

How do you balance what people wants (normally more water) with environmental needs, especially during draughts?

How do we ensure we are building on previous work (networks, understanding, trust) and not just restarting consultation/engagement with a new batch of academics or bureaucrats.

Instability in government staff makes trust and sharing power very difficult. How can capabilities within government agencies be built?

How does a Govt agency 'compromise' when they are operating under an Act - there are legally obligations that can't be compromised

I appreciate local community involvement is important for social licence and gaining local knowledge. However given the breadth of environmental management, why does decision making have to be conceived only as 'local', why not include people who suffer the consequences of downstream effects? Why not consider forums of people who works in institutions that have certain roles as collectives of local government?

As you said Micheal, it needs to be top down. It is very hard to go out to the public with anything other than a 'department position'. There is a fear that anything an organisation says will be twisted to someone's political agenda. I think this isn't unfounded - even individuals are cautious about what could be misrepresented on social media. How do you overcome this?

One of the growth challenges may be for the Aust and perhaps State Governments to work out how accountability for outcomes, is attributed with shared influence and collaboration. I think it can be done, but it needs a mindset shift from linear program input to output thinking. Interested in the panel's response.

You mentioned the importance of local empowerment in decision-making. However, if the information reaching communities is incomplete or if immediate concerns such as water prices dominate the conversation, is there a risk that decisions may not reflect the most critical long-term issues?

Should water utilities and governments play a stronger role in providing structured information and frameworks so communities can weigh environmental, social, economic, and resilience factors together when shaping priorities?

How to deal with that lack of access to co-design due to gov decisions?

PS we are feeling a bit unheard in the chat - several people have raised - Bernadette's microphone is muted and coming through Caroline's. We can't hear you Bernadette

No point asking, question was well above your group capacity. Vlad

What people want is rarely one dimensional. Having a breadth of diverse community members involved from the outset helps balance needs. Regulations and legislation also provides boundaries and limitations in some instances.

Education and access to wholistic information on current use, predicted availability and impacts of changes also helps people consider wider perspectives and feel seen and heard in a bigger picture scenario.

Academics and Bureaucrats can be mindful of their predecessors and organisational policies, practices and past performance.

Actually being briefed by colleagues who have existing relationships and using community led approaches may help to reduce friction with changes or about-turns.

Asking and checking in with people where they are at before assuming mutually understood parameters or base beliefs.

Spending time in communities, in place, on country usually seems to ground people quite well. Make it compulsory to live a while in the affected community ;)

I suspect there are usually compromises within a topic that can be found outside the parameters of the legal obligations. External incentives, investments and compensation or work arounds to make applications of laws suitable place by place, community by community.

I agree, I consider 'community or communities' in this context to include all affected parties. The law represents the whole of Australia, and/or states as a community in this instance. I like to think of a range of groups of people impacted and affected by water decision making that could be better raised up by our approaches rather than a one dimensional, polarised paradigm

There are elements that are not negotiable for the perspective of the day on the greater good of the entire nation but there are likely to be aspects of any decision making that can be empowering or not. Being true to ourselves, defining our remit and trying to be as mindful, respectful and supportive of wholly positive outcomes are actions that build a repertoire of relationships and reservoir of trust and mutual respect over time that can reduce the likelihood of misrepresentation and abuse by self promoting actors in social media and politics. I agree it is a tricky and complicated growth space navigating public roles in the Digital Age and 24/7 News Cycle.

Yes, I reflect we are in a time of profound changes in the speed at which we grow and change. This is impacting Gov procedural and policy best practice. I think the Aus Gov Office of Impact Analysis could refresh their 2023 thinking and guidance to policy makers by including more aligned advice that reflects the contemporary zeitgeist of multicultural, inclusive practices and resilience building while divesting government of responsibility to the community to deal with wicked problems such as climate change driven disaster. I am loving the work out of Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal's work with Syd Uni <https://frrr.org.au/funding/disaster-resilient-future-ready/>

Further to addressing who is in the room and whether there are diverse perspectives empowered to participate and complete information, the legislation back stops long and short term critical human needs.

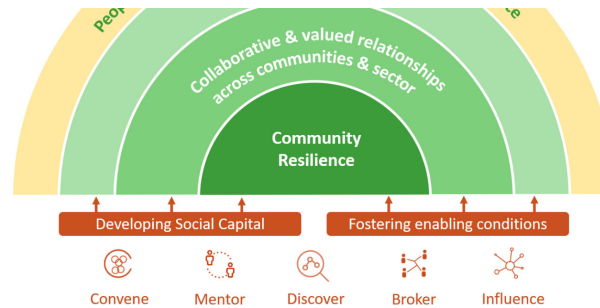
I would love to see more transparent sharing of water information as it is being developed and understood. The NSW Gov has a very low risk appetite and is so adverse to being sued if their published info is used adversely that a lot of profound insight and info is held internally. I'm sure that is the same across many institutions.

I would like to see the Aus Gov Office of Impact Analysis refresh their thinking about best practice consultation to particularly start before the policy and potential regulation is developed. Aligning with Community Resilience building; self protection, sustainability and other lessons learnt from <https://frrr.org.au/funding/disaster-resilient-future-ready/>

Thank you, Vlad - I noticed your question in the chat and would be pleased to learn of your tried and true models of raising capability in communities with regard to decision making around water resource allocation. I recognise many models and templates to inform better quality consultation such as IAP2 or even the Aus Gov <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/best-practice-consultation> published in 2023. Today we discussed moving to capability and to expand on some influences of my recent thinking please see this AI Summary that has lots of <https://oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/best-practice-consultation> leads into what I believe is the foundation of capability building in adversely affected communities. I have been learning some great practice strategies through the work at <https://frrr.org.au/funding/disaster-resilient-future-ready/>



<https://oia.pmc.gov.au/resources/best-practice-consultation>



Researchers at the University of Sydney advocate for a **community-led approach** to disaster resilience. Best practices emphasize long-term partnerships and grassroots co-design, inclusive planning for vulnerable populations (such as people with disabilities), and shifting investments from post-disaster recovery to proactive, pre-disaster preparedness. [1, 2, 3, 4]

[The Sydney Environment Institute champions the following core best practices for disaster resilience:](#)

Equitable Co-design: Involve grassroots communities, neighboring regions, and marginalized groups (e.g., First Nations and CALD communities) in drafting and testing local emergency plans. [1, 2]

Long-Term Engagement: Move away from short-term, reactive funding by establishing ongoing cross-sector dialogue and maintaining designated community liaison roles during non-crisis periods. [1, 2]

Inclusive Accessibility: Ensure emergency plans and survival strategies actively integrate the specific needs of people with disabilities and the elderly, ensuring equal participation in drills and community response. [1, 2]

[Integrated Infrastructure: Recognize social networks, community hubs, and nature-based solutions as vital social infrastructure that mitigates vulnerability.](#) [1]

Comprehensive Adaptation: Address cumulative risks and long-term climate adaptation (like extreme heat mitigation), rather than focusing solely on sudden emergencies. [1, 2, 3]

Further Exploration

[Read about how collaboration between emergency agencies and communities transforms resilience in this Sydney Environment Institute Report.](#)

[Explore long-term funding strategies and resilience frameworks on the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal website.](#)

Learn about disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction training provided by the [University of Sydney](#). [1, 2, 3]