

SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

TITLE: Report on SEQ NRM Plan Forum –
29 November 2011

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PROPOSAL:

This paper seeks to brief the South East Queensland Regional Implementation Group on the SEQ NRM Plan Forum and to make recommendations relating to the SEQ NRM Plan Communication Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the South East Queensland Regional Implementation Group (SEQRIG):
 - a) Note:
 - That a total of 44 people participated in the forum.
 - That feedback received from those attending (12) on the speakers and general value of the forum was favourable.
 - That the forum presentations have been included on the EIANZ, SEQ Division website <http://www.eianz.org/aboutus/past-events/29-november-2011---achieving-environmental-outcomes-in-south-east-queensland-through-the-seq-natural-resource-management-plan> .
 - That while attendees saw merit in the SEQ NRM Plan they believe that the plan has a low level of community awareness and that a number of issues need to be addressed if it is to be successfully communicated and implemented.
 - b) Consider the following recommendations that are based on group discussions at the forum:
 - I. That the communications plan be amended to enhance the awareness of the SEQ NRM Plan by addressing the issues identified by attendees at the forum especially:
 - i. The need to include details on:
 - a. The implications for those affected by the plan;
 - b. The roles of those involved in its implementation.
 - ii. The need to include information on the issues raised by attendees on perceived inadequacies in the SEQ NRM Plan.
 - II. That SEQRIG refer a summary of this report to the Executive Officers' Group recommending how the issues relating to the policy framework; plan framework and capacity of the various groups and other factors impeding its implementation might be addressed.

BACKGROUND:

2. The forum was organised by the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand at the request of the South East Queensland Regional Implementation Group (SEQRIG). This forum activity is one part of SEQRIG's communication plan for the SEQ NRM Plan. The forum was held at the Mercure Hotel, Brisbane on Tuesday 29 November.

3. The forum comprised the following sessions:
 - a. Regional Planning in SEQ – Steve MacDonald, (DLGP).
 - b. Intent, scope, how it was prepared and the science behind the targets in the SEQ NRM Plan - Paul McDonald (DERM).
 - c. Practical aspects of implementing the SEQ NRM Plan – Simon Warner (SEQ Catchments).
 - d. Decision Support Tool - Shannon McGuire (Buckley Vann).
 - e. Group discussions on issues arising of relevance to State Government, Local Government, Development Industry and Environmental Professionals.
 - f. Panel Discussion - Perspectives on involvement facilitated by Piet Filet DLGP.
 State Government Perspective: Bob Speirs, DERM.
 Local Government Perspective: James McDonnell, Logan City Council.
 Developer Perspective: Mark McMahon, Stockland.
 Environmental Professional Perspective: Vicki Low, Origin Energy.
 - g. Summary of issues and Future Directions (Howard Briggs).

KEY ISSUES:

Achieving Environmental Outcomes in South East Queensland through the SEQ Natural Resource Management Plan, EIANZ Forum 29 November 2011.

4. The attached report on the forum indicates a range of issues that are likely to be of interest to SEQRIG. These issues raised in group discussions have been included under the separate headings of: extent of involvement of attendees in the implementation of the SEQ NRM Plan and issues affecting the implementation of the SEQ NRM Plan (viz.: communications plan; awareness; regional planning and development assessment framework; policy issues; and capacity to implement).
5. It is possible that the timing of the forum being so close to Christmas and the size of the registration fee may have reduced the expected attendance of 100 to 44. However, there is a real possibility that the target audience of the forum (senior officers agencies represented on SEQRIG) may see the implementation of the plan as being a lower priority.

H S Briggs
 EIANZ Forum Convener
 (30 January 2012)

ATTACHMENT 1:***ACHIEVING ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES IN SOUTH EAST QUEENSLAND
THROUGH THE SEQ NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN*****EIANZ Forum - 29 November 2011****FORUM REPORT****Attendance and Extent of involvement of attendees in the implementation of the SEQ NRM Plan:**

Of the 44 attendees, 11 were presenters/forum staff; 6 were from infrastructure/energy providers; 3 from community groups; with 10 from State Government (DERM, DLGP and DEEDI); 10 from the consultancy industry (mainly EIANZ members); 1 from Australian Defence Force; 2 from SEQ Catchments; and, 1 from Council of Mayors.

At the forum, participants were requested to break into 4 self-selected groups and undertake the following tasks:

Task 1: Each person was asked to rate their level of involvement in the SEQ NRM Plan from 0 to 5. Where 0 is absolutely no involvement and 5 is where folk have a role that is totally aligned to achieving the NRM Plan.

Task 2: Each person was asked to clarify how the involvement actually occurs.

Task 3: Each person was asked to identify ways in which this sector can better contribute to outcomes of SEQ NRM Plan.

In terms of Task 1, the following table indicates the involvement of participants in each Group in the implementation of the SEQ NRM Plan:

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Local Government	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Environmental Professionals	4	0	1	3	2	2
Development Industry	2	1	3	1	3	1
State Government	1	0	0	2	1	5

Though no data was provided on involvement of participants within the Local Government group there was a view in that Group that a limited involvement by Local Governments in the implementation of the NRM Plan has occurred. However, it is known that there is strong participation by many SEQ Local governments.

The limited participation from local government and the development sectors at the Forum means that the views expressed at the Forum do not necessarily reflect the wider views of those groups.

Issues affecting the implementation of the SEQ NRM Plan:

While the attendees were not given any guidance on the types of issues that might be raised, those that were raised can be conveniently grouped into:

- communication plan requirements;
- awareness;
- regional planning and development assessment framework;
- policy issues; and
- capacity to implement

Communication plan requirement:

- Place an emphasis on increasing the awareness of the SEQ NRM plan and the real **benefits** for the community and of the opportunities that exist for those wishing to contribute to the implementation of the SEQ NRM Plan to do so. **Benefits** include achieving the social, economic and ecological values sought by the community while reducing the overall costs of its implementation, greater community support (and less conflict) and achievement of greater coordination within and between the various levels of government.
- Indicate the **benefits** to State agencies that *enquire* provides to record activities thereby assisting them in locating their NRM data to meet their multiple reporting requirements (such as to meet State of the Environment). It is understood that such data are difficult to locate and are fragmented (including within DERM).
- Provide clarity on the roles of those involved so as to reduce existing duplication of effort and in-efficiencies. This was raised in relation to Local Governments and SEQ Catchments. Also, it was suggested that there should be better articulation of the respective interests of those involved, especially of State and Local interests.
- Clearly indicate the linkages of the plan to State government policies and priorities and the actions being taken to achieve greater collaboration and coordination (issues frequently raised at the forum). This would include the mechanisms in place (such as SEQ RIG) to achieve coordination of effort and outcomes.
- Simply explain the targets in the SEQ NRM Plan and the logic behind them.
- Needs to explain the long term planning horizon to achieve NRM outcomes. For example, when planning to address hazards such as flooding, this is not necessarily for an event that will occur in the next 20 or so years. This contrasts with “term of government cycles” and places greater emphasis on community ownership/responsibility and possibly greater corporate investment in achieving NRM outcomes.
- Communications need to recognise the knowledge and educational background of the different groups in the community. This is essential if those involved are to explain the policy, the outcome being sought and the logic of the action required to implement it (rather than it just being a requirement). For example, the rationale for a landholder to keep cattle out of a creek.
- The use of different educational approaches to achieve awareness, commitment and participation could be along similar lines as used during when weather news reporting on drought.

Awareness:

- A number of the workshop participants perceived that senior executives in the State government do not see the implementation of the plan as being part of their core business. It is possible that the SEQ NRM Plan is only seen as a responsibility of DERM whereas every State agency has a need to contribute.
- While the setting of targets was perceived as having merit, there needs to be greater guidance in the SEQ NRM Plan on what actions should be undertaken to achieve those targets and by whom. Therefore, some forum attendees consider that the SEQ NRM Plan is not a plan as the means for the implementing its policies and targets are missing.
- As it is perceived that there is a lack of knowledge about the *Sustainable Planning Act 2009* (SPA), there needs to be some explanation of SPA, the hierarchy of plans arising from it and the need through SPA for Local governments to take the SEQ NRM plan into consideration.
- It was perceived that there are opportunities for greater involvement of State and Local Governments in identifying the location and means of implementing "Green Infrastructure" in planning schemes (both regional and local) and for addressing cumulative impacts of development (both positive and negative).
- It was suggested that while those undertaking development assessment may not currently refer to the SEQ NRM plan, they need to do so to avoid any perception that the SEQ NRM plan creates two assessment processes.
- A number of attendees indicated that the "Atlas" provided good base line information for a range of purposes including investment planning and others should also be made aware of this.
- It was suggested that there should be greater awareness, and hence recognition given, for all work contributors, including Local governments, make to achieving NRM outcomes.

Regional planning and development assessment framework:

- Many attendees indicated the need for greater emphasis on strategic planning at a regional level and greater collaboration, at both strategic and local levels, in plan development and implementation.
- It was suggested that there needs to be a better linking of Queensland Planning Policy standards to the SEQ Regional Plan.
- A number of attendees expressed concern that there is excessive dependence on development assessment to achieve planning outcomes. Regrettably this does not facilitate the consideration of cumulative issues (which is best addressed at a strategic and regional level). To address cumulative issues there needs to be greater guidance for the planning schemes for addressing regional issues but giving Local governments the flexibility to implement it at a local level.
- It was suggested that greater collaboration is warranted between State and Local Governments and NRM bodies in the development of plans. There was a view that as this NRM Plan had little Local Government input it has received limited attention from them.

- Concern was expressed at the lack of adequate lead time when undertaking development assessment and planning scheme reviews and as a result consideration of the SEQ NRM targets are not fully considered.
- The SEQ NRM plan is seeking to achieve multiple outcomes, not the implementation of specific measure such as the planting trees. It was suggested there was evidence that some implementation activity appeared to be occurring in isolation from other activities when coordination was warranted.
- Guidance is required when developments involving large tracts of land are involved to address connectivity issues.

Policy issues:

- A number of attendees were concerned with the plethora of NRM related legislation without evidence of policy consistency. It was suggested that a review of such legislation with the view to achieving consistency of NRM policy, the possible revoking of certain acts and/or more integrated legislation relating to the achievement of NRM outcomes is warranted. Also, the possible incorporation of aspects of them into the plans (Regional/NRM) also warrants consideration. It is perceived that consistency does not occur because of the haste to prepare legislation and an absence of a legislative requirement to check and achieve alignment between statutory measures.
- As non statutory policies and plans such as those in the SEQNRM Plan are likely to be ignored there appears to be scope for either making the NRM plan a statutory plan or for there to be an enforceable requirement to formally recognise the SEQ NRM plan. It was suggested that there may be value in including aspects of the SEQ NRM plan in specific state planning policies to ensure that Local Governments have regard to it.
- It was suggested that there needs to be a better balance between predictability and flexibility in the use of regulations to achieve NRM targets. Existing conditions that may be set might be simple to enforce but are often ineffective in achieving the desired NRM outcomes. As prescriptive legislation can unduly restrict innovation in arriving at solutions, permitting greater flexibility may enable a move away from the need for statutory measures. For example, when small areas of remnant vegetation are found in an area, it is not always possible to comply strictly with the letter of the law.
- It was suggested that the Office of Coordinator General should be more active in approvals/requirements/conditions leading to conditions set under significant projects to get real NRM outcomes. Also development being considered for a Green Door commitment with Department of Local Government and Planning and by the Urban Land Development Authority need to demonstrate how their approval and conditioning process are also utilising the SEQ NRM targets.
- It is important that the State government be consistent in the application of policies relating to NRM. It was noted that although the Greenbank-Karawatha corridor is identified in the regional plan it would appear that the application of State government policies has failed to adequately recognise the multiple NRM values when permitting development and offsets in and adjacent to the area.

- As planning schemes don't address potential conflicts where existing use is involved and where corridors are fragmented, there is a need for these to be handled by other means (such as through offsets). This suggests that there is a need for DERM and other planning agencies to develop "regional" skeleton network plans and for the development of appropriate tools.
- To achieve SEQ NRM Plan implementation on the ground the policy conflict that exists between the various forms of offset needs to be resolved (such as the different offset policies for biodiversity). It was suggested that DERM needs to work through offsets with Local Governments. It was questioned whether there is enough land available for offsets and whether the SEQ NRM Plan had been considered in a State context thus permitting possible offsets between regions
- The eligibility for compensation where a development leads to reduction in private values was raised (and possibly "betterment" paid where financial gains accrue?).
- There was a plea for the development of a means for establishing a dollar value for environmental/social qualities.

Capacity to implement:

- It was suggested that those expected to implement the plan do not have access to adequate resources. This is a major impediment to achieving the priorities and targets set in the SEQ NRM plan. To address this there needs to be better sharing of resources (investments and expertise).
- As there is a general lack of expertise to implement the SEQ NRM Plan, there appears to be scope for encouraging the retention and the development of staff skills through training, secondment and exchanges. This particularly applies to staff involved in undertaking assessments. Any attempt to achieve compliance to regulation by inadequately skilled staff is of concern. Buy-in of skills is only an option when there are people within the market with these skills.
- Excessive specialisation within agencies, poor coordination mechanisms and work pressures on staff (due to unrealistic timelines) are preventing members of the community with knowledge and expertise to engage with the Government.
- Every effort should be made by the government to avoid the wastage of community resources of time and money due to unnecessary conflict between agencies.
- Groups need the capacity to understand the economic benefit of resource management and which scheme delivers the greater economic outcome for NRM.

H S Briggs
 EIANZ Forum Convener
 (30 January 2012)