



## Making Successful Investments in NRM Practice Change

July 2009

*PROJECT UPDATE July 2009*

*Research project number HAS 13 (002233) of the Social and Institutional Research Program of Land & Water Australia. Commenced in April 2006 and expected to complete in May 2010.*



### Project Summary

The project is developing and testing a range of tools and processes that will help regional natural resource management (NRM) bodies and others to better plan, implement, review and adapt their investments in NRM practice change.

It is an action learning project. The project team works in close collaboration with eight regional NRM bodies across Australia. As the tools and processes are developed, they are being made widely available through the project's website at [http://www.hassall.com.au/australian\\_division/index\\_000.html](http://www.hassall.com.au/australian_division/index_000.html)

Regional natural resource management organisations participating in the project are:

- ▶ Fitzroy Basin Association (Qld)
- ▶ Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority (NSW)
- ▶ Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (NSW)
- ▶ West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (Vic)
- ▶ North East Catchment Management Authority (Vic)
- ▶ South Australian Arid Lands NRM Board (SA)
- ▶ South Coast NRM Inc. (WA)
- ▶ NRM North (Tas).

## Introduction

Much of the investment in NRM in Australia is targeted towards fostering changes in land management practices. There is therefore value in developing tools and processes that will help regional NRM bodies and other investors to understand the people whose practices they are seeking to change and hence, how that change can best be fostered.

This understanding, coupled with a process of continuous improvement, will help them to more effectively plan, implement, review and adapt their investment in NRM practice change. There is also an opportunity to influence future policy for NRM to enable and support successful investment in NRM practice change.

## Project Objective

The objective of the project is to enable better informed and more effective investments in NRM practice change through regional NRM bodies. It is intended that the project will deliver two key outcomes:

- ▶ improved capacity of participating regional NRM bodies to plan, manage, review and adapt their investments and strategies for NRM practice change leading to improved natural resource condition; and
- ▶ lessons learnt from the project communicated to policy makers to enable continuous program and policy improvement for targeted and effective regional investment in NRM practice change.

This action learning project continues to evolve as we work together with the participating regional NRM bodies. Detailed research questions arise and are considered through the course of the project.

## Study Areas

The regional NRM bodies that have been active participants in the project to date are:

- ▶ Fitzroy Basin Association (Qld)
- ▶ Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment Management Authority (NSW)
- ▶ Lachlan Catchment Management Authority (NSW)
- ▶ West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (Vic)
- ▶ North East Catchment Management Authority (Vic)
- ▶ South Australian Arid Lands NRM Board (SA)
- ▶ South Coast NRM Inc. (WA)
- ▶ NRM North (Tas)
- ▶ Desert Channels (Qld) (2006 & 2007)
- ▶ South East NRM Board (SA) (2006 & 2007)





## Target Audience/s for Project Findings

Key audiences for project findings are the staff, executive and board members of the 56 regional NRM bodies; other investors who are seeking to facilitate NRM practice change; and policy makers at State and Australian Government levels.

## Progress to Date

One of the initial tasks of the project team was to develop, in collaboration with the participating regional NRM bodies, a **NRM Practice Change Planning Framework** (see attached). The intent is that the Planning Framework will help regional NRM bodies to identify how they will achieve their local vision for NRM, with a particular focus on the people aspects of change. The Planning Framework is being continually tested and refined as the project progresses.

For each of the two action learning cycles completed to date, the participating regional NRM bodies identified key areas of the Planning Framework where they were interested in working with the project team to develop new tools or approaches.

## The following areas have been explored:

**Business Planning** – considering ways to incorporate practice change into standard business practice/planning.

**Planning** – developing a process for program planning that includes gaining a better understanding of the ‘customers’ in order to engage with people who haven’t engaged in the past.

**Community Engagement Planning** – developing a better understanding of the elements to be considered in planning for community engagement that facilitates effective investments in practice change.

**Implementation Models** – comparing approaches for supporting regional NRM implementation groups and identifying suitable mechanisms for fostering change.

**Strategic Review** – investigating the current approaches used to invest in NRM practice change and the success of these approaches in achieving targets identified in regional catchment strategies.

**Program Logic and the Planning Framework** – trialling Program Logic and the Practice Change Planning Framework as a basis for review of RIS / RCIP etc.

**Monitoring and Evaluation** – building regions’ internal capacity for M&E; improving their capacity to choose the best way to learn about what worked; and improving their systems for retention of corporate learning.

Tools and information resources that help regional NRM bodies to understand and plan for practice change have been sourced or developed as required for each of these areas and made available via the project website.

The project is now commencing its final action learning cycle. The focus has therefore shifted from development to further testing and refining of these tools as the regional NRM bodies adapt them into their own organisational systems.

## Key Outputs

A number of tools, processes and templates have been developed or are in development, including:

- ▶ **NRM Practice Change Planning Framework** – a cyclical series of steps with associated questions to be asked at each step. It is proving to be a useful tool for prompting consideration of the people aspects of change and hence identifying how a desired change can best be achieved, see page 6.
- ▶ **NRM Program Logic** – Program logic is a framework that is commonly used for monitoring and evaluation, but it can also be valuable during program planning. It sets out the theory of change, namely how particular activities have contributed / are likely to contribute to the desired outcomes. The NRM Program Logic has been specifically tailored for regional NRM.
- ▶ **Project / program planning process** & associated templates – a step-wise approach for program planning by a regional NRM body, using the above tools.
- ▶ **Strategic review process** for taking a rear-vision look at past investments and how these have considered and fostered practice change.
- ▶ **Stakeholder influence mapping** process and template.
- ▶ **Beliefs and Assumptions in Planning Practice Change** worksheet.
- ▶ **Mechanisms for NRM Implementation** – a background paper and guide that describe different ways of fostering change and how to select a suitable mix of mechanisms.
- ▶ **Supporting regional NRM implementation groups** – a guide to different approaches for supporting groups, including the risks and benefits of each.
- ▶ **Community engagement tools** - considerations in planning community engagement, stocktake process, review methods and templates.
- ▶ **Case studies** comparing regional NRM implementation models, including engagement methods, supporting groups, and the mix of mechanisms used by a sample of regional NRM bodies.
- ▶ **Fact sheets and web links** to further information on social profiling and analysis, and community engagement.

## Other outputs include:

- ▶ **A project website** that includes: as 'works in progress' the tools and processes being developed by the project; a page with links to a range of suitable tools and information to help in understanding and fostering practice change; and details of the participating regions.
- ▶ **A community of practice** that has developed amongst project participants. The shared focus of the project, together with initial workshops which were held in each region; two annual forums involving all participating regional NRM bodies; and regular teleconferences facilitated by the GHD Hassall team have all helped to enable the sharing of ideas across the regions. The regional NRM bodies are all facing similar challenges and they have appreciated the opportunity the project has provided for them to gain insights into how other regions are responding to those challenges.
- ▶ **A policy briefing paper** outlining some early implications from the project.
- ▶ **A paper presented to the Primary Industries Innovation Symposium**, Armidale, November 2008. The paper will be published in the Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture.





Australian Government

Land & Water Australia

Department of the Environment,  
Water, Heritage and the Arts

# NRM Practice Change Planning Framework

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The NRM Practice Change Planning Framework maps out the steps and questions to consider when developing, implementing and reviewing NRM practice change programs or projects. By including 'people' aspects from the early planning stages, the framework prompts both strategic and operational level consideration of the social elements of practice change.

This framework has been developed in collaboration with the 10 regional NRM bodies involved with the "Making Successful Investments in NRM Practice Change" project.

## Using the framework

The framework is best considered as a cycle of key questions for use at the program and project level. It is not a rigid process but rather a series of prompts to help ensure that key elements have been investigated and considered.

The steps in the planning framework are iterative and strongly inter-linked. You may move dynamically forward and back between the steps as more information arises and your goals are clarified. Working through the framework may be anything from a quick consideration through to a detailed investigation and decision process.

The framework works well in combination with program logic. A planning process using these tools together is outlined in a companion fact sheet. Alternatively, the framework can be used within an organisation's existing planning process. Any process of working through the framework questions for each specific program or project can aid in planning. For example, one region has incorporated key elements of the planning framework into its project application template.

## Benefits

By presenting a series of logical questions with practical consideration of 'people elements', the framework may help to improve the effectiveness of investments in practice change.

Working through the framework helps to document the rationale and assumptions underpinning a program design. This allows it to be revisited and adapted as new knowledge comes to light. It also captures this understanding for communication to other/future staff.

## Limitations

The framework presents the key steps and questions only; further tools may be needed to help find the answers.

## When to use

It can be used in the design, approval, implementation and evaluation phases of a project or program.

## Companion Tools

NRM Practice Change  
Planning Process

NRM Program Logic

Tools for different stages, as listed on project website

## What is required?

- |    |                    |   |
|----|--------------------|---|
| ✓✓ | <b>Skills</b>      | Facilitation, research, understanding   |
| ✓  | <b>Resources</b>   | Staff time for workshops and background investigation. Independent facilitation or research may be sought. Different people may be involved in each step, a coordinator/champion needs to be involved in all five steps. Refer to each step for detail. Worksheet and template. |
| ✓✓ | <b>Information</b> | Information is sought firstly from team members with further investigation sought to fill gaps.   |

✓ = LOW LEVEL

✓✓ = MEDIUM LEVEL

✓✓✓ = HIGH LEVEL



CLIENTS|PEOPLE|PERFORMANCE

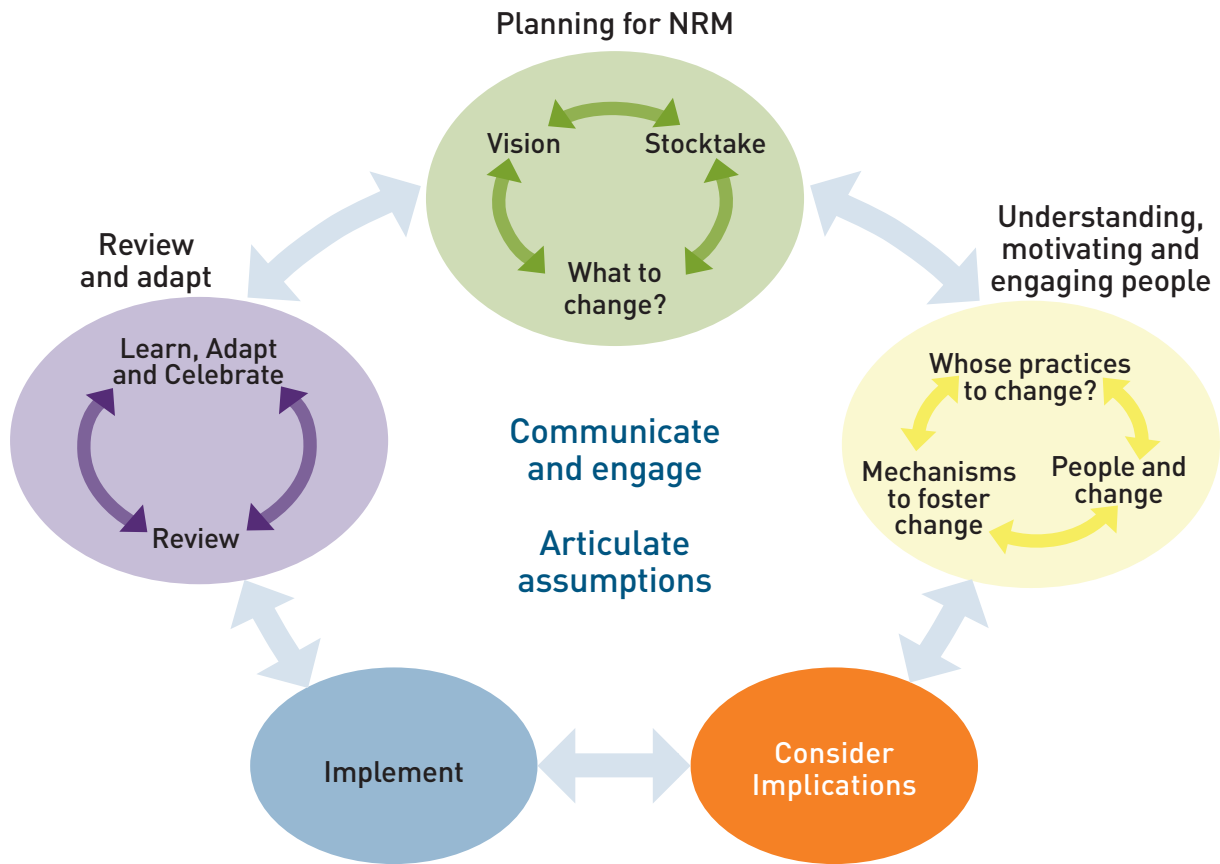
GHD Hassall

Making Successful Investments in NRM Practice Change

A RESEARCH PROJECT FUNDED BY LAND & WATER AUSTRALIA, THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT  
AND PARTICIPATING REGIONAL NRM BODIES

# NRM Practice Change Planning Framework

This framework is designed to aid regional NRM bodies in planning, implementing, reviewing and adapting their investments in NRM practice change. It is a key tool from the "Making Successful Investments in NRM Practice Change" project. Companion fact sheets and information are available from the NRM Practice Change website: [www.hassall.com.au/australian\\_division](http://www.hassall.com.au/australian_division)



**Vision**  
 What do we want to achieve in the region?  
 (from existing plans)

**Stocktake**  
 Where are we at?  
 What is the condition of assets across our region?  
 Which assets are highest priorities to improve/protect?  
 What information is available to assist our decisions?  
 What practices are currently in place?

**What to change?**  
 Is change needed, and if so, what?  
 What changes are highest priorities for the vision?  
 Where in the region is this change most needed?  
 What changes give the greatest return for the investment?  
 What are the 'givens' or investor preferences?  
 What scale of change is needed and how quickly?

**Whose practices to change?**  
 Whose practices need to change?  
 What is the relative importance of each market segment in relation to this change?  
 What are the attributes/demographics of these people/segments?

**People and change**  
 Why would people change?  
 What drives or prevents change?  
 How willing are they to engage?  
 Who influences them?  
 Where are they at in the change cycle?  
 What is their capacity to change?  
 Who is able/willing to change in the required timeframe?  
 What is the 'fit' of the change?

**Mechanisms to foster change**  
 What is required for change to happen?  
 Which mechanisms are most effective and efficient for fostering change for each practice change & each market segment?  
 How will mechanisms interact?  
 Is there a best sequence?  
 How will we build confidence and knowledge?

**Consider implications**  
 What are the risks and benefits?  
 What other impacts (positive & negative) may result?  
 What are the trade-offs?  
 What assumptions are made?

**Implement**  
 What is required? – Staff, Funds, Other resources?  
 Who could we partner with to help achieve the change?  
 What timing best suits the target sectors?  
 What time is needed for people to consider the change?

**Review**  
 How will we monitor, evaluate & reflect on what has been achieved?  
**Learn, Adapt and Celebrate**  
 What did we learn?  
 What will we do differently?  
 Do we need to adapt the program/project?  
 How can we celebrate & promote achievements?

## For more information

Please visit the project's website at: [http://www.hassall.com.au/australian\\_division/index\\_000.html](http://www.hassall.com.au/australian_division/index_000.html)

Or Land & Water Australia's website at:  
[www.sirp.gov.au](http://www.sirp.gov.au)

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