



# **from Local Watershed Management to Integrated River Basin Management**

**Reflections on 30 years of Australian experience**

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# Outline

- Disclaimer
- Reflections on my experience in the Australian context
- Thoughts on governance

# Personal declarations

- Farming background south-western Victoria, Australia
  - Family farming in the district since 1860s, own farm managed 1987—
  - 450ha: 30% farm forestry, 10% environmental reserves, 60% leased to a neighbour for prime lambs
- Forestry & rural sociology: Creswick, Melbourne & Wageningen
- Forester Victorian government, Manager Potter Farmland Plan 1984-88
- First National Landcare Facilitator 1989-92
- 5 years as a Senior Executive in Australian Government
- 7 years as CEO of a national research funding authority
- 4 years as an independent consultant
- 2 weeks as a Professor, Charles Darwin University in Darwin...
- I don't know what to do in Australia, let alone the Mekong...



# Where have we come from?

- **22 years ago**, Prime Minister Hawke announced the Decade of Landcare and a 30-fold increase in Commonwealth funding for community-based Landcare groups (\$340 million)
- **A bipartisan political commitment, with a decade of funding**
- **1980s-1990s: the Landcare decades**
  - >5,000 voluntary community groups
  - involving more than one-third of all farming families – more than two-thirds in many districts
  - cooperative work across farm boundaries, neighbourhood group extension, bottom-up approaches
  - community-based monitoring (WaterWatch, SaltWatch, FrogWatch etc)
  - Landcare ‘caring hands’ brand recognition >85% in urban communities
  - Considerable corporate investment through Landcare Australia Ltd





# Widespread community engagement

In schools, with young people



In community-based monitoring



Farm and watershed planning was widespread

Linking farm-scale actions to watershed outcomes – especially river health



# Where have we come from?

- **1996-2007: consolidation of a national approach**
  - Scaling up to the catchment or regional level;
  - 56 regional/catchment bodies (WMOs or RBOs)
  - Trying to take a more integrated approach at landscape scale
  - National investment shifted from millions to billions
- **2007— asset-based investment approach**
  - Identifying environmental assets (priorities)
  - Business plan approach to investment in the highest priorities
  - Market-based instruments, private nature conservation etc
  - Competitive tenders to purchase specific environmental outcomes



## Where are we now?

- **2010: Launch of the Community Guide to the new Murray-Darling Basin Plan**
  - Ten year drought highlights water allocation problems
  - Top-down attempt to define sustainable diversion limits for all valleys in the Basin
  - Landcare and catchment (watershed) groups excluded from process
  - Badly received by stakeholders and the community
  - Chairman of the Board resigns
- Landcare moribund in many areas
- Catchment (watershed) organisations also struggling
- Community appetite for water reform waning

Many landcare groups now tired, like this sign



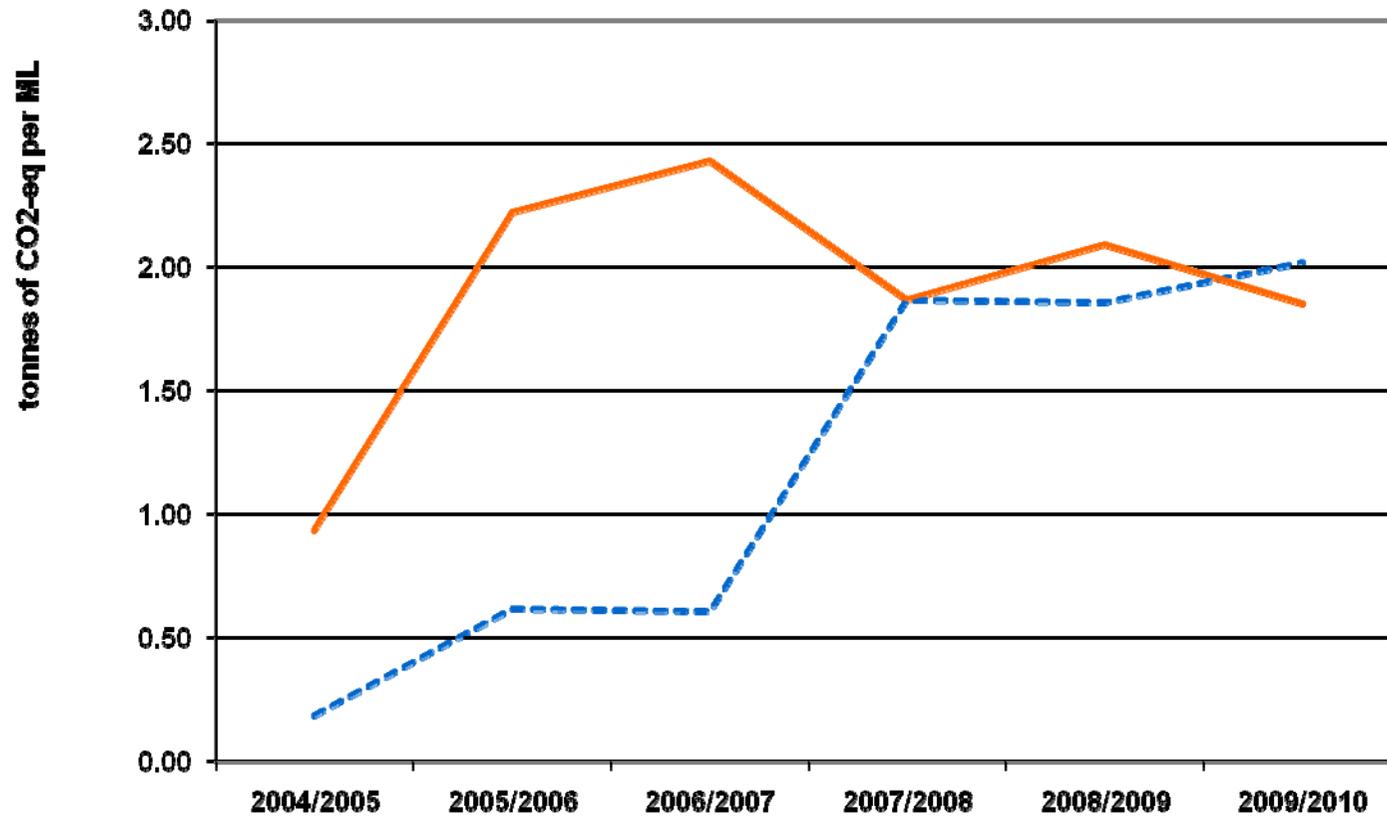
## Observations

- **Three approaches from 1980s – 2010:**
  1. Voluntary, bottom-up, neighbourhood-scale landcare groups (5000+)
  2. Regional/catchment (watershed) organisations (56) (Multi-Stakeholder Platforms [MSPs])
  3. Targeted investment in environmental assets, and payment for environmental services (PES) through competitive tenders and market-based instruments

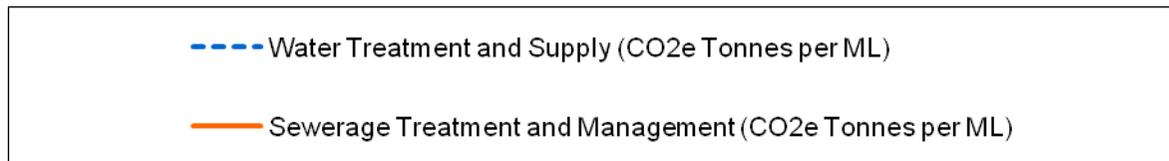
## Observations (2)

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  3. Targeted investment in environmental assets, and payment for environmental services (PES) through competitive tenders and market-based instruments
- Implemented in sequence, not in parallel, displacing the previous approach, rather than building on it. **HUGE MISTAKE**
- These are complementary, not alternative approaches.
- Bottom-up approaches are not sufficient, but they are essential
- **We have to continue to nourish the grass-roots — forever!**
- **We have to move beyond single-issue approaches**

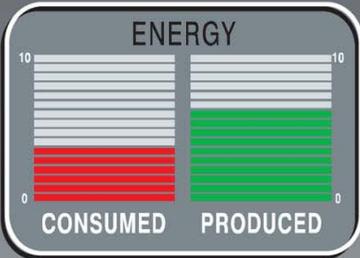
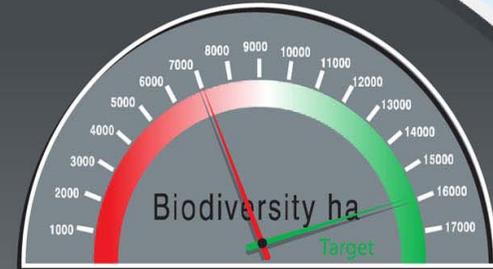
# Coliban Water emissions per Megalitre



- Note water supply emissions have increased tenfold in five years



# Sustainability Dashboard for an Irrigation Water Company

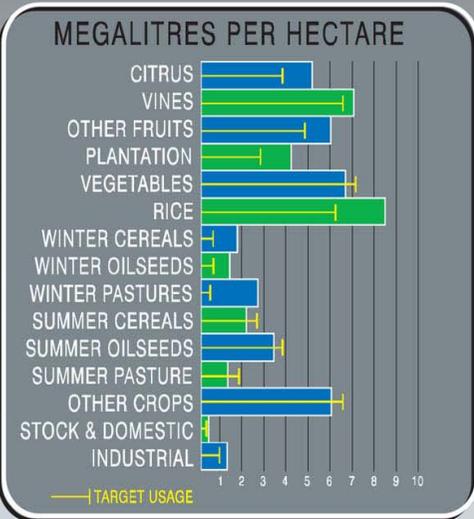


-16%  
Conveyance previous year



**MI projects meeting EW targets**

- RIVERREACH
- MODERNISATION
- WAH WAH S&D
- IHS
- BIODIVERSITY
- BBSW/MIRROOL CK
- DEVELOPMENT
- ON-FARM
- ENERGY



**EnviroWise Education Courses**



94%  
Staff Attendance

Investment \$M	2	3	4	9	9
Co-investment \$M		7	5	5	6



## **Climate-Carbon-Water-Energy-Food the bigger picture**

- If you are in the food business, you rely on water and energy
- If you are in the water business, you are in the energy business
- If you are in the energy business, you will soon be in the carbon business
- If you have not analysed the potential interactions between these drivers into the future, you are in for a nasty surprise
- **This has profound implications for governance**

## Governance

*“How society shares power, benefit and risk” (Xing)*

- Vertical and horizontal
- The challenge of integration
- Need to honour the past and respect local values, without being shackled by them
- The tyranny of lowest common denominator consensus
- Local institutions are essential, but not sufficient
- **As everything becomes more interconnected, better governance becomes more vital, and more difficult.**

## Ideas for distributed governance

*“In order to discover new lands, one must be prepared to lose sight of the shore for a very long time”\**

- Leadership at all levels
- Networks and communities of practice across sectors, scales, disciplines, basins, nations
- New technologies, to share information, at all levels
- Building social capital that dilutes rigid divisions
- Hard-wiring involvement of schools, civic society (clubs etc)
- **Good governance is a great investment**

\* *André Gide 1925 Les Faux Monnaieurs*



For more info:  
[www.triplehelix.com.au](http://www.triplehelix.com.au)

e.g. *The Getting of Knowledge*  
*Managing Australian Soils*  
*Paddock to Plate* [policies for sustainable food systems]  
*Climate change primer* [for WMOs & RBOs]