

**USING LAND AND WATER AUSTRALIA'S  
'CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL FOR RIPARIAN REHABILITATION'**

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## **OVERVIEW**

This workshop will present a short introduction to the theory of 'capacity' and capacity enhancement and a brief outline of how Land and Water Australia's (LWA) 'Capacity Assessment Tool' (CAT) for riparian restoration was developed.

The workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to step through the tool, assessing a catchment/region of their choice.

Participants will also have the opportunity to participate in a review of the CAT that is currently underway.

Around 20 participants can participate in the workshop.

## **THE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT TOOL**

The Capacity Assessment Tool is a Microsoft<sup>TM</sup> Excel<sup>®</sup>-based computer program designed to help people think about, and work through, the issues associated with their capacity to engage in riparian restoration works. The tool is not intended to be used to make comparative judgements between regions and projects.

The CAT is an outcome of a national research project undertaken in 2002/3. The project involved re-visiting five of the regions that were part of Phase One of LWA's National Riparian Lands Program Demonstration and Evaluation Projects to learn, from the range of people involved, about what enabled and constrained their riparian restoration activities. The case-study regions were the catchments of the Johnstone River (QLD), Mary River (QLD), Blackwood Basin (WA), Goulburn-Broken (Vic) and NSW Far South Coast catchments. These regions are very diverse – climatically, biophysically, socially, politically and economically – however, we found that the people in each of these regions faced very similar challenges in their efforts to undertake riparian restoration projects.

The content of the CAT is based on a 'dialectic' approach to understanding the capacity of regional communities (and institutions) to achieve their desired outcomes. Dialectics is the study of flows and fluxes and sees all 'things', such as 'good' river and riparian management, as the outcome of underlying processes. Thirty-five key issues (or 'dimensions') were identified from the research that impacted on community capacity for riparian rehabilitation (see Table 1).

To complete the steps of the CAT, users select one of three statements that best describes their region/project/site of interest for each of these 35 'dimensions'. Users then nominate whether that condition is improving, declining or remaining static.

Users are then able to assign a 'weighting' to each dimension to reflect what they believe to be the **relative** importance of that dimension in their region.

Users have the option of having the CAT suggest priorities for action in relation to enhancing critical areas in which capacity is identified as lacking. Priorities are calculated on the basis of current condition and trend, and users can change the criteria for nominating priority.

There are various outputs from the tool. Summary results are presented as ‘traffic light’ indicators of relative condition and trend. This output can also be viewed with the numerical data that exists ‘behind’ the tool. If selected, priorities are also suggested. This one-page ‘report card’ provides a useful reference, highlighting areas which need attention.

A detailed report describing possible responses to good, moderate and poor current conditions, taking into account current trends, is also provided. These suggested responses are specific to each dimension and are intended to provide some tips about what might be done to maintain or enhance capacity.

**Table 1 ‘Dimensions’ of capacity within LWA’s ‘Capacity Assessment Tool**

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Dimension</i>
Context	Economic conditions, community cohesion & support, awareness of water quality/quantity issues, setbacks, community networks, community negotiation structures, complexity & cost of works.
Values and Perceptions	Values, shared vision, skills in working with diverse values & perceptions, awareness, open mindedness & learning, perceptions of solutions, ownership of problems and solutions.
Communications and Empowerment	Data availability, communications – targeting, communications – mechanisms, consistency of communications, cooperation between agencies, empowerment, inclusiveness.
Program Design	Roles and responsibilities, financial security, program consistency, institutional consistency, flexibility, forward planning, transparency.
Program Delivery	Decision-making, consistency of key people within agencies, personality of key people within agencies, skills and experience of key people within agencies, community ‘champions’, monitoring and evaluation, institutional capacity.

## **PREREQUISITES AND PREPARATION**

There are no prerequisites for this workshop. Anyone with basic computer skills will be able to participate meaningfully.

The only preparation required of participants before the workshop is to select and start thinking about a region, project or community they would like to use as the subject of their assessment. Waterwatch coordinators, program managers, extension officers, etc. would have enough knowledge about their community and their region ‘in their heads’ to be able to use the tool meaningfully – particularly if you have been in the role/region for 6 months or more.

You may like to ask if other workshop attendees from your area would like to work with you to complete the exercise together. Or, you can complete the process individually and compare your results at the end – which is very interesting as an exercise in understanding different perceptions of issues.

Participants will have to be prepared to do a bit of reading – each dimension has 3 statements of up to 50 words, but once you get into the swing of it it does not take too long. Hard copies

of the text of the statements will be available at the workshop and users will be able save and print their 'results' for later references.

Workshop participants might also like to attend a paper presentation by Don Thomson entitled 'Waterwatch as a community engagement and capacity building tool', which will discuss the theory of 'capacity', from a dialectic perspective and how Waterwatch 'fits' into this model of 'capacity'.

### **WHAT WILL PARTICIPANTS GAIN FROM THE WORKSHOP?**

- An understanding of the key dimensions of 'capacity' and an appreciation of how outcomes are influenced by processes
- Familiarity with the Capacity Assessment Tool – and therefore the ability to 'take it home' and use it
- A print-out of the tool 'results' for later reference.
- A free copy of the CAT to take with you (but LWA would like all users to register so that users can be notified of up-dates)

### **DRAFT WORKSHOP AGENDA**

- Welcome and Introductions (10 mins).
- Overview of the theory behind the tool and how the tool was developed (15 mins).
- Using the tool – basic steps to get you started (5 mins)
- Assessing your region/project/community (45 mins)
- Discussion – impressions, improvements, will you use it? (15 mins).
- (Workshop participants willing to contribute to the current review of the tool can complete a short survey after the workshop, if they would like to contribute to refining the tool).

Don Thomson was principal investigator on the research project and principal developer of the tool. Don also hopes to gain something from the workshop – more feedback on the tool and how it could be used, improved, etc. This information will be fed back to LWA through a review of the tool, which is currently being undertaken by the author.