

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

Interpreting private landholder stream restoration practices

Dean Platt, Tree Wishes

Abstract

Relationships between people and place contribute to differences in people's perceptions and knowledge of waterways. Understanding these differences can guide more effective waterway management as waterway authorities rely profoundly on partnerships with landholders to conserve waterways. Waterway health outcomes and policies are grounded in science, which forms the basis of communication/education to landholders. It is possible though that landholders may not comprehend the messages bound in this science. Research using an ethnographic narrative analysis attempted to understand landholder practices, interpretations and relationships regarding river restoration and discuss the implications for river management communication, education and practice. The research focused around rural landholders and aimed to compare biophysical pictures to social pictures of waterway health.

Developed in 1999, the Index of Stream Condition (ISC) is regarded as an important milestone in benchmarking the environmental condition of waterways. It provides a detailed picture of river condition integrating data on five sub-indices – hydrology, water quality, streamside zone, physical form, and aquatic life. The ISC concept appears to disregard interacting with society, especially those with a keen knowledge of river health management, including farmers and landholders who manage frontages.

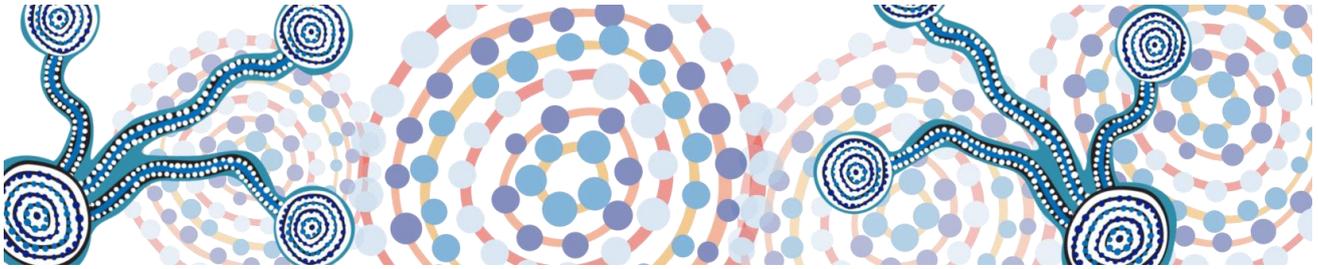
Ethnography is the deliberate 'witness-cum-recording' of human experiences. Thus this research project was a place-based narrative analysis. Landholders and their 'stories' is a 'discourse of familiarity' with their rivers, recorded through direct interviews. They are informants with a 'point of view' on river health and illuminate the 'social picture', whereas the ISC illuminates the 'biophysical picture' of river health.

This research reflected a need to integrate this 'social body' of knowledge to the current 'scientific problems and solutions' approach to waterway restoration. Common knowledge and differentiated knowledge existed. Common knowledge included:

- streamside vegetation
- aquatic life as indicators
- weeds
- eco-visual functionality
- accessibility
- flow
- birds
- domestication

Differences included:

- Flow variations
- Waterbugs



- Trout
- Natural debris
- Livestock access

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet and pay respects to their Elders past and present.

Other Acknowledgements:

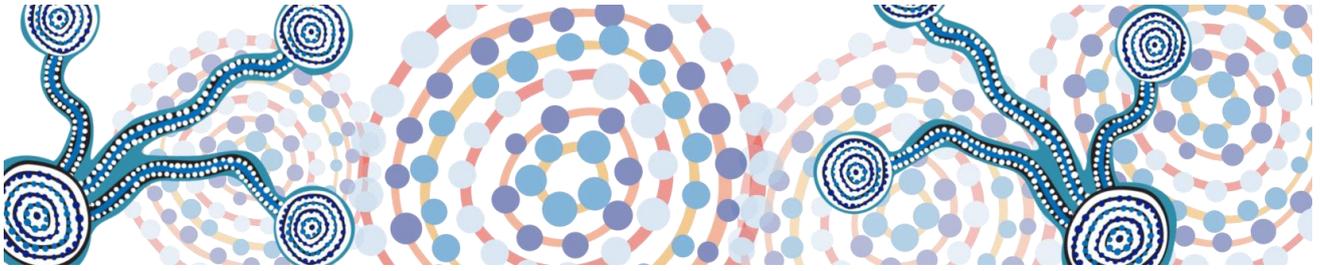
I acknowledge being inspired by the very many landholders that I have had the pleasure and benefit of working alongside to restore their creek. I also thank those landholders involved in the research directly – providing their time and access to their sites and histories. Numerous stream management professional colleagues associated with Melbourne Water, including Tania Begg, Lloyd Stanway, Adam Barber, Anna Zsoldos, Michelle Ezy and Megan Jericho have provided important support through the exchange of ideas and flow of knowledge from current stream restoration projects. Finally, I thank Associate Professor Dr Ruth Beilin from University of Melbourne provided vital academic and personal support in seeing this research through.

Speaker Profile

Dean Platt, as Principal Consultant of Tree Wishes, is widely experienced in land care planning and project management. Academic qualifications include:

- a Masters of Environment from University of Melbourne (environmental education)
- a Post-graduate Diploma in Land Rehabilitation.
- a Degree in Applied Sciences (Biological Resource Management) and

Following 11 years of industry experience with Hume City Council (Land Management Planner); Murray-Darling Basin Commission, and Department of Sustainability and Environment (and previous nominations), Dean established Tree Wishes as a consultancy in 2002. Dean has a combined 30 extensive experience in strategic environmental education and conservation management planning advice to local councils, water authorities, TAFE, university and other training organisations.



Website links



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