

coasta! Collaboration Cluster



Tasmania: Derwent Estuary Program

Purpose

Building institutional capacity to utilise and transfer science into decision-making is a challenge in contemporary coastal zone management. There are fundamental limits, mostly imposed by time and human capacity, to incorporating even the most appropriate and well targeted science into policy development and planning and management decisions. There are also science 'supply-side' constraints in targeting the very specific problems decision-makers face. This themed investigation explored the opportunities provided by boundary organisations – bridging the interface of science and management – to address these challenges, with particular reference to the Derwent Estuary program (DEP) in South East Tasmania.

Indicative Research Questions

- What boundary spanning functions/activities exist?
- How does convening, mediating, facilitating of boundaries take place?
- Are there individual boundary entrepreneurs?

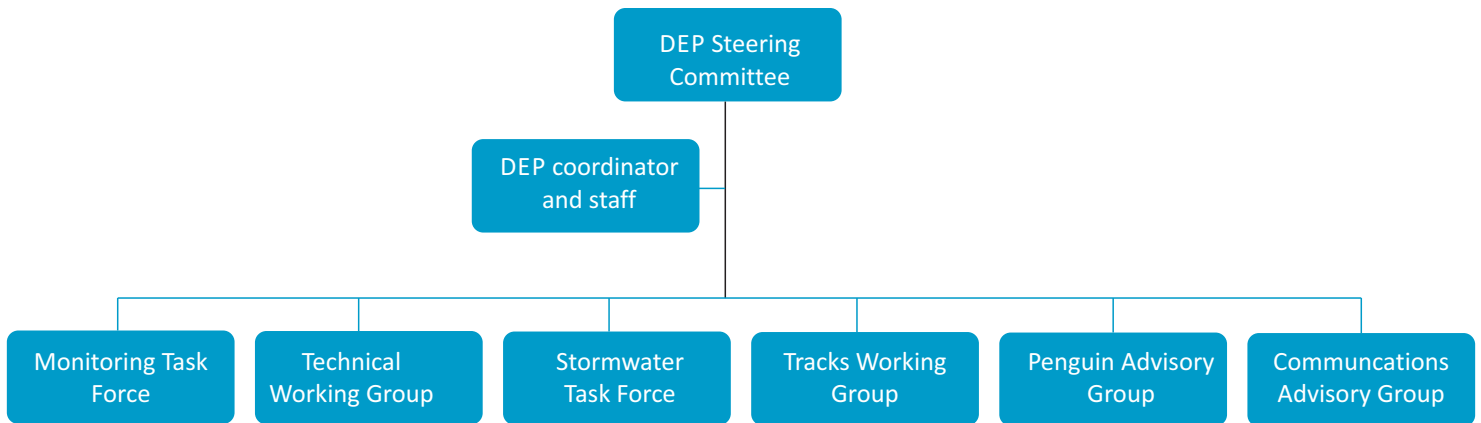
Background

The DEP is a regional partnership comprising the Tasmanian State Government and Local Councils bordering the Derwent in conjunction with commercial and industrial enterprises, research organisations, and community-based groups. Established in 1999, the DEP develops, coordinates and implements framework agreements and practical initiatives aimed at the reduction of water pollution, habitat and species conservation, the monitoring of river health and enhancing the use of the Derwent foreshore areas.

Initially the Tasmanian State Premier and Mayors of the six local governments bordering the Derwent Estuary (Derwent Valley, Brighton, Glenorchy, Clarence, Hobart and Kingborough) signed the management agreement to establish the Derwent Estuary Program. A parallel agreement on water quality monitoring included the major polluting industries. This initial level of governance eventually proved unnecessarily complex, particularly as industry became more comfortable about involvement in more than just monitoring. There is now a single agreement for the environmental management of the Derwent, initially signed in 2002, and re-signed in 2009 for review in 2014. The DEP has a small staff, with the initial agreement including a commitment by all parties to ongoing base level resourcing of the DEP, which enabled that employment of a coordinator and scientific officer.

The DEP includes a Steering Committee that meets only a few times a year and is chaired by the Secretary of the State Government's Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE). Membership includes General Managers of the six municipalities and representatives the major industries, plus TasPorts, Southern Water and the Hydro. Their most critical role is to sign off on the DEP program and management plan for the coming year, and they receive a 'State of the Derwent' update each year. A number of working groups sit below the Steering Committee. Some of these, the Monitoring Task force and Technical Working group are large and play a central role in the strategic direction and core work of the program. Others are more transient or address a narrower field, such as the Penguin Advisory Group.

The CSIRO Flagship Collaboration Fund facilitates involvement of the wider Australian research community in addressing the nation's most significant challenges and opportunities. Flagship Clusters are three-year partnerships between Flagships, universities and other public research agencies.



Taking a long term strategic approach to managing challenges in the Derwent from by providing its partners and stakeholders with a strong science base, the DEP coordinates targeted projects and ongoing monitoring programs, producing an annual report card and a State of the Derwent Report every five years.

Key Findings

We examine the evolution of the DEP from a science partnership to a stable boundary organisation. Unlike a classic boundary organisation, which acts an intermediary between to external agents (e.g. a Government agency and a research organisation), the DEP has positioned itself carefully on multiple boundaries: between state and local government, industry, science agencies, and the broader community. It serves particular goals of each of these groups in a way that allows for synergy and delimits political controversy and risk.

Key themes which run through our social history of the DEP, and are articulated by participants as leading to the, success of the DEP, are: the alignment of interests of the players/partners, the returns on their investment, the development and maintenance of trust and reciprocity, leadership, and the maintenance of strict boundaries around what the DEP does and does not do. These elements have shifted overtime with the changing legislative, social, political and economic context, which has been strategically negotiated by the DEP and its partners to enable the longevity of the organisation.

The DEP is informative about key issues in the boundary organisation literature, especially related to the model of boundary organisations based on principal-agent theory. A classic boundary organisation sits between two principals becoming and agent for each. In the case of the DEP there are multiple parties with multiple objectives that the DEP facilitates and mediate between – such multi-boundary players facilitate interaction and points of intersection and alignment among these interests, including those of scientists and science agencies.