



THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

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Managing climate risk

An international project

International scope

- Sthn Australia, Sthn Africa, South-west USA, Med rim, China, South America
- Similar climatic variability
different institutional systems
- Contrasts promote awareness of possibilities
- Building research alliances
- Fostering cooperation in international forums

Drought as starting point

- Aim is a comprehensive analysis using drought to provide insights
- Drought stress highlights strengths and weaknesses that are usually hidden
- Political priorities and underlying cultural values are revealed by the way we make difficult choices

Drought policy

Climate change policy

- Increased variability predicted from climate change is different in degree but not in kind from historical variability
- Current drought policy will be the foundation for climate change policy
- Strengths and weaknesses of drought policy will be more extreme in both directions with climate change policy

Will examine capacity to:-

- respond to crisis expeditiously
- develop evidence based policy
- engage communities re difficult issues
- Negotiate compromises between competing interests
- Manage across borders
- Achieve compliance despite division
- Promote cultural change to support reform
- Take account of equity and indigenous issues
- Adapt to novel circumstances not previously foreseen

Australia's ambivalent history

- Awareness of climatic variability and the need to adapt is not new but has been continually resisted
- Tension between optimism and the desire for certainty and the need to adjust
- Goyder's line in South Australia in 1870s-80s
- 1901 inquiry into NSW's Western Division
- Long debate re soldiers settlement policies and breaking up large pastoral properties
- Crop and animal breeding
- Urbanisation has reduced awareness

Tensions in MDB

- 1902 royal commission re river flow variability
- 1914/15 RMWA and proportional shares for water
- Early awareness has been eroded through demand creep
- State focussed management in the MDB has reduced capacity to manage system-wide interactions
- The current crisis in the lower lakes is the result of failure to introduce Basin-wide management

- Many sections show strong awareness and innovation
- Once the level of modification is decided priority is whatever is needed for environmental stability
- Para 48 insist users carry full cost of adjustment
- But para 49 suggests a stable volumetric entitlement (ie not fluctuating in response to variability)
- No jurisdiction has yet made the institutional rearrangements needed for compliant water plans

Summary

- Benefit of international comparisons
- Drought as a revealer
- Range of issues
- Drought as a precursor to climate change
- Ambivalence
- MDB record
- NWI unresolved tensions

Project plans

- Conference workshop in November 2008
- Climate risk website
- Building international links
- Turkey in March 2009
- Publications through 2009 and 2010