

Building Leadership Capacity to Drive Sustainable Water Practices

Improving this form of capacity development

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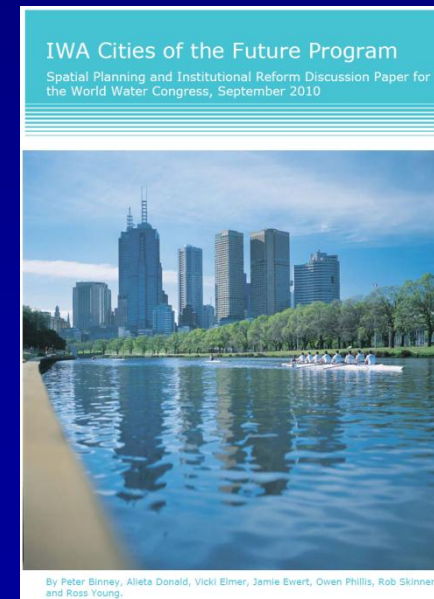
Objectives

1. Highlight the importance of building leadership capacity.
2. Profile some recent initiatives.
3. Briefly highlight some methods and principles.
4. Suggest some steps to continue the momentum.
5. Plus, I hope to bust some myths along the way...



What is leadership?

- Elements of contemporary definitions:
 - Process of influence that involves:
 - Setting direction (e.g. a shared vision).
 - Aligning resources (e.g. people, projects, funds).
 - Motivating and inspiring people to meet shared objectives.
 - For example:
 - The IWA's 'Cities of the Future' program.
 - Activities of the Wentworth group.



Why build leadership capacity?

- 1. Leadership capacity is central to driving change.

- “Producing change is about 80% leadership ... and 20% management...

In most change efforts, those percentages are reversed.

We continue to produce great managers; we need to develop great leaders.”

(John Kotter, 2006, p. 14).

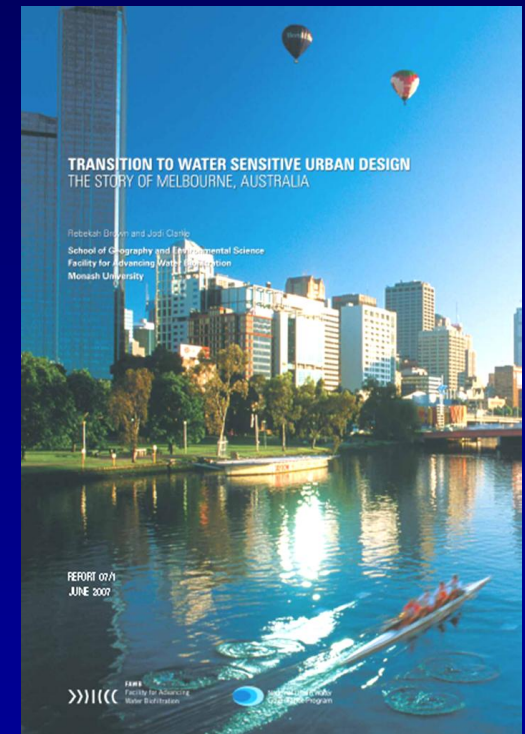


- Any change needed in the water sector?

Why build leadership capacity?

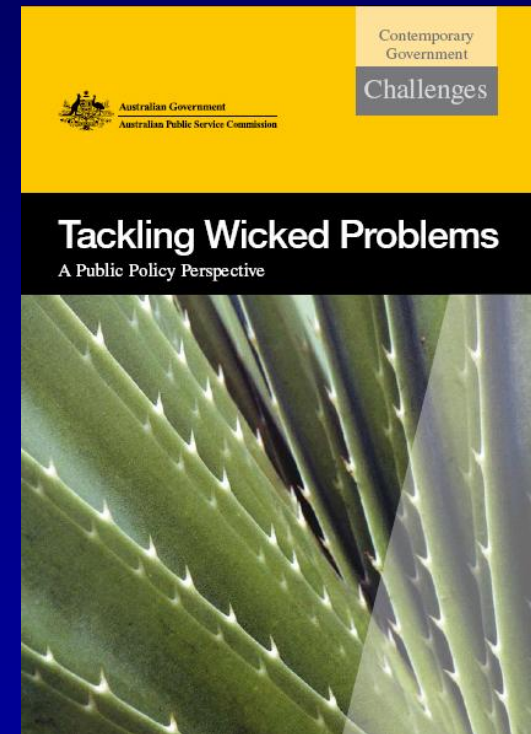
■ 2. Strong evidence that leadership matters.

- Research at Monash University:
 - Role of ‘champions’ / ‘key change agents’ is critical to change.
 - See: Brown & Clarke (2007), Taylor (2010).
- International research on ‘policy entrepreneurs’:
 - Leadership by individuals and their organisations is critical to realising policy transitions in the water sector.
 - See: Meijerink & Huitema (2010).



Why build leadership capacity?

- 3. Our context requires certain forms of leadership.
 - Context:
 - Complex challenges / wicked problems.
 - High levels of uncertainty and rapid change.
 - In such contexts:
 - There is a greater need for leadership per se (Conger, 1993).
 - Certain forms of leadership are needed (e.g. 'enabling leadership').
 - Particular leadership attributes (e.g. skills, knowledge and networks) are needed.



Relevant myths

1. Leadership development (LD) is only relevant to people in senior roles (e.g. executives).
2. People with good technical and management skills are well equipped to drive change processes.
3. Leaders are born not made, so there is no point actively building their self-awareness, skills, knowledge, etc.
4. Generic organisational leadership initiatives will meet all of our sector's LD needs.



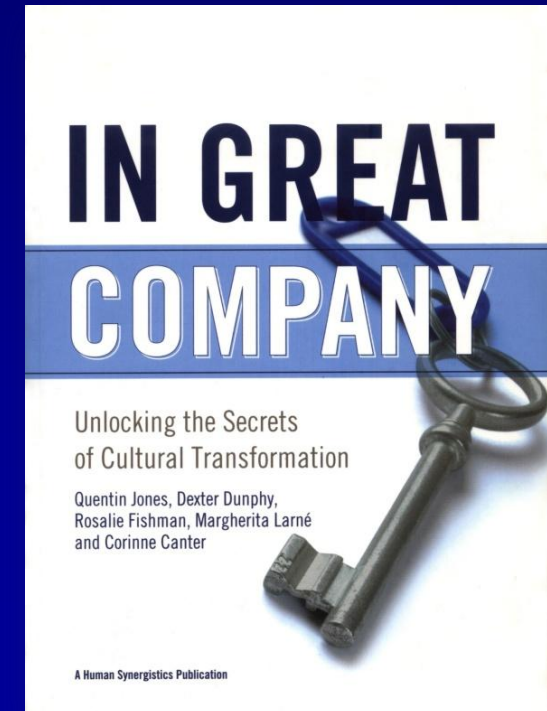
Some recent initiatives

- Customised leadership development programs:
 - The International WaterCentre's program for emerging water leaders who drive more integrated and sustainable practices (2011).
 - The Peter Cullen Trust's Bridging Water Science and Policy leadership program (2010/11).
 - The NSW State government's:
 - Advancing Sustainability Leaders program (2011) for emerging water and energy leaders; and
 - Advancing Leaders Program for water educators (2008/09).
 - Monash University's program for emerging leaders who promote sustainable urban water management (2008/09).



Some recent initiatives

- In-house leadership programs:
 - Many water agencies have been running complementary corporate culture and leadership programs:
 - See Jones *et al.* (2006) for a Yarra Valley Water case study.
 - Use of tools such as the:
 - Organizational Culture Inventory (culture).
 - Life Styles Inventory (behaviors).



Some recent initiatives

- Short courses:
 - The AWA have run six workshops around Australia (2009/11) on leadership behaviors and strategies that sustainability change agents use in the water sector.



Methods - overview



■ Mentoring:

- An advice-based developmental relationship, usually with a more experienced leader. May involve one-to-one or group mentoring.

■ 360-degree feedback:

- Multi-source ratings of leadership behaviours and/or performance.
- Identifies strengths and weaknesses, and builds self-awareness.

■ Training:

- Classroom-based interactive learning, communicating leadership behaviours to use in different contexts.
- Often structured around locally validated conceptual models.

Methods - overview



- **Coaching:**
 - A goal-focused form of one-on-one learning.
 - Often focused around a developmental plan.

- **Action learning activities (incl. 'job assignments'):**
 - Project-based learning, often directed at key organisational problems.
 - Providing 'stretch' assignments for developing leaders.

- **Leadership development programs:**
 - Combination of methods.

Relevant myths

5. All leadership development initiatives are expensive, complex and hard.
6. All 'leadership development programs' are similar.
7. Leadership development is something that has to occur 'off-line' (i.e. away from the office).



Best practice principles



- 10 principles are covered in the paper. They include:
 - Multiple methods should be used to ensure developmental experiences collectively have the elements of challenge, assessment and support (Van Velsor & McCauley, 2004).
 - Methods should seek to build the participants' self-awareness, as this attribute is:
 - a pre-requisite for significant leadership development (Avolio, 2005); and
 - strongly correlated with leadership performance in organisations (Atwater & Yammarino, 1992).

Best practice principles



■ Principles include:

- The content of the intervention should be credible and relevant to the target audience.
 - For example, the content of a LDP should be structured around a locally-validated, theoretically-grounded conceptual framework (see Avolio, 2005).
- The design of interventions should reflect the '70:20:10 rule' of leadership development (Lombardo & Eichinger, 2000).
 - This suggests that approximately 70% of development is derived from practical experience, 20% from feedback and 10% from structured training.

Relevant myths

8. All leadership development (LD) initiatives deliver similar levels of performance (e.g. behaviour change, ROI).
9. Training alone is a highly effective LD method.
10. Research and theory aren't necessary when building an LDP – makes it “too academic”.
11. Everyone has equal potential to benefit from a LDP.



6 steps to continue to improve



Some suggestions:

1. Continue to build awareness in the water sector about the 'why' and 'how' of leadership development.
2. View leadership development as 'core business', along with strengthening technical and managerial capacity.
3. Support a suite of high quality development interventions:
 - Some in-house (e.g. mentoring programs).
 - Some external (e.g. customised feedback-intensive LDPs).

6 steps to continue to improve



4. Insist that LD activities are:
 1. Transparent in their design (open to scrutiny).
 2. Rigorously evaluated (e.g. assess behavioural change).
 3. Publicly reported (i.e. learnings are documented and shared).

5. Support research in our sector that builds the knowledge base for customised LD initiatives.

6. Get involved (e.g. as a facilitator, participant, sponsor, mentor, buddy, coach, trainer, evaluator, researcher ...).

Relevant myths

12. Properly evaluating leadership development initiatives is always complex and expensive.
13. Leadership development interventions are best designed by experts with little involvement of practitioners.



Conclusion – key points

- Building leadership capacity in the water sector is needed to drive change and address complex challenges.
- Good progress is being made, but we need to extend the breadth, depth and reach of LD initiatives.
- Key steps to build momentum include:
 - Building awareness of the need, methods and principles.
 - Seeing leadership development as 'core business' for the sector.
 - Fostering a suite of high quality interventions.
 - Encouraging transparency, evaluation, reporting and related research.
 - Getting involved – there are many roles to play.