Communication planning in natural resource management

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Resource Futures

• Our focus is to improve the prosperity and quality of life in Australian communities.

• We do this by:
  – Helping Australians look after valuable ecosystems within their rural and urban communities.
  – Influencing decision-making and policy on natural resource management in Australia.
  – Working at the nexus between the social, environmental, economic and institutional sectors.
Natural resources in Australia
Natural resources in Australia

- We also have a lot of natural resource problems
  - Degradation of land through soil salinity and acidity
  - Loss of native vegetation through clearing
  - Degradation of air and water quality
  - Extinction of native species
  - Feral animals and plants.
Science communication in NRM

- Communication professionals need to improve what they do

- The need to manage dwindling and degrading natural resources
  - the lack of uptake of known solutions
  - the need to justify public funds spent on managing natural resources
Study of communication plans

- 22 plans across government, research and funding NRM agencies
- Types of goals, objectives, activities
- Relationship between these elements

⇒ recommendations for communication planning in NRM
Research findings

• Many communicators lacked:
  – formal plans and planning processes
  – confidence in plans they developed

• Many plans were:
  – not comprehensive (i.e. were missing many important elements of a communication plan)
  – had weak or poorly developed objectives
  – advocated tactics that were poorly related to their objectives
  – did not evaluate their outputs or outcomes
Excuses for not planning

• ‘Lack of time’
• ‘Things are changing’
• ‘Paid for results not plans’
• ‘Doing OK without a plan’
• ‘Don’t know where to start’
Recommendations
1. Understand the basics of communication planning
What are the elements?

- Assessment
- Situation analysis
- Implementation
- Strategy
Elements of a plan

- Situation analysis
- Program goal
- Target audience
- Objectives
- Strategies
- Implementation plan
- Evaluation plan
2. Develop meaningful goals and objectives
Program goal

- Summative statement of desired outcome/s
- Have a broad focus
Types of goal

• Knowledge/awareness
• Attitude
• Behaviour
Types of goals

- Awareness
  - Create top-of-mind recall about an idea or issue for members of a target audience.
- Retention
  - Members of a target audience recall a specific message about an issue.
- Acceptance
  - Members of a target audience internalise a message by identifying it as true, significant, and aligned with their own opinions.
- Attitude formation/change
  - Members of a target audience adopt a new attitude or change an existing attitude.
- Behavioural influence
  - Members of a target audience act or intend to act in accordance with campaign goals.
Objectives

• Key results to achieve the goal
• Objectives
  – give focus and direction
  – are measurable
    (so they spell out the criteria for monitoring)
Types of objectives

1. Assist access to range of relevant, reliable information (environmental, economic, social, institutional)

2. Build networks with others resource users and managers to share information, values and resources

3. Promote discussion of issues to increase understanding and respect for multiple values
3. Use strategies that relate to your goals and objectives
Communication mix

- Advertising
- Mass media
- Electronic media
- Direct mail
- Technical material
- Educational material
- Personal interaction
Communication mix

Knowledge/awareness  attitude  behaviour

Mass approaches  personal interaction
4. Build in evaluation – big and small
In summary

1. Understand the communication planning process

2. Network with other communication professionals

3. Engage in discussion of planning issues