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Resilience enhancing local government capacity in natural resource management

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knowledge for managing Australian landscapes

Thurs Sept 21 2006

The information contained in this presentation is based on scientific research conducted by Su Wild River for a project funded by Land & Water Australia.



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Presentation Overview

- About the research
- Knowledge
- Strategic Action
- Resources
- Coordination
- Sustaining Communities
- Where to now



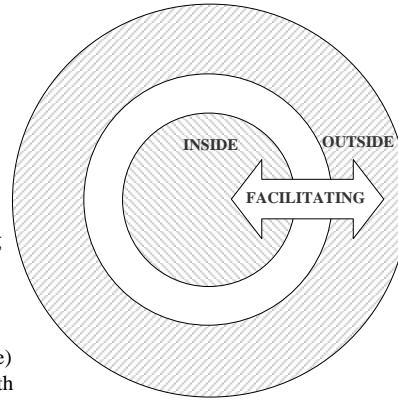
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Resilience – enhancing LG capacity in NRM

- Theoretical basis – the local-state antinomy
 - SG considers LGs to be creatures and servants of the state
 - LG considers LGs to be creatures and servants of the local
 - Both views are valid, but they are contradictory
- Resilience* is trying to make a difference by bringing outside information to LG, and bringing insider perspectives to the outside.
 - Outside information from the National Land and Water Resources Audit
 - Inside information from 28 LGs (4 from each state) and the regional NRM agencies that they work with



Selecting LGs

Inland Waters

- Exceeding water quality guidelines for recreation and health
- Riparian zones and river habitats
- Surface water availability
- Ground water availability

Land

- Productivity
- Erosion
- Dryland salinity
- Soil acidity

Biodiversity

- Landscape stress
- Threatened species

Climate

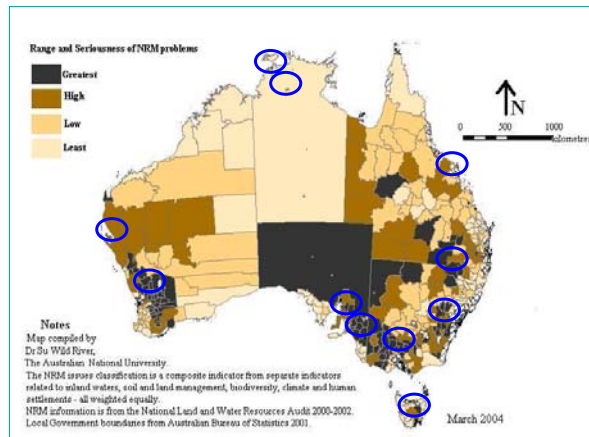
- Rainfall and rainfall variability

Human Settlements

- Perceptions, changes and limitations to changed farming practices
- Income and wealth

Other issues

- Estuaries and the sea
- Integrated Catchment Management in the Murray Darling Basin



Selected LGs face serious, multiple NRM challenges, and have mixed levels of engagement in NRM programs.

10 from the Murray Darling Basin



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Resilience outside information

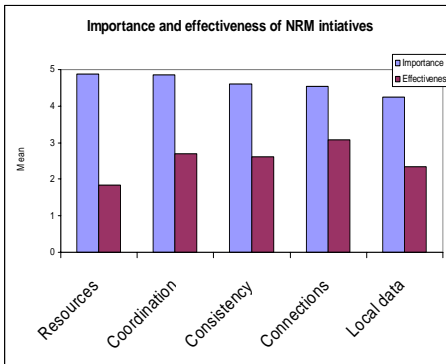
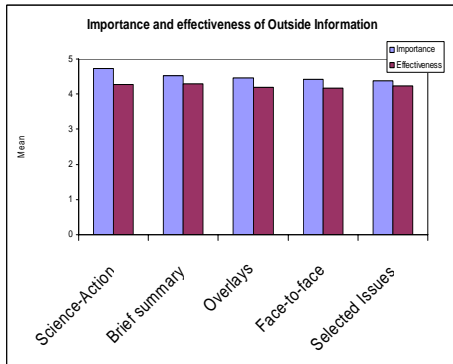


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Survey results



People liked the Outside Information, but the research also highlighted many problems faced by LGs dealing with Australia's current NRM framework.

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Complete research results

- Soon available online at:
- www.wild-river.com.au/research/resilience/full-reports

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Information and knowledge



- LGs have access to detailed local environmental knowledge.
- Scientists and outsiders have valuable insights about broad NRM features.
- Optimal sharing of this information between all agencies is rare.
- The strategies here ensure that people and processes are proactive in moving information around to those who need it. Applying the strategies will help everyone to operate with the knowledge that they need to be effective.

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Share Valuable Knowledge

- Engage LG representatives on regional NRM committees.
- Seek local insights about local priorities and landscape features.
- Provide for LG access to expert advice and useful data sets.



Innovative or strategic?

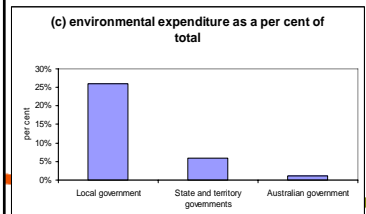
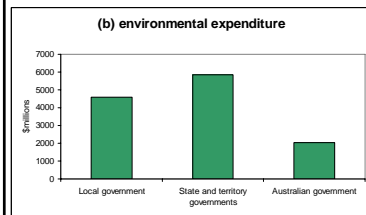
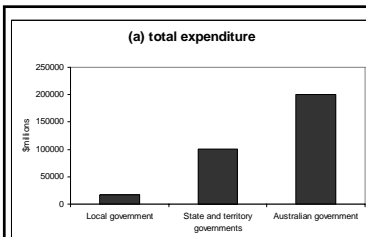


- On-ground practitioners see historical legacies in their local landscapes.
- Some problems with invasive species, soil degradation and water wastage are the result of past imperfect scientific knowledge and resulting policy advice.
- Hence, the focus at the local level is on wise and strategic actions that cause no new problems while offering new benefits.



Take strategic action

- Work to solve pressing local problems, consistent with the goals for long-term priorities.
- Clarify how larger-scale issues are significant in the local area.
- Prevent mistakes and harness support by carefully testing innovations in the local area.



Resources

- LGs are the poorest sphere of government
- They make a disproportionately high investment in environmental work.
- LGs have little potential to increase their environmental commitment.
- They resist moves to increase workloads unless proper resources are guaranteed.



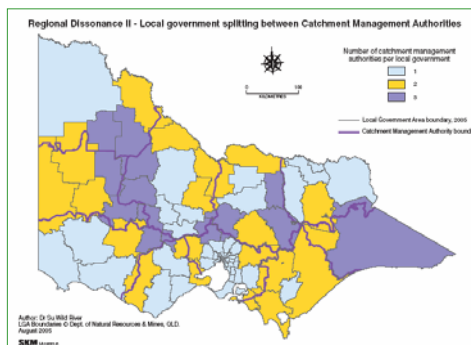
Provide proper resources

- Provide a long-term budget for any new NRM work asked of local government.
- Establish the statutory, or other formal authority for local government to fulfil its roles.
- Remove hidden costs of diligent NRM work by local governments.



Coordination

- Many NRM roles are not allocated to any sphere while others are covered by multiple agencies.
- LGs and NRM regional agencies produce plans for improving NRM but timeframes and contents have rarely been aligned.
- Inconsistencies remain and integration is elusive.
- In the absence of perfect coordination, flexibility is a practical solution.





Coordinate between spheres

- Clarify roles and responsibilities between agencies. Remove gaps, overlaps and confusion.
- Develop arrangements that require and support consistent planning between spheres.
- Design flexible arrangements that support cooperation for solving novel problems.



Communities

- LGs are fundamentally connected to their physical and social landscapes.
- NRM problems have taken scores of years to emerge, and community relationships have built up over decades.
- Regional NRM initiatives need to recognise this context for their work.
- Long-term commitment of human and other resources is needed to ensure that NRM initiatives help to sustain, and not undermine communities.



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Help sustain communities

- Acknowledge that NRM problems have taken time to emerge, and will take time to fix.
- Make enduring commitments with local governments to work together for NRM outcomes.
- Provide secure tenure and attractive packages to retain skilled people in the regions.



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Where to now?

- Grab the fact sheet, and pass it on
- Check out the website (in a couple of weeks)
- Apply the strategies to new (and old) initiatives

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