
Hub

Northern Australia Environmental Resources

Case study title

Working with government staff to help maximise research impact

Project number(s) & project title(s)/or Hub activity

Hub projects working in and relevant to Queensland government roles & responsibilities (current & complete projects)

Short version

Hub researchers and research users from the Queensland Departments of Natural Resources, Mines & Energy and Environment & Science co-designed workshops resulting in productive information exchanges, clarification of needs, follow up activities and new ways to maximise research impact.



Working with DNRME water planners (photo Clare Taylor).



Marketplace discussion at DES workshop (photo Jane Thomas).

Narrative

Working with the Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy (DNRME)

With the Gulf and Mitchell River water plans both expiring later this year, it was really timely for Hub researchers working on environmental water needs in the Flinders, Gilbert and Mitchell catchments to meet with Queensland government water planners for a full day workshop.

The Director of Water Planning (Coastal Catchments) and the Hub Knowledge Broker co-designed the workshop agenda and format to ensure a useful day for both research users and researchers.

Researchers first presented their work and this, along with follow-on Q&A sessions, resulted in water planners and associated staff better understanding the scope and possibilities of projects and how they could inform water plan reviews in the short-term, as well as broader water planning and allocation needs in the long-term.

An exercise in populating a risk assessment for the Mitchell River led to Hub researchers better understanding the intricacies of current water planning processes and the assessments that underpin them. The exercise also raised researchers' awareness of preferred output types, meaning they can now better frame research outputs to match specific water planning needs.

More general discussions resulted in increased knowledge of risk assessment frameworks, how information is shared within DNRME, communications needs, and items for future meetings. The workshop also created and strengthened relationships between government staff and researchers which will facilitate future interactions and follow-up activities.

Feedback from this workshop was positive from both researchers and government staff, with scientists finding it useful to learn "about the multitude of processes through which government can use science" and water planners describing the event as "very successful". Workshop evaluations attested to a useful day with expectations being met or exceeded.

Since the workshop researchers have contributed to further risk assessments and materials circulated for future use. Other specific actions identified have been implemented or are underway (e.g. filling a critical gap in flow data and organising a second meeting) and further productive follow-ups will occur through strengthened relationships.

Testimonials

"Great to see closer collaboration between researchers and the government.." (Research user)

"Let's do it more often" (Government co-researcher)

Working with the Queensland Department of Environment and Science

A half-day 'marketplace' forum engaged and informed staff from across the Department of Environment and Science (DES) as well as Hub researchers in February 2018. Nine energetic overview presentations and a quick outline of other interesting projects provided a good picture of the breadth and depth of Hub research in the north that's relevant to DES staff, increasing awareness, understanding and the potential for research impact.

DES staff and researchers then sat down together in small self-selected groups, to ask follow-up questions and discuss the research in more detail. This was repeated twice to facilitate multiple exchanges with different people. This marketplace format led to users providing detailed feedback on how they could use the research, and advice on how researchers could best continue to engage with them as projects progress. It also led to researchers having a much better understanding of how their work could be better used and what output formats might be most appropriate.

Researchers presented a summary of this user feedback and their follow-up actions back to the whole group which consolidated information and energised both researchers and users.

Of the evaluations received, seven rated the event as 'excellent', three as 'good' and one as somewhere between 'excellent' and 'good', with users appreciating the "keenness of researchers to conduct research useful to government" and researchers finding the marketplace format "extremely helpful". Relationships were initiated and strengthened, and follow-up actions identified that are now being implemented (e.g. new links and follow-up meeting with the Prioritising Threatened Species project).

Testimonials

"It was very well run and the DES staff who attended got a lot out of it... I am positive that many of the tools and information being developed will be very useful in government decision-making"
A/ Director, Knowledge Information and Analysis, DES.

"Great to have this opportunity" (Research user)

"Really well structured" (Research user)

"A very informative and engaging workshop" (Researcher)



Research outputs

Fact sheets and other outputs for the projects participating in the workshops are available at www.nespnorthern.edu.au

Attributions

DNRME workshop presenters (in alphabetical order): Michele Burford, Michael Douglas, Mark Kennard, Ben Stewart-Koster.

DES workshop presenters (in alphabetical order): Michele Burford, Michael Douglas, Mark Kennard, Helen Murphy, Justin Perry, Cathy Robinson, Jim Smart, Ben Stewart-Koster, Clare Taylor.

Please contact the Hub for details of workshop participants.
