

River Basin Management in the EU and Australia

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Comparison of water policy in Australia and the EU:

		Australia	Convergence
Major problem	Water quality	Water scarcity, drought	Complexity of users and stakeholders Competing uses
Objectives	Good water quality - maintaining groundwater resource	System to manage water to optimise economic environmental and social objectives	Increasing emphasis on sustainability - broadly defined
Instruments	Emphasis on regulation and planning	Legal, market and planning system	Increasing public intervention Policy packages using a mixture of approaches and instruments
Implementation	Wide variation	Catchment Management	National frameworks, river basin management plans, regional and local implementation

Comparison EU Water Framework Directive and Australian National Water Initiative:

	WFD	NWI
Scope and Scale	River basin planning (surface and groundwater)	Integrated catchment management (surface and groundwater)
Water Quality	Water quality standards and pollution controls to achieve "good status" of all waters	Voluntary implementation of environmental quality objectives by States and communities
Water supply and allocation	Controls on water abstraction, impoundment and recharge (where it affects "good status") water bodies	Sustainable water allocation and trading to meet consumer and environmental needs, and restore overallocated systems
Water Pricing	Full cost recovery to be taken into account	Continued implementation of full cost recovery pricing
Monitoring & reporting	Monitoring and reporting on status of water bodies	Water accounting, metering and reporting
Public consultation	Involvement of interested parties in WFD implementation	Open and timely consultation with relevant stakeholders

Institutional Requirements for Sustainable River Basin Management:

- Integration
 - *Horizontal, breaking down the “silos”*
 - *Vertical : balance between direction and delegation*
- Management scale
 - *Fit between biophysical and administrative governance*
- Stakeholder and public engagement
 - *Balancing broad and genuine engagement, delays and costs*
 - *Encouraging dynamic and adaptive representation*
- Information and adaptation
 - *Flexible arrangements to deal with uncertainty*
- Capacity building

Studies that I looked at:

- Australia
 - Comparative study State ICM reviews
 - World Bank case study of Murray Darling Basin
 - Several Assessments of NWI and regional NRM arrangements
 - Several catchment specific studies
- International
 - Three major international comparative studies
 - Several river basin studies in France in Spain
 - Both France and Spain have long established river basin planning and management systems

Integration:

- Australian studies
 - Water and land management is not well integrated
 - Environmental policy is not well integrated with either
 - Significant integration problems may arise in implementing the NWI
- International studies
 - Crises often provoke solutions
 - Environmental concerns persist
 - Policy Integration constrained by competition between administrations, and special interest groups

Management scale/Biophysical Governance Fit:

- Australian studies
 - Both biophysical units and governance boundaries must be meaningful
 - Value of regional organisations in networking and information broking, linking stakeholders and different levels of government
- International studies
 - Needs to be appropriate to problems and actors involved.
 - River basin organisations, groupings of local authorities, national and regional governments all play a part
- No one model fits all

Alignment of Problem Characteristics and Scale:

	Scale	
	Widespread impacts	Local impacts
Small number of different interests, small number of affected people	Gravel extraction affecting two municipalities* INTER MUNICIPAL	Small scale construction and diversion LOCAL
Small number of different interests, large number of affected people	Competition between fishing and boating* INTER MUNICIPAL	Impact on a community of localised water pollution from a factory* LOCAL PLUS STATE ANTI-POLLUTION AGENCY
Large number of different interests, large number of affected people	Flood control* Dams or irrigation leading to reduced downstream water flow RBO, STATE	Dams or irrigation leading to reduced local water flow LOCAL PLUS WATER AGENCY

Stakeholder and public engagement:

- Australian studies
 - ICM has helped people get together, build common understanding
 - Many unresolved issues about participation
 - Problems in CMCs
 - Lack of accountability, non and negative participation
- International studies
 - Encouraging and discouraging factors
 - Broader participation generally beneficial, despite costs
 - Participative processes in Spain
 - Long-established structures both help and hinder participation
 - Irrigators sometimes play positive role in leading and coordinating river basin action
 - Concern that separating land and water rights could create a new class of “water lords”

Adaptive Management : Government and natural systems:

Response to:	“Traditional” Government system	Natural system
Change	Control	Evolve
Certainty/Uncertainty	Stabilise, avoid surprises, minimise the (perceived) impact of crises	Disturbance and crises as opportunities for evolution (the backloop) Emphasis on policy experiments
Diversity	Efficiency, utilitarianism, rationalization, official knowledge	Redundancy (positive or negative), diverse carriers of knowledge
Knowledge	Experimental, scientific	Experiential (local) and experimental (national)
Organisation	Centralised hierarchical process, administrative scale	Self organized process, social/ecological scale

Other Findings :

- Information needs
 - Mobilise information to support regional decision-making
 - Engage scientists, use local knowledge
- Capacity building
 - Most catchment bodies in adequately resourced
- Factors that contribute to financial sustainability
- EU and national policies important drivers of regime change

Conclusions:

- Good news! Increasing problems appear to drive better coordination and more effective action - in the long run
- Australia well advanced in water allocation, but not in protecting water quality
- Literature challenges us a number of directions
 - Further analysis of the alignment of problem characteristics and scale of intervention
 - Further efforts to improve the integration of environmental policy, water management and land use planning (at the sectoral level)
 - How to encourage positive stakeholder engagement and discourage negative engagement?
 - How to integrate public governance requirements and adaptive management?

