

Community

People and the relationship they have with their environment are at the core of NRM. Social science makes pathways into understanding how different people relate to their environment and provides insights into what motivates behaviour, develops perspectives and directs actions. As Lovett argues in Australian Government (2006: 55): "If we fail to understand ourselves, we will fail to improve our management of scarce and precious resources in equitable and sustainable ways". Since the 1970's onward social scientists were the first to explicitly recognize that human behaviour was the greatest determinant in environmental degradation and sustainable natural resource management (Roughley & Salt 2005).

At NACC we have a strong tradition of listening and working with the community in the Northern Agricultural Region. Our strong grass-roots connection with the community and ability to engage with people across the Northern Agricultural Region (NAR) is enabling our region to grow its environmental wealth. Social science has been used traditionally to inform NACC about how the community thinks about NRM-related issues, be it on land or on the coast. Social marketing has been used in the past in an effort to increase knowledge and understanding of key NRM concepts in the Northern Agricultural Region.

Currently social science is used to look specifically at the social impact of NACC programs. Under the current Caring for Our Country funding the KASAP (knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations and practices) method is used to assess our incentive and extension project. The KASAP method combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, in other words, words and numbers. At this point in time we can say that participants who participated in one of NACC's sustainable farming incentives have reported on average a 35% rise in knowledge and 29% rise in skills from their experience. At the same time they appreciate the technical support in for instance grazing management workshops. KASAP data also shows that lack of finances and lack of technical knowledge was what inhibited most farmers and land managers to adopt practices to mitigate wind erosion. KASAP data has enabled NACC to report on the social dimension or the 'human change' aspect of its programs. It effectively shows that the work NACC is doing is needed and supported and deeply appreciated by our main target audience, farmers and land managers.

References

- Australian Government (2006) *People, Practice and Policy. A review of social and institutional research*. Land & Water Australia.
- Roughley, A. & Salt, D. (2005) Introduction of social science in natural resource management agencies. *Journal of Research Practice*, 1(2), article M2.