



CRC for
Water Sensitive Cities



Program D: Adoption Pathways | Project D3.1 | Project duration: March 2013 – June 2014

Science-policy partnerships

Overview

The outcomes of the CRC for Water Sensitive Cities (CRCWSC) research programs will have the potential to guide capital investments estimated to be more than \$100 billion by the Australian water sector and more than \$550 billion of private sector investment in urban development over the next 15 years. These impacts will be realised when the knowledge generated by the CRCWSC is adopted and incorporated into the key policies and strategies that shape our cities and guide investment in infrastructure and service provision.

Relationships that facilitate dialogue and discussion between researchers and policy makers, referred to as “science-policy partnerships”, are a key adoption pathway that specifically targets the integration of research outcomes into policy-making processes to influence the transition toward water sensitive cities (WSC). This project worked with industry participants to develop new, or strengthen existing, relationships that increase the adoption and use of CRCWSC research in policy. It has tested relevant partnership models that focus on policy championed by state and local governments.

Key outcomes

This project has supported the creation of new science-policy partnerships which have helped further the adoption and integration of CRCWSC’s research outcomes into national, state and local government policy agendas. Building capacity to better understand and use CRCWSC’s research has been an important part of creating these partnerships.

Pilot science-policy partnerships were established with Blacktown Council and Ku-ring-gai Council in New South Wales, and the Department of Water (DoW) in Western Australia. The CRCWSC acted as a knowledge broker to the Blacktown Water Working Group to support its program to strengthen the council’s water sensitive urban design policy, capability and capacity. The Ku-ring-gai Council’s science-policy partnership provided expert knowledge to assist the council in the review and enhancement of their key water related policies to transition them towards a water sensitive city.

A number of important lessons from these pilot projects have been identified and will help guide other stakeholders seeking to establish their own science-policy partnership arrangements. Some of the lessons learned are outlined below:

- Science-policy partnerships help build participants’ confidence to initiate policy projects in the case of DoW and Ku-ring-gai Council, or to strengthen initiatives in the case of the Blacktown Council.
- Early impacts have come from two-way “sharing” of CRCWSC knowledge with the participating organisations rather than linear “transfer”.
- Alternative strategies of “influence” (rather than knowledge transfer) are based on the confidence and capability of the messenger rather than the message itself.
- There is not a single model for science-policy partnership arrangements, rather tailored solutions are necessary to match the particular circumstances and requirements.

Key findings from the Department of Water – CRCWSC partnership to support the transition to a WSC

The first workshop held in November 2013 between the CRCWSC and DoW was an early step in building a long-term science-policy partnership between the two organisations. Twenty-five department staff, including senior executives, participated in the one-day workshop to share ideas about future urban water management, and to identify opportunities for CRCWSC’s research to contribute to evidence-based policy.

The workshop generated many ideas about what successful urban management could look like, including:

- having an agreed, shared vision across government and communities for managing water to create liveable cities

- building stewardship of water resources for the greatest good of society and the environment
- having an enduring, bipartisan, whole-of-government position on urban water
- fostering water sensitive behaviours across society.

The vision for urban water management started to take shape with staff identifying a future where a community of practice is managing water effectively in Western Australia’s cities and towns, and where the world looks to the state for leadership in providing water security, creating vibrant cities and towns, and protecting the health of water environments.





Project design

This project sought to create strong and lasting relationships between CRCWSC researchers and industry participants through the development and enhancement of partnership arrangements associated with specific strategic policy initiatives. The structure of the partnerships were informed and shaped by the local context, particular policy drivers or issues, the roles of the various participants, the knowledge pathways involved, and the resources available.

The key steps in the process included:

1. Establishing models for science-policy partnerships from literature and analysis of comparable knowledge transfer and science-policy relationship.
2. Identifying partnership opportunities and analysing the policy roles and science needs of participant.
3. Establishing pilot science-policy partnerships
4. Monitoring and reviewing to enable further development and refinement of partnership models.

A series of three pilot science-policy partnerships were established to help test the conceptual model.



Figure 1. Department of Water - CRCWSC workshop (© Now for Future).

Outlook

This project was completed in July 2014. A summary of lessons from the pilot projects will be available in early 2015. The CRCWSC will continue to support the building of partnerships between researchers and policy-makers through a variety of activities and initiatives, including continuing to work with the Department of Water to support the development of future water sensitive city policy tools and strategies.



About the Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities

The Cooperative Research Centre for Water Sensitive Cities (CRCWSC) brings together interdisciplinary research expertise and thought-leadership from Australia and the world to address current urban water management challenges facing our cities and regions. In collaboration with over 80 research, government and industry partners, it develops and synthesises knowledge into powerful tools and influences key players aiming to achieve sustainable, resilient and liveable water sensitive cities.

Further information

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