



Inovact CONSULTING
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Community Skills Knowledge and
Engagement in Regional Natural
Resource Management
National Staff and Stakeholder Survey Report

July 2011



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Overview

This project reviews the contribution of regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations to the effectiveness of Community Skills Knowledge and Engagement (CSKE) strategies against the five-year outcomes for the Caring for Our Country Program.

Two surveys were conducted to develop an understanding of regional CSKE; one of stakeholder organisations involved in natural resource management organisation's (NRMOs) staff and the other of key staff involved in CSKE within regional NRM organisations. In total 659 people participated in the survey including 512 stakeholders and 147 staff. This included contributions from stakeholders in 52 of the 56 NRM regions and staff from 43 regional NRM organisations.

Stakeholder Preferences for Accessing Knowledge and Information

Overall, the results show that regional NRM organisations are the most important source of knowledge and skills for stakeholder organisations. This supports the Australian Government strategy of investing in partnerships with regional NRM organisations to deliver CSKE outcomes.

Stakeholder communication channel preferences continue to be for a mixture of group or personal interaction supported by email driven information. This preference for personal and group interaction aligns closely with the services usually offered to stakeholders by regional NRM organisations. Social networking and online forums, once seen as nascent, at this stage, are only important for a small group of stakeholders; although this may grow over time as these forms of communication become more established in the NRM community.

Examples of the information needs of stakeholders were collected through the survey. The diversity of examples provided by stakeholders emphasises the range of individual and local issues that need to be met by the national CSKE effort. Stakeholders draw on a range of different sources and people to meet their specific information needs and will access different information providers depending on the issue they are engaged in.

Organisational Approaches to Service Delivery

The findings from the national survey, confirm that regional NRM organisations generally have relevant processes in place to meet the basic requirements for effective CSKE. This set of commonly applied processes includes:

- an approach to understanding stakeholders' perspectives and needs;
- a strategy for how they will interact and engage with them;
- a range of staff and skills devoted to CSKE activities;
- a diversity of strategies for communicating and influencing stakeholder groups; and
- processes for reviewing and improving performance.

Findings in relation to the Caring for Our Country Community Skills Knowledge and Engagement Five Year Outcomes

Outcome One – Improve the access to knowledge and skills of urban and regional communities in managing natural resources sustainably and helping protect the environment.

The survey findings represent a strong result at the national level for regional NRM organisations in relation to this Caring for Our Country outcome.

The national survey suggests that regions have built a strong understanding of the knowledge and skills needs of stakeholders and are providing services that are used and valued by stakeholders. A substantial majority of stakeholders find regions to be helpful in assisting them with resolving natural resource management issues and related challenges of planning, management and evaluation of NRM activities.

These findings, in combination with the identification of the importance of regions as a source of knowledge and skills for stakeholders, suggest that the regional base funding component of the CSKE investment strategy is providing a good return on investment in terms of reaching and positively influencing a diversity of stakeholders.

Outcome Two - Increase the engagement and participation rates of urban and regional communities in activities to manage natural resources and to help protect the environment.

Overall, the evidence suggests that regions are doing a good job of engaging a diversity of stakeholders and actively seeking to build their engagement within the wider community over time.

Stakeholders agree that sufficient engagement is occurring, that it is of a moderate to high quality and that opportunities exist for stakeholders to participate in regional NRM processes.

Engagement between regional NRM and stakeholder organisations is also resulting in partnerships for funding and most stakeholders agree that engagement with regional organisations has had a moderate to high level of influence in encouraging them to invest more in their NRM activities.

Outcome Three - Position all regional natural resource management organisations to deliver best-practice landscape conservation and sustainable land use planning to communities and land managers within their regions.

The evidence from the national survey suggests that regional NRM organisations are well positioned to lead regional planning processes in cooperation with stakeholders.

NRM organisations are the most commonly preferred source of NRM information. They are generally seen as being adequately informed about regional issues, willing to listen to stakeholders and providing leadership in NRM.

Relationships between a majority of stakeholders and regional NRM organisations appear strong; on the whole, staff and stakeholders agreed that a moderate to high level of trust, transparency, inclusiveness and commitment exists between their organisations.

At a national level, most regional NRM organisation staff also agreed that their organisation had an effective relationship with the state and Australian governments and that they generally received consistent policy advice.

Outcome Four - Ensure the continued use, support, and reinvigoration of traditional ecological knowledge to underpin biodiversity conservation.

The majority of indigenous organisations generally agreed that their regional bodies were adequately informed by stakeholders. However, the survey shows that regional organisations are less confident that they are effectively engaging indigenous stakeholders than they are about the effectiveness of their engagement processes for stakeholders as a whole.

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1. Introduction to the National Survey

Evaluation of the effectiveness of government strategy and investment supports better decision-making and organisational learning about what works. It also provides the foundation for communication of the outcomes of government programs to key stakeholder groups.

This project reviews the contribution of regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) organisations to the effectiveness of Community Skills Knowledge and Engagement (CSKE) strategies against the five year outcomes for the Caring for Our Country Program.

The report is based on the findings of a national survey and series of interviews on the views and opinions of 43 (of the 56) NRM organisations, and over 500 stakeholder organisations closely involved in NRM at a regional level.

It is one of a compendium of three reports from a project commissioned by the Australian Government Land and Coasts team in 2010-11. The companion reports include:

- a set of detailed case studies of the CSKE strategies of high performing regional organisations; and
- a policy synthesis report that distils the findings of the survey and the case study reports into a set of issues and recommendations that can be considered and acted on by the Australian Government.

The report is structured into five chapters:

- *Overview* distils the key insights and findings of the survey for an executive audience;
- *Introduction to the National Survey* provides an overview of the national survey and the methodology used to collect and analyse the underlying data and information;
- *Stakeholder Needs and Preferences* provides an analysis of stakeholders valued sources of NRM information, their preferences for receiving information and the areas where NRM is having and influence on the NRM practice;
- *Regional CSKE Strategies* provides background and contextual information for the survey; and
- *Progress against 5 year CSKE Outcomes* summarises the evidence derived from the survey that is relevant to reporting achievements against Caring for Our Country Program Outcomes.

Survey Methodology

Overview

Two separate surveys were conducted to develop an understanding of regional CSKE; one survey interviewed stakeholder organisations involved in NRM and the other interviewed key staff involved in CSKE within regional NRM organisations.

In total 652 people participated in the survey including 512 stakeholders and 147 staff.

The stakeholder sample is segmented into categories based on state, the focus of the organisation, the priority of NRM within the organisation and the relationship between the regional organisation and levels of funding provided.

Copies of the survey questionnaires are provided in the appendix.

To measure the progress of CSKE against its five year outcomes, a national survey was conducted to collect a 'snapshot' of data that describes key attributes of the regional NRM system as it relates to CSKE issues.

Interview results combine factual information and expert individual perspectives on the effectiveness of CSKE activities at a regional level. Interviews were conducted using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) methodology. All interviews were conducted according to the international standard for market and social research (ISO20252).

The survey approach has been adapted from earlier work completed by the Department in 2007¹. This approach enables a level of continuity, facilitating benchmarking of results from earlier work, while evolving and focussing the survey to align with the context of a new Program structure and current policy issues.

The survey involved interviewing two key groups of people:

- staff from regional NRM organisations, and
- stakeholder organisations from within each region.

The approach taken with each group is described below.

¹ Fenton M and Rickert A (2008) A national baseline of the social and institutional foundations of natural resource management programs, NLWRA, Canberra .

Staff Interviews

Each regional NRM organisation was invited to participate in the survey.

Key staff from regional organisations were targeted to gather the perspectives of the people leading CSKE activities at a regional level. Interviews lasting around 45 minutes were sought from up to four staff members from each participating organisation.

As in previous surveys, the text of the questionnaire was emailed to respondents, and they were encouraged to review the questions and consider their answers. Some chose to submit their responses as self-completed questionnaires by email or fax, while others went through the questionnaire with an interviewer by telephone. All had a copy of the questionnaire during the interview, and questions or reply options were only read out where required to clarify the response. Telephone interviews typically took around 20-30 minutes. Some respondents who self-completed reported they spent over an hour completing the questionnaire.

In particular, interviews were sought from individuals responsible for setting the NRM organisation's strategic direction, implementing CSKE programs and activities and monitoring its performance. Organisations were given the opportunity to nominate three staff participants in addition to the CEO.

Some nominated more than four (up to 16 for one region) while others were only able to nominate 2 or 3 due to the small number of staff in the organisation. Some CEOs completed the questionnaire but did not nominate staff or staff did not complete the survey within the field work time frame. For a small number 5 or 6 questionnaires were completed as faxed and emailed completed surveys were received while other were being completed by telephone.

The interviews provided a structured evaluation of the status of CSKE within the organisation based on the knowledge, judgments and perspectives of staff. Questions were framed to gather information about:

- the types of stakeholders that the NRM body engages with;
- how the organisation engages with stakeholders;
- the internal capacity and implementation of strategies;
- the perceived successes and challenges experienced by the organisation in achieving CSKE; and
- the role of state and federal government.

A copy of the questionnaire is provided in the Appendix for reference.

Stakeholder Interviews

The stakeholder survey consisted of interviews with up to 14 organisations involved in NRM within each participating region.

The survey particularly targeted how the regional organisations engage with and develop the knowledge and skills of organisations working 'on the ground' in NRM. Organisations included community groups, landcare groups, local councils, businesses and other organisations that are particularly influential in NRM in their respective regions. Other stakeholders that the organisation is responsible to (such as governments and politicians) were not a priority for the survey unless there was a tangible link to practical NRM, for example through outcomes or activities.

Stakeholder contacts were drawn from:

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- a list of the organisations that applied for funding under Caring for Our Country
- lists of up to 25 nominations from regional NRM organisations and
- additional local contacts provided by stakeholders themselves in response to the final survey question:
 - Who else would you recommend we contact for their views about the activities of the regional body and its relationships with others concerned about NRM in this region?

The sample includes a mixture of people identified by the regional NRM organisation and sourced independently by the review team. This diversity of sources for stakeholder contacts ensures that the national stakeholder sample is balanced and representative of the groups involved in Caring for Our Country and regional NRM.

The stakeholder questionnaire sought to understand:

- the importance of knowledge and skill development to stakeholder NRM practice
- key sources and formats of information and skills
- the relative influence of different types and sources of information on their NRM practice
- recent examples where knowledge and skills have supported practice improvement
- the nature of the relationship they hold with regional NRM organisations
- the benefits of regional NRM organisation relationships, and
- stakeholder involvement in developing and implementing regional NRM strategies and activities in their region.

A copy of the stakeholder interview questionnaire is provided in the Appendix. It was found that taking stakeholders through the questions in a traditional telephone interview styles took around half an hour. To streamline data collection and improve data quality, all stakeholders who consented to interview were provided with a copy of the questionnaire to review before being interviewed and had the copy to hand during the interview. As with NRM staff, questions or response options were only read out as required to clarify which response was intended.

Summary of Responses

Interviews were conducted in 52 of the 56 NRM regions across Australia. 43 regional NRM organisations provided contacts and completed staff interviews. All regions were provided with the opportunity to participate. The majority of the 13 regions who did not directly participate in the review agreed to participate but did not provide information in time to be included in the survey. The two Cape York organisations were excluded at their request based on the process not being applicable to their situation.

In total, of the 659 people who participated in the survey, 512 were stakeholders and 147 staff. Table 1 provides an overview of the sample by state. A more detailed profile of each of the samples is provided below.

Table 1: Distribution of the survey sample by state

	Staff Interviews	% of sample	Stakeholder Interviews	% of sample
NSW	38	26	146	30
VIC	25	17	84	16
QLD	32	26	97	19
SA	17	12	71	14
WA	24	16	78	15
TAS	5*	3	23	4
ACT	3*	2	6*	1
NT	3*	2	7*	1
Total	147	100	512	100

*NB: The small sample sizes for these groups means that this data has not been reported separately to the national average. Figures for ACT and NT responses are not reported and Tasmanian results are only reported for the stakeholder survey.

Characteristics of the Staff Sample

Staff from 43 regions were interviewed. From these regions, a total of 147 staff were interviewed from the organisations including 31 CEOs and 116 other staff. Table 1 shows the distribution of respondents by state, with NSW making the largest contribution.

Figure 1 provides the distribution of respondents according to their job title. Organisations were asked to nominate three staff in addition to the CEO who held key responsibility for CSKE activities. This distribution indicates that a diversity of people with regional NRM organisations are involved in CSKE. Program Managers form the largest group, followed by staff involved with responsibility for communication, information or education and catchment coordinators.

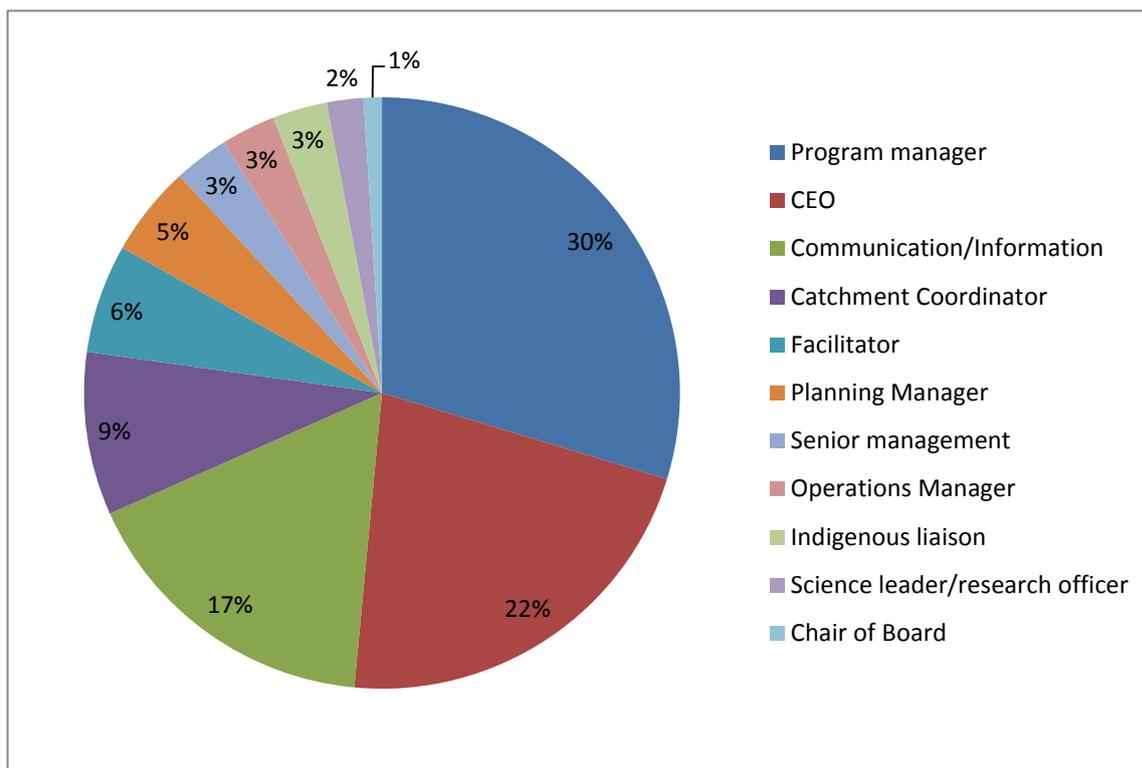


Figure 1: Overview of the staff sample, according to job title

Characteristics and Analysis of the Stakeholder Sample

Distribution by State

Stakeholders were drawn from all States and Territories (see *Table 1*). NSW provided the largest response with 146 participants, with comparable contributions other larger states, with each contributing between 70 and 100 participants. These samples provide a useful basis for identifying trends and differences between stakeholders according to the state they are in.

With only 3 regions, Tasmania contributed 23 responses. This provides a good indication of current trends, and perspectives. The two territories, the ACT and the Northern Territory, produced 6 and 7 responses respectively. These responses do not provide a sufficient sample to accurately infer differences compared to other states but ensure a proportionate contribution from these single region jurisdictions to the national sample.

Distribution of the Sample According to Stakeholder Type

The stakeholder sample includes a diverse selection of organisations who are involved in NRM at the regional level.

Figure 2 provides a breakdown of the sample on the basis of organisation type based on the nominations made by respondents themselves. The largest proportions of respondents come from community groups at 22% of the sample. This includes people from Coastcare and other NRM focussed organisations. Landcare organisations, environmental representative organisations, local councils and farmer's organisations also contributed between 10-15% of responses. The remaining groups provide the survey with a snapshot of the diversity of organisations engaged in regional NRM.

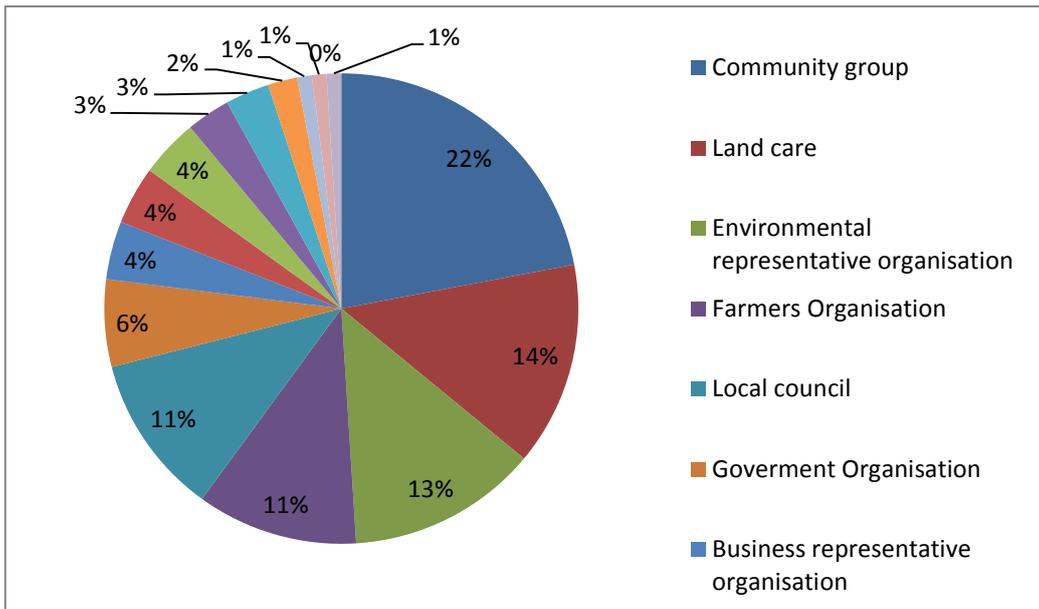


Figure 2: Distribution of stakeholder responses according to the type of organisation

NRM Focus of Participating Organisations

Stakeholders were asked about the extent to which NRM was the key focus of their organisation. 77% of those surveyed stated that NRM issues were an important focus of the organisation, whilst 23% state that NRM issues were a lower priority area. Figure 3 shows a further breakdown of responses according to the significance of NRM for their organisation.

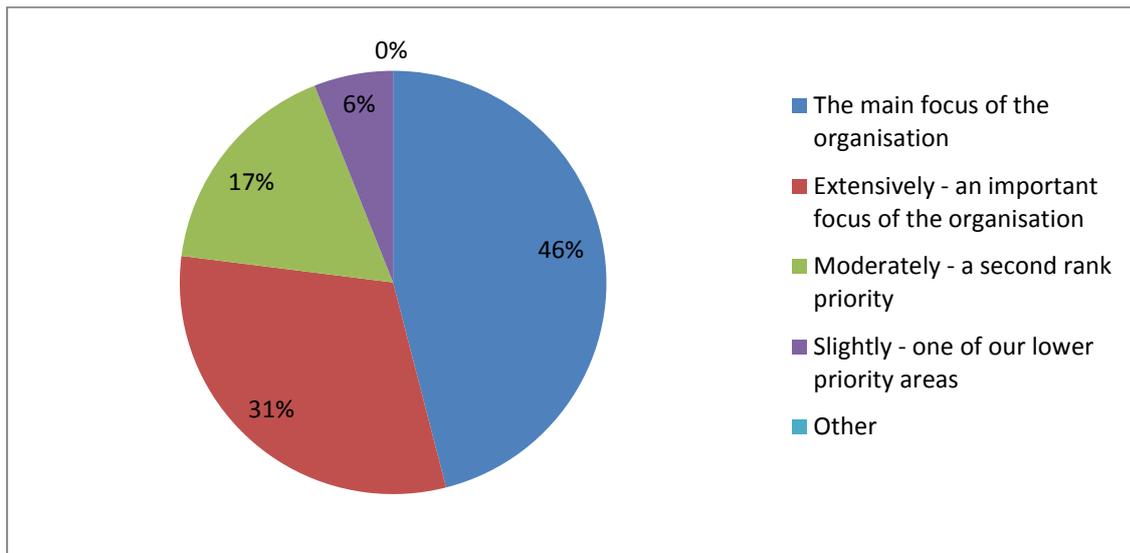


Figure 3: Significance of NRM for stakeholder organisations

The groups that most commonly identified that NRM was their main focus included Landcare groups (78%), other community groups (70%) and environmental representative

organisations (67%). Primary producer organisations, business groups, indigenous groups and other government organisations mostly saw NRM as an important focus for their organisations while local government was the least likely to nominate NRM as a main focus (7%) with 40% describing NRM as a second rank priority for their organisation.

NRM Issues

Stakeholders were asked to identify the selection of NRM issues that they were mostly involved in managing. At a national level, biodiversity conservation and sustainable land management were the two most significant focuses for NRM organisations. Respondents were nearly twice as likely to nominate these issues as the focus of the NRM compared to inland water management, coastal and marine management or urban conservation (*Figure 4*).

A diverse range of other NRM issues significant to the organisations was stated, including community education, renewable energy and mining, salinity, food security, waste management and heritage, with each mentioned by only a small proportion of the respondents (4%).

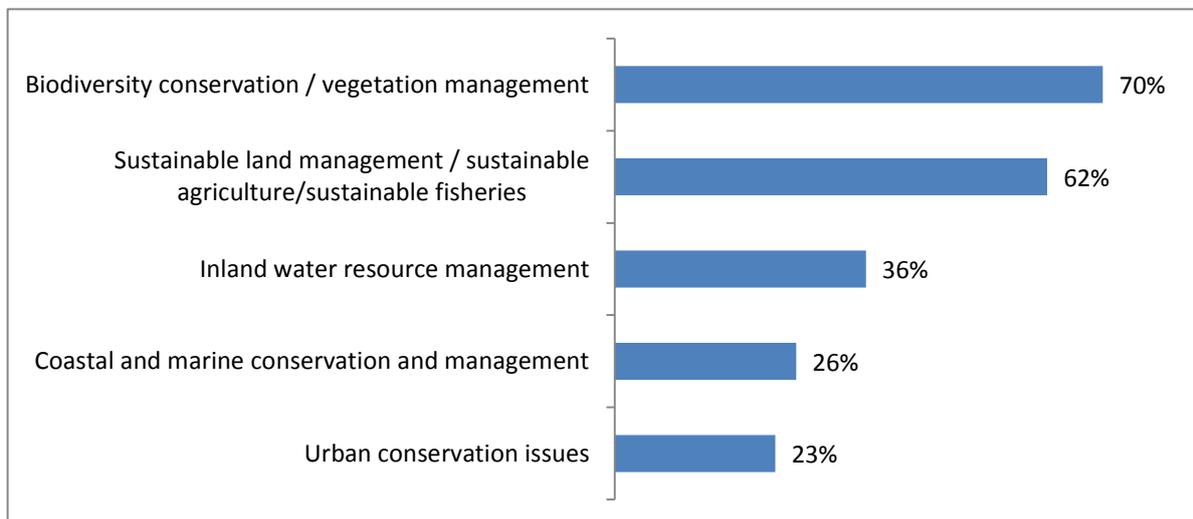


Figure 4: Stakeholder organisation NRM focus

Relationship with the regional NRM organisation

Stakeholders identified four key ways in which they maintain a relationship with their regional NRM organisation (*Figure 5*). Most common was an ad hoc contribution and engagement in regional activities as well as benefiting from information and advice, engagement and advice being a key part of the relationship. Receiving funding and participating in formal engagement activities (such as advisory boards) were also important ways in which the stakeholders involved in the survey were involved with the regional organisation.

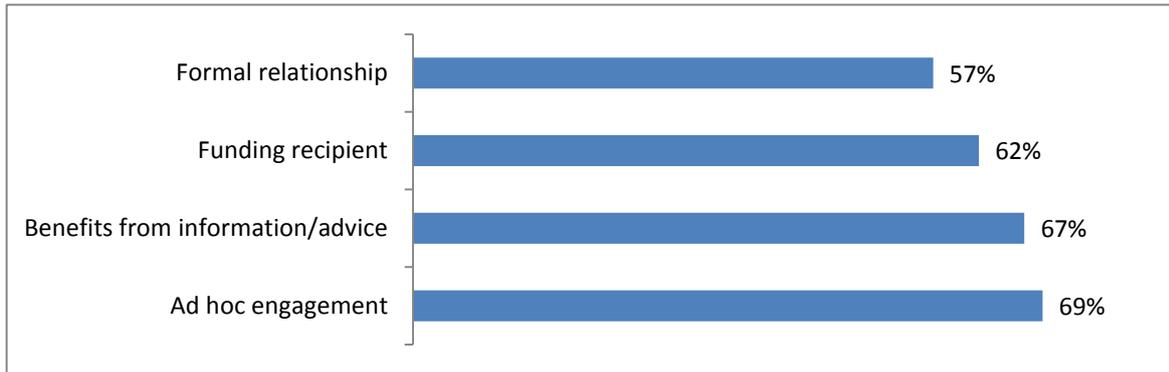


Figure 5: Nature of stakeholder relationships with their regional NRM organisation

Funding

The survey confirms the importance of Caring for Our Country funding to the operation of natural resource management at a regional level (Figure 6). Across the sample, 68% of the stakeholders interviewed reported they had sought funding from the program. Stakeholders from metropolitan regions were less likely to have sought investment, with just over half (54%) of the metropolitan groups reporting they had made an attempt to secure investment.

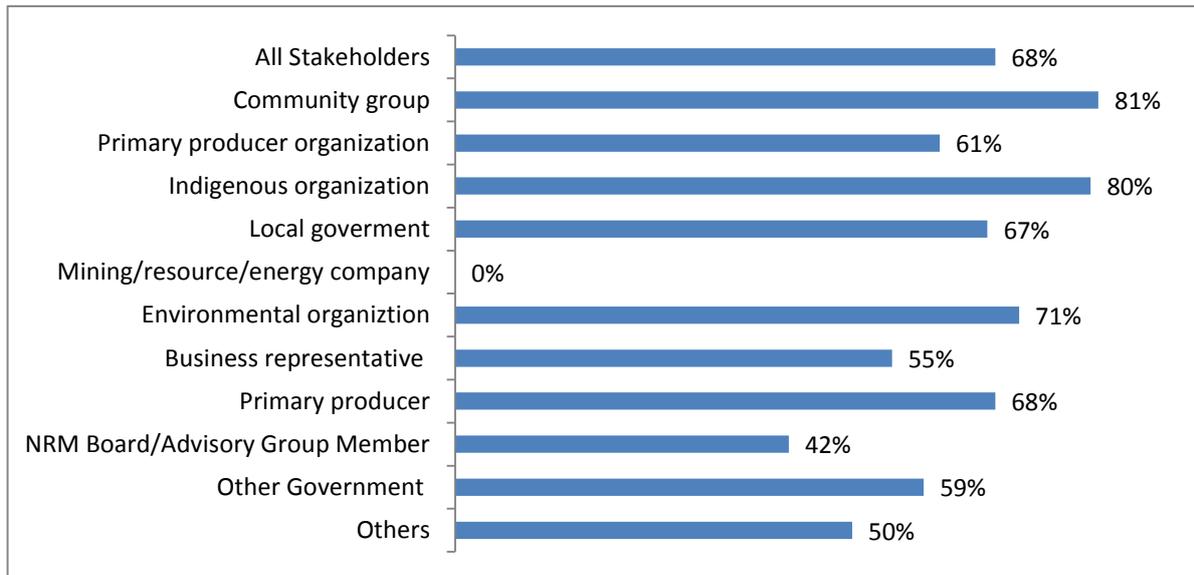


Figure 6: Frequency of Caring for Our Country Funding Applications

2. Community Skills Knowledge and Engagement in Regional Natural Resource Management

Overview

This chapter briefly outlines the policy and Program context for the report including the four Caring for our Country outcomes which underpin Australian Government investment in regional CSKE.

The scope of the natural resource management challenge for Australia is vast. To meet this challenge, as well as government action, Australia needs communities and individuals to be working towards this goal. Better coordinating and aligning community efforts to what is understood to be the most effective management systems and approaches in different contexts also helps to improve the likelihood that long-term policy goals will be achieved.

In some parts of the landscape government can directly manage resources for particular outcomes through the national reserve system and key threatening processes such as land clearing are now highly regulated. But beyond the national reserve system and the environmental regulatory framework lies a host of management issues that require or can only be subject to less direct intervention.

Alongside direct funding of strategic management activities and national and regional NRM planning, a key response by government has been to seek to build the capacity of resource managers to contribute to landscape scale outcomes. This has often been through skill and knowledge development and by engaging them in wider regional and national discussions about NRM. This effort has its roots in agricultural extension and the beginning of the community driven Landcare movement in the 1990s.

A fundamental innovation in NRM and CSKE policy and programs has been the development of regional NRM planning and management structures in the early years of the new millennium. These regional NRM organisations have assumed a key role in identifying and resolving NRM issues, including those related to CSKE. Their positioning between government and on-ground community/individually-driven NRM provides regional NRM organisations with a competitive advantage in NRM investment and CSKE activities compared to local and national actors. Partnerships with these organisations remains an important component of the Australian Government NRM investment strategy.

In a broader sense, targeted investment in CSKE will reap significant returns if it successfully motivates local people to look after their environment and ensures they adopt appropriate methods of doing so. The benefits that CSKE can provide to Australian communities are substantial. Amongst other things, CSKE can:

- Increase in the quality of policies developed;
- Promote stronger social capital and social cohesion;
- Increase legitimacy;
- Create a sense of belonging in the community;
- Empower individuals;

- Encourage outcomes which are more proactive;
- Allow a diversity of voices to be heard;
- Harness local knowledge;
- Increase motivation to act; and
- Improve the quality and effectiveness of actions taken.²

Successful implementation of CSKE strategies fosters relationships and support for the programs, helping to ensure the initiative’s enduring success.

Caring for Our Country and Community Skills, Knowledge and Engagement

The Caring for our Country Program seeks to achieve an environment that is healthy, better protected, well-managed, resilient, providing essential ecosystem services in a changing climate.³ The program is an important way of supporting farmers, land managers and community groups make a real difference to the environment. The long-term projection for improving CSKE under Caring for our Country is:

An informed Australian community that supports, and is effectively and actively engaged in, activities to promote our environment and sustainably manage our natural resources.

In the first five years of the program (from 2008-2013), \$2.25 billion will be invested through Caring for our Country to promote improved strategic outcomes across six national priority areas (see Figure 7).

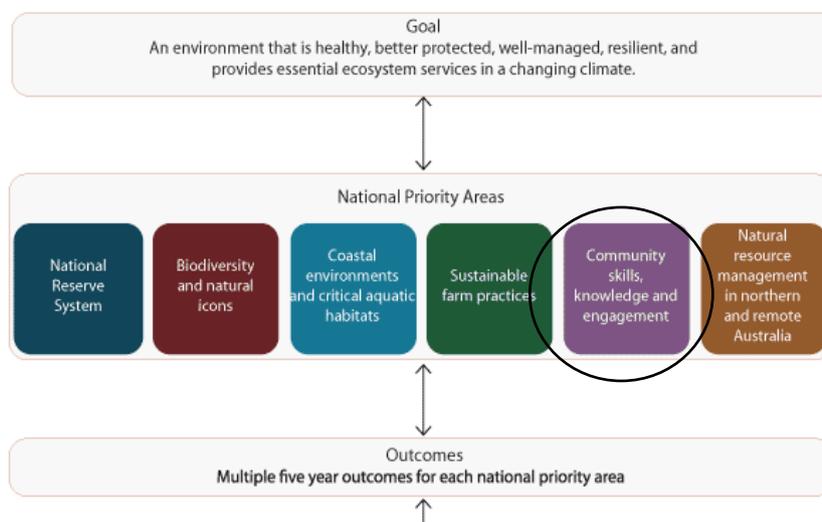


Figure 7 Caring for Our Country National Priority Areas⁴

The government is currently supporting CSKE through dual investment strategies where applicants seeking support for community skills knowledge and engagement must be able to

² Queensland Department of Communities 2005, Engaging Queenslanders: An introduction to community engagement.

³ Caring for our Country Outcomes 2008–2013.

⁴ Source: <http://www.nrm.gov.au/about/caring/index.html> Accessed: 30th May 2011

explain how the proposed activities will contribute to other targets. This approach is designed to ensure that CSKE activities contribute directly to achieving on-ground change.

This report reviews how the Australian government is tracking in meeting these outcomes for CSKE from investment in regional NRM organisations. The focus of this report concerns the strategic areas of Community Skills, Knowledge and Engagement (CSKE). The engagement of Australian communities is paramount in achieving Natural Resource Management (NRM) objectives. This is because Australia's progress towards a healthier environment depends on the collective actions of many individuals, groups and communities.⁵

Between 2008-2013, there are four specific goals relating to CSKE which are outlined below.

Caring for Our Country goals for Community Skills Knowledge and Engagement (2008 to 2013):

1. Improve the access to knowledge and skills of urban and regional communities in managing natural resources sustainably and helping protect the environment.
2. Increase the engagement and participation rates of urban and regional communities in activities to manage natural resources and to help protect the environment.
3. Position all regional natural resource management organisations to deliver best practice landscape conservation and sustainable land use planning to communities and land managers within their regions.
4. Ensure the continued use, support, and reinvigoration of traditional ecological knowledge to underpin biodiversity conservation.

As part of the Caring for Our Country Program, the Australian Government has provided an annual total base level allocation of \$138 million to the 56 Natural Resource Management (NRM) regions in Australia (*Figure 8*). The 56 NRM bodies work across Australia in partnership with stakeholders including landholders, farmers, community group (including landcare groups), non-governmental organisations and indigenous organisations.

Regional bodies are essential in providing support and access to knowledge and skills for stakeholders to ensure that the environment is protected at a grassroots level. The accessible scale of regional bodies is conducive to enabling quality community engagement. Furthermore, regional delivery can improve coordination and integration across structures, often acting as a bridge between higher levels of government and the local communities.⁶ The important role that NRM bodies play at the interface of delivery of Caring for Our Country means that it is vital to ensure that these bodies are operating as effectively and efficiently as possible.

⁵ <http://www.nrm.gov.au/about/caring/community.html>

⁶ Robins, Lisa and Dovers, Stephen. Community-based NRM boards of management: are they up to the task? [online]. *Australian Journal of Environmental Management*, v.14, no.2, June 2007: 111-122.

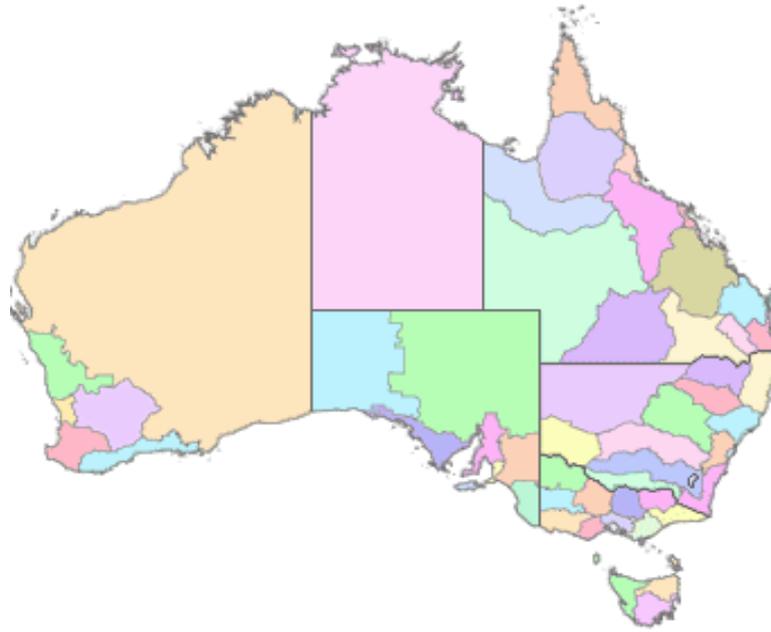


Figure 8 Map identifying the boundaries for the 56 NRM bodies in Australia⁷

⁷ Source: <http://www.nrm.gov.au/nrm/region.html>

3. Stakeholder Needs and Preferences

Overview

Overall, the results show that regional NRM organisations have become the most important source of knowledge and skills for stakeholder organisations. This is an important finding as it shows the success of the strategy being pursued by the Australian Government of investing in partnerships with regional NRM organisations to deliver CSKE outcomes.

Stakeholder communication channel preferences continue to be for a mixture of group or personal interaction supported by email driven information. This preference for personal and group interaction aligns closely to the services usually offered to stakeholders by regional NRM organisations. Social networking and online forums remain emergent and are only important for a small group of stakeholders; this may grow over time as these forms of communication become more established in the NRM community.

Examples of the information needs of stakeholders were collected through the survey. The diversity of examples provided by stakeholders emphasises the range of individual and local issues that need to be met by the national CSKE effort. Stakeholders draw on a range of different sources and people to meet their specific information needs and will access different information providers depending on the issue they are engaged in.

Effective communication underpins the success of CSKE and the improvement of natural resource management practices. Achieving influential communication means reaching a target audience using a combination of the right information, in the right format from the right source. The translation of information and the use of intermediaries can be essential strategies in successfully gaining people's attention and influencing their behaviour.

As well as examining the quality of the relationship between stakeholders and regional NRM organisations, the survey asked stakeholders a series of questions about where they source information and knowledge to improve their NRM and what has been most influential for them in their recent practice.

These questions were asked at the beginning of the interview before the stakeholder's relationship with their regional organisation was discussed to avoid biasing the responses by emphasising the project's interest in this relationship. This data therefore represents the organisations' unprompted views on what sources of information are most important.

The results provide an understanding of which groups are most influential in CSKE. It also provides information that can be used to refine national communication and engagement strategies to target the sources that are most influential with different target groups.

Sources of Knowledge and Skills

Stakeholders were asked to nominate up to eight important sources of information that they particularly value in solving NRM issues. They were then asked a series of questions to identify which source was most influential in knowledge and in practice.

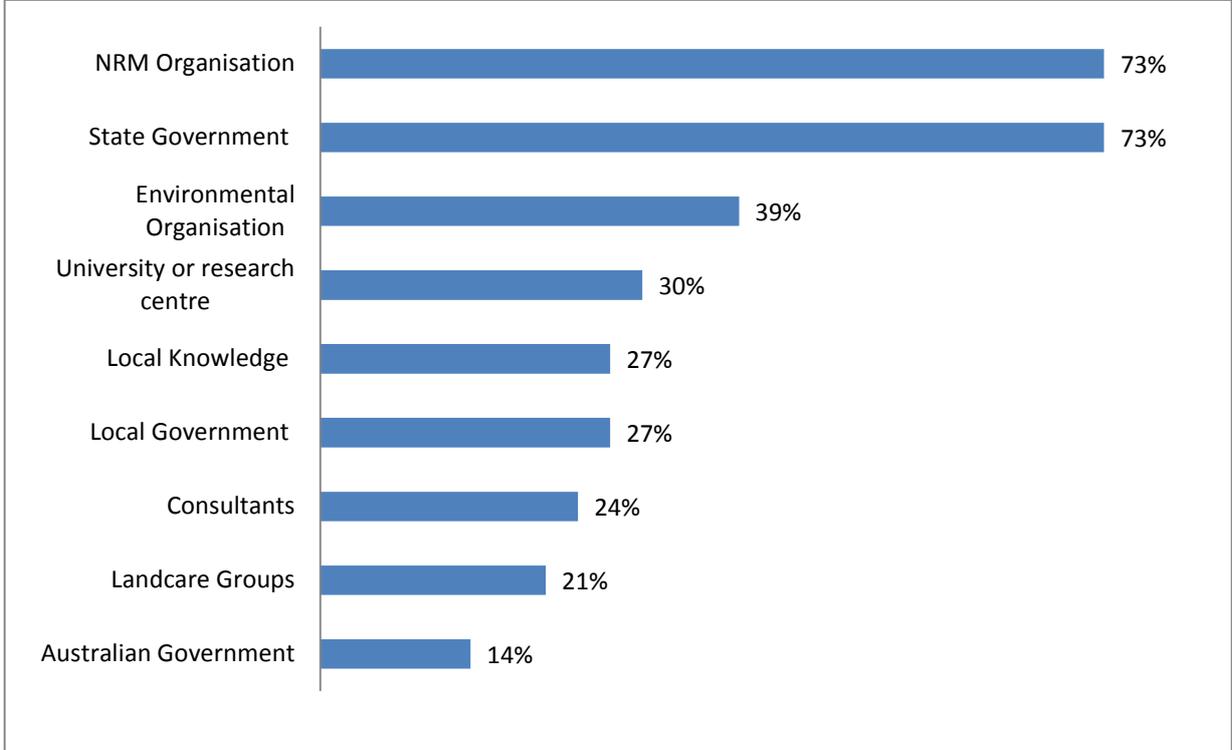


Figure 9 Organisations from which stakeholders usually source knowledge

A total of sixteen different sources were mentioned by respondents. Three quarters of respondents identified their regional NRM organisation and/or the state government in nominating their eight most important sources. The results suggest that these two sources are the most common point for stakeholders to seek NRM information (Figure 9). The Australian Government was mentioned by 14% of stakeholders as an important source.

The survey then explored a number of potential characteristics of these information sources to identify some of the drivers of importance amongst the eight information sources nominated by stakeholders. This included asking stakeholders to identify which information source they found consistently interesting and relevant; exciting; credible; and gave the most assistance in making a positive difference to NRM.

The overall pattern of responses remained consistent for each of these drivers with regional organisations and state governments being the most commonly mentioned for each factor (Figure 10). State governments were slightly more often mentioned as a credible source, while NRM organisations were mentioned more frequently than state governments for each of the other three categories.

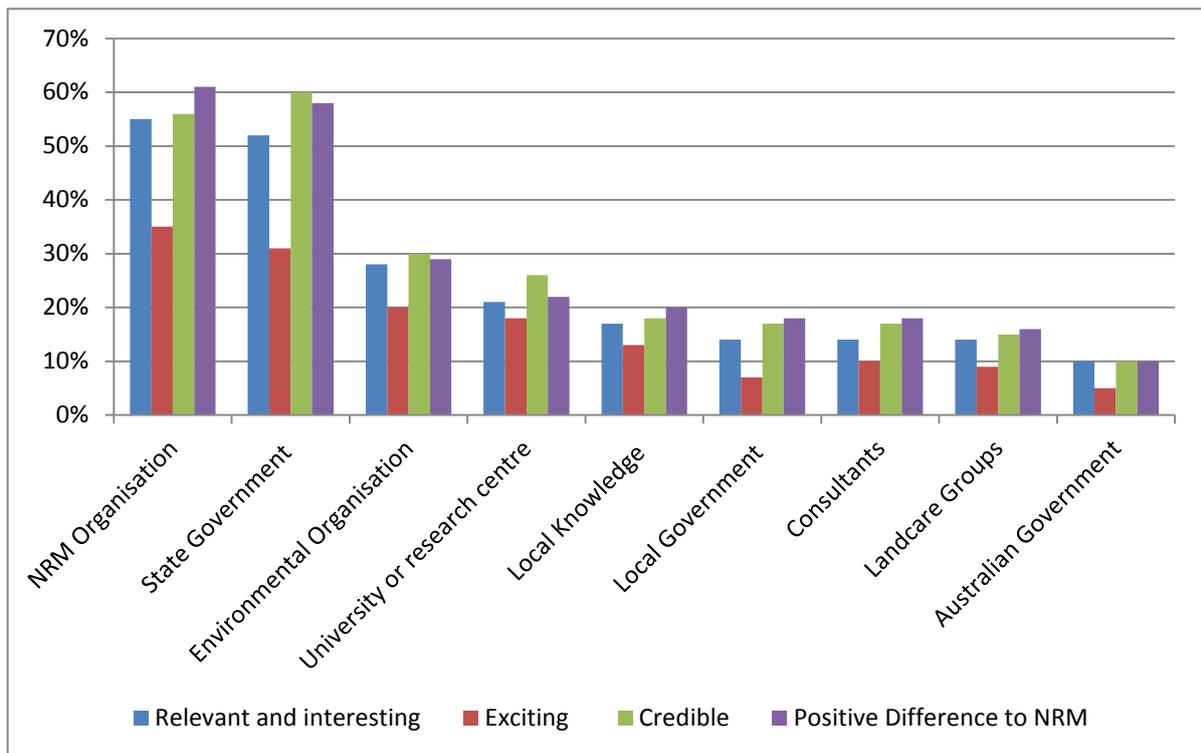


Figure 10: Attributes of most important sources of knowledge in improving NRM.

Stakeholders were also asked to identify the most important source of information for understanding NRM issues. In responding, many people suggested that it was too difficult to identify one most important source of knowledge because people rely on a group of equally important information sources to meet the diversity of needs that arise in their NRM. However in making a choice, the most common choice was again regional NRM organisations, with nearly one-third of stakeholders identifying this as their most important source of NRM information (Figure 11).

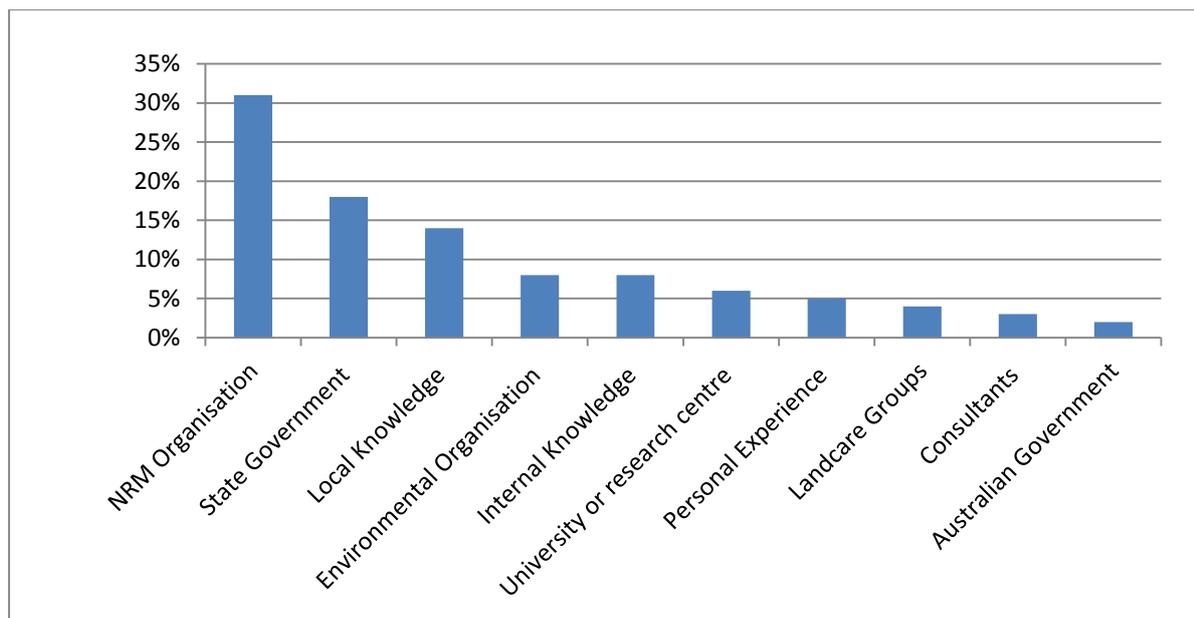


Figure 11 Most important source of knowledge for understanding NRM issues

The results were similar when stakeholders were asked about their most important source for information to improve their NRM practice. Regional NRM organisations were again cited by about one-third of stakeholders as the most important source while state governments were nominated by a nearly quarter of stakeholders, a stronger result than for NRM information (Figure 12).

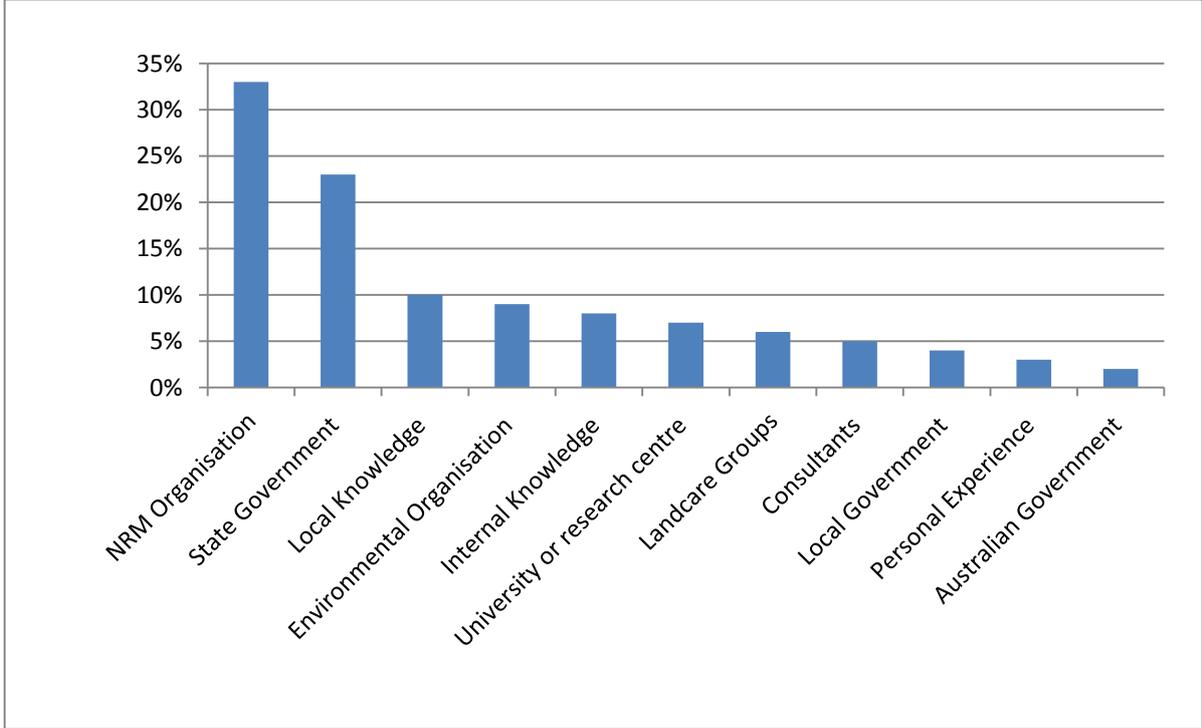


Figure 12: Most important source for improving NRM practices

Taken together, the results show that regional NRM organisations and state governments are the most important sources of NRM knowledge for regional stakeholder organisations. The results show this to be consistent across a range of attributes and for both information on issues and practices.

Important Communication Channels

Stakeholders were also asked to rate the relative importance of different communication channels as part of the discussion about information and knowledge. In addition to responding to this specific question, many stakeholders identified their general preferences for different communication channels in their response to the questions about information sources.

Figure 13 provides the summary of responses across the stakeholder sample. This data indicates that a preference for more traditional methods of communication and skills dissemination compared to emerging methods such as online forum and social networking sites. Key preferences are for a combination of group information sessions, email newsletter and one-on-one advice. This pattern of key preferences is consistent across the different types of organisations and the different issues that stakeholders are focussed upon.

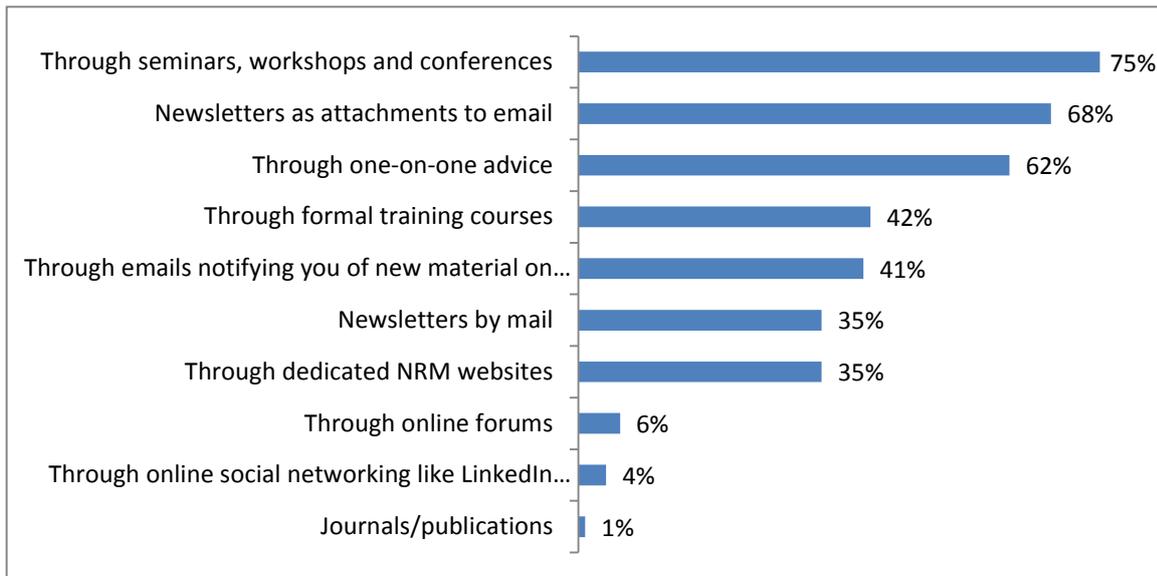


Figure 13: Stakeholders preferred communication channels

The response pattern suggests that the effective use of email is crucial to communicating cost effectively and regularly with NRM stakeholder organisations. Other cost effective approaches such as websites and forums can play a support role but may be less influential if used in isolation. A comprehensive information approach will include a mixture of the preferred approaches.

The mention of communication channels within important sources of information confirms these general preferences. In these responses, one-on-one advice and training sessions were most often cited, suggesting a preference for personalised interaction on NRM issues where possible.

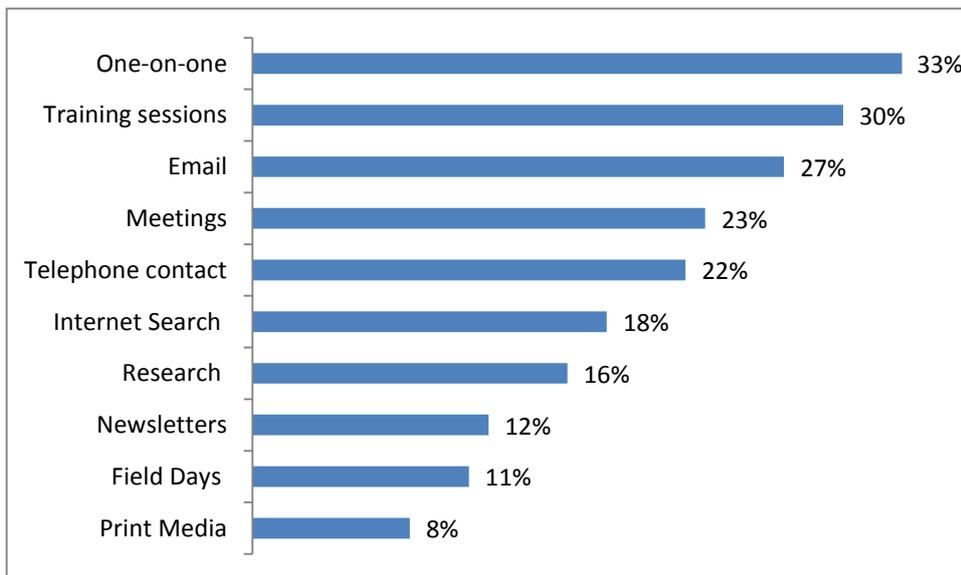


Figure 14 Communication channel preferences derived from mentions of channels in response to question about eight most important sources

Some preferences are driven by a particular group's interest in NRM. For example, demand for formal training in NRM issues is likely to be greatest from those organisations that are more focussed on NRM. Figure 15 shows a clear trend of declining interest in formal training as the focus on NRM declines.

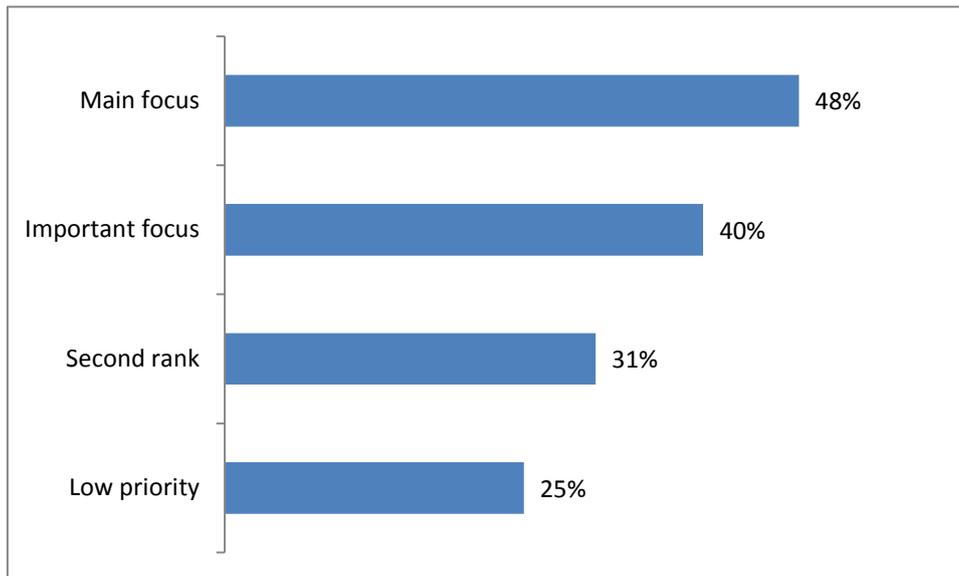


Figure 15: Preference for training compared to organisational focus on NRM

For those organisations that list NRM as a low priority, impersonal channels such as email were preferred to more time consuming and personal channels such as meetings, training or one-on-one advice.

This result is not surprising if these organisations are looking for more time and cost effective ways to access NRM information alongside other sources of information that match the organisations higher priorities.

Examples of Practice Change

In finishing the discussion of preferences for receiving NRM information to develop stakeholder knowledge and skills, respondents were asked to identify a recent example where new knowledge and skills had led to an improvement in their natural resource management. The answer to this question provides an insight into the type of impacts that CSKE strategies are having within stakeholder groups.

The responses were categorised into six broad areas of improvement (*Figure 16*). These emphasise the diversity of information being exchanged in the system and the range of people and organisations involved which have a positive impact on NRM.

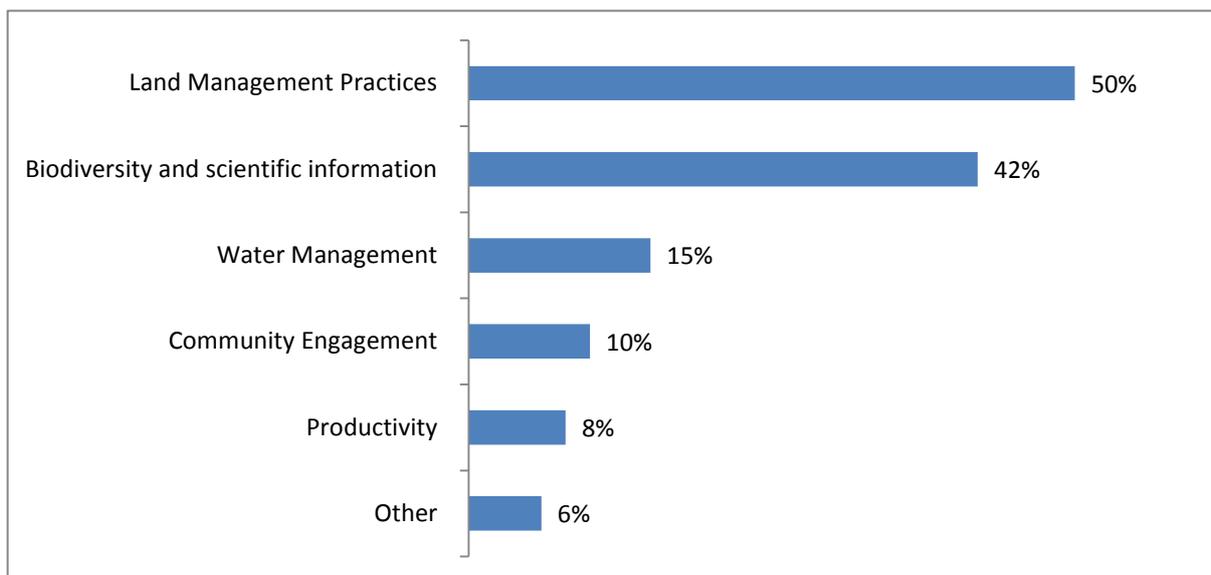


Figure 16: Areas of NRM where knowledge and skills has led to recent improvements for stakeholders

Half of the stakeholders identified an improvement to one aspect of their land management in response to this question. The responses included a diversity of examples, a sample of which are provided below:

- *The Murray Catchment Management Authority educated us on the importance of maintaining ground cover and encouraging a broad range of grass species;*
- *We developed a crop growing method to implement a soya bean crop in rotation to sugar cane to stop monoculture. This has created a new cash crop and put nitrogen back into the soil;*
- *Our local Land Care organised and ran a farm training field day including half a day on theoretical training in grazing management; and*
- *We took an elder out and we were talking about the skills of burning off. He said in the old days we used to have a set date not just anytime and from this knowledge, we will only burn off at certain times in the future.*

The second most commonly cited area of influence was via the acquisition of biodiversity or scientific information relevant to NRM:

- *Our local nursery has helped us a lot by telling us which varieties of plants are endemic to the area so that we can choose the right ones to plant in our regeneration project.*
- *We have been managing a bird roost which was set up with help from Wetlands Australia. They held a seminar which we went to and we learnt from their aerial photographs of patterned fens how to manage the roost.*
- *We have received help from local experts in using infra-red cameras to track fauna.*
- *Workshops discussing coral bleaching and how to assess it have been very helpful.*

Water management was also commonly mentioned by a smaller group of respondents with developing a better understanding of how systems work as a main theme. The responses

show a diversity of information was being used, from complex scientific modelling to traditional ecological knowledge:

- *We have developed a large flood model which can be utilized to research NRM issues such as changes in hydrology.*
- *The Catchment Authority has helped us gain new knowledge regarding environmental flows, and how this extra flow is going back into previously dry billabongs and lakes in the area.*
- *We have been consulting with a local Aboriginal tribe on how to implement their knowledge to manage waterways.*

Stakeholder organisations also valued information or collaboration on community engagement processes, given that many of them have their own constituency to engage and influence.

Some of the examples mentioned include:

- *Improving communication, information sharing and understanding the locals better to get different groups working together.*
- *We have learning programs for kids in cooperation with the Catchment Management Authority.*
- *WIRES, working in collaboration with the Cradle Coast NRM group are supporting us in conducting accredited training for wildlife volunteers. This is helping volunteers learn how to handle injured wildlife correctly.*

Examples of replies classified as other include:

- *We have been advised to sow our crops North and South because when the sun passes overhead, each plant has an equal amount of sunlight, which gives a 5% increase in yield.*
- *A Commonwealth Landcare officer spoke to us about Carbon Credits which has opened up more ideas on how to obtain funding.*

4. Regional CSKE Strategies

Overview

The findings from the national survey confirm that from the perspective of the people who work in regional NRM organisations, they mostly have processes in place to meet the basic requirements for effective CSKE. This includes:

- an approach to understanding stakeholders perspectives and needs;
- a strategy for how they will interact and engage with them;
- a range of staff and skills devoted to CSKE activities;
- a diversity of strategies for communicating and influencing stakeholder groups; and
- processes for reviewing and improving performance.

A central aim of the national survey was to document and compare key aspects of the organisational approaches to CSKE that are being delivered at a regional level. These approaches underpin the ability of regional NRM organisations to deliver influential CSKE investments over time. The effectiveness of the processes and structures of NRM bodies are crucial to ensuring the delivery of the CSKE outcomes.

This section provides details of the strategies that NRM bodies commonly use in achieving its CSKE aims. The survey sought information regarding:

- the ways in which organisations develop an understanding of stakeholder needs;
- the structure of the organisation;
- whether the organisation has a stakeholder engagement strategy and how the organisation uses this strategy;
- staffing capacities;
- common methods of engagement; and
- mechanisms for review and improvement of CSKE activities over time.

The information provided complements the detailed case studies of regional approaches and strategies outlined in the companion report. More detailed analysis of how these organisational characteristics flow through to performance are described in the companion policy analysis report.

Understanding and Prioritising Engagement with Regional Stakeholders

The effectiveness of community, skills, knowledge and engagement is driven by an understanding of the organisations and people who are targeted for engagement and knowledge and skill development. Understanding stakeholders enables an organisation to

target activities within the wider stakeholder group and to design strategies that have the best chance of both reaching and influencing the target audience.

Staff who participated in the national survey were asked to identify the types of stakeholders their organisation most commonly engages with as part of their engagement activities.

Figure 17 provides a summary of the types of stakeholders who regions are most likely to engage.

The data indicates that five groups are the key target of regional CSKE activities:

- community groups including 'care' organisations;
- farmers and landowners;
- indigenous organisations;
- local councils; and
- organisations representing business and environmental interests.

These groups also represent the types of stakeholders who are most commonly directly engaged in natural resource management activities or are capable of influencing those who are engaged.

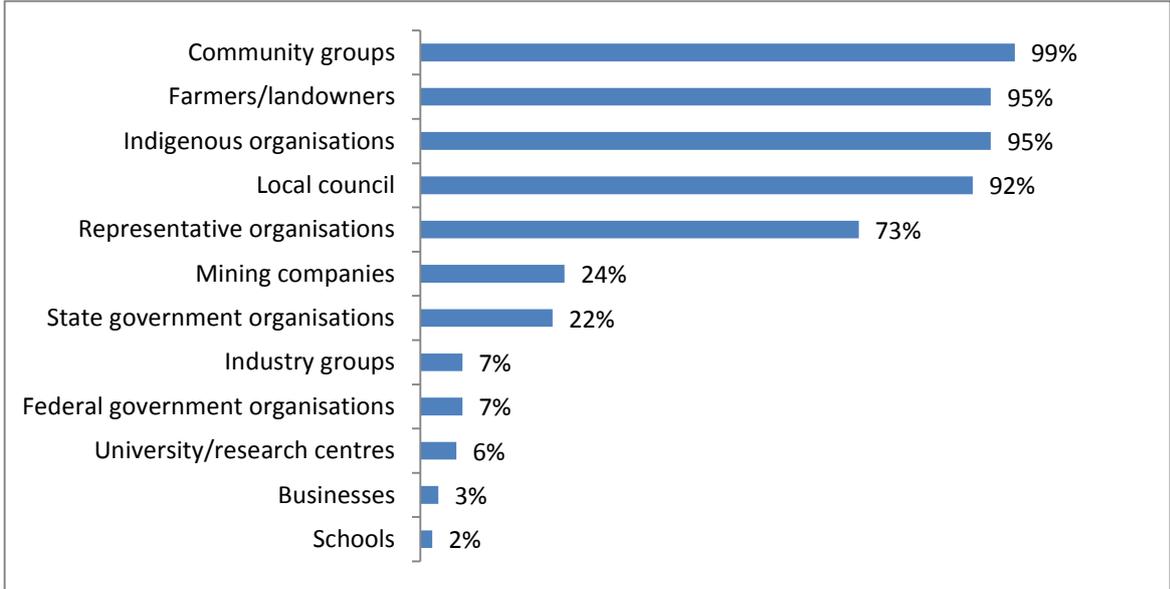


Figure 17: Stakeholder groups most commonly engaged by regional NRM organisations

When asked to confirm which groups were most important to decision-making, knowledge and skill development, community groups (including Landcare groups) as well as farmers/landowners were clearly identified as the key stakeholders for regional natural resource management organisations (Figure 18). While local councils and representative organisations were usually engaged, they were often not seen as the most important to achieving CSKE outcomes.

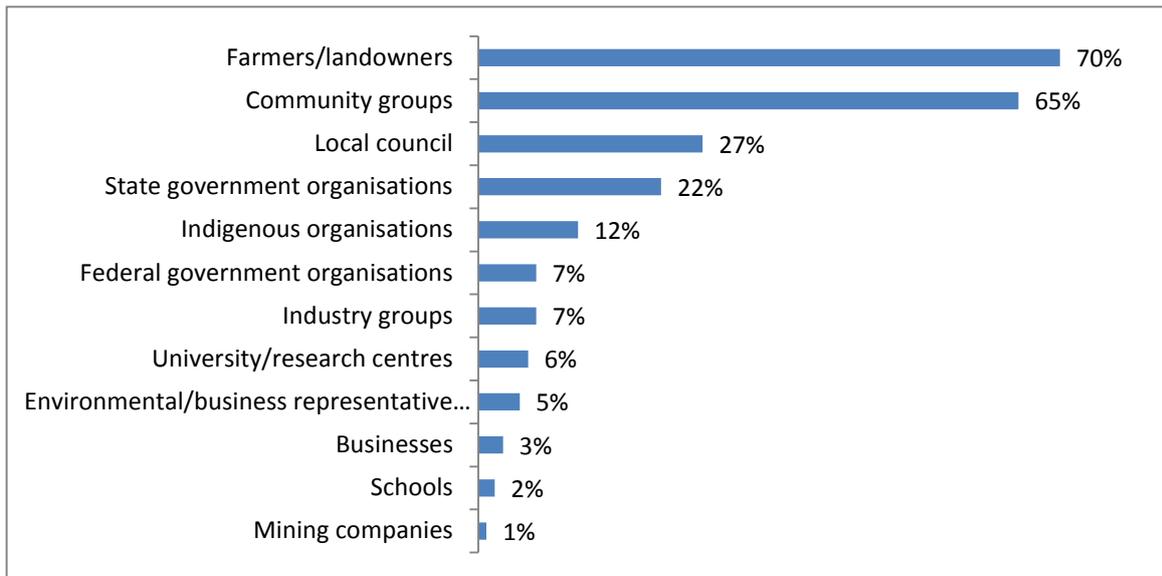


Figure 18: Most important stakeholders for regional NRM staff engagement

In maintaining an understanding of these key groups of stakeholders, regional NRM organisations use a variety of strategies (Figure 19). Nearly all staff rely on the activities of internal staff whose role is to undertake engagement and communicate information back to the organisation. Most also maintain formal consultative structures such as advisory groups and draw on their existing knowledge and personal networks.

Formal and less people-based approaches are not as widely used. A majority of staff use systematic processes for targeting engagement activities and information from regular formal surveys but these are less likely to be a part of a region's effort to understand stakeholders.



Figure 19: Approaches for understanding stakeholders

The use of stakeholder surveys to gain an objective view of stakeholder perceptions and needs is important in developing a balanced knowledge of stakeholder issues. Surveys can also minimise biases that can develop from relying too heavily on limited networks or engagement with people who are close to the region. However surveys are the method least likely to be employed. At a state level, Queensland and NSW are more likely to be using this approach, whereas staff from Victoria are the least likely to cite regular survey work as a source of information for understanding their stakeholders (*Figure 20*).

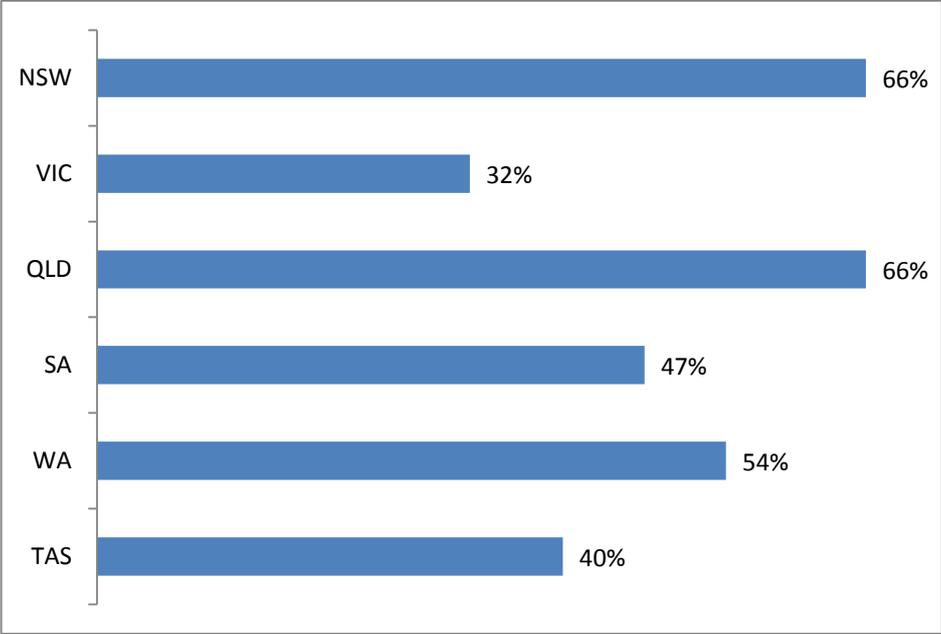


Figure 20: Use of stakeholder surveys

Organisation Strategy

Creating a strategy for stakeholder engagement provides the opportunity for organisations to bring together their knowledge of stakeholders and their organisational objectives. This allows an organisation to identify how it will seek to develop relationships and influence.

A strategy typically includes the documenting of priorities for skills, knowledge and engagement and development of tailored strategies for specific stakeholder groups. The benefits include ensuring everyone in the organisation has a clear understanding of how and why the organisation is engaging with particular groups and that a coherent approach is implemented over time.

The survey results suggest that most regional NRM organisations have a stakeholder strategy in place. Nearly three quarters of staff interviewed reported that their organisation had documented a stakeholder strategy to guide CSKE activities (*Figure 21*). Organisations in Queensland and South Australia were the least likely to have a strategy in place and also had the largest group of staff who were unsure about the existence of a strategy.

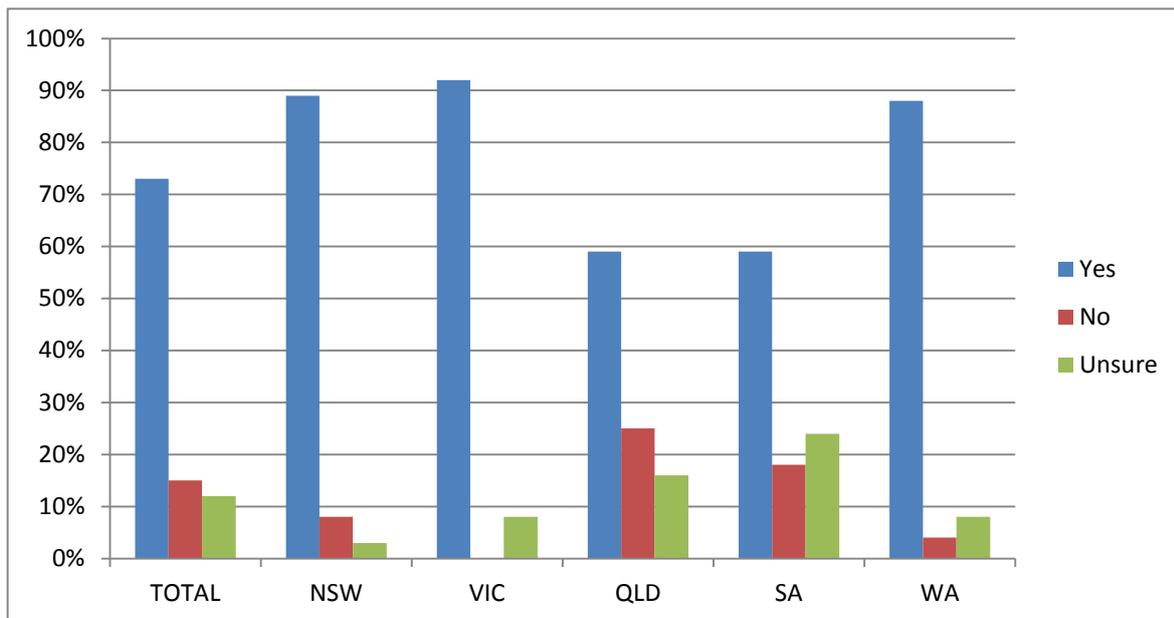


Figure 21: Does the organisation have a stakeholder engagement strategy

Staff who indicated they worked under a strategic approach were also asked about the influence of the strategy on decision-making and operations. Staff generally agreed that the strategy did influence the way the organisation did business (Figure 22).

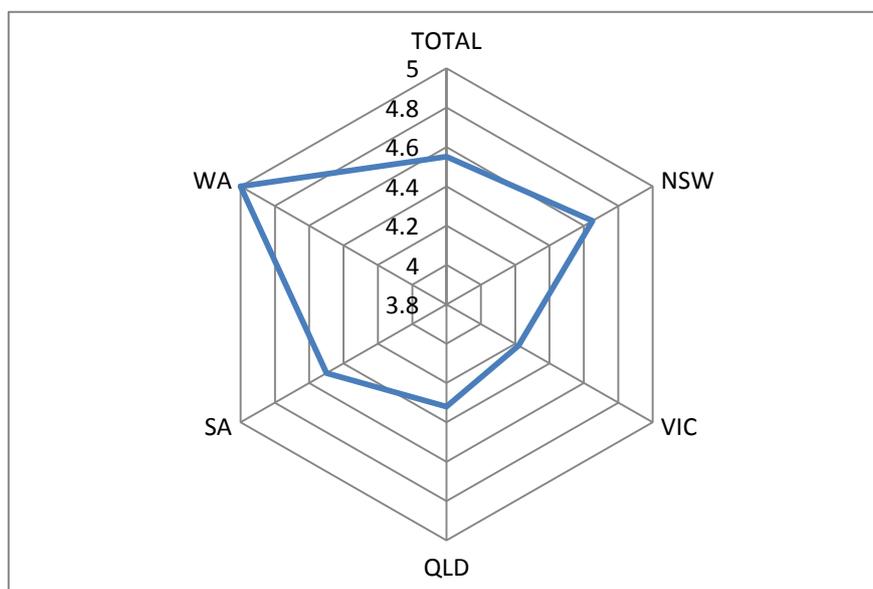


Figure 22: Extent to which staff agree that the stakeholder strategy guides decision-making and operational activities (mean responses, rating 1 to 5)

Staff Capacity

In fulfilling its goals, an organisation needs to apply the right mix of staff skill-sets and time to achieve effective CSKE outcomes. The staffing capacity of an NRM region for CSKE purposes reflects whether CSKE is a high priority within the region, and whether the region has adequate resources to fulfil its functions.

The survey suggests that organisations involve more staff in knowledge and skill development than they do in engagement activities. While 62% of staff believed that more than 50% of people in their organisation had responsibility for the development of knowledge and skills for stakeholders, only 46% reported that half or more of the staff were involved in engaging stakeholders (Figure 23).

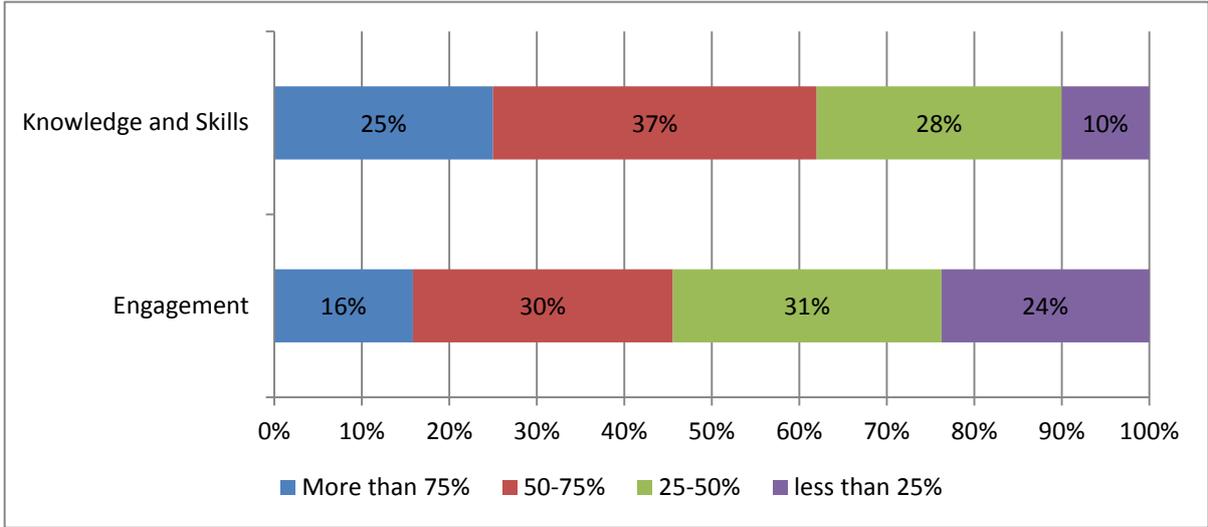


Figure 23: The extent of staff responsibility for skills and knowledge compared to responsibility for engagement

There was a notable variation between states with NSW and WA involving the highest proportion of staff in engagement activities, while Victoria mostly had less than half of staff assuming **some responsibility** for engagement activities (Figure 24).

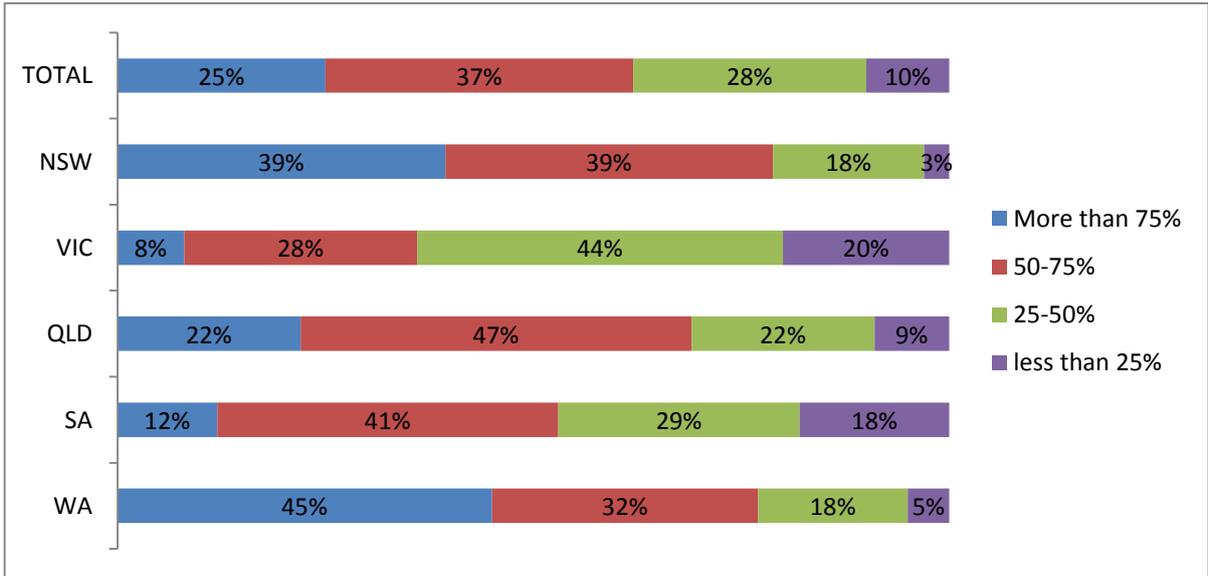


Figure 24: Proportion of staff involved in community engagement

Nearly all staff agreed that they had opportunities through the organisation to improve their own skills as CSKE practitioners. 92% of staff reported that training was available to improve their CSKE skills for the organisation. Confidence regarding the mix of skills also remains high amongst regional organisations. 91% of staff identified agreed that the right mix of people were engaged in CSKE, with a mean response of 4.79, slightly lower than the mean of 5.0 in the 2007 survey⁸. Importantly, most staff were confident in the organisations ability to translate technical information for stakeholders, a crucial component of successful CSKE.

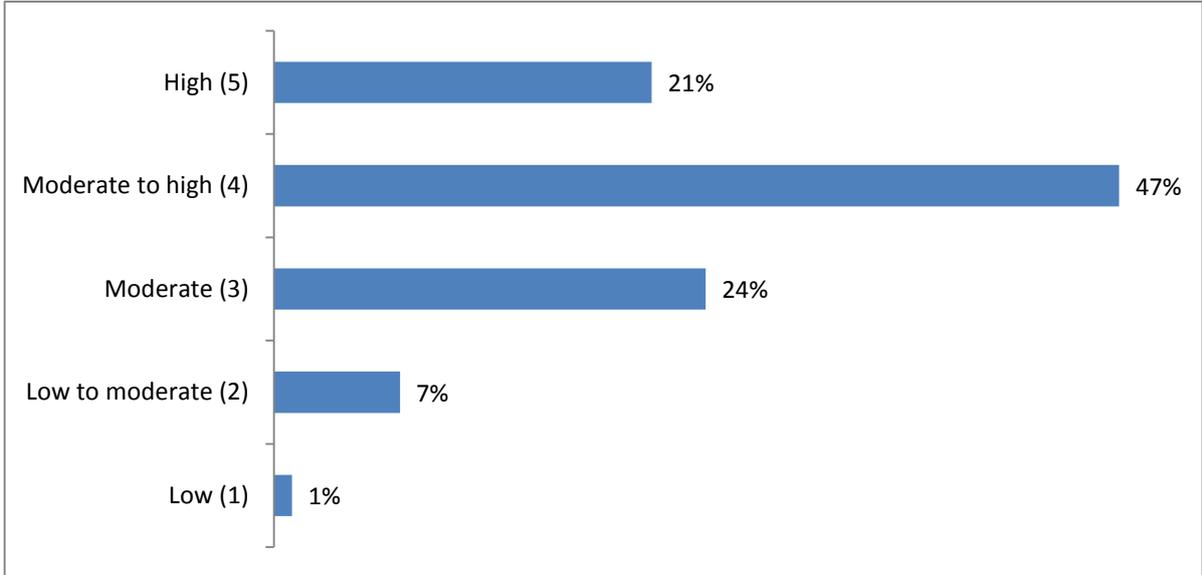


Figure 25: Perspectives on technical translation skills

The Role and Influence of Facilitators

Staff were also asked about the effectiveness of facilitators in increasing levels of awareness and participation amongst stakeholders. Nationally, around three quarters of staff interviewed were confident that facilitators were effective in both areas of influence (Figure 26).

In most states, staff were more likely to see facilitators as effective in raising awareness rather than increasing participation, with the exception of WA where this result was reversed. NSW and Victorian staff are less confident that facilitators are having a positive impact. The two states where regional organisations operate more independently from government (QLD and WA) were more confident about the effectiveness of facilitators.

In contrast, only 50% of staff in regions with major urban populations saw facilitators as being effective in facilitating participation. These regions were also more likely to have based their assessments on a process of formal review for facilitators (50%) than the total staff sample, where only 31% of staff identified that their perceptions of effectiveness were based on evidence from a review of facilitator performance.

⁸ Fenton p 31

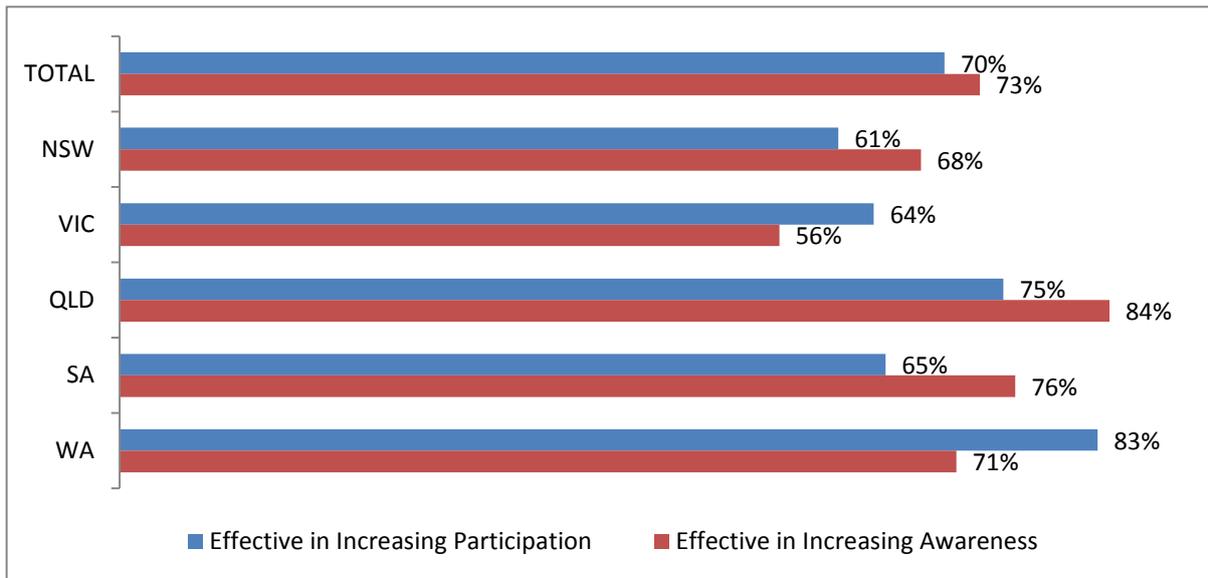


Figure 26 Staff perceptions of facilitator effectiveness

Implementation of CSKE Activities

There are a variety of ways for an NRM body to approach CSKE. Staff were asked to identify the kinds of approaches used by their organisations. Figure 27 summarises their responses to this question. The responses show that there are **four dominant approaches** commonly being employed by regional NRM organisations:

- information through websites and publications;
- training and workshops;
- one-on-one advice; and
- written advice in response to requests.

In addition to these common strategies, a range of other methods is used by particular regions including holding events, communicating through networks and collaborative approaches with other organisations.

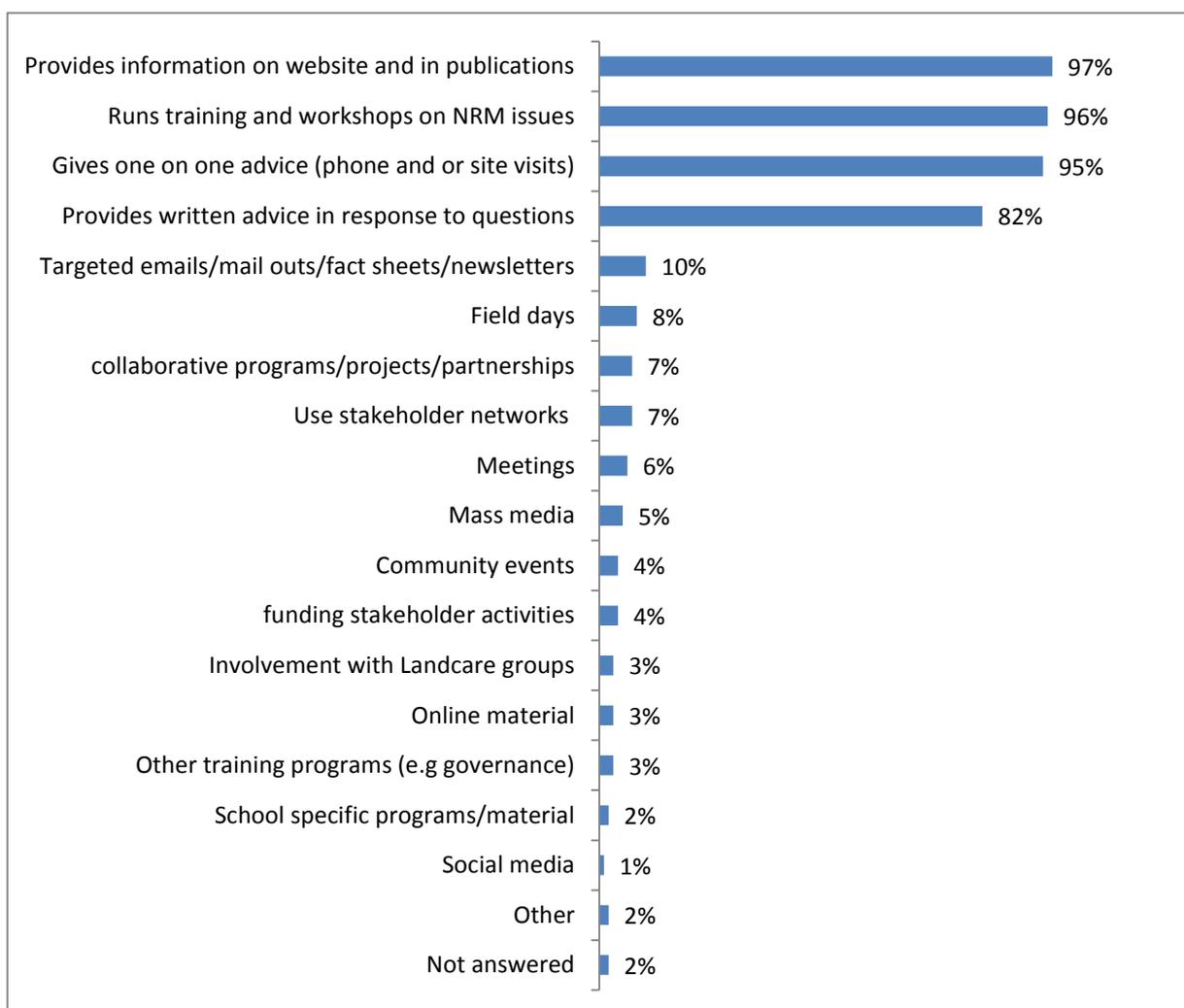


Figure 27: Approaches to provision of advisory services provided by regional organisations

The subjects upon which information and advice is most commonly provided by regions is described in Figure 28. Information on economic and social systems is the least likely

information to be provided, with most organisations concentrating on biophysical and management and planning issues. An exception to this concerns information on indigenous communities which is made available by most regional NRM organisations.

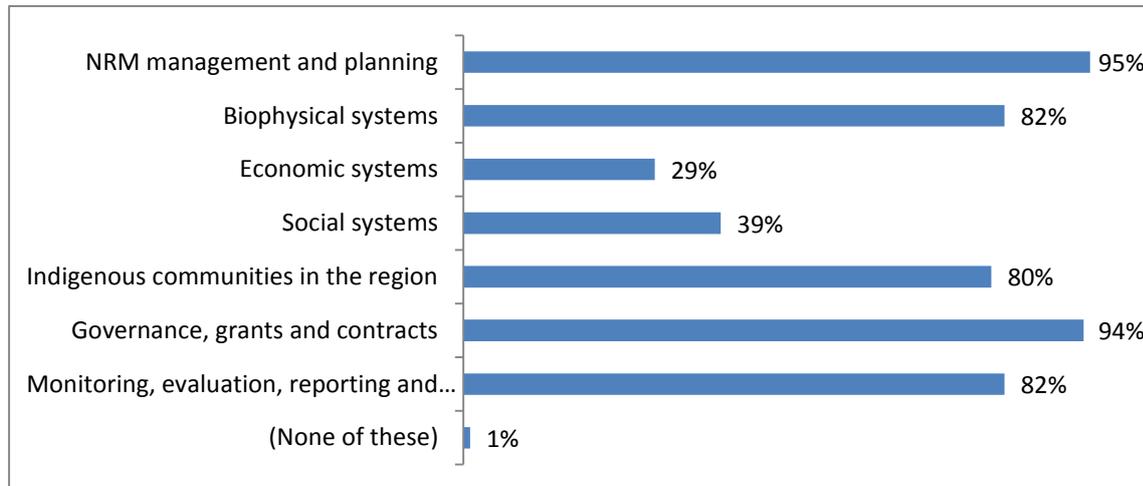


Figure 28: Types of information provided to stakeholders by regional NRM organisations

As well as providing advice and information directly to stakeholders, regional NRM organisations can enter into partnerships with other organisations that have common challenges or are more closely engaged with particular groups. Figure 29 identifies the current status of partnership approaches within regional NRM. Partnerships with government (state or federal) are the dominant approach used by nearly all organisations.

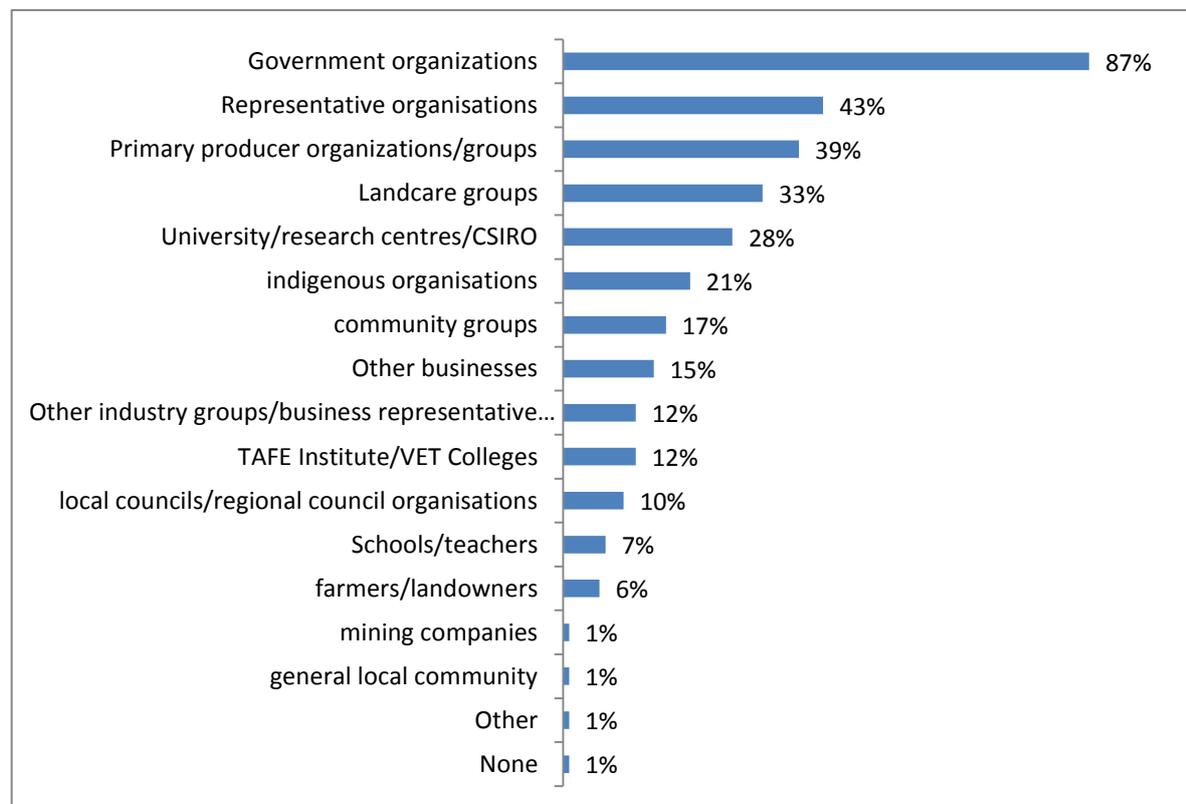


Figure 29: Partnerships for information dissemination

Evaluating Success

A thorough evaluation of stakeholder strategy and implementation allows an organisation to identify strategic opportunities for growth and improvement, and reinforce the benefits of continuing effective practice. The survey indicates that two thirds of organisations complete at least a partial evaluation (i.e. some evaluation has occurred but the interviewee does not consider it to be comprehensive) of their CSKE approach (*Figure 30*) with a majority of staff benefiting from evaluation in all states. South Australian and Victorian staff were the least likely to have completed a full evaluation process.

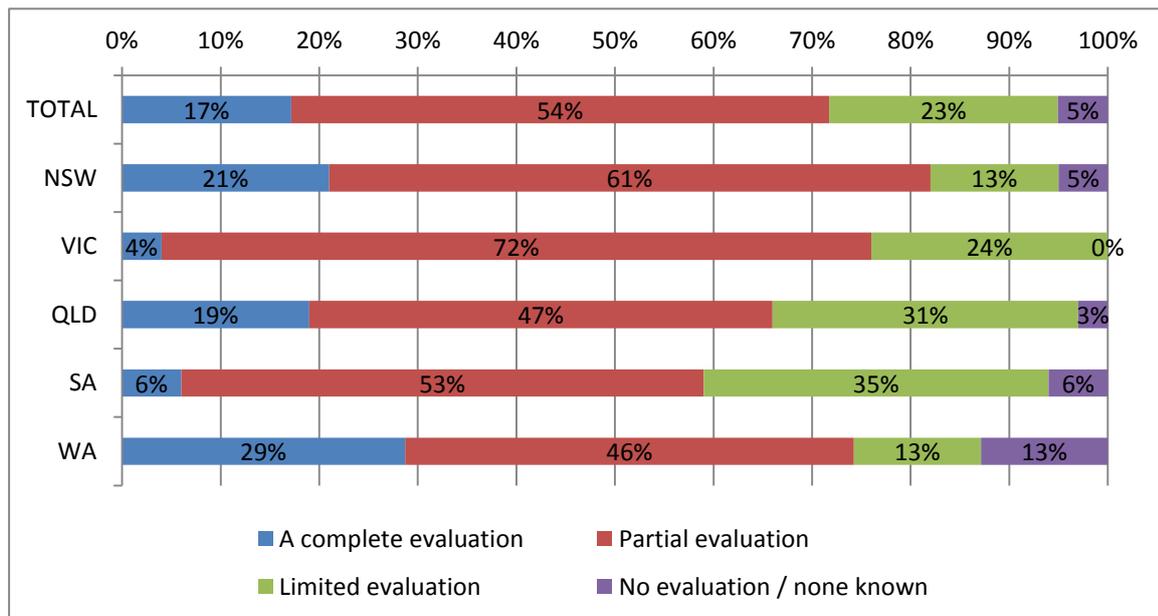


Figure 30: Evaluation of CSKE strategy

5. Progress against 5 year CSKE Outcomes

This chapter examines how these foundational organisational elements are being translated into influence and impact in CSKE that is aligned to national objectives.

The survey was designed to provide information that supports measurement of progress in meeting Caring for Our Country Program targets. This was achieved by using the survey process to ascertain the extent to which regional NRM organisations are providing valued knowledge and skills for NRM practitioners (CSKE Goal 1), engaging stakeholders in regional planning and decision-making (CSKE Goal 2) and maintaining strong relationships with organisations working to achieve practical improvement in NRM within their region (CSKE Goal 3).

Findings relevant to each of these goals are provided in this part of the report. Given the extent and scope of the national survey process, these findings provide a strong indication of the level of achievement currently being realised by regional NRM organisations.

Caring for Our Country goals for Community Skills Knowledge and Engagement (2008 to 2013):

1. Improve the access to knowledge and skills of urban and regional communities in managing natural resources sustainably and helping protect the environment.
2. Increase the engagement and participation rates of urban and regional communities in activities to manage natural resources and to help protect the environment.
3. Position all regional natural resource management organisations to deliver best practice landscape conservation and sustainable land use planning to communities and land managers within their regions.
4. Ensure the continued use, support, and reinvigoration of traditional ecological knowledge to underpin biodiversity conservation.

Evidence in Relation to CSKE Outcome One

Improve the access to knowledge and skills of urban and regional communities in managing natural resources sustainably and helping protect the environment.

Overview

The findings of the survey represent a strong result at the national level for regional NRM organisations in relation to this Caring for Our Country outcome.

The national survey suggests that regions have not only built a strong understanding of the knowledge and skills needs of stakeholder, but that they are also providing services that are used and valued by stakeholders. A significant majority of stakeholders find regions to be helpful in assisting them with resolving natural resource management issues and related challenges of planning, management and evaluation of NRM activities.

These findings, in combination with the identification of the significant importance of regions as a source of knowledge and skills for stakeholders, suggest that the regional base funding component of the CSKE investment strategy is providing a good return on investment in terms of reaching and positively influencing a diversity of stakeholders.

One of the primary five year outcomes for Caring for our Country is to improve the access to knowledge and skills of urban and regional communities in managing natural resources.

As part of this initiative, the Australian Government is seeking to provide information sessions on new technologies and sustainable farm practise to at least 30 per cent of land managers and farmers. Through Caring for our Country, the Australian Government is also seeking to provide community organisations with the opportunity to undertake community skills, knowledge and engagement activities, including through workshops, field days and communication initiatives.

Base funding to regional NRM organisations is one of the most important ways in which these activities are provided. This section examines not only the provision of these activities, but also the evidence identifying the overall effectiveness of the knowledge and skills services provided for stakeholders.

Effectiveness of Regional Knowledge and Skill Development

The provision of advice on natural resource management issues is an important role for regional NRM organisations in building skills and knowledge for regional NRM. Regional organisations should provide an accessible source of quality expertise for stakeholders seeking to improve their NRM.

Importance and demand

The survey confirms that there is significant demand for this service. Nearly all stakeholders rated access to new knowledge and skills as important to their NRM practice. On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being of little or no importance and 5 being highly important) a majority of stakeholders chose the highest rating.

Stakeholder judgments about the level of importance were related closely to the focus of the organisation on NRM. Those organisations that identified NRM as their main focus were nearly four times as likely to see new knowledge and skill development as highly important (*Figure 31*).

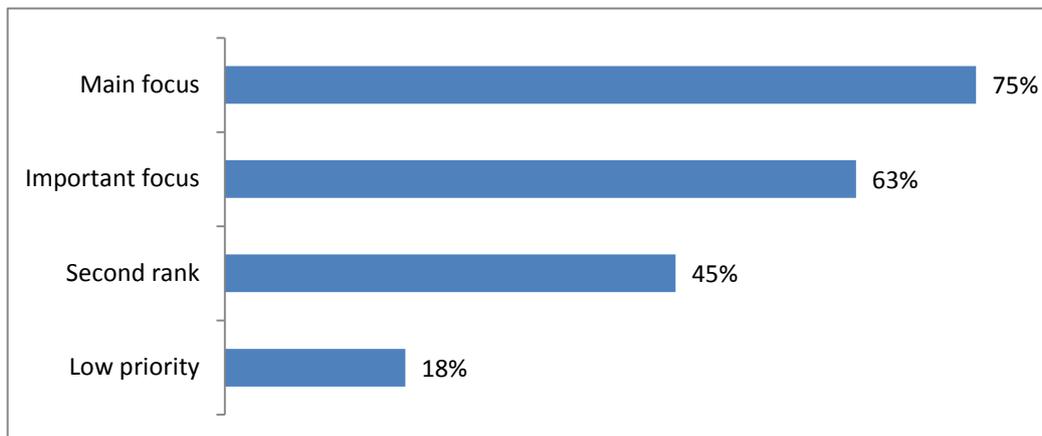


Figure 31: Agree that new knowledge and skills are highly important

To meet this demand, regional NRM organisations must understand stakeholder needs. The survey indicates that regions are generally confident that they have a good understanding of their stakeholder base. 82% of staff agreed that their organisation has a good understanding of the knowledge and skills needs of key stakeholders. Figure 32 identifies the reasons these staff gave for their confidence.

Close involvement and contact (i.e. maintaining a personal relationship with key stakeholders) was the main reason for staff having confidence that they understood what was needed by stakeholders in their region.

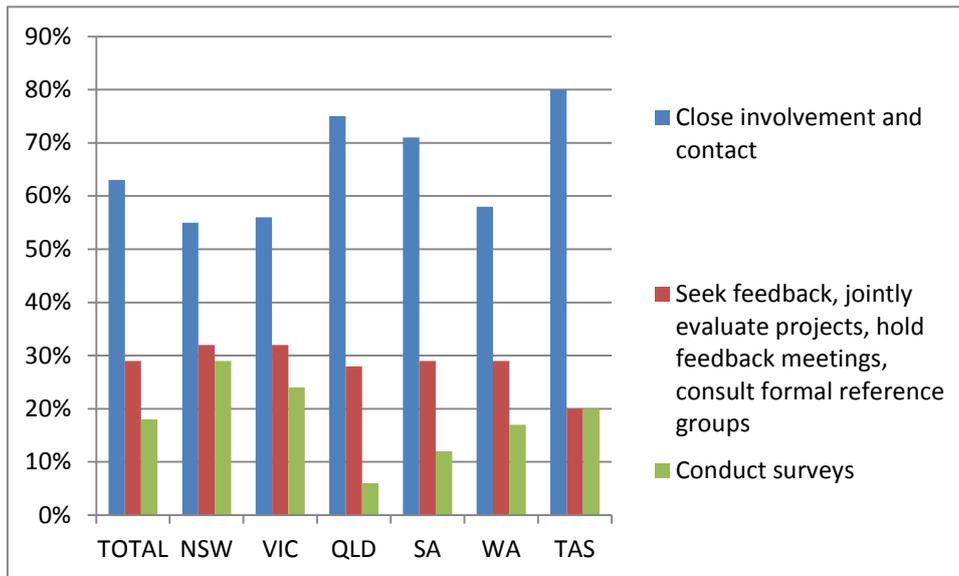


Figure 32: Basis for confidence of staff in understanding knowledge and skill needs

Regions are also experiencing strong demand for services. 24% of staff identified a moderate to high demand for their information and advisory services (Figure 33). Perceptions of demand were strongest in WA and Queensland and weakest in SA where no staff reported that they perceived a high demand for regional NRM organisation advisory services from amongst stakeholders.

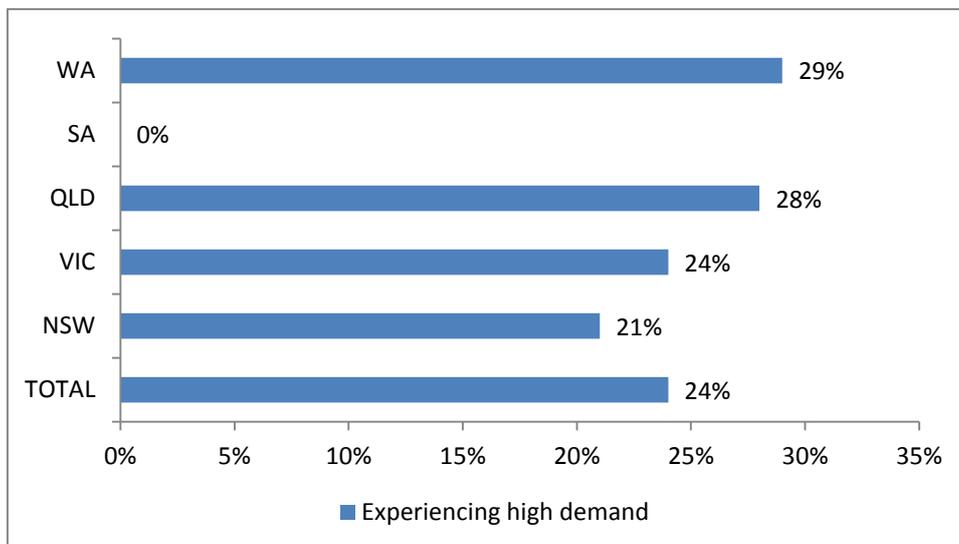


Figure 33: Proportion of staff who perceive a high demand for knowledge and skills services from stakeholders

As well as seeing significant demand for their services, on the whole staff are mostly confident of the level of influence that the region is achieving in meeting stakeholder knowledge and skills needs (Figure 34). Staff in Queensland and Western Australia were the most confident about the influence of their services, while South Australia and Victoria were much less likely to hold this view.

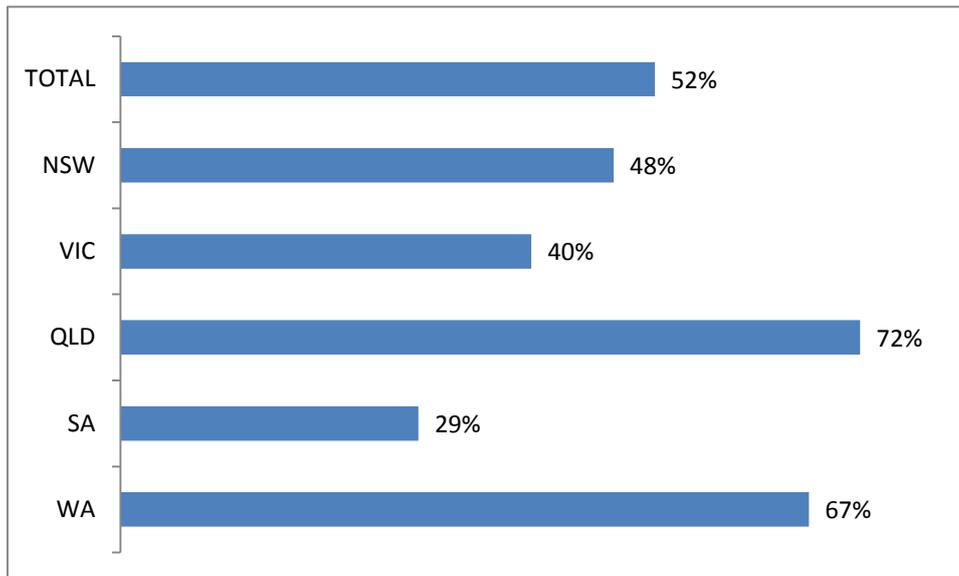


Figure 34: Percentage of staff who see their information and advisory services as being highly or moderately to highly influential

The stakeholder survey supports the positive perceptions held by staff about the performance of the regions in meeting knowledge and skills needs. A general indication of success of knowledge and skills services was sought by asking regions about the perception of the helpfulness of regional NRM organisations in helping them solve NRM issues. The data shows that across Australia, regional NRM organisations are positively perceived by stakeholders (Figure 35). Over three quarters (76%) of stakeholders saw the regional NRM organisation as helpful in assisting them with solving NRM issues.

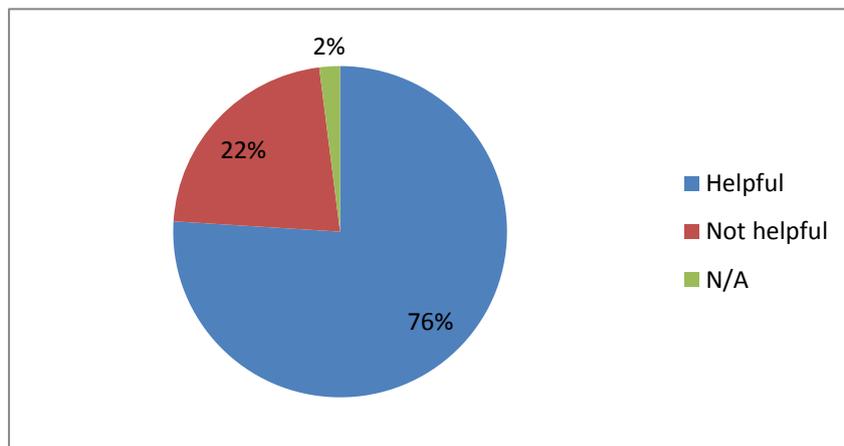


Figure 35: Perceived helpfulness of regional organisations in solving stakeholder NRM issues

Organisations in Tasmania, South Australia and NSW were most positively perceived. Stakeholders in Victoria were less likely to give their local region the highest rating (highly helpful, 18% agreement) compared to the other states, although their overall level of helpfulness was similar to the average at 73%. Environment representative organisations, indigenous organisations and primary producers all found their respective NRM bodies to be most helpful, each group returning approximately 80% agreement.

Stakeholders were also asked to identify in which areas they had obtained input from their regional NRM organisation in the last 12 months (Figure 36). Less than 10% of stakeholders

had received no advice from their regional NRM organisation suggesting that there is a high level of engagement amongst stakeholder organisations and regional NRM bodies.

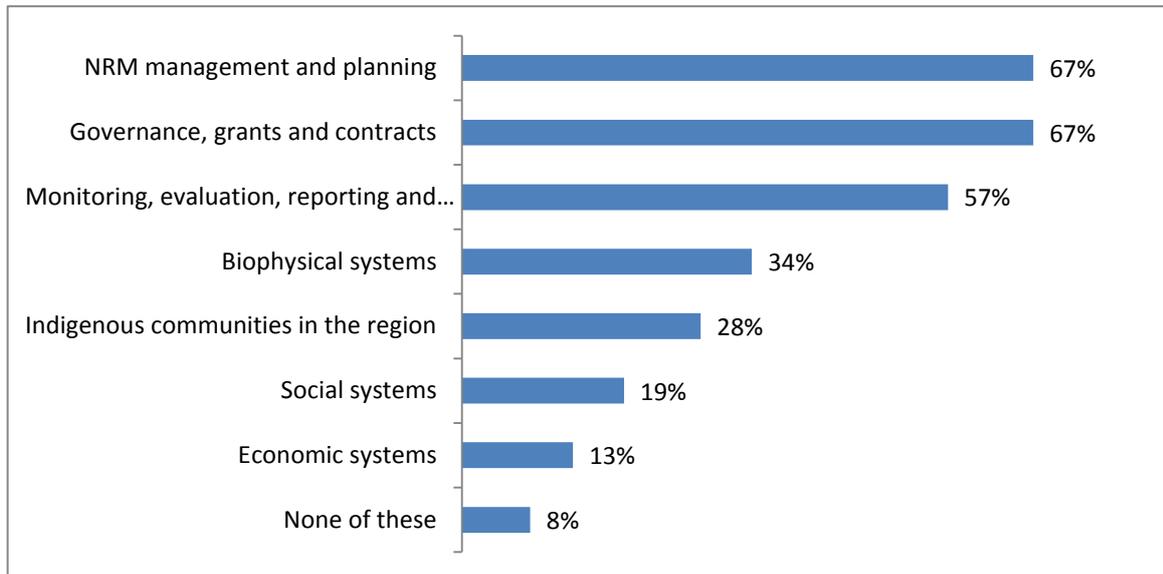


Figure 36: Type of advice and input accessed by stakeholders from regional NRM organisations

The scope of the advisory services was broad with a suggested focus towards management and administrative components of resource management. The most common sources of input were for management and planning, governance of funding and MERI issues. This is perhaps not surprising as these components of NRM are core business for regional NRM organizations that access and administer significant funding and are a natural source of local expertise on these issues. Regions are also providing advice on technical NRM issues, most commonly input regarding the management of biophysical systems and indigenous issues, with socio-economic issues being the least likely advisory topics. This information is closely aligned to the services mix identified by staff as being provided by their organisation (*Figure 37*).

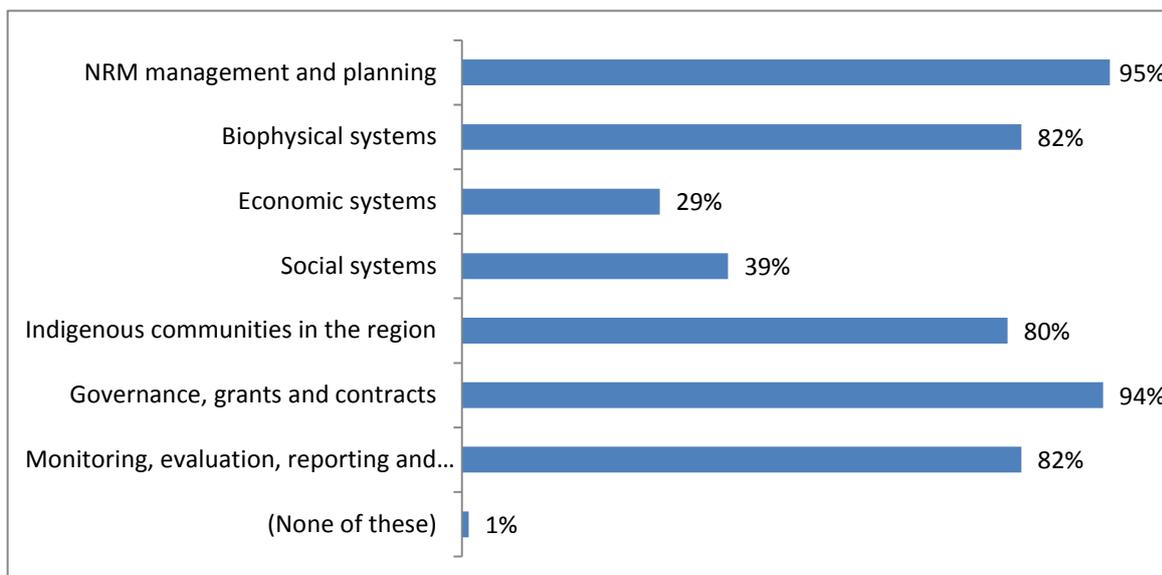


Figure 37: Types of information provided to stakeholders by regional NRM organisations

Summary

Taken together, the findings of the survey represent a strong result at the national level for regions. It suggests that regions have not only built a strong understanding of the knowledge and skills needs of stakeholder but that they are also providing services that are used and valued by stakeholders. Significantly, a majority of stakeholders find regions to be helpful in assisting them with resolving natural resource management issues and related challenges of planning, management and evaluation of NRM activities.

These findings, in combination with the identification of the significant importance of regions as a source of knowledge and skills for stakeholders (see the following chapter), suggest that the component CSKE investment strategy is providing a good return on investment in terms of reaching and positively influencing a diversity of stakeholders.

Evidence in Relation to CSKE Outcome Two

Increase the engagement and participation rates of urban and regional communities in activities to manage natural resources and to help protect the environment.

Overview

Overall, the evidence suggests that regions are doing a good job of engaging a diversity of stakeholders and actively seeking to build their engagement within the wider community over time.

Stakeholders agree that sufficient engagement is occurring, that it is of a moderate to high quality and that opportunities exist for stakeholders to participate in regional NRM processes.

Engagement between regional NRM and stakeholder organisations is also resulting in partnerships for funding and most stakeholders agree that engagement with regional organisations has had a moderate to high level of influence in encouraging them to invest more in their NRM activities.

'Engagement' refers to the formal and informal activities conducted by an NRM body which provides individuals, groups and organisations in the NRM body's geographical area an opportunity to:

- become increasingly aware of regional NRM problems and priorities;
- contribute their views and concerns about NRM activities and priorities; and
- influence decision-making by the NRM organisation.

Engagement is especially important given that Caring for Our Country is seeking to increase the recruitment and retention of volunteers in community and landcare groups involved in managing natural resources. It is also important to ensure that the NRM system of investment and governance benefits from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. This is essential to achieving a level of alignment between strategic national objectives, regional issues and individual organisation priorities. The more these perspectives can be aligned the better the outcomes will be at all levels of the system.

This section provides information about the engagement activities being undertaken by regional organisations to involve stakeholders in regional planning and decision-making. The effectiveness of engagement also reinforces the ability of regions to connect with and develop the knowledge and skills of stakeholders undertaking NRM.

Quality of Engagement Processes

Staff and stakeholders were asked about the sufficiency of engagement activities being undertaken by regional NRM organisations. 93% of regional NRM organisation staff agreed that the organisation had supported sufficient activities for community engagement in the last 12 months. 95% of staff identified a moderate to high level of participation by stakeholders in community engagement activities.

Overall stakeholders also agreed that regional NRM organisations were sufficiently active in engaging with stakeholders in their region. Negative responses were highest in Victoria, Western Australia and the ACT. Stakeholders in metropolitan regions were also slightly less likely than non-metropolitan counterparts to be satisfied with the level of engagement by their regional NRM organisation.

A general indication of the perception of quality of engagement was provided by both the stakeholders and the organisation's staff. While only 17% of stakeholders considered that the quality was 'high', 65% of stakeholders saw that engagement was at least of a moderate quality. This suggests that for most stakeholders, the level of engagement is acceptable but that there is also opportunity for further improvement in engagement processes by regional NRM organisations.

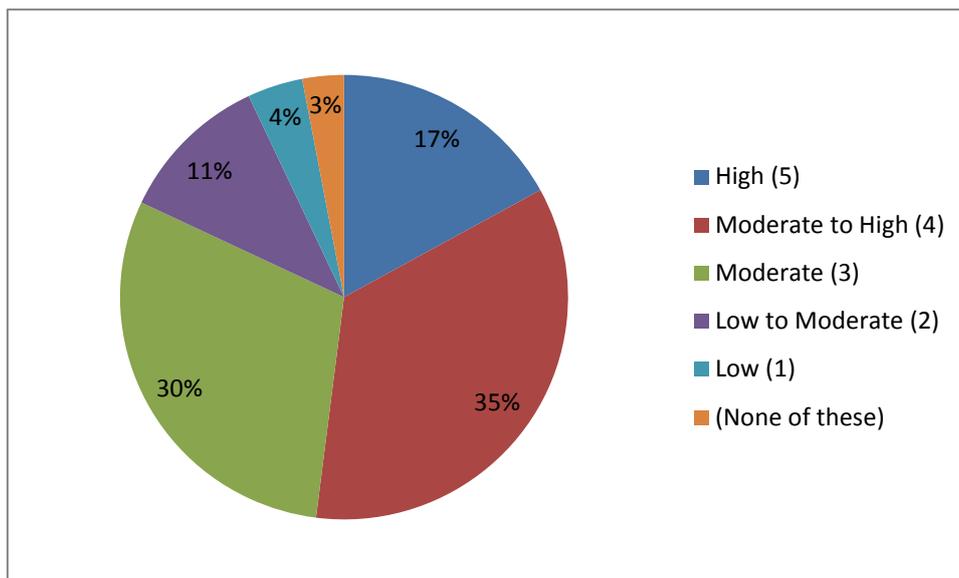


Figure 38: Stakeholder perceptions of the quality of engagement processes undertaken by regional organisations

A higher level of satisfaction felt by Indigenous organisations has appeared to continue, with 60% of indigenous organisations scoring the quality of engagement as one of the top two options. This satisfaction is shared by environmental representative and business representative organisations, achieving scores of 60% and 64% respectively.

The level of stakeholder participation also provides a foundational indicator of stakeholder engagement. Overall, 79% of organisations believed that there was at least a moderate level of participation in NRM activities for engagement (*Figure 39*).

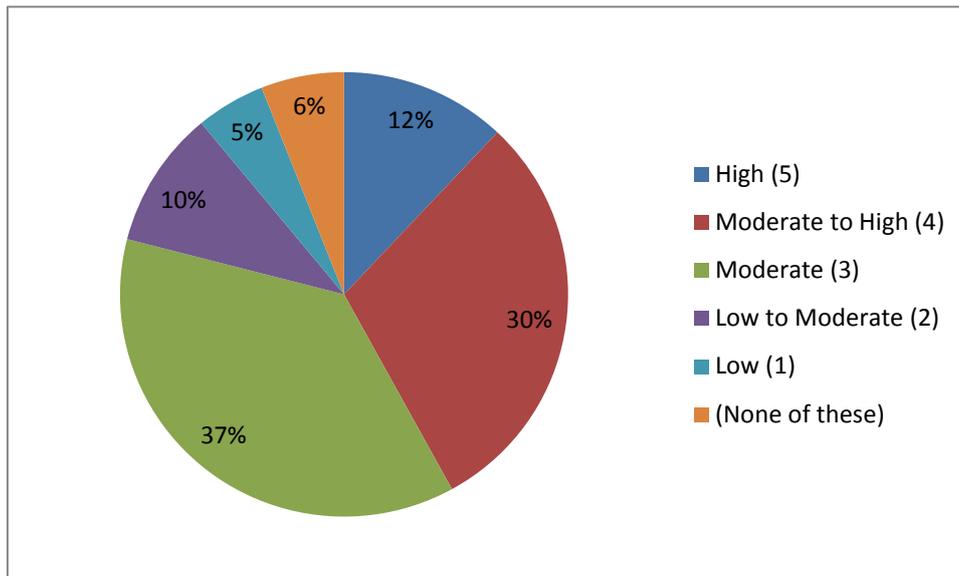


Figure 39: Stakeholder perception of their level of participation in regional NRM organisation activities.

Nationally, on a scale of 1 to 5 the mean participation rating of 3.94 shows improvement compared to the national mean 3.7 in the 2007 survey. Perspectives on the diversity of stakeholder engaged has remained relatively steady (2011 mean: 4.66; 2007 mean; 4.6).

The survey found that regional NRM organisations are actively seeking to engage wider groups of people and those who may not have been effectively engaged by the organisation previously. 72% of staff believed that the region had sought to engage important regional stakeholders who had not been closely involved in the regions activities previously. Farmers and landowners were the group most likely to be the target of these efforts with nearly half of the regions prioritising better engagement with this group (Figure 40).

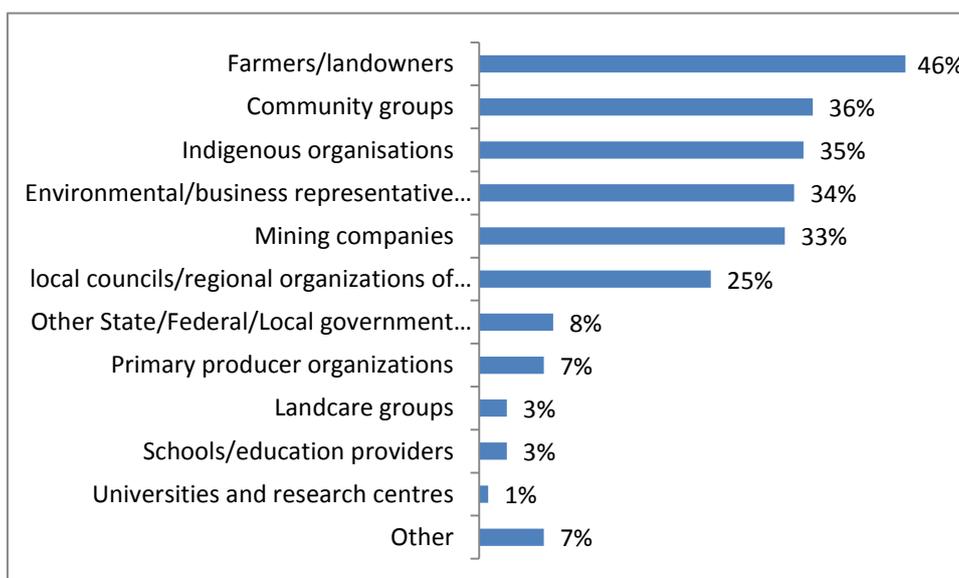


Figure 40: Stakeholder groups targeted for developing stronger engagement

Partnerships for Funding and Stimulating Investment

Organisations who had sought funding from Caring for Our Country were asked if they had done so in partnership with their regional natural resource management organisation. Nearly two-thirds of organisations (64%) pursued funding for NRM activities through a partnership with a natural resource management organisation.

Organisations in NSW were most likely to have used a partnership with over three quarters of respondents taking this approach. Western Australian stakeholders and those in the smaller states were less likely to have opted for a partnership approach (*Figure 41*). Stakeholder organisations in metropolitan regions were also less likely to have engaged in a partnership with their regional natural resource management organisation with only 53% doing so compared to 65% in non-metropolitan regions.



Figure 41: Percentage of stakeholder who had sought funding in partnership with their regional NRM organisation

Stakeholders' Perspective on NRM Encouragement to Invest

A key indicator of the success of CSKE is the extent to which engagement or new knowledge and skills motivates stakeholders to further invest in NRM. The national survey suggests that a significant proportion of NRMOs are at least moderately effective in encouraging their stakeholders to invest in NRM issues (*Figure 42*).

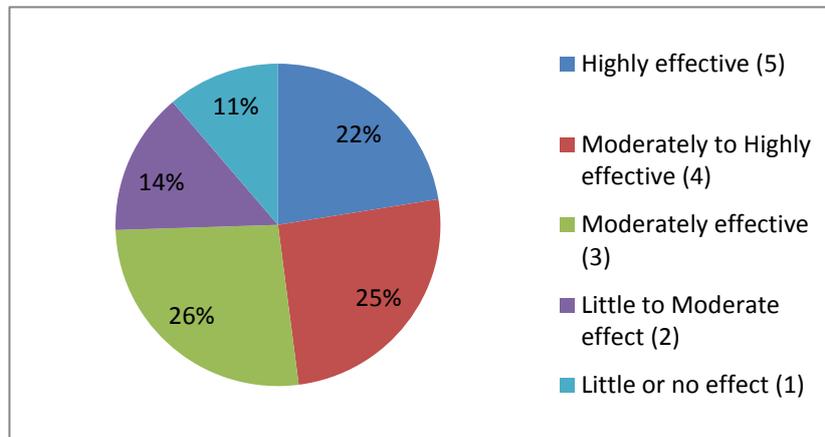


Figure 42: Effectiveness of regional NRM organisations in encouraging additional investment by stakeholders

There is variation evident between groups with community organisations, local government and people involved in the region through advisory groups or as a member of the board least likely to see engagement as something that has stimulated an increase in their investment in NRM. Primary producers and their organisations, indigenous groups and environment representative groups were most likely to agree that interaction with the NRM organisation had stimulated additional investment.

Evidence in Relation to CSKE Outcome Three

Position all regional natural resource management organisations to deliver best practice landscape conservation and sustainable land use planning to communities and land managers within their regions.

Overview

The evidence from the national survey suggests that regional NRM organisations are well positioned to lead regional planning processes in cooperation with stakeholders.

NRM organisations are the most commonly preferred source of NRM information. They are generally seen as being adequately informed about regional issues, willing to listen to stakeholders and providing leadership in NRM.

Relationships between a majority of stakeholders and regional NRM organisations appear strong; on the whole, staff and stakeholders agreed that a moderate to high level of trust, transparency, inclusiveness and commitment exists between their organisations.

At a national level, most regional NRM organisation staff also agreed that their organisation had an effective relationship with the state and Australian governments and that they generally received consistent policy advice.

By providing base level funding for regional natural resource management organisations, the Australian Government is providing the opportunity for these organisations to meet the needs of regional communities. Positioning for influence involves more than money. The national survey has provided an opportunity to examine the relationships between stakeholders and regional NRM organisations that are relevant to their ability to deliver best practice landscape conservation and sustainable land use planning in their region.

Several important findings that have already been discussed in the report are also relevant to this outcome. These include:

- the position that regional NRM organisations occupy as the most commonly preferred source of NRM information for stakeholders;
- that 95% of regional staff report that information on management and planning is being provided by their organisation; and
- that information on NRM management and planning has been recently accessed by 67% of stakeholders involved in the survey.

Four elements of the national survey assist in understanding the positioning of regional NRM organisations in meeting this outcome beyond access to funding. These include:

- how well informed regional NRM organisations are in decision-making;
- the strength of relationships between the regional NRM organisations and stakeholders;
- whether regional NRM organisations are seen as leaders; and

- the state of the relationship between regional NRM organisations and state and Australian Governments.

Adequately Informed

Staff expressed confidence that their organisation is adequately informed by stakeholders in its decision-making process with 94% agreeing at some level (*Figure 43*).

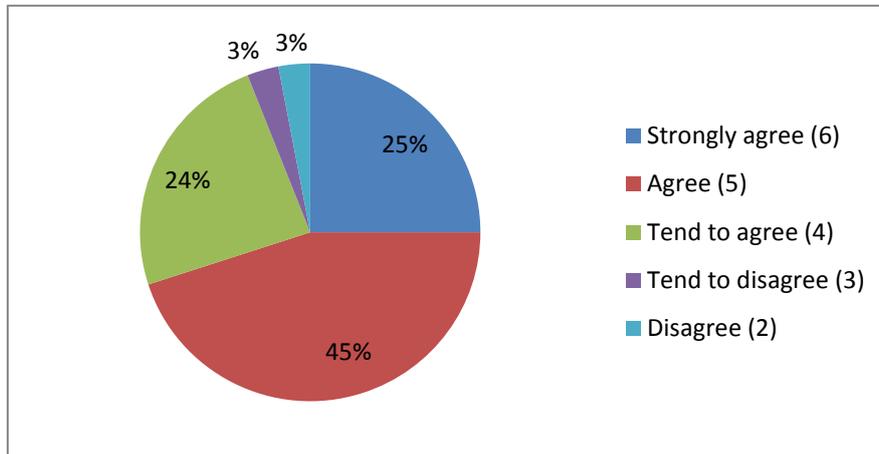


Figure 43 Staff perspectives on the extent to which the region is adequately informed

Stakeholder perspectives support this perception with 75% agreeing that regional NRM organisations are well informed in decision-making (*Figure 44*). This provides a basic source of credibility which is necessary for influencing planning and decision-making by stakeholders in the region.

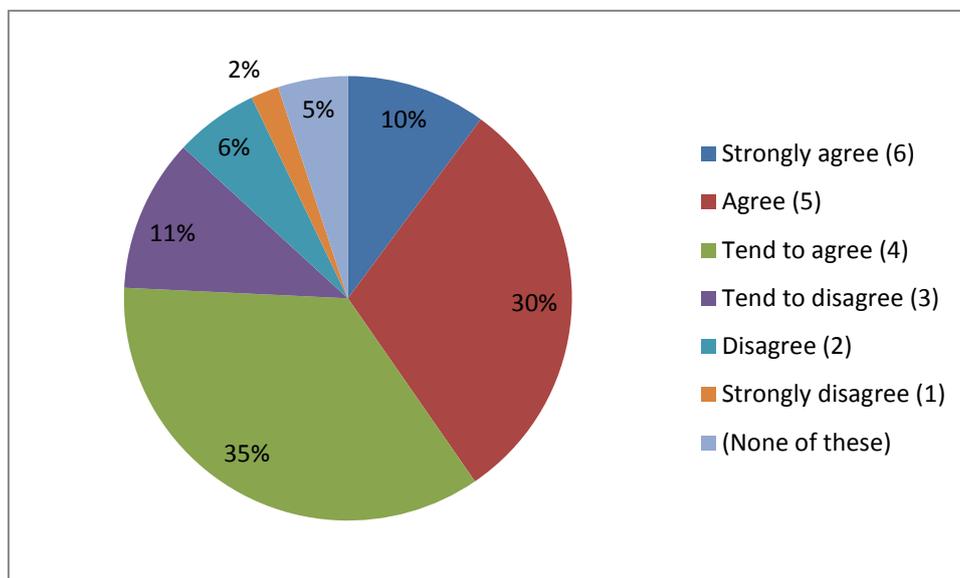


Figure 44: Level of agreement that the NRM Organisation is well informed by stakeholders in its decision-making

Providing Leadership

The survey also confirms that NRM organisations are seen as providing leadership to stakeholders. Overall, 82% of stakeholders agreed that their NRM body provided leadership in relation to NRM.

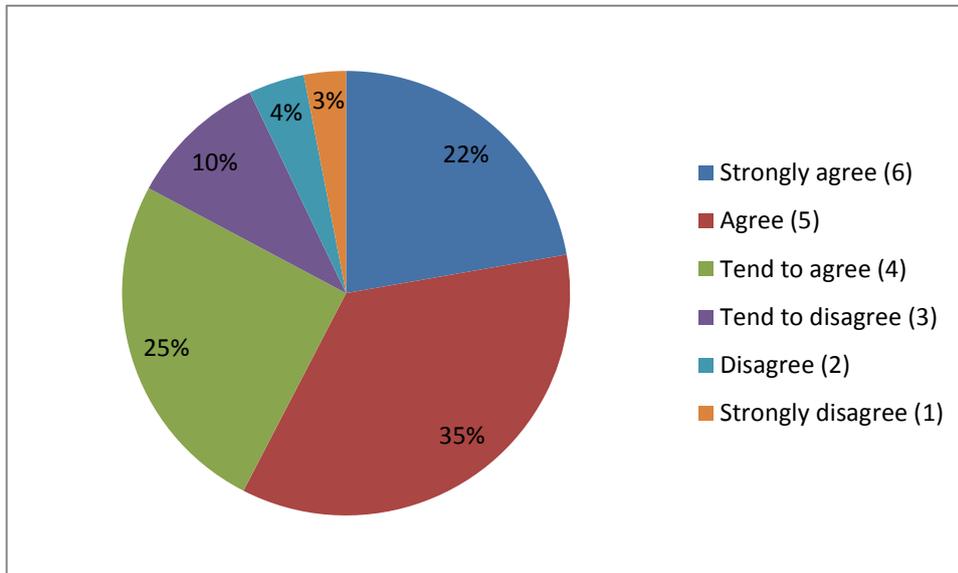


Figure 45: Level of agreement that the regional NRM organisation is providing leadership

Listening

Stakeholders were asked about the extent to which they were listened to and provided with opportunities to contribute expertise and knowledge to regional NRM decision-making. Half of the stakeholder rated regional NRM performance as moderate to high (Figure 46). Across the states, South Australian and West Australian organisations were less likely to be seen as effective in listening to stakeholder organisations.

NRM boards, government, primary producer and community organisations were least likely to believe that the regional body was highly or moderate to highly inclusive in the engagement process. Indigenous organisations and business representative organisations responded most positively to this question.

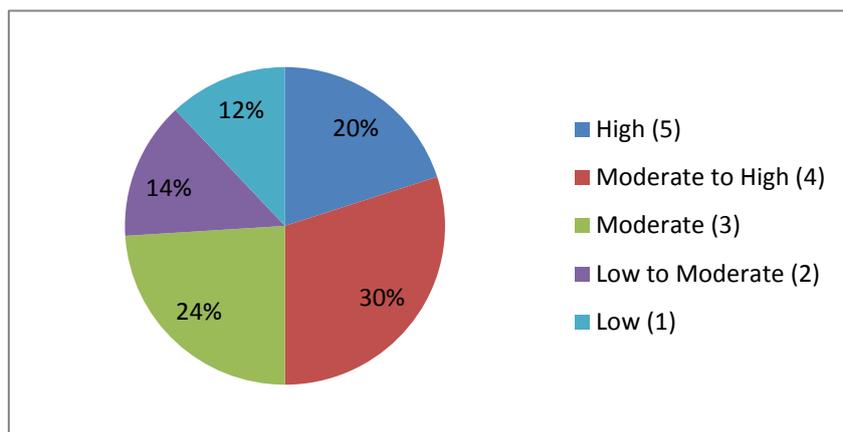


Figure 46: Extent to which regional NRM organisations are listening to stakeholders, mean ratings by state

Examining these results by type of stakeholder shows that indigenous organisations and primary producers were more likely to rate their regional organisation highly. Notably, stakeholders who were formally engaged through advisory boards were the most likely to rate regional NRM organisations as performing at a low to moderate level in listening, despite being placed in a position to communicate directly with organisations on NRM issues.



Figure 47: Extent to which NRM Organisations are perceived to be highly effective at listening to stakeholder organisations

Strength of Stakeholder Relationships

Both staff and stakeholders were asked about four factors that together measure the strength of their current relationship with stakeholders. These included perspectives on the current level of:

- trust
- transparency
- inclusiveness, and
- commitment.

Aligning the questions allows staff perspectives to be compared against the perspectives of stakeholder organisations (Figure 48). For all of these measures a majority of staff and

stakeholders agreed that a moderate to high level of trust, transparency, inclusiveness and commitment exists. While regional organisational staff generally have a higher level of confidence in the performance of the organisation than stakeholders, more stakeholders identified the existence of high level of trust and transparency with their regional NRM organisation.

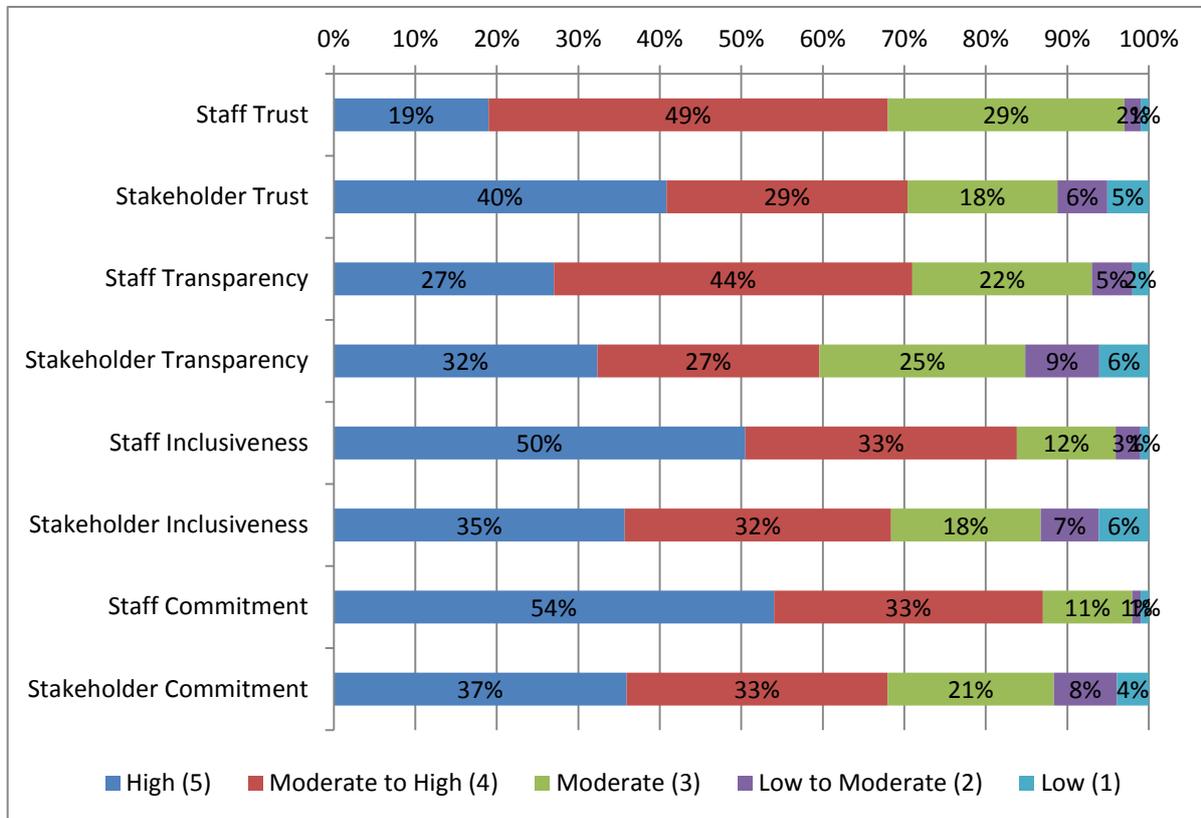


Figure 48: Comparison of staff and stakeholder perspectives on key relationship measures

A correlation analysis which compared the responses of staff and stakeholders within specific regions confirmed that for the factors of trust, inclusiveness and cooperation there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the perceptions of staff and stakeholders in an individual region. Transparency provided an exception to this: there was no correlation between results for this factor. This suggests that there are different perspectives of what transparency means between staff and stakeholders or that staff may not be aware of how opaque their organisation is to outsiders in the region.

Ratings for relationship measures were similar across states with the exception of South Australia which exhibited lower mean ratings for both transparency and inclusiveness. This result may be linked to the recent organisational changes in South Australia (Figure 49).

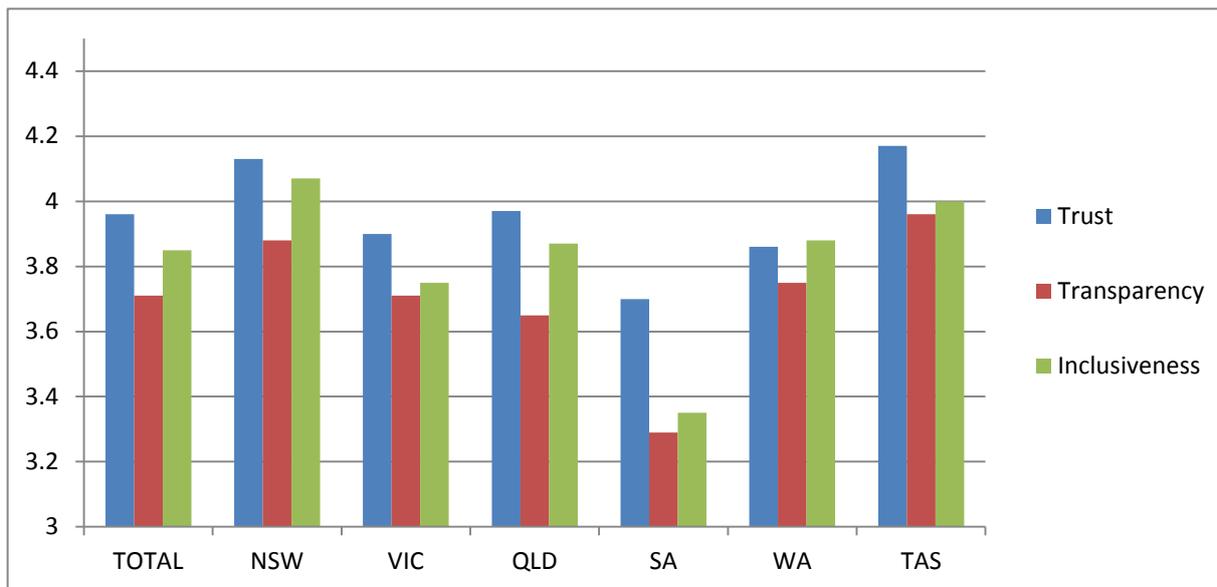


Figure 49: Mean stakeholder ratings of the extent to which they can trust their regional NRM organisation and its transparency and inclusiveness

Business representative organisations and primary producers both expressed the highest level of trust in its NRM regional organisation, with 82% and 80% of respondents saying that the level of trust between their organisation and the NRM organisation is at least moderate to high or high.

Compared to organisations which focused on other issues, coastal and marine management organisations were most likely to believe that there was a high level of transparency in the decision-making process (at 67% which was on average 10% higher than those focusing on other priority areas).

Indigenous organisations, local governments and business representatives were also most likely to believe that there was a high level of transparency in decision-making. Community representative groups, primary producer organisations and NRM boards only had 51%, 57%, and 47% of respondents reporting that there is a high level of transparency.

Amongst stakeholder organisations, perceptions that stakeholder groups cooperated with each other in NRM was highest amongst environmental representative and government organisations and lowest amongst organisations who classified themselves as business representative groups or primary producer organisations. Cooperation between stakeholders was also seen as lower by organisations which have NRM issues as a lower priority, perhaps because they had less opportunity to be involved in or aware of such cooperation.

State and Federal Government Role in Regional Community Engagement and Knowledge Sharing

A key aspect of positioning regional NRM organisations to play an effective role in planning processes is the strength of the relationship between the organisation and state and federal governments.

At a national level, most staff felt that their organisation had an effective relationship with the state and federal governments and that they received consistent policy advice (Figure 50). In general, staff were more positive about the relationship with the Commonwealth than they were in their relationship with their state government.

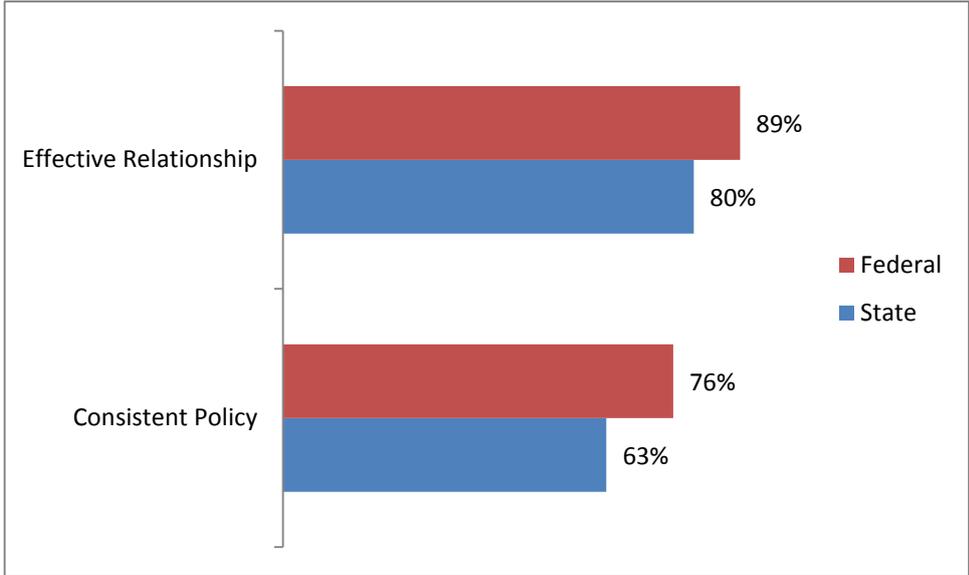


Figure 50 Comparison of regional staff perspectives on state and federal government relationships

63% of staff felt that the state government provided consistent policy advice. In comparing the states, WA, SA and Victoria are the states where fewest agree on policy consistency (Figure 50).

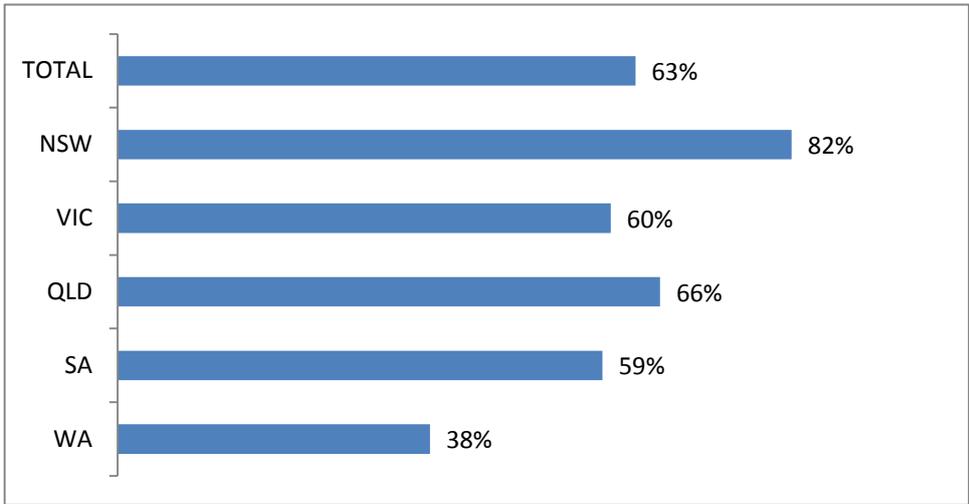


Figure 51: Staff who agree that state government provides consistent policy advice

The level of trust between the regional NRM organisations and the Australian Government (as partners in Caring for Our Country) remains high with 89% of staff agreeing with this statement, leading to a mean rating of 4.46 (1 to 6 scale), effectively the same as the mean rating achieved in 2007 (4.5). This suggests that changes which have occurred in the Program since then have not undermined trust between the Caring for Our Country partners to any significant extent.

However there appears to be room for improvement in the relationship between the organisations on CSKE issues. While 86% of staff agree that government has an important role in community engagement and knowledge sharing in the region, only 64% of staff agree that they receive consistent policy advice on community engagement and knowledge sharing issues from the Australian Government. This suggests that from the perspectives of staff in regional organisations there is room for improvement in communication between the organisations.

Evidence in Relation to CSKE Outcome Four

Ensure the continued use, support, and reinvigoration of traditional ecological knowledge to underpin biodiversity conservation.

Overview

The majority of indigenous organisations generally agreed that their regional bodies were adequately informed by stakeholders. However, the surveyed shows those regional organisations are less confident that they are effectively engaging indigenous stakeholders than they are about the effectiveness of their engagement processes for stakeholders as a whole.

The Australian Government has acknowledged the unique knowledge and skills that Indigenous people have to support conservation outcomes.⁹ Indigenous participation is also a priority because it may help achieve Caring for Our Country outcomes, as well as supporting the Australian Government's commitment to Close the Gap. Furthermore, "Indigenous People have significant and unique knowledge and skills in land and sea management relevant to the delivery of many Caring for our Country targets"¹⁰.

The current target articulated in the 2011/2012 Business Plan is to resource at least 20 projects which directly involve Indigenous organisations or groups to achieve Caring for our Country outcomes¹¹.

This component of Community Skills Knowledge and Engagement for Caring for Our Country was not a primary driver for the survey. However, two questions in the staff survey sought perspectives on the engagement of indigenous people by regional Natural Resource Management organisations. The evidence gathered can be considered alongside other information the AGLC is collecting to report against this measure.

Indigenous perceptions of how well informed regional organisations are in making decisions

Although the sample group for indigenous organisations is small, this question may provide some insight into the extent that the core outcome for Caring for Our Country concerning traditional ecological knowledge is being achieved. If indigenous stakeholders feel that regional bodies are not adequately informed by stakeholders, this may indicate that the necessary 'two way exchange' of knowledge is lacking. Of the 15 Indigenous organisations sampled, 73% generally agreed that their regional bodies were adequately informed by this stakeholder group.

⁹ From business plan

¹⁰ From Business Plan, p 15

¹¹ <http://www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan/11-12/priorities/community/indigenous-participation/index.html>

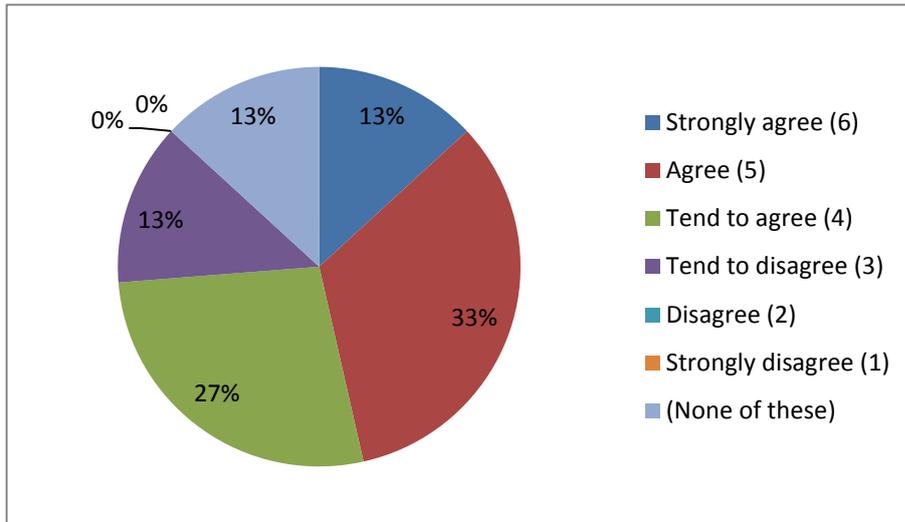


Figure 52: Indigenous Perceptions of How Well Informed Regional NRM Organisations are in Decision-making

Regional Staff Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Indigenous Engagement

Staff were also asked about their perceptions of the effectiveness of indigenous engagement processes. This information shows that regional organisations are less confident that their current engagement processes are effectively engaging indigenous stakeholders than they are about the effectiveness of their engagement processes for stakeholders as a whole.

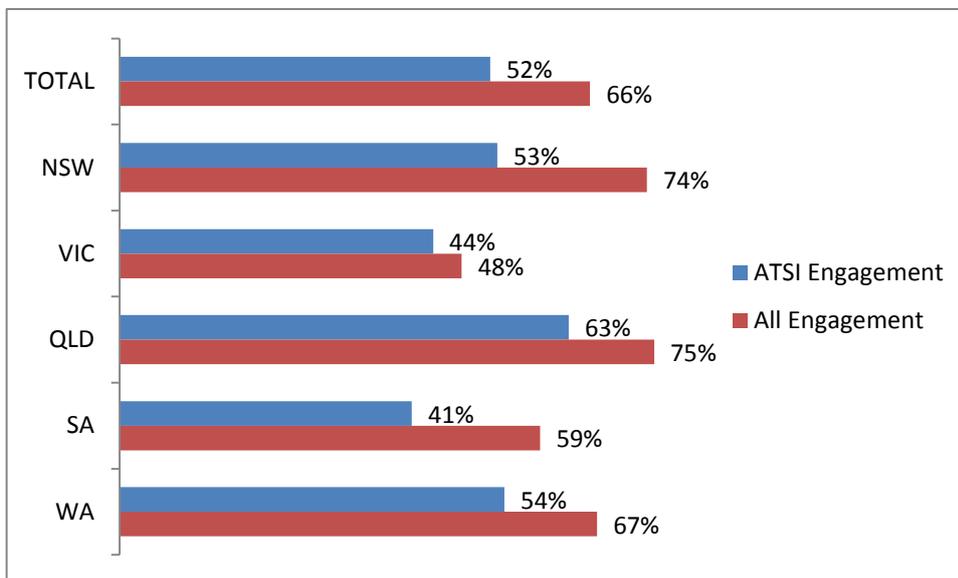


Figure 53 Comparison of staff perceptions about the extent of effectiveness of all organisational engagement compared to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement

Appendix

Stakeholder Organisation Interview Schedule

Introduction

The aim of this project is to monitor and improve the delivery of NRM programs, through a thorough assessment of the trends in community engagement and knowledge-sharing.

The project will gather information through interviews with regional NRM bodies and stakeholders. The interviews will be supported by a set of case studies examining regional examples of community engagement and knowledge sharing. Aspects of the survey are linked to an earlier 2007 survey to enable some benchmarking of changes at the national and state levels.

This project is funded by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and is being undertaken with all regions of Australia. Further information about the project and the methodology being used is available on the project website at <http://www.inovact.com.au/NRMengagement.html>

Confidentiality of Information

The information you provide will be confidential and the names of individuals and organisations participating in the project will not be identified.

Feedback

Two reporting processes will be completed for this project:

1. A national report on the project will be completed.
2. Individual and confidential reports will be made available to each participating regional body, showing how they compare to other regional bodies in their State and nationally.

Interview Process

In relation to the telephone interview:

- We estimate the interview will last around 20 minutes.
- This is an evaluation based on your knowledge, judgements and perspectives. We would like you to answer the questions as objectively and accurately as possible.
- Other organisations will also be interviewed in your region to enable us to develop an understanding of different stakeholder views
- Unless otherwise stated all questions refer to the previous 12 months

Definition of community engagement/participation

This includes the variety of formal and informal activities by an NRM organisation that provides individuals, groups and organisations in the NRM body's geographic area with an opportunity to:

- become increasingly aware of regional NRM problems and priorities
- develop their NRM knowledge and skills
- contribute their views and concerns about NRM activities and priorities
- influence decision-making by the NRM organisation

- undertake NRM activities that involve their investment of time, money and/or other resources

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REGIONAL STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Organisational characteristics (enables analysis and segmentation)

1. Which of the descriptions below best describes your organization?
 - community group
 - farmers/landowners organization
 - indigenous organizations
 - local council
 - mining company
 - environmental representative organisation
 - business representative organisation
 - Other (SPECIFY)

2. How much is your organisation involved in natural resource management activities and solving natural resource management problems in this region?
 - The main focus of the organisation
 - Extensively – an important focus of the organisation
 - Moderately – a second rank priority
 - Slightly – one of our lower priority areas
 - None – not something we are really involved in GO TO Q?
 - Other (SPECIFY)

3. What are the main natural resource management issues your organisation is involved in?
 - Biodiversity conservation / vegetation management
 - Inland water resource management
 - Sustainable land management / sustainable agriculture
 - Coastal and marine conservation and management
 - Urban conservation issues
 - Other (SPECIFY)

Knowledge and skills

4. How important is access to new knowledge and skills to improving your organisation's natural resource management?
 - Highly important
 - Moderately-Highly important
 - Moderately important
 - Little-Moderate importance
 - Little or no importance

5. From what organisations do you usually source the knowledge and skills you need to solve natural resource management problems that concern you? Please list up to eight sources of such knowledge and skills, however you obtain this (e.g., by direct contact, training sessions, visiting the organisation's web sites, etc)

Source 1: _____
Source 2: _____
Source 3: _____
Source 4: _____
Source 5: _____
Source 6: _____
Source 7: _____
Source 8: _____

6. Considering just these sources of natural resource management knowledge and skills for your organisation, which ones do you find:

(a) consistently provide relevant interesting information

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 None

(b) give information you find exciting

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 None

(c) give information that is highly credible

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 None

(d) make a positive difference to your natural resource management activities

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 None

7. What is the most important source of knowledge for understanding the natural resource management issues that concern you?

Main source: _____

8. What is the most important source of knowledge and skills to improve your natural resource management activities and practices?

Main source: _____

9. Please describe a recent example of where new knowledge and skills has led to an improvement in your natural resource management.

10. How do you prefer to receive natural resource management information? Please tick your preferred methods from the list below.

- Newsletters by mail
 Newsletters as attachments to email
 Through online social networking like and LinkedIn, FaceBook
 Through online forums
 Through seminars, workshops and conferences

- Through formal training courses
- Through one-on-one advice
- Through dedicated NRM websites
- Through emails notifying you of new material on NRM websites
- Other (SPECIFY)

Relationship with the regional organization

Interviewers note: Regional NRM organisations have different names in different states. In NSW and Victoria they are known as a Catchment Management Authority, in Queensland, Western Australia and Tasmania they are known as an NRM organisation, in South Australia and the Northern Territory they are known as an NRM Board and in the ACT they are known as the NRM Council. Please ensure that the stakeholder is sure of the organisation in their region to which these questions refer.

11. Which of the following descriptions apply to your relationship with your regional NRM organisation in the last twelve months?

(MULTIPLE RESPONSE. IF UNSURE DO NOT CODE THAT OPTION)

- formal (e.g. advisory board membership/committee/project steering group)
- funding recipient
- ad hoc contributor (e.g. participate in events and activities, consulted on key issues)
- gave us useful information/advice
- disconnected – no longer have an active relationship
- never had an active relationship
- other (specify)
- (NONE OF THESE)

12. Thinking about your relationship with the regional NRM organisation.
Is your relationship with the organisation and its staff about
- (a) identifying and understanding the regional NRM issues you should get involved in trying to solve?
 High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low
- (b) developing effective solutions to regional NRM problems you are involved with
 High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low
- (c) supporting the regional NRM to identify and prioritise regional NRM issues
 High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low
- (d) supporting the regional NRM to have a positive influence on NRM activities undertaken by the community
 High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low
13. Which (if any) of the following topics have you obtained input about from the regional NRM organization in the past 12 months? Please endorse all that apply.
- ...NRM management and planning
- ...biophysical systems
- ...economic systems
- ...social systems
- ...indigenous communities in the region
- ... governance, grants and contracts
- ...monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI)
- NONE OF THESE
14. Thinking about the last 12 months and excluding any financial assistance you may have received from the regional NRM organisation, how much help has the regional NRM organisation and its staff been in solving NRM issues you are involved in?
- Highly Moderately-Highly Moderately Little-Moderate
 Little or helpful helpful helpful help no
 helpful helpful helpful help help
 help help help help help
15. Has engagement with the regional NRM organisation encouraged you to invest more money, time, effort and resources in solving regional NRM issues?
- Highly Moderately-Highly Moderately Little-Moderate
 Little or effective effective effective effect no
 effective effective effective effect effect
 effect effect effect effect effect

In relation to the following, would you say in the last 12 months...

16. ...your organisation's knowledge and understanding of regional NRM processes and programs undertaken by the regional body, including plan development, investment strategies, implementation and on ground actions, has been...

High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

17. ...the level of trust between your organisation and the regional body in the engagement process has been...

High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

18.the level of transparency in the engagement and decision-making processes between your organisation and the regional body has been...

High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

19.the willingness of the regional body to be inclusive in the engagement process has been ...

High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

20.the level of cooperation amongst stakeholders, landholders and community in the engagement process has mostly been ...

High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

21. ...the level of ongoing commitment by the regional body to maintaining the relationship with this organisation has been...

High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

22. In the last 12 months the regional body has initiated or supported sufficient activities for community engagement.

Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

23. In the last 12 months the level of participation by stakeholders, landholders and the community in these activities has mostly been...

High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

24. When the regional body makes important NRM planning and investment decisions, would you say it is adequately informed by different sectors, stakeholders and interest groups?

- Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

25. Overall would you say the quality of the community engagement process implemented by the regional body has been...

- High Low Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate

26. To what extent do you agree with the statement that "Within this region, the regional body provides leadership in relation to NRM"?

- Strongly Strongly Disagree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree

27. In the past year, to what extent has the regional body listened to or drawn on the expertise and local knowledge of your organisation in developing and implementing its NRM plans and activities – has it been ...

- High Low Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate

28. Has your organisation applied for NRM funding under *Caring for our Country*?

- Yes No (Go to Question 28)

29. Was your application for funding made in partnership with the regional NRM body?

- Yes No

30. Who else would you recommend we contact for their views about the activities of the regional body and its relationships with others concerned about NRM in this region?

SPECIFY INCLUDING CONTACT DETAILS

Thank you. That is the end of the survey.

Regional NRM Bodies Interview Schedule

Introduction

The aim of this project is to monitor and improve the regional delivery of NRM programs, through a thorough assessment of the trends in community engagement and knowledge sharing at the regional level.

The project will gather information through interviews with regional NRM bodies and regional stakeholders. The interviews will be supported by a set of case studies examining regional examples of community engagement and knowledge sharing. Aspects of the survey are linked to an earlier 2007 survey to enable some benchmarking of changes at the national and state levels.

This project is funded by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and is being undertaken with all regions of Australia. Further information about the project and the methodology being used is available on the project website at <http://www.inovact.com.au/NRMengagement.html>

Confidentiality of Information

The information you provide will be confidential and the names of individuals and organisations participating in the project will not be identified.

We will provide each participating regional body with a confidential report. This report will show the indicator scores and how the regional body compares to State and National averages.

Information about specific regional NRM bodies will be confidential to each regional body and will not be disclosed to other regional bodies or to Government.

Feedback

Two reporting processes will be completed for this project:

1. National reports on the project will be completed.
2. Individual confidential reports will be made available to each participating regional body, showing how they compare to other regional bodies at the State and National level.

Interview Process

When answering the questions in the telephone interview could you please have this document with you. We will work through the questions with you on the phone.

Please remember the following:

- We estimate the interview would last around 30 minutes.
- This is a self-evaluation and we would like you to answer the questions as objectively and accurately as possible.
- Three other people from your organisation will be completing the interview. Please avoid discussing the questions with them until after they have completed the interview.
- Unless otherwise stated all questions refer to the previous 12 months, ending on 31 March 2011.

Definition of community engagement/participation

This includes the variety of formal and informal activities by an NRM organisation that provides individuals, groups and organisations in the NRM body's geographic area with an opportunity to:

- become increasingly aware of regional NRM problems and priorities
- develop their NRM knowledge and skills
- contribute their views and concerns about NRM activities and priorities
- influence decision-making by the NRM organisation
- undertake NRM activities that involve their investment of time, money and/or other resources

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REGIONAL ORGANISATION INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Individual involvement in community engagement

1. **What is your role in the organisation (if not available from contact information)?**
2. **In what ways do you engage with the stakeholder groups and the wider community?**
 - Formal organisational forums (e.g. Board, advisory groups, consultation meetings)
 - Attendance/participation in community and stakeholder meetings
 - Participation in community engagement activities (e.g. field days)
 - Communication and advertising campaigns
 - Provision of training/advisory services
 - Informal and ad hoc engagement/exchanges
 - None – I don't engage directly with the community or stakeholder organisations
 - Other (SPECIFY)
3. **From the ways identified above, which method of engaging with the stakeholder groups and the wider community do you use most?**
4. **From the ways identified above, what do you find is the most valuable method of engagement with the stakeholder groups and the wider community?**

Understanding the community as a basis for engagement

5. **Which of** the following types of external stakeholders does your organisation regularly engage with when working on solving NRM issues?
 - community groups
 - farmers/landowners
 - indigenous organisations
 - local council
 - mining companies
 - environmental/business representative organisations
 - None – I don't engage directly with the community or stakeholder organisations
 - Other (SPECIFY)
6. **Which two of** those types of external stakeholders are most important to decision-making in your organisation?

7. **Which two of** those types of external stakeholders are most important to achieving your regional NRM objectives?

8. **How** does your organisation identify the knowledge and skills regional stakeholders need to improve their NRM? Please endorse all of those listed that apply:

- rely on internal knowledge of the region and stakeholders
- informally consult with a small number of important stakeholders
- maintain advisory boards and committees to provide advice on specific issues
- use a systematic process for identifying and consulting stakeholders as needed
- conduct regular formal surveys of stakeholders to obtain their views
- ensure regional coordinators stay in close touch with key stakeholders
- Other (SPECIFY)
- None of these

9. **The** organisation has a good understanding of the knowledge and skills needs of key stakeholders

- Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9a: What leads you to make that assessment? RECORD VERBATIM

10. **How** does the organisation collect information on stakeholder perspectives relevant to the regional body's decision-making and priorities? Please endorse all of those listed that apply:

- rely entirely on internal knowledge of the region and stakeholders
- informally consult with a small number of important stakeholders
- maintain advisory boards and committees to provide advice on specific issues
- use a systematic process for identifying and consulting stakeholders as needed
- conduct regular formal surveys of stakeholders to obtain their views
- ensure regional coordinators stay in close touch with key stakeholders
- Other (SPECIFY)
- None of these

11. **Do you agree that the** organisation has a good understanding of stakeholder perspectives on the organisations priorities?

- Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

PROCESSES AND STRUCTURES

12. Does the organisation have a stakeholder engagement strategy?

Yes No Unsure (if no/unsure, go to Q17)

13. The community engagement approach or strategy is used to guide decision-making and day to day activities.

Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. To what extent is the stakeholder engagement strategy integrated with wider organisational planning and other strategies?

Completely Almost completely Well enough Partly Very little
 Not at all

15. In your view, does this regional body have effective organisational and decision-making processes in place to achieve its community engagement objectives?

Yes Partial only No

16. In your view, is the right mix of people involved in community engagement within this regional body to achieve stakeholder engagement?

Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. Does the organisation provide information and advisory services to stakeholders to develop their knowledge and skills for NRM?

- provides information on website and in publications
- runs training and workshops on NRM issues
- provides written advice in response to questions
- gives one on one advice (phone and or site visits)
- gives information and advice in other ways (PLEASE SPECIFY)
- no such services provided GO TO Q20

18. Does the regional body partner with other organisations that provide knowledge and skills for important regional stakeholders?

- Yes – with several partners
- Yes – with one or two partners
- No – GO TO Q20

18a. Can you provide examples of the organisations you partner with? RECORD VERBATIM

INTERNAL CAPABILITY

19. Apart from NRM Coordinators, what proportion of staff in the organisation do you estimate have a direct responsibility for community engagement?

- More than 75% 50-75% 25-50% less than 25%

20. Apart from the NRM Coordinators, what proportion of staff in the organisation do you estimate have a direct responsibility for developing stakeholder knowledge and skills for NRM?

- More than 75% 50-75% 25-50% less than 25%

21. Over the last 12 month period how would you rate the level of skills and abilities within the regional body in translating technical NRM information for use by stakeholders?

- High Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate Low

22. Does the regional body provide opportunities for staff to participate in structured or formal training programs for professional development to support community engagement and knowledge sharing activities?
- Yes No

IMPLEMENTATION

23. When the regional body makes important NRM planning and investment decisions, it is adequately informed by different sectors, stakeholders and interest groups.
- Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

24. The level of trust between the Regional Body and stakeholder groups in the engagement process has been...
- High Low Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate

25. The level of transparency in the engagement and decision-making processes between stakeholder groups and the Regional Body has been...
- High Low Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate

26. The willingness of the Regional Body to be inclusive in the engagement process has been ...
- High Low Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate

27. In which of the following areas of knowledge does your organisation actively disseminate information or advice to other NRM stakeholders in the region?
- ...NRM management and planning
- ...biophysical systems
- ...economic systems
- ...social systems
- ...indigenous communities in the region
- ... governance, grants and contracts
- ...monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI)
- NONE OF THESE

OUTCOMES (SUCCESSES/CHALLENGES)

During the last 12 months how effective has the Regional Body's network of NRM coordinators been in....

[Interviewer note: NRM Coordinators are staff directly employed by the Regional Body to work with the broader community and stakeholders. They may also be referred to as NRM Facilitators, Project Officers or NRM Officers].

28. ...increasing awareness of NRM?

- Very effective Effective Somewhat effective Somewhat ineffective Very ineffective

29a. Is this rating based on the results of a formal review conducted during the year?

- Based on a formal review
 No formal review

29. ...increasing community participation in NRM?

- Very effective Effective Somewhat effective Somewhat ineffective Very ineffective

30a. Is this rating based on the results of a formal review conducted during the year?

- Based on formal review
 No formal review of this

30. In this region over the last 12 months, this regional body has provided effective leadership in relation to NRM.

- Strongly agree Agree Tend to agree Tend to disagree Disagree Strongly Disagree

31. In relation to the most recent NRM planning activities, how effective do you think the community engagement processes have been in contributing to regional decision-making?

- Very effective Effective Somewhat effective Somewhat ineffective Very ineffective

32. In relation to the most recent NRM planning activities, how effective do you think the Aboriginal or Traditional Owner engagement processes have been in contributing to regional decision-making?

- Very effective Effective Somewhat effective Somewhat ineffective Very ineffective

33. In the last 12 months the regional body has initiated or supported sufficient activities for community engagement.

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

IF DISAGREE GO TO Q35.

34a1. Please describe the most significant activity undertaken to achieve community engagement?

34a2. Please describe the next most significant activity undertaken to achieve community engagement?

34. In the last 12 months the level of participation by stakeholders, landholders and the community in these activities has been...

High
Low

Moderate-High

Moderate

Low-Moderate

35. In the last two years, the diversity of stakeholder groups involved in regional body activities has been extensive

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

36. Over the last 12 months, has the regional body engaged with any important regional stakeholders who have had limited or no previous involvement with the regional body?

Yes

No [go to Question 38]

37a. Please tell me which types of regional stakeholders you are thinking of here?

- community groups
- farmers/landowners
- indigenous organisations
- local council
- mining companies
- environmental/business representative organisations
- None – I don't engage directly with the community or stakeholder organisations
- Other (SPECIFY)

37. In the last 12 months would you say the quality of the community engagement process implemented by the regional body has been...

High
Low

Moderate-High

Moderate

Low-Moderate

38. In the last 12 months the level of ongoing commitment by the Regional Body to maintaining relationships with stakeholders, landholders and the community has been...

- High Low Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate

39. In the past year, stakeholder demand for the organisation's information, training and advisory services has been...

- High Low Moderate-High Moderate Low-Moderate

40. How influential have the organisation's information, training and advisory services been in improving NRM by key regional stakeholders?

- Highly influential Moderately-Highly influential Moderately influential Low-Moderate influence

41. How effective have the organisation's partnerships with other organisations to provide information, training and advisory services been in improving NRM by key regional stakeholders?

- Very effective partnering Effective Somewhat effective Somewhat ineffective Very ineffective No such

REVIEW + IMPROVEMENT (EVALUATION, FUTURE OPTIONS/CHANGES)

42. In relation to community engagement, has your process been subject to...

- A complete evaluation Partial evaluation Limited evaluation No evaluation

43. (NSW NRMs Only) Does the regional body have the capacity in time, resources and expertise to effectively review and update the Regional/Catchment Plan or Strategy?

(All OTHER JURISDICTIONS): If required to do so now, would the regional body have the capacity in time, resources and expertise to effectively review and update the Regional/Catchment Plan or Strategy?

- Very high capacity High capacity Some capacity Low capacity Very Low capacity

State and Federal Government Role in Regional Community Engagement and Knowledge Sharing

44. There is consistent NRM policy information provided to this regional body by most State Government Agencies and Departments.

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

45. There has been an effective partnership between this regional body and most State Government Agencies and Departments.

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

46. There is consistent NRM policy information provided to this regional body by most Australian Government Agencies and Departments.

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

47. There has been an effective partnership between this regional body and Australian Government NRM Agencies and Departments.

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

48. As partners or investors in the Caring for our Country program, my regional body has a high level of trust in the relationship with most Australian Government NRM Agencies and Departments.

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

49. Overall, my regional body receives consistent policy advice on community engagement and knowledge sharing issues between State and Australian Government Agencies and Departments

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

50. Government Agencies and Departments have an important role in community engagement and knowledge sharing with NRM stakeholders in this region

Strongly agree
Disagree

Agree

Tend to agree

Tend to disagree

Disagree

Strongly disagree

IF DISAGREE GO TO Q58.

55a. Please describe that role

IF RESPONDENT IS NOT THE CEO GO TO THE END.

CONTEXTUAL QUESTIONS FOR REGIONAL NRM BODIES CEOs

The following contextual questions will be used to assist the interpretation of information from interviews with regional NRM bodies. These will be removed where data is able to be provided by the Department for each participating regional organisation.

51. Size of the region (km²)

52. Population density of the region _____ people/square km

53. Which of the terms below best describe the region:

- a) urban, rural, remote
- b) coastal / inland

54. How many years has it been since your current regional NRM plan (or catchment strategy) was developed?

_____ years

55. How many years ago was the last review of the regional NRM plan (or catchment strategy)?

_____ years

56. How many full time equivalent employees does the regional body currently have?

_____ number of full time equivalent employees

57. How many local or regional NRM facilitators or coordinators are employed by the regional body?

(This does not include those individuals directly funded by the Australian Government which include Caring for our Country facilitators)

___ number of local NRM coordinators employed by the regional body

58. what is the size of your current annual operating budget (in \$,000's)

\$|_|,|_|_|_| ,000