



RURAL INDUSTRIES RESEARCH
& DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Community participation

in rangeland management

**A report for the Rural Industries Research
and Development Corporation**

by Dana Kelly

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Foreword

Governments are increasingly using participatory approaches for solving rangeland problems. The value of involving local communities is generally appreciated by agencies and their staff, and many landholders appreciate the opportunity for greater involvement with land management programs. Many, however, remain critical of some of the current approaches.

The work reported here surveyed a wide range of landholders and agency staff to determine their attitudes to participation, and to see how future participative programs might be improved. The work also examined how the types of approach could be tailored to the specific situation, the motivations of participants, and what models are effective at different scales.

Interviews were conducted in four Rural Partnership Program regions: two in Queensland, one in New South Wales and one in Western Australia. One of the Queensland regions, the South west strategy, was examined in depth; the other regions were used to validate the findings across the rangelands. Finally, this report proposes guidelines to assist individuals and organisations to choose suitable participatory methods.

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Peter Core
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Executive Summary

The purpose of this project was to assist organisations to improve participatory approaches used in rangeland management. The research revealed that in the regions, many approaches are being used to involve local communities. Some consultative approaches merely provide information or collect the views of local people; other, highly participative approaches incorporate local knowledge in project planning and implementation and attempt to share decision-making power with local people.

The terminology used to describe the various types of participation is inconsistent. Words such as *consultation*, *participation*, *community engagement*, *partnership* and *collaboration* are often used interchangeably, and the meanings are different in different States and regions. In this report, *participation* is used as the umbrella term to mean a range of processes through which local communities are involved and play a role in effecting government programs.

The concept of community participation has been promoted world-wide since the 1970s and is extensively used in the fields of development (e.g. rural development, sustainable development, community development) and government. In agriculture, increased community participation and sharing of responsibilities for land management parallels the shift from the transfer-of-technology model to one that has emphasised education and, more recently, human development. The shift from solely “top-down” approaches to those that include some “bottom-up” elements came from the realisation that local knowledge was valuable, even apparently “primitive” or “indigenous” knowledge which was very different from the widely accepted “scientific” knowledge sources.

Many researchers and organisations (Chambers 1997; Commonwealth of Australia 1999; Jiggins and Röling 1994; Pretty 1997; Scoones and Thompson 1994; WECD 1987; World Bank 1996) came to recognise the importance of — even the necessity for — using local knowledge and diverse perspectives in developing solutions to land management problems. Governments and local communities, particularly landholders, need to be involved in decision-making about rangeland management. It is the landholders who are the custodians of most of the rangelands and undertake most of the land management. Participation by local communities has the potential to improve government decision-making, to enhance effectiveness and efficiency of government programs, to encourage ownership and improve land management practices, to enhance learning by landholders and agency staff, and to facilitate social change.

In the Australian rangelands, the trend in policy and government guidelines has been to promote participatory approaches for a variety of reasons. Landholders usually appreciate opportunities to “have a say” and influence government policy and regulations. Government decisions can benefit from the input of local knowledge. Participatory approaches that share decision-making power with the community clearly enhance ownership and motivate people to change land management practices. Although sharing power can be threatening for the government, community participation can be used to collect local knowledge, reduce conflict and co-opt volunteers to stretch budgets; or it can be a mere token activity undertaken to appease policy directives. Sometimes however, participation inappropriately used can exacerbate problems rather than develop solutions.

A comparison between different stakeholder groups involved in land management programs revealed that the most significant differences in perspectives about participation occurred between rural landholders and government staff. These perspectives were dynamic, varying between States, between centres and over time. The differences tended to be most pronounced when agency staff were based outside the rangelands. Staff who lived and worked in rangeland regions tended to think that they understood the views of landholders, but cultural and generational differences caused difficulties in understanding and communication. Although landholders and agency staff agreed on the broad issues, misunderstandings were rife where subtle meanings and underlying motivations were involved.

These differences in perception indicated aspects of participation that could be improved. These include strategies to:

- minimise the costs of participation for landholders; e.g. by holding activities in local centres to reduce travelling time, by organising activities to suit busy property schedules and by offering financial support to offset travelling costs,
- clarify the function or purpose of participatory activities; in particular, by being explicit about the issues that landholders can influence and what has already been decided,
- develop more definite links between the structure or methods used in participation and the purpose (often, the methods did not match the purpose),
- define more carefully the roles of individuals within groups,
- improve communication, including such aspects as honesty and active listening,
- recognise that building trust and building relationships with individuals are vitally important, but take considerable time and effort,
- improve language to enable landholders to better understand government documents,
- develop training programs to build social capital for both landholders and agency staff, and
- increase awareness within agencies of the value of landholder knowledge.

Even within the existing framework of government, the above strategies could be implemented and the effectiveness of existing participatory activities improved.

In-depth research was undertaken in SouthWest Strategy regions of western Queensland and secondary case studies were carried out in the Gascoyne–Murchison in Western Australia, the West 200 region of New South Wales and the Desert Uplands region in central Queensland. These regional development initiatives all began as part of the Commonwealth Government’s Rural Partnership Program (Department of Primary Industries and Energy 1995a; 1995b). The perceptions held by landholders and government staff were compared in all regions, and many issues had a high degree of commonality. Most differences in perception were found between people in Western Australian regions and people from the regions of the eastern States (which may have a historical basis). Western Australian pastoralists were more positive about government staff, even though they tended to have far less interaction with them, and fewer opportunities for interaction.

Some of the myths associated with the so-called “apathetic majority” of rural people are questioned in this report. Landholders who do not want to participate with government (the “non-participants”) were studied only in south-western Queensland. The non-participants are not necessarily the landholders who most need assistance, as is commonly thought; some are financially secure and do not have environmentally degraded land. While many landholders are not regular participants in government programs, all those interviewed said that they attended at least one event annually. This is consistent with observations and other research reports (Nielsen · McNair 1998). Many of the non-participants were active in organisations such as local show committees, the Isolated Parents Association and rural industry bodies, and made other contributions to their communities.

The key difference between south-west Queensland landholders who do not commonly participate with government and those who do, seems to be that the non-participants believe that they cannot influence government decisions through participation. Landholders often said that government officials did not listen, had made up their minds before consulting, had no empathy with people in the

bush, and were not interested in landholders' situations and concerns. Other reasons suggested by landholders for not wanting to participate were:

- they were suspicious of and mistrusted government bodies,
- They believed that the government had hidden agendas,
- they resented the costs of participating, including time away from their businesses and distance travelled to attend meetings, especially when they could not afford to hire labour.

Landholders who participated regularly with government were motivated by both positive and negative factors. One key motivation was the desire to learn. Others included a desire to represent and promote the views of landholder, rural community or industry groups; to safeguard the future of rural and regional Australia for future generations; and sometimes to attend social events. Occasionally, regular participants were motivated by concerns (or even fears) about increasing government regulations, and that if landholders were not seen to be interested they would be ignored later. The most important factor motivating attendance was probably the desire to influence the government and to share in the decision-making power.

Power and the level of power sharing are key aspects of participatory activities, yet the importance of these factors is often misunderstood (or even goes unrecognised) by facilitators. The typologies of participation (e.g. Arnstein 1969; Cornwall 1995; Pretty 1995b) help clarify the possible levels of power sharing in participatory activities. However, these typologies are still too simplistic; for example:

- In this research, it was found that landholders did not always want to be involved in decision-making as sometimes, simply receiving information is appropriate; yet the typologies imply that more participation and a greater degree of power sharing are always better.
- The examination of government programs in south-west Queensland highlighted that the level of power sharing fluctuated over time and that several levels could operate during any one project; yet the typologies assume that levels of power sharing are static.

In highly participative projects the level of power sharing would be frequently negotiated, even though the levels between landholders and government were likely to vary. Making the level of power sharing explicit to all participants is recommended, but is often difficult.

Government staff and landholders across the Australian rangelands seem to have different perceptions of power sharing. Some of the dissatisfaction about participation, particularly from the landholders' perspective, revolved around inaccurate expectations and confusion over power sharing. Landholders were especially concerned about the impact they could have, and which aspects of the program or decision they could influence. The lack of clear intent about how power was to be shared in land management programs contributed to landholders' mistrust of government across Australia.

Two key problems need to be solved if participation is to be improved in the Australian rangelands. The first is that government facilitators often fail to understand the complexity of participation, and assume that simple participatory strategies are adequate. The second is that many institutional arrangements actually hinder effective participation.

The first problem will be overcome if government facilitators are more careful in the design of participatory approaches, being cognisant of the complexity of participation. To this end, a model has been developed to assist in designing appropriate participatory processes. This model highlights the following dimensions.

- **Context:** The social, cultural, economic and environmental contexts are different in each situation, as well as being dynamic over space and time. Participatory designs need to account for

differences such as long distances in rangeland regions.

- **Purpose:** participation has various purposes, including improving government decision making, increasing awareness of environmental issues, encouraging community ownership and commitment to changes in land management practices.
- **Scale:** for pragmatic reasons, regional and local scales need different approaches to participation. As a result, the regional scale is likely to have fewer people involved, and learning about on-ground management practices is more limited than at the local scale.
- **Who:** many stakeholder groups remain poorly represented despite efforts of community and government members to encourage participation. Designing specific participatory approaches for particular groups may help ensure that groups are more representative.
- **Power:** several levels of power sharing seem useful in achieving sustainable rangeland management. Landholders certainly appreciate the increased opportunities to influence government decisions; but the degree of power sharing that is desirable for all participants, and the level which is feasible within the project timetable, need to be considered.
- **Stage:** the stage of the project most appropriate and most effective for community participation needs to be considered, particularly as many landholders felt that they were being over-consulted.
- **Constraints:** the capacity of institutions to support participatory approaches, the capacity of the staff to facilitate participation (with its inherent conflict) and the capacity of the landholders all need to be considered. Participation requires flexible government arrangements and responses, and often takes longer and is more expensive than initially thought. Poorly designed and implemented participation can be worse than no community participation at all; therefore the constraints need to be recognised before government agencies embark on any participatory activities.

The second problem is that many institutional arrangements actually hinder effective participation. The lack of clarity about why participation was undertaken, short-term funding cycles, frequently changing staff, increasing regulations and politically motivated changes between approaches to community involvement did not assist in building trust between government agencies and landholders. Even with appropriate designs and the best of intentions, individual staff were limited by the lack of support and restrictive institutional frameworks within which they operated. To improve participation, detailed recommendations are made in this report in the general areas of:

- encouraging greater coordination between government agencies, and so avoiding over-consultation,
- build trust between landholders and agency staff, and
- fostering new alliances between groups with different perspectives, as one way of broadening representativeness of groups.

The results of this research indicate that different participatory approaches are needed in different contexts. Three common scenarios are presented to illustrate the participatory processes, levels of power sharing and types of groups that are appropriate for different types of land management issues. These scenarios occur where the government is (a) collecting information from the community; (b) encouraging adoption of simple technology; and (c) facilitating complex changes in land management practices.

Community participation can play an important role in achieving sustainable development in Australian rangelands. If this participation is to be optimised, (a) initial approaches to and engagement

of participants must be more carefully designed, (b) participants must be more judiciously employed and (c) institutional arrangements must be made more supportive.

1 Participation in the rangelands

1.1 Introduction

The problems facing rural Australia are immense. This has always been true, and the never-ending impacts of drought, distance, flood and fire have become so enshrined in our national consciousness that rural hardships have assumed a popular romanticism; there are myths about what life in the bush is like. This lack of understanding is more hindrance than help to our struggling rural communities: it masks the modern realities, the pressing, immediate problems that have to be faced. It disguises the impact on all Australians of more insidious problems such as falling prices for rural commodities, loss of plants and animals, degradation of productive land and escalating rural social problems. For decades, we have put our trust in technology to solve our problems and, largely, this trust has been honoured; but we are discovering that our solutions do not lie in technology alone. Much of it remains unused. We need to apply our knowledge and wisdom to better manage our existing resources — but how? Knowledge and wisdom are widespread commodities, and there are so many diverse interests clamouring for attention and influence that they compete rather than collaborate, argue rather than form alliances, each immobilising the other in conflict. Clearly we need new skills — social skills — that will help us to garner and capture this wisdom and knowledge, from all its sources. We need new approaches, new models, that can be employed to bring these diverse interests together in useful alliances. Fortunately, there *are* new approaches being tried, and new models examined. One of these models in particular is showing great potential; termed *participation*, it is already being used effectively to improve collaboration in solving rural problems. It is participation that forms the subject matter of this study.

1.2 Solving the problems of rural Australia

Alliances, even “unholy” alliances, have been formed from time to time to overcome the problems facing rural Australia. “Unholy” because groups now working together were once in opposition, having very different perspectives about land management. The first well known alliance of this sort was created in the 1980s when the Australian Conservation Foundation and the National Farmers Federation initiated the Landcare movement (Toyne and Farley 1989; Campbell and Siepen 1994). In 2000, water and salinity problems were the catalyst for an “unholy quartet” of conservationists, farmers, Aborigines and the social services sector (*Weekend Australian* 5–6 Feb. 2000, p.10). These groups came together for the first time to recommend that all Australians pay a salinity levy to spread the burden beyond the rural people on whose land the problems were manifest.

The problems in rural and regional Australia are wide-ranging. Declining terms of trade, the pressures of globalisation (Vanclay and Lawrence 1995; Napier 1997), land degradation (Commonwealth of Australia 1996), drought (Daly 1994), species extinction (Commonwealth of Australia 1996) and the proliferation of pest plants (Commonwealth of Australia 1997) have all received wide attention. Social problems are gaining greater recognition; for example burgeoning farm debt, youth suicide, limited medical services and bank closures in small centres are all symptoms of rural decline (Alston 1999; Lawrence 1995). Ecological, economic and social problems are linked, with socially disadvantaged people often living in economically declining regions where environmental degradation exists (Lawrence 1995, 1996).

The need to form alliances underlies the real challenge: managing people. Managing people is really about managing the diversity of interests and differences in perceptions held by individuals. In the rural environment, these interests are about the land, the way it is managed and who is responsible for paying for that management. Science and technology are usually the focus of attention, but much of the current understanding about land management is not employed. The answers lie in making better use of existing knowledge and capacity, not simply in inventing new technology.

The adoption of existing technology is determined by people's varying perceptions about the value of the land and how it should be managed. Many people have a stake in how Australia's land is treated: the people who depend on rural land for their livelihoods, people who live in rural and regional areas, people who visit the country for holidays, people who have spiritual links to country, and people who care about the native wildlife. Most of Australia's land is rural, yet the population is concentrated in urban areas. Australia is one of the most highly urbanised societies in the world (Garnett and Lewis 1999) and these urban people significantly influence land management.

Identifying who needs to be involved in making decisions about land management is often difficult. The literature rarely discusses "who" should participate (Guijt 1998 p.10). Australian rural environments are experiencing rapid and profound change and the nature of rural communities is diversifying. Sher and Sher distinguished between the terms *rural* and *farming* and contended that "all rural places are not farms, nor are all rural Australians farmers" (Sher and Sher 1994 p.13). They suggested that between 83% and 96% of rural Australians are not farmers. While much of coastal rural Australia supports a diversity of enterprises, diversity is less marked in the pastoral lands of the inland. Even so, landholders, government, conservationists, Aborigines and mining companies often have an interest in inland areas, depending on the region. The changing social landscape has resulted in many stakeholders becoming involved in land management; all need to be considered in participatory methodologies.

To solve problems in complex circumstances where uncertainty and instability are common, multiple perspectives need to be taken into account (Schön 1983). In land management, scientists, policy makers, conservationists, landholders and other members of rural communities need to utilise each other's expertise and knowledge to develop integrated solutions. Many environmental problems, including weeds and pollution, do not respect property boundaries and need catchment or regional solutions. Landholders need to work with their neighbours as well as with scientists and others to develop answers. The traditional models of technical rationality based on single disciplines or sectoral "fixes" are not always appropriate; rather, holistic approaches that incorporate multiple perspectives are frequently needed (Reid 1995; Schön 1983 ; Tighe and Taplin 1990; Fisher and Hovermann 1988).

Stakeholders need forums to facilitate discussions about land management. The participation of local communities in land management programs to achieve this integration has been heralded by many as the way to achieve sustainable development. For the past two decades institutions world-wide have promoted participatory approaches in rural and agricultural development programs (Bamberger 1991; Keen and Stocklmayer 1998; Lawrence, Vanclay and Furze 1992; Pretty 1995; Scoones and Thompson 1994; Wilson 1987; World Commission on Environment and Development 1987; White, Nair and Ascroft 1994). The Earth Summit (United Nations 1992) was one of the first international agreements to recognise the need to involve local people in formulating strategies for sustainable development. In Australia, the National Strategy for Ecological Sustainable Development (Commonwealth of Australia 1999) has promoted participation to provide more informed analysis of community values and needs. Their assumption is that this will lead to more effective programs. Better decision-making and facilitating implementation are often seen as key benefits of participation (Diesendorf and Hamilton 1997).

Governments may formulate policies but it is the local people who actually manage the land. It is these individuals who implement land management practices, and without their involvement change is impossible. Rural people are responsible for tending much of the world's land, and the conservation of this resource is vested in them as custodians. Fundamental changes to land management practices are required and this means social change also, in rural communities.

To enable better land management practices and to improve decision-making, learning is required. Learning needs to incorporate different perspectives and to integrate different knowledge systems. For example, integrating indigenous farmer knowledge and scientific knowledge are increasingly seen as necessary to solve complex land management problems (Abbot and Guijt 1998; Pretty 1997; Chambers, Pacey and Thrupp 1989; Gabriel 1991; Russel and Ison 1991). Agricultural extension

models incorporating learning are increasingly being promoted to replace more traditional transfer-of-technology models (Chamala, Coutts and Pearson 1999; Jiggins 1993; Macadam 1997; Röling 1995). These emphasise the view that end users and government policy makers can learn from each other.

However, participation is not the panacea for all rural problems (Guijt 1998b). Current policy directions espouse the value of partnership, consultation and participation of local communities. In reality, participation processes are often difficult (Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau and Thomas-Slayter 1995; Warburton 1997; White et. al. 1994). Inappropriate designs or ineffective communication in participation can exacerbate problems rather than develop solutions: one recent example comes from Queensland, where antagonism was generated because of the process used by the Government in vegetation management legislation (*Courier-Mail* 15 Feb 2000 p.2; *Queensland Country Life* 9 March 2000 pp.1, 3, 4; *The Weekend Australian* 11-12 Dec 1999 p.10).

Jiggins (1994 p.140) suggested that the current focus on participation may falter if the quality of methodologies is not questioned. This comment is particularly relevant to Australia, where the character of current participation processes is not well understood in the management of agricultural land and natural resources. Few studies provide a rigorous analysis of participatory methodologies, especially in the rangelands. Clearly, there is a need to examine how Australian participatory approaches may be improved.

Participatory approaches needed in the rangelands could well be different from those required in other areas in Australia, because of the large distances and sparse population. These extensively managed areas may be under greater threat of decline because of the lack of opportunities for diversification. Research indicates that intensive, more-diversified agriculture supports more-viable communities (Olfert 1997 p.110). Many concerns have been expressed about the future of the rangelands, and some suggest that the current form of agriculture in the rangelands is unsustainable (Abel and Ryan 1996; Auty 1994; Blesing, Andrew, Foran, Abel and Bourne 1996; Eldridge and Freudenberger 1999). The quest is on to find new ways to develop management strategies in the rangelands.

Consequently, this enquiry will focus on how to improve local community participation in Australian rangeland management. To improve participatory methodologies, it is important to understand the way in which participation is being implemented. This enquiry begins by describing existing participatory practices used in Australian rangeland management programs. It then addresses the need for a conceptual framework to guide the participation of local communities in achieving sustainable land use within the Australian rangeland context.

1.3 Research context

In pursuing this aim and to better understand the reality of what works and why, this study will explore the perspectives of the various groups involved in rangeland management. Particular attention will be given to land managers and government.

The primary research objective was

to assist governments and communities to develop effective community participation approaches for local and regional government programs to improve sustainability of Australian rangelands.

Achieving the participation of rangelands stakeholders may require approaches that are different from those used in the more closely settled coastal areas. In the sparsely settled rangelands, time and distance are likely to be major issues for people who have to travel to attend meetings. Participating in other ways, such as via the Internet, is impossible for many rural people because of the poor quality of telecommunication services. Declining economic viability of many rural industries in the rangelands, and falling incomes, exacerbate the problems of apathy and the desire of some to not participate. These issues were investigated during this enquiry.

A number of terms are critical to this study. Although the study is about community participation in sustainable rangeland management, most of the terms used — for example *rangelands*, *sustainability*, *community* and *participation* — have diverse meanings. To avoid confusion, general definitions are provided as a prelude to a discussion about sustainable rangeland management later in this chapter. As participation is the focus of this study, Chapter 2 elaborates on the forms of participation and presents a specific definition.

This enquiry was developed from the researcher's experience of working in the Australian rangelands and is therefore based on particular views and assumptions. The remainder of this section deals with these assumptions (sub-section 1.3.1) and some important definitions (1.3.2 to 1.3.5).

1.3.1 Assumptions

All research is based on assumptions that stem from the researcher's personal view of the world. The same programs, organisations or communities examined by another researcher, from another perspective, would lead to different results and conclusions (Patton 1990). Although each approach has its own strengths and limitations, it is still important to make the researcher's assumptions explicit so that readers can make their own decisions about the relative value of each approach (Patton 1990 p.89).

Key assumptions that apply in this enquiry are:

- Participatory approaches must involve local communities in developing goals and making decisions if rangelands are to be sustainable. While participation of local communities may not be necessary in every facet of land management programs, participatory approaches do assist in improving land management. This assumption is supported by many authors including Chambers (1997), Chambers, Pacey and Thrupp (1989), Jiggins and Röling (1994), Lawrence, Vanclay and Furze (1992), Pretty (1997), Scoones and Thompson (1994), White et al. (1994) and in many policy documents including the World Commission on Environment and Development (WECD 1987), the World Bank (1996) and the Commonwealth of Australia (1999). This research examines how to improve participatory approaches in circumstances where the government has already decided to involve local people.
- Some land management practices in Australia need to change to ensure that rangelands are economically, environmentally and socially sustainable. Many rangeland areas are experiencing problems as outlined later in this chapter, and changes are required.
- Participatory approaches will continue to be used by government. Participation can be seen as a fundamental ingredient at the basis of democracy where people have the freedom to follow their beliefs and to say what they think (Paulo Friere, in White et al. 1994 p.13). The trend in Australia and elsewhere in the world is for increasing participation of local communities. In times of rapid change local people are demanding a greater say in government programs. This emphasis on participatory approaches seems unlikely to alter in the next 5–10 years.
- Participatory approaches can be improved. This premise is based on the optimistic idea that there is always room for improvement and that people have the ability to change the way they interact with others.

1.3.2 Defining rangelands

Rangelands have been defined as

the semi-arid and arid regions of the world where pastoralism is the dominant land use (Eldridge and Freudenberger 1999 p. xv).

The term *rangelands* is internationally recognised as meaning extensively managed areas, usually with livestock grazing, rather than intensive grazing or agricultural cropping (Commonwealth of Australia 1999). In Australia, rangelands cover approximately 70% of the continent (Beare 1995), but because this area is described in several different ways, there are no commonly agreed boundaries. The Rangeland Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia 1999) suggests that boundaries move as climatic conditions alter.

Most of the rangelands occur in the arid and semi-arid areas of Australia, and are characterised by highly variable, but low, rainfall of 150–500 mm per year (Hodgkinson 1995). This is insufficient to allow cultivation. Some definitions of rangelands include areas of seasonally high rainfall across northern Australia — the Tropical Savannas, which are north of the Tropic of Capricorn. The main ecosystem types are native grasslands and woodlands; these are largely undeveloped, except for the introduction of some improved pastures, mainly buffel grass.

1.3.3 Defining participation

As participation is the topic of this research it is discussed in detail in Chapter 2. However, its definition is briefly considered here to allow the context of the project to be outlined. The word *participation* was the catch-cry of the 1980s and 1990s in development agencies (Bamberger 1991; Pretty 1997; White et al. 1994) and has become part of the normal language of many Australian institutions involved in land management. However, the term means different things to different individuals.

Definitions of participation abound. In common use, participation simply means “to take part in some activity”, for example people participate in, or attend, meetings. In the agricultural extension and development literature, the term has been used for decades to mean both a philosophy and a mechanism (or process).

Numerous participatory methodologies are used in agricultural extension in Australia. These include Participatory Learning, Action Research, Participatory Action Management (or PAM) (Chamala 1990; 1995) and Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (or PM&E). These usually have a philosophical base with some principles as well as some defined processes. Chamala (personal communication, November 1999) stated that the terminology that would probably replace the word *participation* is *collective action* or *collective governance*. These terms emphasise the power relationship and the need for equity which defines “genuine” participation in the development literature.

This enquiry uses participation as an umbrella term to encompass the different types of participation used to involve local people in land management programs. The literature about participation is reviewed in Chapter 2 where the definition used in this study is presented.

1.3.4 Defining sustainability

The term *sustainable development* first came to prominence in 1980 when the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and National Resources (IUCN) produced the World Conservation Strategy (IUCN 1980). The emphasis was primarily on ecological processes even though this Strategy reinforced observations of earlier conferences about the need for an integrated approach to environmental problems (United Nations conferences in Stockholm in 1972 and Bucharest in 1974, Moffatt 1992).

The Report of the Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future* (WECD 1987) focussed world-wide attention on sustainable development and offered several descriptions of the concept. It linked ecology, economics and the idea of *intergenerational equity*, saying that sustainable development was development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WECD 1987 p.43)

The Australian National Conservation Strategy (1996a) and the National Strategy for Ecological Sustainable Development (1992) adopted a similar idea by including the needs of Australians today, as well future generations.

Since the Brundtland report, many authors have attempted to provide a clearer and more concise definition. Pretty (1999) found about 100 published definitions of *sustainability* in an attempt to clarify what is being sustained, over what area, for how long, for whom and at what cost. Precise definitions are inappropriate because sustainability should not be seen as prescribing certain goals or levels to be attained or defining certain practices or policies (Pretty 1994; Cox, MacLeod and Shulman 1997); nor can it be used as the basis for theory or action (Wilbanks 1994).

Our Common Future states that “Sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change” (WECD 1987 p.9). The dynamic nature of sustainability in a world where change is inevitable precludes a static definition — environmental conditions, technology and knowledge all change. People have different perceptions about sustainability and the meaning of the word alters according to circumstances and who is using it. Sustainability is more a process for learning according to many authors (Pretty 1995; Reid 1995; Röling 1994). Learning is usually seen as a prerequisite or at least a component for change. This report uses this definition of sustainability — a process rather than a fixed goal or state.

1.3.5 Defining Community

The word *community* is used in everyday language but its definition can be elusive. Sociologists in particular have used it in numerous ways; in the mid-1950s, Hillery (1955) discovered 94 different definitions. The notion of community is fundamental to sociologists and its meaning has been debated by several seminal scholars including Durkheim, Weber, Tonnies and Simmel (Cohen 1985).

While social scientists struggle with the concept of community, for people who live in communities the sense of “community spirit” can be very strong. Sometimes, formal membership is not important. People can be bound together in joint, even aggressive, activity toward a common goal, such as the groups described by Heskin (1991) who fought against being displaced from their homes. Other groups are bound by common ties of kinship, friendship, rivalry, familiarity and jealousy which guide the social interactions of their lives (Cohen 1985). Not all these ties are positive; it is a myth that communities are homogenous. Cohen says

This consciousness of community is, then, encapsulated in perception of its boundaries, boundaries which are themselves largely constituted by people in interaction” (Cohen 1985 p.13).

Boundaries of community are usually based on people or places. Willmott (1989 in McKenzie 1994 p.44) distinguishes between *interest* communities (people-centred) and *territorial* communities (place-centred). People-centred communities are those where people have a common cause, common interests or common ideas. An international community of aid workers or the Landcare community are other examples where people share common interests. Place-centred communities are those where people live in one locality. This is the sense used in the Rangeland Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia 1999 p.34). Here, the boundaries are based on a geographical location, such as south-eastern Queensland or the Cunnamulla town community.

However, boundaries are usually unclear, and choice of boundary usually depends on the individual defining the community as it is culturally and socially determined. According to Wilkinson (in Christenson and Robinson 1989) this blurring does not matter if one is searching for the core characteristics of the community.

The core characteristics will be dynamic and time-dependent, particularly if they are described by the members of the community. Aspects of social interaction and psychological identification will assist in describing particular communities. Social interaction occurs between members of people-centred and place-centred communities, as does psychological identification. People, place, social interaction and

psychological identification are the four components suggested by Hillery (1955) for defining community. The size of a community certainly affects the degree of social interaction that people have; local-scale communities have stronger links with each other.

This enquiry views the term *community* as that which is defined by its members. Clearly, people-centred and place-centred communities can overlap. Christenson and Robinson's definition suits this view where community is:

people that live in a geographically bounded area who are involved in social interaction and have one or more psychological ties with each other and with the place in which they live (Christenson and Robinson 1989 p.9).

Definitions of these terms allow the current situation in rural Australia to be described without misunderstandings about the meanings of the key terms. The following section briefly describes the economic, environmental, social and cultural context of rural communities in Australian in which governments undertake consultation, participation and partnership activities.

1.4 Rural Australia — the context

Chronic economic, environmental and social problems occur in rural Australia despite the advances in science and agricultural technology. Governments have introduced structural adjustment programs, developed environmental regulations and promoted trade liberalisation policies but the trend of rural decline continues world-wide.

Sustainable development is a balancing act which requires trade-offs between the equally important goals of the social, economic and environmental systems (Barbier 1987). These goals are culturally determined and differ between groups within society. All the relevant groups, including rural people, need to be involved in developing goals and determining how trade-offs are made.

Culture influences communication, learning and power relationships between individuals and groups of people. As has been discussed in the previous section, participatory approaches are needed to bring the various stakeholder groups together, but participation is complex. Simply involving local communities does not seem to be sufficient to achieve sustainable development. This research contributes to finding solutions by examining how participation of local people in land management programs currently operates and how it can be improved. To understand trends influencing rural people's perspectives, and to place their comments in perspective, a brief overview of the economic, environmental and social context of sustainability is now provided.

1.4.1 Economic situation

The economic picture in Australia reflects the experience of other countries. Overall incomes from agriculture are declining, numbers of farmers are declining and farm debt is increasing. Since 1991–92 the average rural income has been consistently below zero, as indicated by 1994 ABARE Farm Survey figures. Since then, agricultural commodity prices have continued to spiral downwards and farm numbers have declined. In the European Union, rural farm numbers have fallen by 21% between 1975 and 1989 while in Australia numbers fell 25% in 25 years between 1970 and 1995 (Gleeson and Topp 1997).

Servicing debt is a major cost for many producers and farm debt levels are rising (Gleeson and Topp 1997). In Queensland, debt had doubled within one year, according to the Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (*Courier-Mail* 31 March 1999). The Queensland beef cattle industry carries the major debt load according to 1997 QRAA data (Reeve 1999). The rangeland areas have a disproportionately high level of debt compared to other rural areas in Australia, according to 1998 ABARE figures (*Courier-Mail* 31 March 1999).

Part of the problem for Australian agriculture is that it is vulnerable to world trends because of its export orientation. The 1980s saw market prices for agricultural produce in Australia distorted by

subsidies and major structural surpluses of agricultural products overseas (Roberts 1997 p.7). Trends in the changing global environment for agriculture which influence Australian rural communities in the 1990s include:

- globalisation increasing throughout the world, and every farmer is a global operator
- small businesses are under pressure from larger businesses and more co-operation is required,
- rapid advances in technology are occurring, especially in genetics and information management, and
- information is increasing in value (Napier 1997).

The impact of globalisation is usually seen as negative, but this is not always the case. Being part of international markets is negative in that it intensifies pressure on commodity prices. This limits farmers ability to alter production regimes and may prevent landholders from becoming more environmentally responsible Vanclay and Lawrence (1995). But, in Australia the positive response to globalisation has been for rural industries to increase productivity (Matthews 1999). Rural industries are recognised as being continuing to become more efficient and innovative with a focus on value-adding (Matthews 1999).

Many of these trends began in the 1960s with the Green Revolution, which produced widening differentials between rich and poor farmers. The 1980s were characterised by increasing industrialisation, driven by technological revolution — for example in the USA (Halcrow 1984) and world-wide (Pretty 1995) — which encouraged specialisation, high-input high-output systems and large-scale operations. Many of these technologies favoured larger enterprises. In Australia, rising costs and increasing reliance on expensive chemicals led to a significant cost-price squeeze that was compounded by declining yields caused by the widespread drought in the 1990s.

However, further structural adjustment is inevitable, and some schemes have begun (e.g. Rural Partnership Program DPIE 1995a, 1995b). The form it takes will vary according to the region. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) some geographical areas in regional Australia are growing while most are declining (OECD 1995). Morrissey (1999 pp.8–10) describes “post primary producer” communities in the coastal hinterland where population is increasing. Here, other industries have become more important than agriculture. In the extensively managed pastoral zone or rangelands of Australia, there are limited alternatives for diversification of agricultural industries. On a broad scale, low and highly variable rainfall and soil fertility are limiting factors (Abel 1999).

In the 1990s, rangelands pastoralism accounted for only 3–6% of the gross value of Australian agricultural production (Beare et al. 1995). In the rangelands, mining currently contributes the most to GDP and a variety of other industries are increasing in importance; meat and wool production was worth approximately \$1 billion in 1993–94, while mining contributed \$12 billion in 1993–94 and tourism \$1.7 billion in 1992–93 (Commonwealth of Australia 1999; Commonwealth of Australia 1996b).

One of the consequences of the deteriorating economic position of farmers is that there are fewer opportunities to care for the environment. Degradation is thought to have occurred because farmers lack information and understanding. However, landholders in the 1990s still choose to ignore land degradation problems, often for rational reasons (Vanclay and Lawrence 1995 p.172). It is increasingly difficult for landholders to care for the land as their enterprises become less profitable. For example, controlling weeds and other pests costs money, and as one landholder interviewed in western Queensland during this project explained: “it is hard to be green when you are in the red”.

1.4.2 State of the environment

It is difficult to assess the state of the rangeland environment. The extreme fluctuations in seasonal and year-to-year rainfall can mask the long-term trends in land condition (Davies 1999). Pastoralists can often dismiss the concerns of scientists about land degradation because of their belief that the “country comes back after a good season” (Lorimer 1999; Davies 1999). On the broader scale, many landholders and scientists recognise that land degradation is prevalent in rangelands.

Land degradation costs about \$1.5 billion per year across all of Australia (Gretton and Salma 1996) Some of the key problems are as follows:

- **Salinity.** Irrigation salinity and dryland salinity both occur in the rangelands. In the Murray-Darling Basin river severe drought-like flows in over 60% of years have contributed to salinity (Queensland Murray-Darling Basin Commission 1999).
- **Soils.** Soil acidity, soil erosion, soil structural decline and nutrient decline all affect agricultural land (Campbell and Siepen 1994; Vanclay and Lawrence 1995). Soil erosion has been identified as a major problem in rangelands with approximately 16% affected in 1988 (Commonwealth of Australia 1996b).
- **Water.** Water management will be one of the major issues to be addressed in the future in Australia. Already, controversy has erupted over water allocation and irrigation licences as exemplified by the No Cotton on the Cooper campaign in south-west Queensland. The Water Policy Reform framework adopted by the Council of Australian Government in 1994 (Commonwealth of Australia 1996b) heralded the beginning of these changes.
- **Introduced species.** Weeds and feral animals threaten the biodiversity of native animals as well as agricultural production. Animals such as rabbits, goats, horses and pigs contribute to over-grazing (Commonwealth of Australia 1996b). Rangelands weeds which are listed as weeds of national significance on the National Weeds Strategy lists are rubber vine, prickly acacia, mesquite and Parkinsonia as weeds of national significance. Weeds cost the Australian wool industry nearly \$600 per annum (Commonwealth of Australia 1997 p.9) and some of this occurs in the rangelands.
- **Vegetation.** Over 20% of the forests have been cleared or thinned (Graetz, Wilson and Campbell 1995). An average of 500 000 hectares of native vegetation was cleared annually in Australia between 1983–93 (Department of Environment, Sport and Territories, Biodiversity Unit 1995). Legislation has been introduced by most States to prevent large-scale clearing, the first being in South Australia. More recently in the Queensland rangelands, much heated debate surrounded the introduction of vegetation management legislation with an emphasis on sustainability and conservation in 1994 for leasehold land and in 1999 for freehold land (Land Act 1994 and 1999).
- **Biodiversity.** Many native plants and animals have become extinct over recent decades. Twenty species of mammals are presumed extinct; eleven of these are from rangelands and a further vertebrate species and 150 birds are considered endangered (Aslin 1996; Commonwealth of Australia 1996b). For example, endangered species in Queensland include the freckled duck, bilby, hairy-nosed wombat and yellow-footed wallaby (Queensland National Parks and Wildlife Service brochures 1999). The rangelands contain many land systems significant for nature conservation, including wetlands of the Cooper Creek, the Channel Country and Lake Eyre Basin, all of which provide habitat for many birds; Currawinya Lakes are listed under the international Ramsar Convention (Cowley 1998).

Links exist between the environment and the social systems. As Lawrence (1995, 1996) points out, social decline tends to parallel geographical areas of environmental degradation. This is true for many areas in the rangelands; for example in south-west Queensland the Rural Partnership Program adopted

an integrated approach to addressing problems by appointing social and financial rural counsellors, undertaking natural resource management projects and supporting regional development programs.

1.4.3 Social systems

Various indicators point to social decline in rural communities in Australia. Most trends in service delivery, health, population and employment indicate deterioration, but there are some indications to the contrary. The closure of banks and the withdrawal of many government services in rural towns have been well publicised (*Queensland Country Life* 3 February 2000 p.7). Withdrawing services is understandable from an economic rationalist viewpoint because with declining populations in most rural communities, services are used less. However, the fall in services is contrary to the serious needs of rural communities, which are suffering from increases in illness and other social problems (Alston 1999).

Overall, rural populations suffer from poorer health, compared with urban populations; rural people have higher hospitalisation rates and lower life expectancies (Lawrence 1995; Strong, Trickett, Itulaer and Bhatia 1998; Alston 1999). Many of the problems remain hidden; male farmers, in particular, are reluctant to seek assistance. The stress of increasing debt levels, reduced farm incomes, difficulties in finding alternative income sources and a lack of opportunities to sell properties contribute to alcoholism, increased domestic violence and suicide. Youth suicide is particularly serious with rates 14 times those of urban areas. Males under 24 years in small rural communities of less than 4000 people are most at risk (Dudley, Kelk and Florio 1997).

With a deteriorating social fabric in many parts of rural and regional Australia, further population decline must be expected. ABARE estimated that the average age of farmers is over 50 (Stayner 1997) and young people tend to drift away from rural localities in search of employment. However, population figures are complex; some authors (e.g. Alston 1999) have shown that up to 200 rural shires experienced declining population in the 22 years up to 1999. Others suggested that the drift to metropolitan areas stopped in the 1970s and that people were moving from small to medium towns in larger communities of 200–1000 people (Garnett and Lewis 1999). Population movements are mirrored by changes in the labour force. The labour force in most rural areas has been static or dropping, while the larger country towns have experienced growth in the labour force (Garnett and Lewis 1999) and overall agricultural employment is increasing (Matthews 1999). Despite all the negative indicators, some rural communities are experiencing growth.

These population and employment figures suggest that many rural people want to stay in country areas. The factors causing rural poverty are usually not personal factors, but structural factors such as unwelcome government policies and the withdrawal of services (Alston 1999). One example of a rural community's resilience and desire to survive occurred in Henty, New South Wales, where local people contributed funds, purchased a building and opened a bank (Taylor 1999).

Individual observers have different perspectives on what trends are occurring and what opportunities exist for the future of the rangelands. At the 9th Australian Rangelands Conference in Port Augusta, participants developed two options for the future of the rangelands: one focussed on economic viability and agricultural production within a market economy; the other emphasised cultural choice with integrated social and economic systems based on bottom-up visions (Blesing et al. 1996). The Sustainable Habitation in the Rangelands conference (Abel and Ryan 1996) indicated some of the differences in perception held by people with interests in the rangelands — including graziers, conservationists and government policy makers. Groups often have distinct values and views about the world, based on their different systems of shared meaning or different cultural structures. Some of these cultural perspectives are discussed in the next section.

1.4.4 Differing perceptions — the influence of culture

Individuals have differing perspectives on the situation in rural communities and what they think is a desirable future. These perspectives may differ widely, both between individuals, and between groups.

Group differences may be exacerbated where individual perspectives within each culture are closest. In this context culture is defined as a “shared meaning system” where shared ideas, customs, knowledge, values and beliefs are used by the group to understand the world (Fiske 1987; Johnson 1995; King 2000).

There are differences in perception between land-users, scientists and policy makers (Waters-Bayer, Haile and Alebikiya 1999 p.34). Government Ministers and other analysts suggest that rural decline will continue and that more farmers will leave the land (Vanclay and Lawrence 1995; Morrissey 1999; Fisher 1999). However, many farmers are reluctant to accept this economic reality of declining viability and remain determined to stay on their properties.

Morrissey (1999) suggested that many farmers are optimistic; they believe that agricultural decline is cyclical and that better times are ahead. Research by Stayner (1997 p.112) has suggested that many landholders are motivated by intrinsic rewards such as interest in their work, rather than instrumental rewards such as their money-earning potential or a secure future. Also, family tradition was rated as important by about half the people surveyed. Many people wanted to protect the special features of the land (Martin 1999) and had an emotional attachment to it, especially if the land had been in the family for generations (Flannery 1994).

The idea that landholders care about their land and wish to act as stewards of the land is contrary to the commonly painted portrait of landholders as pillagers of the land (Vanclay and Lawrence 1995 p.77). Landholders’ views about the environment are usually thought to be different from those of government, and different again from those of conservationists. Landholders are thought of as having a more production-orientated focus and less conservation-orientated views than government or the broader community. Yet many broadacre farmers recognise the significance of land degradation on their properties (Grivas, Moon, Mues, Peterson and Toussaint 1995) and some see degradation as increasing (Mues, Roper and Ockerby 1994). This recognition of land degradation is not universal: in the 1990s many either did not perceive the problems, or chose to ignore them (Vanclay and Lawrence 1995 p.172).

The differences in the views held by landholders, government and other groups in society have led to difficulties in encouraging participatory activities. The reality of implementing participation in the bush does not always match the rhetoric of policy documents and political statements (Dale and Bellamy 1998; White et al. 1994). Different perspectives and lack of shared meaning about land management practices often lead to communication problems and misunderstanding. The possibility of conflict is real, and processes need to be carefully designed so as to encourage people to listen to each other rather than allow them to polarise already divergent views. Clearly, there remains a need to find improved mechanisms to facilitate dialogue between parties with different perspectives.

Involving local communities in land management programs does not necessarily lead to success in terms of improved land management, and in fact may lead to negative changes. Many authors (Arnstein 1969; Burke 1968; Cornwall 1995; Pretty 1995b) highlight the effects of power inequality on people’s ability to negotiate outcomes that are compatible with principles of social justice. The type of problem depends on the size of the community of stakeholders. The need for natural resource management issues to be addressed at a variety of scales adds complexity and increases the likelihood of some groups being disadvantaged; farmers, in particular, have less power than that exercised by large companies and government during negotiations.

Local rural people’s knowledge is often devalued and overlooked in land management programs.

What rural people know is assumed to be “primitive” and “unscientific”, and so formal research and extension must “transform” what they know in order to “develop” them (Pretty and Shah 1994 p.48).

Agricultural research and rural development programs tend to be designed and managed by scientists and relate to specific issues. Few programs embrace a holistic framework and participatory

methodologies are often incorporated only as a secondary thought, ignoring the possibility that programs could be enhanced by using local knowledge, capacities and priorities.

This brief review indicates the extent of the rural crisis in Australia's rangelands. Trends in this country reflect those occurring overseas, partly because of Australia's policy direction that encourages reliance on trade. The problems are complex, and solutions of the past have not been effective. Land sustainability needs to be addressed by all the parties involved in managing land and in managing policies that support participatory approaches. The different stakeholder groups need forums which facilitate discussions about land management issues. A range of participatory approaches has been used in agriculture with varying degrees of success. The legislation, policy and statements that promote partnership, consultation and participation do not always match the reality of how local communities participate in government land management programs.

1.5 Structure of the report

This report provides background information as a context for participation, presents the results of the enquiry and formulates recommendations for government and other groups who wish to encourage local community participation in rangeland areas. The content of the chapters is described below.

This chapter, Chapter 1, has set the scene by outlining the context of sustainable development worldwide and, more specifically, of sustainable agricultural and rural development in Australia.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature on participation in terms of its evolution in agriculture and rural development. The policy trends from traditional transfer-of-technology models to local community participation in research and extension are highlighted. This leads to formulating the research questions for this study.

Chapter 3 discusses the philosophical and methodological approaches for this social research and Chapter 4 describes the case study regions as a background for the results presented in the following chapters.

Chapters 5 and 6 constitute the core analytical chapters which address the research questions. Current participation processes are described for the primary case study region, followed by a comparison of the key issues for various stakeholder groups. Landholders' views are compared with the views of government officers at the local and regional levels. In Chapter 6, the motivation of landholders and government agencies to embrace participatory approaches is compared. Apathy in rural communities is discussed and several myths about apathy are questioned.

Chapter 7 checks the generalisability of the results obtained in the primary case-study, by comparing these results with those obtained in other Rural Partnership Program regions in the rangelands.

Chapter 8 presents key questions that need to be considered when undertaking participatory activities. It also presents recommendations to guide participatory approaches implemented by government agencies.

2 Participation in sustainable agriculture

This chapter examines the literature relating to the context of participation of sustainable agriculture in Australian rangelands.

2.1 Introduction

Participatory approaches in a rural context has been discussed in the development literature, including that dealing with sustainable development, rural development and community development. The study of development has borrowed ideas from many disciplines including organisational management, action research, sociology, anthropology and farming systems research. The contributions from these diverse disciplines are so interrelated that their “sources and traditions have, like flows in a braided stream, intermingled more and more” (Chambers 1992a p.2).

Much of this literature has been based on work conducted in developing countries and the northern hemisphere, particularly America, but many of the principles and techniques for participation are applicable in Australia. Some adaptations are needed for the Australian situation and culture. Agriculture here is market driven and capital intensive by comparison to many other countries. As Syme (1991) suggested, the overseas literature needs interpreting as Australians emphasise individual freedom and have preferred methods of decision making.

This chapter examines the meaning of the term *participation*, proposes definitions for this report and then reviews the literature on participation. The trends in participation for development, agriculture and resource management are highlighted. Emerging from the literature are two key elements of participation: power and learning. These are discussed at the end of Chapter 2.

2.2 Meaning and purpose of participation

The term *participation* is ambiguous, meaning vastly different things to different people. In common parlance it simply means “being present”. Many practitioners involved in community development, regional development and sustainable development have a more specific definition; for them the only true participation occurs when decision-making power is shared with local people.

Different interpretations of and strategies for participation are important in different situations. Meanings depend on who defines participation, and why it is undertaken. The intent of the initiators, that is their purpose for choosing a participatory approach, largely determines the meaning. In Australian rural land management, local community participation is often initiated by government agencies, so the meaning is largely defined by those agencies.

The purpose of participation has changed over the years. Initially the intention was a transformative approach which moved the locus of control to disadvantaged poor, it was a poverty-alleviation strategy in developing countries. According to the World Bank:

Participation is a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank 1996 p.3).

In an agricultural context Chambers suggested that a

growing range of participative approaches share a common emphasis on enabling local people to play an active role in their own development. (Chambers 1996 quoted in Cornwall 1998 p.47).

Both descriptions reflect the original intent of participation to empower local people, to provide a “voice for the voiceless” (Friere 1972). Empowerment is about changing the balance of power, for it is

about individuals learning about themselves and learning to help themselves. This ideology is about human development, social change and communities becoming self-reliant.

Participation in this sense is the purpose of the activity and is an end in itself; but participation can also be the means to a particular outcome. Whether participation is, or should be, an end or a means has been debated in the literature (Guijt 1998; Oakley 1991; Rogers 1992). Several authors have suggested that participation needs to be an end in itself as well as a means to an end to have long-term benefits where different approaches are synthesised (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Pretty 1999; Warburton 1997).

Participation is widely used in sustainable development and land management. The benefits of a participatory approach include improved decision-making and better facilitation of action (Diesendorf and Hamilton 1997). Another benefit of participation is that it results in learning, and learning is often (but not always) a prerequisite for changing behaviour and practices (Bennett and Rockwell 1995). Engendering behaviour change has been suggested as one of the most useful strategies for government funded programs because local community participation means that:

- individuals are more likely to support decisions
- individuals are more likely to assist in implementing change
- it is easier to change the behaviour of the group than that of individuals (Burke 1968).

Participation is often romanticised as a cure-all so that anything participatory is assumed to be “good” and “empowering” (Rogers 1992; Guijt 1998b). The most effective participation is seen to be that which involves the whole community, but this is clearly unrealistic. Rogers (1992 p.227) acknowledged that participation is difficult to achieve, rarely works completely and can fail spectacularly. As Slocum and others have argued: “past experience suggests that participation can bring about both positive and negative change” (Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau and Thomas-Slayter 1995 p.17). Whether the impact of the change is positive or negative depends largely on the purpose of participation.

For those facilitators and practitioners who are responsible for participative programs, the range of intentions is wide: some are ideological and ethical; some are not; some are simply pragmatic. Participation can be a way of making decisions about land use more equitable, based on social justice principles. In Australia, the intention of participation is frequently claimed to be empowerment (Syme 1994). However, some have used it to educate or “cure” citizens, to alter public opinion or to assess public views (Arnstein 1969) and to supplement limited staff resources (Burke 1968). Pragmatic reasons include the improvement of effectiveness and efficiency by saving time and money, to improve the resource allocation process (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Mitchell 1989) and — rarely admitted in Australia but often an element of participation — to defend government decisions about land management (Syme 1994).

Frequently, the goals of participation have been coopted — some would say corrupted — by government or other agencies, both overseas (Rogers 1992; Landre and Knuth 1993; Pretty 1994; Guijt 1998) and in Australia (Syme 1991; Dugdale 1996). Many programs are still top-down, aimed *at* people or run *for* people, but not developed *with* people. Participation may be intentionally or unintentionally subsumed by the initiating agencies. Frequently, local people are dragged into taking part in programs that are of little or no interest to them, in the name of participation (Rahnema, quoted in Pretty 1994 p.40). The justification for such manipulation is often bureaucratic efficiency. Government employees who implement participatory activities often have little or no understanding of the theory or history of participation; they may be well-intentioned but naive.

High levels of participation are difficult for governments and agencies to implement. Such programs are often seen as inefficient and threatening because power becomes decentralised and has to be shared with local communities. Governments tend to maintain strong control over policy development and

then expect implementation to occur with minimal consultation with local people (Younis 1997 p.309). Many of those in the government and the bureaucracy are concerned about the ability of local people to act in the best interests of the public as a whole.

While there are many pragmatic reasons for participation not always being implemented in the manner in which it was originally conceived, this mismatch between the original intent and today's practice has caused several paradoxes (Pretty 1995; Guijt 1998). Guijt (1998) explains two:

1. The standardisation of approaches is contrary to one of the original aims of participation: to move away from the blueprint approach to planning, towards more-flexible and context-specific approaches that enhance learning opportunities.
2. The way in which participative approaches are used — the “manual and method mania” of the 1990s — has led claim many to that they are conducting participative projects, while they had only a superficial understanding of the underlying empowerment principles that were at the root of much of the pioneering work.

Clearly, there is an enormous range of views that operators hold about participation and its implementation. Not surprisingly, this has led to complexity in the literature, and has allowed the term *participation* to develop a plethora of confused meanings.

2.1.1 Definition of participation

This enquiry uses *participation* as an overarching term to encompass the broad spectrum of meanings. It encompasses circumstances where participation is an end in itself and where it is a means to an end, and it allows for the wide range of intentions that impel the initiation of local community participation. For the purposes of this report, participation was defined as follows:

Participation is a range of processes through which local communities are involved and play a role in issues which affect them. The extent to which power is shared in decision-making varies according to type of participation.

Differences exist between different types of participation and this report uses the terms *consultation* and *partnership* to describe opposite ends of a spectrum of approaches.

- *Consultation* is defined as the periodic involvement of the community in organisation-driven or top-down activity. It employs a one-way flow of information between an agency and the community and includes participative activities such as transferring information, collecting information and undertaking a needs analysis. Local people have no, or limited, influence over agency decisions. The agency is often a government institution, but may be a rural industry group or other agency.
- *Partnership* is defined as an on-going interaction where power is shared between the agency and the community. Power can be shared in various ways, including collective decision-making and collective management of projects. It involves negotiation and a two-way flow of information.

This enquiry examines the differences in approaches to participation in Australian rangeland management.

2.3 Trends in participation worldwide and in Australia

The original aims of participation and current criticisms are better understood by reviewing the trends in participation through the literature on sustainable development and rural development. The growing recognition of participation is also evident by tracing its use in international documents, and in Australia by examining government and funding agency statements.

Participation is not a new concept. Various grassroots approaches were promoted during the 1970s and the development of participation reflects broader trends in thinking in scientific disciplines. The general trend towards interdisciplinary approaches began as a reaction to the failure of specialised scientific disciplines and economic growth to solve social and environmental problems. Social and political insights were seen as a necessary adjunct to the conventional disciplines (Tighe and Taplin 1990). Despite this recognition, incorporating the perspectives of different disciplines has not been easy. Barriers to integrating social and natural sciences and the perceived illegitimacy of the social sciences (Heberlein 1988) continue to frustrate many land and natural resource management programs today. These difficulties have stimulated the emergence of transdisciplinary approaches in the late 1980s and 1990s (Fisher and Hovermann 1988; Tighe and Taplin 1990). The emphasis has changed from single disciplines to multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and now transdisciplinary approaches as the general scientific community has recognised the need for integrated, holistic and systemic methods.

The period of interdisciplinary thinking paralleled criticism of top-down approaches in development and land management and the emergence of participation. Some of the best-known critics include Norman Uphoff (1992), David Korten (1980) and Robert Chambers (1989, 1997). All these authors argued that alternative people-centred approaches that are context-specific are needed if programs are to be successful. Slocum (1995) explained that central to these alternative approaches

is the belief that people [local people] are capable of critical reflection and analysis and that their knowledge is relevant, necessary and valuable (p.11).

The understanding that the perspectives and knowledge of local people was valuable meant that institutions could learn from the community and new approaches could be used in the search for a sustainable future.

Since the 1970s in particular, there have been significant changes in attitudes to participation. The general scientific community (especially agriculture) the rural development community have all shown a trend to support the increasing use of participatory approaches. The search for alternative approaches in science, the concerns about sustainability in agriculture and the emergence of participation began around the same time. The focus of Australian agriculture has changed from production to productivity, to long-term sustainability and then to regional development. Participation has continued to increase in prominence from the 1970s until the present. These key phases, especially in the development of structured participatory approaches and the related trends in agriculture and rural development in Australia, are summarised below (Table 2.1). The broad trends in the rural Australia are the same as those in the rangelands.

Table 2.1 Parallel development of participatory processes and Australian agriculture

Era	Trends in participatory processes	Australian rural trends
1950s & 60s	Rapid industrialisation and growing influence of technological expertise; supremacy of scientific knowledge. Chambers (1992a) said that this era was characterised by the diffusion model of adoption in agriculture. Extension agents were involved primarily in teaching farmers, and in the transfer of technology.	Drive for increased production. Post-war settlement schemes and optimism in agriculture
1970s Need for alternatives	Concern expressed about “giving a voice to the voiceless” specifically the poor in developing countries (Friere 1972). Increasing focus on learning, adult learning principles and group extension. Early experimentation of participatory approaches in Development. Frustration over the ineffectiveness of externally imposed & “expert” orientated forms (Chambers 1992a). Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) grew out of Rapid Rural Appraisal (RAA).	Drive for increased productivity and efficiency Increasing awareness of environmental issues. Recognition of the need for interdisciplinary approaches
1980s The participation boom	Change from top-down to bottom-up; acknowledgment of the value of local indigenous knowledge The 1980s witnessed flourishing of activity, particularly amongst non-government organisations (NGO's) in seeking alternatives to top-down outsider driven development. The emphasis was on participatory appraisal and analysis in rural communities. Proliferation of participatory methodologies, including PAR (participatory action research) and tools such as rich pictures, and venn diagrams	Concerns about sustainability
1990s The participation imperative	The fervour about participation continued in the early 1990s. Participation became synonymous with “good” or “sustainable” in the development field (Guijt and Shah 1998 p.4). As Green (1998 p.71) emphasised, the popularisation of participation is dangerous, as the problems are often glossed over. Funding bodies began demanding participatory processes as a condition for funding. The push for participation stimulated a proliferation of guidebooks and courses on “how to”. A growing interest in natural resource monitoring and evaluation has led to community involvement in these activities.	Rural and regional development focus Emergence of transdisciplinary approaches

(After Guijt and Shah 1998)

Those looking for alternatives in the 1970s were inspired by Paulo Friere’s works (1970, 1972) from the education field. His process of *conscientization* is about learning — learning that raises people’s awareness of their own ability to make a difference and which encourages action based on the individual’s own knowledge. This trend is exemplified by Juan Diaz Bordenave’s analysis of development, in which he describes a shift from an “almost exclusively diffusion approach” to a “group communication approach” to a “participative approach” (Bordenave 1994 pp.35-48).

In agricultural extension, there has been a shift away from the traditional linear model of diffusion originally proposed by Rogers (1962, 1983) and Rogers and Schoemaker (1971). This shift, which has been towards more participative, flexible, learning approaches, has been promoted by many (Korten 1980; Chambers et al. 1989; Jiggins 1993; White et al. 1994; Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Pretty 1999). This literature highlights learning as an integral component of participation, whether it is learning for *conscientization*, institutions learning from local people, or local people learning from each other.

Participation in Australian natural resource management and agriculture has followed these trends. Mulligan (1990) suggested several reasons for the growth of public participation in Australia:

- Citizens have demanded government protection resulting in an enormous growth of social regulation. This has been accompanied by citizens demanding a greater say in the implementation of the regulations (p.20)
- Citizens have been alienated from decision making by technical complexity, increasing people's desire for involvement (p.20)
- Poor government performance is more easily reported through the electronic media resulting in greater public involvement at all levels of government (p.21).

These reasons suggest that citizens are demanding more participatory democracy rather than representative democracy and that local communities have an increasing desire to be involved in government decision-making processes.

2.3.1 Policy documents and other statements

The trends in participation can be traced through policy documents and statements by agencies, both international and Australian. The Australian approach to participation is based largely on the northern hemisphere literature (Syme 1991) so a brief review of key international milestones is relevant to outline the history of participation (Table 2.2).

The milestones indicate that participation originated in the field of community development (Warburton 1997). The United Nations and the World Bank are leading proponents of participation. The first major international document to promote participation in sustainable development did not occur until after the Earth Summit in the early 1990s. It rejected traditional top-down perspectives in favour of bottom-up people-centred development and emphasised education of all levels of society (Younis 1997 p.300).

Many of these documents promote participation where decision-making is shared; however, a gap exists between this rhetoric and the reality. Collective decision-making is participatory democracy. While many of the international agreements listed above espouse this type of democracy, many governments cling to representative democratic models where the elected representatives are the decision makers. Representative democracy and participatory democracy offer the public two different types of participation. The existing representative system of government is not easily compatible with the participation promoted in government documentation.

A similar situation exists in Australia where participation has become enshrined in law and policy documents (Dale and Bellamy 1998). But while participation is part of the political rhetoric in the 1990s, the effectiveness of the various forms of participation has been questioned (Dale and Bellamy 1998; Diesendorf and Hamilton 1997). Some examples of Australian policy are indicated in Table 2.3. The reality of what happens in rangeland participation is the subject of this research.

Table 2.2 Some international milestones for participation

1953	Major institutional support for participation began when the United Nations began using community development to describe self-help activities to tackle poverty and social inequity (Warburton 1997 p.18).
1973	President of World Bank made a landmark address which brought credibility to “people’s participation” (White et al. 1994 p.21).
1980	<i>World Conservation Strategy: Living Resources Conservation for Sustainable Development</i> recognised the importance of participation and community action by stating that “increasing pressure by individuals and community groups to participate in decisions which affect their locality has been a notable movement of the past decade ...there is increasing enthusiasm for local action which offers great scope for building a resource saving society” (IUCN 1980 p.70).
1987	<i>Our Common Future: Brundtland report by World Commission on Environment and Development</i> stated that one of the first requirements to achieve sustainable development is “a political system that secures effective citizen participation in decision making” (WECD 1987 p.65). The report detailed the need for public participation: “The law alone cannot enforce the common interest. It principally needs community knowledge and support, which entails greater public participation in the decisions which affect the environment. This is best secured by decentralising the management of resources upon which local communities depend, & giving these communities an effective say over the use of the resources. It will also require promoting citizens’ initiatives, empowering people’s organisations, and strengthening local democracy” (WECD 1987 p.63).
1992	<i>Earth Summit conference Rio de Janeiro</i> , in Brazil formally established participation as a central element in sustainable development. The importance of new forms of participation incorporating local knowledge and reshaping decision-making systems is reflected in many statements in Agenda 21, for example <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “the broadest possible participation ... should be encouraged” (Agenda 21, 1.3) • “it is particularly important to focus on capacity building at the local level in order to support a community-driven approach to sustainability” (Agenda 21, 3.12) • integration to be promoted at every level, especially community & local scale (Agenda 21, 3.5) • government and non-government organisations “should support a community driven approach to sustainability” (Agenda 21, 3.7) (UNCED 1992).

After the Brundtland Report, the Australian Commonwealth government proposed a National Conservation Strategy (NCSA 1983) and encouraged each of the States to develop its own statements. However, over the next 10 years participation has developed in an ad-hoc way and often lacks integration between government approaches (Syme 1991). The documents listed below (Table 2.3) all promote public participation; with documents in the 1990s more frequently mentioning principles such as cooperative action, community decision-making, equity, empowerment and various forms of learning. The guidelines for consultation and planning with Aboriginal people (Commonwealth of Australia 1994; Queensland Government 1998) and those for agricultural clients (Queensland Department of Primary Industries 1994) are prescriptive and detailed. Guidelines such as these, that list specific processes and protocols, are rare. Because of differences between locations, even within the rangelands, very prescriptive guidelines that stipulate methods would limit the flexibility that may be needed to adapt participation for the local context.

Overall, the mandate for participation in Australia is vague. This allows agencies to interpret the need for public participation and the extent to which it is implemented on a case-by-case basis. In any one State, land management agencies ascribe different meanings to participation. Numerous terms are used, often interchangeably, including community engagement, community constituency, collaboration, client liaison, consultation and partnerships.

This suggests that conceptual clarity is lacking and that there is little guidance for initiators of participation. Murthy (1998 p.210) supported this view by saying that in Australia, the purpose and characteristics of participation are rarely differentiated or clarified. This has undoubtedly contributed to lack of public credibility in participatory processes (Syme 1991). Guijt and Shah (1998) suggested that it is only when attention is paid to conceptual clarity, and when appropriate methods and methodologies are implemented by supportive institutions, that participatory approaches will improve.

Table 2.3 Some milestones and key policy documents related to Australian rangelands

1980	Acceptance of <i>World Conservation Strategy</i> by Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser (Wilson 1987)
1984	<i>National Conservation Strategy for Australia</i> established the grounds for public participation in both government and private sector decision-making (Carr 1993): its development involved a wide cross section of the public in decision-making (Wilson 1987).
1987	<i>Landcare</i> endorsed by Australian Conservation Foundation and National Farmers Federation (Toyne and Farley 1989).
1989	Prime Minister Bob Hawke's Statement on the environment <i>Our Country Our Future</i> committed a financial contribution to cooperative action between community and government for environmental action (Carr 1993).
1991	A nationwide consultation program was undertaken as an important part of developing the <i>Ecological Sustainable Development Strategy</i> (Commonwealth of Australia 1992).
1994	A guide prepared for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, <i>Community-based planning: principles and practices</i> , suggests specific processes to empower communities and highlights some issues in developing community plans.
1994	A Queensland Department of Primary Industries policy states "client consultation should be considered during the planning and implementation stages of all major projects that will impact on clients" (DPI 1994 p.2). Effective consultation in this document means that clients have a genuine opportunity to influence decisions.
1995	Department of Primary Industries and Energy promoted a new approach to rural development through the <i>Rural Partnership Program</i> with principles such as community involvement, equity and cultural diversity (DPIE 1995 pp.4-5). Community ownership, self-reliance of rural communities, integration of programs and sustainable management of natural resources were encouraged as the basis for best practice (DPIE 1995 pp.14-15).
1997	Indigenous participation was promoted in the <i>National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Rural Industry Strategy</i> (Commonwealth of Australia 1997). Objectives include community decision-making, short- and long-term empowerment by providing a degree of self-sufficiency.
1997	<i>Landcare</i> and Integrated Catchment management in Queensland were linked. The <i>Landcare and Catchment Management Committee</i> aims "to provide community leadership in partnership with government to achieve priority natural resource management, bio-diversity and sustainable production outcomes in Queensland" (Department of Natural Resources 1997 p.1).
1998	<i>Protocols for consultation and negotiation with Aboriginal people</i> suggested detailed processes to guide practitioners involved in consultation with Aboriginal people in Queensland.
1998	Reducing the barriers to women's participation in government, industry and communities is one of the key principles stated in <i>A Vision for change: National plan for women in agriculture and resource management</i> (Commonwealth of Australia 1998). It emphasised the need to empower women, to increase their skills and build confidence.
1999	The document <i>Managing Australia's Rangelands: National principles and guidelines for Rangeland Management</i> focused on an "integrated, coordinated and participative planning processes, with a regional focus and local ownership, including all local or regional stakeholders" (Commonwealth of Australia 1999 p.7). It emphasised consultation, collaboration and partnerships with regional stakeholders, flexible and responsive planning for the purpose of capacity building, continuous learning and skill improvement.

These policy documents and statements as well as the participation trends highlighted from the literature imply that traditional approaches such as transfer of technology are no longer useful, or used; however, this is not the case. While much of the literature, particularly from overseas, has idealised the benefits of participation, Tighe and Taplin (1990) have pointed out that one must not assume that traditional approaches have been rejected. Different approaches are complementary. Traditional technology transfer can be effective for simple messages; but as issues become more complex, as the problems become less well defined and as human values are challenged, then learning and participatory approaches are more likely to be successful (Blackett 1996; Pretty 1999; Van Beek and Coutts 1992). This is illustrated in Figure 2.1.

Different types of learning are needed for different extension approaches — for example, creating awareness, information provision (technology transfer), facilitating understanding. Experiential learning and action learning have been proposed for problem solving and human development (Clark 1996; Blackett 1996; DPI 2000). Different types of learning are explained later in this Chapter.

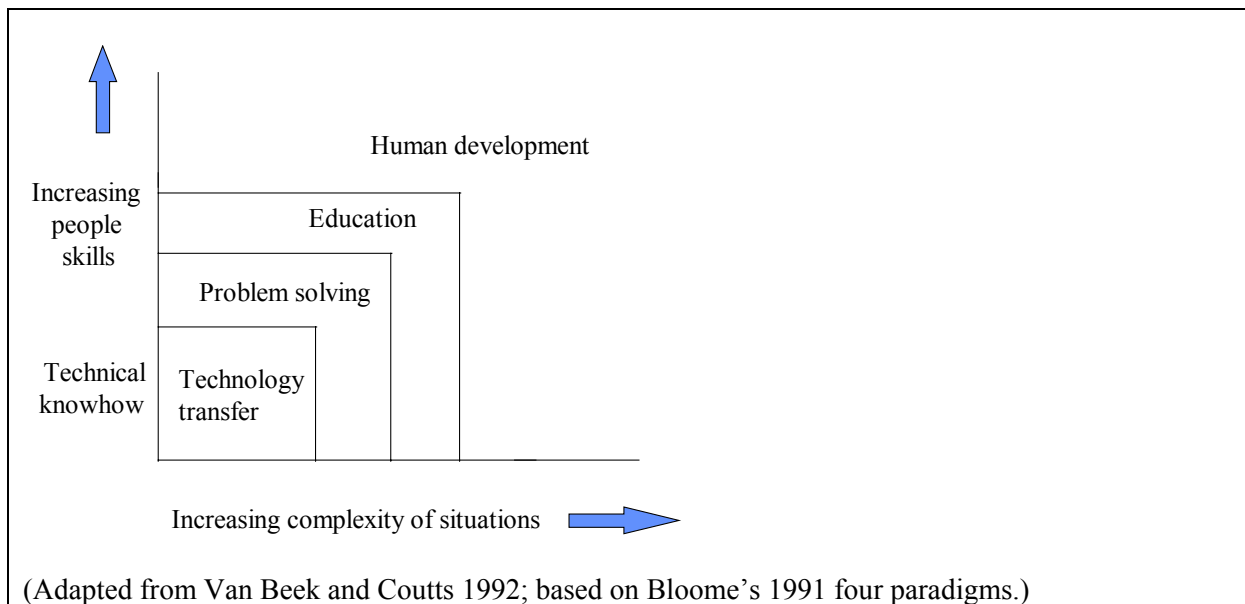


Figure 2.1 Complementarity of differing extension approaches

Traditional and participation approaches are appropriate in different contexts but few guidelines exist to guide the choice. Institutions initiating participation in Australian land management are often unclear about exactly why participation is needed and what type of participation is appropriate. To be truly participatory, the purpose for which local people are involved needs to be clearly explained to the supposed beneficiaries. The following sections explain different types of participation and some key, related concepts, as this understanding is needed to improve participatory approaches.

2.4 Different types of participation

The previous discussion on meaning and trends in participation indicates that different types of participation exist. Several models have been developed, each proposing a spectrum of participatory approaches, and these will now be discussed. The different types of participation are differentiated according to a variety of criteria (often including power).

2.4.1 Typologies of participation

For many observers, participation is ultimately about power relations and this designates the key difference between participation and other approaches (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995; Slocum et al. 1995). Power, or varying levels of control between researchers or institutions and local people, is the most common criterion used to identify different types of participation. In simple typologies, levels of

power sharing are expressed merely as a dichotomy; in complex typologies, however, many levels of power sharing are described.

The terminology differs in each, and all differ from the definition adopted by this enquiry. Here, *all* levels are called participation but with varying degrees of power sharing between the supposed beneficiaries (often referred to as local people) and the initiators (such as researchers, planners and government or agency staff).

The World Bank (1996 p.3) has named the more traditional approach the “external expert stance” as opposed to a “participatory stance” where decision-making power is shared with local people (World Bank 1996 p.3). These polarised positions of power sharing are also referred to as “top-down” and “bottom-up”. Biggs (1989) and Oakley (1991) distinguished only a few levels of power. Biggs defined four: contractual, consultative, collaborative and collegiate; Oakley (1991 p.6) has three: participation as contribution, as organisation and as empowerment. The last two levels of each of these involve some transfer of control to local people.

Some typologies are more complex (as indicated in Table 2.4). Arnstein (1969) is perhaps the most well known. She employed a model that differentiates eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation. According to Arnstein, only three levels are “true” participation but other levels often masquerade as attempts at participation. Pretty (1994, 1995a, 1995b, 1999) proposed two versions of his typology, both very similar to Arnstein’s, but based on Adnan, Barrett, Nurul Alam and Brustinow’s work (1992). Jiggins’ version (1993) is different in that it links agricultural extension models and techniques to levels. As she explained, models are representations of reality but can also be used as analytic tools or as guides for action by determining “fitness for function” (Jiggins 1993 p.615). Cornwall (1995) suggested a continuum with six positions (Table 2.4). This enquiry suggests that participation typologies could be used to assist in determining which level of control is appropriate in a particular context.

Table 2.4 Types of participation

Arnstein’s model	Jiggins’ model	Pretty’s model	Cornwall’s model
Manipulation Therapy		Manipulative participation	Co-option
Informing	Transfer of Technology (ToT) (includes Training and Visit)		Co-operation
Consulting (e.g. attitude survey)	Farming systems research & extension (farmers not in diagnosis)	Passive participation Participation by consultation	Consultation
Placating (representative on a Board or committee)		Participation for material goals	
	5 element model (decisions made collaboratively)		
	Chain-linked (decisions made interactivity)	Functional Participation (to achieve goals of external agency)	Collaboration
	Participatory Technology Development (PTD) (includes RRA)		
Partnership	Natural Resource Management (NRM)	Interactive participation	Co-learning
Delegated power			
Citizen control		Self-mobilisation	Collective action

(Adapted from Arnstein 1969; Jiggins 1993; Pretty 1995b; 1999; Cornwall 1995)

Arnstein suggested that manipulation (level 1) and therapy (level 2) levels of her ladder are “non-participation”; informing (level 3), consultation (level 4), and placation (level 5), are “degrees of

tokenism”; and the only levels of the ladder which have “degrees of citizen power” are partnership (level 6), delegated power (level 7), and citizen power (level 8). Jiggins suggested a similar gradation from weak to strong participation, but described different models as her interest was in agriculture whereas Arnstein’s was in planning. Arnstein’s Informing is similar to Jiggins’ Transfer of Technology in that ToT is about governments informing the community about technology; this has some elements similar to Cornwall’s co-operation, where farmers co-operate with government to undertake some activity — all are one-way flows of information where farmers have no decision-making power. Arnstein’s ladder is very similar to Pretty’s typology. The other typologies share some similarities among their levels.

One of the problems with these typologies is that only one criterion, power, is used to differentiate between levels. Other criteria mentioned in the literature include:

- number of people involved — wide versus narrow (Farrington and Bebbington 1993)
- role of the people involved (Jiggins 1993; Cornwall 1995)
- goal of participation — behaviour change, transfer of information, advice about needs, facilitation of learning, organisational development (Landre and Knuth 1993).

Another problem is that these typologies imply that there is an ideal level of power sharing. As Warburton (1997) has pointed out, the literature suggests that more is better, but this is questionable. Devolving power to local people may not be feasible or desirable (Murthy 1998).

- It may not be true that more is better. Murthy (1998) has stated that it is only assumed that a greater level of participation leads to greater empowerment and more effective projects; however, few studies have examined the impact of participation.
- It may not be feasible. Local people do not always wish to be involved. As Guijt and Shah (1998) pointed out, 100% participation is a myth.

Participation is often described in terms of dichotomies such as *shallow versus deep* or *weak versus strong*. These terms are value-laden and imply that participation that does not share power in decision-making is “wrong” and the only “true” participation occurs where local people have a say. Carr (1994) argued that approaches from either end of the spectrum are not ideal and that a middle ground that incorporates elements from both top-down and bottom-up approaches is needed to achieve sustainable land management. Paul (1987 quoted in Greene-Roesel and Hinton 1998 p.210) differentiated between information sharing, consultation, decision-making and initiating action, and suggested that all may exist simultaneously.

Other authors have identified other problems with participation typologies. Most typologies seem to do the following.

1. They assume that participation occurs in a static situation. Participation levels change during the life cycle of any project; often, high levels of participation by local people occur in early stages (Guijt and Shah 1998 p.10).
2. They simplify “insider” and “outsider” perspectives. Several authors support this argument that the reality is very complex; for example not all government staff are regarded as outsiders (Guijt and Shah 1998 p.10).
3. They ignore diversity. Initiators may tend to use typologies in a prescriptive manner that can stifle creativity. As Guijt and Shah (1998) pointed out, the purpose of participation changes even between research and action-orientated contexts.
4. They neglect the difficulty that perceptions about the degree of participation may vary between

the different actors (Cornwall and Jewkes 1995).

5. They ignore the importance of scale. The choice of spatial and organisational scales depends on the goal; for example problem definition or needs analysis may need to occur in a specific location; changes in land management practice usually need to occur at the local scale; while policy change may need to occur at the State or national scale. Horizontal and vertical links between the various ecological units, social community units and organisational units are often missing (but are needed) as many land management issues encompass multiple scales and multiple interests.

These problems indicate that the context of participation is critically important. This suggests that (a) context will influence the type of participation that is appropriate or possible and (b) different participatory approaches may be appropriate in different stages of the same project. Participation needs to be flexible, sensitive to the complexity of community relationships and designed for the specific context.

2.5 Key concepts in participation

Two key concepts related to participation — power and learning — have already been highlighted in the earlier literature review. The discussion on typologies indicated that the degree to which power is shared between actors is commonly used to differentiate between types of participation. The definitions of participation also mentioned the importance of power: (a) the extent of influence and power varies according to the specific situation; (b) enabling local people; and (c) empowerment. The literature suggests that improved land management is more likely to occur when decision-making power is shared with local people.

The discussion outlining trends in participation suggested that the increased emphasis on learning has paralleled the development of participatory approaches. Various forms of learning have been highlighted in the literature — learning for empowerment, increasing awareness, improving skills, transfer of technology, understanding new information, institutions learning from local people, or local people learning from each other. Learning is an integral component of participation and is sometimes one of the goals of participation.

Landholders, government institutions and other agencies rarely use the words *power* and *learning* explicitly, but the concepts often underpin discussions about participation. Both of these concepts are complex and the literature is extensive, especially in sociology, education and organisational management. A very brief review of some of these ideas, as related to participation, follows.

2.5.1 Power

Power relationships are inherent in the social context within which participation occurs. Power also operates in the relationship between the initiator and beneficiaries of the participatory process as described in the typologies. Lozare (1994) stated that communicators need to be more effective in understanding power relationships, and in managing these in a way that contributes positively to the development process. A better understanding of power relations is obviously needed to formulate strategies for change through participation.

This section discusses some theoretical issues about power. It further examines the relationship between power and knowledge, and between power and conflict.

Popular definitions of power simply describe the power that person A has over person B and the tension between the force of A and the resistance of B (Hoy 1981; Kearnis 1999). Weber's (1947) contribution was to observe that power is rarely absolute — A may exert force on B, but B will not always capitulate. A different perspective on power was provided by Foucault (Kearnis 1999). His

position was that power exists in all relationships and as such is socially constructed. Foucault believed that power is not a possession that individuals, groups or classes have and use over others who lack it; this is fundamentally different from the Marxist view which is based on class or social structure where power is used by the powerful to repress the less powerful (Gross 1985). Power is based on the relationship and only really exists when used (Foucault 1980b p.89 quoted in Kearns 1999).

In the context of this report on participatory land management, Foucault’s description seems more relevant than Marxist definitions. In Australian rural communities, power is not easily ascribed to particular groups, and changes according to the particular situation. Sometimes power may be vested in government, and at other times with local community members. If power is defined as inherent in relationships, it influences the way in which participation produces change.

Power can produce positive or negative changes. Empowerment of local people is promoted by the highly participatory approaches, yet the results have frequently been to maintain the status quo or even to strengthen the position of traditional elites and further disadvantage the poor. The concept of sharing power can be seen as threatening and even revolutionary to the hierarchies in society. Yet power can be generative, allowing individuals to generate their own sense of power and develop their human potential (White 1994). As the World Bank (1998a) stated:

Through participation, we lost “control” of the project and in so doing gained ownership and sustainability, precious things in our business.

Kelman (1967) proposed that some types of power have enduring or stable influences while other forms are intermittent or unstable in their effects (Table 2.5). Intermittent or unstable change reverses when the external influence is removed. For long-term sustainability in agriculture, enduring or stable change is usually required.

Participatory approaches in this context need to use the type of power base which is enduring as these are more likely to be effective. The concept of stable and unstable influence can be applied to the five commonly used power bases described in French and Raven’s classic work (1959) as outlined below (Table 2.5).

Table 2.5 Linking stable/unstable power to different power bases

Influence	Power base
Unstable or intermittent	Coercive power – where negative consequences can be handed out or positive consequences removed
Stable/enduring	Reward power – where positive consequences can be delivered or negative consequences removed
Stable/enduring	Expert power – where someone is seen as having special knowledge or skills and as being trustworthy
Stable/enduring	Informational power – where people believe that someone has information that will be useful in accomplishing their goals
Unstable or intermittent	Referent power – where people respond to someone because they identify with, respect, or want to be liked by this person e.g. public image and charisma
Stable/enduring (Kelman 1967)	Legitimate power – where people ought to have influence because of their position or special role e.g. policeman (French and Raven 1959)

Within participatory approaches, the level of power shared in decision-making varies, as in Pretty’s typology. As discussed previously, the language used in the typology implies that levels of participation that share more power are better than those that share less. This report suggests that the consequences of participation depend on how the interaction occurs between individuals; it is the

power base and the power embedded in individual relationships which influence the outcomes. The types of participation are not inherently good or bad. This supports Foucault's view that power is best conceived of in terms of the relationship, not an entity or quality of a particular group.

The following table links types of participation to their possible power base and proposes possible consequences for each type of participation. Pretty's typology (1995b) is used with its different levels of power sharing in decision-making suggested by each type.

Table 2.6 Linking types of participation and power bases

Types of participation (Pretty 1995b)	Power base (French & Raven 1959)	Type of influence likely on local people
1. Manipulative participation	Coercive	Unstable
2. Passive participation (information giving)	Expert Informational Referent	Stable or unstable; - may or may not be effective for long-term change in land management
3. Participation by consultation (collecting information)	Could be any base	Stable or unstable
4. Participation for material goals	Reward	Unstable in land management because funding incentives are short term or intermittent
5. Functional participation & 6. Interactive participation & 7. Self-mobilisation	Expert Informational Referent Legitimate	Stable or unstable - may or may not be effective for long-term change in land management. An example of referent power is a government or local person who becomes a charismatic leader; the group is likely to fail when the leader leaves.

The comparison indicates that some types of participation are more likely to produce more lasting influence than others, by achieving stable or enduring change. The literature suggested that "weak" participation (e.g. Jiggins 1993) is not useful because decision-making power is not shared with local people (e.g. Pretty's 1995b levels 2 and 3). However, people may change when information is provided by someone whom they trust and respect, someone with an Expert or Informational power base, which both produce enduring or stable change. When information is collected from local people (e.g. Pretty's 1995b level 3), there may or may not be stable change. There may not be any intent to influence people, but it is well established that the presence of research and researchers themselves does have an effect (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe 1995). The questioning strategy can stimulate reflection. This reflection, and listening to other people's ideas, may stimulate learning.

Functional, interactive and self-mobilisation (levels 5, 6 and 7) are all likely to have stable and/or good consequences, but this is not assured, simply because decision-making is shared. Referent power is also likely as a power base in these situations and this is unstable, as explained in the table.

Other aspects of power within participation are important. These include the power within the existing context and the domain within which people want to have power.

- The inherent power relationships within the existing social context will influence the implementation of participation. For example, when local people choose members of a group or choose individuals to represent group views they are influenced by existing relationships.
- Domains are the areas or issues over which people wish to have power, e.g. power over resources. Ife (1995) suggested that different strategies need to be used to empower people within each domain (Table 2.7).

Table 2.7 Power and empowerment

Domain of power	Empowerment strategies
Over personal choice and life chances	Increase power over decisions about future
Over definition of need	Education and access to information
Over institutions	Legitimise expression of ideas in public forum; ability to engage in dialogue with others
Over resources	Making institutions more accountable, responsive and accessible to people
Over economic activity	Effective power of all people over distribution and use of resources

(Ife, 1995 pp.60-62)

In land management programs, power is sometimes shared in one domain but not in others. Commonly, landholders have some influence over the content of programs but little influence over the process and methods to implement the program. Misunderstandings and conflict are likely when facilitators promise participatory programs and sharing of power but are unclear about the issues and domain that are negotiable.

The way that the term *empowerment* is used in this context (Table 2.7) is different from that used by Foucault as it implies that power is a commodity that can be given to local people by a more powerful government agency or elite group. This has negative connotations and could be seen as insulting to Australian landholders who do not see themselves as totally powerless. If used in this way, empowerment may not build social capital as intended — it may not build trust at all, but reinforce the concept of inequality and powerlessness.

Power and conflict

White (1994 p.230) suggested that “power struggles and conflict are constant features of development programs” and that the issue is about managing the conflict. Within land management issues, conflict is inevitable as there are increasing and often opposing demands for finite resources such as water and land. A mismatch between local aspirations and national goals often causes conflict (Christenson and Robinson 1989) Different groups with different power bases can also cause difficulties.

Participation seems to exacerbate conflict in some situations. Issues with multiple stakeholder groups where there are divergent views can be difficult. However, government agencies can generate tensions when the participation processes are not managed well. Political agendas and interference in carefully designed participation processes can often create conflict.

Some conflict can create energy and challenge previously unquestioned traditions and myths, and this can be very desirable. Asking critical questions is part of some learning strategies (Clark 1996). Participation processes need to be designed to accommodate potential conflict and acknowledge power differentials between stakeholder groups.

Some government agencies use participation to silence questions and quash potential conflict. Prisco (1997) warned that the values driving conflict management are different from the values of participation. Conflict management aims at compromise and consensus while some participation focuses on building citizenship and expressing interests and needs. However while participation may not aim for consensus, all participation tends in that direction because simply bringing people together to talk encourages the development of group norms. Then, ideas begin to coalesce as knowledge is shared.

Power and knowledge

The adage “knowledge is power” contains much truth. Foucault argued that power and knowledge influence each other: “It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power” (Sarup 1988 p.82). This conceptualisation suggests that the source from which knowledge originates fundamentally influences the power relationships. Agency staff have the role of “experts” in local communities, yet they frequently fail to recognise the power they hold in relationships.

Local knowledge and landholders’ experiences are not always valued in agriculture. This failure, in terms of Foucault’s framework, contributes to loss of power within the local community. The value of local indigenous knowledge is beginning to be recognised in developing countries (Chambers 1997; Jiggins 1989). Here in Australia, local knowledge is often under-utilised, partly because of the lack of trust, understanding and social networks between agencies and landholders.

Building social capital helps to keep this power in rural communities, which is essential if they are to survive. Trust, networks and social links are basic ingredients of social capital (Cavaye 2000). Building social capital also means building local capacity. Participatory learning is a mechanism for building social capital; for when different stakeholder groups interact constructively, they listen to each other and learn from each other and build trust. High social capital in communities is linked with strong cohesion, constructive communication, empowerment and less dependence on the government hierarchy (Cavaye 2000; Putman 1993).

Social capital needs to be harnessed and programs developed to build the capacity of local people for collective action, which is so necessary in land management. Christenson and Robinson (1989) promoted building social capital for community development; but it is needed for agricultural development as well, because the social, environmental and economic development of communities is inextricably linked. As Pretty (1999) stated, agriculture provides an important entry point for rebuilding social and natural capital. One of the chief prerequisites for building social capital is learning, and this subject will be examined in the following section.

2.5.2 Learning

Participatory approaches which incorporate learning are now commonly promoted in land management and agriculture world-wide (e.g. Chambers 1992; Korten 1980; Pretty 1999). However, the norm in institutions still tends to be teaching and technology transfer, rather than learning. As Pretty (1999) explained, the focus needs to be more on *how* and *with whom* people learn, rather than only on *what* people learn. This is not to say that content is not important, for it is; but to achieve sustainable agriculture, both content and process of learning need to be addressed. Learning rather than teaching or technology transfer is desirable because learning approaches have the potential to be flexible enough to embrace error (Korten 1980); to be adaptive to allow for ever-changing environmental circumstances (Walters and Holling 1990; Lee 1993); and do not presume to fully understand the means or the ends in advance (Bawden 1995).

The meaning of *learning* in this report is based on the purposes for learning as highlighted in Bennett’s (1993) Planning and Performance hierarchy. These purposes include changing knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations and practices. Bennett (1993) and Bennett and Rockwell (1995) discussed the factors needed to achieve the desired change. In land management practice, some changes and learning are simple; many changes are complex and require learning that questions people’s underlying values and the prevailing norms of the group. For example, the change required in many agricultural extension agencies from technology transfer models to participatory learning approaches has required altering their world-view and for some, this is difficult.

There are many forms of learning, each with its particular principles and processes. Experiential learning, adult learning, action learning and more recently social learning are discussed in

development, agriculture and natural resource management. A brief summary of some the different types of learning is given below.

Definition of learning

Learning incorporates the acquisition of knowledge, but it is more than that; it is the transformation of knowledge which assists decision-making. As well as knowledge acquisition, learning can also incorporate enhancing skills, developing new attitudes, raising aspirations and developing empowerment.

The introduction of *experiential learning* (or learning-by-doing), has assisted in changing the focus from teaching to learning. Experiential learning occurs where learning is achieved through active participation in the learning process. Kolb (1984) developed a learning cycle which linked theory and practice with a phase of conceptualisation and concrete experimentation.

When agricultural extension agencies in Australia refer to learning, it is usually characterised as *adult learning*. Many of its principles can assist in the implementation of many rangeland programs; some of these include:

- learners must set their own goals,
- learning must build on and use the learner's own experience,
- the value of learning must be understood by learners if they are to be motivated,
- learning needs to value the learner experiences,
- the learning environment must be socially and mentally safe,
- people learn when messages are relevant to their own circumstances and point of view,
- people are more likely to listen and learn if we listen to them,
- adults tend to focus on learning for life so are problem-centred, not subject-centred. (adapted from Knowles 1990; Malouf 1993; Mackay 1994)

However, Bennett (1993) suggested that this model is a barrier to closer working relationships among extension and other agencies. Adult education models neglect the possibility of applied research on practices and technologies as well as overlooking the influence of extension programs on the agency staff (Bennett 1993 p.24).

When considering learning, *who* is learning is sometimes not considered. Bennett's model of interdependence highlights the role of two-way learning (landholder > agency and agency > landholder) and the need for more cooperation and collaboration between agricultural agencies. To improve land management, learning needs to take place within institutions as well as local communities. While this may be accepted in theory, government agencies and other institutions often see themselves as centres of excellence and sources of expert knowledge, so that local knowledge is under-valued.

To assist in changing this view, other approaches have been promoted, such as *participatory learning*, action learning and action research (e.g. Hamilton 1995). These approaches underpin training courses for agricultural extension officers in Australia at the Rural Extension Centre, University of Queensland (Coutts, Fell and Woods 1995), and Hawkesbury, University of Western Sydney (Bawden and Macadam 1990).

Participatory learning actively seeks diversity and multiple perspectives by increasing the participation of stakeholders. Other criteria nominated by Pretty and Chambers (1994) include:

- a defined methodology and systemic learning process to emphasise learning by all participants,

- experts act as facilitators to assist stakeholders, working *with* them, rather than undertaking research *for* them,
- group inquiry process so that complex situations can be better understood, and
- context specific approaches to allow flexibility and adaptation to suit specific and changing conditions.

Action learning is a process which builds on experiential learning but emphasises a reflection phase to encourage more effective and efficient learning. As proposed by Revans (1980), the reflection comes from “questioning enquiry” where fresh questions are asked about an actual problem situation. It is the use of direct questioning by specialists during consultation that allows this type of participation to encourage effective learning about complex real-life situations. Many variations of action learning exist, but key characteristics usually include cyclical process, critical reflection and participation of stakeholders. One of the most common versions comprises four iterative steps “plan > act > reflect > generalise >” (McGill and Beaty 1992). Action research is one of the many variations on action learning.

Another form of learning which is becoming more prominent is *social learning*. According to King (2000), social learning is a mechanism that encourages landholders, communities the society to reverse their attitudes, approaches and behaviour. For Lee (1993), social learning is a way by which institutions and individuals can learn while managing complex and changing environments; it is adaptive management combined with political change. Social learning occurs when individuals, communities and institutions learn about how society works and the interrelationships between scales (such as local and regional) and components as well as about specific issues.

With learning, as with participation, there is often a mismatch between theory and practice that leads to confusion about the links between the processes used and outcomes. The literature suggests that there needs to be a high degree of fit between program design, beneficiary needs and the capacity of the associated organisations (Korten 1980 p.490). The design of participatory approaches is important if different types of learning are to be stimulated. In the Australian rangelands, many agricultural extension programs claim to incorporate learning; this enquiry examines who is involved, what processes are used and the purposes for which participation is undertaken.

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the trends in participation, particularly in the Australian rural context, and the complexities of meaning, purpose and type. The trend towards more participative and learning approaches has developed because of the failures of previous systems. The context in which the participatory activities occur is critical to their success and must be considered when designing them. This report has proposed the validity of many types of participation to achieve sustainable agriculture. Power and learning, the key concepts related to participation, were also discussed.

An array of differing meanings for participation, power and learning have emerged from the range of contexts in which the concepts have been applied. In this report the following definitions apply

- Participation is a process which involves stakeholders in issues which affect them.
- Power refers to the degree to which power is shared decision-making.
- Learning is the transformation of knowledge which assists decision-making. It incorporates the acquisition of knowledge, but can also incorporate enhancing skills, developing new attitudes, raising aspirations and developing empowerment.

The links between these concepts are indicated in Figure 2.2.

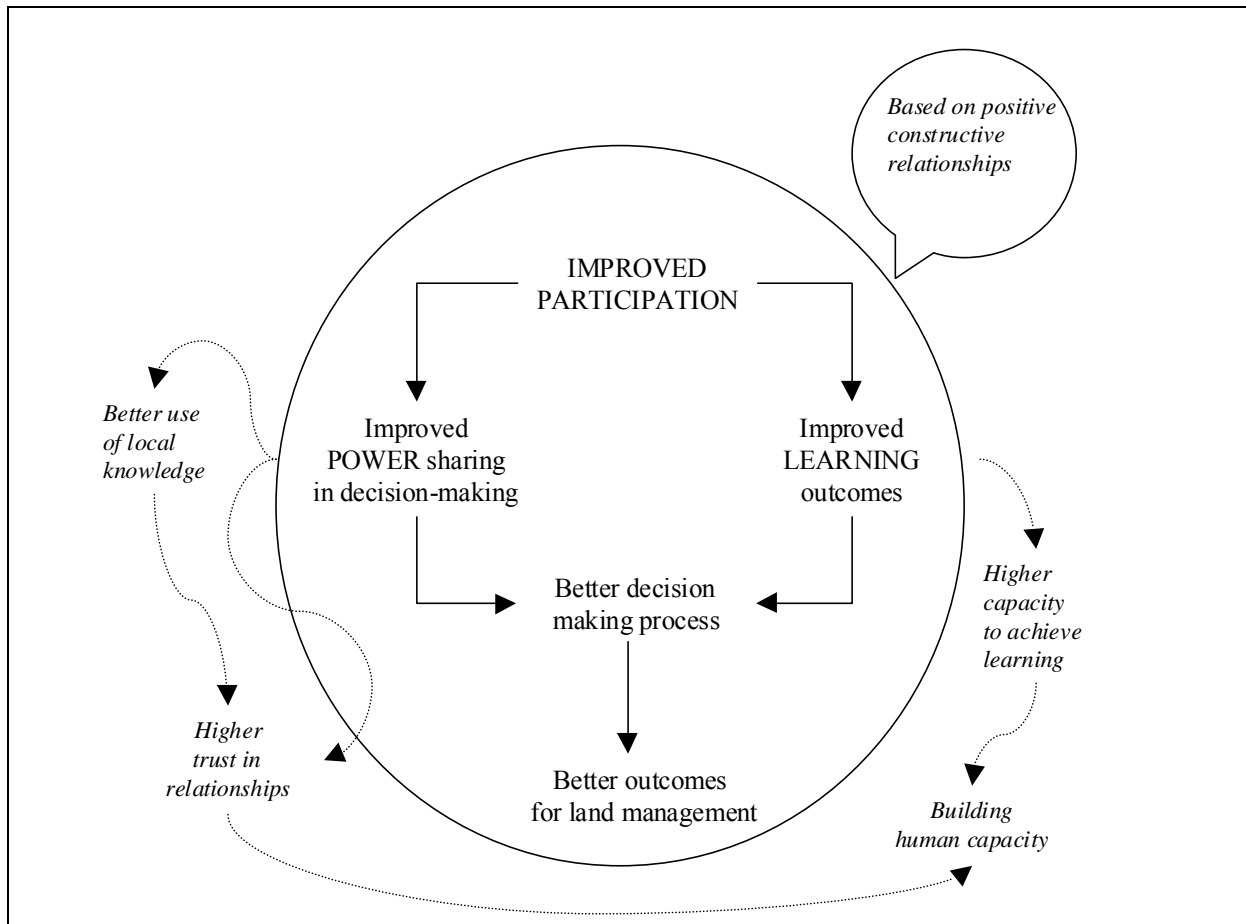


Figure 2.2 Relationships between participation, power and learning

Participation of local communities in land management programs can lead to improved decision-making processes and better outcomes for land management, when improvements are made to (a) the way that power is shared in decision-making and (b) the way that learning is undertaken. The implementation of participation is difficult. Many problems occur when attempts are made to share control with local people at the end of the participation spectrum where collective action and collective decision-making is undertaken. This is understandable because it is threatening to the centralised representative–democratic system of government in Australia. Land management issues also have multiple actors with widely divergent views.

Participatory approaches need to be designed to manage both the power relationships and the learning outcomes so that local communities can contribute positively to rangeland management. Participation can be seen as yet another passing fashion, but it is necessary to achieve sustainable rural

communities. What is crucial is for government departments, other agencies and communities to improve their ways of working together, rather than to return to the failures of the past.

Three key research questions were developed to guide this research. Their aim was to improve sustainability of Australian rangelands by assisting governments and communities to develop more effective community participation approaches in local and regional government programs. The research questions were:

- What are the community participatory processes currently used by government in Australian rangeland management programs and projects?
- What are the key issues which enhance or impede participation?
- Are different participatory processes appropriate in different contexts?

The next chapter of this report outlines the framework and methods used to explore these questions in the Australian rangelands.

3 Research framework and methods

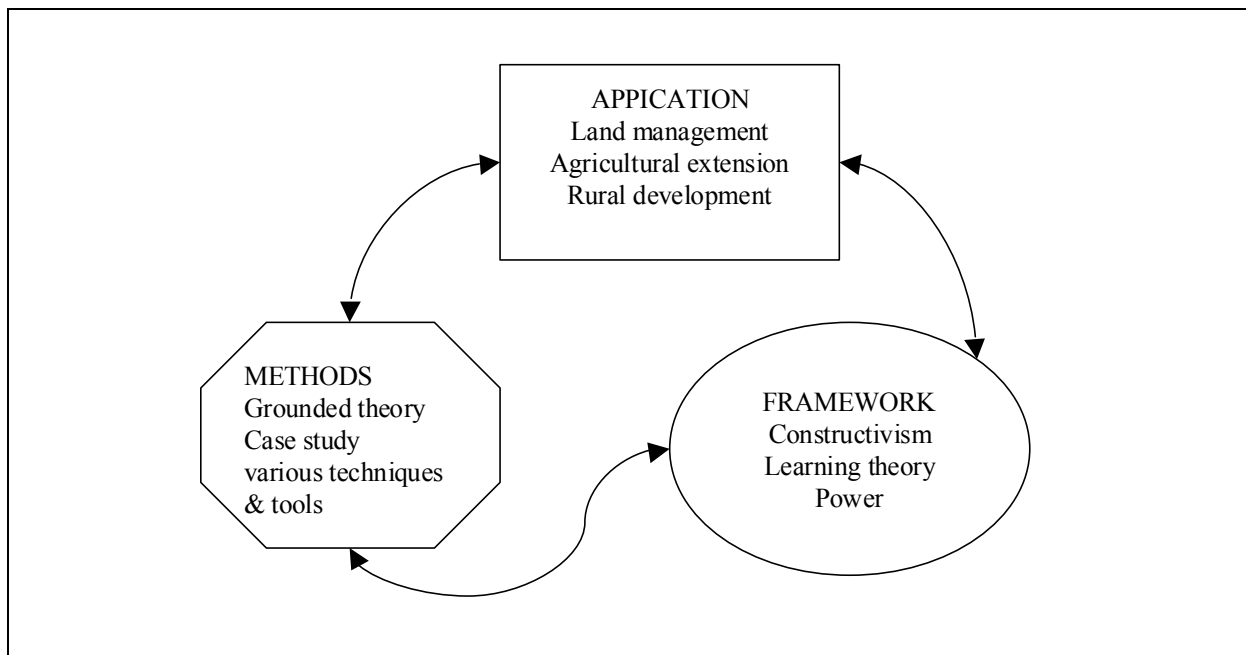
3.1 Introduction

The manner in which research is undertaken and the way that its findings are interpreted are fundamentally influenced by the research framework (Easterby-Smith et al. 1995). This framework reflects the researcher’s personal view of the world and so incorporates one individual’s values and assumptions. Consequently, all research is “socially constructed”; that is, its objectives, its structure and its interpretations are all given meaning by human beings. In the social sciences especially, methods can be used in different ways depending on the investigator’s underlying assumptions. These assumptions are often hidden, but it is important that these assumptions be made explicit or the findings of the research cannot be fully understood.

This chapter briefly outlines the research approach, clarifies the assumptions, and explains when and why specific methods were chosen for data collection and analysis.

3.2 Research framework

The research framework was designed to combine several philosophical approaches and methods. According to Patterson and Williams (1998), such an integrated, pluralistic approach is highly suitable for research into natural resource management. By combining different philosophies and a variety of methods, the research remains flexible but retains rigour because it respects the relationship between the methodology and its underlying assumptions (Jackson 1997).



Based on soft systems methodology (Checkland 1985)

Figure 3.1 Linking the application to research framework and methods

3.2.1 Philosophical approaches

This investigation draws from the philosophical research traditions of *constructivism*. This approach was chosen as it allows the researcher to explore and incorporate the different perspectives held by different stakeholders. Within rangeland management many of the individuals and groups do have different perspectives and it is often these differences which cause frustration and conflict. To improve community participation in this context, the various different perspectives need to be understood. One of the benefits of a constructivist approach is that the researcher actively seeks different views. Constructivism is defined by its acceptance of multiple mental constructions of reality (Guba and Lincoln 1994).

The emphasis on multiple perspectives also helps reduce (researcher) bias. Predetermined categories are avoided and new viewpoints are allowed to emerge, rather than the researcher attempting to find consensus too early in the process. However, one problem with an absolute constructivist approach is its relativism; relativists assert that there are no universal principles of truth. Each reality is valid and true, and no one position can be recommended over another. This prevents the researcher from taking a stance and making any recommendations for policy.

However, a distinction can be made between different types of relativism: epistemic relativism and judgmental relativism. Epistemic relativism “identifies alternative forms of valid knowledge, and more importantly knowledge production” (Brown 1998 p.11). This means there can be different views about the world, different ways of knowing the world, but this does not imply that one cannot make a judgement about those forms of knowledge. By contrast, judgmental relativism claims that all forms of knowledge are equally valid and “we cannot compare different forms of knowledge and discriminate among them” (Brown 1998 p.10).

In this research where participation is the topic of research, epistemic relativism treats different forms of knowledge and people’s different perspectives as valid. Then this data is used to make policy recommendations for government and other agencies about improving participation approaches to involve local communities in rangeland management.

As indicated above, it is important to identify and make explicit the assumptions that underlie the research philosophy and these are therefore outlined (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Research philosophy — assumptions, values and roles

Assumptions	
- about reality	Reality is not absolutely knowable.; multiple, constructed realities are socially constructed (Guba and Lincoln 1994)
- about knowledge	Epistemic relativism (Brown 1998) Subjectivist, in the sense that values mediate inquiry; the interaction between researcher and researched influences knowledge creation (Guba 1990; Guba and Lincoln 1995)
Values	Honesty, transparency and openness, critical thinking
Role of researcher	Facilitator, participant observer, active participant, interactive

3.3 Theory and methods for data collection and data analysis

Theoretical approaches and specific research methods need to be chosen which are consistent with this philosophical framework. Two theoretical approaches that are appropriate for a constructivist framework are *case studies* and *grounded theory*.

Case studies are ideal for rich, in-depth investigations of real-life contemporary contexts when research questions ask *how* and *why*. This approach is not appropriate for questions about *where*, *how much* or *how many* (Yin 1994 pp.5–6). Case studies are an alternative to experimental research for situations where the researcher has no control over events. The four case studies undertaken in this work are based on regions in the rangelands where Rural Partnership Programs exist. The studies are (a) the primary case study, the South West Strategy (SWS) in south-western Queensland, (b) the Desert Uplands (DU) in central Queensland, (c) the northern section of West 2000 in north-west New South Wales and (d) the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy (GMS) in Western Australia. The details are examined in chapter 4.

Grounded theory principles are appropriate in this research because of the complexities of participation and lack of documentation or existing theories about participation in rangeland management. Grounded theory is about developing theory from findings that are grounded in real-life patterns; it is not a theory in itself. Grounded theory proposes systematic processes and principles for collecting and analysing information.

Information is collected about the same event or process in a variety of situations, settings or dimensions (Strauss and Corbin 1990; Easterby-Smith 1995). The basis of grounded theory, as first formulated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is that theory is developed through a “comparative method” (Easterby-Smith 1995). Complex themes and categories emerge from the data during analysis, and these are then compared for the different settings.

In this enquiry, participation was examined from the perspective of the different groups involved (e.g. government departments, landholders who frequently participated and landholders who rarely participated in government-initiated activities). Also, various types of activity (e.g. Futureprofit workshops, Landcare and Bestprac meetings, Safe Carrying Capacity project, Pest management project, Regional co-ordinating groups) were examined at different scales (e.g. a local scale — property, groups of properties, or district — and regional or catchment scales).

3.3.1 Methods in the primary case study

Methods are the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse the data related to the research questions (Blaikie 1995 p.7). In this investigation, the methods were chosen to be consistent with case studies, grounded theory and a constructivist paradigm. These are qualitative and descriptive rather than quantitative or numerical. The credibility and trustworthiness of the researcher is recognised as vitally important in qualitative research as it is one aspect of rigour (Patton 1990). In this research, culturally appropriate strategies were selected to build rapport with the community. After the interviews had been completed, several people commented that they had been very open and had shared more information than usual.

The research methods comprised (a) in-depth interviews (b) participant observation, (c) written documents and (d) convergent interviews for the primary case study. Figure 3.2 indicates where these methods were used in the overall research design.

(a) In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews or discussions were used to collect information from agency staff and landholders who frequently attended meetings or activities. Designed according to focus group processes (Krueger 1988) these interviews employ semi-structured interviewing, which allows flexibility and in-depth

discussion. According to this semi-structured approach, a list of discussion topics, rather than structured questions, were prepared. The interviews incorporated specific tools to enhance their effectiveness; for example, the questioning strategy was ordered with general questions followed by more specific questions to allow the key themes to emerge — a technique called *funnelling* (Dick 1998; Minchiello et al. 1990).

Consequently, the researcher and interviewees were able to “negotiate meanings” and so reach a shared understanding of the issues. The meanings of terms used to describe the involvement of landholders with government agencies were a significant problem: different meanings were often attached to the one term (e.g. words such as *involvement*, *engagement*, *consultation*, *participation*, *partnership*, *co-operation* and *collaboration* all have a range of meanings; also, these meanings often change within the government as politicians change office). Unstructured interviews also were undertaken with landholders and government officers to clarify issues at various times throughout the project.

For practical reasons (e.g. distance and availability of landholders) some participants were interviewed individually on their properties. Group interviews were used wherever possible because they provide a rich source of data in a short space of time. People stimulate each other to recall experiences and debate different points of view.

(b) Participant observation

Participant observation is a research method where the researcher takes part in the meeting or activity (Johnson 1995). Participant observation was used in this work to ensure that the context of people’s comments was retained. It also assisted in overcoming the problem of people’s comments reflecting their beliefs, which can be inconsistent with their behaviour (Argyris and Schön 1996).

(c) Written materials

Written materials were used to supplement the primary data that were collected. Both unpublished government and agency reports and formal published literature were used. In line with grounded theory approach, the literature on the key emergent themes in participation was reviewed after the data had been collected.

(d) Convergent telephone interviews

Convergent telephone interviews were held with landholders who did not regularly attend meetings. These landholders were much harder to locate, and key informants were asked to nominate potential interviewees. Convergent interviewing is a very reliable method which leaves the content unstructured for flexibility, but structures the process rigidly. Data are systematically collected, then analysed, before more data are collected throughout the iterative process (Dick 1990, 1997, 1998).

Sample selection and size for primary case study

The key actors involved in land management in rangelands are landholders and government officials. In south-west Queensland, landholders are predominantly graziers, private individuals and companies. Interviews were organised to link with existing meetings. This was done because members of the local community had requested it to minimise the time and cost involved in attending meetings. This also reduced organisation time and ensured good attendance at interviews. Aboriginal groups and mining companies were poorly represented and this reflects the limited extent of land managed by either group in south-west Queensland.

The Australian population has approximately equal numbers of women and men, with slightly more men than women in some rural areas. The gender ratio within groups was checked to ensure a balance, but specific meetings for women were not necessary as women commonly attended meetings. In some cases the women may have attended because the researcher was female.

The criteria used to decide when to stop interviewing were:

- when no new information was being discovered (Dick 1991), and
- when the sample of people interviewed was representative. (In this case, representative in terms of the theoretically relevant dimensions, defined as part of the grounded theory process. The issues of representativeness in terms of the sample being statistically representative of the whole population was not as important as obtaining a deep understanding of the complexities of participation processes).

The number of interviews recommended for grounded theory is 30–50 (Morse 1994). This enquiry conducted approximately 200 interviews with different groups as outlined in Table 3.2.

Data analysis

This type of qualitative research is time consuming in terms of data collection, but especially in data management and analysis as open-ended questions generate masses of unstructured data. The rambling nature of the interviews means that a high level of skill is required to analyse them. The computer program NVivo was used to assist in coding the text and locating the key themes.

3.3.2 Methods in the secondary case studies

Information about participation from other case studies held in the Australian rangelands was collected by various formal and informal methods. Some research was undertaken prior to the primary case study in south-west Queensland and some afterwards. Preliminary investigations were undertaken in several rangeland areas prior to the detailed research in south-western Queensland. This reduced bias and enabled a snapshot to be taken of participation by local community members in government agency activities. These investigations included field trips to the rangelands in New South Wales, Western Australia and central Queensland. Over fifty landholders and government officers were interviewed during these trips.

Many of the methods used were the same as those employed in the primary case study area. Interviews and documents were used to check if the results found in the South West Strategy (SWS) region were valid in other regions:

- Eighteen formal, semi-structured interviews were undertaken by telephone with landholders and government officers in West 2000 (New South Wales), in the Gascoyne-Murchison Strategy (Western Australia) and in the Desert Uplands (central Queensland). There were three landholders and three agency people interviewed in each region. For these interviews, a two-page summary of the results from SWS was faxed to the interviewees and the SWS results were discussed during the interviews.
- Internal reports, evaluation documents, unpublished literature and published reports from each RPP area and other rangeland areas were reviewed.
- Informal interviews were held with people in other rangeland areas where RPPs do not exist, for example the Lake Eyre Basin Catchment Coordinating Committee and Rangeways (around Kalgoorlie) in Western Australia.

A summary of the research undertaken in all case studies and the order in which it was conducted are outlined in Figure 3.2 below.

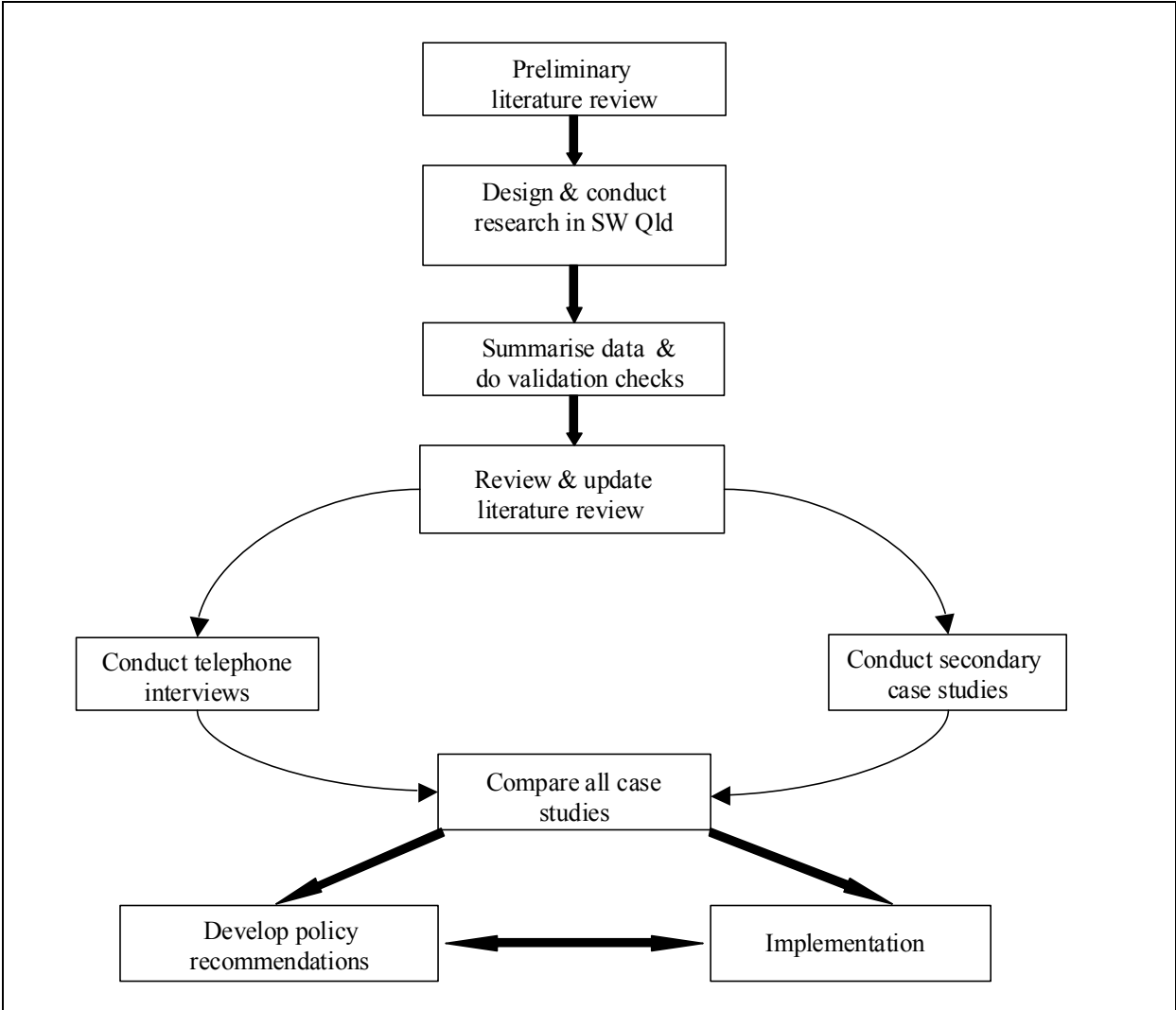


Figure 3.2 Research design

3.4 Validity, reliability and generalisability

Qualitative research and case studies are often viewed as “soft” and less rigorous than surveys or experiments. Compared with empirical or analytical research, this research faces different tests of validity and reliability. Qualitative and constructivist social researchers tend to use different tests, such as credibility (paralleling internal validity), transferability (paralleling external validity or generalisability), dependability (paralleling reliability in the sense of stability) and conformability (paralleling objectivity) (Guba and Lincoln 1995 p.114).

This enquiry employed a series of *validation and reliability* checks. The most commonly used method to check validity and reliability is the use of multiple sources of data: different informants as well as different methods of data collection. Comparisons can then be made between those sources. For this research, the approach adopted was to make comparisons:

- between observational data and interview data,

- between formal and informal interviews (to check what people say in public group interviews versus what they say in private), and
- between groups of people from different perspectives or points of view (Patton 1990 p.467).

Different methods of data analysis were used by (a) looking for emergent themes, (b) using theoretical frameworks to assist data interpretation, and (c) comparing the results with the literature (Dick 1997). Data were partially analysed during the collection process. This meant that more-specific questions or probes could be devised at the end of later interviews to allow differences between interviews to be explored.

Internal validity was improved by sending written summaries back to the people who were interviewed and to other people from the primary case study for checking. These “member checks” allowed the tentative results to be redefined to incorporate the actors’ reactions (Reason and Rowan 1981; Dick 1997). The analysis was also externally validated by checking the results with people from other rangeland areas around Australia.

Traditional research often checks the generalisability of results to other sites. However, research which accepts multiple realities suggests that every case is different and many authors suggest that generalisability is impossible (Patton 1990). This enquiry accepted that there are multiple realities and that each case has some aspects that are unique. However, this research also accepted that some generalisability is possible and the secondary case studies have been undertaken to check if there are any points of commonality.

Many previous studies have tended to focus on one particular type of project or participatory process, such as Landcare or Bestprac, and few have tried to analyse all land management programs within one region. This means that the primary case study was intensive in attempting to collect in-depth data and also extensive as there are many land management projects and programs in south-western Queensland. For pragmatic reasons of time, the secondary case studies were not as intensive, but these did allow for comparisons regarding the generalisability of key results.

The next chapter of this report describes the primary and secondary case study areas in the rangelands.

4 Regional case studies

In this chapter, we shall be describing the characteristics of the case study in south-west Queensland, and the secondary case studies: Gascoyne–Murchison, West 2000 and Desert Uplands.

4.1 Introduction

Regions have become a focal point for natural resource management in Australia (National Natural Resource Management Task Force 1999). Individual landholders and local communities are seen as having a key role in land management and it is at this scale that links between the local people and government institutions are being forged. The regional scale is considered significant in land management because effective solutions need to be locality specific; regions allow for the benefits of economies of scale, while acknowledging local needs, with the ability to be more adaptive at larger institutional scales (Woodhill 1996).

This research examined the participation of local communities with government in four rangeland regions. The Rural Partnership Program areas were chosen as the focus for this study because this Program encouraged the involvement of local communities in local and regional land management programs. At the time that this study commenced, there were few other regional programs in rangeland areas. Rangeways in Western Australia was one of the few, and this program was informally studied.

The Rural Partnership Program (RPP) was one of the first regional programs in Australia to promote the involvement of a local community. It was thought that regional programs that had implemented some participatory activities at the local and regional scales may provide some lessons for other regions because of the following.

- Local communities were known to have had some experience in participation with government in land management programs. Consequently, these communities were more likely than others, who may not have had that opportunity, to be able to provide useful insights.
- Some coordination between the various State government departments had occurred in setting up the RPP. Therefore, agency staff in these regions may have been able to offer insights about local community participation as well as providing inter- and intra-agency links.
- These regions represented one of the few examples where links between various levels or scales of government were operating.

The Rural Partnership Program was developed cooperatively by the Ministers of Commonwealth and State departments of primary industry and agriculture, and was an umbrella program under which communities could apply for funding from a variety of government programs aimed at supporting rural areas.

The broad principles under which it operated were:

- community support and ownership,
- coordinated program delivery at regional and local levels, and
- strategic approaches to address rural regional economic development and adjustment, sustainable land and water management, and social and environmental issues.

The Commonwealth Government began a number of regionally based projects as Rural Partnership pilot projects including:

- South West Queensland,
- Western division of New South Wales,
- Tobacco growing areas on the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland and in the Myrtleford region of Victoria,
- Sunraysia,
- Gascoyne–Murchison in Western Australia,
- Central West of New South Wales, and
- Eyre Peninsula of South Australia.

The outcomes sought by the government were that regional strategies should address issues of structural adjustment, sustainable resource management and community development. The aims were:

- to further the development of a more profitable rural sector that operates competitively in a deregulated financial and market environment and effectively adapts to changed market, economic and resource conditions;
- to improve sustainable management of the natural resource base and local environmental conditions;
- to develop a more robust and prosperous rural community; and
- to introduce complementary micro-economic and institutional reforms that address catchment-wide and regional issues (DPIE 1995c).

The four strategy areas in the rangelands were the South West Strategy (SWS), Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy (GMS), Desert Uplands (DU) and WEST 2000. These are described in this chapter in terms of their formation, boundaries, environmental state, economics and demographics.

4.2 South West Strategy

The South West Strategy grew out of an increasing recognition that significant areas of South West Queensland were experiencing major economic, social and natural resource problems and that these were escalating.

In 1991 the Mulga Land Use Advisory Group was formed and was successful in establishing the Land Degradation Voluntary Property Build-Up Scheme, launched in 1992. A Mulga Position Paper by the Mulga Land Use Advisory Group, along with several other reports, highlighted these issues and gave impetus to the formation of the South West Strategy (Centre for International Economics 1997).

After extensive consultation, the South West Strategy was launched in 1994 as a blueprint for recovery for the region. The Queensland Government initiated a whole-of-government approach involving three main strategies:

- Enterprise reconstruction
- Natural resource management

- Integrated regional development (Centre for International Economics 1997 p.ix).

More recently, a fourth strategy — information and technology — has been included. This component was created to identify and address the communication infrastructure needs of rural and outback communities of south-west Queensland. This strategy aims to ensure more access to education and training, access to the global economic markets, communication with the global community, access to government services and access to research and development initiatives (DNR Corporate Communications).

The South West Strategy was formed with the vision of:

A more robust South West Queensland capable of sustaining vital communities, viable pastoral enterprises and a wider range of resource uses which accommodate and enhance its natural and cultural values.(South West Strategy Group 1995 p.3)

The South West Strategy is a management concept rather than a discrete geographical area (Centre for International Economics 1997 p.43). The South West Strategy Paper (South West Strategy Group 1995) identified that the integrated regional development initiative of South West Strategy aimed to promote more effective community empowerment to help ongoing adjustment to changed markets, economic and resources conditions and a more robust regional and economic base. The program was developed from a joint approach of the local communities and the State and federal governments and it was generally agreed that the program should be community-led and administered (South West Strategy Group 1995 p.4). The South West Strategy Group was established in Charleville and comprised members from rural and urban social groups, Chambers of Commerce, government departments, industry groups and financial institutions to help implement the strategy.

The South West Strategy boundary is defined according to several criteria. The main focus was the mulga lands bio-geographic region — although the area does include a large area of channel country, some Mitchell grass downs and part of the brigalow belt. The mulga lands altogether constitute around 192,036 square kilometres.(Rayner et al. 1999). The eastern end of the region is defined on a bioregional basis following the mulga lands, while at the northern end it is based on some shire boundaries and incorporates the different bio-geographical regions of channel country, Mitchell grass downs, and mulga lands. The western boundary is predominantly the South Australian border and the southern end the New South Wales border. The Barcoo, Bulloo, Murweh, Quilpie and Paroo shires are totally covered by the region but Balonne, Booringa and Warroo have about one third of their shires in the region while Tambo has only about 16% of its shire in the South West Strategy region (Cowley 1998).

The South West Strategy area overlaps with several programs and regional groups which extend across state boundaries. These include the Lake Eyre Basin Coordinating Group, the Great Artesian Basin Consultative Council and the Murray-Darling Basin Commission. Another area of overlap occurs as a result of Queensland's being divided into five regions for State government program administration. About two-thirds of Queensland's mulga lands lie within the Queensland Murray-Darling Basin. Part of the reason is that the South West Strategy area includes three major river basins and one — the Warrego Paroo — is in the Murray-Darling Basin. The other river systems are the Bulloo River Basin and the Georgina-Diamantina river systems (part of the Lake Eyre Catchment).

The South West Strategy, due to its sheer size, has inevitably brought about duplication, for example in program guidelines and funding. Similarly, Queensland's DPI has established regional boundaries in western Queensland that are different from those chosen by DNR and EPA; further, the South West Strategy region does not correspond with either state administration or local government boundaries. Hence funding applications tend to be made on a project-by-project basis using the guidelines that are specific to each project.

4.2.1 Economic and social situation

Due to the South West Strategy boundary not following federal, State, regional or shire boundaries, demographic statistics are difficult to estimate.

It is estimated that the South West Strategy involves about 9000 people living in towns and on rural properties in an area of approximately 32 million hectares or 18.5% of the State (Grunold and Clark 1999 p.12). According to Australian Bureau of Statistics figures of 1996–97 (Rayner et al. 1999 p.26), the shires of Bulloo, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie, Barcoo and Tambo together have a population of 10,174. The discrepancy between the total population figures of the major shires and the estimated population of 9000 in the South West Strategy area occurs because only part of some of the shires is contained within the South West Strategy region (see Table 4.1 for shire breakdown).

Table 4.1 Population by shire

Shire	Population
Bulloo	520
Murweh	5,031
Paroo	2,310
Quilpie	1,285
Barcoo	470
Tambo	558
Total	10,174

(Rayner et al. 1999.)

The main town in the region is Charleville which has a population of approximately 3330. Other towns include Cunnamulla and Quilpie. It is estimated that there are about 1200 properties or actual enterprises in the region (Neale Price, personal communication, 28 March 2000).

Sheep and cattle industries dominate agricultural production in the region. Seasonal conditions tend to determine the nature of the enterprise mix. For example, the western and eastern mulga lands generally include cattle breeding, sheep breeding and wethers with bullock fattening possible in above-average seasons (QDPI 1995). The value of livestock production, and sheep and cattle numbers by shire are shown in the following table (Rayner et al 1999).

Table 4.2 Value of agricultural production, and sheep and cattle numbers, by shire

Shire	Value of agricultural production (\$x000)	Sheep numbers	Cattle numbers
Bulloo	16,046	166,703	126,066
Murweh	32,293	644,110	189,695
Paroo	28,638	1,148,266	53,407
Quilpie	26,844	840,808	66,215
Barcoo	23,456	266,757	97,517
Tambo	10,906	259,189	53,246
Total	138,183	3 325,833	586,146

(Rayner et al. 1999)

Other examples of industry diversification that were identified in the region include forestry, native foliage, a timber mill, grapes, goats, dates, cottage industry, organic beef, meat sheep, cotton, western export and forage hay (Gronold and Clark 1999). The gross value of production for western Queensland (which incorporates the south-west and is approximately three times larger) stood at around \$750m in 1996–97 (Gronold and Clark 1999). On the assumption that the south-west area of the region produces one-third of western Queensland's production, in 1996–97 the gross value of production in South West Strategy would have been approximately \$250m and livestock production for South West Strategy would have been around \$52m.

On a shire basis, Murweh, Paroo, Quilpie, Barcoo and Bulloo shires are listed among the top ten western Queensland shires. Together, they registered a gross value of production of around \$134m (Gronold and Clark 1999). It is estimated that the shires of Paroo, Quilpie and Murweh recorded a GVP of livestock products in 1996–97 of \$43m. According to the Gronold and Clark report, the Paroo, Quilpie, Murweh and Barcoo shires are listed in the top ten wool producing shires of Queensland and the Murweh, Bulloo and Barcoo are included in the top ten meat cattle producing shires of Queensland.

The average rural debt is presently around \$276,000 having been up to approximately \$400,000 in the past (Neale Price, personal communication; Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority, Brisbane, 28 March 2000). This decrease could be due to the amalgamation or sale of many enterprises, and pastoralists either leaving the industry or diversifying into other industries as a result of the build-up program.

The Mulga region's position paper of 1993 reported that woolgrowers' debt levels had risen significantly since the mid-1980s. At about the same time (1988–1991) property equity levels fell (between 85 and 65%). It was also estimated that 88% of properties had negative cash margins. The economics of sheep grazing in the eastern mulga lands has been more severely affected than in other areas of the basin due to the smaller property sizes there. At the end of the four years to 1991, mulga lands woolgrowers needed double the land to earn an income. Analysis of property size in the mulga region indicates that two-thirds of the 250 properties had rated carrying capacities less than 7500 DSE (dry stock equivalent) which is marginal even with high wool prices (Queensland Murray–Darling Basin Commission 1998 p.B65).

In fact much of the impetus for forming the South West Strategy was because of concern about land degradation due in part to the non-viability of property size in the mulga lands. The Safe Carrying Capacity Project was a natural resource management initiative within South West Strategy aimed at addressing this issue. In the mid-1990s, pastoralists and government agencies in south-west Queensland had long recognised that the carrying capacities for many properties within the mulga lands were inappropriate and that sustainable, long-term carrying capacities needed to be established (South West Strategy 1995).

In addition, many producers were concerned that lowering stock levels in areas of significant degradation, would only lead to an increase in the numbers of kangaroos and feral animals. Feral goats, for example, are located mainly in the mulga lands (Queensland Murray–Darling Basin Commission 1998).

4.2.2 Environmental state

Cowley (1998) stated that despite inappropriate land management being blamed, the broader, underlying issues are the real causes of land degradation. She cited as examples economic policy and climate, land tenure, closer settlement, and individual and institutional attitudes to, and awareness of, land use. Other economic barriers to sustainable land use cited by Cowley include high debt levels, small property sizes, overly optimistic market valuations, decreasing terms of trade and limited opportunities for diversification.

Natural resource issues were given a high priority within South West Strategy. Initially, funding was sought for three main areas: total grazing pressure incorporating a safe carrying capacity project; conversion of bore drains to reticulated piped systems; and feral goat and kangaroo management programs. It was recognised that many of these natural resource issues were inter-related and should not be considered in isolation from other programs of the strategy (South West Strategy Group 1995).

South-west Queensland is semi–arid-to-arid with most land utilised for pastoral activities. Land tenure is predominantly leasehold and vegetation in the region is dominated by mulga. However, the country

also supports poplar box and silver-leaved ironbark and smaller populations of coolibah, river red gum, yapunyah and black box on the floodplains (Cowley 1998).

The mulga lands of Queensland appear to have suffered a smaller loss of biodiversity compared to the New South Wales mulga lands (Queensland Murray-Darling Basin Commission 1998 p.B26). Even so, in the Queensland mulga lands bioregion, less than 10% of the original brigalow and gidgee remains and what is left is classed as endangered. Only between 10% and 30% of many poplar box and riparian communities remain (Cowley 1998 p.1). This area also supports many rare and endangered species including the yellow-footed rock wallaby (both rare and endangered) and the grey falcon, plains wanderer and kowari (which are classed as vulnerable) (Queensland Murray-Darling Basin Commission 1998 p.B25).

The wetlands of the Paroo River are considered by many to be the most significant wetland complexes in the Murray–Darling Basin as they have been the least affected by water and agricultural development in the Basin. According to Kingsford (1995), certain wetland and swamp areas within the region are major waterbird breeding areas and are amongst the most significant wetland areas in arid Australia.

4.3 Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy

The Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy was initiated in May 1995 after a series of meetings in the Upper Gascoyne area of Western Australia where pastoralists supported the development of urgent reforms to restore the economic, social and environmental standards of their region (Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy 1999). Three years of consultation and negotiation followed and the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy was launched on 22 April 1998 with the slogan “A new lease on life”. The Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy has State Government endorsement as a whole-of-government initiative with the goal of:

A socially and commercially viable community, involved in a diverse range of industries, based on the use of the rangelands in an environmentally sustainable way.
(Dames and Moore 1999 p.4)

The Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy intends to achieve this goal by encouraging people in the region to:

- develop their own and their business’ full potential (through business and industry development grants),
- expand and diversify the region’s industries (through industry research and development programs),
- restructure for modern land use needs (through Voluntary Lease Adjustment), and
- create development that builds the region’s environmental and economic base (through better regional environmental management) (Dames and Moore 1999 p.4).

The Gascoyne–Murchison area was defined as the eleven Western Australian shires of Meekatharra, Exmouth, Carnarvon, Upper Gascoyne, Murchison, Shark Bay, Yalgoo, Mt Magnet, Sandstone, Cue, Wiluna, plus seventeen pastoral leases immediately south of the shires of Shark Bay, Murchison, Yalgoo, Mullewa and Morawa situated in the agricultural area.

The region lies between latitudes 220 and 290 South and extends from the Indian Ocean to the Great Sandy Desert about 300 km east of Wiluna. It covers approximately 480,000 square kilometres. Two main rivers, the Gascoyne and Murchison, drain most of the region (Dames and Moore 1999).

4.3.1 Economic and social situation

In 1994, the population of the strategy area totalled 15,050, with 6600 of those living in the main town of Carnarvon. Carnarvon is also the site of a major horticultural industry. It is a centre for fishing and tourism and a service centre for the pastoral areas (Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy Steering Committee 1997).

Other coastal towns are Exmouth (2400) and Denham (870); these support fishing and tourism. Inland towns include Meekatharra (1900), Mt Magnet (1170) and Cue (640); these mainly support mining but also service the pastoral area. The remaining population (about 1500) is sparsely spread across the rangeland area. Aboriginal people form a significant part of the population in this strategy area (over 12%) compared with a State average of 7% (GMS Steering Committee 1997).

The principal land use over virtually all the region is low intensity grazing of domestic stock on approximately 250 pastoral leases. There is no freehold pastoral land within the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy region. The average area of these leases is about 190,000 ha, supporting about 10,000 dry sheep equivalents. A small but increasing number of the leases are held for non-pastoral purposes by mining companies (mainly in the east), aboriginal communities and for tourism purposes. However, these lessees are still required to meet leasehold stocking requirements (Dames and Moore 1999). Pastoral leases are often large in area, and increase in size as one moves from south to north and from west to east (GMS Steering Committee 1997).

Pastoral industry profitability (and individual profitability) within the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy region is very low. Recent Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) figures showed enterprises making cash and business losses (Dames and Moore 1999). Pastoral production in 1994–95 was valued at around \$15m. Complementary land uses include feral goat and kangaroo harvesting (Dames and Moore 1999). The decreasing importance of pastoral production in the area in part reflects the collapse of the reserve price scheme for wool. In 1993, the Pastoral Wool Industry Task Force (PWITF) concluded that the pastoral wool industry, in its current form, would not survive under the existing wool price scheme. Wool prices have continued to deteriorate since then (GMS Steering Committee 1997).

Economically, mining is by far the most prominent industry in the area, contributing \$764m in 1994–95. Tourism is estimated to contribute about \$100m, making it the second most important industry, and likely to play a bigger role in the future (GMS Steering Committee 1997). Horticultural production in 1995 was valued at approximately \$30m through 150 enterprises located mainly around Carnarvon. Approximately 1% of the region is held in conservation reserves, and aboriginal occupation and community establishment is also an important land use (Dames and Moore 1999).

4.3.2 Environmental state

The vegetation of the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy area is dominated by Acacia shrubland, with inclusions of hummock grassland, particularly on deep, sandy soil in the Exmouth Gulf area and in the Wiluna area. Net primary productivity is low and in many areas the vegetation has been significantly altered as a consequence of prolonged grazing. Other natural resources are sparse, apart from significant but scattered gold deposits across the eastern third of the region and in the Yalgoo area. The marine and coastal environments in the Shark Bay World Heritage Property (WHP) and in Ningaloo National Park are world renowned for their landforms and biota (Dames and Moore 1999).

Natural resource management issues can be divided into three distinct environments which face different challenges: the arid shrublands, coastal and marine environments and the area adjacent to the Gascoyne River downstream from Rocky Pool and 50 kilometres from the river mouth (Dames and Moore 1999).

The largest of these by far is the arid shrublands, which cover the whole region apart from the area close to the coast and the lower Gascoyne River. Land and vegetation resources of this area have been used for pastoral production for 80–140 years and as such have been profoundly degraded in many places. These changes have been recorded in detail through the Range Inventory and Condition Surveys carried out by the Western Australian Government (Dames and Moore 1999 p.3). According to Dames and Moore (1999) continued use of these resources for grazing will need management systems aimed at stabilising and improving the environment. As is the case in south-west Queensland, declining terms of trade for livestock commodities and problems associated with small lease size and low inherent land capability prohibit current management from meeting these requirements. Dames and Moore state that recent financial returns of sheep grazing in the region, as shown in locally collected and ABARE data, are not sufficient to support normal business investment in property maintenance; government intervention is urgently required to improve the range of economic opportunities available. They suggest that this could be implemented through the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy.

Other issues identified by Dames and Moore (1999) were that the area held in conservation reserves is inadequate, that it poorly represents the region’s biological resources and ecosystems, and that there needs to be sustainable management of the Carnarvon Artesian Basin. The Natural Heritage Trust (NHT) is addressing this issue by acquiring available parts of pastoral leases to be added to the conservation estate. The major component of the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy is to identify areas of special ecological value within the region and for some of these to be purchased for the conservation reserve estate as they become available through the Voluntary Lease Adjustment (VLA) process (GMS Steering Committee 1997). The NHT is also supporting a program to rehabilitate the bores and cap and pipe the water to stock watering points.

The western end of the region — the coastal and marine environments and the lower Gascoyne River — are not directly related to the Gascoyne–Murchison rangeland strategy. The lower Gascoyne River area contains significant shallow fresh water aquifers and the river is crucial for the horticultural industry that uses the adjacent land. The Lower Gascoyne Management Strategy has developed programs for sustainable management of the water resource, maintenance of the riparian areas and flood mitigation, landscape stabilisation on the delta floodplains, management of mangrove areas and prevention of weeds in the river system (Dames and Moore 1999).

4.4 Desert Uplands Strategy

The Aramac Landcare Group initiated a number of public meetings in 1994–95 and the Desert Uplands Build-up and Development Strategy Committee (DUBDC) was formed in response to growing financial pressure, the declining state of natural resources and a declining standard of living in some areas of the Desert Uplands. The DUBDC was to investigate methods of increasing the viability and sustainability of the population and land within the region (DUBDC 1996).

The committee was successful in establishing the Desert Uplands Community Scheme 1998–2004 which consists of a number of projects attracting approximately \$6m in public and private funds to support positive change in the region (CMP Economists 1999). The DUBDC vision states:

That the people of the Desert Uplands will, through sustainable economic and environmental development, progressively increase their standard of living and quality of life. (CMP Economists 1999 p.2)

Like the South West Strategy, the Desert Uplands position paper identified threats to the main unique values of the region, including:

- Low levels of profitability in primary production;
- Degraded natural resources; and

- Declining regional population and other social issues. (CMP Economists 1999 p.2)

In response to these, four fundamental objectives of the scheme were put in place:

- Economic development
- Natural resource management
- Environmental management
- Social development.

The area covers some 75,000 square kilometres and is based on a designated region under the Landcare property build-up and development provision of Queensland Government legislation (CMP Economists 1999). It also encompasses the Desert Uplands bio-geographic region covering some 70,000 square kilometres. The Desert Uplands bio-geographic region lies in north-central Queensland, straddling the Great Dividing Range between Blackall and Pentland. It extends to north of the Flinders Highway near Torrens Creek. Approximately 50 kilometres west of Tambo is the southern boundary and the area is defined by a line from Blackall to Hughenden through Barcaldine in the west and the Belyando River in the east (DUBDC 1996).

Approximately half of the bioregion forms part of the Lake Eyre Basin catchment. The region is located on the headwaters of the Alice River, Aramac, Cornish, Torrens and Towerhill Creeks which become the Thomson and Barcoo Rivers (outside the region) and these join to form the Cooper Creek. The north-eastern sector is drained by the Cape, Campaspe and the lower reaches of the Suttor Rivers. The Belyando River collects the runoff from the Dyllingo and Carmichael creek catchments and other small creeks along the eastern and south-eastern side of the Uplands (Natural Resource Management Group, DUBDC 1999).

In the centre of the region are two ephemeral lakes with internally drained catchments. Lake Buchanan has a catchment area of approximately 2770 square kilometres and a lake bed area of about 117 square kilometres which is for most of the year dry salt playa. Lake Galilee has a catchment area of approximately 2460 square kilometres and a lakebed area of about 220 square kilometres. Salt-tolerant plant species cover most of the lakebed (Natural Resource Management Group, DUBDC 1999).

4.4.1 Economic and social situation

Population figures have declined over recent years and in 1995 stood at around 11,690. Table 4.3 below shows the estimated shire populations from 1991–95 and indicates the declining population of the region.

Table 4.3 Population of Desert Uplands by Shire

Shire	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Aramac	949	949	920	901	892
Barcaldine	1,755	1,752	1,745	1,739	1,728
Blackall	2,146	2,134	2,118	2,090	2,066
Dalrymple	3,533	3,573	3,546	3,501	3,456
Flinders	2,666	2,652	2,612	2,556	2,491
Jericho	1,110	1,112	1,107	1,087	1,061
Total	12,159	12,172	12,048	11,874	11,694

(DUBDC 1996 p.3)

The main towns of Barcaldine, Aramac and Alpha are on the edges of the region; smaller towns of Torrens Creek, Pentland, Prairie and Jericho are within the area.

The major land use is extensive cattle grazing. There are about 320 properties consisting of approximately 1200 land parcels in the region. Of the 1200 lots, 610 are leasehold and more than 290 are freehold. There are three national parks and one resource reserve together covering 158,500 ha or 2% of the area. Properties in the Desert Uplands are, on average, between 20,000 and 25,000 ha. Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRAA) information and a DUBDC financial survey estimate that around 57% of properties are less than 20,000 ha (DUBDC 1996).

Properties within the Desert Uplands have an average debt of \$215,000 (DUBDC 1996). However, a rural debt survey commissioned by QRAA in 1995 found that the average debt of Desert Uplands beef producers was far above the State average. The survey found that only 27% of Queensland producers had no debt. Of those Queensland producers with debt (73% of all producers) the average debt per Queensland beef producer was \$284,951 and the average debt per Desert Uplands beef producer was \$450,122. The DUBDC identified access to PIPES — Landcare property build-up and development — as a first step in arresting deterioration of natural resources and in improving the overall viability of the region (DUBDC 1996).

Other social issues which affect the Desert Uplands are property transfer and off-farm income. Following the Australian trend, the average age of rural property owners in this area is increasing, and the declining incomes do not allow elderly landholders enough finance to retire comfortably. Hence farm ownership can not be transferred to subsequent generations because of insufficient financial resources. It is estimated that up to 50% of surveyed families had to seek off-property employment, many outside their local area. Off-farm income averaged \$8731, and in 1994, the region produced approximately \$36.5m worth of agricultural products (DUBDC 1996).

4.4.2 Environmental state

The region is dominated by sandstone ranges and sand plains which contrast with the more fertile, undulating clay plains of the Mitchell grass downs to the west and brigalow belt to the east (Natural Resource Management Group DUBDC 1999). The soils of the region are generally deficient in essential minerals and trace elements, and resemble the soils of the mulga lands. The vegetation of the region falls into nine broad classes. The vegetation is mostly ironbark/spinifex with some ironbark/low grasses, yellow jack and box. Coolibah /river red gum, gidgee, and black gidgee exist in the most fertile soils whereas bendee/lancewood areas are the least fertile and most prone to erosion. Some cypress pine also grows. Some introduced weed species have the potential to rapidly increase in area and impact on the region (DUBDC 1996).

A study of the Lake Buchanan–Lake Galilee area conducted by the Department of Environment, and another of the Dalrymple Shire by the CSIRO and Department of Natural Resources, suggest that 60–70% of the Desert Uplands may be suffering degradation (DUBDC 1996 p.5). This degradation includes reduced density and biodiversity of native pastures and an increase in introduced weed

species. The committee suggested that assistance with the piping of above-ground water supplies would relieve the burden on local, limited aquifers and that other water management processes needed to be investigated. A full resource survey of the region was recommended to inform landholders of the current conservation status of the area and incentives to implement nature conservation measures were also suggested (DUBDC 1996).

4.5 West 2000 Strategy

Depressed commodity prices, record drought periods and high interest rates beset landholders in the western division of New South Wales in the early 1990s. These unprecedented pressures led to a joint search conference between government officials and western division landholders who proposed a recovery program, referred to as WEST 2000 (WEST 2000 Plus 1999).

The subsequent lengthy negotiations led to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding for the WEST 2000 Rural Partnership Program on 21 February 1997. The aims of the program were:

- Profitable and self-reliant rural industries which operate competitively and can adapt to changing market, economic and resource conditions;
- Sustainable management of the natural resource base;
- Robust, equitable and prosperous communities; and
- To contribute to a competitive, viable and self sustaining Western Division through the provision of measures to enhance property productivity and natural resource management.

Three focus areas govern the delivery of projects: natural resource management, rural restructuring, and training and skills development (WEST 2000 Plus 1999).

The projects have focussed on four main areas:

- an interest subsidy grant for property expansion,
- a debt restructuring grant,
- re-establishment support, and
- rural financial counselling support.

On average, landholders have contributed \$2.30 for every dollar of WEST 2000 funding in addition to in-kind contributions such as labour (WEST 2000 Plus 1999).

The implementation of WEST 2000 lies with the WEST 2000 Management Board which was appointed by the NSW Minister for Land and Water Conservation in 1997. The 12 members are predominantly Western Division landholders. The WEST 2000 program is due to come to an end in mid-2000 (WEST 2000 Plus 1999).

The boundary of WEST 2000 follows the Western Division of NSW, which comprises the local government areas of Brewarrina, Bourke, Cobar, Central Darling, Balranald, Wentworth and Broken Hill, and part of the Walgett, Bogan, Carrathool and Hay local government areas (WEST 2000 RPP 1999). It covers approximately 325,000 square kilometres and stretches from the Murray River at Balranald in the south to the Barwon River at Mungindi in the north and west to the South Australian border. The region has one major river system, the Barwon–Darling River, which is made up of two distinct sections and is part of Australia's longest river (DLWC 1999).

4.5.1 Economic and social situation

The Western Division has a small population base estimated at approximately 52,831. About 70% live in towns. The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research (West 2000 Plus 1999) shows almost a 10% drop in population from the figure of 58,460 recorded in 1981. The region contains some 1700 properties and makes up 42% of the area of New South Wales. Over 95% of the area (31 million hectares) is Crown Land held under Western Lands Lease (DLWC 1999).

Western Division Landholder Research (Logan and Axiom 1999) released in September 1999 created a profile of the typical western division landholder. Although landholders were found to be evenly distributed across the four age groups (see Table 4.4), they were typically aged 45 years or over (72%), ran sheep and cattle (84%) and had a landholding of more than 15,000 ha (63%). The research also revealed that approximately half had applied for a WEST 2000 grant and the younger they were, the more likely they were to support the current and future WEST 2000 programs.

Table 4.4 Spread of ages of landholders in WEST 2000 survey

Age	55 yrs and over	45–54 years	35–44 years	Less than 34 yrs
Percentage	22 %	24 %	28 %	23 %

(Logan and Axiom 1999.)

The Western Division rural sector has contributed on average around \$1 billion annually (mainly from pastoralism, mining and tourism) to the national economy. In 1998, mining production was valued at \$495m and tourism was estimated to be worth more than \$130m. Total agricultural production was valued at \$450m with wool contributing \$315m, cotton \$80m, grapes \$40m, citrus \$25m, grains \$20m and beef \$13m (DLWC 1999). The diversity is obvious, and improved production and land management practices have permitted such a diversification of enterprises on properties allowing pastoralists to generate more cash flow (DLWC 1999).

The National Institute of Economic and Industry Research in 1999 reported a drop of around 92% in farm profit for non-cropping properties in the western division, from \$120,834 in 1988–89 to \$9359 in 1996–97. Wool and sheep prices since 1997 have slipped further. These poor returns have caused an increase in the reliance on off-farm income. In 1998, Resource Consulting Services conducted a survey of 42 graziers in the southern part of the Western Division which showed that over 30% of females worked off-farm in some capacity (in Logan and Axiom 1999). The table below shows the enterprise profile of Western Division landholders:

Table 4.5 Enterprise Profile of Western Division Landholders

Enterprise	% of landholders involved
Sheep	66 %
Cattle	14 %
Cropping	14 %
Off-farm & other	6 %

(Logan and Axiom 1999.)

When dual enterprises are considered, 6% of sheep enterprises also run cattle and 3% are also involved in cropping.

A policy of closer settlement in the Western Division for over 60 years until the late 1980s has resulted in smaller property sizes. Most of these properties have a carrying capacity of less than 6000 Dry Sheep Equivalent (DSE) (Wynne 1993). Of the 23% of landholders with 40,000 ha or more, 86% are involved in sheep enterprises. The size of Western Division landholdings is presented in the following table:

Table 4.6 Size of Western Division Landholdings

Size of holding	% involved
40,000 ha or larger	23 %
25,000–40,000 ha	19 %
15,000–25,000 ha	23 %
5,000–15,000 ha	24 %
Less than 5,000 ha	11 %

(Logan and Axiom 1999)

Various reports have highlighted problems of small property size and its impact on natural resource and environmental management. There is general consensus that the property size limits management options and pushes pastoralists to stock more heavily than is ecologically desirable (Anon 1999). This also exacerbates the cost/price squeeze as terms of trade deteriorate. This situation is similar to that in the western region of Queensland.

4.5.2 Environmental state

The main vegetation types in the Western Division of NSW are mulga, Bimble Box/Pine, Saltbush/Bluebush, Coolabah/Black Box, Belah–Rosewood and Mallee (Abel, Tatnell and McKinley 1996).

Although the Barwon–Darling River above Menindee is not regulated by a major storage on the river itself, flow patterns have been affected by the regulation and water extractions in its major upstream tributaries. Seventeen weirs have been constructed, and flows in the river are highly variable. Large, private, off-river storages have also been constructed to store water and these have a total combined capacity estimated at 230,000 ML. Groundwater within the Great Artesian Basin is a major source of stock and domestic water in the region and can be tapped to flow naturally to the surface. Other groundwater resources in the region are of variable quantity and quality (DLWC 1999).

There is widespread evidence that the health of the State's freshwater systems is declining as a result of increased extractions and river regulation (DLWC 1999 p.3). The DLWC–Far West Region Information Manual (1999) cites a 1995 and 1996 scientific assessment of the Barwon–Darling River which reportedly found evidence of environmental degradation as a result of the changed river flow regime and diversions from the river. It also identified inflows into Narran Lake (from the Narran River) — one of the State's most important ibis breeding areas — as being substantially reduced by diversions in Queensland. The manual also noted a decline in native fish numbers throughout the region and the issue of water quality with regular blue-green algal blooms in the river system. Declines in bore pressure and huge losses from open bore drains are blamed for the decrease or, in some cases, total loss of artesian groundwater supplies (DLWC 1999). Water use is therefore a major concern of the DLWC.

Other natural resource issues for the Western Division include the impact of total grazing pressure, increased populations of red and grey kangaroos, soil degradation, woody shrubs encroaching on areas of former open lands, native vegetation clearing, biodiversity and conservation.

Woody shrub infestation is one of the most significant natural resource and environmental problems in the region, with almost 60% of the region affected (Graham 1988). The Fenner Conference on Sustainable Habitation in the Rangelands (Abel 1996) identified the most significant impacts on biodiversity as being total grazing pressure, introduced predators, clearing, changes to fire regimes and the distribution of water. It reported that permanent water points had redistributed, intensified and prolonged grazing pressure by domestic and feral animals and kangaroos.

The same report cited a decline in some animal species, particularly mammals.

4.6 Comparing the regions

These four rangeland regions have at least one thing in common — the strategies grew out of concern for the deteriorating state of their economic, social and environmental resources. In addition, each was experiencing significant economic and social problems. This coincided with a recognition by government and calls from the community for an integrated and self-reliant approach.

Population centres in the various regions rely almost entirely on primary production, predominantly extensive sheep and cattle grazing, and therefore suffer the effects of any rural decline. At least three of the regions also have to deal with environmental and natural resource issues which are caused by financial pressures impacting when property size is inadequate and seasonal conditions unfavourable.

Broadly speaking, the aim of each of these strategy areas is to create a more robust and economically viable community while also improving the state of the environment.

One of the recurring themes in these four regions was that the environmental and natural resource problems could not be viewed in isolation from the economic and social issues confronting these communities. Cowley (1998) identified the increased pressure between some environmental values present in these areas and the underlying causes: economic policy and commodity returns, land tenure, closer settlement, individual and institutional attitudes and the level of awareness of land use issues. It is too simplistic to look at inappropriate land management (e.g. overstocking) as being the only cause of land degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Differences in perception can also have a significant bearing on how these environmental issues are viewed. For example there are different perceptions about the extent and causes of degradation in each region.

In terms of participation, each of the regions has undertaken extensive consultation with various sectors in their local communities; this was a requirement of the Rural Partnership Program. While each of these Rural Partnership Programs is in the rangelands, there are considerable differences in the biophysical, economic and social aspects, as indicated below in Table 4.7.

Table 4.7 A Comparison of Rangeland Strategy Regions

Strategy Region	Area (km ²)	Pop'n	No. of Pastoral Enterprises	Key industries	Value of industries to region	Average debt level per property
South West Strategy	320,000	9,000	1200	Sheep/Wool Beef cattle	GVP \$250m Livestock \$52m	\$276,000
Gascoyne-Murchison Strategy	480,000	15,050	250 pastoral leases (ea av. 190,000 ha)	Mining Tourism Horticulture Pastoral	\$764m \$100m \$30m \$15m	unknown
Desert Uplands	75,000	11,690	320 properties (120 land parcels)	Cattle Sheep/Wool	\$36.5m agric product	\$215,000
WEST 2000	325,000	52,831	1700 properties	Mining Agriculture Wool Cotton Tourism	\$495m \$450m \$315m \$80m \$130m	unknown

This summary table indicates some of the variations between the regions, particularly in terms of numbers of properties and in the industry mix and contribution to local economies in each region. Obviously, the regions drawing on a wider diversity of industries, especially if one of them is mining, contribute more to the national economy and are less vulnerable to the downturn in wool and livestock

commodity prices. Desert Uplands is by far the smallest region in area but is not as sparsely populated as the vast South West Strategy area.

While the means of appointing members to the controlling body of each region varies, each seems to have strong community involvement. South West Strategy has strong producer and departmental input through its networks; the board members of the South West Strategy are nominated by various industry and community groups, including Landcare. The members of the Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy, while appointed by the relevant minister, have strong community support, Desert Uplands has a strong grassroots approach and WEST 2000 benefits from strong links between community groups and the government, although the board is appointed by the minister from western division landholders.

Participation in each of the regions will be outlined in the following chapters, initially the South West Strategy in Chapters 5 and 6, then the other three secondary case studies in Chapter 7.

5 Participatory processes in practice

The research results of this investigation are discussed in the next three chapters. This chapter (Chapter 5) and Chapter 6 focus on the South-West Strategy region of south-west Queensland; Chapter 7 presents the results from the other case studies.

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, participatory processes in land management programs and projects are described from the perspectives of those involved in land management programs in south-west Queensland. The key categories of people currently involved are landholders and the staff of government departments. Projects discussed include Futureprofit, Bestprac, Feral Goat Management, Landcare and Water Allocation Management Planning projects.

This chapter begins to answer the research questions:

1. *What are the community participatory processes currently used in government land management projects in Australian rangelands?*
2. *What are the key issues which enhance or impede participation?*
3. *Are different participatory processes appropriate in different contexts?*

To answer Research Question 1, the participatory processes used in the various programs and projects in south-west Queensland are described in terms of (a) the function or goal of participation, (b) the structure of participation or processes and/or methods used, and (c) the scale (whether it is national, State, regional or local).

For Research Question 2, the perceptions of the various groups of people are compared and contrasted. Individuals and groups were asked to comment on what they liked and disliked about current participatory approaches. This research did not question the validity of each person's comments, which were all accepted as the reality of the individual, and no reality was considered more correct than another. This way of generating knowledge and of understanding reality is what defines the constructivist paradigm.

Negative comments suggest ways in which participation may need to be changed, while positive comments suggest aspects of the current participatory design that could be continued. Consensus on exactly how participation should be designed is not necessary achievable or even desirable. Individuals all have preferences about how they like to be involved in activities.

This chapter will now discuss government programs and projects in terms of the function (or goal) of participation, what structure (or methods) are used and at what scale issues are applicable. The chapter also reports any matches found between the function, structure and scale of the participation undertaken. These need to be clear if participants are to choose activities that best suit their needs and preferences. The chapter then outlines the differences and similarities of the perspectives of two major categories of participant: landholders and government agencies.

5.2 Participatory processes in south-west Queensland

The current participatory approaches used by government officers to involve local communities in land management programs and projects in south-west Queensland are described according to three dimensions:

- Why do government agencies want to involve local communities in this particular program or project? That is, what is the function (purpose) of participation?
- How has participation of local people been facilitated by government agencies? That is, what is the structure (processes or methods) of the participation?
- At what scale do changes in land management need to be implemented? At what scale should participatory activities be undertaken?

5.2.1 Purpose

In this report, the purpose of participation refers to the function or goals of participation as determined by the initiating agency, not the purpose determined by the participants. For most rangeland management programs and projects, the initiating agencies are the State government departments of agriculture and natural resources and to a lesser extent the Commonwealth department involved in agriculture. The following table lists the relevant departments and most of the key projects related to land management in south-west Queensland.

Table 5.1 Departmental programs and projects in south-west Queensland during 1997-99

Departments	Related programs, projects and services
State: Department of Primary Industries (DPI)	Futureprofit (partly funded by Commonwealth) Safe Carrying Capacity project Total Grazing Pressure project Producer Demonstration sites (PDS) & Storelink (Meat Research Corporation program facilitated by DPI) Bestprac (The Woolmark Company program, facilitated by DPI)
State: Department of Natural Resources (DNR)	South West Strategy (community initiative, administered by DNR) Bore Drain Replacement program Bore capping program Landcare Feral Goat Management project Water Allocation Management Program, and Water Allocation Planning Nature conservation planning project Vegetation management/Tree clearing guidelines Land Protection (pest animals and plants; stock routes)
State: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), incorporating National Parks and Wildlife Service (QNPWS)	Advice regarding native wildlife National Park planning Community Nature Conservation program Input into Local Shire planning, Integrated Planning Act planning, other Department programs
Commonwealth: previously Department of Primary Industries & Energy (DPIE); now Australian Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (AFFA)	Rangeland Strategy Rural Partnership Program Rural Adjustment Program Futureprofit or Property Management Planning (funded 30-40% through National Landcare Program)
Industry	Flockcare & Cattlecare (both often have DPI involvement) Producer Initiated Research and Development (PIRD)

Only some of these projects were discussed in detail by landholders or government officers and those were analysed in terms of the goals or function of participation. The distinction between the goals of the project itself and goals or purpose of participation was sometimes a little confusing for agency staff. The goals of participation are the reasons for the initiating agency wanting to have landholder participation of some sort in the project.

Table 5.2 Purpose of participation in south-west Queensland

Project	Goal of the program or project	Purpose of participation
DPI: Futureprofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhance skills • increase people’s ability to cope with change in enterprise, including holistic property planning 	Group-based activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning • enhance skills • improve knowledge
Bestprac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve production & economic aspects of business • improve efficiency & effectiveness of production system 	Group-based activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning • share information between landholders • improve knowledge, attitudes, skills & aspirations leading to • improved practice
Safe Carrying Capacity project (SCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • objectively estimate safe long term grazing capacities of properties 	Individual enterprise activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve knowledge • change stock management practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landholders employed on short term contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve credibility of knowledge
Total Grazing Pressure project (TGP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to combine the knowledge and experience of graziers, scientists & wider community in development of sustainable grazing practices 	Group activity: involves whole of community, not just graziers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide information about total grazing pressure & practices • change the management of domestic, native and feral animals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landholders employed on short-term contracts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to improve community ownership, credibility & relevance of knowledge
DNR: South West Strategy Board (SWS Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • aims to achieve “a robust south-west comprised of a responsible community, viable progressive rural & urban businesses in a carefully managed resource base that attracts people to live, work and visit.” (SWS strategic plan) 	Representative groups & individual activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to develop synergies through diverse stakeholder input, not just landholders, that ensures wide community ownership of goals & activities of SWS
Bore Drain Replacement (BDRP) & Bore capping programs (BCC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve utilisation of water resource • promote better control of waters for feral animal management, improved stock control (mustering and mating), less erosion etc. 	Individual enterprise activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • change water management practices, through education and commitment <p><i>Note: Financial incentives are offered.</i></p>
Feral Goat Management project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve management of feral goats • ascertain the cost & benefits of different control methods • improve policy 	Group & individual activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learning • share information between landholders • improve knowledge, attitudes, skills & aspirations leading to • improved practice

(Table continued over)

(Table 5.2 continued)

Project	Goal of the program or project	Function or purpose of participation
Landcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to encourage land users to take responsibility for local problems and work on a group basis• to improve land management practices	Mainly group activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• learning• use local knowledge• share information between landholders• improved practice
Water Management Plans (WMP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to ensure sustainable use of water	Mainly group activity: as many different stakeholder views as possible <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to increase ownership• to reduce conflict
Nature conservation planning project	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• education of principles & practice of nature conservation	Group activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to have ownership & input into nature conservation planning in the region
Vegetation management guidelines for leasehold land	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to maintain biodiversity & ecological processes• to maintain productive potential of land• to allow appropriate development on properties	Mainly representative group activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• improve knowledge• improve planning to facilitate assessment process• remove angst by allowing a full understanding of assessment process• allow localised specialisation of policy & procedures
EPA: Advice regarding native wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to care for sick & injured animals• more people providing better care for native wildlife	Mainly individual activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• to build individual & community knowledge & understanding about the needs of native animals
National Park planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• realistic, achievable plans of management for protected areas	Mainly group activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• community ownership & understanding of park management• improve relationships with community
Community nature conservation program extension services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• integrating nature conservation principles and practices with property management.• facilitating long-term social and environmental change	Group & individual activity <ul style="list-style-type: none">• build knowledge, skills & capacity of landholders to integrate management of wildlife habitat with existing land management practices
Rural financial services and social counselling	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to assist farm families and small businesses to achieve their goals• to build robust, resilient communities• to provide support at times of emotional & psychological trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• to build social capacity and encourage human development• to enhance employment skills• to identify and advocate important social issues

Many agency staff stated that they had developed the function or purpose for participation themselves, as the goals for involving the community in the project were often not stated in the project plans. Sometimes, the goals of participation had not even been discussed among the members of the agency project team.

The four most commonly suggested functions for participation were improving knowledge, increasing understanding and learning, changing management practices and encouraging ownership. Landholder ownership was often thought to be necessary before any change would occur in practices. Also, ownership was thought to reduce conflict.

Some projects were specifically aimed at improving relationships with the community or reducing conflict. Reducing landholder antagonism or “breaking down the barriers” of suspicion was frequently mentioned by agency staff as an essential prerequisite for any project. To overcome lack of trust in

government or agency staff, several projects employed local people to test project models and organise community meetings. However, this method was not commonly used.

Many programs and projects had multiple functions for participation, and sometimes the reasons that government departments had for involving landholders were not clear. Often, the functions of participation were not made explicit to the participants; even if they were, the participants were often unclear about their role and why they had been invited to attend particular meetings.

Another dimension of participation was the methods and techniques used to involve local people — the structure of participation. The methods used in participation were much easier for both landholders and agency staff to outline, and these are described in the next section.

5.2.2 Structure

When designing the structure of participatory activities, extension staff tended to discuss the methods and techniques before deciding on the purpose of participation; sometimes the purpose of participation was clarified and then the methods chosen to fit the goal.

The number of methods and techniques used by departments in south-west Queensland seems to reflect the extent of participatory activities undertaken by that department. The number of methods listed was highest for DPI staff, lower for DNR staff, and lowest for staff of EPA.

The types of participatory methods and techniques used to involve local people were collected through participant observation when the researcher attended meetings, and during discussions with government staff. Each program and project tended to use a number of similar methods and techniques, and it is repetitive to simply list these for each project. Differences occurred between the government departments initiating the participation, as much as between the individual projects. Some examples of the types of methods and techniques used by the three key government departments involved in land management in south-west Queensland are listed below. The list is not exhaustive but provides an indication of commonly used methods.

Table 5.3 Examples of methods and techniques used in participation

DPI	DNR	EPA
Telephone calls	Telephone calls	Telephone calls
Workshops & seminars	Workshops & field days	Meetings
Information & discussions days	Media – newspapers, radio, TV, publications, newsletters, eg	Letters
Media - newspapers; radio, TV, publications, newsletters e.g.	MulgaLine	One-on-one
MulgaLine	Advisory groups for specific issues	– Staff do property visits (rare, mainly by landholder invitation)
Steering committees & community consultative groups - for TGP & DPI	One-on-one	– Landholder visits to EPA office seeking information
One-on-one	Public meetings & shows	Advertisements
Meetings – various types	Calling for submissions (written and verbal)	Informal or opportunistic discussions
Lectures	Secondary participation:	Secondary participation:
Mail out, flyers, letters	Working with existing groups e.g.	invitations by other agencies to meetings & field days
Surveys – mail & telephone	Catchment Management	
Short term employment of landholders	Associations	
On-farm research trials	Invitations from existing groups e.g. UGA	

The DPI and DNR seemed to be more active with landholders than EPA, because EPA:

- emphasised that they attended many meetings by invitation from other departments,
- said that they waited for landholders to approach them. Some of their best interactions occurred when landholders came to them seeking information, and

- had less contact with landholders and relied more on opportunistic discussions.

DNR was the only department to mention the formal process of calling for submissions, which was done during the Water Management Planning (WMP) processes. A few landholders suggested that the process of calling for submissions paid only lip service to participation. It was not genuine participation, and the submission process was used when the Government did not want to listen to landholders' views. Agency staff explained that landholders were likely to feel that they had not been listened to when their views were not adopted.

Both DNR and EPA discussed their use of secondary participation, where they attended meetings or activities organised by another agency. According to EPA, one of the benefits of attending other agencies' meetings was to build links between agencies, and to allow landholders to better understand the different roles of each department. DPI did not mention secondary participation at all, and was the only department to employ landholders for short periods to undertake specific tasks and to undertake on-farm research. Some landholders advocated more short-term contracts for local people because this helped to build trust between landholders and agencies.

Many producers said that "processes all look the same". Observations of meetings indicated that meetings did tend to use the same techniques; for example meetings often started with the ground rules, participants expectations were often collected, agency staff usually claimed that they wanted to know what landholders thought about an issue, butchers paper was used to record landholder comments, and meetings often ended with evaluation "happy sheets" for people to complete. One of the implications of a similar structure for many meetings was that landholders tended to become confused about the purpose of the meeting. They often suspected hidden agendas even when facilitators tried to explain the purpose of the meeting.

In some programs and projects, the structure was determined outside the region and did not allow for the complexities of individual personalities, existing group dynamics and the needs of particular communities. Many land management problems develop outside the region and finding solutions means including people from other regions. The need to incorporate several scales adds to the complexity of organising local community participation.

5.2.3 Scale

Most land management and environmental issues were part of a complex web of relationships that encompassed more than one scale. Some land management issues crossed property boundaries, such as free-roaming feral animals; some cross district boundaries, such as weeds spreading down a river catchment; others cross State boundaries, such as water use in the Murray–Darling catchment, while migratory birds nesting in the Paroo wetlands have flown across international boundaries. The term *scale* in this report is defined in terms of national, State, regional (or catchment), and local areas. The phrase *local scale* is used to refer to a paddock, a property or a group of adjoining properties in a district.

Decisions made at one scale can impact on practices at another scale and the people affected may have no involvement in the decision-making. For example, international agricultural policies, which may have no involvement of local landholders, influence marketing opportunities which in turn influence landholders decisions about numbers and types of livestock (Slocum, Wichhart, Rocheleau and Thomas-Slayter 1995).

Participation can occur at various scales. The participation of different groups of stakeholders is needed to address land management issues at different scales or levels. Many projects are planned at a different scale to which they are implemented. For policy direction and funding, the planning stage is important. However from the perspective of the landholders who change their land management practices and monitor changes, it is the implementation scale which is important. The paddock, property or district are commonly where these changes occur. For example landholders were involved

in an advisory capacity in planning the Futureprofit program at a national and State level, and then participated in the training programs which examined individual enterprises (the local level); occasionally landholders were also involved in evaluation and product improvement after the program had been completed.

Table 5.4 Scale at which participation is undertaken

Project	Planning scale	Implementation scale	Topic area (in priority order)
Futureprofit	National & State	Local: Property	Economic Environmental Social
Bestprac	National, district & property	Local: District & property	Economic Environmental (now incl. social)
Safe Carrying Capacity project	SW Qld region	Local: Property	Environmental (has flow-on economic effects)
Total Grazing Pressure project	SW Qld region	Local: Property	Environmental Economic
South West Strategy & Natural Resource Management sub-group	SW Qld region	Regional & local: district & property depending on the project	Economic Environmental Social
Bore Drain Replacement program & Bore capping program	Great Artesian Basin - multi-state in Qld, NSW & SA	Local: Property	Environmental (has economic implications)
Feral Goat Management project	SW Qld region	Local: District & property	Environmental Economic
Landcare	National	Local: District	Environmental
Water Management Plans (WMP)	National & multi-state	Region – catchment (water licences on property)	Environmental
Nature conservation planning project	SW Qld region	Region	Environmental
Vegetation management guidelines	State	Region – Bioregion	Environmental
National Park planning	District	Local: Properties surrounding the parks	Environmental
Leadership program	State	Local: individuals	Social
South West Financial Counselling Service	State & Federal	Local: individuals & enterprises	Economic Social
Rural Partnership Program	National and region	Region	Economic Environmental Social
Rural Adjustment program	National and region	Region	Economic

Syme (personal communication March 2000) suggested that most Australian land management programs and projects were related to environmental management at the local scale, while social aspects were more likely to be addressed at the regional or higher scale. These data confirm that trend; all local level programs and projects had an environmental component, usually as the highest priority.

Programs or projects addressing social issues are not frequently listed on this table as most were not seen as being directly related to land management issues. Two projects in south-west Queensland that did address social issues were the Rural Counselling Program and the state-wide Rural Leadership Program. The Rural Counselling Program was considered to be very successful by the South West Strategy board members and by government officials. These two programs were among the few that attempted to incorporate social justice and empowerment principles. However, one person who

worked with the community thought that the Leadership Program failed from a social justice perspective as it empowered only limited sectors of the wider population: It maintained the status quo because some people lacked the confidence needed to enrol, while others could not afford the enrolment fee.

On the whole, there were poor links between social, environmental and economic programs and projects. Staff running these programs tended to come from different agencies and rarely interacted professionally. The South West Strategy did attempt to forge links between these disparate disciplines, but there was some resistance as most people were more interested in one area than others.

5.2.4 Links between function, structure and scale

Matches existed between the structure or methods used in participatory activities and scale of the land management issues involved, but links were not as clear between function (purpose) of participation and structure, or between function and scale.

The links between function (or purpose) of participation and the structure (or methods) used to involve local people did not seem to be clear, particularly to the participants. As previously mentioned, landholders thought that the processes used in meetings and activities were similar. Agency staff said that there was a link between function and structure and the intention was to have that link, but it was often not visible. A number of reasons for this can be proposed:

- methods and techniques needed to be adapted to fit each particular situation,
- extension officers and facilitators were often provided with methods and techniques as recipes rather than having frameworks to link theory and practice,
- adapting methods required an understanding of assumptions and principles underpinning each method; and many agency staff had limited training in extension and facilitation theory, and
- transparency in the function and reasons for community participation.

The relationship between structure and scale was much clearer. Programs which had a regional component inevitably used a representative model where a small number of landholders represented the views of the landholder community; for example the South West Strategy and Vegetation management programs. When local level implementation was part of the project, the individual landholders tended to be involved, either on a one-on-one basis as in SCC or BDRP, or in group situations such as in Futureprofit, Bestprac and the Feral Goat Management project.

Links between function and scale were not completely clear, but learning, knowledge and skill acquisition were much less likely to be mentioned in regional-scale programs. Ownership and community input into policy were more likely to be functions of regional groups.

From this study, it is obvious that most agency staff involved the community in their programs and projects in some way, but many staff lacked an understanding of the complexity of and theory about participation. Extension officers and facilitators came from a variety of backgrounds; many had technical training and were expected to undertake community participation in addition to other tasks. Some lacked opportunities to discuss the various dimensions and complexities of participation. The skills, expertise and views of individual staff about participation varied considerably.

The literature suggests that the views of different groups involved in participation do vary, so the perspectives of landholders and agency staff warrant exploration; this is reported in the next section.

5.3 Comparisons between different perspectives

In the context of this report, the aim of participation is to achieve sustainable land management. All the landholder and government groups said that they aimed for sustainable land management. Problems arose as the various groups attempted to develop management strategies based on different assumptions. Groups sometimes did not negotiate what sustainable land management meant; even when they did, they often disagreed on how it could be achieved in a specific area.

Various groups were questioned about their perspectives on current participatory processes in which they had been involved. While major differences were revealed among individuals during each group discussion, many generalisations are still possible. The following comments indicate thinking which existing during the period of field work. Themes have been selected which highlight the main issues. Comparisons are made between the perspectives of the following groups, as illustrated in Figure 5.1; firstly between (a) the perspectives of landholders in various types of local groups, then between (b) the perspectives of staff in three State government agencies, and (c) the perspectives of agency staff and landholders, and lastly between (d) landholders involved in local and regional-scale groups.

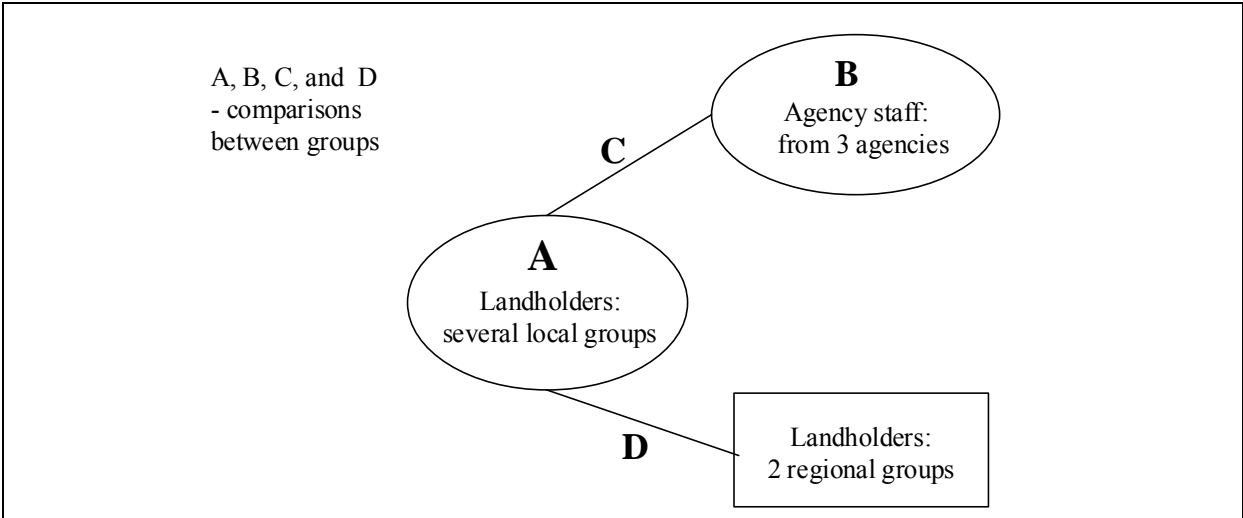


Figure 5.1 Comparisons between perspectives

5.3.1 Landholder groups

Discussions were held with landholders while they were attending both local and regional-scale group meetings. Meetings at the local scale included Landcare, Futureprofit, Bestprac, Feral Goat Management, Nature Conservation Planning, Safe Carrying Capacity, Total Grazing Pressure and rural industry group meetings. For the purposes of this report, these groups are classified as one category: “local groups”. Groups of landholders also attended meetings at the regional scale such as Integrated Catchment Management (ICM), Natural Resource Management (NRM) and South West Strategy (SWS); these are classified as “regional groups”.

Naturally, landholders always discussed the project whose meeting they were attending at the time. However, all groups discussed several other projects with which they were involved. Landholders were regularly involved in more than one project, and the issues they discussed tended to apply to many projects. The important issues for all landholders groups were not the differences between the various projects, but more general communication issues concerning all projects with which they were involved. The views of landholders who attend local groups were compared to (a) views expressed by government departments, and (b) views expressed by landholders in regional groups.

5.3.2 State government agencies

All three state government departments agreed on many aspects of participation. For example, all thought that the choice of method depended on the issue, cost effectiveness was a consideration, and the same landholders tended to participate in all activities.

When they differed, DNR staff frequently adopted views somewhere between the views expressed within the other two departments; sometimes closer to one, sometimes closer to the other (Table 5.5). Many of the differences in the agencies' views on participation were related to the primary interest of that department. The roles of each department are quite different in that DPI's primary role is to serve their clients, the rural producers. DNR and EPA were perceived as having more regulatory roles. DNR in particular, was seen as a regulatory department, including the control of vegetation management, water allocation and assessing land valuation. EPA regulates air, water and noise pollution as well as keeping and selling of native wildlife. Both DNR and EPA attempt to balance the needs of the wider community with those of local communities and as such, the desires of local people will not always be satisfied. During the course of this project, the role of the DPI changed to encompass sustainability.

The attitudes of landholders to the departments were obviously affected by these roles. It would be expected that landholders would be far more supportive of the department which had a production focus (as they were), rather than those which focused on protecting and conserving the environment.

Table 5.5 Summary of differences and similarities between government departments

Attitudes to issue	DPI	DNR	EPA
Interest of department	Support agricultural production and profitability	Management of natural resources	Conservation of native plants and animals
Methods used	Most variety	Some variety	Least variety
Amount of interaction	Most	Some	Least
Government view of landholder attitudes towards government	Least antagonism	Some antagonism	Most antagonism
Government attitude towards landholders	Support landholder	Regulate landholders Behaviour	Change landholders attitudes to conservation

Sometimes, EPA did not comment on specific issues; this was probably because consulted less. Much of their contact with landholder was secondary consultation where they did not organise the event. Their comments tended to reflect this difference. With the appointment of Community Nature Conservation extension officers, EPA is now organising more events such as field days themselves.

Methods and cost-effectiveness

Agency staff that thought the choice of methods depended on the issue.

DPI, DNR and EPA all thought that the choice of methods and techniques depended on the issue, and that a combination of methods was usually required. The choice of method was influenced by

- scale, in terms of the number of people the department wanted to contact, and
- the goal of the participation or outcome required. DNR focussed on the need to provide information to people and gathering some feedback, while DPI commented that “face to face contact initially” was important to help break down barriers.

All departments said that participatory activities needed to be cost effective. Both DPI and DNR mentioned the need to balance the time and cost of building relationships with landholders against the accountability and cost-effectiveness demands of government — trust and cooperation were considered important but “often the only way of getting it is in a labour intensive way... one-on-one and it's not cheap, it's high cost”.

Degree of interaction

The amount of interaction with landholders varied between departments, with DPI having the most, DNR less and EPA “minimal”. This probably accounts for some of the variation in the number of methods used. The department which had the most interaction had done so for many years, and this greater experience in participation led to staff developing a large number of methods.

All departments expressed some interest in increasing their interaction with the local community. EPA staff were interested in conservation rather than production and they wanted more participation, but for reasons that were different from those of the other two departments — they were concerned that society had a development mentality and did not understand conservation. DPI and DNR staff both wanted increased participation to improve the utilisation of land and water resources from the perspectives of their own department’s interests.

Understanding participation

DPI and DNR had similar understandings of the meaning of participation, with both groups discussing a:

...spectrum of community participation...from minimal participation to maximum participation [where] at the lower end it was consultation then participation and then partnership.

Partnership occurred where the community was “in power...actually controlling a situation”. EPA officers said that they worked cooperatively with landholders, but did not think landholders “would like to think that they’re in a partnership with a government department like us”. This comment highlighted the antagonism and confrontationist attitudes which pervaded most interactions between EPA staff and landholders.

Attitudes to each other

Landholders were most antagonistic towards EPA, less with DNR and least with DPI. This was largely because of the roles of the departments

The extent and intensity of this antagonism was inversely related to the amount of interaction with each department. Departmental comments indicated that landholders were most antagonistic to EPA, less so to DNR and least to DPI.

DPI staff tended to be more sympathetic than staff of other departments to landholders’ views. They wanted to solve production problems for landholders and believed it was wrong for government officers to tell landholders what to do. One criticism of some DPI (and other) facilitators was that they encouraged landholders to work in a hypothetical situation, ignoring the existing legislation. This helped people develop their own views through brainstorming and creative thinking, but it also tended to develop false expectations.

EPA and DNR were also keen to help landholders solve problems, but within the framework of the existing legislation. Both were more likely to want landholders to change their practices to some extent. DNR suggested that they often wanted to gather information or give advice, sometimes “without appearing to be running the show”. EPA staff thought that their agenda conflicted with the landholders’ production aims in many instances:

You’ve got to get people changing their attitudes and it’s going to be a long term thing but you’ve got to get people thinking differently about the environment and the importance of it.”

EPA was the only department which commented that landholders had too much power and the government placed too much emphasis on landholders’ views. EPA staff argued that their

department's expert knowledge was being ignored and landholders had a conflict of interest in some situations and should not be involved in decision-making because

it's really an unfair position to put them in when you think about it. I mean there are some people out there who probably do care about what happens in nature conservation, but they have to feed their family and pay their bills first.

Officers of all departments agreed that some land management programs did not need landholder involvement, but for different reasons. DPI staff wanted to balance the "knee jerk reaction" of some landholders with long-term research projects looking at the future. Some DNR and EPA staff agreed that at times "the government would be better to make a quick, clean decision and to mop up [the backlash] later." The contentious tree clearing issue was one example given, but this statement was made before the vegetation management legislation was introduced in late 1999.

Choosing landholders and groups

Some landholders were over-consulted and others were under-consulted; contributing to this was the tendency of agencies to work with the same landholders.

It was recognised by most agency staff that the same landholders tended come to all the meetings and as a result "the people that are fronting up over commit themselves because they take on too much".

Both DNR and DPI tended to work with the same groups, contributing to those people being over-consulted. DPI explained that they spent a lot of time breaking down barriers, and instead of:

...bashing our heads against a brick wall...we'll go back to the people that we know want to work with us, we know they want to participate so we'll stick with them.

DNR staff said that they targeted people who were members of existing groups because "they're always a source of membership" for new groups or to comment on issues because they were assumed to be interested as they were already participating in something. Existing groups were also used "because of the fact of distance and time ... it's important to try to tap into those activities that are already occurring", as this would save landholders time and money by not having to come to yet another meeting.

EPA officers tended to work with any interested landholders and this meant that they also worked with the "tame landholders". Because of the role of their department, EPA officers worked with National Park neighbours and off-park conservation areas, so they said that they did work with landholders outside the sometimes restricted client-base of the other two agencies.

The consequences of departments working with the same landholders included:

- the views presented might be biased and not be representative of the broader landholder community,
- the power to influence government agencies tended to become vested in the hands of a few, and
- other landholders tended to become distrustful of the intent of the "meeting-goers". (There were likely to be accusations of landholders' benefiting personally from their involvement in government committees.)

5.3.3 Comparing agency and landholder views

Comparing the perspectives of government staff and landholders highlighted significant differences between these groups. The differences were greater between landholders and agency staff who were from outside the region, but there were still differences between many regional State government staff and landholders that were largely unrecognised by agency staff themselves. As the landholders and

agency staff themselves frequently commented, it was difficult to make generalisations, as effective participation depended largely on whether or not individual personalities got on well with each other.

Government agencies and landholders were frequently referred to by each other as a “single entity”. Many landholders did not discern between government departments. Likewise, agency staff tended to refer to landholders as one group. Both these views were simplistic as the groups were not homogeneous; there were considerable differences between individuals within each group. However, the groups did tend to be referred to as distinct groups. Perceptions of each other were largely determined by the generalised characteristics of each group.

Consequently, it was important to compare the generalised views of landholders with the generalised views of government. At one level this was quite valid. While the three main State government departments did have some different perspectives, their approaches to participation were very similar in many instances. Landholders also did share many views about participation.

The issues raised by landholders and government staff included the preferred types of participatory activities; costs of participation; lack of community trust in government; value of different sources of knowledge; poor feedback from meetings to the broader community; and communication issues such as language and facilitation skills. The similarities and differences between the views of landholders and agency staff on these issues are discussed below.

- **Type of activity**

<i>Landholders and agency staff thought that the type of activity depended on the situation – “horses for courses”. For landholders, communication issues were far more important than the type of activity.</i>
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Most landholders answered the question about their preferred types of activity by discussing broader communication and relationship issues, for example:

- landholders wanted agency staff to do more property visits and spend time one-on-one instead of only in groups; and agency staff needed to like talking to people:
 - Willingness of the government people to communicate with the local community one-on-one ... [agency staff have] just got to be a bit of a social bloody person that goes around and talks to people
- relevant information was required and this was difficult to organise as the topics that landholders considered relevant changed rapidly; they also wanted opportunities to access timely information:
 - Field days are great, but if only 20% of the information is relevant for you, then it's a waste of time
 - Relevant information, that could change from week to week too, it's a bit hard to set those guidelines [for topics that are relevant]
 - We just want to be able to pick up the phone and say “I want to find this out”, boom [and receive an immediate answer].

Both landholders and government departments thought that the type of method depended on the situation. A few landholders mentioned that individuals had different learning styles, one saying that landholders were “mainly kinesthetic learners”. Some liked group activities and some preferred one-on-one, which was evident in many comments. Some landholders said that they liked group activities, others said they did not. A few DNR officers thought that landholders did not like groups:

People out here are very independent and we try and consult with them and get them involved in participation and ... They don't really work well as groups in a lot of cases.

Government staff liked one-on-one extension, but felt constrained in using one-on-one methods because of the cost and the need to be accountable to the government “bean counters”. Many landholders wanted government staff to come and visit more often, saying:

One bloke with a Toyota would probably do more than all of them are doing now.

You should see them [government staff] on the road more, actually just coming to people's places and talking and finding out information like that ... it would be money fairly well spent. They [government] might say it's inefficient, but ... that's when you find out things and what's happening and there are a lot of good things happening around.

DNR seemed to have a slightly different understanding from DPI's about the appropriateness of methods. DNR seemed more focussed on information transfer suggesting that "public meetings, workshops and even newsletters can be opportunities for two-way communication", reflecting their regulatory role. DPI staff discussed methods in terms of assisting changes in awareness, skills, knowledge and land management practices.

A few landholders said that demonstrations were more appealing; sitting in a room was very difficult and many were reluctant to fill out surveys and questionnaires. Government officers all thought that a combination of methods should be used in each project, but DPI suggested they start with methods which allowed a relationship to develop, such as on-on-one, while DNR started with "a lot of broader approaches and we follow them up with one-on-one."

While government policy has encouraged the use of group extension, partly for economic reasons and partly because of the benefits of groups, it is obvious that some landholders wanted more personal contact. The pressure on agency staff to do more administration and to be accountable for every dollar spent make it difficult for them to incorporate more one-on-one extension. The benefits are often not easy to quantify, especially not in the short term, as it is about building relationships and trust with individual people. Partly as a result of this project, Futureprofit officers in western Queensland introduced property visits to promote their training courses and conduct market research. This seems to have been very successful, with a large number of landholders expressing an interest in doing courses.

• Participation costs

Landholders were concerned about the cost of participating in activities because of the costs, in terms of time away from the property, opportunity cost of lost income for time away, distance to and from meetings and the cost of travel.

One of the foremost issues about participation for landholders was the cost:

It's time, it's distance ... it's just getting people to actually come to a central point or actually take time away from their business to get themselves up to speed with just what government is doing.

I put up with the time lost, but the travel costs is too much - most departments will not pay.

In western Queensland, one or two overnight stays away from home were sometimes necessary because of the long distances. The small, ageing population was often struggling to maintain viability. Lack of staff compared to 10–20 years ago meant that both partners, husband and wife, worked on the property and it was difficult for even one person to get away. Some meetings

are up to 300 km away and you don't do that for nothing, plus the fact that you've probably got to stay overnight, if they go till 5.00 ... you're not going to come home at 5.00 through the 'roos.

[Landholders] have to select what to go to, what will benefit us most [and] the way things are at the moment, so you tend to pick and choose pretty tightly.

However, landholders stated that government officials kept asking the same individuals to attend meetings:

The unfortunate part about this partnership or working with government, you show some interest and you get involved with one thing, suddenly they want something else and you become involved in that and it's a snowball effect. You suddenly you find, you're [spending] more and more time away from home

Landholders sometimes resented the fact that government staff were paid to go to meetings while they did not. They also felt that some government staff, especially those from Brisbane, did not understand rural life:

But they [government] assume that you've [landholders] got plenty of time. It's their assumption and that's where they're wrong because people are too hard pressed.

Most of them have never been out here, they have no idea of the distance ... [they ask you to attend] a meeting tomorrow morning, and you say "I'm sorry we're a thousand miles away" ... [and they say] "Oh but you couldn't be" [that far away].

The discussions with departmental officers indicated that some staff *did* understand the costs incurred by landholders who participated in activities:

because of the fact of distance and time, there's some constraints out here. Quite often what you've got to do is try and tap into existing groups and existing meetings that are going on, rather than trying to set up your own series of special meetings for your particular issue. So it's important to try and tap in to those activities that are already occurring.

However, it was obvious from discussions that some staff did not understand rural people and their situation. Most staff were not intentionally harassing landholders, as was sometimes believed; rather that they either lacked understanding or were limited by operating within the institutional framework established by their department.

Many staff wanted to balance community needs with individual landholders needs, but realised that there were some decisions that were never going to be popular with some individual landholders. Landholders, even within the south-west region, had very different views on some land management issues, such as dingo baiting: some agreed to lay poison for dogs and others absolutely refused.

Landholders and regional government staff both complained that staff were sometimes not resourced properly. One landholder told a story of an occasion within the last 5 years when he paid for fuel so that a government officer could visit his property and provide advice during a disease outbreak.

From the government point of view, participation activities cost money and time, especially to establish relationships with landholders: "Partnerships take a long time to form, like true ones, especially out here given...suspicion and all that...". For many agency staff, developing trust was important and "often the only way of getting it is in a labour intensive way...one-on-one and it's not cheap, it's high cost." These high costs in the short term with long-term benefits difficult to measure, meant that young staff, especially, found that agency requirements of accountability often limited their options in participation.

There were several issues here, and several opportunities which were being explored by some agencies to overcome landholders' concerns about the costs of participation.

Issue 1: *Landholders did not feel appreciated for their time and knowledge.*

Action: Token gestures such as providing lunch, a few beers or a ride in a vehicle to the venue was really appreciated by landholders; this was frequently done by many government staff in the west. (Such efforts can easily backfire if landholders think "our hard-earned tax payers money" is being wasted on extravagances! Such gestures need to be "culturally appropriate".)

Issue 2: *It did cost a lot for local community people to attend meetings.*

Action: Government agencies could be more coordinated in their efforts to assess what landholders needs are and in evaluating programs. This research highlighted the fact that many issues that

landholders have with government programs are the same across programs. This means that during evaluations, landholders are constantly repeating themselves. Opportunities of further coordination of government efforts to consult with rural communities is currently being considered at the Western Region Managers meeting. Consistency across government as to when landholders are paid sitting fees and travelling costs to attend meetings may also help remove some of the current confusion.

Issue 3: *Undertaking consultation, gaining participation and building partnerships with local communities took much longer and was more costly than many agency staff recognised.*

Action: The time and effort required for these approaches needs to be considered before projects commence, and appropriate budgets and time need to be built into project planning. Specialist advice on costs and time is often advisable.

• Trust

Landholders and agency staff saw the need to increase landholder's trust in government.

Several comments by landholders and government officers indicated that “the old bush suspicion of government” was alive and well in south-west Queensland. Several groups of landholders suggested that “there is a lot of fear and there is no trust” and “there is a complete lack of trust”. Landholders sometimes trusted individual government staff, but did not trust the agency. They feared what happened to information given to the agency as time passes, especially as staff and government policies seem fairly transient. One regional group had a different view, suggesting that “It is not a matter of mistrusting them [the agency staff]...there's far more trust now in the community than there was 15–20 years ago.” Others suggested that trust had increased at the local level, but not with agency officers further up the hierarchy.

Problems caused when landholders did not trust government officers included landholders withholding information from them and providing misinformation:

A lot of people that deserve to get help or assistance aren't getting it and the ones ... who can tell the biggest fibs ... The way the government make things now, to get anything you have got to lie ... they are encouraging people to lie on these forms ... otherwise no one would be able to get anything.

Trust was seen as important to landholders, but government actions often shattered that trust. One of the reasons landholders had for participating with government was to access information and to learn. In the past, DPI advice about property management had led to poor results; as one landholder said, “they [government agencies] are here to guide us, if the knowledge they are give us is wrong...it has sent blokes broke in the past”. Promising one thing, such as consultation, and doing something else, such as introducing legislation without broad consultation, also breached trust.

Overall, landholders indicated that they trusted DPI more than either DNR or EPA. A large part of this was related to the role of the department, and part might have been the approach of staff to landholders. Both DPI and EPA staff emphasised the need to “break down barriers” before genuine participation could begin. For EPA staff, it was more difficult to develop relationships with landholders because of landholder attitudes. DPI wanted to develop credibility and cooperation through honesty and transparency in their interactions.

While casual observations indicate that many government staff socialise with landholders, DPI staff and landholders both made a point of saying that they wanted to build relationships between individuals by

...drinking with them, having a beer, sayin g' day to them [because this] helps you understand what they're going through and what their constraints are.

Most landholders and government staff wanted to develop a relationship of trust with each other, except for some staff in EPA. Working with landholders was more difficult for EPA than DPI staff

because of the roles of the agencies; the agency representing conservation interests was seen as the enemy by many landholders. Some EPA staff with extension related roles recognised the value of building trust; but several other staff suggested that it was not ethical for them to build any relationships of trust with landholders because

trust is a tricky one ... I don't necessarily try and instigate a trust relationship because if they do trust you and then a decision gets made that they're not happy with, they feel twice as badly done by. Whereas if you just go and be polite, straight down the line, firm, and distance yourself from them a bit well they sort of expect ...

there's no point in them trusting you really.

However, trust is essential if participation or partnerships are to be successful. Developing trust can be difficult to achieve and is time consuming, but it is fragile and breaks easily. Time spent developing trust is probably time well spent, but it is nebulous and almost impossible to measure. Even the long-term benefits can be difficult to specify, but strong relationships may well assist in preventing conflict when unpopular decisions need to be made by government.

Landholders suggested several strategies to build trust, including (a) government staff living locally and socialising with landholders to build a relationship and an understanding of each other's points of view, (b) avoiding hidden agendas in projects and during meetings and (c) genuinely involving landholders in developing regulations. The ability to communicate well was fundamentally important. It was often the little gestures that helped to build trust — taking care with the subtlety of communication and taking time to actively listen and show people that their comments were understood was essential. Even experienced extension officers and facilitators needed to be mindful of this, as several examples of unintentional problems were highlighted by landholders.

• Knowledge is valuable

Knowledge is valuable, but it comes from different sources and not all is valued equally. This research showed that scientific knowledge about land management tended to hold supremacy over other forms of knowledge (particularly local landholder or indigenous knowledge), often in subtle ways. The tendency to value scientific knowledge more than local landholders' skills and knowledge was found in both landholders and agency staff.

Is landholder knowledge valued?

Government staff did not always value the knowledge and skills of landholders. Landholders cited many subtleties in communication which indicated to them that their ideas were not valued.

One of the key themes that emerged from landholder interviews was that landholders believed that the government did not really listen to what they said. The implication for landholders is that the government does not value landholder knowledge. Agency staff were thought to be less arrogant than they used to be, but a few still had condescending attitudes towards landholders.

they are inclined to talk down to you all the time as if you are from out of space; they have it all up here, they are real super intelligent and you are a nut.

when people represent [their group] or participate ... ,I'm not looking at it as a job or anything like that, but being valued, but having expenses reimbursed, that sort of thing ... that's why people don't come forward ...

Despite these negative views, many landholders commented on specific projects where the government *did* listen and incorporated local landholder knowledge. Such projects included Bestprac, Feral Goat Management project, Safe Carrying Capacity project (SCC) and the Total Grazing Pressure project (TGP). While not everyone was positive about these projects, several people were very enthusiastic saying that it was “the first time ever” that project managers had really involved them and valued their input (see Table 5.2 for goals of projects). The Bestprac and Feral Goat projects were based on participatory action learning principles which emphasised incorporating landholder

knowledge into the on-farm experiments and monitoring. SCC and TGP projects both employed landholders to undertake parts of the project and their views were respected and used in further developing activities. The personalities of staff in all projects were praised on various occasions; these staff were interested in what landholders had to say and this undoubtedly contributed to landholders' comments.

DPI staff obviously valued landholders' contributions because they thought that interacting with landholders was

a way of improving your knowledge and learning as well [because] if we don't go out there and learn, we've got nothing to offer.

Most DPI staff agreed that there were issues in which landholders did not have expertise, but they maintained that a partnership was needed, based on equality.

DPI staff placed less emphasis than staff of the other departments on changing, or imposing change on, landholders. This was partly due to the role of the different departments — DPI's role was to support rural clients and improve productivity of rural industries. DNR, with a more regulatory role, wanted to utilise landholders' skills and knowledge in conjunction with scientific skills:

to anchor things in reality I think. You know, we can come up with these ... ideas on paper for a strategy.. or whatever but [landholder groups] are there to make sure that there's realism in what we're trying to do

we wanted engineers on [the project Board] ... but we also wanted landholders who had experience with bore drains.

EPA also acknowledged that landholders and government needed to work together as neither understood all the issues; both groups could learn from each other, where "they're seeing what we're doing as a value and we're acknowledging their knowledge and expertise as well." Providing information about wildlife was one situation where landholders usually respected EPA staff for their knowledge. However, in some situations, such as tree clearing, landholder knowledge was not considered valuable

why have the landholders been asked about what should and shouldn't be kept standing in southwest Queensland? Why did anyone assume that they would know?

Is government knowledge valued?

Landholders often listened to other landholders rather than to government staff.

Landholders frequently said that they valued the knowledge and expertise of government officers and that this was their first point of contact when they wanted to find information. Landholders tended to make more positive comments about the government department which offered production advice, which is understandable, saying that this department

is fairly valuable if you want to know specific things, we reckon, they are there so that you can ring up and find out some specific things.

One group of landholders said that "Very few [landholders] listen to them [government], unfortunately." Another group explained that they are more likely to listen to other landholders:

I know I would take any research if they [agency staff] do it in a hands-on manner in partnership with someone [landholder] on their place ... because somebody has got to make a living on the results

This was recognised by a few government officers, as one said that sometimes landholders "would rather look over the fence than listen to the experts."

Local staff from one agency were concerned that their expert knowledge was disregarded by landholders and other government departments. They had a different perspective from that of other departments and said that landholders were only "recognising our expertise when it suits them and

when it doesn't suit them they know the issues." They felt the need to find outsiders to support their ideas:

If you know it's going to be controversial, it's really good if you can get somebody who's considered an expert or a specialist in that field.

If you say well look I'm just a scum bag ... from Charleville then it's fairly easy to knock you, but ... [if it is] somebody from the Museum or the Herbarium in Brisbane or something like that, then it's a lot harder to assassinate their character.

Even though there are some exceptions, landholders' knowledge was usually not valued as much as "expert" scientific knowledge. Landholders and agency staff tended to appreciate different forms of knowledge — scientific knowledge and "local" knowledge. As a result, landholders could not participate equally in discussions about land management and did not have the same power as agency staff to influence government decisions. This inequality of power between landholders and agencies in rural communities led to resentment and often anger on the part of landholders.

• Language

Different styles of language were an impediment to effective communication.

Difficulties in understanding scientific and bureaucratic language was an issue for many landholders:

They don't try and understand our language, yet at the same time they expect us to understand their language ... we talk two different languages completely

Some government people can't express themselves, often the really educated ones cannot communicate, "Told us nothing we wanted to know"

Government wording and jargon is hard for bush people, country people to understand, they don't get to our level, not necessarily that we are at a lower level but we are not used to their words

I think they deliberately do it to lose applicants so they don't have to hand out forms.

Specific problems mentioned included acronyms, complicated language, technical jargon and lengthy papers rather than a precis when

all you need is a page [that you] can read in 2–3 minutes, then it's good.

Language differences were exacerbated at the regional level:

We tend to talk same language at a local level ... when at the regional level the language goes way over our heads.

DNR and EPA staff did not mention this issue, so they might or might not have been aware of the extent of landholder concerns. DPI officers acknowledged the problem when one said:

I guess we use jargon and various academic terms, and they get interpreted in different ways and unless people communicate and talk about exactly what they mean then there's confusion.

Landholders were often thought to be "dumb" when they did not understand, when sometimes it was simply that they did not understand the words used. Many could easily understand complex issues and theoretical concepts if put in language they comprehended. Landholders and government staff had different communication styles. The issues of not valuing knowledge and language both highlighted the importance of communication.

• Feedback

Providing feedback from activities and meetings from landholder representatives to the broader community was difficult.

Both landholders and government staff discussed the ineffectiveness of feedback from government and community groups to the broader community. Feedback was required about specific projects or

issues as well as about regional groups such as South West Strategy. Several landholder groups demanded better feedback from the government about projects, suggesting that there “should be accountability in the sense of following up projects.” One frequent complaint was that feedback took too long; in some projects this was linked to landholders’ expectations and lack of understanding about research. Research time scales were usually much longer than landholders realised, and results often could not be validated until after several cycles.

There was some confusion about who should provide feedback. DNR had an expectation that people who attended meetings would disseminate information back to the groups they represented, but thought that there was “something wrong” with the current system. Some landholders seemed to see this as the role of the government. Feedback was difficult in rural communities as people frequently complained about information overload. However, information from their peers was often seen as more useful than that from government.

Government departments explained that they often operated

on the basis that we deal with this core of people who represent a much bigger area and we’re placing the responsibility on them as a group, or as individuals ... to get information back to assist in those linkages.

Departmental officers and landholders questioned the appropriateness of using producer organisations to provide feedback to rural communities. South-west Queensland producer organisations themselves estimated that only about 40% of producers were members, so

they’re not necessarily representing a lot of people in terms of the broader community.

A paradox exists in that landholders complained about information overload and also complained about not being given important information. Packaging information (in a way that people would notice) was an increasing problem when there was so much information available. Many landholders tended to listen to their peers before reading material.

Several strategies were discussed by which government staff could support landholder representatives in providing information to those not attending meetings. For example, the roles of representatives needed to be better defined and induction packages could be produced to assist landholder representatives. Landholders on committees were already suffering from burn-out and providing feedback was seen as yet another task; they suggested that they needed to be reimbursed for the cost of telephone calls and faxes used to provide feedback.

Resources to fund community efforts in providing feedback have been considered by the South West Strategy.

- **Facilitation and other skills for participation**

Building the capacity of local communities, as well as government staff, was necessary if people were to be able to participate effectively in decision-making about land management issues.

Almost all departmental representatives and several groups of landholders agreed that facilitators were very important. The need for skills and training for agency staff and the community was frequently mentioned.

Landholders said that facilitators needed to be professionally trained. According to them, one role of facilitators was to keep the meeting from “getting sidetracked” and wasting time. The desirable characteristics included “someone enthusiastic, someone that’s a good listener, can communicate well, is energetic, and not an overbearing personality”, has a practical knowledge and has rapport with landholders.

The facilitators attitude was considered important. Arrogance, and people who thought they knew everything could mean that “the whole thing would break down...they’re not coming to drive us”. Facilitators have “got to be prepared to learn...you get the right facilitator, they learn just as much” as the landholders do.

Government staff in both EPA and DNR mentioned wanting to improve their facilitation skills. This interest probably arose partly because these departments had traditionally placed less emphasis than DPI on extension training, and partly because of their departmental roles, they had dealt with more-controversial issues than DPI had.

EPA staff were concerned about the confrontationist attitude of some landholders who were not going to share any information, not going to tell you anything about where things are or what they’ve seen or that sort of stuff. It makes it very difficult to operate with them and it requires a lot of skills to get anything out of them if they’ve got that attitude

All government departments discussed the need to develop community skills in participation as well as government facilitator and technical skills

the facilitator skills and community skills are the real constraints. On the technical skills, generally we don't do too badly with that stuff.

One of the skills needed by communities was the ability to feed information from meetings back to the broader community, as highlighted by DNR:

It’s all about giving the community the skills, the participation skills, and a part of that is being a good representative if you are a representative on a group for a group of people back out in the community.

One regional group was critical of the facilitation approach which was used in various catchment groups around Australia. The role of facilitation involved *not* expressing an opinion about content issues and simply managing the process. Within this basic tenet, facilitation styles varied from being fairly directive to allowing the group to do whatever it wanted. Often, understanding something about the general situation assisted facilitators to better design an appropriate process.

Being content-neutral throughout a meeting could cause problems. In western Queensland the facilitator at a meeting was often the person managing the project. The project manager might have needed to clarify policy or technical issues, but as the facilitator this was not appropriate. In many situations government officers saw themselves as representing the views of the broader community because all stakeholders were not present at the meeting. The “wearing of many hats” could be confusing and as such this was inappropriate for someone in a strictly facilitator role. The following quote seems to illustrate the frustration which occurs when a facilitator role has been adopted:

[Government] was trying to get from the local catchment group what they expected them to do; and the local catchment group was trying to get from [government] what they expected them to do ... These government agencies, they don’t seem to have any direct message from government about what they’re expected to do and so it’s a very confusing issue.

If the government would say to us well look we’d like you to progress a project like this, you’re doing a good job there, progress it a bit further or there’s going to be funding for it, we could get into it and do it. The way it is it’s always left up in the air and you’re not too sure whether you’re going down the right track ... it’s very hard to know what you’re expected to do and what you’re supposed to do.

Landholders also frequently complained about the government having a hidden agenda. This could occur when facilitators attempted to swap between the role of technical adviser and the role of the content-free facilitator. If the change from one role to the other was not visible and made blatantly apparent and explicit for participants, participants felt manipulated. The requirements of funding bodies in the project were also often poorly understood, and the on-ground facilitators had little or no control over these requirements.

The two examples above indicate that some of the issues and complaints about the government may be related to poor design of the meeting process and poor implementation or facilitation. Both of these factors are fundamentally important to the success of participation. When they work well they are invisible to participants, but conflict and problems can be avoided by good process design and attention to detail.

The Rural Leadership course and Working in Groups courses both included components of training in participation for landholders. Both training programs were highly regarded by landholders.

5.3.4 Comparing “local” landholders and “regional” landholders

Overall, landholders involved in regional groups held very similar views to landholders involved in local groups. While most landholders supported the trend towards greater participation and wanted their opinions heard by government, several concerns were voiced.

Being involved in regional groups meant a considerable time commitment from landholders. This was probably because these landholders

- were also involved in local groups,
- were asked to comment on various other issues because they were known to government,
- travelled further to regional meetings than local meetings as most were held in Charleville,
- were away from home longer as many regional meeting lasted more than one day.

The differences that *did* exist between local groups and regional groups could stem from the regional group members’ greater involvement with government, and their involvement in more strategic issues, rather than in technical and operational issues.

Issues on which local and regional landholders groups agreed are listed below. The key differences between these groups are then discussed.

Similarities between regional and local participation

One key issue for all groups was the cost of participation in terms of time spent and distances travelled for landholders to attend meetings. Other issues mentioned by landholders in regional and local group meetings included:

- government staff did not listen to landholders,
- the need to increase trust in government staff; many landholders still did not trust them,
- government staff did not understand rural life (especially officials in the hierarchy, rather than the locally or regionally-based staff; for example, they assumed that landholders always had plenty of time),
- government meetings could be a waste of time because nothing happened, which caused landholders to lose interest in participating in future activities,
- landholders did not feel that their contributions were valued,
- landholders did not understand or want bureaucratic language; “It’s just a heap of jargon.”,
- many people were concerned about apathy in the rural community; various reasons suggested included previous negative experiences with government, and “unless it directly concerns some

people they're not going to take an interest in it.”,

- landholders' concerns about government regulations were widely discussed,
- the importance of individual personalities and the need to establish social relationships,
- government regulations lacked flexibility to account for regional differences,
- resources were used for government overheads rather than practical on-ground activities, “bureaucracy has the ability to spring up overnight, it grows faster than mulga”,
- government staff changes occurred too frequently and corporate knowledge was lost,
- many groups commented that participation was more difficult to achieve at the regional level than the local level “because you can't see the result”.

Many of these concerns indicated a clash of cultures between (a) predominantly urban-based and -trained government officers operating within a framework of bureaucratic guidelines that defined decision-making processes and implementation, and (b) rural landholders who found the bureaucratic processes to be time-consuming and frustrating. For example, landholders made and implemented decisions quickly compared to government officials whose decisions went “back and forward” between the various different individuals and usually took considerable time.

Differences between regional and local participation

The key difference between local and regional groups was that regional groups could usually provide more in-depth explanations about landholder attitudes and behaviour, and had a better understanding of the way that government operates. Regional groups explained that:

1. landholder negativity about government was prevalent because
 - change for landholders often began with a negative reaction or “blow up” but changes in attitudes were occurring in rural areas, and
 - many landholders found participation difficult. This was aptly expressed as:
it's a lot easier to be the leader of the opposition than leader of the party. It's very easy to stand and criticise and it's a bloody lots harder to be in there...[trying to develop solutions].
2. One reason landholders moved from one type of group to another was that government officers took over the agenda when groups became successful, then people moved on to another group where they had more control. This contributed to the increasing number of different groups:
suddenly everyone leaves Property Management Planning and goes on to Bestprac groups. So that's why we're getting this plethora of groups because people are jumping one ahead of the one that's taken in under the umbrella of government.

Agency staff who had been involved tended to want to claim some credit, rightly or wrongly, for the success of groups. By doing so they tended to devalue the role of the group members. For a time, agency staff wanted to repeat the model with other groups and the contextual needs of different locations and different people were often forgotten. Another reason for the proliferation of groups was that agencies tended to reward staff who developed “new” approaches and “new” methods. The institutional structures tended to ignore the needs of on-going groups in the search for something better. Building relationships, developing trust, changing attitudes and land management practices took time, often much more time than institutions recognised.

Regional groups also tended to be more positive about government staff than the landholders involved in local groups. Two possible reasons for this are that

1. these landholders had always been positive about government and that was why they agreed to become involved in regional committees, and
2. since these landholders had had more involvement with government, they had become friends with government staff and had been to some extent “captured”.

The term *capturing* describes a phenomenon whereby people adopt some of the ideas of the group with whom they spend considerable time. For example, landholders who sat on several government committees were often accused of having “sold out” to the government by fellow landholders. Likewise, government staff in regional areas often had ideas and opinions similar to those of their rural clients; then, government head-office staff accused the regional staff of having been “captured” by their clients.

Local group members had a greater tendency than regional group members to emphasise the importance of personal aspects of government staff. For example, local groups discussed

- the attitudes of government staff, and particularly that some talked down to landholders, and
- the skills of government staff who had no life experience and lacked practical knowledge.

This might have been because local groups tended to build closer, on-going relationships between landholders and a small number of agency staff, while regional groups focused more on strategic issues and tended to relate to a larger number of agency staff.

Overall, the differences between regional and local groups were not particularly significant in terms of organising participation.

5.4 Conclusions

Landholders and government agency staff tended to have different perspectives about participation. The following analogy probably sums up many landholders' ideas of participating in government activities. One landholder said:

We were like a sheep dog trial, we just nudged here and nudged there, a little bit at a time, week after week, a little nudge here, a little nudge there ... it took a very long time, very long winded.

While this was not meant as a reflection on individual government officers, the government as a whole was seen as a mob of sheep, regarded as not very bright; they tended to run as a mob and followed the leader; and if you got one going in the right direction the others might follow. Some landholders hated them, others liked them, but most people just got frustrated while trying to manage them! In a similar manner, some government staff probably saw the landholders also, as sheep. Many commented on the difficulties in achieving changes to land management practices, complaining that even when landholders smiled and agreed with proposals, nothing happened. They were also frustrated with the process of participation.

These distinct perspectives indicate a difference in the culture of the two groups. One group comprised predominantly older rural landholders; the other, predominantly young, city-trained, agency staff. One of the key factors affecting participation was people's attitudes to each other, their understanding of each other's perspectives and their ability to communicate effectively. This was made more difficult because of the two cultures, but this gulf between the two groups did not seem to be well recognised.

Government staff tended to focus on searching for ways to improve the participatory methods and finding new methods. However, this research supports the literature which suggests that there has been an over-emphasis on methods. It is the intent and principles, and the way the methods are used that is important (Guijt 1998). Much less effort was spent by practitioners in this study questioning their communication style, their principles and the reasons for involving local people in participation. As a result, some of the participatory approaches did not seem genuine to the landholder participants.

Overall, landholders did want to participate with government and agencies, and many wanted to see increased participation. However, several aspects could be improved. Various strategies to improve participation have been proposed in this chapter and these will be highlighted in the final chapter (Chapter 8). Progress is being made towards achieving some of these, some of the time, but concerns still exist. These include:

- the function or purpose for participatory activities could be more explicit; in particular being clear about what aspects landholders can influence and what has already been decided,
- the structure or methods used in participation could have more definite links to the function, as the methods did not match the purpose in many instances,
- better definition of the roles of individuals within groups,
- improved communication including such aspects as honesty and active listening,
- support to offset the costs for landholders to participate in meetings,
- more recognition that building trust and building relationships with individuals is important, but takes time and effort,
- improved language to enable landholders to better understand government materials,

- training and the building of social capital for both landholders and agency staff, and
- increased awareness of the value of landholder knowledge within agencies.

Many landholders did not feel valued by society, saying that governments listened to urban people; rural people had less voting power. Not only did landholders feel that they were not listened to and their knowledge not valued, many felt that society no longer considered rural industry to be a worthwhile use of the rangelands. Their perception was that they were constantly criticised of “raping the land” by conservationists, urban people and some agency staff. Increasing regulations were but one indicator that they were not trusted to manage the land.

The negative perceptions of others has probably contributed to landholders not valuing themselves:

A lot of people don't feel their ideas are valued or think that they haven't got anything to offer.

That's why people don't come forward [and volunteer for jobs]... our own things that we run ourselves [like United Graziers Association, Isolated Parents and Children Association] ... we don't value ourselves, we don't value each other and that's where a lot of our problems are ...”

The fact that some rural people have recognised these problems is a step towards finding solutions. Landholders initiating their own scheme to process and market organic beef directly to overseas countries is one example of landholders taking control of their own destiny. These may be few and far between as yet, but such groups are an inspiration to others.

A sense of victimisation and negativism characterised many discussions in this study. Several landholder groups suggested that widespread apathy in rural communities was related to landholders feeling marginalised in society. However, there are those who remain optimistic about the future of rural industry. These people show energy and drive, and take responsibility for working towards that end. This emerging energy was also noticed in a review of Rural Community Development initiatives (Comber and Pullar 1995). The issues that motivate landholders to participate and the factors which contribute to apathy are the topics of the following chapter.

6 Motivation and power

6.1 Introduction

This chapter contributes further to answering Research Questions 2 and 3; it builds on Chapter 5 by examining *why* landholders and government officers (the people involved in land management programs in south-western Queensland) had different perspectives. One reason for disparity could be that the two groups had different expectations about what they wished to achieve through participation. Clearly, people's motivation to participate provides some indication of their expectations.

Differences between government motivations and landholder motivations have caused misunderstanding and even conflict. Understanding why these differences occur should assist in designing better participative approaches. Examining motivation is also important because government agencies and community members are concerned about the small number of landholders who participate in land management programs in south-west Queensland.

During the course of this research, the factors that motivated government agencies to involve landholders in land management programs were compared with the factors that motivated landholders to become involved in the government programs. The motivation of landholders was examined from three perspectives: (a) landholders who attended local group meetings, (b) landholder representatives on regional groups, and (c) landholders who only infrequently attended meetings.

To further examine the problem of landholder apathy, the disincentives which hinder landholder motivation were examined; in particular, the disincentives of landholders who did not frequently attend government activities. In this report, these landholders are termed "non-meeting-goers". Understanding the disincentives is important because both government officers and landholders believed that participation could be improved by increasing the number of landholders who participated, and by attracting new landholders to land management activities.

It was thought that the degree to which landholders have the power to influence land management decisions may influence the motivation of landholders. The literature indicated that the degree to which power is shared between landholders and agency staff can be an important aspect of participation. During interviews, Pretty's typology was used to examine the degree to which power is shared within existing projects and encourage discussions about power issues.

This chapter of the report outlines results:

- comparing the motivation of landholders and government staff for participation,
- investigating the extent of and reasons for apathy about participation
- questioning some myths about apathy
- exploring landholder and government views about how power was shared.

6.2 Comparing landholder and government motivation

The motivations of government agency members and landholders to involve landholders in rangeland management programs were compared. Agency members and landholders tended to be motivated by different factors. At a broad level there were similarities, but few similarities were found in the detailed comments that individuals made about what motivated them. The subtler meanings within people's comments are discussed because it is through this deeper understanding that the greatest improvements can be made in designing participative approaches.

The factors that motivate members of the various categories — that is, government officers and landholders who (a) attend local group meetings, (b) attend regional groups, and (c) only infrequently attend meetings — are summarised in Table 6.1. The categories are defined as follows:

- *Government* includes all three State government departments commonly involved in land management programs and projects in south-western Queensland.
- *Meeting-goers* are those landholders who frequently attend meetings and were interviewed at various meetings, and include the following:
 - “*Local*” *meeting-goers* — those landholders who are involved and were interviewed at local meetings with small groups of landholders from a district or neighbouring properties. Groups included Futureprofit, Bestprac, Landcare etc.
 - “*Regional*” *meeting-goers* — those individuals who represent local community are involved in and were interviewed at regional meetings of the South West Strategy or Natural Resource Management sub-group of the Strategy.
- *Non-meeting goers* are those landholders who were thought to attend meetings or other government-organised activities only infrequently. These people were nominated by friends or neighbours and were interviewed individually by telephone.

Table 6.1 Motivation Factors for Different Categories

Factors that motivate	Category				
	Government motivation	Landholders’ motivation			Government perception of landholders’ motivation
		Local meeting-goers	Regional meeting-goers	Non-meeting goers	
Landholders learn	**	**	*	*	
Government learns	*	*	*		
Better government decisions	**	**	*	*	
Legislative or funding requirement	**				
Increase landholder adoption & ownership	*				
Justify government decisions	*				
Topic		*	*	*	
Improve business		**	*	*	*
Fear of government regulation		**	*	*	*
Build trust	*	*	*		
Socialise		*		*	*
Keep up with changes		*	*		
Be ignored in future		*		*	
Asked to represent your group		*	*	*	*
Financial incentives		*	*		*
Feel passionate about issue		*	*	*	*
For future generations		*		*	*
Who is talking		*		*	
Share the participative task			*		

KEY * indicates important motivational factors
 ** indicates **very** important motivational factors

Local and regional groups

In terms of motivational factors, the differences between local and regional groups of landholders did not seem to be significant. The factors that motivated regional landholder groups were a sub-set of the motivational factors influencing landholders in local groups. This could be simply because more time was spent in discussions with local groups than with regional groups — there were fewer regional groups than local groups and discussions were held with only two regional groups and with more than ten local groups.

The only factor mentioned by regional groups and not local groups was helping other landholders by sharing the load of time committed to meetings. This seems understandable as the time commitment needed for landholders to become involved in regional groups is usually taxing and landholders try to help each other.

As the motivations of landholders from local and regional groups were essentially the same, it was considered valid to treat all comments from these as one group: *landholders who frequently attend government activities* (or *meeting-goers* for the purposes of this report).

6.2.1 Similarities in motivation

At the macro level, government agencies and landholders agreed on the reasons for participation: a desire to learn and to make better decisions.

Broadly, the motivation of government officers and landholders to work together in land management programs seemed to be the same. Both wished to improve land management practices and ensure the sustainability of rural communities. Two factors that motivated some people from each category were (a) learning — landholders wanted to learn and governments wanted them to learn and (b) decision-making — governments made better decisions about land management when landholders were involved (but not in all situations).

Learning

The one issue that almost every landholder and all government staff mentioned as a motivating factor was learning. For most people this meant that landholders were motivated to attend if they thought that they would learn from participating in government-organised activities. Landholders and government officers usually meant that landholders would learn about (a) technical subjects such as new technology, ways to improve their productivity and profitability, and (b) sustainability and subjects dealing with the environment and conservation.

Often, government facilitators planned for landholder learning to be a key focus of the activity, so they designed the activity to emphasise the information that was provided. For some government agencies, learning still equated with information provision, and staff had only limited understanding of the learning process. Information provision is indeed an appropriate way to change land management practices in some situations, but it rarely involved learning. Information provision does not always involve learning, though learning usually involves some new information. Where knowledge comes from was important to many people; most government staff and many landholders valued scientific knowledge. Landholder knowledge and skills were valued less by both groups, but differences still occur here.

Both landholders and government staff acknowledged that landholders placed importance on learning from other landholders. As one landholder said, “the main thing is that we’re learning from one another”.

Making better decisions

Government officers and landholders both recognised that combining landholder knowledge and skills with scientific knowledge could lead to better government decisions. Comments from members of two different departments which support this view are:

It's offering more alternatives to problems as well, rather than our thinking that we know the only way and their thinking they know the only way.

From a government perspective, better decisions are a fairly important [motivating factor] ...that's the reason why government is placing more emphasis on community involvement.

Several projects that were investigated had specific processes to capture and utilise landholder input because government members thought:

They [landholders] have skills ... it might be geographic or industry or ... it might be in-depth knowledge of a particular subject.

Most staff agree that incorporating landholders' knowledge can lead to better government decisions.

One of the key factors that motivated landholders was a strong desire to influence the government or agencies. The grazing community held a conviction that they needed to participate to "keep the bastards honest" and to try to improve the decisions made by the Government and its departments.

Both of these motivating factors (learning and making better decisions), were common to all landholder categories — "local" meeting-goers (who regularly attended local groups), "regional" meeting-goers (who regularly attended regional groups) and non-meeting-goers (or landholders who rarely attended meetings).

6.2.2 Differences in motivation

On the whole, government members and landholders were motivated by different factors (in spite of the agreement in the factors discussed above). Some of the key differences probably stemmed from the underlying premise that governments wanted landholder participation in order to improve land sustainability by modifying landholder practices, while landholders wanted to participate to change government practices. Because of these different positions, government staff and landholders came to meetings with differing expectations, and they often did not really understand each other.

No total agreement

Landholders and government officers agreed on some aspects of motivation, especially about learning and making better decisions. However, notwithstanding the agreement found in these factors there were important differences. Many government staff understood the broad factors that motivated landholders to participate; in fact all factors suggested by government officers as motivators for landholders were true, according to the landholders.

However, government staff did not seem to recognise all the factors that motivated landholders (see Table 6.1). The subtlety and complexity of motivation were often overlooked by government officers, particularly by those visiting south-western Queensland or those recently posted to the region. For example, in the section *Learning about what?* below, landholders said that the topic was important to them, but the motivational power of the topic depended on many factors such as weather, and changes over time. As in all human relationships, it was often the detail, the little things, that made the difference between successful and unsuccessful relationships.

In designing participatory processes, facilitators need to consider the subtlety of factors that explain landholder behaviour; further, these may be different between regions and between groups within a region.

Learning by whom?

Government officers rarely design participatory processes with the intention of learning from landholders, but landholders often participate because they want government staff to learn.

Not everyone agreed about *who* learns or who should learn from participative processes. One DPI member emphasised that the government learnt from landholders, saying that participation was a two-way flow of information:

It's not just one way...it's improving your knowledge, it's...sharing information and hopefully all of the community and the government benefit from it...if we don't go out there and learn, we've got nothing to offer.

As mentioned previously, one reason that departments differed in their approach to participation was their dissimilar mandates. The department that emphasised the need for government staff to learn from landholders had an agenda compatible with landholders' goals, and focused on improving producers' productivity and profitability. Other departments (DNR and EPA) were more focussed on promoting State, national and international perspectives on issues such as nature conservation and water management. These perspectives were often accompanied by legislative requirements; clearly, many aspects of interactions with landholders were non-negotiable. In these situations, local perspectives could be incorporated only in a limited sense. Several staff from these departments said that little could be learnt from landholders about some natural resource management issues.

However, landholders often participated to modify the ideas of government staff. Several landholders, particularly those involved in local groups, thought that government officials did learn from the participative process. Learning probably depended more on the individual government officer and that person's desire to learn, but learning from landholders was a concept more prevalent in some departmental cultures, particularly DPI's.

Learning about what?

The topics that motivated landholders and government staff probably differed. However, staff of government departments who emphasised that they wished to learn from landholders did not stipulate their topics of interest. Consequently, no further comment can be made regarding the topics that interested government staff.

As mentioned above, landholders often participated in order to teach government officers. Landholders wanted governments to understand rural life: social aspects, the economic situation of rural industries, issues about the land and environmental aspects. Most government officers did not seem to recognise how important this was for some landholders and how much effort some landholders put into helping government, particularly new staff.

Even so, most government officers seemed to recognise that the topic was an important aspect of motivating landholders. However, landholders and government officers did not seem to have the same understanding about what topics interested landholders.

Landholders from all categories (local and regional meeting-goers and non-meeting goers) frequently nominated the topic to be discussed as a key factor in their decision to attend activities. Issues that affected their livelihood, their lifestyle and their business all motivated participation. The specific topic varied over time, and could change rapidly, depending on the current situation (such as the weather).

Some landholders were motivated by anything related to their business, productivity or profitability. A frequently expressed sentiment was that "We don't get too excited unless it hits the hip pocket." For other landholders, economic motivation was important only up to a point, because:

we want to make a living, we want to have bread on the table...but it's not the pure economics that drives us, and that's what a lot of them [government officials] don't understand.

One topic that government officers did not recognise as important to landholders was learning about government and how bureaucratic systems operate. Landholders, particularly those involved in regional groups, explaining that landholders participate:

to get themselves up to speed with just what government is doing.

If you want to learn how the bureaucracy works, get on the likes of the Strategy — because you'll soon work it out; it will educate you for life.

Making better decisions

Government staff and landholders thought that landholder input could improve government decisions in some situations. However, the situations where landholder input was appropriate seemed to differ between landholders and government.

One department, DPI, was consistently more supportive of landholders. This was understandable because the departmental charter of rural industry productivity required more of a client focus. The EPA's charter involved incorporating the views of the wider community, views that were often in conflict with those of local landholders. (This observation may be superseded; since these interviews were undertaken, DPI has adopted a broader charter of enhancing social, economic and environmental sustainability with a consumer focus.)

What motivates only landholders?

Landholders were motivated by a large numbers of factors; one was their concern about increasing government regulations. Despite many agency staff assuming that financial factors were the most important motivators, some landholders were opposed to financial incentives.

Many factors motivated landholders but not government staff (see Table 6.1). These factors included wanting to protect the land for their children and for future generations, socialising, keeping up with changes, financial incentives and a concern about not being seen to be interested if they did not participate and then being ignored in the future.

Several landholders were concerned about increasing government regulation or (as some landholders expressed it) a fear of increasing government regulation. Their fears were about excessive and inappropriate government regulation, about the lack of sensitivity and flexibility of regulations to allow for local differences and about the increasing influence of urban people and conservation groups. The topics of concern change from year to year, but during 1997–2000 they included native title, tree clearing, land valuations and water management.

Landholders admitted that it was difficult to understand what motivated them as the factors changed over time. As one landholder explained, their needs fluctuated, depending on:

the different drivers that we all have, and at different times different things happen too, someone has a young family, someone buys a place and he wants to get all the timber treated, another bloke wants to get a good mob of sheep and another bloke wants to buy a house at the coast — different drivers at different times.

Government members tended to believe that economics was the key motivator for landholders (which was not true for all landholders). Financial incentives were frequently discussed as several projects had monetary incentives. However, not all landholders thought this was a good idea and some were opposed to the welfare mentality that developed from continuing financial assistance.

What motivates only government?

Agency staff often had a mandate to undertake participation, and might or might not have supported this approach. Sometimes, agency staff used participation as a defensive mechanism to justify decisions already taken, or to protect themselves from criticism.

The factors motivating government have been highlighted in Table 6.1. A key factor motivating government officers, but not landholders, was that participation was a legislative directive or statutory obligation; and was often a requirement of funding grants. Other factors included government officers' desire to increase (a) the rate of landholder adoption of new land management practices and (b) landholder ownership of projects. These were particularly important for one department, which saw that the only way to achieve its mandate was to have landholders supporting their goals. One departmental officer said that community participation was used to justify their actions and to protect themselves:

We're going to make these decisions anyhow, but we've gone out and consulted the community so we've done that bit ...

You do the consultation, and then you go and do something; then someone whinges about it and you say "I asked all these people and they said it was okay".

At times, the community assisted in developing the decision-making framework for government. One example occurred in the Bore Drain Replacement Program (BDRP):

You're getting community participation in setting up those processes.

With the BDRP we have processes in place to actually prioritise and select people, before we reach a decision and that's where the emphasis [with community participation] is on getting those processes right.

Another departmental officer emphasised the role of participation in building trust and breaking down the barriers that relate to the suspicion of government in the bush and the fear of hidden agendas.

Perceptions of each other

Some landholders seemed to understand government very well — probably better than some government staff gave them credit for. Landholders, particularly those involved in regional groups, recognised the various factors motivating government officers which were different from factors that motivate landholders. They suggested that activities motivated by political or bureaucratic factors might not be "in the best interests of the environment or Australia." They also mentioned government staff undertaking activities to boost their egos and to look good on their curricula vitae; these were not explicitly mentioned by government staff.

Government officers' perceptions of the factors that motivated landholders were provided mainly by one department, so cannot be said to be indicative of a general attitude within the bureaucracy. The factors listed by staff of this department were correct, in that landholders listed the same factors. However, many motivating factors for landholders were not mentioned by government staff and some of the factors which were particularly important to landholders (indicated by asterisks in Table 6.1) were not mentioned by officials at all. This suggests that their understanding of what motivated landholders was limited; other data indicated that this was true across all departments. Generalisations are difficult to make because there were many individual staff who did not fit the category. Usually, agency people who had lived in the area for many years seemed have a good understanding of what motivated landholders, but when these data were collected, there were several staff new to the region.

The interviews indicated that these landholders seemed to have a better understanding of government than government officers had of them. This is not surprising as in many cases these landholders were mostly the regular meeting-goers and had often been involved with government for longer than the government staff member had been employed. Landholders live there; government staff members come and go. In south-western Queensland some government staff were young and others were new to

the region. These members did not seem to recognise the level of understanding that many of the landholders had about government processes.

Much of this misunderstanding occurred because of different communication styles between landholders and government officers. As this report has already suggested, rural people in Australia are culturally different from many urban people, even though this is often not recognised.

6.3 Investigating landholder apathy — fact or fiction?

In south-western Queensland, the community's apathy (or lack of motivation) was considered by government staff, rural industry groups and landholders to be a major problem. It was a commonly held view that at least 40% of landholders did not attend meetings so “we don't hear their point of view.” As a result, people said “We're talking to the converted, the 5% that put themselves there [at meetings]” and that DPI did not service a large proportion of its potential clients.

Little investigation has been made of why landholders rarely or never attend government activities (called the *non-meeting-goers* in this report). This report questions the view that many landholders are non-meeting-goers. Understanding the current problems from the point of view of landholders' perceptions is important if participatory activities are to be improved.

This section of the report outlines the extent to which apathy exists in south-western Queensland. Landholder apathy was investigated by interviewing landholders who did not commonly attend government activities (called non-meeting-goers in this report). It then compares the differences in motivating factors for meeting-goers and non-meeting-goers, before questioning some common agency assumptions about non-meeting-goers. The motives of non-meeting-goers for participating in non-government activities are also outlined. Landholders who did attend meetings comprised the landholders from local and regional groups.

6.3.1 Extent of landholder involvement with government

While many landholders did not regularly attend government related meetings, most did attend some government activity every year; however, many were very active in community events.

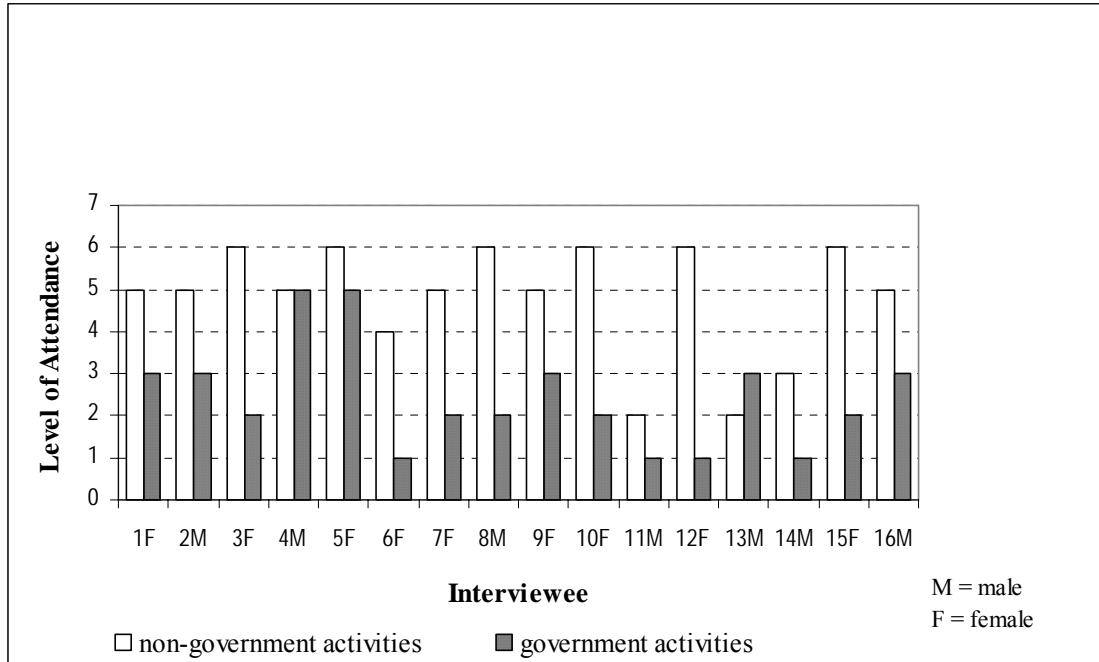
This research indicates that most landholders did attend some government meetings, but that not all had extensive involvement all the time. As one person said “there are not a lot of graziers these days, so most people are involved in something”. The situation seems to be dynamic, one landholder describing a pattern of a landholder spending one or several years involved intensively with government activities, then having a break while other landholders “took over” the role of liaison with government. One landholder stated that his reason for becoming involved was “because I thought X had enough on his plate ... I'd rather be out on the tractor or riding a horse around than coming to meetings”.

The graph below (Figure 6.1) shows that even though landholders did not regularly attend government meetings, many of the same people were active in non-government activities such as rural producer community events. Almost all had been to a government activity at some time; most went occasionally (i.e. once or twice a year and when they felt strongly about a particular issue).

The range of activities attended varied from person to person and seemed to be different for men and women. Women were more likely than men to be involved in non-government activities. Activities women commonly mentioned were school activities (including IPCA and P&C committees), and sport (for their children and for themselves). Other activities mentioned less-frequently were local shows and rodeos, cultural events, fundraising, races, local council activities, and church and social activities. Men were more likely to mention producers' organisations (particularly UGA) or other groups related

to their business (such as Wool International and stud animal associations). Sport was occasionally mentioned.

There was no distinctive pattern for males and females in regard to the frequency of involvement. A few comments suggested that there may have been a correlation between stage of life and frequency of participation, but this needs to be investigated further.



Key for graph

Degree of involvement relates to attendance at activities

- 6 very active: weekly
- 5 active: monthly
- 4 somewhat active: 6 times per year
- 3 moderate: 1-2 times per year
- 2 occasional: annually or intermittently when issues of concern arise
- 1 never: never

Figure 6.1 Frequency of participation in government and non-government activities.

These findings are supported by those of other research, conducted by ACNielsen•McNair (1998 p.11), which suggested that most producers had contact with DPI, only 6% of producers had no contact with DPI within a 12-month period and approximately 50% attended a field day, meeting or other event. In the following section we examine the similarities and differences between landholders who regularly attended government activities (the meeting-goers) and those who did not attend as regularly (the non-meeting-goers).

6.3.2 Comparing non-meeting-goers and meeting-goers

Many of the issues that related to participating with government were common to both meeting-goer and non-meeting-goer groups. However, it was the other issues — those that differentiated between the groups — which indicated aspects of participation that might have been able to be improved. These are outlined in the following section.

Many of the reasons that landholders gave for not participating were the same, whether they were meeting-goers or non-meeting-goers. What was different was the depth of their feelings. The major disincentives were (a) the lack of opportunity to make a difference, (b) a desire to avoid social tension, and (c) the lack of community skills. Other, less-important disincentives included (d) not getting value for money in participation, (e) a preference for relying on one's own judgement, (f) a backlash against educational courses associated with increasing regulations, (g) governments always seeming to mishandle programs, and (h) economic and environmental context such as drought and financial decline.

(a) Lack of opportunity to make a difference

Non-meeting-goers were more likely to say that attending government activities was a waste of time. For them, it was particularly important that they *could make a difference* to government decisions, that there was a “real chance of change”. If they thought that they could not influence government decisions, “if there is no opportunity to influence, then participation is a waste of time”. In that case, they were more likely to want to spend time working on their properties. This was compounded during drought or when times were hard economically because “going to meetings won't improve wool prices.”

Several other comments were made by non-meeting-goers (but not by other groups), which support the idea that landholders cannot influence government. One non-meeting-goer stated:

Everything is done under the guise of public consultation; if the government goes to enough people, someone will give them the answer they want and then they can justify their proposal by saying these people wanted it, and also say we consulted.

Some non-meeting-goers thought that there was too much participation. Some said that there were too many advisory groups and that over-consultation was an issue. Others agreed strongly with the sentiment expressed by meeting-goers that:

government is elected to govern, and sometimes they should just make some decision. On more complex and difficult issues it is important to consult [e.g. vegetation clearing or environmental policy]; but government should not consult on everything. It is a waste of time to consult on everything.

Other comments that landholders made about their lack of opportunity to make a difference were:

- Governments play favourites and landholders cannot access information “unless you are one of their select groups”.
- Governments did not tell participants much, participants cannot get information even when they ask, and then participants have no idea what the real outcome will be.
- Governments make political decisions and there is little opportunity to influence outcomes unless there is a political gain for government.

(b) Avoidance of social tension

Three aspects of social relationships were particularly important to non-meeting-goers: (a) many simply preferred to avoid conflict, (b) some were independent personalities, and did not want to be part of any group activities and (c) some wanted to attend meetings only with friends.

Most non-meeting-goers would not attend meetings because they preferred to avoid conflict and social tension. One stated, “if I don’t agree with what government is saying I won’t attend”. Of this group, only two people disagreed. One said, “conflict is difficult but I will go anyway.” Another stated: “I will go if I do not agree with them, to educate them”.

The non-meeting-goer group seemed to fall into two sub-categories. One sub-category did not like attending any group activities (this is supported by other recent research by Shrapnel and Davie 2000). For the other sub-category, on-going relationships with other group members were an important factor influencing their decision about whether or not to participate. Several people always attended activities where they knew people, where they had the opportunity to talk to people with similar motivation, and where they felt comfortable and got on well with others. These people were disinclined to attend meetings if their friends or social group members were not going to be there. This factor seemed less important than the formal topic being discussed, so would probably be an influencing factor only if the topic was of marginal interest.

One of the major disincentives for landholder participation was implied but not explicitly stated. Landholders who were very active meeting-goers, in government activities or as industry representatives, were often not respected by their peers. The term “meeting-goer” was almost a derogatory term in some circles. Several landholders complained that the same few people tended to dominate meetings and they did not always represent the views of the majority. One comment alluding to this sentiment was that “good managers don’t go to meetings”. The idea was further illustrated in a story told about one high-profile landholder who retired from public life to avoid the derision of his peers.

(c) Lack of community skills

This factor was not explicitly discussed by many but it was probably important. Two women discussed the lack of community skills in detail and explained that many rural people found it hard to speak out because they:

- lacked confidence in their ideas, a fear that their argument would be “blown away”,
- had low self-esteem and low levels of skill in public speaking,
- did not want to draw attention to themselves by speaking,
- had difficulty expressing ideas or feelings because they had to shut off emotions to cope with the harshness of the job (e.g. killing sheep during a drought),
- were embarrassed (especially the men) about their lack of education.

Such reasons could certainly contribute to people’s feeling that they could not make a difference so it would be a waste of time attending; but it would be wrong to assume that this applied to all landholders who were not regular meeting-goers.

(d) Getting value for money

Getting value for money in participation was a big issue for a few non-meeting-goers who would not attend if there was “no return for cost, or not enough return to justify the expense”.

This was true when they were trying to influence government and also when they were attending training courses. Time, distance and related costs became an problem in this context. Cost rather than

distance was more of an issue for some, while some thought “distance is only an issue if we are really busy, time is more of an issue than distance” because distance was a part of their lives.

(e) Relying on one’s own judgement

Several non-meeting-goers commented that they preferred to rely on their own judgement. They were not interested in “change for change sake” and the latest developments were not of interest to them. Many of these people seemed to have multiple sources of information and were well informed about their enterprises. Links to interstate and overseas universities, as well as friends in CSIRO in Canberra, were mentioned.

(f) Backlash against educational courses

With training programs, there seemed to be a backlash against educational courses associated with increasing regulations; for example, courses that provided landholders with “a piece of paper” to do something they already knew how to do: a tail-tag course was mentioned. Producers implied that in some situations government staff and industry groups wanted to protect themselves, and the producers had to pay the costs.

(g) Government’s mishandling of programs

These landholders also tended to be more negative about government activities, saying that government staff always seemed to “mishandle programs” and “bastardise all ideas and proposals”; also, “government intervention always leads to inefficiency”.

(h) Economic and environmental context

Landholder motivation certainly decreases during drought and severe financial crisis. Government staff commented on the situation during the long dry period of the 1990s. One department instigated “Tips and topics” days on a variety of issues of interest to landholders, to encourage them to have a day out. Landholders commented during this research that some people who would benefit from courses to improve their business could not afford to attend because of their financial situation. As one person said, “we have to help people get there, otherwise it’s not going to work”. Queensland Rural Adjustment Authority (QRA) support for people to attend training courses was mentioned positively.

6.3.3 Motivation about non-government activities

Non-meeting-goer landholders made several comments about their motivation to participate in activities run by organisations other than government (or non-government activities). Many from this category of landholder were actively involved in non-government activities including sport, children’s activities and rural producer organisations. The desire to “get off the place”, develop another interest and have fun was one factor that motivated landholders to join non-government activities (but not government activities).

Other incentives attracting landholders to (and disincentives deterring them from) non-government activities were essentially the same as those for government activities, and included:

- opportunity to influence industry regulations,
- opportunity to be able to make a difference,
- opportunity to obtain a good return on money and time invested in participation; not a waste of time. One person said that it was too expensive to be a member of organisation X; the money was better spent elsewhere,
- opportunity to increase in productivity, profit and efficiency of the business,

- need to see on-ground results following group decisions or activities; not just another report or strategic plan getting dusty on the bookcase,
- not like impractical ideas or people do not respect,
- too politically motivated — help a few who are in the know; you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours; old boy's club,
- difficult to get involved — too hard to get involved,
- no respect for leaders; own leaders have let us down,
 - failed graziers were often the speakers ,
 - old fellows talking about trivial things,
 - bad managers go to meetings and/or people who like social life and dodging work.

6.4 Exposing myths

Government officials and some landholders shared some commonly held (but questionable) assumptions about landholder participation. These were:

Assumption 1. Most landholders (40–60%) did not attend any government meetings.

Assumption 2. The landholders who choose not to participate probably should, because they could learn something. The implication was that they could improve their property management by listening to other landholders or to agency staff during meetings.

This research suggested that these two assumptions may be myths. Further work is needed to investigate exactly what the situation is, but the data give reason to question many of the current statements.

Assumption 1. Most landholders did not attend government meetings

The results of this research suggested that most people who were perceived as non-meeting-goers by their neighbours and friends did attend some government activities every year. One reason for the perception by government staff and other landholders that people did not attend government activities was that:

- different types of governmental activity attract different segments of landholders. For example, the landholders who were attracted to a basic skills course run by Futureprofit might be different from those attracted to Bestprac, and different again from those attracted to strategic or policy advisory groups established by government or industry. Unpublished research by the Futureprofit team in western Queensland (Markey, personal communication 20 January 2000) also suggested that landholders could be categorised into different segments — they could be differentiated according to the level of control landholders felt they had over their business. As a result some landholders were more willing than others to discuss their business in group settings and were therefore attracted to different types of activity.
- different government departments had different roles and might attract different groups of landholders. The literature suggests various characteristics to differentiate between segments within the landholder community; for example some landholders focus on land stewardship and some on profit (Bourne 1997); others have an industry focus.

The individuals did not necessarily know who attended groups (other than the groups they attended themselves).

Assumption 2. Landholders who did not participate, probably should, because they could learn something.

The results of this research indicated that not all non-meeting-goers needed to improve their skills. Some may have needed to, but these landholders were likely to be a sub-category of the non-meeting-goers rather than all of them. There also seemed to be a large number of people who were well-read and had strong social networks acting as information sources, but who did not regularly attend industry or government meetings.

This research suggested that different sectors may have existed within the group of non-meeting-goers who were really less-frequent meeting-goers. Further research is required to investigate if these different sectors did exist, and whether or not these were discrete or overlapping sectors. Some characteristics which may define these sectors are:

- a lack confidence and participation skills,
- busy managers who did not have time to attend government meetings,
- landholders who have retired from public life for various reasons.

The categories of meeting-goers and non-meeting-goers may be compatible (or overlap) with those identified in research undertaken by a Futureprofit team in western Queensland (Markey, personal communication January 2000). The Futureprofit team suggested two categories of people who did not participate in government Futureprofit activities — those who were working hard to establish their business and did not have time to attend government meetings, and those who were on the edge of retirement.

6.5 Power sharing

Power sharing is highlighted in the literature as important in land management because it is seen as an incentive for collective action. Collective action is often required because of land management problems crossing boundaries, as previously discussed. Shared decision-making and collaborative learning were usually seen as prerequisites for collective action. This section examines how power is currently shared between landholders and government agencies in land management programs and what the different groups' views were about the degree of power sharing that is desirable.

The term *power* rarely used by landholders or agency staff. However, the concept is well understood, even if not discussed explicitly. The word is not in common parlance and the concept is rarely discussed.

6.5.1 Views of government

Two of the government departments seemed to have almost diametrically opposite views about sharing decision-making power with landholders. These positions were understandable when the roles of the department are considered: DPI is interested in rural industry and improving productivity; EPA is interested in conservation, national parks, reserves and native wildlife.

In DPI, many staff (but not all) tended to be concerned that power inequalities frequently occurred in projects and that more-equal relationships were necessary if the department was to better serve its clients.

The way government participates, it is very Clayton's ... we'll talk to these people about this but we won't take any notice of what they tell us.

In contrast, some staff from EPA were concerned that during the past 10–15 years, landholders had become more empowered and in some situations had too much power. Staff felt that they were “manipulated by people who are self-reliant” and the department was disempowered. One said, “I

don't know whether we want too much more empowerment ... because it makes them [landholders] really hard to deal with." Many of the staff in this department found it difficult to do their jobs because of they often represented views that were not shared by staff from other government departments or by landholders, and they were often a lone voice in the crowd at meetings. This department was in the business of introducing regulations that could negatively impact upon agricultural production, especially in the short term. In harsh economic times, this was particularly unpopular with landholders.

Staff from the third key State government department involved in land management issues, DNR, held views that supported both the other departments at times, as well as holding views that fell between these two divergent positions.

6.5.2 Views of landholders

Overall, landholders clearly indicated that they thought landholder participation with government in land management programs was desirable. Landholders wanted to be seen as equal partners with government and other stakeholders. They were well aware that they did not have as much power in the political sphere as they had in the past, because of the declining value of their industries to the Australian economy. While acknowledging that national and international views must be considered, rural landholders did not want to be made to pay for the mistakes of past generations or for the pollution caused in urban areas.

Many landholders in regional groups wanted an equal share of power in decision-making with government, saying that governments needed to take some responsibility alongside landholders:

You want somebody from outside looking in, we are inside looking out [where] local people's knowledge is used as well as scientific knowledge.

Examples were discussed where landholders had a positive experience when power was shared. However, landholders felt manipulated when power was not genuinely shared.

Landholders from local groups also wanted to be able to influence government decisions, particularly in some key issues; for example:

The water one is very touchy at the moment ... I feel that landholders should have some say.

Many landholders thought that participation was working well in that they wanted many of the existing programs to continue; but there was room for improvement. Landholders were on one hand overwhelmed by the number of issues on which they were asked to comment, but on the other hand demanded a greater say on key issues. This suggests that participation efforts by government needs to be far more focussed and coordinated. There needs to be a greater recognition that landholders are busy people and have businesses to run, yet do have a desire to have a say about issues that will affect them.

Pretty's typology

The typology proposed by Pretty (1995b; 1999) was shown to interviewees near the end of the discussion. Frequently, they made comments about the levels, such as:

they make a lot of sense to me, the last one is the ultimate, but the second last one you've got to have.

Landholders involved in local-level projects and government staff wanted to share power in many projects. Without prompting, landholders suggested that levels 6 (interaction participation) and 7 (self-mobilisation) were the ideal positions. The results need to be treated with some caution as one of the problems with this typology is that the language suggests a graded scale, where level 7 (self-mobilisation) is more desirable than level 1 (manipulative participation, where representatives sit on Boards).

However, most discussions were very open and encouraged landholders to question the validity of the typology. Some landholders were quite cynical about level 7 (self-mobilisation), suggesting either that the government would take no notice, or that landholders were not capable of doing something all on their own. They offered comments such as:

I've seen ... put into practice, they [government] just take it over, seems like another public relations exercise where they get control of the direction, they don't even give you a chance to control it.

I think a lot of times... growers need some assistance and direction, need some guidance ... it's not that they are not enthusiastic, but they... don't have the skills in organising and obtaining information that is going to be helpful ... we are notorious for going for the track ... it is beneficial that they have some sort of guidance

The results of what landholders thought about the degree of power sharing in existing projects is shown in Table 6.2. Some landholders and government agency staff tended to discuss the typology in general terms rather than ascribe projects to particular levels; these responses are not included in the table. Some landholders responded as a group rather than individually and these responses were noted separately to avoid bias arising from grouping the data. Figures in brackets are percentages of the total.

Table 6.2 Range of power sharing levels in land management projects, at the local level

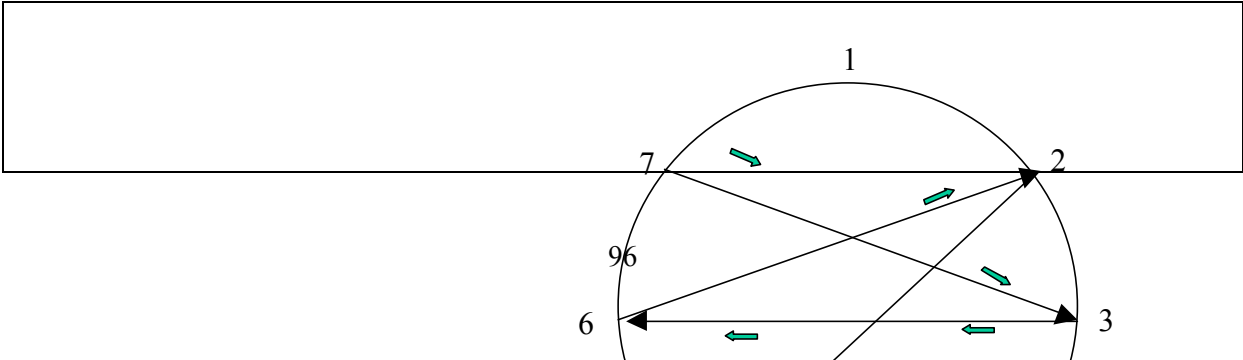
Pretty's levels	Group responses		Individual responses	
	No.	%	No.	%
1 Manipulative participation	3	(6.8)	3	(7.5)
2 Passive participation	5	(11)	5	(12.5)
3 Participation by consultation	9	(20)	8	(20)
4 Participation for material goals	7	(16)	6	(15)
5 Functional participation (to achieve agency's goals)	3	(6.8)	5	(12.5)
6 Interactive participation	16	(36)	12	(30)
7 Self-mobilisation	1	(2.3)	1	(2.5)
Total number of people	44		40	

Table 6.2 indicates that landholders (both individually and in groups) thought that several existing projects *did* share the power of decision making with landholders (Pretty's level 6) — one of the levels that landholders considered ideal. Fewer projects focused on consulting with landholders (Pretty's level 3) or on providing information (Pretty's level 2). During discussions, several landholders said that providing information (Pretty's level 2) was the appropriate level in many situations.

6.5.3 Fluctuating power

It is evident that the degree of power-sharing fluctuated between the different levels on Pretty's typology through the life of many projects. Landholders frequently suggested that each project fitted several different levels or stages; for example "each time they met it was a different stage...no two meetings were the same, the initial meeting was...explaining their intentions..." and landholders received information, then at the next meeting government officers asked landholders to provide information, then landholders exerted some influence over the project, and so on.

Figure 6.1 indicates the way that power levels changed from level to level during one particular project.



This project started at 7 when initiated by the community and moved through 2, 3, 6, 3, before concluding at 5 with the government setting the goals and taking over running the project and taking the credit for the project

Figure 6.2 Fluctuating power

Various comments from landholders and government officers supported this concept of fluctuating power levels between landholders and government officers during various projects:

- Bestprac begins at 5 (functional participation following government goals) as one government officer said “you set them up and you get them together to a group, you go in there the first time and you've got the goals and the function of the group ... then they participate in saying what their needs are”, which is level 3 (participation by consultation). The group often then moves to 6 (interactive participation) and “Once it gets rolling then it becomes self reliant”. Landholders said that “Bestprac spends more time at the 7 stage” (self-mobilisation), than many other projects.
- “Landcare... starts back with participation for material incentives (level 4) and builds towards level 7 (self-reliant participation) from there”
- The Bore Drain Replacement project (BDRP) also “starts with participation for material incentives” according to landholders and government. In the BDRP, landholders said that once the government finishes laying the poly pipe “they’re off to another place” or property, and the project finishes there. Landholders were happy because “We've got six hundred miles of poly pipe, that's all we need out of the government.” This project was well received by most landholders. Most complaints were about the selection process when people had missed out on grants to assist them in piping their bore drains. Landholders were involved in an Advisory group and could have some influence on the criteria for selecting properties. Even some of those who had missed out admitted that the project was in the best interests of the rural community as a whole and that it was well run.

Different levels of power sharing seemed to be considered to be appropriate. Concerns arose when (a) landholders did not understand at what level the government was operating, or (b) where one level was espoused (usually equality) while in reality the government was operating at another level.

As suggested in the literature described in Chapter 3, participation levels were linked to the types of participation process and techniques used. In agricultural extension, it is recognised that extension approaches change with levels of complexity of the information required to be exchanged.

A few authors suggested that the traditional transfer-of-technology model was appropriate for simple technological information and could use any number of traditional extension techniques such as media, brochures, field days and information days to create awareness and understanding of the new information. This relates to Pretty’s participatory level 3 *Passive participation* where information is given to landholders by government officers. This research suggested that in some circumstances, power sharing was not needed; for example in the Bore Drain project, landholders said “just give us the information, we only want information, and we can do the project”.

6.6 Conclusions

This section has highlighted two key factors motivating most landholders (a) a desire to learn, and (b) a desire to influence government decisions, policies and regulations. As many landholders want to learn, the design of a participative activity needs to build on this motivation wherever possible and appropriate. In designing participation activities, facilitators and practitioners need to consider whether learning is an appropriate goal for participation in that context, what type of learning is desirable, who is learning and how learning can be incorporated.

Landholders, both meeting-goers and non-meeting-goers, were motivated to attend meetings if the issue affected, or had the potential to affect, the landholders' families, lifestyle or livelihood. Government staff recognised that the issue or topic was a very important factor, but the issues changed regularly and varied between individuals. Some were interested in the productivity of their enterprises, while some were interested in social issues. During 1998–99, most landholders were highly motivated to attend activities associated with tree clearing, land valuation and water management — all often seen as “crisis” issues.

Agency staff recognise landholders learning and better land management decisions as incentives for landholder participation, but there were many factors motivating landholders which agency staff were not aware of, or where they did not understand the extent of landholder concern. Other factors which motivated landholders, both meeting-goers and non-meeting-goers, included:

- fear of government regulations,
- desire to represent landholders, when asked by government or industry,
- wish to attend social events,
- concern for the state of the land for their children and future generations, and
- concern that if you did not take an interest you would be ignored later.

Several commonly mentioned factors which discouraged landholders from attending activities included:

- landholders could not influence government because:
 - government officials did not listen (One landholder suggested that this commonly mentioned factor was sometimes a reflection of the time it took for government to get things done, rather than the individual government officers not listening),
 - government officials often made up their minds before consulting; they did what they wanted to anyway,
 - government officials were not interested in landholders' situations and concerns,
- the cost of participating, including time away from their business and distance travelled to attend meetings,
- landholders could not afford to pay labour on the property, so it was hard to leave,
- government had no empathy with people in the bush,
- government had hidden agendas, and
- landholder suspicion and mistrust of government.

This research questioned some of the commonly held views (myths) of agency staff about landholder motivation, specifically that:

- Over 50% of landholders never attend government activities. Most landholders probably did attend some government activity every year, even though they may not have been regular meeting goers.
- Landholders who did not participate were the ones who needed to the most, as they needed to improve their land management practices. Some landholders who did not attend seemed to be the “good managers” — some have good networks of contacts and access to information; some rely on their own judgement. Others feel that attending meeting is a waste of time and money.

It is clear that there are many factors that discouraged landholders from attending activities. Agency staff need to take care in making assumptions about the apparent lack of landholder motivation. Landholders’ motivations to participate and their ability to respond were influenced by their context; by the social, environmental and economic situation; and by their personalities. These points are supported by the research findings of Shrapnel and others in central Queensland (Shrapnel, Davie, Freed and Frank 1997; Shrapnel and Davie 2000).

The key point of difference between landholders who regularly attended government activities and those who did not was that the non-meeting-goers felt that attending government activities did not provide an opportunity to influence government decisions. The non-meeting goers also seemed to be concerned about avoiding social tension in the community which may arise from attending meetings. Lack of social skills was also an issue, but rarely made explicit.

The degree to which power is sharing in projects is vitally important in terms of motivating landholders and giving them some ownership of land management programs. Two emerging points from this study were that (a) power levels fluctuate during projects and (b) landholders do not always want to share power in all aspects and all stages of a project. The implications for designing participatory processes is that it is important to negotiate what level of power sharing is appropriate for each project with all of the participants. When evaluating programs, the fact that participation varies, means that it will depend on *when* the evaluation is undertaken as to the level of participation which may be indicated.

7 Comparisons throughout the rangelands

7.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews community participation in the land management aspects of Rural Partnership Program strategies throughout the rangelands of Australia. The aim of the chapter is to assist in the development of policies and guidelines about participation which are relevant to areas outside south-west Queensland, at a State or even national level. More specifically, it answers the question:

How representative are the community participation issues that were raised in south-west Queensland, to other Rural Partnership Programs regions in the Australian rangelands?

To achieve this, the chapter outlines the similarities and differences in participation between the various Rural Partnership Programs regions. This chapter is based on landholder and agency staff comments as well as observations made during fieldwork in each of the States.

7.2 Comparisons between rangeland regions

Making comparisons between regions across the rangelands is extremely difficult. The gross generalisations necessary to make some State-wide comparisons do not reflect the experiences of all individuals in the regions. These comparisons are obviously subjective and are coloured by the views of the individuals in each State that the researcher has visited over the past 3–4 years, as well as by the researcher's own background and understanding.

The key point, made over and over again by people living and working in the rangelands, was that the relationships between government and agency members on one hand and landholders and pastoralists on the other depended on individual personalities. The success of government programs sometimes revolved around the charisma of individuals or the respect a community had for a particular person.

No generalisations about gender issues can be made from this study. Considerable variation existed between regions, and between districts within regions. In some areas women dominated the committees; in other areas no women were present. Sometimes women were influential in land management decisions, but were not manifestly visible.

At one level, every situation was different because of individual personalities and the specific context within which local people were involved with government agencies. Despite the importance of context, some generalisations can be made about each region, and these are made next. Firstly, generalisations are made about the frequency of participation and the methods used by agencies to involve local and regional communities. Then, the perceptions of landholders and agency staff about some of key issues about participation are discussed.

7.1.1 Frequency of landholder participation

The frequency of landholder participation in the eastern regions is different from that in Western Australia. In the eastern States the frequency of some landholders' involvement is higher than many agency staff realise.

In all Australian States, governments were encouraging greater community participation in land management issues. Some landholders and agency staff commented that this was a move on the part of governments to devolve responsibility to the community. For example, in New South Wales the Catchment Boards take responsibility for making decisions about the allocation of water rights

New South Wales and Queensland were very similar to each other in that a small group of landholders are over-consulted, leading to burn-out; this was not considered as issue in Western Australia.

Landholders in the eastern states complained about too many meetings and suffered from administrative and information overload. One government officer in New South Wales stated that there the requirements of the bureaucracy and its need for accountability should be balanced against landholders' time.

Highly participatory processes seemed to occur a little less frequently in the grazing lands of north-west New South Wales than in the western Queensland regions. New South Wales landholders seemed a little more reluctant than landholders in Queensland to attend government organised activities. Some landholders even suggested that in some areas there was less participation now than a few years ago; the Murray–Darling catchment region was an exception. One extension officer said that in NSW, government people never say “We are here to listen to you and what you say will influence our decisions.” In Queensland such comments were more common and indicate a different type of participation.

A difference in the frequency of participation occurred between Western Australia and the eastern states. The opportunities for local landholders, or pastoralists in Western Australia, to attend government activities were less because agencies held fewer meetings in Western Australian rangelands; as a result, landholders attended far fewer meetings. Despite this, several people suggested that there were opportunities for grass-roots producers to have input into agencies' decisions.

A few agency staff in the Gascoyne–Murchison region suggested that while there was a push from government for more partnerships, the main change which had occurred was in the way participation was undertaken, rather than an actual increase in the number of pastoralists involved in government activities.

The frequency of landholder participation in the three eastern State regions is probably similar. Discussions with landholders and agency staff in the northern part of West 2000 and Desert Upland regions suggested that the landholder involvement in government organised land management programs was similar to that in south-west Queensland, but not to that in Western Australia.

An indication of the types and frequency of meetings in the South West Strategy Region is presented in Table 7.1. These data are only indicative of the difference between the States; they are based on observations and comments from a few landholders during 1999–2000 and are not based on a large-scale or representative survey. This table indicates that far more meetings were held in south-west Queensland than in Western Australia.

Table 7.1 Differences Between Frequency of Participation According to Landholders

Western Australia (indicative data from 1999–2000)			South-west Queensland (indicative data from 1999–2000)		
Type of meetings	Meetings per group	Groups operating per year	Type of meetings	Meetings per group	Groups operating per year
Southern rangelands partnership groups	6/year	1	South West Strategy	5/year	4
Bestprac	0–4/year	2	Bestprac	1–4/year	7
Land Conservation District	0–2/year	2	Landcare	0–4/year	14
Agriculture Dept. liaison meetings	1/year	2	DPI West region needs assessment meetings	1	1 every 3 years
Gascoyne–Murchison Board	4–5/year	1	Water management meetings	1/year	10
--			Vegetation management meetings	1/year	4
--			Futureprofit	7/year	3
--			TGP project	1/year	4
--			Nature conservation planning	1/year	8
Range of time spent participating (av. probably 12–36 days/year)		1–15 days/year	Range of time participating (several spend 20 days/year)		1–120 days/year

7.1.2 Methods used in participatory activities

By and large, landholders did not mind which methods were used, but participatory approaches could be improved with more clarity between the function (or purpose) and structure (or design and methods) of the participatory activities.

The methods used in participation in New South Wales and in both Rural Partnership regions in Queensland were basically the same. Agency staff tended to suggest that different processes were used in different situations. Landholders commented that workshops, field days, demonstrations and meetings were the most common ways in which they were involved with government. Media, brochures and newsletters were also mentioned, but were not as useful according to landholders. Western Australia did not seem to hold many field days or demonstrations.

Usually, landholders did not express preferences for particular processes, with a few exceptions. Several people interviewed said that landholders across Australia had developed a hate of surveys; in Queensland, submissions were seen only as lip service or token participation. As everywhere, respected local landholders were seen as important sources of information. In New South Wales and Queensland, landholders mentioned that using locals to organise events or seek views often worked well.

In eastern State regions, a few landholders commented that all extension processes looked the same, no matter what the intent or agenda. This lack of differentiation between processes and the lack of visible link between the process and the intent contributed to landholders often being confused and suspicious of hidden agendas. The difficulty of confronting conspiracy theories was mentioned in all States by agency staff. However, as one extension officer said, if the purpose of the meeting or workshop was clearly enunciated at the beginning of the meeting, then landholders could answer questions more effectively and the meeting would be more productive for everyone.

In Western Australia and Queensland, several people discussed the agency push towards more group extension and the reduction of one-on-one extension. Some confusion existed about whether or not agency staff were allowed to undertake any one-on-one extension. Some agency staff and landholders thought that effective extension officers still did property visits. Many people said that one-on-one was still the most effective approach and complained that the quality of extension suffered from the group approach as the contact was less intimate and seemed less sincere. One agency member suggested that the change in government focus from *outcome to process* was debilitating as it was an excuse not to do anything.

In New South Wales as in Queensland, some landholders and agency staff suggested that processes such as Bestprac were an exception to the problems of many of the group processes, the reason being that in Bestprac, agency staff did listen and landholders could influence the direction of the activities. Adult learning and action learning approaches are used in Bestprac and some other projects. These generally drew positive comments from participants.

Distance and cost were concerns for many in the rangelands, and landholders wanted methods of participation which could help overcome the need for more travel. Many landholders wanted more activities in their local area rather than only in the bigger centres, particularly in relation to training courses. Some said that there were plenty of training courses around, but the problem was that courses were not run in remote areas.

The potential of electronic communication is probably enormous, but the infrastructure was simply unavailable to most landholders at the time of this study. Landholders across Australia, but particularly in the two regions in Queensland, expressed a lot of interest in being able to access the Web and e-mail, but the telecommunication system was far too slow. Landholders in some areas of Western Australia still wanted reliable telephones. Several landholders requested the use of teleconferences, especially for on-going activities. The *one proviso* for non-contact forms of participation was that landholders thought it was important for everyone in the groups to have met face-to-face initially, then subsequent meetings could use teleconferences, facsimiles or e-mail.

7.2 Comparing perceptions between the regions

Overall, pastoralists and agency staff had similar perceptions about participation in all States, although differences did exist in the way that communities related to government and agencies. In other regions, as in south-west Queensland, people's perceptions of participation tended to vary according to their role. For example, a senior government officer involved with a Regional Strategy group thought that landholder representation at the regional level was working well, but a field extension officer suggested that grass-roots landholders in that region were extremely frustrated and that Regional Strategy Board members lacked credibility in the community.

Landholders in all regions had similar views about government agencies, despite the fact that there were differences between individuals. These broad similarities will be examined in the following section (7.2.1). Landholders' perceptions about participation are then discussed in Section 7.2.2.

7.2.1 Landholder perceptions of agencies

Despite the land management agencies having different names in New South Wales, Western Australia and Queensland, there were similarities in the way that landholders and pastoralists related to departments with similar functions.

Many landholders and pastoralists thought of the government as a single amorphous entity. The relationship between landholders and agencies in northern New South Wales seemed to be characterised by a little more frustration and a little less empathy and understanding than were evident in Queensland. One agency member thought that this was possibly because of one particular person

who worked in the area a few years previously. In Western Australia the relationship between agency staff and rural people seemed congenial. The historical context of agency intervention may explain this difference (see Section 7.3.1 below).

For those landholders who did differentiate between the departments, the departments of agriculture in each State were usually seen in the most positive light because their role was to provide agricultural research and extension services. The regulatory departments were generally less trusted and often not as well liked; for example the Agricultural Protection Boards in Western Australia were involved in enforcing regulations about feral animals and pest plants. They were seen as having a culture different from that of the Agriculture Department and were not very popular with some pastoralists.

In all States, landholders tended to be critical of the department involved in managing national parks and reserves – CALM in Western Australia; EPA in Queensland; NPWS in New South Wales. The complaints are similar – the reserves are not managed properly; they were not adequately resourced and the agency cannot be trusted because they were “land grabbers”. In Western Australia this was exacerbated by CALM controlling the rights to sandalwood harvesting.

7.2.2 Landholder perceptions of participation

The following discussion illustrates the most important perceptions about participation held by landholders and agency staff in the Rural Partnership Program regions of the rangelands. These key perceptions were: the cost to landholders of participating, lack of trust, government regulations, lack of motivation, need for on-ground resources, communication, facilitation and conflict management, local knowledge, and regional participation and representation.

Cost of participation

Landholders in all rangeland Rural Partnership Program regions were concerned about the cost of participation, especially when their contribution was not used by government agencies

The cost to landholders of participating in activities was a common theme raised by landholders and agency staff throughout the rangelands. As in south-west Queensland, costs to the landholders in other regions included not only travel costs but the cost of being away from the property. These costs became especially burdensome in times of economic hardship when there were often no staff on the property to attend to stock water and other daily necessities. Some landholders felt that government staff did not fully recognise the enormous commitment of landholders and did not respect landholders’ time.

As in south-west Queensland (discussed in Chapter 5) the solutions in other regions may or may not involve money; not all landholders wanted money. One government officer in New South Wales said that the payment of sitting fees had quietened the issue. However, some landholders said that payment was not an issue, and some were opposed to being paid, believing that they should contribute to their community. Even so, these landholders wanted to know that their contributions were valuable and to see that their ideas were recognised and used.

Pastoralists in the Western Australian rangelands were more isolated and remote than were their counterparts in the eastern States. The distances involved and the time needed for pastoralists to attend activities were recognised as big issues by everyone, particularly in times of economic difficulty when cost was a greater concern, and when properties employed fewer staff to care for things when the owners were away. Those who lived furthest from regional centres probably rarely attended meetings, as for some attendance involved at least 2 days travelling time. These people also seemed more likely to be negative about agencies.

Lack of Trust

In most regions, trust needed to be improved, and trust is needed before programs to achieve sustainable land management can be implemented. Increasing regulations in the eastern States has eroded trust, according to landholders.

Overall, many landholders in the rangelands around Australia were suspicious about the trustworthiness of government and agency staff. Landholders in the eastern States commented that increasing regulations were a sign that government officials did not trust the current land managers. Almost everyone said that trust between the community and government staff was fundamentally important to achieving sustainable land management.

Many landholders thought that trust between landholders and government staff had improved, as had trust among the government agencies. In all regions, several landholders noted that government agencies did not trust each other and that considerable “turf protecting” occurred. Overall, trust among State government staff working at the local level was certainly better than trust between local staff and staff from further away, such as those at Head Office.

Landholder trust in government and agency staff seemed to deteriorate whenever new regulations or monitoring programs were introduced, particularly when these were not linked with clear explanations of the need for and purpose of the change. In the South West Strategy and Desert Uplands regions in Queensland, landholders complained about the heavy-handed top-down way in which vegetation and water reforms had been introduced; some suggested that trust had been shattered and that relationships between government staff and landholders had been set back about 15 years. Vegetation management was probably less of an issue in the south-west Queensland mulga lands than in the Desert Uplands, because of the limited potential for development in the south-west.

Trust in other States was also affected by changes in government regulations. New South Wales agency staff reported that trust in government officers dropped off when vegetation and water reform were introduced in that State. Compared with Queensland, New South Wales was further down the track in this process. Some landholders thought that the increased regulations in New South Wales meant that trust between landholders was also eroded because individuals became concerned that some people had more influence with agencies than others. In Western Australia, distrust developed during the 1970s when Resource Surveys were introduced. This was because of (a) the lack of transparency for pastoralists when the relevant government department did not inform them about the reasons for the survey, and (b) the recommendations were developed in isolation without landholder involvement.

In the late 1990s–2000, the lack of trust which dominated discussions in the eastern States was not as big an issue in Western Australia. Both pastoralists and agency staff suggested that the lack of trust and barriers with “them and us” attitudes were largely a thing of the past; agency staff thought that most pastoralists had more respect for the Western Australia Department of Agriculture now, and that most had a good rapport with agency staff. Comments about other departments were similar but a little less positive.

In all States, more landholders and pastoralists than agency staff probably saw lack of trust as an issue. As one extension officer explained, the non-conformists will feel targeted as the government becomes more vigilant about ensuring sustainability.

Government regulations

Land management is affected by a plethora of Acts and regulations and in the eastern States there is increasing regulations especially in relations to water and vegetation management.

Landholders in all regions expressed concerns about increasing regulations. The concern was much greater in the eastern States than in Western Australia. Reform of water use and vegetation management began in the 1990s in New South Wales and Queensland, and is continuing. Land management legislation was reformed in South Australia around 1989 and in the Northern Territory in the early 1990s; but legislation and regulations in Western Australia have been relatively stable (Burnside, personal communication 20 April 2000).

Only a few pastoralists in Western Australia seemed to think increasing regulations were of some concern. According to agency staff in Western Australia, increasing regulations were not an issue in the Gascoyne–Murchison region, but in New South Wales and Queensland agency staff agreed that regulations were increasing and that landholders were affected. In the eastern States, issues for landholders included:

- rights have been eroded through native title legislation, and water and vegetation reforms,
- increasing regulation means increased living costs for landholders, and
- most regulations are city-based and cannot be easily transposed to the bush.

The perceptions of increasing regulations are compounded by a national situation of complex legislation governing land management. A plethora of Acts relate to land management. Fitzhardinge (1999) pointed out that landholders in New South Wales are affected by more than 23 different Acts (see box below).

<i>Aboriginal Land Rights Act, 1983</i>	<i>Clean Water Act, 1970</i>
<i>Agricultural & Veterinary Chemical Act, 1994</i>	<i>Forestry Act, 1916</i>
<i>Catchment Management Act, 1989</i>	<i>Native Title Act, 1994</i>
<i>Crowns Lands Act, 1989</i>	<i>Rural Fires Act, 1997</i>
<i>Local Government Act, 1993</i>	<i>Soil Conservation Act, 1938</i>
<i>Endangered Fauna Act, 1991</i>	

(Fitzhardinge 1999 p.57)

Other states have similar Acts and it can be difficult for landholders to integrate the information from these and other sources. Frequently, the objectives of the different pieces of legislation and their codes and regulations do not complement each other (e.g. State of Queensland 1998). One extension officer suggested that landholders were very frustrated when they could not see how programs linked together, and that improved communication on the part of the agencies could assist in overcoming this.

One landholder said that even the bureaucrats did not understand the interface between the different pieces of legislation. A lot of confusion exists between Federal and State Acts and this is complicated by political processes. One recent example was the debate between the Queensland and Commonwealth government over compensation to landholders for vegetation management in Queensland (*Courier-Mail* 21 March 2000).

Western Australia did attempt to reconcile the legislation on rural land management and natural resource management issues in 1995–96, but it was unsuccessful. An NRM Task Force prepared a report but it seemed that pressure from landholders persuaded the Minister not to continue with the process (Burnside, personal communication, 20 April 2000).

All landholders interviewed in this study were concerned about the lack of flexibility of regulations to allow on-ground variation between land systems. Again there was much less concern in Western Australia than in the eastern States. Some of this is probably related to the history of intervention in Western Australia compared to the eastern States, as outlined in Section 7.3 – Influences on Participation.

Lack of motivation

Many landholders and agency staff were concerned about apathy in rural communities. This research found that commonly held views did not always reflect the complexity of reasons that landholders had for not attending activities.

Landholders (or pastoralists) and agency staff in all regions were concerned about the apathy of landholders, especially in not wanting to attend meetings. Extension staff found it difficult to get landholders to attend meetings and found the lack of numbers disappointing. In New South Wales, agency staff commented that it was particularly difficult to involve older farmers.

Several reasons given in the Desert Uplands, West 2000 and Gascoyne–Murchison regions were similar to those given in south-west Queensland, in that landholders:

- needed to feel they had been listened to; if they were not, participating was a waste of time; one landholder from the Desert Uplands said “no process gives us a real say or makes our vote really count”,
- were individualistic and hated giving information away,
- were worn down by the economic situation and declining terms of trade, and
- were daunted by the cost of attending meetings.

Extension staff and landholders in several regions explained that sometimes landholders felt they have not been listened to when the government did not do what they wanted. As suggested previously, this might have been alleviated to some extent by more honesty and clarity about the function of participation and the role of landholders in the participation process.

Landholder involvement also seemed to decline as the program progressed; this has also been reported by Guijt and Shah (1998a). In the Desert Uplands region, some group members suggested that attendance at Strategy meetings had declined because landholders thought that the committee was doing a good job and there was no need to attend. The Gascoyne–Murchison Strategy also had wide-spread consultation in the early stages, but some members now thought the need for consultation was reduced. This could well apply to other regions.

The detailed investigation of motivation factors undertaken in south-west Queensland was not repeated in other regions. Consequently, no comment can be made about whether the extent and reasons for apathy apply in all regions. There were some suggestions that the factors influencing landholders’ decisions about participation were complex. Some landholders suggested that it was not apathy that kept landholders away from meetings, but rather the lack of time. This was particularly acute as many areas had been in drought for many years. On the other hand, other landholders and agency staff suggested that a difficult economic situation might have been an incentive for participation.

Need for on-ground resources

The need for resources to be spent on the ground rather than on administrative costs or research and extension was a common theme across Australia. Several people commented that there was even negativity about how resources were spent in Landcare – for example where landholders wanted money for weed management but this was not always allowed under the NHT criteria.

Communication

Landholders in all regions said that communication skills, personality and the attitudes of agency staff were more important to the success of participatory activities than the methods chosen..

The attitude and personalities of agency staff, and developing a relationship between staff and landholders were considered fundamentally important throughout the rangeland regions. Landholder and agency staff comments indicated that training was needed in basic communication skills. As one agency person from the Gascoyne–Murchison region said, good communication skills are more useful than any participatory process in achieving outcomes for land management.

A few communication issues were universally supported:

- Young agency staff needed training, as well as on-going advice and support, as suggested by comments like “many arrive with an attitude problem, but you can educate them”.
- Communication problems were usually more pronounced with people from outside the region as is evidenced by statements such as “Inappropriate consultation is usually generated from outside the region”; “agency staff focus on urban issues, they are urban-centric” and “locally based staff understand well, but communication breaks down the higher you go in the agency”.
- Language used by government agencies made communication and understanding difficult for landholders. Some thought government language was “airy-fairy” and full of “motherhood” statements; some thought that scientific technical language was particularly difficult to understand.

One person explained that the consequences in rural communities of inappropriate communication by agencies were far reaching. Agencies often created confrontation unintentionally, so that people wasted an enormous amount of time in “damage control” — landholder leaders complained about spending long hours on the telephone explaining the situation and allaying other landholders’ concerns and anger. Several landholders advocated avoiding unnecessary confrontation. More effort put into celebrating successes was mentioned as a way of building relationships and overcoming negativity.

Most rural people thought that the city did not understand the bush and many thought rural communities should do more to overcome this, and educate city people. One idea was to develop an education kit or book for schools. Many commented that the government represented the city majority and that the majority did not understand rural issues.

Some landholders were very supportive of young agency staff, saying that they had more advanced ideas than many landholders. However, one person was concerned that most staff were reluctant to use their own ideas and seemed frightened to say what they thought because of negative repercussions in the department (e.g. regarding their future careers).

One issue highlighted in both Western Australia and Queensland relates to the effect of landholders’ attitudes to agency staff. The negative and critical attitudes of some landholders adversely affected the motivation of agency staff, particularly young staff, to undertake participatory activities. As one extension officer explained:

For young agency staff, working in the bush can be a thankless task; the wins are few and far between, landholders are usually unresponsive, reluctant to change and keen to shoot down new ideas [both from agency staff and other landholders]. Staff are not appreciated even though they want to help people ... and this is very deflating.

Young staff, such as the person quoted above, needed training in communicating with landholders, as well as support from their institution in understanding the nature of participatory processes and change. Change takes more time than many people realise and incremental changes are often invisible.

Facilitation and conflict management

The need for facilitators to improve their skills was linked to the need to improve communication skills. Some existing participatory approaches negated conflict, which tended to increase the problem rather than develop a resolution. Facilitators needed to have the confidence and skills to manage conflict constructively.

Facilitators were often referred to by landholders and agency staff during this research, and in this context facilitators were agency staff or outside consultants who coordinated and organised activities.

Landholders in most regions had mixed views about the value of agency facilitators, probably partly because of the variable ability and professionalism of the facilitators. As in Queensland, some New South Wales landholders wanted to see more respected local people as facilitators. In Western Australia, some thought facilitators were needed, but others did not like them. Some of the criticism of facilitation processes was that they:

- determined the lowest common denominator; meaning that facilitators tended to look for points of consensus to guide action (rather than exploring options which may have multiple but compatible actions),
- did not encourage innovation because alternative views were discouraged,
- stifled criticism and conflict. Landholders said that they needed to be challenged to learn and that when facilitators did not allow conflict to become visible, people did not learn.

From observations made during this research, it seems that the use of facilitators was accepted a little more in Queensland than in other States. However, even in Queensland, the process of facilitation often seemed to minimise conflict. Participative approaches tended to encourage a diversity of views, but this had the potential to raise conflict. In an attempt to develop a positive and constructive atmosphere conducive to learning, facilitators tended to avoid bringing conflict out into the open. Participatory processes that shared power with local people tended to allow conflict to become visible, but the challenge was then for facilitators to learn to deal with the diversity of views.

Local knowledge

Across the rangelands, there seemed to be an increasing recognition of the value of local landholders' knowledge.

Across Australia, it was suggested that on the whole, governments and agencies were more interested in landholders' views now, than in the past. However, in New South Wales and Queensland many landholders agreed that the government and agency staff did not value their knowledge and skills. In Western Australia, only a few pastoralists still thought that the agencies did not value pastoralists views; largely this was the case 10–15 years ago, but is not the case now.

Agency staff in all regions were more likely than landholders to think that landholders were valued and had the opportunity to have significant input into government decisions. A few were concerned that the pendulum had swung too far and landholder views were given precedence over scientific knowledge.

A few landholders and agency people suggested that landholders did not value themselves. At times the very innovative landholders were dismissed as mavericks; anyone who was successful might be subjected to criticism through the tall-poppy syndrome.

Regional participation and representation

Regional participation was characterised by a representative model. Both landholders and agency staff expressed concern about how representative these groups were, of the rest of their communities.

In all regions, landholders expressed the common concern that they were not always properly represented in meetings. The views raised in all States were much the same, but landholders' frustration seemed strongest in New South Wales, where comments seemed to be voiced most frequently.

Some of the common views expressed by landholders in all regions were:

- those who go to meetings were those who had a “barrow to push”,
- representatives had their own perspectives,
- landholder representatives were mainly the wealthier, older generation,
- younger landholders were not listened to by representatives,
- representatives did not provide feedback from the meetings to other landholders,
- some landholders had more difficulty understanding the “big picture” or the issues at the larger scale (such as regional, State or nationally).

Landholders said that many of them dismissed national issues as irrelevant, and therefore were much less likely to read such information or attend meetings. In south-west Queensland, agency staff suggested that it was more difficult to attract landholders to regional meetings than to meetings on issues related to the local, district or property scale. Government officers and landholders in New South Wales however, did not indicate that they had more difficulty in getting landholders involved in regional groups (as opposed to local groups). This may be because many regional groups in New South Wales, such as the Catchment Management Boards, have a high profile and kudos; they have government status and pay sitting fees. A couple of New South Wales agency staff commented that the type of person who was attracted to these positions was “a different type of person” — they were more political, tended to be older and sometimes more conservative. One person said that these people were the “blue-bloods” and were not always respected by the grass-roots landholders. These issues were not discussed in detail by people in other States, but observations suggest that a different group of landholders were attracted to regional groups and rural industry Boards.

Agency staff in regions also expressed similar concerns to those of staff in south-west Queensland, and added the following:

- how to improve the representative system of participation where a few landholders attended meetings to present the views of a larger group; some staff seemed confused about when representative models of participation were appropriate, and when more inclusive approaches were needed,
- how to identify who should be involved; “the big problem is identifying who “the community” is”, and who should be chosen as representatives,
- how to improve the ability of local communities to keep up with the rate of change within government (e.g. policy changes occurred too fast for the local community to keep up-to-date),
- how to ensure that groups are not getting too far ahead of the community they represent; one example mentioned was the Regional Catchment Groups in New South Wales.

This research found that the role of representative groups needed to be clearer in most regions. The report proposes that some groups may not need to be representative, for example if providing

information to government on low-priority issues. However, if groups are to be truly representative, the process of appointing individuals needs to be carefully considered — individuals could be appointed by the government, appointed by local groups, or elected by local people or groups.

To understand why landholders and agency staff had these perceptions, the factors which influence participation need to be examined, and this is done in the next section.

7.3 Influences on participation

The key factors that influenced participation, which emerged from the secondary case studies, include context, communication, institutional arrangements and power. These factors can either enhance or impede the participative process, depending on the context. These factors partly explain some of the differences between the various Rural Partnership Program Regions.

Some factors have a direct influence on participation, such as institutional arrangements which stipulate the time available for staff to spend consulting with landholders. Other factors underpin many aspects of the participatory process; for example the power base inherent in relationships, and confidence and communication skills of the landholders and agency staff. Most factors are interlinked and impact on each other. The key factors are outlined below.

7.3.1 Context

Understanding the context of participation can clarify important factors which may not be clearly understood from field observations or even talking to people. Two examples of how context influences participation are outlined below to illustrate this point.

History of agency intervention

This research indicated that participation in Western Australia was different from that in the eastern States. In Western Australia there seemed to be fewer complaints about agencies not listening to pastoralists.

A few reasons for this difference were suggested by agency staff. One of the reasons was that Western Australia has a history of less intervention than Queensland's. For example, there have been no settlement schemes to reduce the size of leases, and no lease adjustment schemes which attempted to increase the size of leases — leases in Western Australia are more stable with many still the same as when they were originally pegged.

During this project, land management legislative reforms were underway in the eastern rangelands, but were not a concern in Western Australia. New South Wales was further advanced than Queensland in terms of introducing water and vegetation reforms. Consequently, some of the angst associated with the changes had declined in New South Wales.

Another reason for the more positive relationship between the Western Australian Agriculture Department and pastoralists, cited by some agency staff, was that the Department had always valued the knowledge and experience of pastoralists. Since the early 1950s when the Department became involved in rangelands, staff said that they had used the best pastoralists to educate others.

Distance from major towns

Attitudes towards agencies in Western Australia seemed to depend on the physical location of properties. Those pastoralists who lived close to a regional centres, such as Carnarvon, had different attitudes from those who were more remote.

Pastoralists from the inland areas to the east seemed to be more antagonistic towards government, one suggesting that:

we are just tenants; it is crown land and...the community can do as they wish with the land.

Mining was prevalent in this area and had a huge impact on day-to-day grazing operations. Here, some pastoralists complained of being service providers — providing water for mining companies, roads for tourists and camping grounds for aboriginals. They felt that pastoralists were regulated, but other users were not, or that regulations for others were not enforced because of a lack of people to check what happened.

One agency officer explained that pastoralists in this area were physically very isolated and that it is traditionally poorer country. People here tended to have independent and isolationist thinking, a strong work ethic and to rarely attend meetings.

Comments from landholders in all regions indicated that distance from major towns could have an impact on landholder's experience of and attitudes towards participating in government activities. However, the comments and observations collected during this research in Western Australia are supported by Dames and Moore (1999) who interviewed extensively in the Gascoyne–Murchison region.

7.3.2 Communication

The communication ability of individuals was another factor that could enhance or impede participation. This research suggested that government agencies overlooked the importance of basic communication. One of the most frequent comments by landholders in all regions was that the personality and communication skills of the agency staff were vital to the success of programs, and far more important than the participatory methods. The need for a high level of communication skills to implement community participation was also highlighted in a review of rural regional communities undertaken by Comber and Pullar (1995).

Guijt (1996) suggested that in participation, communication skills need to be seen as “essential complementary skills, rather than as optional social skills”; her work was in forestry but the same applies to the Australian rangelands. This research found that training in communication skills, or training in any aspect of participation, was not a priority for State government agencies in any of the regions.

Landholders from all regions suggested that communication problems arose because agency staff had a lack of understanding of rural life. They thought that agency staff and some city people had a perception that landholders were not very intelligent. Many graziers were keenly aware that they had trouble expressing themselves; they were often thought of as having no ideas because they did not the right words.

This research also emphasised the cultural differences between rural and city people, and between landholders and government staff, which influence people's ability to communicate effectively. Most people interviewed agreed that the problem was worse with staff further up the hierarchy and with staff from the city. The idea that rural people are different to urban people is supported by psychological research by Shrapnel and others (Shrapnel, Davie, Freed and Frank 1997; Shrapnel and Davie 2000) who suggested that rural people have personality traits linked to their isolated lifestyle.

7.3.3 Institutional arrangements

Government staff and landholders interviewed in all regions agreed that some institutional arrangements hampered positive interactions between landholders and agencies. These included

- Lack of continuity of staff. This a problem in some regional offices and not in others, but the issue was raised in all States. One agency member suggested that their office was relatively stable, then went on to say that the average stay was 2–3 years. The Queensland EPA in both regions had fewer short-term projects than DNR or DPI.

- Short-term contracts. Staff employment contracts were linked to funding cycles, which are usually 3 years. Many landholders acknowledged that short-term contracts and appointments were becoming the norm in many industries and that these were not all bad.
- Lack of promotional opportunities. A career structure for staff who wanted to stay in the rangelands was often non-existent; and staff usually needed to move to the city for promotion.
- Centralisation of functions. Centralisation of decision-making and of organising functions caused problems in that staff answering enquires had no understanding of locations or distances. Therefore, if tasks were allocated centrally, staff could not prioritise jobs efficiently for travel.
- Resistance to change. Some landholders suggested that agencies were slow and resistant to change. A few landholders debated whether government agencies should target the high achievers; Queensland departments were thought to target the average producer. Observations in this research support this view, that many innovative producers had little contact with government departments. This is supported by Chambers (1999 p.65) who said that internationally, conservatism had become entrenched in departments through a reverence to standard regulations and procedures. Agencies promoted the use of standardised procedures and these tended not to be changed without strong reasons — rather, procedures were adapted or added to, with new ideas superimposed over old.
- Horizontal communication. Communication between different government agencies was frequently mentioned as a problem by landholders: “Agencies should work together better” and “not do the same job”. Agency staff suggested that communication needed to be encouraged between senior levels of the departments, not just at the regional level.
- Vertical communication. Information flows within agencies — between field staff, regional managers, policy people, Ministerial advisors and Ministers — were frequently mentioned as ineffective. Messages were transformed beyond recognition in transit, or never reached the appropriate people. It was frequently said that the further up the agency hierarchy, the more political the agenda, and the more distorted the link between local needs and departmental actions. Agency managers also referred to instances of field staff being “captured” by clients, and not wanting to pass on information which was unpalatable.

Most agency staff and some landholders acknowledged that both horizontal and vertical communication was improving. In all regions the Rural Partnership Program Strategies were credited with helping this improvement; the Strategies built links between agencies and between community members.

As in south-west Queensland, institutional systems in other regions were often frustrating for landholders. Many said that they just wanted to get on with the job and not waste time jumping through institutional hoops. One landholder explained that they were always being told by government:

You have to learn to play the game — but to us this is frustrating and a waste of time.

Some felt that landholders were expected to go through a consultation process and therefore their ideas were watered down before reaching the decision-makers; whereas other groups in society, such as the conservation movement had the ear of the Minister and could express their views directly.

Landholders developed various tactics to achieve change and outcomes from agencies. At times, the landholders’ way of managing the frustration of blockages in vertical communication within departments was to circumvent the bureaucracy altogether and opt for using their own political

pressure. One suggestion was to get politicians to agree to something in a public forum, then the field staff would have to implement the edict.

7.3.4 Power

For many landholders “the office drives the field rather than the field driving the office” — most of the power was still perceived as being with the government despite the rhetoric of participation, partnerships and empowerment. Government was often seen as reluctant to hand over responsibilities and money to groups — “as the money increases, the government takes over”. One regional group felt that they were threatened with funding cuts if they did not support government policy.

Government was also seen as dishonest about how decisions were made. Landholders were unclear about whether or not they could really influence decisions and what was negotiable and what was already decided. In New South Wales and Queensland, landholders complained about “meetings which went in a circle”. The agenda of the meetings were confusing and landholders wanted agency staff and facilitators to be clear about the point of the meeting at the beginning.

The lack of clear intent about how power was to be shared in many participatory processes also contributed to mistrust. The processes used by agencies to provide services and by agencies involved in regulation are very similar and often use the same catch-phrases. Confusion and suspicion of hidden agenda result from processes which are not matched to the intent.

People’s views on the degree to which power should be shared in participatory activities tended to differ. Overall, landholders and pastoralists wanted to share in the decision-making power on issues which were important to them; many wanted a greater share. However, some agency staff in all States thought their departments “bent over backwards” to accommodate landholder views.

Sharing power seemed to be difficult for agencies. One agency officer explained that sometimes the government did not want to specify exact policies and this made life difficult for public servants. Ministers preferred policy to be vague because then they had the power to make decisions to satisfy all parts of the community and maximise political mileage. One community member commented that the results of increased community participation were probably more far reaching than the government realised at first, for the community became more forthright in having their say and would demand changes in the way government did business.

7.4 Conclusions

Many of the issues discussed by landholders, local community people and agency staff in the rangelands had a high degree of commonality, at least superficially. A brief summary of the comments from people in south-west Queensland rang true for people in other areas. A couple of people suggested that the comments were what one would expect of most rural areas in Australia.

Most of the differences in participatory approaches were evident between south-west Queensland and Western Australia; north-west New South Wales and the Desert Uplands regions were quite similar to south-west Queensland. The interaction between landholders and agencies differed from the eastern States in two key respects:

1. a more positive relationship between pastoralists and agencies, particularly Department of Agriculture, based on higher levels of trust,
2. far less interaction and fewer opportunities for interaction between government officers and pastoralists because of larger distances.

To understand rural people's perceptions of participatory processes and their interaction with government and agencies, one needs to understand the detail and context. Broad generalisations may be suitable for international or national policy, but for the implementation of land management practices the detail is fundamentally important. For example (a) in the ecological sphere, stocking rate changes impact on vegetation species in particular paddocks, and broad generalisations about vegetation bio-regions are meaningless; (b) in the social sphere, the differences between individual property managers' daily work plans can affect the success or failure of feral animal control programs coordinated between several properties.

People's initial comments are generally often shallow, and the important issues take time to uncover. Comments from landholders and agency staff from the same region often seemed similar in this enquiry, and on the surface the issues they raised were the same: both wanted to achieve some sort of sustainable rural environment. However, the subtlety and nuances of meaning in what people said, and what was left unsaid, need to be understood. These deeper issues are often not easily discussed. People's behaviour and comments can appear the same, but deeper understanding is needed if complex land management practices and the associated social changes are to occur.

In spite of the similarities, the underlying motivations of groups and individuals involved in land management decisions were often fundamentally different. These motivations were often difficult to pinpoint. Sometimes, even for one individual, we do not know why we do things the way we do. If the people involved in participatory activities did not understand each other's motivations, misunderstandings were likely to occur. As one landholder explained:

The dichotomy of purpose between landholders and government means a different starting point. Landholders are accountable on a daily basis, are emotionally involved in issues, this is the grass roots approach. The government situation is the opposite. It is generally the big picture, not touched by the reality of daily events such as rain. It is a difference in purpose, rather than a lack of understanding that causes many problems.

The issues associated with people's motivations seemed to be similar between the regions, even though a deeper examination of motivation and apathy was undertaken in south-west Queensland. Comments and observations uncovered no disconfirming evidence, but further research on some of the detailed reasons related to motivation is needed.

However, when the influences that enhance or impede participation were examined, they seemed to be much the same in all regions. The context is important and this probably accounts for most of the

differences between the eastern and western States. The next chapter will use the factors that influence participation to develop a framework to guide the design of participatory approaches.

8 Improving participatory approaches

This chapter concludes this report and meets the primary research aim, which is to assist government and communities to develop effective participation approaches for local and regional government programs to improve sustainability of Australian rangelands.

Participation is *essential* to achieving sustainable land management. However, many problems currently exist in Australian rangelands, and embarking on participatory approaches needs to be carefully considered. The present level of community participation should not be abandoned because it is not working, as much can be done to improve the existing approaches. This research focussed on ways to improve participatory approaches, particularly those where a highly participative approach had been chosen by a government agency.

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings of the research reported in previous chapters, and presents these under headings based on the research questions that were proposed at the end of Chapter 2. This provides a detailed review of the current situation regarding community involvement in government land management programs, and particularly what the participants, mainly rural landholders, think about the government's way of interacting with them.

These findings raise three significant aspects of participatory approaches that need to be improved:

- institutional arrangements,
- operational aspects, and
- links between land management issues and participatory processes.

Current institutional arrangements sometimes hinder participatory approaches, and some practical recommendations are provided for policy makers and managers on how to support participative approaches rather than impede them. Changes are also needed at the operational level, so that facilitators can design appropriate participatory methods. The complexity of participative approaches needs to be understood; flexibility and adaptations of methods are necessary to account for the immense variation between contexts. A model has been formulated to illustrate the various dimensions of participation. The related set of questions is posed, primarily to guide field staff, extension officers and practitioners who design and implement on-ground participatory approaches.

To conclude this chapter, scenarios are used to exemplify and clarify the links between rangeland management issues and the choice of participatory approach. These scenarios explain the different levels of power sharing and the possible types of group and types of participatory process for three simplified issues.

8.1 Summary of results

This section summarises the key findings as related to the specific research questions. These are:

1. What are the community participatory processes currently used by government in Australian rangeland management programs and projects?
2. What are the key issues which enhance or impede participation?
3. Are different participatory processes appropriate in different contexts?

This summary is based on the perceptions of those interviewed, both those involved and some of those who do not commonly participate. These were mainly rural landholders and government staff

currently involved in participatory approaches used by land management agencies in Australian rangelands.

Question 1. What are the community participatory processes currently used by government in Australian rangeland management programs and projects?

Participatory approaches and processes used by government officers in Australian rangeland management programs extended from those that merely provide information for communities to those that employ highly participative approaches where local people share in the decision-making. Many of the same processes were used in different projects; for example, brochures, media releases, field days, workshops and discussion groups were commonly employed. However, it is clear that these labels are ineffective in describing the details of the processes that are actually used.

Practitioners and landholders described participatory processes in different ways. Practitioners usually discussed participatory processes in terms of the purpose or goal they were trying to achieve; for example, a workshop can aim to improve landholder knowledge, change community attitudes, enhance landholders’ skills, create awareness or change land management practices. However, it is notable that neither the purpose nor the labels clearly describe the process, especially from the landholders’ perspective. Landholders tended to emphasise the communication style and sincerity of the government practitioners involved with them, as well as the degree of power landholders had in the project (i.e. could they influence the decisions).

This research highlighted the principle that it is the *way* the processes are implemented that is fundamentally important, and this largely depends on the attitudes and intent of the practitioner. For example a workshop may be a series of lectures imparting information; or it may be highly participative with interactive exercises involving all members of a local area, or only a few representatives. The following definitions (Table 8.1) encapsulate some of the ideas of practitioners by dividing participatory processes into three broad groups: traditional extension methods, highly participative processes and representative processes.

Table 8.1 Participatory processes currently used in Australian rangelands

	Traditional extension processes	Highly participative processes	Representative processes
Definitions	Usually one-way flows of information from government to landholder, and sometimes from landholder to government.	Two-way flows of information between groups, and where the decision-making power is shared between the various stakeholders equally.	Community representatives are elected or chosen and only these individuals participate.

Many processes fit into each of these groups and some are generic and fit into one or more of these groupings depending on the way the methods are used. The examples indicated in Table 8.2 are from the literature as well as from observations made in the rangelands during the course of this research. For example, action learning may or may not be participative, or it may be highly participative and include interactive activities.

Table 8.2 Examples of participatory processes

	Traditional extension processes	Highly participative processes	Representative processes
Examples of processes – groupings may change according to the intent.	Media releases Newspaper articles Newsletters Brochures Flyers Radio Television Mail & telephone surveys Field days Workshops Discussion days Meetings Information days	Participatory Action learning Local Best Practice Soft systems methodology Participatory Rural Appraisal Participatory action research Participatory monitoring & evaluation Field days Workshops Discussion days Meetings Information days Delphi technique Future search conferences	Boards & representative committees Citizen’s juries Community profiles Rapid rural appraisal Delphi technique Future search conferences

Currently, traditional extension processes are extensively used in the rangelands. Sometimes these are employed on their own and sometimes in combination with representative or with highly participative processes. Both government staff and landholders noted the trend towards highly participative processes, particularly at the local level. Programs such as Landcare and Bestprac espouse highly interactive processes which share some of the decision-making power between government and landholders. Representative processes dominate at the regional scale, probably for purely pragmatic reasons as long distances in rangeland areas make it more difficult to involve large numbers of people for longer periods of time. A summary of several of the projects analysed is included in Appendix 1.

Question 2. What are the key issues that enhance or impede participation?

This question further examines participatory processes from the perspectives of the various stakeholder groups, and highlights questions that need to be considered if current participatory processes are to be improved.

Most issues highlighted by landholders and government staff have both positive and negative implications and therefore could either enhance or impede participation. For example, a key issue for most rangeland landholders was that they wanted to be able to “have a say”. If the participatory process provides the opportunity for landholders to influence decisions, they are positive; but landholders feel they are wasting their time and are critical if they believe they are not listened to and cannot influence government decisions.

In summary, some of the factors that enhance participation are:

- honesty, good communication skills and understanding of rural people,
- genuine sharing of decision-making power with landholders (when appropriate),
- sufficient time to establish relationships and undertaken participatory activities,
- good social capital in rural communities, including communication skills and confidence to participate in government programs,
- transparency of the process, so that people understand what to expect.

Some of the key factors that hinder participation include:

- landholders’ lack of trust in government,
- cost of participation, particularly in more remote areas,

- apathy, or lack of motivation of rural communities (debatable, as discussed in Chapter 6),
- poor communication skills and lack of understanding of rural culture and the rural situation,
- some institutional arrangements (discussed in a later section of this chapter).

Overall, landholders liked the trend of increased opportunities for local community involvement in government rangeland management programs. Most government staff agreed, but some thought there was too much emphasis on community involvement. While landholders and agency staff were largely supportive of the concept of participation to improve land management, all agreed that participatory approaches needed improvement.

Local landholders in this study revealed that poor participation can be worse than none at all: sometimes it is better not to involve the community, rather than to do it badly. Agencies initiating participation need to recognise that participation is not always appropriate. When participation becomes insulting to landholders, it can exacerbate cynicism about government, shatter trust between government staff and local communities, degrade social capital, promote conflict between stakeholders and encourage apathy towards all government programs. An understanding of the key issues is essential if participatory approaches are to be improved.

Opinions differ between landholders and government staff, particularly government staff from outside the rangelands, about the importance of some issues. Many government staff are concerned about which participatory processes and methods enhance or impede participation. This research indicated that, from the landholder's perspective, this is the wrong question. To landholders, of most importance was the way in which the processes were implemented and the communication skills and integrity of the government staff involved. While this may seem commonsense or even trite, it is a key issue for government agencies because many of the staff lack the highly advanced communication skills required.

Existing participative approaches will improve if government officers find solutions to these problems. It is also important that the participatory approach suits the specific context and situation, as is discussed next, in Question 3.

Question 3. Are different participatory processes appropriate in different situations?

It seems obvious that different participatory processes are needed for different situations. Many existing approaches are designed with a specific situation in mind: media campaigns are used to raise awareness; experiential learning is used in workshops to improve people's skills, such as in computing or pregnancy testing cattle; participatory action learning is used with groups in BestPrac to improve productivity.

For a variety of reasons, government agencies do tend to promote recipes to guide their participatory activities. It is quicker and easier for practitioners to use someone else's methodology than to adapt or invent their own, and recipes attempt to ensure some consistency across all regions. However, even if participation in a regional project has the same purpose and desired outcome across the region, each situation is immensely varied in its social, cultural, economic and environmental elements. No matter how successful participatory processes have been in similar contexts, or even in the same context at a different time, every context has unique features.

This research highlighted the need for more attention to be given to the complexities of the situation when choosing and implementing participatory processes. Participatory approaches need to be adapted to fit, or be designed especially for, the given situation. This research showed that participation is complex, with a myriad of dimensions. Consequently, designers of activities need to be cognisant of the appropriate scale, degree of power sharing, relevant stakeholders, skills of the individual facilitators, resources available, regional constraints and so on.

Participation needs to be contextual, not only for different situations or projects, but also within projects. Processes may need to be adapted during implementation, because circumstances can alter during the life of the project. Processes should be flexible and responsive while remaining consistent with the overall principles that influenced the design. Landholders applauded those projects which attempted to incorporate flexibility and adaptation; examples in south-west Queensland included Bestprac and the Feral Goat Management project. Recent literature on land management also emphasises flexibility and adaptation (Walters and Holling 1990; Lee 1993) and the same principles apply to participation (Pretty 1999; Abbot and Guijt 1998). Flexibility and a readiness to adapt to unforeseen circumstances are essential principles in designing and implementing participatory approaches.

Summary of research results

In summary, these research results indicate that a range of participatory approaches are currently used in Australian rangeland management programs, and that variations in approach are required for the different situations. Landholders and government staff tend to have different perceptions about how participation is working, and participation is described according to various dimensions: purpose, degree of power sharing and scale, as well as the methods and techniques used. Most of the landholders and government staff interviewed in this study agreed that improvements are needed for participatory approaches to be effective.

The rest of this chapter examines how participative approaches in rangelands can be improved. Institutional changes, operational changes and better links between issues and participatory processes are three areas where improvements are highlighted. Government managers could remove many of the barriers to participation by reorganising institutional frameworks within which staff operate, and bureaucratic structures. Recommendations for changes in institutional arrangements to better support participatory approaches are presented below.

Changes are also needed at the ground level. Government staff, practitioners and facilitators need to design participatory processes to more specifically match the context. To avoid producing a recipe for choosing participatory processes, and to ensure flexibility, a model and set of questions have been developed to guide practitioners in choosing the most suitable approach. The model will also help practitioners make certain that important factors are not overlooked. The third section illustrates which participatory processes are appropriate for different types of rangeland management problems. Three scenarios highlight the links between the land management problem, the appropriate level of power sharing and who needs to be involved, and possible types of participatory processes.

8.2 Recommendations: Improving participatory approaches

The recommendations flowing from this research can be considered under three sections: how to decide the best participatory method for a particular situation, how to improve institutional support for participatory activities, and how to link participatory processes to land management issues. These will now be considered in turn.

8.2.1 Deciding the participatory method to use

Participation can be very complex, and each situation needs its own participative approach and methods. Consequently, the various dimensions of participation (which impact on the choice of appropriate process) need to be considered when an approach is being chosen. These dimensions of participation include the purpose of involving local people, the scale of the participation, the people who need to be involved, the degree of power sharing and the stage of the project at which people could be involved. All these factors are considered in the framework proposed below.

Many of these dimensions of participation are interrelated and need to be aligned for effective participation to occur. Learning is often proposed as one of the purposes of community participation in rangeland management programs, but designing processes to stimulate different types of learning is

complicated, and understanding how to do it is difficult. As this report has highlighted, the links between the context and the various dimensions of participation are poorly understood. Perceptions about the links between the dimensions varied between the participants interviewed. For example, agency staff thought that the design and process of participation were determined by the purpose. While this may be true to some extent, the link between purpose and methods was often not apparent to landholders, several of whom commented that all processes looked the same.

A mismatch between dimensions such as structure and purpose can exacerbate landholders' fears about hidden agendas simply because the process lacks clarity. The inappropriate use of structures to implement participation can contribute to the ineffectiveness of processes, and may exacerbate existing tensions within the group or even create conflict.

Another dimension highlighted in this research was the capacity of the government agency to handle participatory activities. Both institutional arrangements and the communication skills of the facilitators are key influences on participatory processes (see Chapters 6 and 7). For example, the personalities of individuals were considered fundamentally important by many landholders interviewed; this shows that the same methods used with different people in different contexts can have completely different outcomes.

The framework presented in Figure 8.1 illustrates the multiple dimensions of participation. All of these need to be considered when designing participatory approaches and choosing appropriate methods. The dimensions are interrelated; for example, the choice of design for the participatory activity often depends on the appropriate scale or degree of power sharing required. The interrelationships between the dimensions change according to the particular context in which the participation occurs. Mismatches occur when the participatory design chosen does not exist for one or more of the other dimensions of participation.

Facilitators tend to begin planning participatory activities by choosing the design and methods to be used. However, this framework suggests that other dimensions need to be considered first, as these influence the choice of design. Planning participatory activities requires an iterative process because the answers to questions in one dimension may alter after other dimensions have been investigated. Flexibility is also required during implementation, as new information emerges, or some of the dimensions change over time.

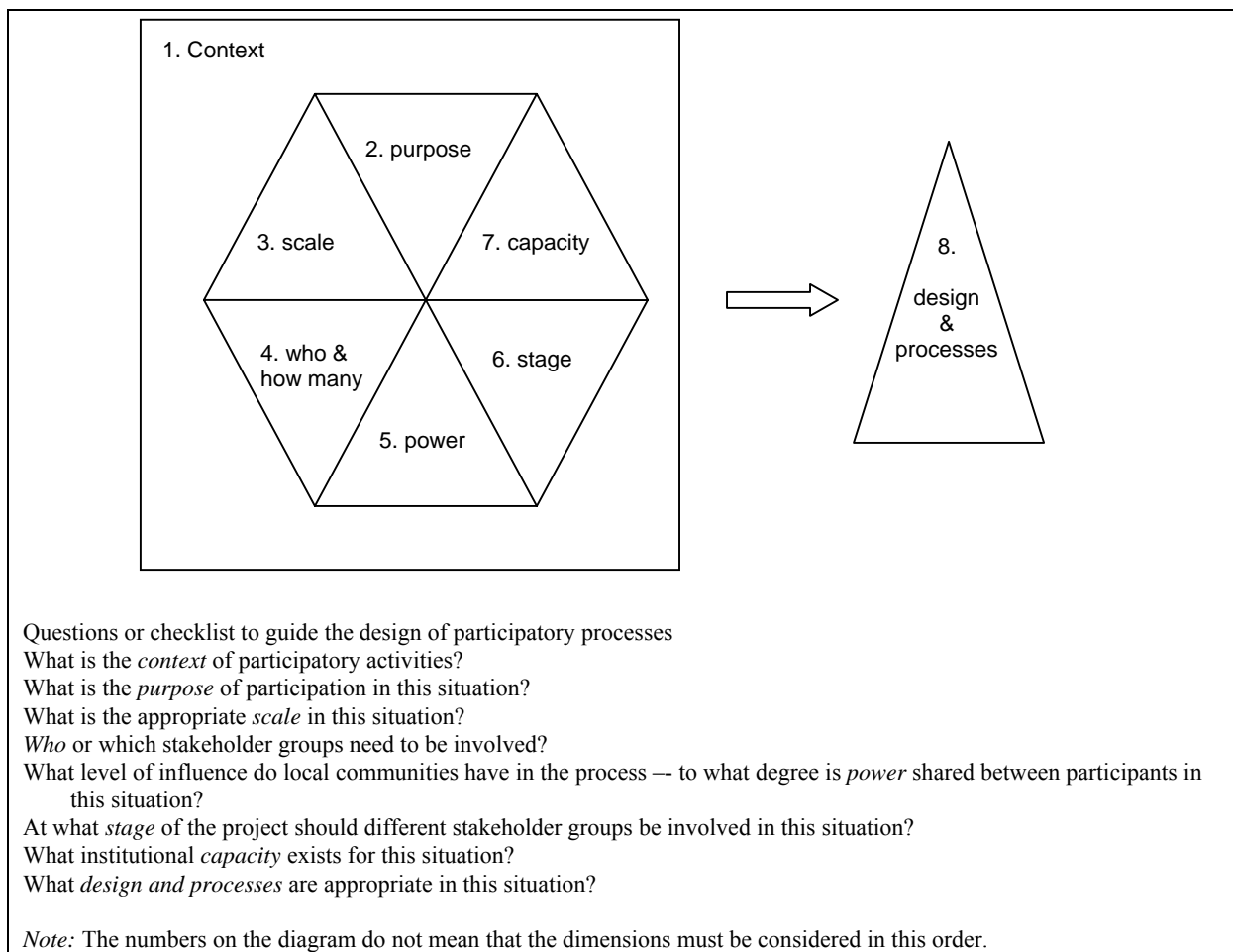


Figure 8.1 Dimensions of participation.

The use of a series of questions, rather than formulae, to guide the choice of participatory processes is meant to emphasise the need for flexibility. Established processes and recipes can be useful; but to be most effective, usually need to be adapted to the specific situation. The key findings of this research that are relevant to these questions are outlined below, and a case study illustrates how the questions assist in choosing an appropriate design for participation.

1. What is the context of the participation?

The context of participation includes the social, environmental and economic contexts within which the participatory activities will occur — the existing social relationships and networks; the existing power base inherent in some positions. This research highlighted the importance of context, for example in explaining the differences between Western Australia and the eastern States.

Context is fundamentally important in designing participatory approaches; each situation is different in some way. Also, the context is dynamic over space and time; for example, two aspects specific to rangelands which landholders suggested were commonly overlooked by government agencies are:

- Time and distance are important limitations to attending activities, particularly in rangelands; therefore, participatory designs suitable for other contexts, such as coastal regions, may not be appropriate here.

- The lack of services in rangeland areas restricts the use of some tools that could aid participation. One example is e-mail. Many rangeland regions do not have adequate telecommunications infrastructure. This limits e-mail, internet access and in some areas reliable telephone and fax services. Many landholders, especially in Queensland, expressed a desire to access electronic communications. The potential of these services in supporting participative processes is probably enormous, but the telecommunications infrastructure is simply unavailable to most landholders at present.

Social, cultural and political issues and people's values about these may also be important. Unless the context for participatory activities is understood, the design cannot account for any of the local differences. Consequently, the context needs to be considered before the design and methods of participation are chosen.

2. What is the purpose of participation?

The purpose of participation refers to the reasons that the initiating agency has for involving local people in the land management program. This purpose is different from (a) the reasons that the local community and landholders have for wanting to participate, and (b) the goals of the project itself.

Some purposes of participation can produce positive responses from participants while others can contribute to feelings of mistrust between local communities and government agencies. Participation that purports to "listen to the people" but whose purpose is simply to follow the agency mandate is not genuine participation and often leaves participants frustrated and disillusioned. Other purposes of participation suggested by agencies in this report include to:

- improve government decision-making and policy with input from various sources,
- inform the community about government policy and processes for decision-making,
- increase awareness of natural resource management issues,
- improve knowledge and understanding about land management issues,
- build landholder support and ownership for implementing land management practices,
- encourage landholders to learn,
- encourage changes to management practices,
- foster positive relationships between outside groups and the local community,
- reduce the potential for conflict about proposed changes, and
- empower communities to become more self-reliant.

Participation that is simply rhetoric and ritual can be very frustrating for those who want to share in the decision-making process. It is vitally important to be explicit about the purpose of participation so that local people understand their role and have realistic expectations about the outcomes.

Many programs and projects examined had multiple functions for participation, and at times these existed simultaneously. For example, awareness was sometimes needed before understanding and before changes in land management practices occurred. However, this report suggests that some functions may be incompatible and have possibly caused confusion and frustration for participants. This incompatibility of functions is noted by Priscoli (1997) who highlighted the differences between the functions of conflict management (which aims for consensus) and participation (which can allow multiple perspectives). This research suggests that resolving conflict may be incompatible with learning: learning proceeds from an examination of different view-points and the search for innovation and new ideas; conflict resolution processes tend to purposefully ignore any ideas that diverge from the norm and emphasise the commonality in points of view, thus limiting opportunities for creativity and lateral thinking.

Many of the facilitation processes used in government activities attempt to fulfil dual purposes. For example, during this study several programs were observed which set out to minimise conflict while at the same time encouraging landholders to learn.

Learning is enhanced when a positive, supportive atmosphere is created, where there is trust and when members are comfortable expressing their views. However, by creating a positive atmosphere to minimise conflict, facilitators tend to hide divergent views, to stifle creative and lateral thinking and to hide their own understanding of landholders' perspectives. The opportunities for open and honest communication were curtailed and landholders sometimes felt that agency staff were not prepared to listen to them.

The function of participation needs to be clearly stated. The reasons for inviting landholders to attend meetings, and the roles that landholders were expected to assume, are often not clear to participants and, sometimes, not even to the facilitators. Government agencies do not always document the function of participation in project plans, or make the purpose explicit to the participants. This call for institutions to strive for greater clarity in participatory approaches is not new: Guijt (1998) stated that the depth and scope of the participation needs to be clarified, and Landre and Knuth (1993) suggested that the role of the local community members needs to be made explicit.

Lack of clarity about the function of participation fuels landholders' confusion and their suspicions about hidden agendas. Some landholders have their own hidden agendas, but these are not revealed in an atmosphere of distrust.

3. What is the appropriate scale?

The need to incorporate several scales of participation is necessary in land management, but it adds to the complexity of organising community participation. Using local and regional scales with close links between these may (a) reduce conflict, as outlined above, (b) help local people to understand broader perspectives, and (c) provide better coordination between agencies and between programs. The term *scale* refers to the spatial size or spread of the natural resource management issues or the focus of the participatory activities (as defined in Chapter 3). As such, scale can be local, regional, catchment, State, national or international. The emphasis of this report is on participation at the local and regional scales.

The links between scale and other dimensions of participation are not always clear. During the conduct of this research the links between scale and purpose were not obvious; more obvious were the links between scale and methods used. Most regional rangeland programs used a representative model, with a small number of local people representing the broader community. This choice of representative model was inevitable for pragmatic reasons, as the size of the region and distances made the cost of involving everyone prohibitive. At the local scale, considerable variation existed in the design and methods used in participatory activities, but representative groups were not common. Local projects often aimed to reach a larger number of people and were open to anyone who wished to be involved. While the link between scale and method at regional scale were more obvious, the purposes of regional groups and the purposes of local groups were often unclear in the rangeland case studies.

Organisers need to clarify the links between scale and purpose. In many regional groups there was a general expectation that the whole community would learn about how to improve land management practices. The research reported here suggests that this is unrealistic. Regional groups are limited in their capacity for learning. The participants may learn about the structure of government and funding opportunities, and may develop an appreciation of the views of stakeholders who live outside the rangelands, such as conservation groups. As one landholder said, getting involved in a Regional Strategy group certainly educates people about how the bureaucracy works.

This report proposes that the design and purpose of participatory activities should vary according to the scale; especially, regional groups should be different from local groups. Representative designs are appropriate for regional groups — mainly for pragmatic reasons of cost — but are not as appropriate for local groups, which have more options. A range of participatory approaches could be used, depending on the reasons for local communities' becoming involved. Purposes appropriate for regional groups are:

- to provide a link between grass-roots landholders and government agencies (by providing advice to agencies on behalf of landholders and highlighting key information for landholders), and
- to coordinate regional programs and assist in rationalising broad government policy directions with local needs.

While regional groups are limited in their capacity for some purposes such as learning, local groups are suitable for many forms of learning (e.g. adult learning, action learning, and social learning that integrates multiple perspectives). Learning approaches are appropriate when complex land management problems are to be solved. The scale and purpose chosen are interdependent with the next dimension, *who*. For practical reasons, it is difficult and expensive to involve everyone at the regional scale, and more feasible to involve everyone in a local area.

4. Who needs to be involved?

The diversity of stakeholder groups with an interest in how the Australian rangelands are managed means that it is difficult to choose who should be involved in participatory activities. This dimension has two aspects: (a) the specific groups and individuals from those groups who should be involved and (b) the number of people who need to be involved.

Agency staff often forget that the government can be a stakeholder. Agency staff usually focus more on the local community, and sometimes the broader community of people outside their region. Some landholders question the role of government agencies in participatory activities, and whether they are legitimate stakeholders or mere facilitators in the process. During this research, agency staff often seemed to act as spokespersons for groups in society who were not in attendance; for example, they often presented the views of conservation groups or international organisations. However, the value of this role does not seem to be recognised by many agency staff. The need for government to be seen as a stakeholder is also emphasised by Nancarrow and Syme (1999), who suggested that government institutions have a role in balancing inequities within the community.

If government is to be involved, decisions need to be made about which levels of government and which departments should take part. During this research, agency staff and landholders considered that one of the benefits of the Rural Partnership Regional Strategies was to improve liaison between agencies, even though this was often unintended at the beginning. This is a vitally important role for regional groups. Poor coordination in the rangelands between government programs, between government agencies, and between regional organisations has been highlighted as a problem in this research. Other authors have pointed to this as a problem throughout rural Australia (Syme 1991; Dore and Woodhill 1999).

Whom to involve depends largely on the purpose of the participation. If the purpose is to achieve learning about on-ground land management practices that have to be locally implemented, then local groups are more effective than regional groups. The common assumption that representative regional groups can facilitate local practice change relies on the diffusion-of-extension models.

It must be recognised that only the people directly involved in activities are likely to learn; very few people who do not participate will develop an understanding of the issues. Local groups may be more useful to achieve practice change, but representative models of participation do have an important role;

but again, whom to involve depends on the function of the group and the function of participation. Local people are often chosen to be part of representative groups because of their specific skills and knowledge; for example, the Bore Drain Replacement project in Queensland targeted landholders who had experience with bore drains.

The question of how many people in the community need to be involved in participation is a vexing one for many agencies. The problem of balancing efficiency, cost-effectiveness and time constraints against the desire to contact a wide spectrum of people was raised many times during this study, usually by agency staff. The difficulties in contacting people from outside the normal range of groups were also discussed. Most Regional Strategy groups and other regional organisations have made an effort to involve other stakeholder groups, with varying degrees of success. Many stakeholders, including Aboriginal groups, still tend to be poorly represented.

More effort needs to be made to widen the scope of those involved. One of the reasons for the lack of interest in participation and the limited representation of stakeholder groups is that the processes chosen are inappropriate for them. For example, in practice many organisers still

- (a) neglect to hold meetings at times appropriate for women (Guijt and Shah 1998a; Commonwealth of Australia 1998),
- (b) facilitate decision-making with processes and timeframes culturally inappropriate for Aboriginals (Queensland Government 1998) and
- (c) fail to recognise the capacity and skills required of local people if they are to be involved.

This report also highlighted the lack of recognition of the cultural difference between the largely young and urban-centred bureaucratic culture and the older rangeland rural culture. The design of participatory activities must take into account the needs of those whom the organisers wish to involve.

5. What degree of power is shared among participants?

Power sharing is a politically sensitive feature of participatory activities, and organisers have a complex task in working out the degree to which decision-making power should be shared. Several levels of power sharing are useful for achieving change in sustainable rangeland management, depending on the situation. Low levels of power sharing (such as consultation and information sharing) as well as higher levels of power sharing (such as collective decision-making and collective action approaches) are appropriate in different circumstances. A greater level of power sharing in participation is not necessarily better, according to this research. This view is supported by several authors (e.g. Guijt and Shah 1998; Warburton 1997), even though much of the development literature and typologies of power implies that more power sharing with local communities is better (e.g. Arnstein 1969; Cornwall 1995; Pretty 1995b, 1999).

Another finding from this enquiry was that the level of power sharing tends to fluctuate during the life of the project. Landholders explained that different of power sharing arrangements were appropriate at different stages. The key factors seemed to be (a) landholders wanted to be involved in choosing the level of power sharing for different stages and (b) the level of power sharing needed to be clearly and explicitly stated. One implication of this is that evaluators who are assessing the effectiveness of participation need to understand that the results can be different, depending on the stage of the project and the level of participation at the time the evaluation is undertaken; it is wrong to assume that because power is vested in one group at the time of the evaluation that this is the situation for the entire duration of the project.

A key factor which increased landholders' motivation to be involved with agency activities was the opportunity to influence government decisions. Landholders wanted to be seen as equal partners with

government and other stakeholders. A frequent comment was that landholders felt manipulated, and meetings were “a waste of time”; although agency staff claimed that landholders could influence government decisions, this was not the case. This problem was more about a lack of transparency and a lack of clarity regarding the participatory process, than about the level of power sharing.

Landholders in this enquiry did not always want to have the power to make decisions or spend time discussing some issues. As one landholder explained, the role of government was to make some of the difficult decisions so that community members did not have to make decisions that disadvantaged their friends. Similar concerns were highlighted in regard to water allocation in New South Wales (Nancarrow, Syme and McCreddin 1999). Both government agency staff and landholders suggested that there were times when the government just needed to make a decision, and not bother with participatory mechanisms; but when that should occur was a matter of debate. Landholders certainly wanted to be involved in issues that were likely to seriously affect their livelihood or their business.

Any level of power sharing can be threatening for some agencies and for individual agency members. However, as the World Bank (1998a) pointed out, power sharing may actually increase the opportunities for effective outcomes for all the parties involved; losing control of some aspects of a project can actually bring control over more elusive aspects, such as ownership and sustainability.

Project planners need to consider (a) the degree of public involvement that is desirable and feasible for government agencies, (b) the degree of involvement desired by the local community, including the time local people have available to share the power in decision-making and (c) the level of skills the community may need if it is to be involved in different levels of power sharing. Ownership and commitment are more likely to occur if people have the option to be involved in decision-making during the project.

6. At what stage should stakeholders become involved?

Local community participation may occur in various stages of any project. The number and type of stages within a project vary according to the type of project, but some examples are:

Preparation, scene setting	Problem identification
Goal and agenda setting	Research project development
Situation analysis	Seeking financial support
Solution generation	Conducting the research project
Action planning	Producer demonstration/trial site
Action and evaluation	Extension/dissemination of results
(Dick 1987 p.180)	Commercialising research results (Chamala, Coutts and Pearson 1999 p.15)

Communities became involved mainly in the needs-assessment stage and during the evaluation stage of the projects examined. In south-west Queensland, landholders tended to participate in evaluation by answering survey questions, and it seemed that the same small group of landholders were always involved. Numerous evaluations were undertaken in relation to the Rural Partnership Programs. These were usually summative evaluations (i.e. performed at the end of projects). Local communities were rarely involved in designing the evaluation, or adapting projects in response to evaluations carried out while the projects were being undertaken. Dart, Petheram and Straw (1998) also found that participative evaluation where landholders shared in decision-making about evaluation rarely occurs in any substantial way in Australian agriculture.

The research reported here reveals that a high level of decision-making power should be shared with the community from the earliest stage through to the evaluation stage. This supports the view espoused by Mitchell (1989) that if public involvement begins at the strategic level rather than at the operational level, some of the protracted debates can be avoided. Ownership and commitment are more likely to occur if people are involved in defining the problem, then planning and developing the project.

However, involving local people at all stages of projects can cause problems. During the conduct of this research, “burnout” and the cost of participation for local people were mentioned frequently as problems (see Chapters 5, 6 and 7). High levels of involvement occurred in the early stages of some programs (such as the Regional Strategy groups) but dropped off as time passed. This reduction in involvement over time was highlighted by Guijt and Shah (1998) who noted that a high level of participation by local people often occurs in early stages of projects. However, the research reported here suggests that frustration and burnout are probably not simply a consequence of involving people too early, but could also result from unsatisfactory involvement because of inappropriate scale or inappropriate power-sharing. One way of alleviating the problem of burnout is to negotiate with local communities and determine the stages at which they wish to be involved.

The stage of a project is linked to various other dimensions of participation and this research suggests that all of the dimensions need to be considered before participatory approaches are implemented. Where links are discussed in the literature, only two or three dimensions are usually considered. For example:

- the stage in the project is related to the degree of power sharing (Chamala, Coutts and Pearson 1999),
- stages in the project (issue identification; evaluation; decision-making) are related to public participation objectives (Priscoli and Homenuck 1986),
- stages are related to publics (people reached; who is involved), constraints (time, cost and special circumstances) and techniques (Priscoli and Homenuck 1986).

These two papers (Chamala, Coutts and Pearson 1999; Priscoli and Homenuck 1986) provide two-dimensional matrix tables to help initiators of participation develop more-effective approaches. However, the framework shown here (Figure 8.1) suggests that participation has several dimensions which interact, and all these dimensions need to be examined before the design is chosen.

7. What is the institutional capacity?

The capacity of the institutions to support participatory approaches is sometimes underestimated: participation takes time and costs money, usually more than is expected. The process of social change is slow, particularly when barriers of mistrust need to be broken down and organisational commitment needs to be long-term. Participatory approaches are more time-consuming than traditional approaches, which focus on content rather than process. Bureaucratic arrangements need to be more flexible and adaptable to respond to the needs of participatory approaches and the requests of local participants. Staff need skills in planning and implementing participatory approaches.

This research highlighted the fact that communication skills of agency staff need to be seen as essential rather than optional. Government staff who were interviewed tended to focus on searching for ways to improve participatory approaches and finding new methods. However, the landholders who were interviewed said that the communications skills, personality and attitudes of agency staff were far more important than the choice of method. It was the intent and principles, and the way in which methods were used that influenced the effectiveness of participation, an observation supported by Guijt and Shah (1998). This report highlights that:

- many of the communication factors that enhance participation are subtle, and attention to detail in designing the approach and in facilitation is important; and
- existing facilitation processes tend to hide differences of opinion and prevent the subtlety of meaning from emerging.

Many institutional arrangements actually work against effective participation. The lack of transparency about why participation is undertaken and the vagueness and rapid, politically motivated

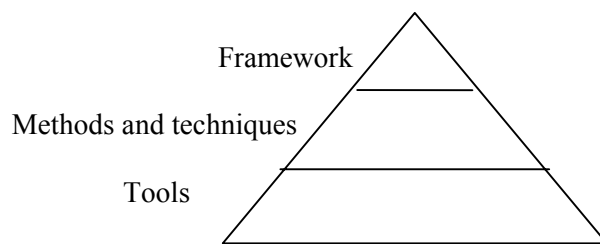
changes about land management policies do not assist in building trust. The accountability requirement of government agencies was mentioned several times by agency staff and landholders as impacting on the type of participatory processes. The desire to reduce the time required and the costs of participation, for both government agencies and landholders, needs to be balanced against the time needed to undertake effective participation. Current short-term funding cycles tend to work against effective participation by limiting flexibility, truncating commitment and hindering staff from developing strong relationships.

Before initiating participatory activities, agency staff need to consider their own skills and the institutional constraints within which they are operating. Pragmatic realism may dictate that the ideal design, methods and techniques need to be adapted. Also, the complex dimensions of participation, and the implications of these dimensions when participatory activities are being designed and implemented need to be considered. However, even with careful planning and the best of intentions, individual staff cannot implement participatory activities effectively without institutional support. Change is needed within government, where institutional systems need to be adjusted to remove impediments to participation. Some suggestions on how to achieve institutional change are outlined below.

8. What design and processes are appropriate for the circumstances?

The range of participatory designs, methods and tools is enormous. Several levels of detail within the participatory approach and components of the design need to be considered. Design — like the hierarchy of mission, goals and objectives — has several levels, frameworks, methods, techniques and tools. A series of methods and techniques are usually linked to form the design of participatory activities. As these terms are used differently by different people, the meaning used in this report is explained below (Figure 8.2).

One important component of design is the order in which methods, techniques and tools are used. Methods and techniques appropriate for awareness are used before methods appropriate for detailed understanding, which in turn come before methods for implementation. Often, the design is iterative, as understanding and implementation may progress in stages; each stage develops deeper understanding, leading to further implementation, and so on.



Framework = general approach with principles or laws guiding the choice and implementation of methods, techniques and tools used within participatory activities. In social science, the loosely corresponding terminology is “methodology”. Some examples include action learning (Dick 1996), soft systems methodology (Checkland 1981), or critical systems thinking (Flood and Jackson 1991).

Methods and techniques = the procedures used to gather and analyse information in research (Blaikie 1995 p.7) or in participation, the way in which activities are undertaken; e.g. focus groups (Krueger, 1988), mail surveys (Dillman 1978), FIDO model (Dick 1991) or Rapid Rural Appraisal (Pretty 1999). Techniques are often used to achieve specific outcomes within the broader method; e.g. funneling, a questioning strategy used in interviews (Minchiello et al. 1990), mindmaps (Buzan 1990), force field analysis or fishbone technique (Dick 1991).

Tools = specific ways of undertaking broader methods or techniques. Tools can be devices to extend the usefulness of methods or techniques such as audio-visual aids or computer programs; or the seating arrangement of the room to facilitate equal discussion (Clark 1996).

Figure 8.2 Components of design for the process of participation

In the 1990s, the design of participatory approaches changed as the traditional extension approaches were seen as not achieving the desired purposes or goals. The need to integrate multiple perspectives and knowledge from various sources to find solutions for complex land management problems was realised, as was the need for social change in conjunction with changes in land management practices. It was realised that desirable change would be slower without the involvement of local communities. Participatory action learning approaches emerged in Australian rangelands with, for example, Bestprac programs promoted throughout the wool industry by the WoolMark Company, and similar programs promoted through Meat and Livestock Australia (MLA) and government agencies. However, despite the rhetoric of participation, many land management programs are still top-down and organised *for* local people, rather than *with* them.

The designs of participatory activities still need improvement. Some conclusions that can be drawn from this research about different participatory approaches and methods are:

- Small group processes can be effective for learning about complex issues where adaptive flexible solutions and practice change are required; for example action learning, adult learning and continuous improvement principles were used in programs such as Futureprofit and Bestprac.
- Social capital and natural capital seem to be linked, yet few programs attempt to develop community confidence, enhance community capacity or raise consciousness; the Building Rural Leaders Program in Queensland is one of the few, and it is based on action learning

principles.

- Individual property visits and one-on-one extension methods are liked by some landholders, and were effective in encouraging practice change — as in the Safe Carrying project.
- Many landholders have an aversion to mail questionnaire social surveys.

As previously highlighted (in Chapter 5) the links between the purpose and structure of participatory activities were not clearly visible in south-west Queensland. This lack of methodological clarity was also reported in developing countries by Guijt (1998b) and Guijt and Shah (1998).

This research suggests that the structure of participatory activities should be based on an understanding of the multiple dimensions of participation: the context, purpose, scale, desirable level of power sharing and stage of the project. To further explain how this model can be used, several programs from south-west Queensland have been analysed by using the dimensions of purpose, scale and appropriate level of power sharing, and by highlighting some of the commonly used participatory approaches (Appendix 2).

The next section of this chapter clarifies the links between dimension of participation and choice of processes by presenting three simplified scenarios commonly occurring in rangeland management.

8.2.2 Recommendations to improve institutional support

Some institutional arrangements impede the effective implementation of participatory approaches, and there are many changes, both small and large, that could make a difference. Encouraging greater coordination between government agencies could alleviate the problem of over-consultation for some landholders. Also, building trust between landholders and agency staff could result in time efficiencies in the conduct of participative activities, which are often hampered by suspicion and even conflict. Strengthening institutional support for staff who undertake participatory activities such as training may alleviate one of the key problems: participative processes do not seem genuine to landholders. Fostering networks and alliances within local communities may encourage greater representation and the involvement of different participants.

The following recommendations apply to Australian rangelands, but not all recommendations will be relevant to all areas at all times. In one region, for example, a problem of high staff turnover at one centre had existed for several years; in another region the problem was more widespread, but a more recent phenomenon. The rangelands, like other areas, are dynamic, and changes have occurred since this research was undertaken. Some of these recommendations have been implemented already and others are currently being considered, partly as a result of this research and partly as a result of the growing focus within government on participation, consultation and partnership issues.

The focus of this research was on extensive grazing land systems, and most time was spent investigating the perceptions of landholders and agency staff in south-west Queensland. Consequently, these recommendations are probably most applicable to governments and other institutions involved in this region. However, as indicated in the review of Rural Partnership Programs in other rangeland areas, many issues are consistent across the regions, especially the factors influencing participation.

1. Encourage greater coordination between government agencies

A frequent complaint by landholders was that participatory activities were repetitive, with many different agencies asking the same questions. Over-consultation had become an imposition for some landholders in the eastern States. Greater coordination between agencies and between programs within agencies would assist. Some specific recommendations for agencies, to encourage more coordination, include:

- Pursue regular meetings between the regional managers of all government agencies involved in community participation to look for opportunities for cooperation, coordination and collaboration.
- Examine opportunities for joint funding of programs and positions to encourage closer working relationships; for example, the Strategic Weed Education and Eradication Program.
- Encourage all agencies (including universities, federal, State and local governments, and research organisations) to contact the region before undertaking participatory activities of their own.
- Appoint a person to assist in the regional coordination of all participatory activities and develop links between departments and other organisations.
- Prepare guidelines to ensure that facilitators have access to information about participatory approaches that are culturally and geographically suitable for local areas.
- Develop a database to track the various consultation and participatory activities undertaken within a region; this would be more useful as an adjunct to other mechanisms which ensure integration and linking of programs.
- Undertake an annual audit of community needs; all government departments should be represented to reduce the extent of repetitive questions from different agencies.

2. Build trust between landholders and agency staff

Trust between landholders and agency staff was lacking in many regions. Agency staff and landholders alike commented on the need to break down barriers and develop trust before land management programs could begin. Landholders in south-west Queensland complained about government agencies taking over the agenda if groups became successful. Programs need to foster empowerment and self-reliance, and build confidence. To do this, agencies need to emphasise learning.

Agencies in many regions are already undertaking actions that build trust and social capital. Some activities which assist include:

- inviting landholders to sit on selection panels for agency staff for their region,
- employing landholders on short-term contracts for specific tasks,
- respecting and valuing the input of local landholders by ensuring that landholder knowledge and skills are incorporated into project planning,
- supporting local groups, without subsuming the agenda, by documenting and regularly checking the agenda with all participants (landholders, government and others) at all levels of the project,
- ensuring opportunities for local groups to manage the project funds if they wish, and
- discussing options for the types of participatory approaches that are appropriate with communities who are to be involved.

3. Strengthen institutional support for staff

While many institutions are committed to participatory approaches and have the best of intentions, some institutional arrangements can impede participation. For example, the time lag between needs

analysis, funding application and project implementation can be many months, or even years. The proposed outcomes may no longer be relevant by the time the project starts. Most bureaucratic systems have little flexibility, and it is almost impossible to change the proposed outcomes after the project has started.

Many agency staff have a limited understanding of participation theory. Most have traditional scientific backgrounds and have had participatory approaches thrust upon them. Agencies and extension officers often have recipes for participatory activities, rather than having frameworks to link theory and practice. However, participatory approaches need to be adapted to suit the specific context. The capacity to adapt requires specific skills and an understanding of the context and the participants. Designing participative programs also requires an understanding of the theory and the assumptions that underpin participatory methods. In spite of this, training in extension, participatory approaches and communication is not seen as a priority by some agencies.

One result of poor staff training is that participatory approaches are often conducted badly. Staff tend to have a limited range of tools, and this contributes to landholders' thinking that all processes look the same. A mismatch of the structure with the purpose of participation causes confusion and fuels landholders' suspicions about hidden agendas. The hesitation of some staff to implement participatory approaches is at least partly attributable to their lack of skills and experience in this field.

Depending on the particular organisation, there are many institutional arrangements that can be modified to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of staff undertaking participatory activities. These include:

- ensuring that there is a long-term commitment to participatory activities, as participatory approaches often take far longer than expected,
- ensuring that sufficient resources are available, in terms of staff time and money,
- encouraging staff to develop their skills in designing participatory programs,
- encouraging staff to develop a high level of communication skills to implement participation and handle the potential conflict inherent in many land management programs,
- developing promotional opportunities and career pathways within rangeland areas to encourage staff to stay and develop positive relationships with local people,
- increasing coordination between short-term funded projects to provide staff with some continuity of employment,
- decreasing reliance on short-term funding for participatory projects,
- rewarding staff for taking time to build relationships and trust in local communities,
- providing institutional support for new and young staff to understand rural culture (there is a need to improve the understanding of different perspectives),
- fostering an institutional adaptive learning culture, to encourage staff to learn from changing circumstances, and
- encouraging institutions to be flexible and adaptive, and to adjust timelines and budgets to allow room for a rapid change of direction within projects.

4. Foster new alliances between groups with different perspectives

Several regions have made commendable efforts to extend the range of groups involved. However, this research has indicated that many groups are poorly represented. Fostering links between different groups and between different regions also enhances opportunities for learning. Local people often learn more easily from each other's experiences and from seeing the processes used by other groups.

Some specific actions that may assist agencies to broaden their base of stakeholders involved in land management issues, and promote interchanges, include:

- discussing the participatory processes that are culturally appropriate with the groups that are poorly represented, and
- organising and encouraging trips throughout the catchment or region to allow agency staff and landholders to better understand the problems that exist throughout the region.

5. Improve links between regional and local groups

While attempts have been made to forge links between regional and local groups, this research indicated that poor links still exist between regional and local scales as well as between groups in the regions. Several strategies were suggested to improve links between regional and local groups, and these relate to improving feedback mechanisms. These need to be reviewed to see if they are appropriate to the particular group and its circumstances:

- The roles of landholder representatives need to be defined more clearly, so that representatives understand that providing feedback is an expectation of their role.
- Groups could provide an induction process to help people, especially newcomers, to understand their roles when representing the broader community.
- Summaries of the key points discussed at meetings, written in community-friendly language, could be provided to landholder representatives for dissemination.
- Expenses associated with providing feedback, such as telephone calls and faxes, could be reimbursed to landholders.

Discussions need to be held with representatives of each group to decide the mechanisms that are appropriate for their particular area, and the support that would be most useful.

6. Clarify the system of participation

The two primary systems used in resolving land management problems at the institutional level are participative democracy (all participate directly) and representative democracy (only selected representatives participate). Landholders expressed confusion and frustration about the way participation was operating at that level.

At the institutional level, many participatory approaches are undermined when government staff switch from one system of interacting with the local community to another. While both systems are used effectively, some of the current conflict in land management decisions, such as vegetation management in Queensland, has occurred when the change from one system to another was not made explicit. For example, when participatory democracy is replaced by the representative system, the opportunities for participation are limited to when rural people lobby politicians. Communities can view this as a change from a system where everyone has an opportunity to be involved in decision-making, to one where the elected representatives (the government) make all the decisions. The switch from one system is often not the cause of the tension; it is that the switch needs to be made explicit so that the change in approach is clearly understood.

Some of the changes needed in institutional arrangements could be made by regional managers; other changes, however, such as making the switch from representative democracy to participative democracy, should be made at a higher (government) level. Even if some of the institutional arrangements can be changed, further improvements are needed in the design of participatory activities. How to choose processes to more closely reflect the context is examined in the next section.

8.2.3 Linking participatory processes to land management issues

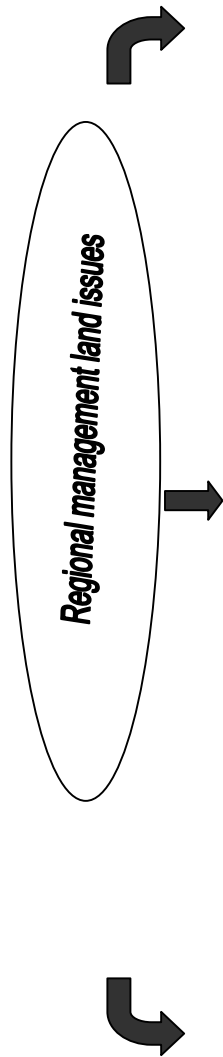
Previous sections of this chapter have emphasised the complexity of participation: the interrelationships between institutional arrangements and participatory approaches, the multiple dimensions of participation and the need for the design to be adaptive in changing circumstances. In conclusion, this section presents simplified scenarios to clarify how to use key dimensions of participation to help choose appropriate participatory processes for a particular issue.

The scenarios are generalised yet practical, because these land management issues commonly occur. The scenarios are simplistic representations, chosen to illustrate three different examples from a wide spectrum of land management issues. Regional issues may actually encompass aspects of each of these simplified scenarios. The first column in Table 8.4 lists the three scenarios.

The scenarios are differentiated by the type of communication flow. In Scenario 1 (where the government collects information from the community) and Scenario 2 (where the government provides information to the community) the emphasis is on a one-way flow of information. A two-way flow of information is essential in Scenario 3 (where community and government interact and negotiate).

However, Scenarios 1 and 2 would both benefit if there were some two-way flow of information. For example in Scenario 1, community members will be more positive about participation if they receive feedback about how and where their information is used. They are also more likely to be motivated and enthusiastic to participate in future government activities. In Scenario 2, information provided by the government is more likely to be relevant, timely and understandable to the landholders if the government officers have an good understanding of the landholders' situation, culture and needs.

Table 8.4 Linking examples of issues with possible types of participatory process



ISSUE	APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF POWER SHARING	TARGET AUDIENCE	POSSIBLE TYPES OF PROCESSES
Scenario [1] Government needs community advice about proposed policy – e.g. new legislation about water allocation	Board of community representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing Rural industry, Regional NRM or Catchment Groups representatives from key stakeholder groups key informants interested people from community random group of community people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>call for submissions</u> public meeting <u>workshop</u> group interview focus group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> delphi technique convergent interviews brochures radio, television media releases mail or telephone survey
	Government receiving information		
	Government providing information		
Scenario [2] Government wants to encourage adoption of simple technology – e.g. improved chemical for specific weed control	Government providing information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> existing local or regional industry or farmer groups all landholders <u>specific landholders e.g. with high levels of weed infestation</u> related stakeholders e.g. chemical retailers & Local Government weed control officers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> brochure <u>brochure mail-out</u> field day radio television media release for newspaper & rural industry newsletter targeted grants or other special funding e.g. NHT priority area
	Material incentives		
	Functional participation		
Scenario [3] Government wants to facilitate complex changes for more sustainable rangeland management e.g. salinity program in an extensive catchment crossing state boundaries	Board of community representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> representatives from key stakeholder groups <u>specially formed local groups of landholders</u> existing local farmer or grower groups specially formed regional group of stakeholder representatives existing Rural Industry, NRM or Catchment groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Local Best Practice technique</u> action learning principles action learning sets soft systems methodology discussion group workshop radio, television brochures field days
	Government receiving information		
	Government providing information		
	Material incentives		
	Functional participation		
	Interactive participation		
KEY:	Critical factor for success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Underlined group is appropriate for the critical success factor</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Underlined process is appropriate for the critical success factor</u>
	Optional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other possible group structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> other possible process

The second column of Table 8.4 is based on Pretty's typology of power (1995b, 1999) and indicates which of the levels of power sharing are appropriate for that particular scenario. More than one of the seven levels may be used for any given issue, so that a number of levels are suggested for each scenario. However, at least one level is critical for success. For example, in Scenario 1 "government receiving information" is essential, but two other levels may be useful in achieving the goal.

In Scenario 3, the essential level is "interactive participation" where community members share decision-making power with the government at key stages. The program is not likely to be successful in terms of achieving outcomes that are lasting unless there is some equality of involvement between those implicated. All levels of Pretty's typology may be used at different stages of a program — probably the government would need to provide information for the community; it may need to collect information from the community. The community may not need to be involved in decisions about how and exactly what information is provided or collected, but it does need to be involved in the early planning, problem identification and setting of an overall framework. Ideally, the community members would be given the opportunity to be involved whenever they wished, but it is likely that they would prefer the government to take responsibility for some tasks within the mutually agreed framework.

The key question for Column 3 is: Who needs to be involved? The possible stakeholders and types of group that need to be involved depend primarily on the particular issue, but there is usually one key audience that needs to be involved for the program to be successful (these critical success factors are underlined in Table 8.4). For example:

Do the people involved need to be representative of particular interest groups?

In Scenario 1, key representatives of groups with an interest in water use should be included. A random selection of people, or a selection based only on those who were keen to attend a public meeting, may not ensure that all interest groups are represented. Existing groups may or may not be representative enough, depending on the particular region. Key informants are those known to government staff. However, these people may not be representative.

Does everyone in a particular group need to be involved?

In Scenario 2, all landholders who have, or potentially have, the weed infestation need information. Other stakeholders also may need information; for example, people to whom farmers go for advice, and Local Government officers who enforce legislation about weed control.

Does everyone in the local area and some outsiders need to be involved?

In Scenario 3, locally coordinated action is needed with support from outside interests. Special groups probably need to be established as the issue is complex and extensive. Existing participants may not be truly representative or may not have time to devote to the issue. Simply involving those expressing an interest is not appropriate. Stakeholders should include (a) those who use the resource, (b) those indirectly impacted by resource use, and sometimes (c) those who have an interest but live outside the region; e.g. interstate conservationists may have an interest in water allocation.

Column 4 lists some of the myriad possibilities of processes that would be appropriate for the different scenarios. The principles governing the implementation of the processes and their sequence are encompassed in the design, which is not discussed here. The choice of appropriate participatory processes is influenced by the issue, the level of power sharing required and the target audience. For example:

- In Scenario 1, there is no attempt to share decision-making power, so basically the process can be a one-off interaction. The principle of iterative feedback to the community is important, so if a workshop were chosen, written feedback to each of the participants about how the information was handled may be appropriate. (It is probably important to gather a wide range of views from different stakeholder groups. It may be necessary to target some groups

separately with specifically designed, culturally appropriate participatory processes. A workshop may not suit all representatives, and individual interviews also may be used.)

- · In Scenario 2, a brochure mail-out could target each of the stakeholder groups. Some additional awareness-raising processes would also be appropriate, as would including the information in training workshops on relevant topics.
- · In Scenario 3, power sharing in decision-making is a critical success factor. Therefore, the process needs to ensure equality of involvement and to promote two-way information flows. Landholders' views and knowledge need to be respected. (The principle of inclusivity is important in this scenario and anyone with an interest should have the opportunity for involvement. Time will need to be spent breaking down barriers and encouraging people to participate.)

Some processes can be used in different ways and may be useful for more than one scenario. A field day can be used to provide information when its format emphasises talks and demonstrations, where participants look and listen. Another type of workshop could encourage discussion and debate between the farmers and government officers, and even allow the farmers to suggest topics for discussion. Both types of workshop may employ adult learning principles, but only the second type of field day would have interactive participation. Likewise, a focus group may be used to collect information (a one-way information flow). Alternatively, it could be used to ensure that the farmers' voice is heard clearly in a dialogue between government staff and landholders, when it is part of a broader process, such as in Local Best Practice.

These simplified scenarios have used power as the key dimension of participation. This dimension is often not explicit during current rangeland participatory processes, yet is considered vitally important by many landholders. The other dimensions (Figure 8.1) could be included in a detailed analysis of issues and when designing participatory approaches.

8.3 Concluding comments

This research was designed (a) to review how local communities are currently involved in rangeland management, (b) to determine their perceptions of and attitudes to participation and (c) to provide guidelines to help institutions and individuals improve participatory approaches in the Australian rangelands.

Participatory approaches that integrate knowledge and understanding from different perspectives are essential to achieving sustainable rangeland management. The rhetoric and policy of rangeland management in Australia certainly follow international trends of sharing power with local communities. Many agency staff in State government land management agencies have embraced participation, and some projects are considered excellent by landholders — but not all. The perceptions of landholders and agency staff about participatory approaches reveal a lack of understanding about the purposes of participation. As Australia has become more urbanised, there has been a growing lack of understanding among new generations of government officials and agencies about the culture and needs of struggling rural communities. This is reflected in poorly implemented approaches that cause confusion and exacerbate tensions.

Clearly, the problems that face rural Australia require improved approaches. We are discovering that our solutions do not lie in technology alone; we need to apply the knowledge and wisdom of the many and diverse interests that are stakeholders in rural initiatives. One approach to this has been participation, and while it is already being used effectively to improve collaboration in solving rural problems, there remains room for much improvement. The recommendations offered in this document should go some way towards assisting these initiatives.

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Appendix 1

Examples of participatory processes currently used

Examples of projects	Commonly used approaches	Purpose or goal of participation	Scale	Level of power sharing*
Futureprofit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action learning Adult learning Workshops, lectures 	Group-based activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Enhance skills Improve knowledge 	Local – groups of properties	High & medium – Interactive participation & passive participation by receiving information
Bestprac	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group-based activities Action learning Experiential learning On-farm research trials Group meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Share information between landholders Improve knowledge, attitudes, skills & aspirations leading to Improved practice 	Local – groups of properties	High – Interactive participation
Safe Carrying Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Property visits Employing landholders as staff 	Individual enterprise activity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve knowledge Change stock management practices 	Local - individual property	Medium & low – Passive participation by receiving information & participation by consultation by providing information
Landcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adult learning Group meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Use local knowledge Share information between landholders Improve practice 	Local & regional	Medium or low – Participation for material goals & functional participation to achieve agency's goals (but high according to government policy documents)
Water Allocation Management Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public meetings Traditional extension, e.g. brochures, media 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change water management practices, through education & commitment NOTE: Financial incentives are offered.	Individual enterprise across a region	Medium to low – Passive participation & functional participation to achieve agency's goals.
Regional Strategy under RPP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Representative board & sub-committees Brochures & media releases Public meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To develop synergies through diverse stakeholder input, not just landholders, that ensures wide community ownership of goals & activities of SWS 	Regional	Low – Token participation on boards; a pretence & passive participation by receiving information.

* The levels of power sharing listed here are based on participants' comments, when shown Pretty's typology (1995b, 1999).

Appendix 2

Case study: How to use the key questions to assist in choosing a participatory approach

This case study is based on a project which aimed to improve feral goat management in one regions of the Australian rangelands. An interdisciplinary team of government staff facilitated the project.

Question 1. What is the context of participatory activities?

Geographical context

Key aspects of the geographical context included:

- rangelands region with predominantly sheep and cattle grazing,
- flexibility is required as weather changes influence the experiment to trap goats – trapping at specific dams is impossible after heavy rain because there are too many other watering points,
- people are relatively isolated by distance, and only occasionally see each other.

Social context

Key aspects of the social context included:

- landholders worked together previously, strong friendships/social network between most, but not all, people in the project group,
- feral goats were considered a problem, causing land degradation and competing with sheep, which are considered more profitable by everyone in this local project group,
- rural community is suspicious about government projects,
- no strong network between different stakeholders within the goat industry.

Question 2. What is the purpose of participation in this situation?

Purpose of the project

The purpose of the project was to improve feral goat management by experimenting with different methods of trapping feral goats.

Local community participation

The purpose of having local community participation was to ensure that the experiment and results were relevant and practical for landholders, to facilitate learning amongst landholders and to encourage coordinated control campaigns between neighbouring properties.

Question 3. What is the appropriate scale in this situation?

Scale of issue, or project

The problem of high numbers of feral goats causing degradation existed predominantly in one region of the rangelands. Decisions about the management of feral goats occurred at the local property scale; however, some coordination between neighbouring properties would improve goat control as feral goats do not respect property boundaries, and roam considerable distances. The focus of this project was on improving on-ground control practices.

Scale of local community participation

Participation was therefore considered to be appropriate at both regional and local scales, but mainly the local scale. There were different purposes at different scales, as indicated in the table below.

Table A.1 Linking scale and purpose

SCALE	PURPOSE	REASON
Local	[1] To ensure that the experiment is relevant & practical for	[1] Government staff recognised they did not know much about feral goats; and valued landholder input.

	<p>landholders.</p> <p>[2] To facilitate learning amongst landholders.</p> <p>[3] To encourage coordinated control between neighbouring properties.</p>	<p>[2] Theory and practice in other States suggested that control methods could be improved.</p> <p>[3] Feral goats cross property boundaries, and coordination would improve effectiveness of control by trapping.</p>
Region	To encourage support for the project from key people in the region.	Because of suspicion in the community, approval from key rural industry groups would encourage local landholders to be involved. Disparate views within the goat industry and rural community meant that key representatives needed to be kept informed and have the opportunity to comment on the strategic direction of project.

Question 4. Who or which stakeholder groups need to be involved?

Identifying those who should be involved

At the local scale, people who managed properties with the highest number of goats were invited to be involved in the project. At the regional scale, key industry and community groups were asked to nominate a representative to be involved in a Regional Management Group. Key project group members were identified through discussions with industry and the community.

Identifying the number of people to be involved

At the local scale, it was important to involve all people in the local area because feral goats move across boundaries — if one property is not represented, the effectiveness of control methods is reduced. To achieve purpose [1], landholders involved would have a range of different trapping situations; e.g. some with flowing watercourses and others with fenced off watering points. To achieve purpose [3] and encourage ownership, ideally every landholder with feral goats would be asked to coordinate their control programs with members of their local project group. This would also assist with purpose [2] as experiential learning would be possible during the trapping experiments.

However, because of the excessive time and costs involved, not all landholders could be included. It was also recognised that only those landholders who were actually members of groups would be likely to learn. Finally, four to six locations were chosen. The selection represented properties with the highest number of goats, and a range of properties that employed different trapping situations. All individuals from neighbouring properties in those locations were invited to be involved in a group.

Question 5. What level of influence do local communities have in the process – to what degree is power shared between participants in this situation?

At the local scale

The facilitators chose to share decision-making power on trapping control techniques with landholders. They wanted landholders to have ownership of the project, to be committed to the project, and to continue with improved goat management after the government had left.

Part way through the project, government staff decided to be completely open with the details of the budget as landholders were particularly suspicious about money. The agency staff discussed the budget at all subsequent meetings. This was difficult for agency staff as the project officer's salary was discussed, and one scientist from outside the region was asked not to attend local meetings because of the cost of travel allowances. As this was the decision of the majority of the group, the scientist reluctantly complied. Such a level of power sharing led to some heated debates between agency staff and landholders about how money was spent; and between agency staff about the process of participation in decision-making. In the end, all agency staff realised that it had been better to discuss budget issues openly, rather than allowing community suspicion to fester.

At the regional scale

Representatives on the project's Regional Management Group had the option to strategically direct the project, and were asked to have input. In reality, the Regional Management Group were involved in decision-making only at specific key times; they were usually only presented with progress reports and plans which they approved, so had a low level of decision-making power. Overall, they were happy with the process.

Several factors probably contributed to the lack of power sharing in this group. In particular, the lack of continuity of individuals in the Regional Management Group meant that the group was never especially cohesive. They were unsure of the level of power they could exert and did not have the confidence to exert any influence at all. No team building was attempted, and little was done by the facilitators to redress this lack of power sharing by the group. This meant that the landholders in this group did not share in making major project decisions. However, the group became a conduit for information to and from some key community groups. The members were supportive of the project and issued some press releases at critical times, such as when funding cuts were threatened. These gave kudos to the respective groups and to the government agency. As the purpose designated by the government staff for this group was primarily as a public relations exercise, the group did achieve this purpose.

Question 6. At what stage of the project should different stakeholder groups be involved in this situation?

Various stages can be identified in any project, and these will change depending on the nature of the specific project. Some stages in this project are listed below and the level of power sharing in decision-making is highlighted for each scale.

Table A.2 Linking stage and regional scale

STAGE	REGIONAL SCALE
Planning - Defining the problem	Defined the problem with Regional Management Group (RMG), and the funding submission did change based on their comments.
Implementation - Setting up project	Some members of the RMG were invited to be on the selection panel; they insisted on a particular regional town where the officer would be based.
Implementation on-ground	Discussed with RMG, location of 4 local groups and annual plans for trapping experiments on private properties. At this point the RMG left the decision-making to landholders in the local groups.
Evaluation	No involvement, because the group energy had largely dissipated by the end of the project. Most members in the RMG at the end of the project had not been involved at the beginning and had only limited interest.

Local groups were not formed until after the funding had been approved. The reason for this was that the agency did not want to raise the communities' expectations too much before funds were granted, or waste landholders' time with the initial stage when the future was uncertain.

Table A.3 Linking stage and local scale

STAGE	LOCAL SCALE
Planning - Defining the problem	Began by redefining the exact problem that was to be examined in the project with the local community group. The aim of the agency was to share power at all stages of the process, because government staff recognised that they did not know much about feral goat management; also, they wanted landholder ownership and commitment to the project.
Implementation - Building of goat traps	Negotiated with landholders for the building of traps, and joint decisions were made about the number of traps, style of traps, and location on which properties in the group. As trust developed during the project, both landholders and agency staff shared more power in decision making in an open manner.
Implementation - Budget	Part way through the project, agency staff realised that landholders were suspicious about the budget allocations. Agency staff made all decision about the budget until this stage, but decided to change the way decision-making power was shared with landholders. In the last year of the project \$20,000 was allocated to one landholder group for them to spend on feral goat control. The agency purchased fencing materials, gates or other materials as requested by the landholders.
Media	Most media releases were written by agency staff; landholders were notified and the content discussed, but they did not want to be involved. Agency staff and landholders jointly featured in a television documentary; the agency suggested topics but did not edit landholders' comments. As this was done near the end of the project, the higher trust levels meant that everyone worked together as equals.
Progress reports	Landholders did not want to prepare any progress reports for the funding agency; this was seen as the role of the agency staff.
Evaluation	The local group was asked to be involved in the summative evaluation; both positive and negative aspects were discussed.

Question 7. What institutional capacity exists for this situation; or what is the influence of institutional capacity?

The capacity of the organisation to use a participatory approach in this project was enhanced by the skills of the staff. The field staff had excellent communication skills and Head Office staff had a good understanding of extension and participation theory. To overcome their lack of experience in implementing the methods and techniques they wanted to use, training courses were organised. The individuals on the project team supported a flexible process; they had no fixed, predetermined agendas from the project. The team respected landholders' knowledge and were keen to learn from landholders. They were highly committed to sharing power in decision-making with landholders.

Institutional arrangements did not exert much influence on this project, primarily as it was externally funded. Managers were not supportive and this threatened to limit the time some staff allocated to the project. The problem with external funding is the short time frame (3 years) with limited options to continue. This led to the most serious issue in this project: a lack of continuity of staff. The critical factor for institutions is to ensure that expertise is available to fill the gap when a critical member of a project leaves.

Question 8. What design and processes are appropriate in this situation?

In choosing the appropriate design for participation in the project, several levels of detail were considered. This case study highlights the framework, methods and techniques. The appropriate tools are not discussed in detail as many books explain the myriad of possible tools.

At the local scale

To choose the *framework* (see Figure A.2) for the participatory processes, three alternatives were examined: traditional extension processes, action learning and Soft Systems Methodology (SSM). Participative action learning differs from traditional extension as it offers learning as opposed to teaching (Ison 1990). Participative action learning was chosen because it:

- fosters learning through critical questioning,
- ensures on-going flexibility through an iterative process of 'plan, act, monitor, evaluate',
- encourages ownership and commitment by participants (all factors that were required in this project).

Both SSM and action learning are action-oriented strategies, and both were appropriate as this project was designed to take action in the trapping experiments to improve goat control. While SSM showed some promise, extension staff thought it was very complicated, the language was not easily understood, and it was thought that this might be off-putting for landholders. Also, the key advantage of SSM in situations where people's values are threatened (to assist people to view the world from other people's perspectives) was not a primary focus of this project.

The framework chosen incorporated principles of action learning into the feral goat project in several ways. Each year the local group undertook one iteration of the action learning cycle, as defined by Kolb (1976), by [1] planning the annual trapping program, [2] undertaking trapping of feral goats, [3] monitoring the numbers trapped and [4] evaluating the effectiveness of the trapping.

The *methods* and *techniques* used in this project were adapted from the Local Best Practices (LBP) technique (Clark 1996), which is based on action learning and incorporates participative problem solving and benchmarking techniques. The LBP technique encourages learning and information sharing in a manner that encourages equal power within the relationships. This supports the various dimensions of the goat project, which required an inclusive process to:

- facilitate learning, and achieve practical and relevant landholder outcomes,
- promote cooperation between group members,
- encourage ownership and commitment (purpose),
- facilitate local and regional involvement of landholders and key people (scale),

- allow all local groups to be involved (who),
- encourage a high level of decision-making power with local landholders (power), and
- allow community involvement at all stages of the project (stage).

One example of a technique used during the setting-up phase was the application of financial incentives. One key person had been reluctant to join a local group, but was running very high numbers of goats on his property. The existing group members and government staff decided to use financial incentives, and successfully encouraged the person to join the project.

The *tools* used, included situation analysis, group discussions and traditional tools such as radio interviews and flyers. The LBP technique provided many tools in terms of possible questioning strategies and draft letters, and this was very useful for busy extension officers.

At the regional scale

In this project the regional scale was not considered as important as the local scale, so not as much time was spent developing the participative design. More-traditional methods of communicating with community and industry representatives in a Management Group were considered appropriate, because the main purpose of this group was to undertake public relations. A consultative process was used, with information gathered and presented to the group. There were limited opportunities and little inclination for landholders to share in a high level of decision-making power.