



Councils Creating Change - Driving the Sustainable Water Management Agenda in Local Government

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Many would be familiar with the theory from the organisational change literature about exploiting windows of opportunity to bring about substantial changes in organisational practices. Many NSW local governments are currently going through mergers, and while these experiences may not appear to be the ideal opportunity to progress a sustainable water management agenda, they do present windows of opportunity. There are new management and team structures, and many councils are updating their strategies and plans. Many are taking the opportunity to create a strategic plan specifically for sustainable water management.

In this context we have been working with several NSW councils to help them conceptualise how they will continue to drive a sustainable water management agenda. Reflecting on the successes that different councils have achieved over the years, we have identified some of the most important strategic moves which have been important in creating change in different organisational contexts. In this paper we will share a game plan for strategic change, which is designed for local government to work out their own framework and action plan for sustainable water management.

The game plan will help councils navigate a series of questions which guide the sustainable water management agenda in the local context:

- What are the important local drivers for sustainable water management? A clear local narrative can be a powerful tool for developing political and organisational support. It can also establish the context for local goals and objectives (instead of generic pollutant load reduction targets), which will set Council's agenda
- What are the most strategic opportunities for Council to improve water management outcomes? For example, is it more important in the local context to improve sustainable water management in new development, or to focus efforts on retrofit projects or routine capital works? Where can Council have the most influence?
- What are the best strategies to create change in these spaces? Councils have a range of tools they could consider, from organisational strengthening to directive reforms. We'll look at successful and innovative examples

- How can capacity building help? Who is the audience? Do they need training, workshops, guidelines, or other tools? These initiatives are important but often off target. We'll look at programs that go beyond the technical challenges and begin to tackle the challenges of engagement and investment in sustainable water management