



# Airing the dirty laundry - Improving cooperation in SME environmental management

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# Partners

## Project management



## Research partner



## Funding partners



**Waste Authority**



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Water**

# Presentation summary

- Light industrial SME environmental management - The situation
- Playing catch up - Conceiving policy that addresses past inadequacies, whilst laying good foundations for the future.
- Perceptions of responsibility - Whose fault is it anyway?
- Getting personalised - Using psychological models for cooperation.
- Cost effective regulation - Getting a genuine bang for your buck.

**Can SME environmental  
management be  
cooperatively improved?**

**Under what conditions?**

# Research design

## Qualitative and Quantitative data triangulation

Premise audits



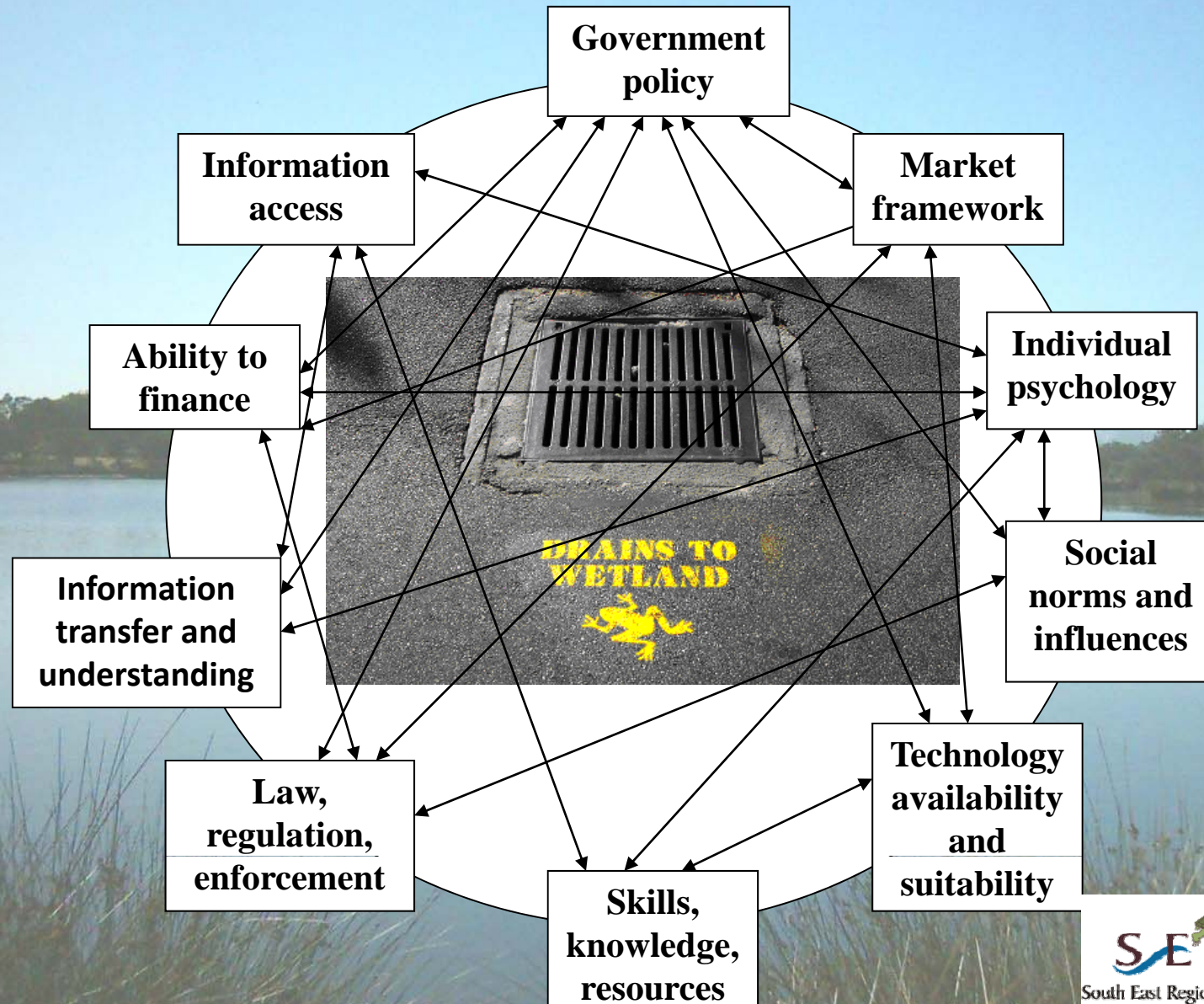
Surveys

Interviews

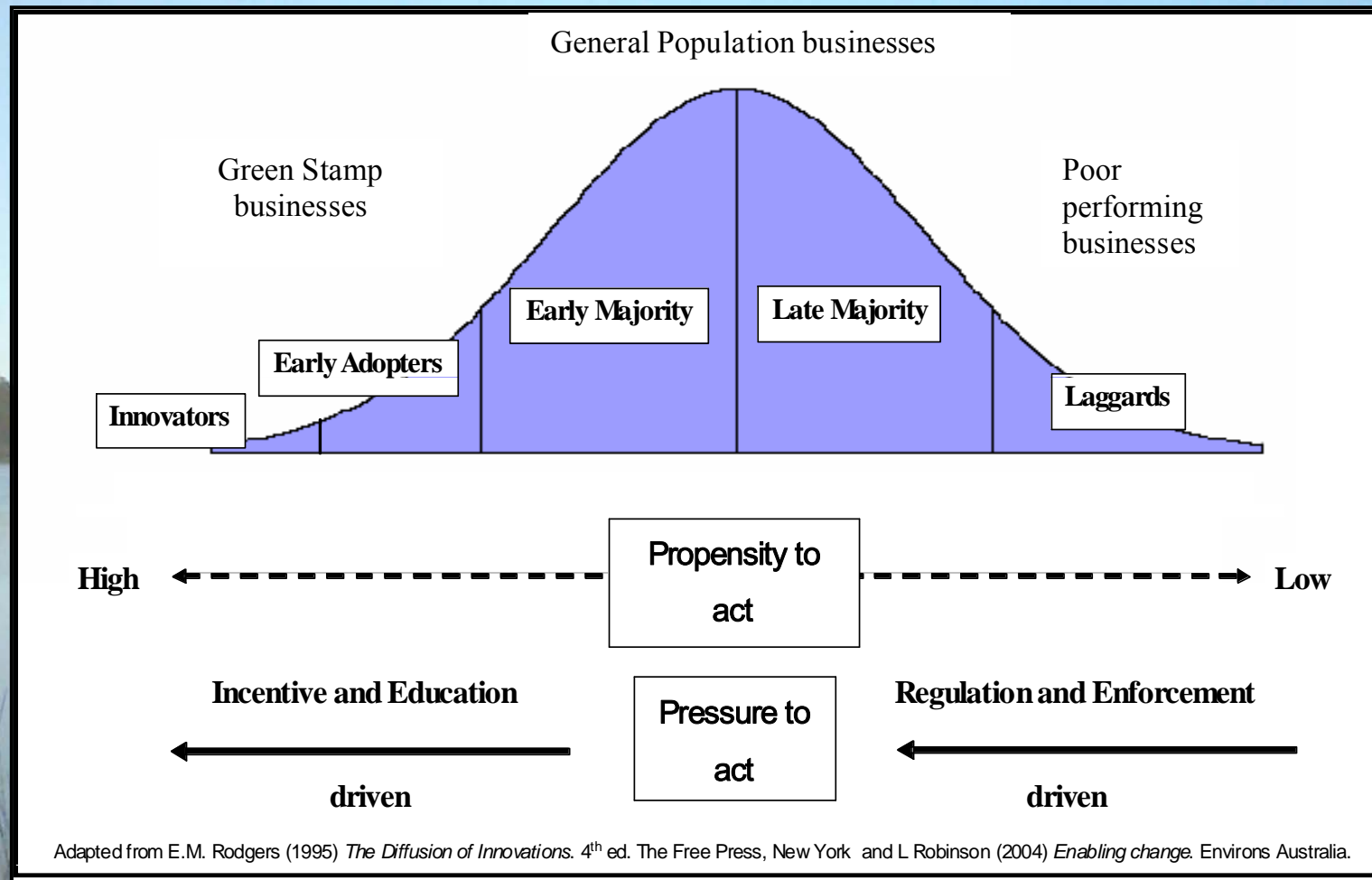
# SME characteristics

- SMEs very important globally, both socially and economically. Sustainability keystone.
- Very diverse and disparate group, all ages, activities, ethnicities, and education levels.
- Significant environmental threat.
- Poor operator recognition of EM hazards and risks.
- Generally positive EM attitude, but handholding expectation.

# Factors influencing environmental management standards

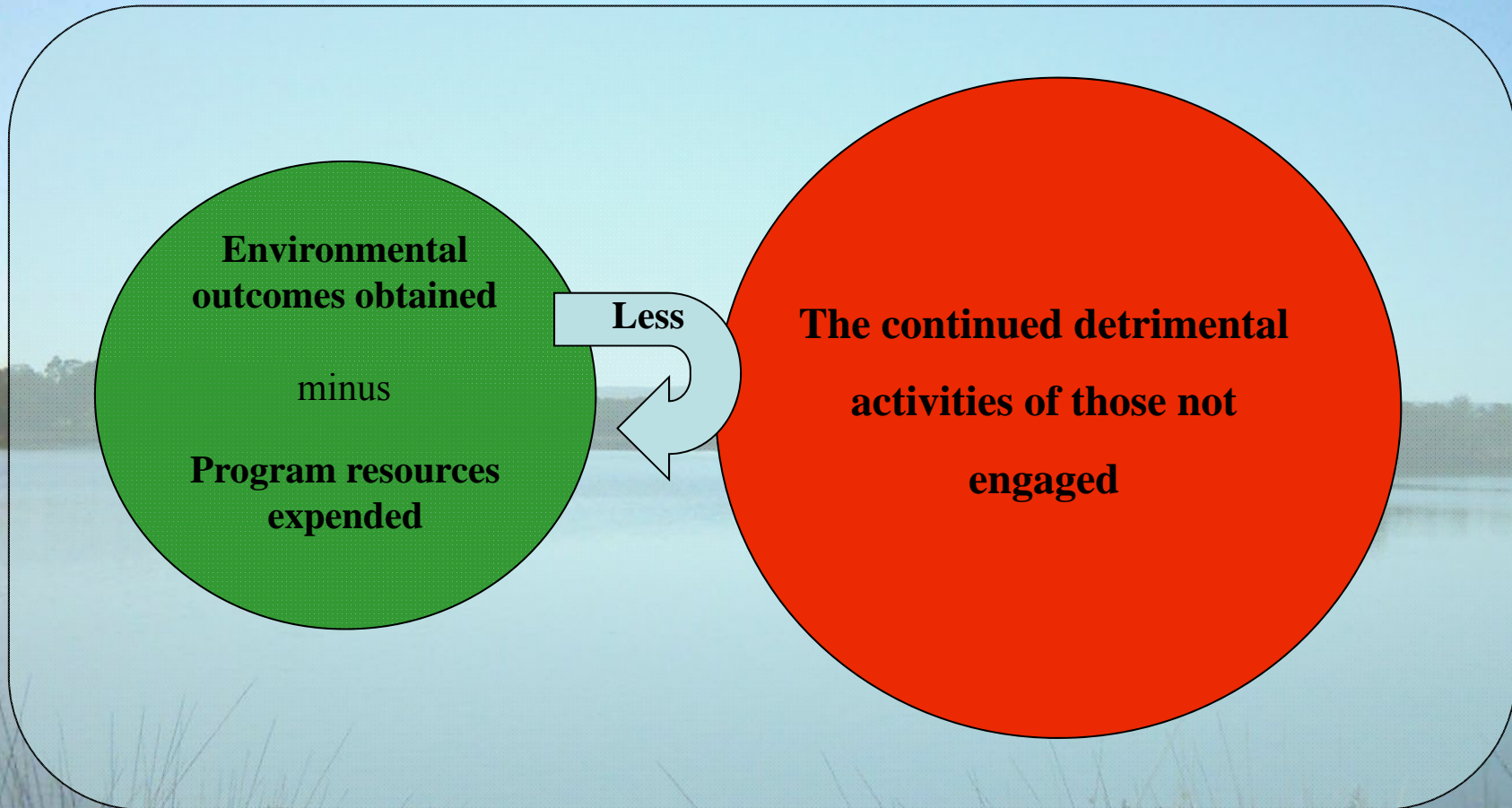


# Diffusions of Innovations model

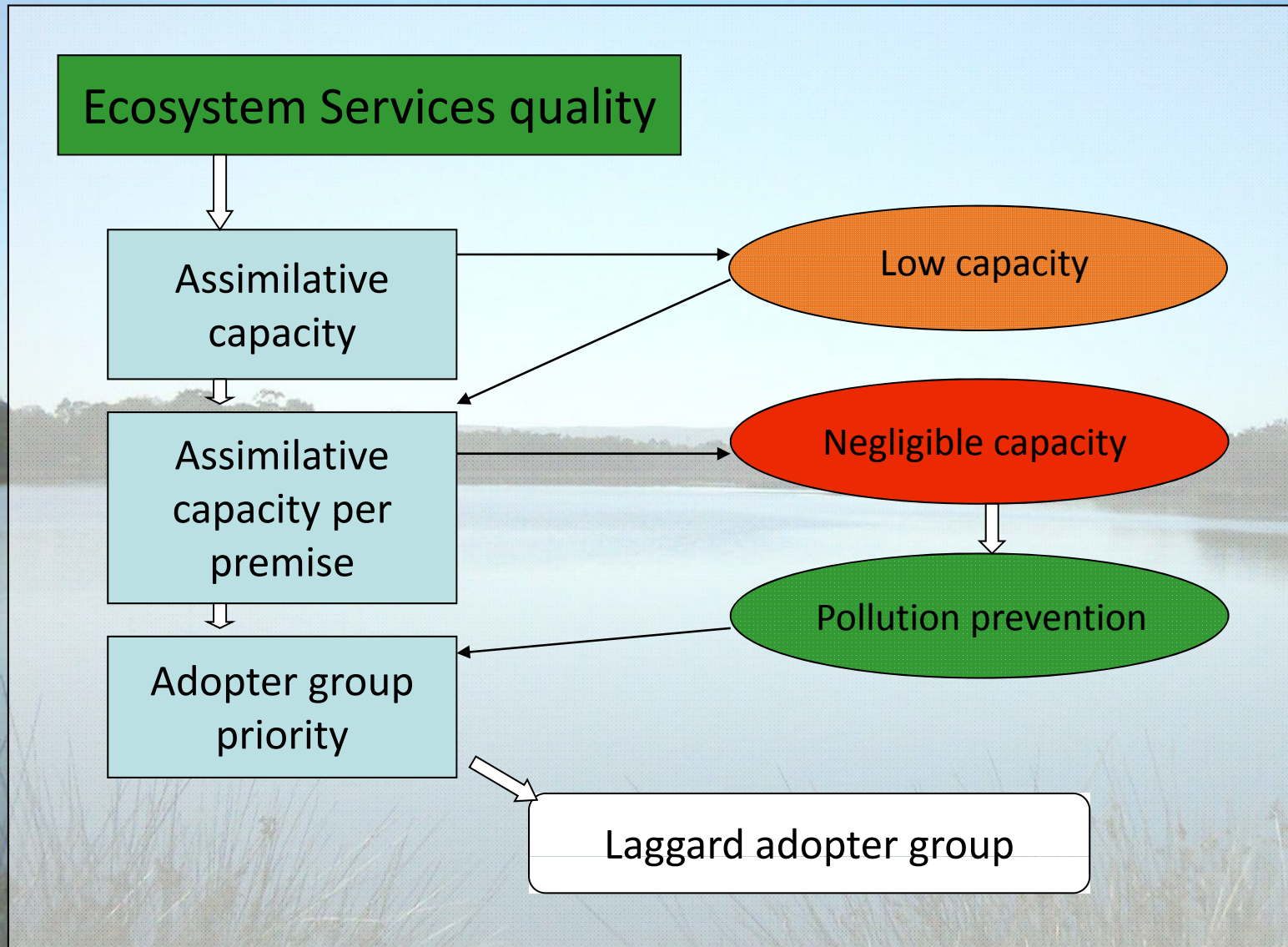




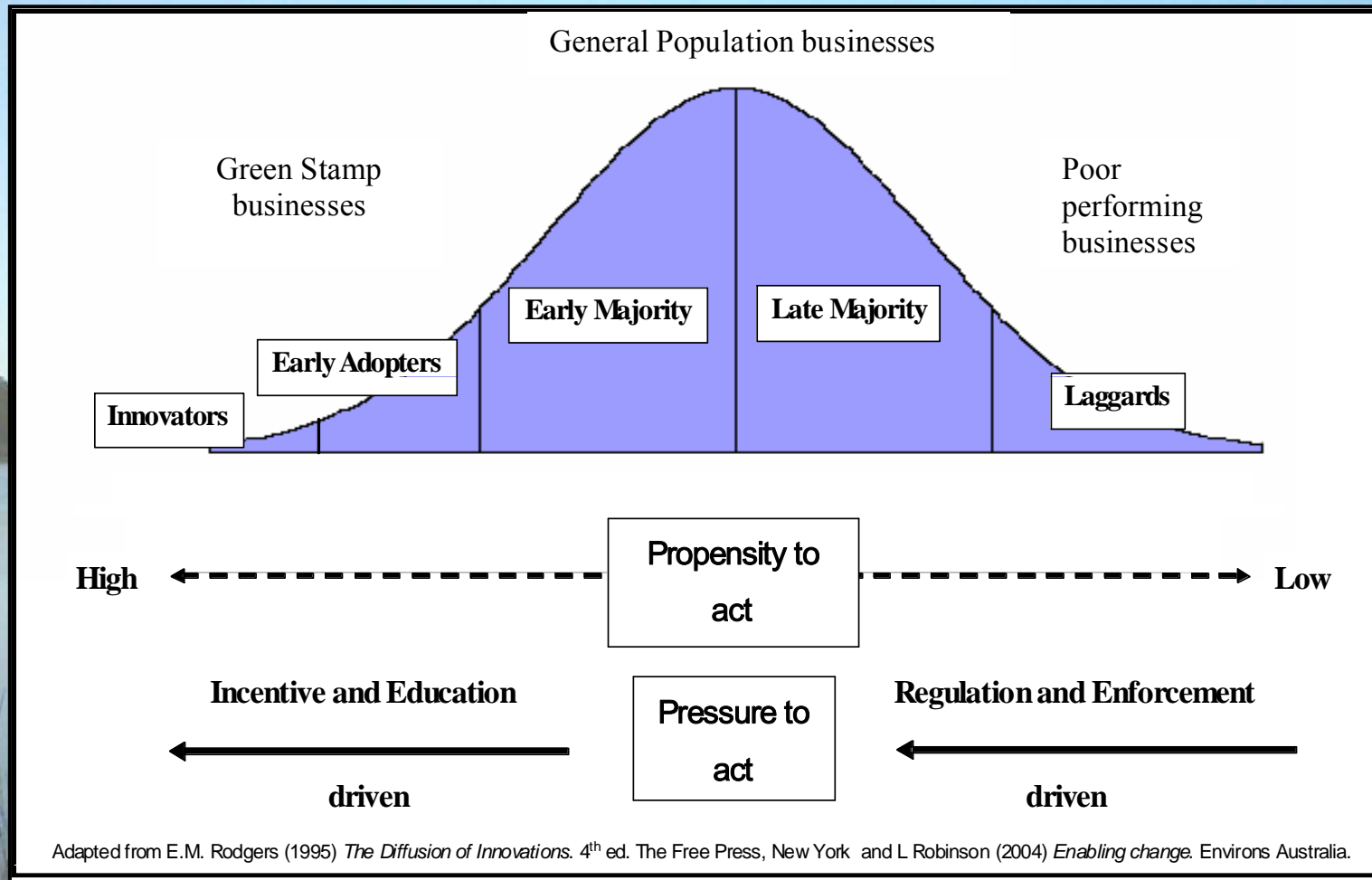
# Cost Benefit Analysis



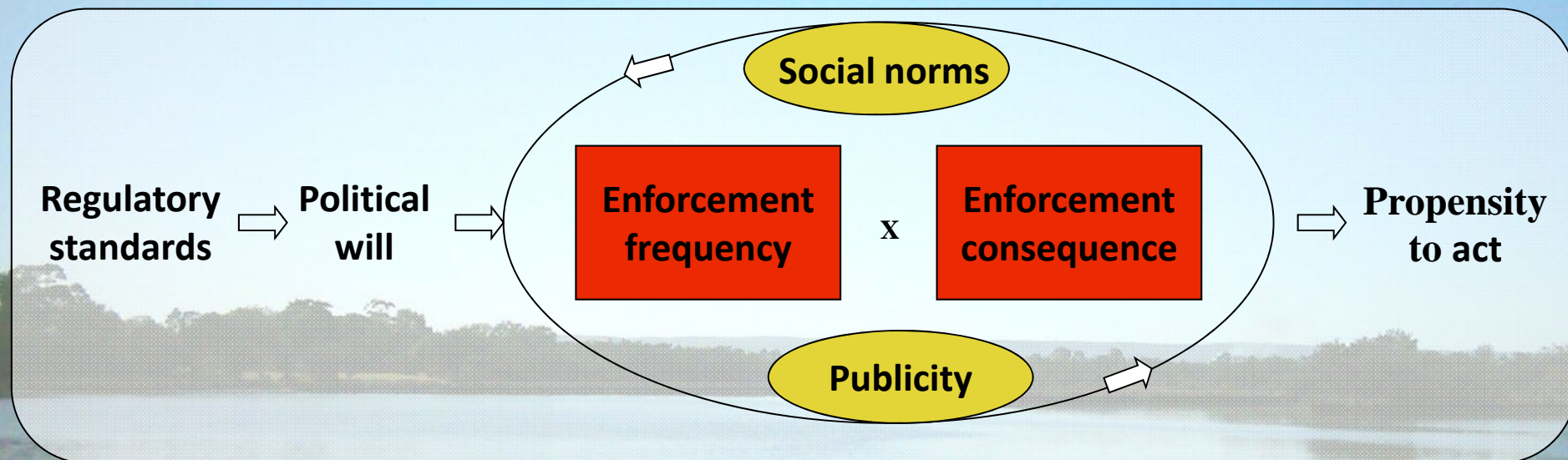
# Cost Benefit Analysis



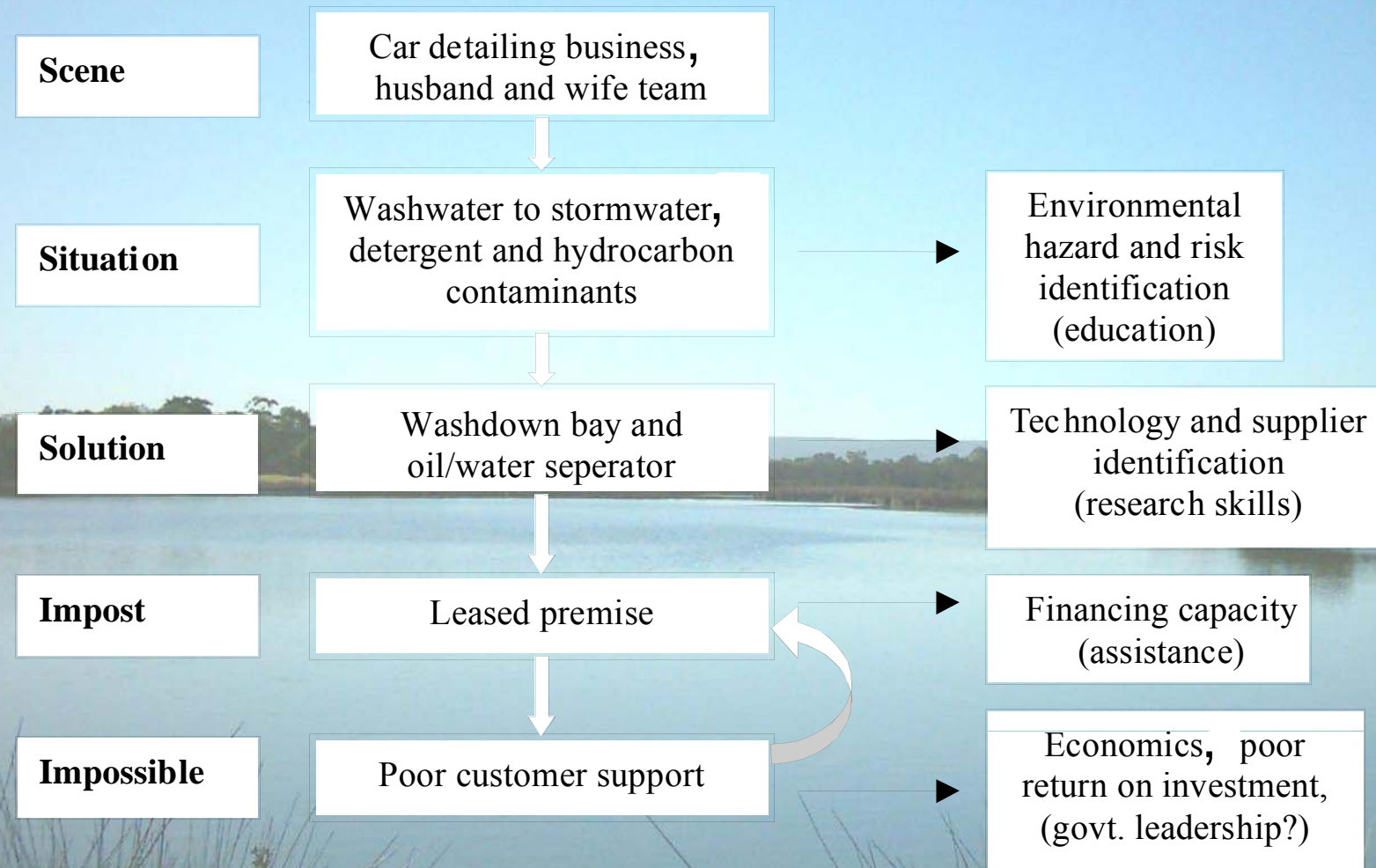
# Diffusions of Innovations



# Command and Control

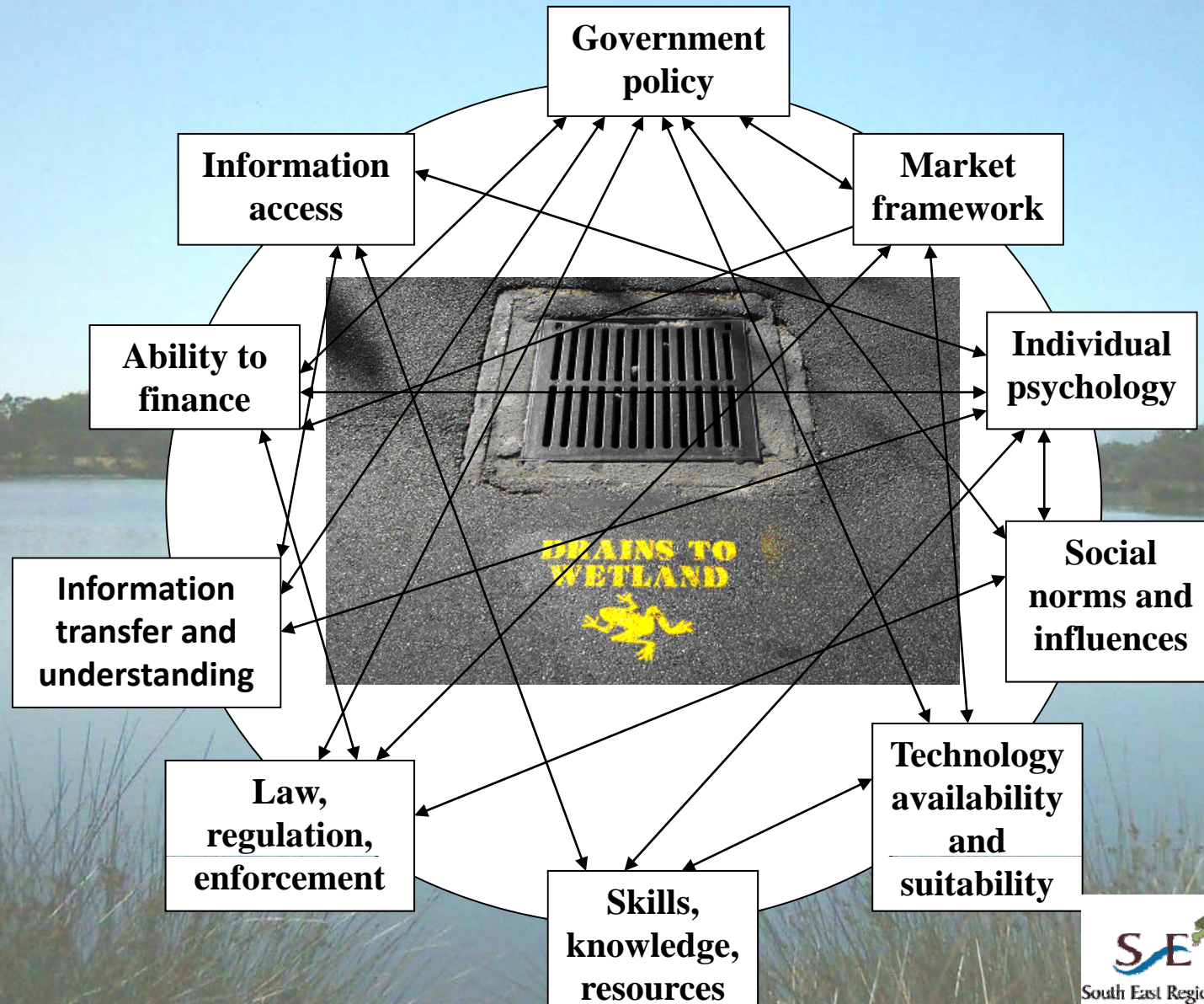


# System and Individual blame



**Who is to blame? Government, Landlord, Business, Customers?  
Who is best positioned with the greatest capacity to make change?**

# Factors influencing environmental management standards



# Why don't people do as we ask?

- They don't believe you (credibility issue).
- They lack the ability to comprehend the explanation, or the explanation is poorly conveyed (learner appropriate information and education technique).
- They lack the skills or resources to follow through with an intent.
- Their values are in conflict (cognitive dissonance).

# Cognitive dissonance

## Resolving a conflict in values:

- Live with the dissonance (discomfort)
- Rationalise the behaviour (externalise the barriers)
- Change behaviour (so the behaviour matches their belief)
- Change beliefs (so their beliefs now match the situation)



# Gibson's Notion of Affordances

- Affordances – positive or negative utility of an object (i.e. the subjective perception of the usefulness of equipment).
- Attunement – habitual association with particular affordances of an object (the convenience of habits regarding old practices).
- Effectiveness – knowledge or skill required to utilise an object's affordances.

# Pivotal point

**Why is the relationship between the auditor/regulator and business owner/manager so important?**

- Lack of SME ability to identify EM hazards and risks.
- Inadequacy of mass communication.
- SME handholding (paternal) expectation regarding EM improvement.
- Site specific individual nature of EM solutions.
- Developing culture of compliance (social norms).
- Regulated level playing field.

# Pivotal point

**Why is the relationship between the auditor/regulator and business owner/manager so important?**

The greatest expense in SME auditing/regulation is delivering staff to the premises door (renumeration, office space, vehicle and equipment expenses).

Given the pivotal nature of the regular/business interpersonal relationship;

**High quality training in sociology, psychology, education and communications theory and practice, is a very low cost, high value, investment in SME environmental management outcomes.**

# Airing the dirty laundry

**‘Significant systemic failures are currently hindering achievement in light industrial SME environmental management. However, it is important to not be paralysed by the paradoxes, but to openly acknowledge the challenges to all stakeholders, gradually building consensus until the policy path to government is clear’.**

# Thank you for your time

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