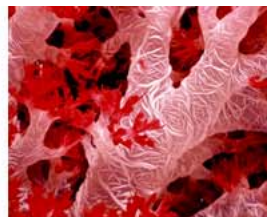
16 M ha nationally important wetlands

64 Ramsar Wetlands

1,560 estuaries

??? ha floodplains

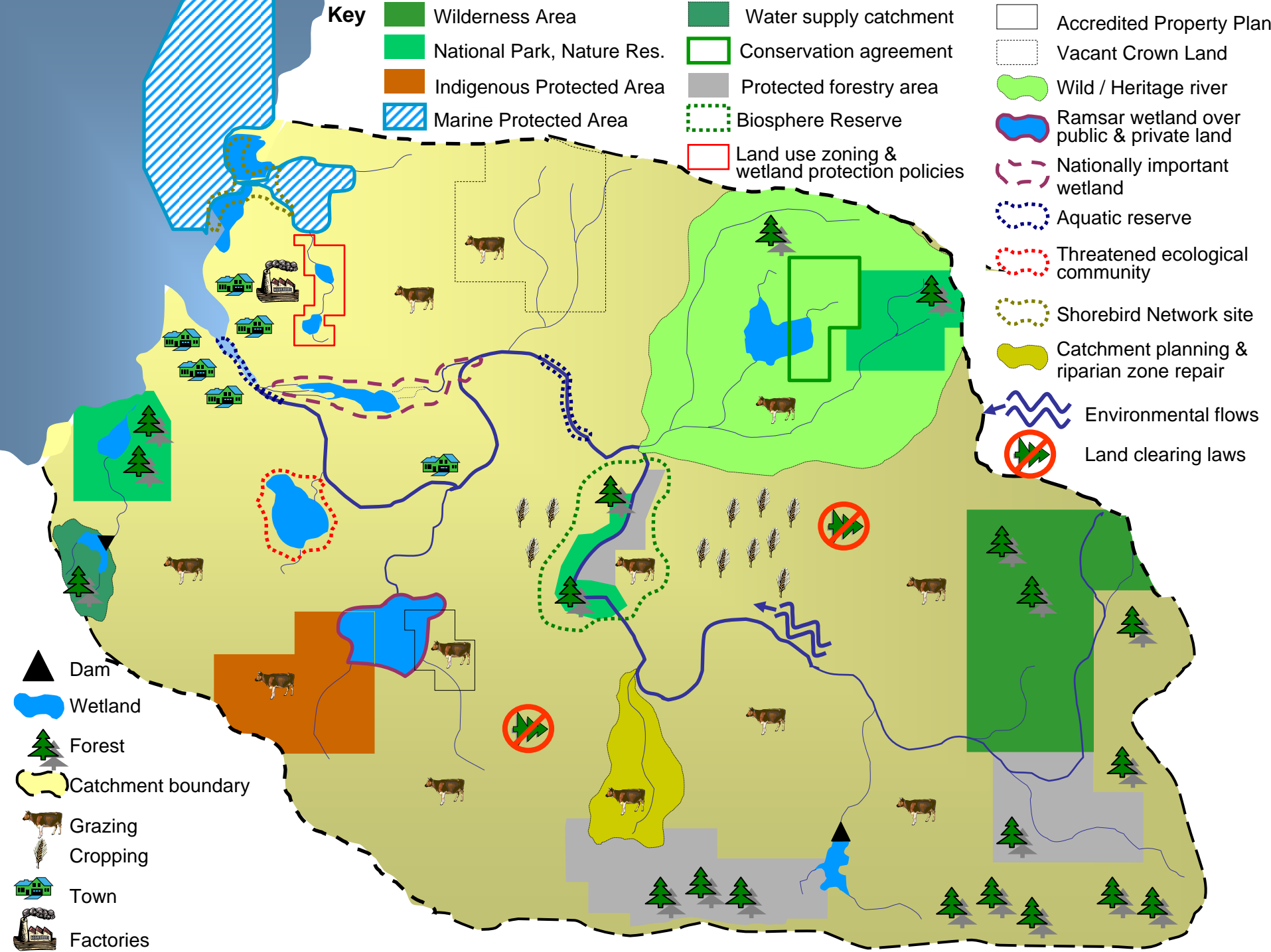
But Australia has no national policy framework or targets for protecting high conservation value rivers, wetlands and estuaries...

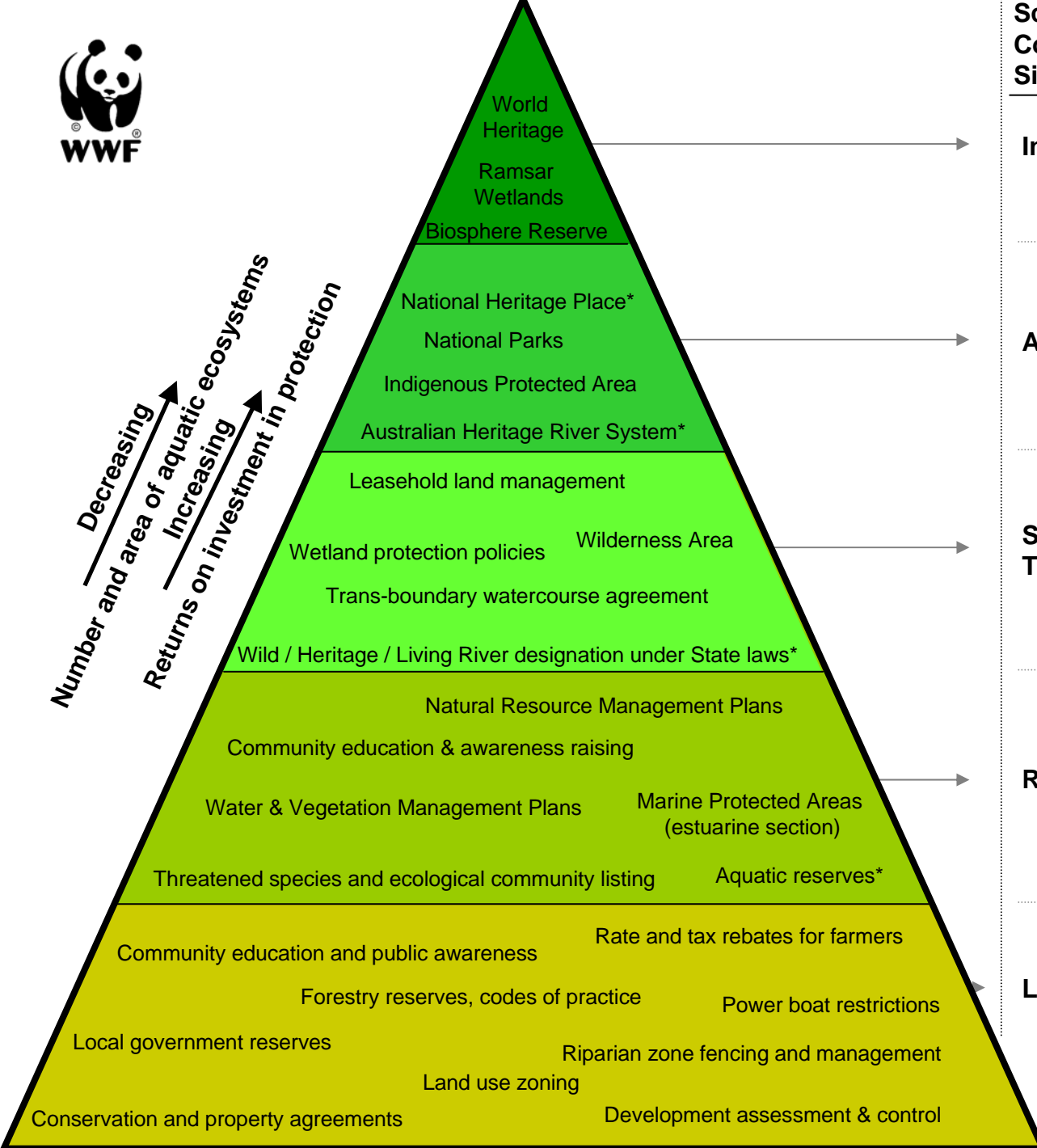




How do Protected Areas fit in the freshwater conservation jigsaw?







Scale of Conservation Significance	National Conservation Value ¹	Lead Coordination Role ²
International	High	Australian, State and Territory Governments
Australia	High	
State / Territory	High	State & Territory Governments
Regional	Medium	NRM Groups and Local Government
Local	Low	



Proposed Australian targets

Protect all HCV aquatic ecosystems by 2010

- International, Australian and State conservation significance

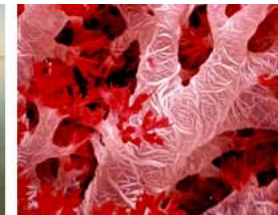
Of the 3 M km of rivers & creeks, protect 15%* in

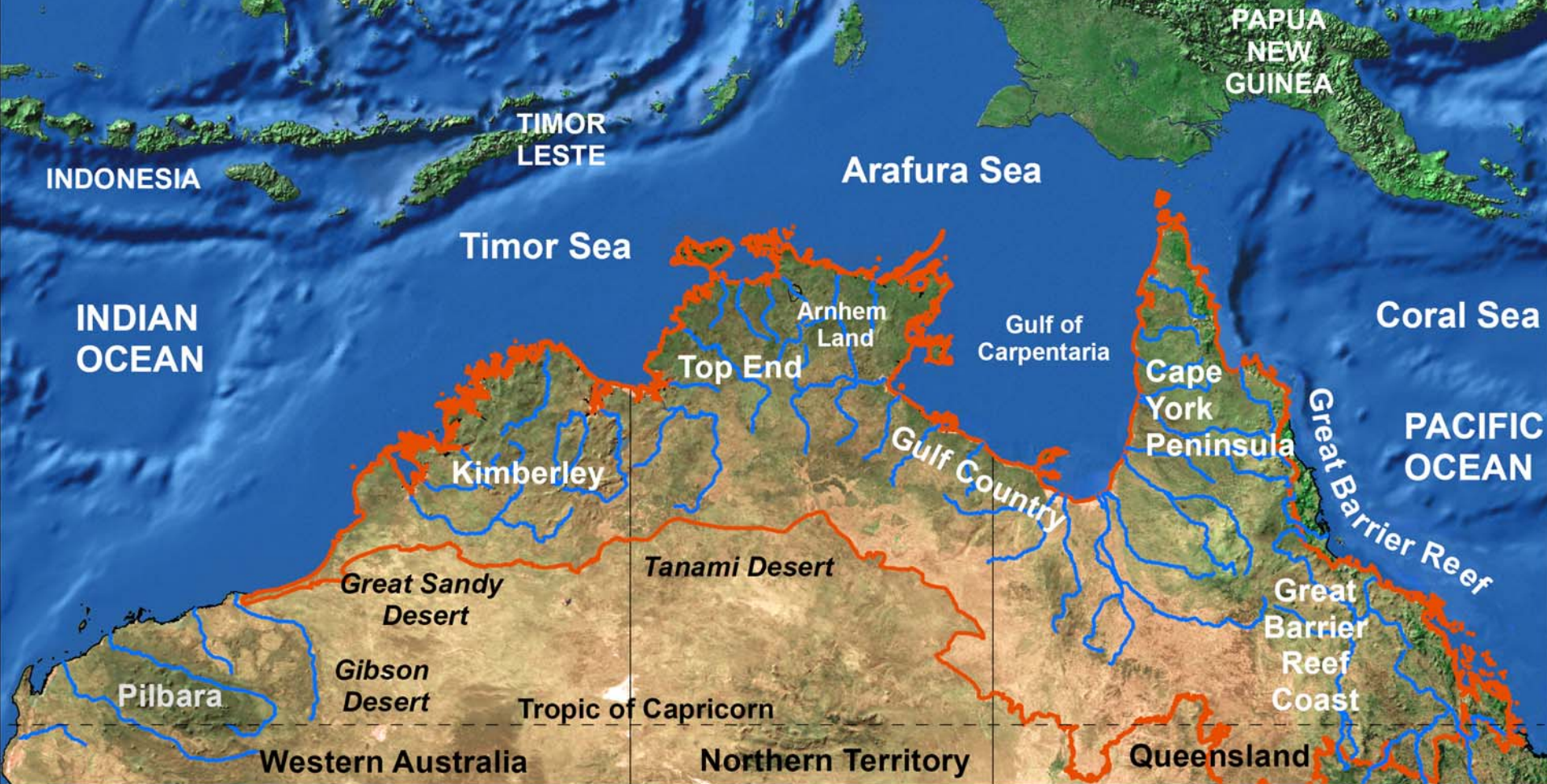
- Wild / Heritage / Living River laws (now 6.0% by length & 4.5% by area)
- Protected Areas (now 7.2%)

Protect 80%* of nationally important wetlands in protected areas (now 55% of 16 M ha)



Designate 100* Ramsar wetlands (now 65 of total 860 wetlands of national importance)

* thru comprehensive & representative representation in aquatic bioregions





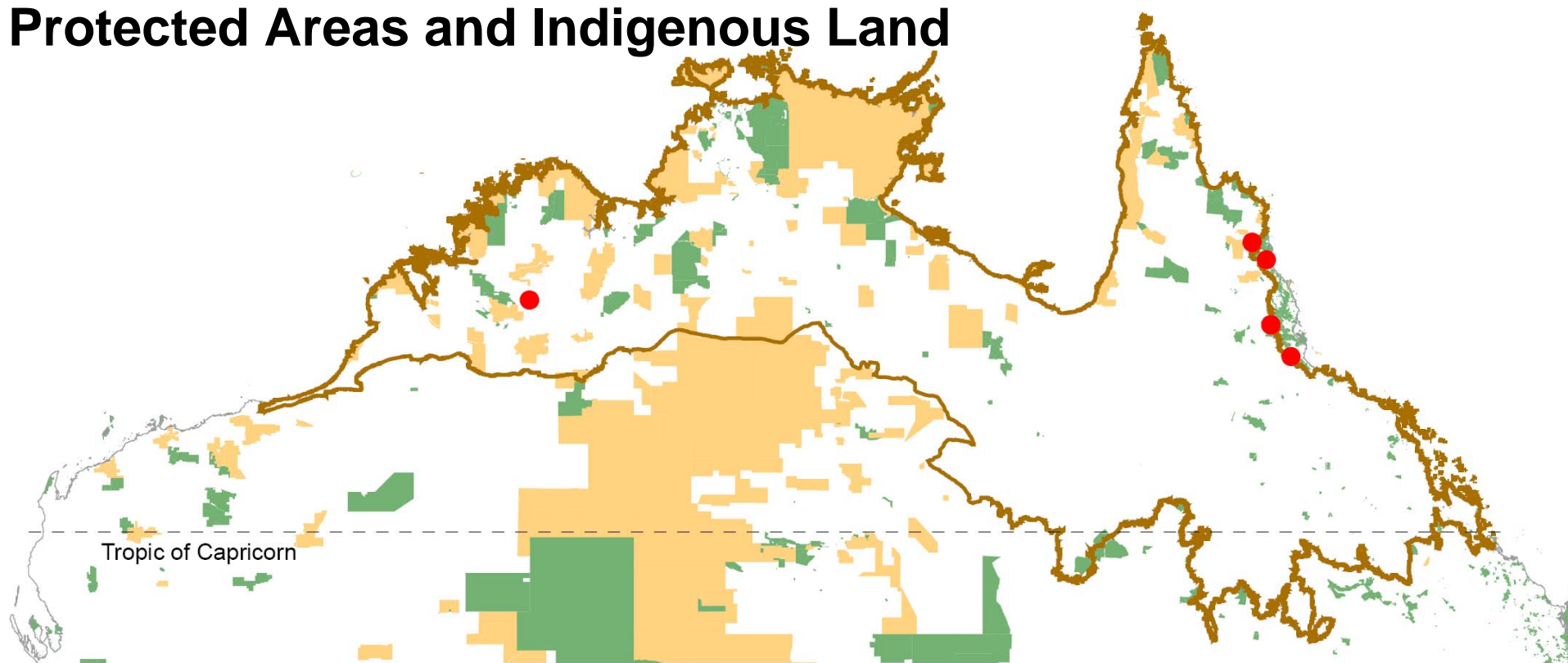
Legend

-  Major river
-  Boundary of tropical savannas

Key stats

- 1 M km of rivers & creeks (100 licensed dams & weirs)
- 65% of Australia's freshwater (c. 78, 000 GI, 50 GI extracted)
- 91 catchments covering 2 M km² (< c. 2% cleared)
- Most diverse, rich & intact rivers in Australia (>200 spp fish)
- c. 5% in PAs, 25% Indigenous, 55% leasehold
- 1.9 M km² of tropical savannas (area of W + S Europe)

Protected Areas and Indigenous Land

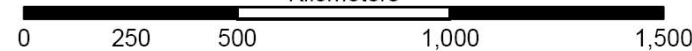


Legend

-  Protected Areas
-  Indigenous land
-  Tropical savanna boundary
-  Private protected areas owned by the Australian Wildlife Conservancy or Australian Bush Heritage Fund



Kilometers



Coordinates: GCS_GDA94



Data sources:

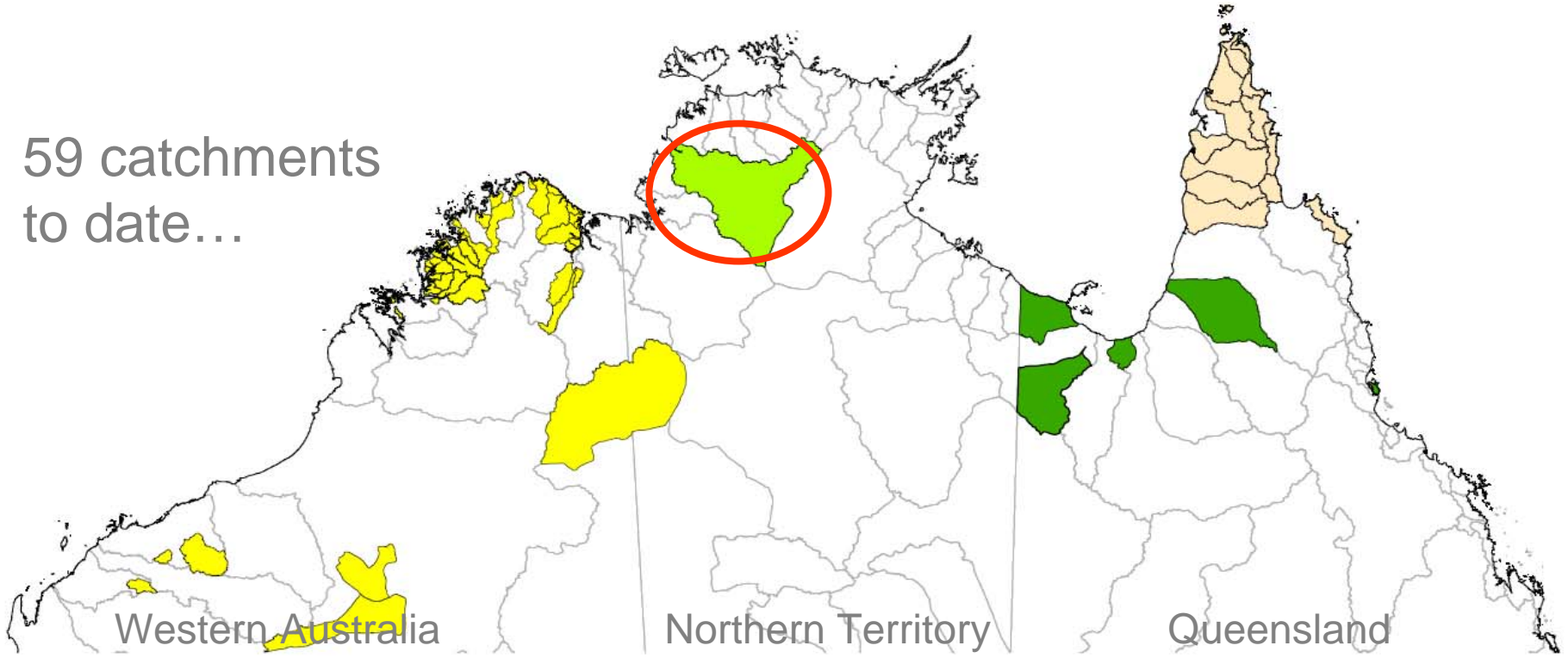
1. Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database, 2004, DEH.
2. National Public and Aboriginal Lands Pre-1998, Geoscience Australia, 2003.
3. Private protected Area locations adapted from AWC and ABHF.
4. Tropical Savanna Management CRC

Produced by S Blanch, WWF, Darwin
Stored at G/GIS/GIS_Finished_Maps/Northern_Australia/
Northern_Australia_protected_areas.pdf



Wild and Living Rivers in Northern Australia

59 catchments to date...



Legend

- Declared Wild and High Conservation Value Rivers - Western Australia
- Indicative Living River (Daly only) - Northern Territory
- Declared Wild Rivers - Queensland
- Indicative Wild Rivers (not yet declared) - Queensland
- Drainage Basins





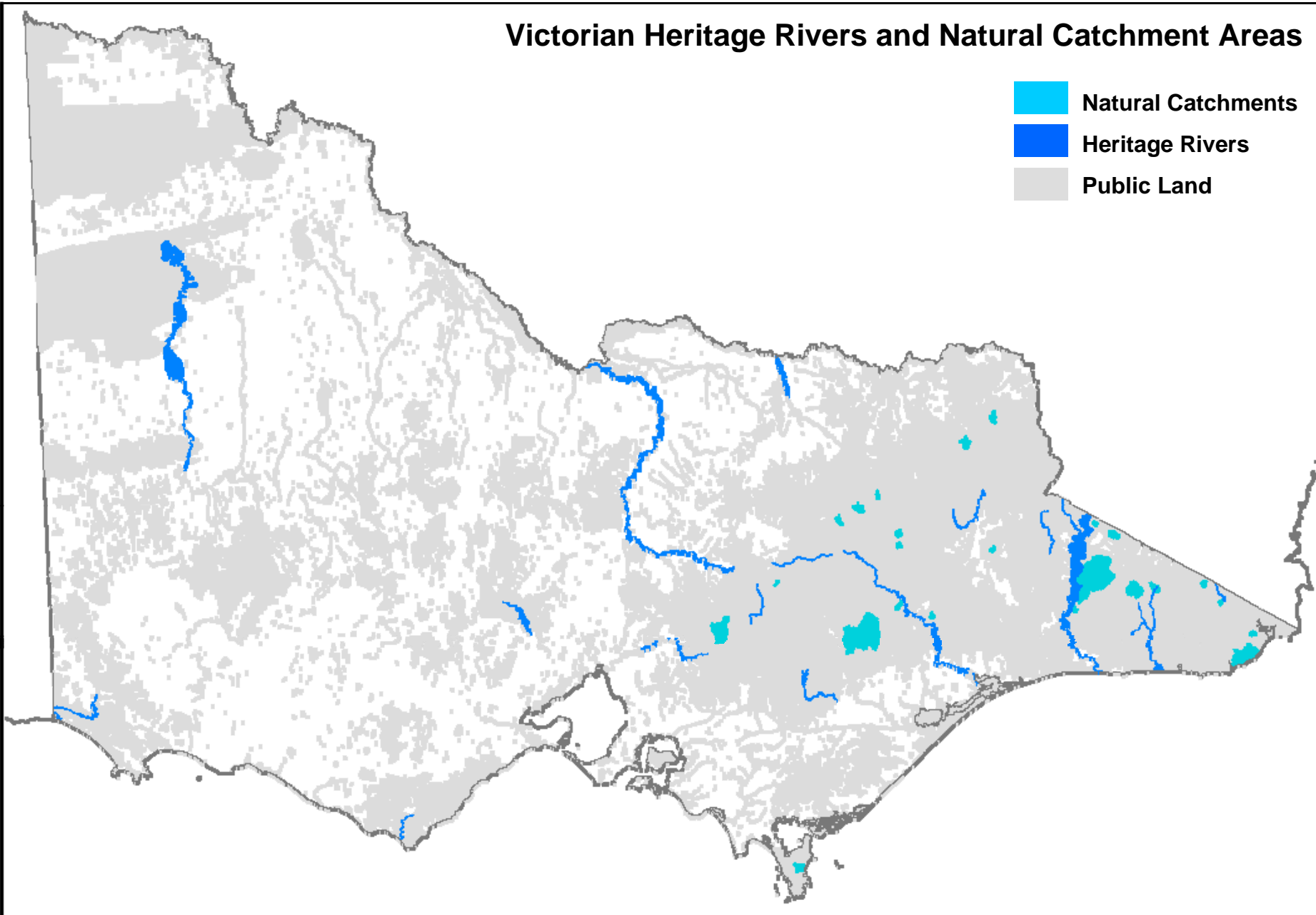
Kilometers



Coordinates: GCS_GDA94

Victorian Heritage Rivers and Natural Catchment Areas

-  Natural Catchments
-  Heritage Rivers
-  Public Land

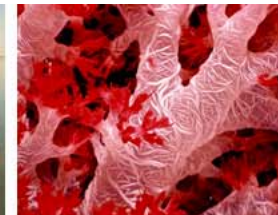




Recommendations #1

Protected Areas for freshwater conservation should

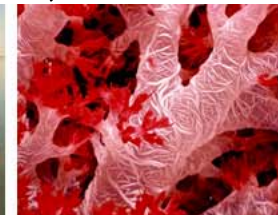
- Explicitly apply comprehensiveness, adequacy & representativeness criteria to freshwater habitats
 - Catchments, river reaches, wetlands, floodplains, GDEs, estuaries
- Seek to form a contiguous network along whole length of a river
 - IUCN Categories I-VI
 - In association with, and strengthen, non-PA freshwater conservation
- Protect whole free-flowing catchments & sub-catchments if possible
- Protect downstream wetlands & estuaries as leverage to drive IRBM along whole river, with other recognition if possible
 - Ramsar wetlands, Shorebird sites





Recommendations #2

- **Develop aquatic ecosystem asset registers per basin**
 - IRBM to recognise & conserve PAs, such as
 - CBD PoW Inland Waters Goal 1.2
 - EU Water Framework Directive linking to Natura 2000 sites (Art. 6)
 - Australia's National Water Initiative, Living Murray Initiative's 6 'Signif. Ecol Assets'
 - Assess conservation value (global, regional, national, aquatic bioregion)
 - Develop FPA toolkit and decision support systems, aquatic bioregions
- **Freshwater conservation targets**
 - wetland area & river length within PAs & designated free-flowing rivers
- **Global free-flowing river conservation framework**
 - Develop global register of free-flowing rivers, explicit link to PAs
 - via CBD PoW Inland Waters, Ramsar, Watercourses Convention?
 - eg, US, Canada, Australia, EU Natura 2000 wild rivers, etc



Thank you

