

WATER RESOURCES

AUSTRALIA'S WATER RESOURCES – MEETING THE RESEARCH CHALLENGE

Australians understand that living with our country means managing our scarce and highly variable rainfall more effectively than we have in the past. We can't drought or flood or fire proof Australia. What we can do is learn to live with the vagaries of our climate. To do this we must make best use of our water resources across the agricultural, urban and environmental spectrum.

We have already started down this track through the 1994 Council of Australian Governments water reforms. The Australian and State/Territory Governments agreed to processes which encompassed water pricing and trading, allocations of water to the environment, and institutional reform. The reforms paid notice to natural resource and environment management improvements, and the relevant communities were meaningfully consulted. These reforms have provided the context for identifying the key research activities that will assist us in continually improving Australia's water resource management.

Water resource management continues to be one of the most important issues for all Australians. To meet these expectations Land & Water Australia convened a forum of Australia's leading water resource managers to look at where we need to focus our science. The Forum produced a package of information sheets around key water resource research and development priorities:

- Improving entitlements and access rights for water
- Improving efficiency and productivity for all water uses
- Ensuring high quality surface and groundwater through improved catchment management
- Integrating management of surface runoff, river water, groundwater, tidal and marine water
- Protecting key natural assets and repairing ecosystems, especially wetlands and riparian systems
- Building a decision-making framework for all uses that recognises climate variability and exploits climate predictions
- Fostering and improving irrigation scheme development and management, in both rural and urban Australia
- Building improved institutional and governance frameworks for water resource management
- Tracking progress and fine-tuning improvements in water resource management.

These priorities are all challenges that we need to tackle through an inclusive and client driven R&D agenda that supports community and industry policy development.

FORUM PARTICIPANTS

Convener: John Langford, Executive Director, Water Service Association of Australia

Facilitator: Colin Creighton, Water Manager, Land & Water Australia

Participants: Don Blackmore, Andrew Campbell, Stephen Carroll, Wendy Craik, Anna Cronin, Peter Cullen, Tim Fisher, Ian Johnson, Ralph Leutton, Mike Logan, Paul Perkins, Bernie Wonder.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about any of the issues raised in the issues sheets, please contact:

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