



TRaCK

Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge

Collaborative water planning in Australia's tropical north

Developing new approaches for water planning

This project pilots new approaches to water planning in Australia's tropical north. It is part of TRaCK – the Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge research hub. TRaCK brings together leading tropical river researchers and managers from across Australia to focus on the sustainability of rivers and catchments from Cape York to Broome.



Water planning – what is it?

Water is vital to all of us. It is also essential to the health of our rivers and ecosystems. Water planning is simply a process to allocate and sustainably manage water to meet our future water requirements. Good water plans provide for waterway health and community needs. Public consultation is integral to the water resource planning process. Regional communities, industry and other stakeholders, including conservationists and Indigenous groups, all have a role to play in effective water planning.

Why participate?

Water reform in Australia is moving at a rapid pace. Despite attempts to consult and involve the public, the rate of change means some groups are left behind, confused about how to participate, or unaware of proposed changes to water planning. This research project aims to overcome these problems by providing clear, accessible ways for people to contribute to decisions on water use.

The project will identify pathways for community participation in water planning for Australia's tropical north. It will show how graziers, irrigators, resource managers, scientists, Indigenous communities, catchment managers and others can learn from each other, and contribute positively to decisions about water sharing. The results will inform water policy-making at state and national levels.

New ways to participate

You can help in finding new and better ways to work together. The project will run until June 2009. Specifically, it aims to:

- identify barriers and opportunities for broad community participation in water planning
- map community expectations of water planning processes and trade-offs in water allocation
- identify effective tools and processes for engaging communities in water planning
- set targets that incorporate social values and transparent trade-offs in water planning
- promote tools that encourage participation by Indigenous communities in water planning
- develop a training package for rural communities, including Indigenous communities, to adopt better water planning approaches
- contribute to national guidelines for public participation in water planning

...providing clear, accessible ways for people to contribute to decisions about our waterways.

...Northern Australia has some of the most **pristine waterways** in the world

How will it help?

The project will improve water planning effort at two levels:

Nationally by developing a tool-kit of good practices to engage industry, Indigenous and rural communities; by setting guidelines and benchmarks to monitor and evaluate collaboration in water planning; by establishing procedures that integrate Indigenous values into water planning.

Regionally by assisting water agencies to improve water planning approaches; by helping to minimise conflicts between parties; by providing models and case studies for good collaboration; by helping develop stronger long-term relationships between stakeholders.





One project, two phases

The research project will be undertaken in two phases.



Phase 1 will review water planning practices in Australia and overseas. It will assess how the community participated in water planning for the Gulf of Carpentaria, Queensland, and the Ord River region in Western Australia.

Phase 2 will pilot various tools and techniques used in water planning in northern Queensland and the Northern Territory. The tools will have been used elsewhere in similar situations. Successful tools and techniques that foster collaboration will be widely promoted. Training materials and guidelines will be developed to help others learn how to adopt them.

The team will develop new approaches to prepare plans for waterway issues in the tropics

How can you be involved?

Your views are important. By talking to you, the team will learn how to improve water planning in Australia's tropical north. Your ideas on how to work together for the future of our rivers, dams and waterways will be used for water reform at a regional and state level. Existing water resource plans will also be reviewed to develop better consultation approaches for the future.

Who is on the team?

A small multi-disciplinary team is working on this project. They have skills and experience in water law, native title, public participation, social surveys, ecological economics, natural resource management in northern Australia, and community education. The team is working with local communities, industry groups, landholders, irrigators and government agencies in northern Australia.



Team contacts

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Further information

Collaborative Water Planning Project:
www.griffith.edu.au/centre/slrc/water/

Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge:
www.track.gov.au



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