



NRM Research Alliance

## Development of the Human Dimensions Cluster of the NRM Research Alliance

WORKSHOP II PROCEEDINGS

Held: Tuesday 4 August 2009, Lirra Lirra Café meeting rooms, Waite Rd Urrbrae

Facilitated by Kerry Thomas of *interPART* & Associates

### Present

Name	Organisation
Kathryn Bellette	NRM Research Alliance, Director
Janet Pedler	NRM Research Alliance, Business Manager
Ed Pikusa	NRM Research Alliance
Guy Robinson	University of SA: Director, Centre for Rural Health & Community Development, and Dean of Research, Centre for Rural Engagement
Janet Dibb-Leigh	University of SA: Research & Innovation Cluster
Andrew Beer	Flinders University: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Deborah Keighly-James	DFEEST: Principal Policy Advisor
Jill Woodlands	Conservation Council of SA, NRM Facilitator
David Jones	University of Adelaide Uni: Director, Landscape Architecture Program
Sylvia Roughan	PIRSA: Rural Solutions: Sen Consultant, Community & Indigenous Serv Team
Greg Cock	PIRSA: Program Manager Drought Response and NRM
Terry Peacock	Conservation Volunteers Australia: SA-NT Manager
Merv Lewis	Northern & Yorke NRM Board: Presiding Member
Ben Hyde	Australian Government, CfoC Facilitator, SA Environment
Brian Foster	Eyre Peninsula NRM Board, Presiding Member
Mark Stanley	Eyre Peninsula NRM Board, Deputy General Manager
John Ward	CSIRO
Jonathan Sobels	Flinders University, Lecturer and Research Fellow, School of Geography, Population & Environmental Management
Lib Hylton Keele	PIRSA: Program Leader, Rural Communities, Sustainable Systems, Agriculture, Food & Wine
Claire Smith	Flinders University, Archaeology
Heather Burke	Flinders University, Archaeology
Chris Raymond	Consultant; PhD candidate UniSA

### Apologies

Name	Organisation
Lisa Daniel	University of Adelaide, Faculty of the Professions,
Mike Young	University of Adelaide, Executive Director, The Environment Institute
Stephanie Williams	Dept for Environment & Heritage, Information Sci & Tech., Science Coord.
John Spoehr	Australian Institute of Social Research, Executive Director
Janie Rioux	CSIRO
Barry Lincoln	<i>interPART</i> & Associates

## Welcome

The workshop began with a welcome to participants and introductions.

## Workshop purpose

Introduced by Kerry Thomas. This workshop was scheduled to further progress the development of a cluster for research into the human dimensions of natural resources management and to provide an opportunity for interested parties who could not attend the first workshop in June to take part.

The key goal of this workshop was to continue the discussion that developed in the first workshop and to identify a core group of people who will take on the role of driving the development of the cluster. This group should be small, but representative, and include a diversity of skills (ie be multi-disciplinary).

## Overview of the inaugural workshop

### NRM Research Alliance

As in the previous workshop, Katherine Bellette provided an overview of the NRM Research Alliance, its roles and programs. Please refer to notes from the Workshop I, 24<sup>th</sup> June 2009 for further details.

### Proposal for the Human Dimensions of NRM Cluster

There is a clear need for greater involvement of the social sciences to inform natural resource management in SA. This need has been expressed by many stakeholders including participants in the previous workshop and in the recent workshop to establish a Habitat Restoration and Sustainable Production research cluster. One avenue to address this need is to form a network of people interested in integrated, cross-disciplinary and cross-sector research.

The need to build relationships between researchers and practitioners at the outset, to help define research needs and research projects was acknowledged.

The biophysical options for natural resource management adaptation to climate change may be available at both the property and regional level, but the best way to enable property managers and regional managers to make good decisions and adopt better practices is unknown. There is a need to identify the policy and market factors that will enable adaptation and the policy and market factors which act as barrier to adopting improved practices.

The proposal supported by the previous workshop is to begin with a pilot project (multi-disciplinary and multi-sector) which:

- works with practitioners from the property to agency level;
- works within existing regional farming and community networks;
- works with regional Local Governments and regional economic development boards; and
- works with financiers and insurers.

It is understood that natural resource managers in regional areas are very interested in improving management practices to respond to drought conditions in the short term and climate change in the long term. Most people see themselves as good land stewards and the role of the research cluster may be to assist with the evolution of good stewardship practices in response to climate change.

While there are currently some ideas about what the pilot project could focus on and/or include, these are definitely not fixed. There is also potential to build on existing projects.

Comments from workshop participants included:

- There is a need to develop the project slowly and carefully, with support from those who have attended the workshops.
- Land management change needs to be step wise. If some of the agronomy projects are already in place, we should be there to look at how to support people to adopt improved practices.
- There is a trend towards fewer landholders with larger properties, and this leads to a need for more precise decision making.
- Securing support and participation of natural resource managers should be approached through existing local support networks.

The State Complementary funding (phase 2) and the Premiers Science and Research fund were identified as possible funding sources.

### **Human Dimensions of NRM scoping study**

Kerry Thomas provided an overview of the scoping study undertaken in preparation for the cluster development. The results from the study were presented in the previous workshop, and more a comprehensive summary of the study results can be found in the Scoping Study report.

#### **Key findings of the study were:**

- Five priority themes for research were affirmed and scoped. These include:
  1. *Social and economic aspects of communities;*
  2. *Engagement (indigenous and non-indigenous communities);*
  3. *Community resilience and adaptive capacity in the light of climate change;*
  4. *Social tools and processes; and*
  5. *Monitoring and evaluation.*
- Stewardship and corporate responsibility didn't get picked up as a priority but the previous workshop identified that it is still important and that opportunities to weave it into research projects should be explored.

#### **Gaps and overlaps identified (both in content and process) include:**

- Knowledge utilisation and application. (A lot of research is undertaken but results aren't being applied.) This may be because end users don't feel connected. This Cluster has a role to play in improving links between practitioner knowledge with scientific/research.
- Context-research findings need to be adapted to the context.
- Complexity-natural resource management is already complex and human dimensions increase the complexity but also provide the solutions.
- Communication-issue of language
- Disconnects between policy and practice

### **Outcomes from the inaugural workshop**

Key outcomes from the workshop held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2009 include:

- There was strong support for development of the cluster and the need for such a group/network articulated by many stakeholders.
- There is potential for the cluster to play a unique and important role, particularly with improving efficiency and reducing costs.
- A key aspect of the cluster's role will be integration, including facilitation of cross sectoral of multi-disciplinary research and end user engagement.
- The approach needs to be flexible and innovative with key functions of the cluster being to catalyse, integrate, interface, identify and influence.
- Strong leadership and champions are needed.
- Language is important and attention needs to be paid to translation and communication.

Extensive discussion followed during which a range of views were expressed. These points offered by workshop participants are organised below under four common themes.

### **Engaging end users and maximising adoption/application**

- We need to engage with end users right from the beginning. End users should be involved in workshops to shape and design how the research will work.
- What works is people coming together at the beginning of the process and being involved in shaping the outcomes.
- Application should be a key consideration at all stages of the research process. Research needs to be relevant and meaningful and able to be applied.
- There needs to be a motivation to apply research, often this is a crisis.
- In the first instance we need to listen to and understand what the needs of people are.
- We should recognise that land managers have a different culture from Government and researchers. On a continuum from Government bureaucrats and academic researchers to land managers 'good will' increases, that is, good will and long term trust are very important to land managers.

### **Models for engagement**

- NRM project officers need to be 'people' people.
- In the past extension hasn't necessarily looked like a good investment, which explains why there is a trend away from using it in NRM policy. If we don't fill in the gaps this has created, we will lose a lot of good faith.
- We need to be able to elucidate the value of extension officers/facilitators as this hasn't been done well in the past. But some work has already been done, so we need to revisit this, bring it forward and use it better to influence funding and policy development.
- Market based instruments can be an effective tool to improve the capacity of land managers. Through engaging in tender/bidding processes land managers have expanded their understanding of NRM.

### **Advocacy**

- The cluster has an important advocacy role, as often human dimension information or considerations are forgotten or omitted from paperwork/reporting communication of research results. (This comment refers to page 7 of the summary paper from Workshop 1 used as a starting point for discussion in this workshop 'Summary material for HD Workshop 2'.)
- There is a highly important role in communication of the research findings and listening to what end users think.
- When policies and projects are developed, this doesn't necessarily translate into investing in people. Better outcomes may be achieved through investing in community development rather than in on ground works.
- It is important to look at how other sectors approach this, to learn about what works. For example, in the health sector there is less of a disconnect between people and policy.
- It is difficult to get human dimensions into the minds of agencies where the significance of human dimensions is often underestimated.
- We do need to invent something to address this gap, such as the new role of 'boundary rider' to bridge the divide between policy and practice. This role needs to be able to do more than just translate.

### **Responding to changing culture**

- It is important to recognise that there are changing generational cultures/needs.
- Digital environment has the potential to assist eg digital networks.

- There are many good things happening already, and there are lots of good models we can build on.

### **Purpose of the human dimensions cluster**

The purpose of the human dimensions cluster was articulated as:

*To facilitate the integration of the human dimensions of NRM through multidisciplinary research approaches to achieve effective NRM outcomes.*

An additional name suggestion was 'human values'

A business case and research prospectus is being framed by *interPART* and it will be developed as a Research, Development and Application Case. Once complete, this could be used to promote the cluster to potential participants and supporters.

### **Governance model**

The aim is to establish a core group, who are willing to drive the ongoing development of the cluster in consultation with the broader network. Representation of different interests is important but the group needs to be small and workable. So far 30-40 people have expressed interest in being involved in the network.

### **Review objectives, strategies/activities**

The following comments and questions were offered by workshop participants:

- *Would the research undertaken be through action learning or would there be space for more theoretical research?*
- *University academics need to be seen in the rural community.*
- *The approach used by David, where architecture students undertook a residency in a rural community as part of their studies, may be a useful one to explore.*
- *The strategies identified look like a linear process, but in practice this may not be the case.*
- *Training opportunities could be identified.*
- *Strategies for building up the good will need to be included.*
- *This network needs to include Local Government. One of the things we are trying to do is to break down the barriers between NRM and Local Government.*
- *Provide a forum to connect people working in the area and allow for relationships to establish on that basis.*
- *Need to set expectations at a realistic level. We need to focus on something concrete, deliver it and build a track record. Then we can attract resources.*
- *The objectives/strategies document should fit on a page as a single stand alone document. The outcomes should be presented first/upfront.*
- *Other ideas for name/phrase 'from knowledge to practice'; 'people turning NRM knowledge and practice'; 'people power'; 'NRM community values'; 'community informed NRM research'.*
- *Social capital and values in the community aren't recognised enough in the strategy.*
- *The principles need to be up front (including listening to the community).*
- *The NRM Boards need to communicate to network members what NRM plan targets are in this field.*
- *We need to think about how to communicate this to the research capacity in the network, to stimulate researchers to support planned outcomes. We could hold forums to communicate what our needs are.*
- *It would be great to have some way of sponsoring landholders to put forward their needs.*

- *We should also ensure that sharing information about current research is encouraged and supported within the research sector/network.*
- *We need to applaud and acknowledge outcomes that were delivered with research input and market successes in application of research results. This could take the form of an award for best research and outcome projects.*
- *We need to create some space for people to meet and interact and learn from previous work.*
- *Learning is the preamble to change so we need to set up the opportunities to learn.*
- *Database coordination (needs to be maintained and accessible in and out).*
- *Flinders Uni would be able to host a database linked in with State Agencies and Research SA also has capacity in this area.*

## Governance

There was some discussion about qualities needed in members of the core group who will drive the development of the cluster. The following workshop participants expressed interest in contributing to the core group. The names of some people who were unable to attend the workshop were also put forward.

Core Steering Group: Formed as follows:

Merv Lewis (Northern & Yorke NRM Board)  
 Guy Robinson (UniSA)  
 Janet Dibb-Leigh (UniSA; in conjunction with G Robinson)  
 Jonathan Sobels (Flinders Uni)  
 Claire Smith and Heather Burke (Flinders Uni; in conjunction with J Sobels)  
 Debra Keighley-Jones (DFEEST)  
 Stephanie Williams (DEH; to be confirmed)  
 Greg Cock and/or Lib Hylton-Keele (PIRSA; to be confirmed)  
 Jill Woodlands and Terry Peacock (NGO representatives – to share)

The group agreed to correspond by email and arrange a time to meet in the near future.

## NRM Research Alliance programs/events coming soon

The NRM Research Alliance is:

- intending to hold research forums for all NRM Boards and is currently planning the first one to be held in October.
- planning to develop a discussion paper series with three issues per year, followed by a forum.
- developing a network to connect land use planners with NRM professionals and researchers. This will begin with a forum, and there is a hope that it may lead to the development of some small but important research projects.

## Workshop close

The workshop closed and participants were thanked for their time and contributions.

