

# Long Term change, short-Term Memories

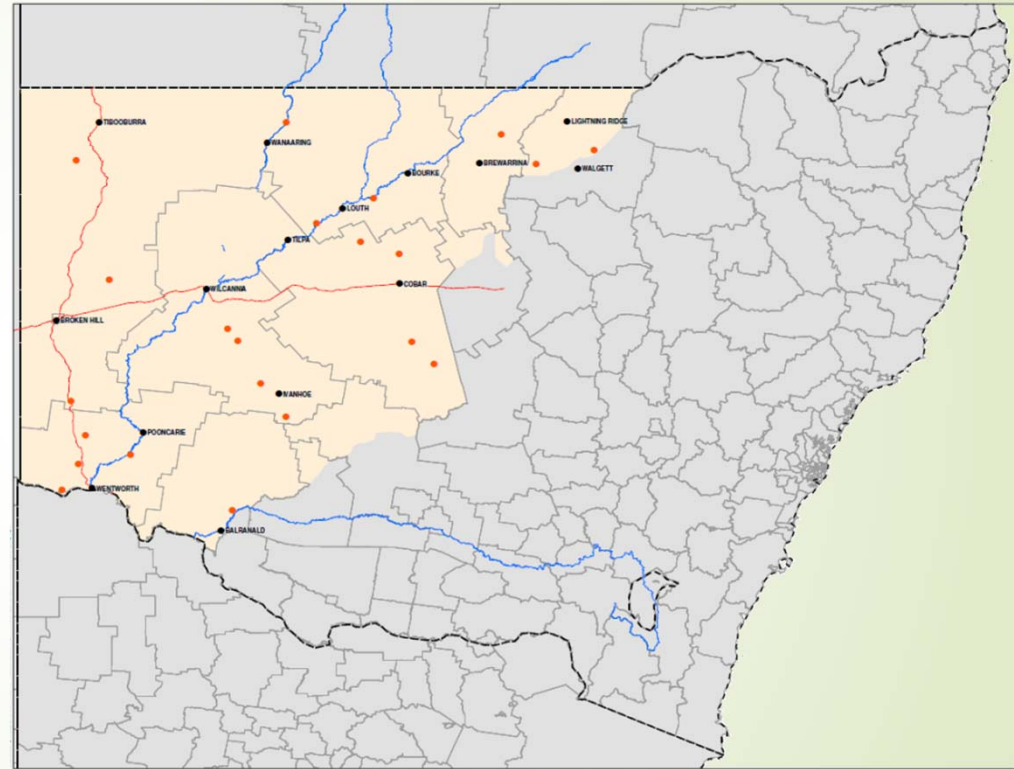
A Dilemma in Evaluating Landscape-scale Programs

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# Background

- 325,000km<sup>2</sup> of semi-arid rangeland
- About 1,600 grazing businesses in 2012



# The WEST 2000 Programs

- WEST 2000 (1997-2001)
- WEST 2000 Plus (2001-2005)
  
- \$30 million investment with the overarching objectives:
  - to contribute to a competitive, viable and self-sustaining Western Division through the provision of measures to enhance the economic performance of Landholders and improve the management of the natural resources base; and
  - to contribute to robust, equitable and prosperous communities.





# The Evaluations

- 2001 evaluation of WEST 2000
- 2005 evaluation of WEST 2000 Plus
  - Mainly focused on outputs
  - A cautious prediction of long-term impacts



# The 2014 'after the event' evaluation

- Objectives for 2014 'after the event' evaluation were to:
  - document successes achieved from implementation of the WEST 2000 Plus program;
  - evaluate the effectiveness of the WEST 2000 Plus program design and delivery against stated program objectives and measures;
  - assess the impact of the WEST 2000 Plus program and the identified outcomes of the program; and
  - inform similar NRM programs and organisations



# Context of Program delivery

- The 'millennium drought' – 2000-2012
- Further government programs in NRM
- Changes in government service delivery
- Advent of new technologies





# Lasting achievements

Lasting achievements of the programs:

- A legacy of a well-managed program
- The value of a 'big boost'
- Commitment to management improvement
- Good timing, good planning and some luck
- Serendipitous benefits



# What was not achieved

- Structural adjustment
- Woody weed removal
- Fully 'self-sustaining' rural industries





# Benefits of 'after the event' evaluation

- Reporting the variable nature and rate of change in rangeland environments
- More certainty about the sustainability of the investments made through WEST 2000 Plus
- Comparing regional performance in the millennium drought to earlier droughts
- Being able to guide current and future investments



# Evaluation Challenges

Category	No.	Comments
Number of WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus participants	1,583	This is nearly all of the landholders in the Western Division
Agreed number for an on-line survey	700	This reduced number was agreed with WLLS prior to scrutiny of the database (URS 2014)
Number of WEST 2000 participants located in the WLLS database	552	This number represents 35% of the WEST 2000 participants
Number of WEST 2000 participants located in the database who left the region after 2005	77	This represents 14% of the participants in the database, which is a measure of property turnover over the 10 years since the end of WEST 2000 Plus
Number of WEST 2000 participants still in the database and still in the region	475	This number represents 30% of the WEST 2000 Plus participants.
(a) Of the 475 landholders, the number with valid email addresses	180	These landholders were invited by email to participate in the survey on-line.
(a) Of the 475 landholders, the number who could only be contacted by phone	5	These landholders were invited by phone to participate in the survey by return of a mailed hard copy.
Total number of landholders that could be surveyed by either email or phone (a) + (b)	185	Total number of landholders (12% of total WEST 2000 participants) contactable and surveyed.



# Evaluation Challenges

- Contacts for 'on the ground' interviews
- Recollections of landholders
- Access to non-landholders with knowledge of the program
- Obtaining secondary data
- Separating out effects of WEST 2000 and WEST 2000 Plus from other interventions





# Conclusions

- The evaluation provided more certainty about long-term impacts,
- Highlighted need for better tracking of regional indicators
- The value of specialist knowledge in the evaluation team
- Knowledge of the context prior, during and post programs
- Importance of seeking unintended positive and negative impacts



# Thank You

- ▶ Vicki Williams, Senior Consultant, Clear Horizon Consulting, Perth WA
- ▶ Don Burnside, Director, DG. Burnside & Associates, Perth WA
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