

Chapter 2

What They Told us: The Views of Queensland Catchment Committee Chairs and Coordinators on ICM

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Summary This paper reports on a survey of Queensland Catchment Committee Chairs and Coordinators. The mail survey sought to find their views on how they thought the ICM process was going in the state and what were the issues that made it successful or were obstacles. Apart from some preliminary analysis by the authors in the discussion at the end of the paper, this summary is limited to “what they told us”. Opinions are presented on the major issues for catchment management, levels of support from various quarters and suggestions on how to make the process work better.

THE SURVEY AND RESPONDENTS

This report is a summary of the responses of the Chairs and Coordinators of the 14 Catchment Coordinating Committees (CCCs) that operated in Queensland in late 1995 to a survey of their opinions about the Queensland ICM program. Individuals responded to the survey on the understanding that their views would be confidential and used only in providing summary information. The survey sought their responses to a number of questions concerning:

- the activities of their own catchment committee,
- important catchment management issues,
- the level of support provided by the community, other agencies and NGO groups,
- the difficulty of resolving catchment management issues,
- the institutional and financial arrangements for ICM and the general process adopted in Queensland.

This is only a small fraction of the information supplied by the respondents and a complete tabulation of the results is available from the authors. The Mazmanian-Sabatier model of policy implementation provided the theoretical framework for this survey but theoretical perspectives are kept in the background in this discussion.

The state-wide survey was limited to the Chairs and Coordinators of the 13 recognised CCCs and one Catchment Care Group operating in November 1995. It was very pleasing for the quality of the survey that fourteen Coordinators (100%) and 11 Chairs (78%) responded to the questionnaire. All the responses were satisfactory, and most respondents provided significant additional written comments. All the ICM committees are quite young and most of the respondents were the initial appointees in their CCC. Many of the Coordinators were recent arrivals into the catchments as young professionals moving in to take up the newly created jobs with a few notable exceptions. Most of the Chairs are lifetime residents and have lived in their catchments more than 15 years (60%), although there are some relatively new arrivals amongst the Chairs (34%).

The Activities and Progress of Catchment Groups

The major activities of the Queensland CCCs are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Activities Undertaken by ICM groups in Queensland

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Awareness and education programs	14	0
Prepared a situation statement	5	9
Catchment strategy	11	3
Advice to Landholders	6	9
Conducted on-ground projects	9	5

Respondents reported a wide range of activities reflecting largely the age and maturity of the CCCs. Some have been in operation effectively since 1988, whereas some are still in the process of being formed. A progression of activities can be recognised from organisational activities - public awareness and involvement - issues generation - catchment planning - technical studies. The range of activities are all envisaged in the Queensland ICM Policy which now requires the preparation of catchment strategies before funding is provided for projects (Queensland

Table 2: Level of Satisfaction with Progress in their ICM Program

	Chairs	Coordinators
Very unsatisfied	0	0
Unsatisfied	0	3
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4	4
Satisfied	6	4
Very satisfied	1	1
No response	0	1

Less than half the coordinators were satisfied with progress in their CCC and three were unsatisfied, one to the point of resigning over it. The Chairs were generally more satisfied with progress, and while none was actually dissatisfied, almost half were ambivalent.

Local Issues

The issues seen as significant by the respondents naturally varied between regions. In all regions natural resource issues were approximately on par with social and economic issues. Most significantly both Chairs and Coordinators believed that too much government regulation was the single most significant issue, exceeding all other issues. The most significant natural resource issue was water quantity, substantially higher than land degradation and water quality problems, although these too also were significant in most catchments.

Those issues rated highly and very highly by coordinators included economic sustainability, native and feral animal management and pests in national parks, creek bank erosion and siltation, groundwater salinity, land tenure and uncoordinated farm drainage and cross border coordination. Chairs rated only a few issues highly and very highly including rural residential development and storm water and native tree species management.

Table 3: The Significance of Social, Economic and Natural Resource Issues

Issue	Coordinators ratings						Chairs ratings						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Social Issues													
Crime	2	6	4	1					5	5	1	1	
Unemployment		3	5	4	1				2	3	5	1	
Economic and Institutional Issues													
Land valuations		1	4	4	3	1			2	4	3	2	
High taxes		2	1	3	5	2	1		1	2	4	3	
Too much Government regulation		1	3	1	8				1	2	4	4	
Natural Resource Management Issues													
Agricultural land degradation problems			6	4	3				1	3	4	3	
Water quality problems		2	4	5	2				2	2	5	2	
Water quantity problems		2	2	1	8				1	3	3	4	
Nature conservation	1	2	4	3	3				1	6	3	1	

(0 = no response, 1 = very low, 2 = low, 3 = moderate, 4 = high, 5 = very high, 6 = NA/don't know.)

Attitudes and Support

Most respondents believed that support from the general public was low due largely to the public's low level of awareness about natural resource management issues. (Table 5)

Table 4: Level of Public Awareness about Natural Resource Issues and Impacts

<i>Level</i>	<i>Coordinators</i>	<i>Chairs</i>
Very high	0	0
High	4	1
Moderate	4	5
Low	5	5
Very low	0	1

Only 35% of Coordinators are satisfied with the acceptance of their CCCs by other government agencies. Chairs are more positive on this point.

A wide range of factors generate support from industry and community organisations, especially the efforts of the CCC Chairs. Again both groups of respondents were commonly unhappy with political support and of the acceptance of local government at both the agency and political levels. As in many other results of the survey there are regular exceptions to common patterns. Other community groups rating as important include Landcare groups, Recreational fishing, Commercial Fisherman’s Association, Aboriginal. Council, Sugar Industry (Mills), Tourism. Environmental organisations considered to be valuable for CCC groups included ACF, QCC, Regional Environmental Council, Marine Conservation Society (although there was ambivalence on this, some respondents believed that these groups were obstructionist).

All groups use local newspapers as the most frequent form of media outlet.. ABC rural programs were mentioned by many respondents and a slightly lesser number mentioned local commercial radio. A few CCCs were able to use TV, one even place subsidised advertisements on regional TV. Only one respondent believed the media to be ineffective in supporting the CCC. Eighty percent of Coordinators believed the media to be effective. One said the media were “The Key!” and two others found the MDBC videos very valuable.

An overall summary of the importance of support from different groups is provided in Table 5. Clearly and not surprisingly, the dominant effective partnership is between the CCCs, the DPI (now DNR) and rural producer groups. There was less agreement between the Chairs and Coordinators on the effectiveness of the involvement of local government and even some ambivalence on the involvement of others such as the Department of the Environment. Coordinators did not in general seem impressed with the involvement of Lands and Local Government.

Table 5: The Effectiveness of Involvement in the CCC by Various Groups

<i>Group</i>	<i>Coordinators ratings</i>							<i>Chairs ratings</i>						
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Rural producers				3	7	3		1			1	8	1	
Local government politicians	1		3	4	3	2			1	2	2	5	1	
Local government administrators			3	5	3	2		1	1	2	3	2	2	
State government politicians			5	4	2	1	1	1	1	2	3	2	2	
Qld Department of Primary Industries			1		6	6						4	7	
Qld Department of Environment and Heritage		2	1	5	1	4				1	3	5	1	
Qld Department of Housing, Local Govt and Planning		2	4	3	3	1			2	2	2	3		2
Qld Department of Lands		2	2	5	2	2				1	4	4		2
Valley Trusts (or similar)	1	1		1	4		6	1	1		3	2		4
Drainage Board(s)		1		2	3		7		1		2	1	1	6
Media	5		1	4	2	1		2	1	2	2	3	1	

(0 = no response, 1 = very ineffective, 2 = ineffective, 3 = neither, 4 = effective, 5 = very effective, 6 = NA/don’t know)

Institutional Arrangements and Finance

Table 6 provides results that probe into the difficulties within CCCs. Coordinators believe that some of the most significant difficulties are due to the wide variety of beliefs amongst CCC members, a view not so strongly held by Chairs; a perception that the program has been forced on the catchment by the State Government in communities without financial resources to respond, and a lack of trust in the public in government sponsored initiatives. The Chairs hold similar views differing significantly as a group only in relation to the significance of the wide variety of beliefs and values of CCC members and to a lesser extent on the difficulties posed by the large size of catchments. Both groups believe that the CCCs have the important groups represented. There are some potentially fatal problems identified here, although many can be overcome in time as the ICM process matures and achieves ownership and clearer common perceptions.

Table 6: The Reasons Implementation of ICM in CCCs is Difficult

Reason	Coordinators ratings						Chairs ratings					
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6
Large size of catchment or poor transportation links	1	5	2	4	1		1	3	1	1	4	1
Wide variety of values and beliefs among CCC members		2	1	8	2		1	4	2	2	2	
Media don't report resource issues accurately	1	6	6				1	5	4		1	
Important groups are not represented on the ICM committee	1	5	3	4			2	4	4	1		
Perception that ICM has been forced on the catchment by the state	1	4	3	3	2		2	5	1		3	
Lack of an effective level of interest by CCC members		3	5	5			1	4	2	2	1	
Public's lack of trust in state or local government sponsored initiatives		2	2	3	5	1		2	1	5	3	
Public's lack of interest in community type activities		3	1	8	1			3	1	6	1	
The lack of financial resources within the community	1		1	6	5			2	1	1	7	

(1 = strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3 = neither, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, 6 = NA/don't know)

Table 7 reveals more detail on the operation of the CCCs themselves. Perhaps the most interesting feature of these results is the wide spread of opinions as to the purpose and operation of CCC among the various individuals and catchments in the State. Coordinators for example are not in clear agreement as to what they and their CCCs should do - some believe that Coordinators and CCCs should coordinate activities and give advice to landowners, others do not. Significant differences in opinion exist as to whether the objectives of the local ICM programs are clear to all members and to the level of participation of their CCC members in meetings. They too do not always agree as to whether the CCC should give advice to landholders.

Table 7: Chairs and Coordinators Opinions on the Role and Conduct of CCCs

Statements	Coordinators						Chairs							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Purpose of ICM														
The objectives of the local ICM are very clear to all members	1		6	2	3	1				2	1	6	1	1
There is a strong consensus among CCC members concerning what the CCC should do	1		3	4	5					4	2	3	1	1
The CCC should coordinate state and local government resource management programs	2	1	3	1	3	3				3		4	3	1
The CCC should prioritise resource management problems in the catchment	1				6	6				1		5	4	1
The CCC should provide a forum for conflict resolution among resource users	1		1		6	5					3	4	3	1
The CCC should educate the public about the catchment's resource management problems and solutions	1				6	6					2	3	5	1
The CCC should provide a forum for information sharing within and between public and private resource managers	1				7	5					1	4	5	1
The CCC should prepare a strategic resource management plan	1			1	6	5					1	4	6	1
The CCC should stimulate community or regional development	1		2	3	3	4				2	1	5	2	1
The CCC and its coordinator should provide advice to landholders	2	1	4		4	2		2	1	1	1	5		1
Membership and Role														
The membership of the CCC effectively represents the interests of the catchment community	1			2	7	3						6	4	1
At CCC meetings, all CCC members participate actively	1	3	3	1	5							8	2	1
A CCC member's role is to provide their personal views on resource management issues at CCC meetings	1	3	3	1	5			2	2	2	1	2	1	1
A CCC member's role is to provide the views of their constituency group on resource management at CCC meetings	1	1		1	5	5		2		1		3	4	1
Performance														
The ICM process is very responsive to local needs	1		2	3	7					1	2	7		1
The CCC is solving the priority natural resource management problems in the catchment	1		4	3	4	1		1		2	3	3	1	

(1 = strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3 = neither, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree, 6 = NA/don't know)

DISCUSSION

Problem Definition

It is crucial to the evaluation of the ICM process to identify what is *the problem* and how it affects the implementation process. From a *technical* point of view resource management is finding effective mechanisms to address specific well defined problems such as soil erosion, flooding, nutrient enrichment, unreliable water supplies, loss of biodiversity. The solutions are defined in terms of land management practices, engineering structures, input usage and similar hard technological matters. From a *socio-economic* point of view, resources management is a matter of designing and implementing socially acceptable and effective solutions and preventative actions to these same problems through awareness raising and education, economic, administrative and legal measures

The survey revealed that there are clear enough technical solutions to many of the natural resources management problems in Queensland. These have been canvassed and promoted in some cases for decades and longer - eg floodplain management, soil erosion control, groundwater depletion and acidification. In the Herbert for example there have been three flood studies and three drainage studies over the past twenty years. The proposed technical

solutions have been similar in each case, but the resources management problem still exists. Other emergent problems, such as biodiversity conservation and nutrient enrichment of waterways are not so well defined in technical terms, and ICM groups where these are key issues have greater difficulty focusing their priorities and activities. They need research information to gain a greater understanding of the processes involved and to demonstrate the necessity and effectiveness of technological solutions.

All the respondents acknowledged the difficulty of promoting a program with relatively few immediate benefits but often with immediate cost implications for land holders. This problem is intrinsic to ICM, and can only be alleviated by a change in ethics in the community as a whole. It would be assisted by technical and economic data that demonstrated the severity of the problems and reality of the long term benefits. Those catchments with more apparent and visible resource issues (such as water shortages or acute soil erosion) will have a better chance of focussing community attention.

The Queensland ICM program is part of the struggle to move from sectoral approaches to resources management to an integrated whole of landscape approach. The survey revealed that the biggest obstacle to ICM is the *process* within the community and within government to redress and prevent resource management problems - political and social processes to apply technological solutions. Not surprisingly, this change of philosophy is accompanied by uncertainty and resistance especially when the way forward is not signposted. As yet there is no well tested solution to this problem as a guide to action.

The move towards an integrated approach to natural resources management has come at a time when community expectations about environment and resources issues have increased. In some cases these changes have been rapid and the shift in resource management and economic goals magnifies the extent of attitude and behaviour change required. For example, twenty years ago, farmers were encouraged to develop natural resources such as irrigation, tree clearing for grazing, clearing and drainage for agriculture. Recently, they have been asked to revise their practices substantially. These changing requirements for resource management have been isolated to a considerable extent from the economic development decision making process although there are promising signs that the merger of resource and environmental issues with economic development issues is beginning to occur in rural areas of the State. For example decisions on water resources development, agricultural expansion, water control, use rights and land tenure, resources extraction are becoming the concern of ICM groups. In order to do this successfully, further changes will be required by the major players in natural resources management. At present the ICM program is largely limited in scope to a relationship between farmers and the Department of Natural resources (formerly Primary Industries). Sustainable development requires a whole of government and a whole of community approach to decision about resources and economic issues.

Context for ICM

The Queensland ICM program has been active only since 1990. Consequently a major constraint to any evaluation is the relatively short period of time that CCCs have been in existence and the limited opportunities they have to bring about change. A progression of activities was recognised from organisational activities - public awareness and involvement - issues generation - catchment planning - technical studies - implementation. Judging from the diversity of responses, it requires approximately five years before a CCC will reach maturity along this spectrum. A considerable amount of time is taken establishing the CCC, creating some coherence amongst its members, learning the challenges and opportunities and having the platform for planning and implementation.

Perhaps for the reason that ICM requires a complex process of learning, there was a disturbing low level of satisfaction amongst the respondents at the state level (especially the Coordinators).

CCCs have to contend with low awareness in the general public about resources management issues and a general resistance to external intervention. A surprising, consistent and very significant result from the survey was respondents universal view that there is too much government regulation. People in rural Australia resent government controls on land use whether they arise from World Heritage listing and conservation generally, tree clearing regulations, water and land management regulations, changes to land tenure and land rights laws. There is a clear message here that landholders in particular will resist any solution to ICM problems that involve state and national government regulations.

DNR is the lead agency for ICM which was perceived to be a successful partnership between DNR and the rural land owner interests and not much more than that. There was a widely held view that local governments, both politically and at officer level have not been involved effectively in the ICM process.

Despite the need for ICM to integrate across government agencies there is a clear absence of a “whole of government” approach, commitment or involvement in ICM. State politicians seemed to ignore ICM and there was ineffective, even counter productive involvement of some state agencies. While there was no reported hostility from politicians, agency staff and community groups, it seems that CCCs must create these supporting links themselves with little support from outside.

On a positive note there was wide agreement about the supportive role of the media and of the essential role that the CCCs, its Chairs and Coordinators play in gaining support from the stakeholders. Clearly, the ability of these people is critical to the success of individual ICM programs. The study could not assess these abilities and what skills are essential, personal or technical.

Institutional Structure

Queenslands ICM program has very broad, and from a community point of view, somewhat nebulous goals. There is general agreement on the ultimate purpose of ICM, but also a wide spread of opinions as to the purpose and operation of CCC among the various individuals and catchments in the State. Perhaps this is not a deficiency of the program given that it is intended to be community based.

Financial resources for a program with such ambitious goals has been erratic and low. A key source of funds has been the NLP, without which ICM would struggle to survive. CCCs are required to find funding on their own initiative rather than use established revenue sources as do most public programs. At present they have no revenue raising capacities and there is a lack of confidence in government funding for implementation, which is of particular concern given that once CCCs have been established and created strategies, their requirement for funds for on-ground works will increase their financial requirements. Planning is inexpensive relative to action.

As discussed above, CCCs have not so far had effective involvement from local governments nor from key agencies with statutory resources management responsibilities but the problem is understood and action being taken (DNR, 1996). As coordinating focus for mainstream decisions affecting resources, ICM have not yet been universally successful but then we are talking about a long term process.

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