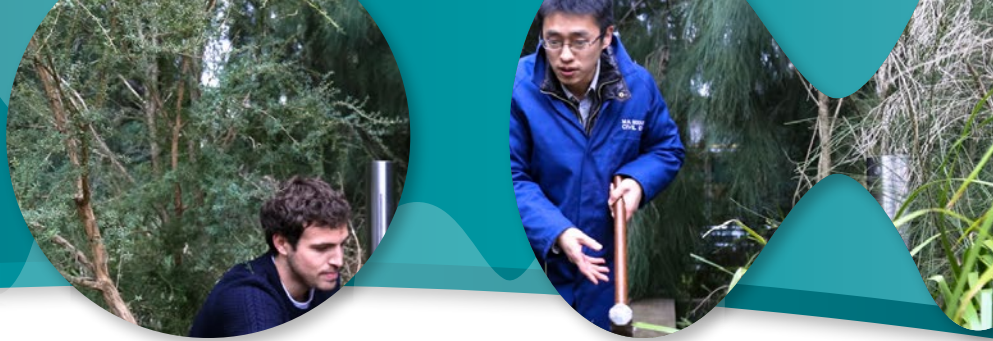




CRC for
Water Sensitive Cities



Program D: Adoption Pathways | Project D6.1 | Project duration: September 2014 – June 2015

Development of an evaluation and learning framework to inform CRCWSC impact assessment

Overview

The CRC for Water Sensitive Cities (CRCWSC) brings together over 80 research, industry and government participants with the aim of undertaking collaborative research that will revolutionise water management in Australia and overseas. The CRCWSC is required to demonstrate the level of influence, adoption and overall impact the investment in research and engagement activities is having on changing current practice.

The purpose of this project is to develop, test and refine an evaluation and learning framework to critically inform key CRCWSC processes, protocols and pathways for adopting water sensitive cities (WSC) concepts, tools and practices within national and international urban water contexts.

Key outcomes

This project will deliver the necessary evaluation tools, techniques and processes for collecting and analysing data to reveal what impact CRCWSC's research and activities have. Specifically, it will:

- map and characterise the expected adoption pathways for CRCWSC's research outcomes
- deliver an evaluation and learning framework appropriate for a large-scale, complex research program
- test the evaluation and learning framework to assess its effectiveness in providing relevant impact information and, where necessary, refine the framework ready for implementation.

Key findings on maximising CRCWSC's research outcomes

A recent evaluation of the Cities as Water Supply Catchments program, a forerunner of the CRCWSC, focused on assessing and characterising the adoption and impact pathways that have resulted from researchers collaborating with industry. This evaluation involved examining five case studies at different scales which reflect a change in policy or practice related to improved urban stormwater management. The review identified two critical processes: seeding, supporting and sustaining networks at different scales; and building individual and organisational capacity as essential precursors to generating tangible impacts such as an on-ground structural project. The evaluation provides a series of recommendations for increasing research utilisation and maximising the impact of ongoing and future research-industry collaborations:

- It is important for researchers engaged in ground-breaking research to recognise that industry partners need to be taken along on their journey in order to implement innovations. Industry partners require practical support from researchers to stay connected.
- Demonstration projects remain an important mechanism for testing technological feasibility and building practitioners' confidence. These projects need to be designed as much more than just implementing technology on the ground. There are significant process-based lessons which emerge from

undertaking the planning, design and implementation of such projects. Understanding and characterising these processes will assist in the widespread replication of demonstration projects to generate broader impacts.

- The research revealed high dependence on lead researchers for achieving impacts in both demonstration projects and organisations. Credibility, reputation and good standing of these individuals are being identified as critical for enrolling high-level decision-makers in CRCWSC's cause and overcoming "road blocks" in projects.
- Industry partners place importance on having access to approachable and visible researchers. This insight will be of specific importance for future CRCWSC regional-based activities, particularly as the number of industry partners has significantly increased and is set to continue to grow. Activities within these regions need to draw on research leaders' knowledge and visibility, but also ensure they are showcasing the breadth of research activities. A variety of engagement and information exchange activities is also important for synthesising and disseminating valuable research insights.





Project design

The development of the evaluation and learning framework will draw on evaluation processes that focus on how, and to what extent, research outcomes are being adopted and utilised by government and industry to achieve WSC. This embeds monitoring and assessment protocols that go beyond traditional indicators of research output (i.e. number of academic publications) to also capture process-related information relevant to determining practice change. By understanding how knowledge is exchanged, adopted and utilised by key players, the CRCWSC can replicate these pathways and processes to generate broader impacts.

The development of the framework will involve a staged process which includes the mapping of adoption and impact pathways which will demonstrate who the intended audiences of CRCWSC's research are, how they will use the research outputs and what impacts are expected to arise from the utilisation of these outputs. Case studies, interviews and online questionnaires, when applied, will provide concrete insights into how the research outputs from specific projects are being utilised by key industry participants, and whether there has been any influence on organisational policy or practice.

Three pilot case studies will test the framework design and approach.

An implementation plan for using the framework beyond this project will complement and extend existing evaluation approaches designed for CRCWSC's activities such as industry and research workshops.

Outlook

It is expected that this project will enhance capacity and capability within the CRCWSC to understand, apply and analyse the results of the evaluation and learning framework. The important insights generated by this project will contribute towards CRCWSC's Adoption and Stakeholder Engagement Plan by identifying potential 'industry needs and knowledge gaps' that require attention (for example, training needs of particular industry groups), and by demonstrating success stories, which illustrate the benefits of applying CRCWSC's research and the associated pathways to achieving impact.

Once the framework has been implemented as an ongoing CRCWSC activity, it will provide a mechanism to benchmark impact, identify emerging issues, successes and areas for improvement, and enhance communication and engagement with key government, industry and research participants.

demonstration projects
 industry partners
 lessons
 influence
 evaluation
 collaboration
 processes
 learning
 practice change
 utilisation
 impacts
 researchers
 credibility
 visibility
 synthesis
 research outcomes
 adoption
 pathways
 framework



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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