

The National Urban Water Governance Program

A Brief Overview

The National Urban Water Governance Program (NUWGP) is a social research program, based at Monash University, Melbourne, aimed at facilitating progress towards Water Sensitive Cities.

The Australian urban water sector is facing a number of significant challenges as it attempts to implement more sustainable practices in a period of dynamic and rapid change.

The NUWGP provides a reliable knowledge base for addressing these issues by focussing on active collaboration with industry to integrate socio-technical scientific research with experiential knowledge.

Three key questions guiding the research of the NUWGP include:

- What socio-institutional factors are most important for enabling change towards Water Sensitive Cities?
- How can current reform processes be effectively informed and adapted to advance Water Sensitive Cities?
- What are the implications and future roles for professionals in the urban water sector?

Current Research Projects

The NUWGP comprises a number of closely related and complimentary research projects across Australia and overseas, including:

1. Comparative Study of Urban Water Governance

This research project aims to test the significance of different institutional arrangements and other factors in terms of how they constrain and/or enable progress towards Water Sensitive Cities. The project involves an in-depth and comparative analysis across Brisbane, Melbourne and Perth.

These three cities were selected as case studies because they are underpinned by differing urban water governance structures and bio-physical systems, while having similar drivers for re-examining their water management options in response to contemporary sustainability challenges (drought, waterway degradation, increasing populations and climate change).



Research partner organisations include the: Victorian Water Trust, Municipal Association of Victoria, Smart Water Fund (established and operated by City West Water, Melbourne Water, South East Water, Yarra Valley Water and the Department of Sustainability and Environment), Western Australian Planning Commission, Department of Water, Water Corporation, City of Armadale, Brisbane City Council, South East Queensland Healthy Waterways Partnership and Maroochy Shire Council.



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2. Advancing Policy and Organisational Receptivity to Water Sensitive Urban Design

This interdisciplinary research project brings together researchers from three Monash University Faculties: Arts, Engineering and Science. The research is focused on advancing the adoption of Water Sensitive Urban Design (WSUD) principles in practice, through improving knowledge of the design and operation of water biofiltration systems. In partnership with the Facility for Advancing Water Biofiltration (FAWB), the NUWGP team has conducted socio-technical and historical research on how the policy context over the last forty years has influenced the uptake and implementation of WSUD for urban stormwater quality improvement.

FAWB research partners include: EDAW, Melbourne Water, The Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges Natural Resources Management Board, Landcom, VicRoads, Manningham City Council and Brisbane City Council.



3. Advancing Policy and Organisational Receptivity to Diverse Water Sources

This research project examines the critical socio-institutional and technical factors that influence the use/supply of diverse water sources by Victorian urban water agencies. This knowledge will be used to develop enabling frameworks, with strategic plans for each of the critical factors, for these organisations to implement the Victorian Government's *White Paper Our Water Our Future*.

Funded by the Victorian State Government's Victorian Water Trust.

4. Community Sustainable Water Planning

This research project involves trialling a deliberative and local community planning process for sustainable water management. The trial includes different communities across eight municipalities within the Cooks River Catchment in Sydney. The project aims to gain insight into alternative planning approaches often advocated in theory but rarely put into practice. Deliberative planning processes focus on in-depth involvement of the community for the identification of local water issues, and the subsequent co-design and co-management of solutions.

Funded by Marrickville Council and the NSW Environment Trust.

International Collaboration: Dutch-Australian Sustainable Urban Water Futures

The NUWGP, in partnership with the *Living with Water Program* at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands, is undertaking research that aims to compare sustainable urban water management practices across Australia and the Netherlands. The focus is on understanding how to build resilience, at the socio-institutional and technical levels, to the effects of climate change in urban environments. By contrasting local priorities against global phenomena, the research partnership aims to identify the common factors most likely to advance progress towards Water Sensitive Cities.

NUWGP Post-graduate Research Program

The NUWGP hosts an active post-graduate research community, supporting a number of PhD candidatures and honours student projects. Higher degree scholars are encouraged to undertake social research projects that will have direct and tangible benefits to advancing sustainable urban water management.



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Monash University, School of Geography and Environmental Science

Building 11, Clayton Campus, Wellington Road, Clayton / Postal - Monash University, VIC 3800, Australia

Phone + 61 3 9905 9992 / Fax + 61 3 9905 2948 / nuwgp@arts.monash.edu.au / www.urbanwatergovernance.com

