

Linking Emissions Trading to Natural Resource Management (NRM): Are NRM Plans in Queensland, Australia up to the Challenge?

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The deliberate, goal orientated efforts of environmental governance and planning, which seek to organise and improve the way that environmental resources are used and managed, is limited by an insufficient attention to evaluating experience. Often this is despite major policy and planning reforms that seek to address governance barriers to the achievement of sustainability outcomes. Australia is currently on the cusp of major institutional reform in the natural resource management (NRM) sector, driven by the *Clean Energy Act 2011*. A key governance development is the \$A1.7 billion Land Sector Package (LSP) which will protect and increase the carbon storage capacity in the landscape for greenhouse gas abatement and for emissions trading. Regional NRM plans will identify opportunities to improve landscape management across the forestry, farming and land sectors and regional governance arrangements will deliver programs to promote management action, assess and monitor progress towards greenhouse gas abatement, climate adaptation and landscape resilience.

The economic, social and environmental benefits from these governance reforms are expected to be far reaching for regions and the Nation as a whole but their realisation depends on diverse and disparate planning and governance arrangements that are highly regionalised and which have not been appraised in the light of the new requirements for NRM.

Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) arrangements were first introduced across Australia in the 1990s to improve environmental governance. They used policy and planning partnerships to coordinate and integrate government and local community aspirations and capacities for action. Plans were key mechanisms at the disposal of NRM bodies to structure processes of bargaining and negotiation among these differing interests to achieve public good environmental outcomes. First generation plans were developed and then brought into effect around Australia in the early-mid 2000's. Second generation plans now need to be developed and will guide Australia's landscape approach to greenhouse gas abatement.

NRM evaluation has been patchy in Australia as it has internationally. We take stock of the experience of First Generation NRM planning in Queensland and present the results of a rapid appraisal in light of the emerging requirements for the next generation of plans using plan data and data from a practitioner workshop.