

Sustainability through a better system of regional planning: The CHRRUPP project

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A pilot regional resource use planning project, called the Central Highlands Regional Resource Use Planning Project (CHRRUPP), is being undertaken in the rangelands of Queensland.

CHRRUPP seeks to establish and to evaluate a more negotiated and integrated approach to regional planning for sustainable resource use. As a three-year research project, CHRRUPP is nearing completion: as an ongoing systems approach to regional planning, it is gradually moving to full community control.

Elements of CHRRUPP

A new approach to regional planning

A review of regional planning in 1998 demonstrated that Australia invests heavily in regional planning but invests little in building a better regional planning system. CHRRUPP is a trial project that aims to improve the health of the overall system of planning within a rural region.

An integrated and negotiated approach

CHRRUPP has established an integrated approach by:

- Better informing all regional stakeholder groups about the nature of natural resource management problems within the region
- Directly supporting these groups to do their own regional planning with respect to the sustainable use of natural resources
- Supporting regional groups to adopt a structured approach to negotiate regional solutions to common natural resource use problems
- Researching regional planning techniques and processes that best suit communicative planning and the specific needs of regional stakeholder interests.

Involving the community

CHRRUPP provides facilitation and technical support to assist key regional stakeholders to undertake their own planning. Each stakeholder group regularly meets through a Regional Co-ordination Committee (RCC) to share information and reach agreement on regional actions. The RCC regularly interacts with the wider community via regional information forums and regular newsletters and media information.

Improving natural resource management

CHRRUPP is focussed on the long term sustainability of the Central Highlands region and is underpinned by significant regional initiatives in natural resource management. These include:

- A negotiated process for allocation of the region's limited water resources.

- A framework agreement between the State and the community for long term reform of the region's planning and development assessment system.
- Structured negotiation between the agricultural and environmental sectors to achieve a durable solution for management of the region's native vegetation.
- A community-led forum to seek strategies for coping with major trends in the region's coal-mining industry. This has resulted in a State-led 'whole of government' initiative to respond to regional needs on this issue.

Combining technical and social expertise

The CHRRUPP project team supports planning undertaken by the stakeholder groups and the Regional Coordinating Committee, providing facilitation and technical support and brokering the best available social economic and environmental research. It also brokers significant research partnerships between the stakeholders and R&D providers. The team coordinates and synthesises technical information through a web-based regional information service and a system of rolling regional auditing. The team also assists stakeholder planning through the development of targeted knowledge-based information systems and decision support software (eg. Vegman and JavaAHP at <http://chrrupp.tag.csiro.au/Tools/>).

CHRRUPP has delivered a new way to:

- Resolve major conflicts
- Improve social capital
- Integrate planning
- Attract regional investment
- Provide open access to information
- Undertake significant research on regional planning and processes.

◀ Previous ▲ Top Next ▶

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