

# **‘How to work with knowledge providers’ workshops Brisbane 5-6 November**

## **Record of local knowledge providers workshop**

### **Introduction**

Workshops in Brisbane on 5-6 November brought together representatives of regional NRM bodies, science and research providers, Indigenous knowledge providers and local knowledge providers. The aim of the workshops was to develop content for a new "How to work with knowledge providers" section of the RKRK in relation to:

- How regional NRM bodies can find research to close knowledge gaps.
- Identifying who are the knowledge providers to regions.
- How can regional NRM bodies best engage with these knowledge providers, including identifying any barriers to engagement.
- Identifying how to increase collaboration across regional bodies so they might jointly identify knowledge requirements and jointly fund knowledge providers to close these gaps.

### **Agenda for local knowledge providers workshop**

1. Introduction
2. What is a local knowledge provider?
3. Story spines
4. Look at emerging issues
5. Intervention Design
6. ‘Nuggets’ from the session and closing

**What is a local knowledge provider?**

- Local CRT/Agronomist
- Anyone with local knowledge (issues, places)
- Local businesses
- Indigenous community
- Department of Agriculture
- Farmer Groups
- Consultants
- Landcare groups
- Landholders
- Land managers
- Local Champions
- Visitors/tourists
- Local government support groups
- Local community groups
- Family
- Schools, uni's/Other educational institutions
- Police
- Non-human things (any point of reference)
- Publications

## **Story spine I**

### **Way back when...**

People lived in small communities where they saw each other everyday and when “Jo” had a problem everyone pitched in and helped. When Fred had a good idea everyone found out about it quickly and trusted Fred because they knew him well. As Angus used to say “If Fred reckons its good, then I’ll do it too”.

### **But one day...**

A government extension person came along and said “Trust me, I am from the government, here to help you. Here is the “expert” advice to solve any problem. At the same time more people moved in (who did not know Fred) and believed the government officer. Fred dies and the only information left was from government experts.

### **Because of that...**

A bad drought came and because there was no Fred everyone waited for the government officer to tell them the answers on how to produce.

### **Until finally...**

The Government reviewed the research and changed their minds and recommendations on management advice. They stopped the extension services (stopped talking, but continued desk-top stuff) because everyone had adopted all the government recommendations and the land/natural resources started suffering and farmers forgot to trust themselves and erroneously trusted “outsiders” who did not know local information about local management practices, geography etc.

### **Ever since then...**

People have left the area, the land is not as productive, people do not look to themselves for solutions – they always look to the government to tell them the answers. So local knowledge is not being spread – its hidden and maybe it will be lost forever, unless it is kept alive and adopted!!!!

Fred’s son found his Dad’s diaries and went to local landcare group meetings .... (to be continued)

### **And the moral of the story is...**

**BUILD ON WHAT YOU HAVE!!!!!!**

## Story spine 2

### Knowing who is the best person to ask

Once upon a time there was a farmer who managed his land.

### **Everyday...**

The farmer went out and managed the land

### **But one day...**

The government decided that the farmer needed a very smart person who was the fountain of all knowledge – Da Da! – the district Agronomist.

### **Because that...**

Worked so well they created a range of new positions and new government departments.

### **Because of that...**

It was repeated through all levels of government

### **Because of that...**

Rural merchants decided to get in on the act as well.

Then because of that, some of the government roles disappeared and then reappeared in different departments

### **Until finally...**

There was great confusion about who was doing what and no-one knew who the best person to ask for (the right) information was.

### **Ever since then...**

The farmer has been in the dark about who the best person to ask was.

### **And the moral of the story is...**

To always ask the farmer what they want!

### Story spine 3

Knowledge islands: territoriality silos and stuff

#### **Way back...**

Before the drought.

#### **Everyday...**

The locals interacted with the scientists and there were EXTENSION OFFICERS!

#### **But one day...**

Resources became scarce and to save \$\$\$\$ functions were centralised.

#### **Because of that...**

Knowledge islands and silos were created – that cause issues!!! (e.g. duplication.....)

#### **Until finally...**

The NRM regional bodies were formed to work across NRM as a whole.

#### **Ever since then...**

NRM regional bodies are trying to get and collate information from the silos:

- to contribute to state and federal reports and monitoring.
- - to contribute to local government and on-ground outcomes.

#### **And the moral of the story is...**

SNAFU!!! (Situation normal and all F\*\*\*\*\* up!!!)

## Story spine 4

### Way back when...

The tribes of science, politics, farmer, grazier, community, townies, government formed and claimed their territory.

### Every day...

They would gather around their campfires (e.g. the lab, parliament, tractor, café, hall) and sing songs about their culture.

### But one day...

A decree was issued across the land that said all tribes shall join together in the pursuit of NRM.

### Because of that...

They gathered together to tell the other tribes their wisdom.

### Because of that...

They realised the difficulty in getting their message through.

### Because of that...

A rumble went through the tribes, which was accompanied by talk of war.

### Until finally...

A regional body super tribe arose from the rubble and declared that everyone was saying the same language.

### Ever since then...

.....grass = vegetation = biomass = feed

### And the moral of the story is...

Sometimes regional bodies need to be the interpreter to help stakeholders say they are saying the same thing.

**Biggest issues in regional bodies working with local knowledge providers**

1. Different timeframes between regions and local knowledge providers
2. Impact of geography and climate on engagement
3. Multiple stakeholder perspectives and priorities
4. Succession planning
5. Knowing who is the best person to ask
6. Too many know-it-alls (“experts”)
7. Burn-out of champions
8. Using right language and communication methods
9. Notice period getting them to make time to engage
10. Using inappropriate methods (forms, jargon)
11. Trust and privacy – building and maintaining
12. Not enough use of local knowledge, good practice
13. Knowledge “islands”, territoriality, silos
14. Lack of clarity of roles and responsibilities

## **Knowledge strategy**

What knowledge for what purpose and who participates?

Market NRM with production focus

RKRRK – feedback on missing links, research needs; general feedback on website leading to constant improvement

NRM persons focus on relationship building, eg farmer; lifestyle escapists – right person for each type – also rolling team visit farms, towns

Involve local knowledge providers in this from beginning

Have pool \$\$\$ to facilitate participation

More time in knowledge provider's back yard, back paddock

User-friendly, drop-in centre for info, coffee – knowledge hub

Create knowledge where people feel comfortable

Every Wed have govt officer in

“Pay” for local knowledge provider's time

If good result do not need to pay, if can't see result then poor communications

Value their time, eg provide labour and support – working bee

Breakdown silos

Use social science

Understand blocks

Look through the assumptions, understand social situation, eg incentive programs appropriate to local community – holistic approach

Barter approach

Noticeboard organised around themes

World Café – add ideas

## **Get to know each other's roles**

Get to know each other – creating an atmosphere of respect through perspectives and experiences

- BBQ
- Opportunities for people to meet each other

Getting involved in local initiatives/groups/activities

\* How does our organisation know what it knows?

RKRK – list of key organisations

- show links – internal – media officers to communicate these
- show definition of roles (organisations/regional groups need to sort this out first)
- web/paper/email based updates

Encourage collaboration – particularly at the communication level

Building strong relationships (internal and external)

Encourage innovation through examples of collaboration

- working together from existing model practices
- RKRK could showcase good examples – real examples – pilot regions

One on one and small group knowledge sharing – time rich

National coordination of information

- newsletter
- relevance?

Documenting learnings (internally)

- successes and failures and issues

## **How can regional bodies work more effectively with local knowledge providers?**

Develop an NRM thesaurus also relevant for industry (eg grass = feed = biomass) as a translator to help communication, eg landholder meaning

We understand there is maintenance cost with this – currency

- risk of mistranslation with different categories of stakeholders and credibility and no one will work with the regional body

- forge stronger links with community eg collecting and aggregating local information to save individual landholders being repeatedly approached for same information from surveys, govt agencies etc. Can be reproduced as information for wider audience eg SW QLD weeds publication

- risk of mistranslation

- consequent reduction of credibility and lack of engagement with regional body

Reduce use of jargon words – language is important!

Dumbing down research for general consumption to give access to local information

Retention and preservation of landholder local knowledge is something to be valued – before it disappears!

Communication of research is just as much an emphasis as the research itself – select a researcher with great communication skills (or a team with these skills)

Target an end user reference group to road test your audience and how your communication is conveyed

End user reference group can feed into future research priorities

## **Solutions – regional bodies and local knowledge providers**

Understand who they are working with – needs, demands to tailor message

Understand existing knowledge base and build on it

Stop being an “expert”! Be a facilitator – broker

Recognition

Respect

Response – collaboration and solution “participation” – work with, not for!

NRM Toolbar – aka “Google”

Getting out there, ie meeting the people on their terms, their patch

Easy access to the right info in the right context and with the right support

Having NRM as a “line item” in budgets to allow focus on core NRM business and continuity of employment

Kite flying, irons in fire and fishing lines/nets in dams, ie we need a bite somewhere – LWA?