

The Future for Environmental Professionals - what we can learn from the past

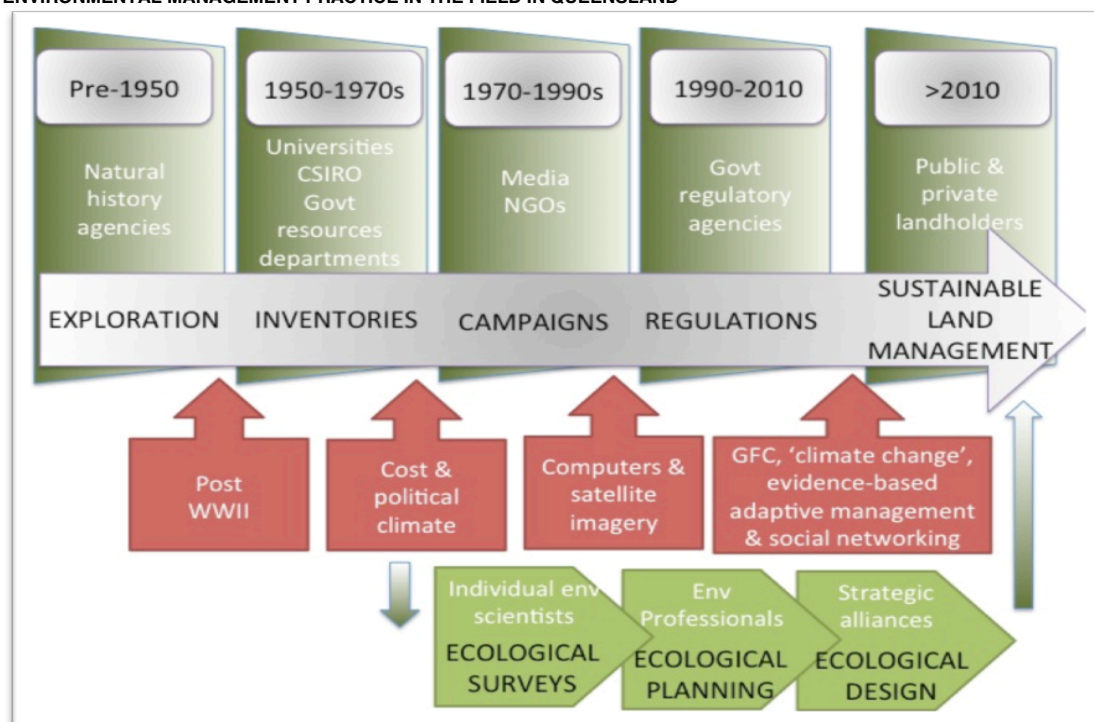
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ABSTRACT

Examination of the history of environmental management in the field in Queensland to date reveals four different eras of major endeavour, with periods of progressive ecological study underlying the later eras. The obvious four eras are validated by significant intervention events that have driven the significant changes between these endeavours.

The intervention currently underway is likely to cause the most dramatic of all shifts in management process to date. It signals a time when there is unusual opportunity to devise, test and institute methods that more effectively address real problems (rather than issues). Sustainable land management is most likely to derive its required evidence/information/methodologies through the ecological survey/planning/design sub-pathway, involving fieldworkers not distracted by populist issues. Members of EIANZ tend to be in this quietly dedicated group, traversing a progressive technical pathway already acknowledged in Western Europe and North America.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT PRACTICE IN THE FIELD IN QUEENSLAND



Source: Lavery, H.J. (2011). - A history of environmental management in the field in Queensland: episodes of activity. *Queensland Environmental Practice Reporter* 17 (76) : 29-52.

The mainstream effort has evolved into complex and increasingly-questionable legislation as the principal tool to achieve results. “Perhaps the most that can be said at the current time is that, without these efforts (at legislation), things would almost certainly be a whole lot worse.” (Dr Philippa England in *Sustainable Planning in Queensland*, The Federation Press : Sydney, 2009).

Such a disturbing conclusion about the considerable effort (and cost) of policing for results recognizes that regulatory compliance only delivers (at best) socially-tolerable standards - not the (still-undefined) outcomes to which we must aspire for quality-of-life. Moreover, legislation promoting national parks, some seemingly-threatened wildlife species, and environmental impact assessments - all also increasingly open to question - avoids the potential for real engagement of (a) remote and isolated landholders who, in fact, manage most of the better natural resource areas of this State, and (b) the community-at-large.

This direction (of private sector engagement at a regional level) affords the chance to seek and define new techniques in sustainable land management that could be the valued legacy of talented young environmentalists in Queensland. If this chance to address the challenge in inspired ways is overlooked, there is every possibility that sustainability will be irretrievable in practice in Queensland. The rising generation of enthusiastic, well-equipped and energetic environmental practitioners will then regret - along with society - the loss of the increasingly-rare opportunity to retain a unique, character-laden set of natural resources.