

National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

Social and Economic

State-level Investment Project SE03

Partnership-based social research for sustainable natural resource management in Queensland

A handbook summarising the outcomes of research supported by the
Queensland social research development and extension (SE03) activity
2004–2006

Compiled by James Whelan

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The National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAPSWQ) is a joint Australian and Queensland Government initiative that encourages governments and regional communities to work together to address salinity and water quality issues in priority catchments throughout Queensland.

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The Action Plan provides a policy and funding base for addressing the biophysical, economic, and social aspects of natural resource management. NAPSWQ is the major source of funding for this partnership-based research, through the Social Research, Development, and Extension State-level Activity (SE03), one of five programs conducted under state social and economic activities.

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Acronyms and abbreviations

ALMS	Australian Landcare Management System
BMRG	Burnett Mary Regional Group
BDT	Burdekin Dry Tropics
BDTB	Burdekin Dry Tropics Board
CHRRUP	Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Project
CA	Condamine Catchment Natural Resource Management Corporation Ltd. trading as Condamine Alliance
CRRIQ	Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation
DCQ	Desert Channels Queensland
DU	Desert Uplands
DUBDSC	Desert Uplands Build-up and Development Strategy Committee
EMS	Environmental Management System
NAPSWQ	National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NRM	Natural Resource Management
QNRMW	Queensland Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Water
RD&E	Research, Development and Extension
SENCC	Social and Economic National Coordination Committee
SE03	The Social Research, Development and Extension activity in the Social and Economic State Level Activities under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality
SEQC	South East Queensland Catchments
UQ	The University of Queensland
WCG	Western Catchments Group

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Introduction

The Social Research Development and Extension state level investment project (SE03) was one of a suite of five state-level social and economic projects funded under the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (the Action Plan). This project focused on regional natural resource management (NRM) bodies developing strong research partnerships with social research, development, and extension providers. The project was completed in June 2006.

Funds supported:

- communicating social research, development and extension concepts with regional bodies
- establishing the expressions of interest and research selection processes
- conducting priority research, development and extension projects within the regions
- disseminating the lessons learned among other regions.

The main aim of SE03 was to fund partnership-based research into social issues that are critical to regional implementation of the action plan. SE03 funded ten projects in two rounds of project calls.

The priorities of SE03 were developed through the Social Dimensions of Natural Resource Management Working Group, the first of several working groups established through the Consortium for Integrated Resource Management.¹ Priorities were developed initially for a position paper on the social dimensions of natural resource management, and were then further explored through workshops with regional communities and social science researchers.

A consistent priorities framework was established with project areas developed and implemented through several avenues, including PhD scholarships, Land & Water Australia funding, an Australian Research Council Linkage project, and SE03.

The findings of a number of these and related projects have been included in *Social innovations in natural resource management: a handbook of social research in natural resource management in Queensland*—a publication intended to be a useful resource for regional communities and researchers, and for further research and research partnerships.

The first expression of interest in SE03 funding was invited in August 2003. Over a dozen submissions were received, and the first round projects commenced in 2004. Expressions of interest in the second round were invited in 2004, and these projects commenced in 2005. Final reports of the projects are available online at <http://www.regionalnrm.qld.gov.au>.

Communicating learning

A symposium was held in June 2005, bringing together the participating researchers and regional NRM bodies. At the time, most first round projects had been completed and several of the second round projects had commenced. The research partners identified that coming together at the completion of all the projects, with an expanded audience, would be necessary to share lessons and assess implications for regional bodies and their businesses.

The process for the first symposium was designed to encourage dialogue, to share insights into the critical social issues examined and the experiences of the participants and the research partners. The interaction was greatly appreciated by the research partners, despite time constraints. The June 2005 symposium identified that the partnership-based research promoted in SE03 is not an easy option, as the imperatives of the key players do not always match those of the researchers; however it is an option that brings potential rewards. The symposium also recognised that the regional arrangements for the implementation of the National Action Plan

¹ The Consortium for Integrated Resource Management operates as a formal linkage network of key officers from four universities (The University of Queensland, Griffith University, Central Queensland University and James Cook University), CSIRO and three government departments (Natural Resources, Mines and Water; Primary Industries and Fisheries; and Environmental Protection Agency).





has been an evolving stage on which the SE03 projects have been conducted.

A second SE03 symposium was convened in April 2006 to:

- hear from SE03 project research teams about their findings, including how their projects have addressed regionally important questions about the social and economic dimensions of natural resource management, how these findings are to be applied, and how research partnerships of this nature can be fostered
- consider other opportunities for research, built on partnerships between regional NRM stakeholders, social scientists and other agencies
- facilitate dialogue between regional groups and researchers involved in regions where NRM is funded through the Natural Heritage Trust and the action plan
- identify other regional natural resource management challenges and opportunities that may be researched through similar partnership arrangements.

The symposium attracted researchers, regional body board members, staff, and stakeholders involved in the eight SE03 partnerships. As the final communication event for the research scheme, the symposium was a valuable opportunity to showcase the insights and tools that regional bodies and researchers considered of relevance in other regions and interstate. A full report of both symposiums is available on the SE03 website.

This handbook presents edited summaries of the eight projects that were submitted in May 2006 by regional body staff, board members, and project researchers. The participating regional NRM bodies and researchers are identified for each project. The following legend explains the icons that are used to draw attention to useful information.

	Project partners		Contact details
	Tools		Reports and publications