

CLUSTER 1: Influencing and steering water sensitive innovation

Nominated cluster leader: Kelly Fielding

Aims & objectives

The overarching aim of the project is to **identify effective processes to build support for water sensitive cities and facilitate transitions towards more innovative water sensitive practices**. Specifically the project will:

1. Develop a meta-narrative and vision for a number of water sensitive cities drawing on existing research from Tranche 1
2. Identify key influencing agents, understand their current level of support for water sensitive innovation and develop **new** strategies to improve knowledge and support for water sensitive innovation
3. Understand the crucial role of institutions in influencing change, differential support for new water sensitive practices and options to strengthen water sensitive innovation
4. Provide advice on the policy, regulatory and governance arrangements that are most suitable (e.g., in terms of economically and politically feasible) for immediate adoption thereby facilitating faster uptake of water sensitive innovation
5. Identify the high priority political problems that are most likely to attract water sensitive innovation solutions

Identified transition needs

The objectives of the project address a range of the identified needs that emerged from the needs and opportunities workshops. The objectives are mapped against the needs in Table 1 below.

Transition Needs/Opportunities	Objectives that address the needsw
#1 Strengthening & aligning policy, legislation & regulation in support of WSC	Objectives 3, 4 & 5
#2 Shared vision & narrative that recognises the values & benefits of WSC	Objectives 1 & 2
#5 Governance frameworks that enable coordination & collaboration across agencies & sectors	Objectives 3 & 4
#13 Influencing WSC outcomes through leadership, collaboration & networks	Objectives 1 & 2
#16 Building community & industry connection & engagement	Objectives 1 & 2
#17 Building capacity to deliver a WSC	Objectives 1 - 5

Knowledge base and research gaps

There are a range of outputs from Tranche 1 that can inform the proposed Tranche 2 cluster projects.

- The A4 projects have developed a process for eliciting context-specific narratives amongst community members and organisations. These findings are directly relevant to developing the WSC meta-narrative and vision (Objective 1).
- Many of the Tranche 1 projects—including A1 findings, Program D activities (e.g., developing a business case for WSC)—will feed into objective 1. **What is not known, however, is what aspects of the narrative and vision are needed to ‘bring to life’ the water sensitive city and develop understanding and support from a range of stakeholders.**
- Tranche 1 findings from the A2 and A3 projects address some aspects of objective 2, although the focus in the A2 projects has been predominantly on the community (understanding community water knowledge and how to frame messages about water) with some work also investigating water professionals. Project A3 findings have focused on other influencing agents, including politicians and policy makers. **But further research is needed to address this objective in relation to other key influencing agents such as non-government agents (e.g. peak bodies) and specific champions within the community (See Figure 1). Moreover, there has been little work done within the CRCWSC or beyond on assessing programs that seek to build knowledge and support for WSCs and so this is an important aspect of the cluster projects.**
- In Tranche 1 the A3 projects identified the crucial role played by organisations in relation to WSC transitions. **More research is required though to understand how particular organisations such as water utilities, government bodies, regulators, etc influence, support or otherwise ‘steer’ WSC innovation.**
- Findings from Project A3 have revealed a wealth of options that are relevant to objectives 4 and 5 and findings from B5.1 also feed into objective 4. **These findings can be synthesised to develop strategic advice about the best policy options to advance water sensitive innovation adoption.**

Context and research opportunity

The cluster provides an ideal opportunity to maximise the adoption of Tranche 1 findings and extend these to address critical questions about how to build support and traction for water sensitive innovation policies and practices in Australian cities. Industry participants and researchers within the CRCWSC are converts to the WSC ‘cause’ but industry participants are also hungry for ideas about how to convey the WSC vision and narrative and how to create change within water organisations and the broader society to advance the uptake of WSC principles. What processes can be used to create WSC champions and advocates that can build the political and institutional will to adopt WSC principles? What policies and institutional arrangements can help to make the WSC a reality? The cluster can provide answers to these broad questions and test and translate the outcomes in context specific settings, working closely with industry partners.

Targeted end user groups

The deliverables are targeted to and can be tailored for local government, water utilities and state government agencies. The outputs can be used in developing internal support within organisations, e.g., for local government organisations seeking support from councillors, or for state government agencies seeking support from politicians. They will also be relevant to organisations seeking external support, e.g., from community or key stakeholders who might otherwise protest or oppose water sensitive innovation.

The cluster projects will involve key stakeholders from industry to ensure the relevance of outputs to key partner organisations.

Research questions and approach

The following research questions will guide the projects within this cluster. They are mapped against the objectives outlined above:

RQ1: What narratives and visions of water sensitive cities are comprehensible, appealing, accurate and compelling to a range of stakeholders (e.g. community, politicians, policy-makers, etc) across Australia's cities and to whom ought these be addressed? (Objectives 1 & 2)

RQ2: What are the levels of knowledge and support for WSC innovations amongst stakeholders and their institutions, what underpins this support and what information and processes would help to promote greater support for WSC innovations? (Objective 2)

Approach:

- Interviews with water organisations and desk top review of international case studies will identify key stakeholders to target to build support for WSC innovations.
- Synthesised Tranche 1 findings (as well as findings from other clusters, e.g., Cluster 5) will feed into the development of the narratives and visions.
- Qualitative focus groups, interviews and quantitative surveys (depending on the stakeholders) will test the persuasiveness of these narratives and visions.
- Qualitative workshops and quantitative surveys will establish current level of support for WSC innovations amongst key stakeholders and identifies drivers of support (or lack of).
- Processes to promote support for WSC innovations will be identified through field experiments (e.g. working with industry partners to trial methods as part of their new or established programs).

RQ3: What are the current relevant policies relating to water sensitive innovation, which alternative policy, regulatory and governance arrangements are most suitable for immediate adoption at which planning scale and in which jurisdictions (e.g., local, state, federal)? (Objective 4)

RQ4: Which political problems are most likely to attract water sensitive innovations (ie solutions) over the coming decade and through whom? (Objective 5)

Approach

- A combination of synthesis of Tranche 1 findings and new data collection (e.g. desk top review, interviews) is needed to address these research questions.

Intended outcomes and translation/adoption pathways

Research within the cluster can deliver the following:

- A compelling and comprehensible narrative and vision of the water sensitive city that is tailored to the context and to a range of stakeholders
- Guidance and recommendations for how to develop WSC advocates in a range of settings. These will include: 1) who to target 2) what processes to use to promote advocacy 3) what aspects of the WSC narrative and vision will be most appropriate/appealing to different advocacy individuals/groups
- Recommended policy options and governance arrangements that could help to fast track WSC transitions at different scales and in different jurisdictions

In addition to the usual pathways of communication via the CRC (newsflashes, reports), researchers within the cluster have established connections to a range of relevant stakeholders that can help to disseminate the research beyond the CRC networks. The

success of the research in the cluster will be contingent on working closely with industry partners to address the objectives thereby increasing the likelihood of uptake and adoption.

Capacity and skills required

The research capacity and skills required currently exists in the CRCWSC. The researchers who have nominated to be part of this cluster have the theoretical and content knowledge, and the qualitative and quantitative research skills required to undertake the research. Many of these researchers have been responsible for producing the Tranche 1 findings that inform this cluster’s proposal. **It will be essential to involve early career research fellows in the projects—there are currently a number of high calibre research fellows involved in Tranche 1 projects who would be ideally suited to spearhead the Tranche 2 Cluster 1 projects.** The addition of PhD students would ensure that we continue to build research capacity in this area. **End user involvement in the Cluster 1 projects will be critical to their success.**

Figure 1. A schematic summarising key elements of the research proposal

