



Living Laboratories

ICE WaRM presents a workshop on

Response to Drought in South Australia: A Case Study in Adaptive Management

The past decade saw large areas of southern Australia subject to the worst drought conditions in living memory. Reduced rainfall throughout South Australia created challenging conditions for dryland farmers and reduced run-off to major water storages for urban water supply, such as in the Mt Lofty Ranges. In addition, low rainfall extended into important catchments in the headwaters of the River Murray in New South Wales and Victoria resulting in the worst inflows on record. The result included:

1. River Murray flows to South Australia were drastically reduced;
2. Allocations to the state's irrigators were well below historical levels creating hardship for the economy of the South Australian MDB;
3. Water levels fell in many places, including the Lower Lakes where significant areas of lake bed were exposed; and
4. The environment became severely stressed from an extended period of low flow and a lack of floodwaters to rejuvenate floodplains and wetlands.

Time will tell how the river system and the communities that live along it recover.

Learning by doing – response to the drought

Much of the policy and management response to water resource availability is based on historical experience. The knowledge on how to allocate water to users, including irrigators during dry seasons has been based on experience with historically dry seasons. However, this approach alone proved insufficient during the most recent drought because the available water resources were the lowest on record – it had not been experienced and hence current practices had not been developed to respond to it. Instead, new lessons had to be learned and new approaches adopted, as the events were unfolding.

WHEN: Wednesday 7 December 2011

TIME: 9.00am - 3.30pm

WHERE: Stamford Plaza - The Crystal Room
150 North Terrace, Adelaide

RSVP by Thursday 1 December 2011

If you would like to attend the workshop:

Email: reception@icewarm.com.au

Phone: 08 8236 5200

The workshop will be opened by the Minister for Water and the River Murray the Hon. Paul Caica with key speakers to include the Hon. Karlene Maywald and Hon. Dean Brown.

Supported by:



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of South Australia**
Department for Water



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Whole-of-Government response

The response to the drought by South Australian Government agencies involved a whole-of-Government effort, dealing with a range of issues including:

1. Decision making and trade-offs;
2. Community and stakeholder engagement;
3. Cross-agency partnerships;
4. Science to support decision-making;
5. Active risk management and assessment;
6. Urban water restrictions; and
7. Managing the environment during an environmental emergency.

Workshop Goals

As part of the Living Laboratories program, an initiative supported by the International Centre of Excellence in Water Resources Management (ICE WaRM) and the Department for Water, a workshop will be held with representatives from Government and research organisations with an interest in the water management lessons from the recent drought.

The goals of this workshop are to:

1. Identify common learnings from across organisations and keys to successful collaboration in responding to the drought;
2. Determine effective means for Government to engage with the community during periods of high, collective community stress;
3. Identify outstanding high priorities for new research and/or policy to help respond to drought or equivalent natural resource stresses in the future;
4. Document and publish the proceedings of the workshop so that the findings may be of value to other public administrators in Australia and overseas.

Workshop Outputs

1. Notes of the workshop, which will form the basis of a special journal supplement or similar publication.
2. A list of high priority learnings to be incorporated into future policy and where appropriate, considered for legislation and/or regulation.

Workshop will be held 7 December 2011
Stamford Plaza - The Crystal Room, 150 North Terrace, Adelaide