Climate, Energy & Water Nexus Forum

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...or, random personal observations.

1. State of CEW discussion
2. Who knows what, should do what?
3. CEW as comparative exercise.
4. CEW++ (other things are important too).
5. Data issues.
7. Prospect “moving forward”.
But first…

- **It’s all about integration (as ever) across:**
  - country jurisdictions (tech, policy, trade, info).
  - disciplines/professions, and research-policy communities.
  - sub-nat jurisdictions & sectors (not just E&W).
  - mitigation and adaptation.
  - infrastructure provision.
  - technologies within and across E&W).
  - plans/policy regimes/instruments.
  - developments/firms (planning & development).
  - communities (different aspirations).
  - households (eg hot water).
  - multiple individual motivations.

- **Which are the most crucial links, trade-offs, synergies, knowledge needs, analytical gaps?**
1. CEW: The state of discussion

- **On the bright side:**
  - (Very) rapidly emerging area of research & policy interest.
  - Some positive tech and info developments, fewer policy advances.
  - Empirical base patchy but improving.
  - “Client” unclear, but interest rising quickly.
  - Many participants, first dates encouraging, but familiarity may breed contempt – tech vs policy vs behavioural focus; squabbling tech options; disciplinary incomprehension; hidden intra-disciplinary variation; contested languages of power (even terminology)…

- **Cautions:**
  - Is it intellectually interesting, as opposed to technically fun and politically topical? What is the deeper contribution, to what discipline?
  - Avoiding in-group, inbreeding, self-citation in a new, fast-growing field – eg. adaptation, resilience and SES literatures.
  - No-regrets adaptation, E&W efficiencies, plain stupid policies – many options overlooked in techno-fixations and institutional fads.
2. Who knows what, or should do what?

- **In research**: multiple knowledge systems (who wins):
  - multiple technological
  - economic
  - behavioural
  - history – understanding inertias (there is a good reason)
  - ecological, and so on...
  - and also non-disciplinary knowledge.

- **In policy** – everybody’s & nobody’s problem.
  - crucial but often absent are public policy, public administration, institutional design, law – antidotes to oughtism.

- **But CEW not the first, or alone:**
  - documented experiences in integrative research.
  - standard and emerging integrative structures and processes in policy and administrative systems (positive and negative).
  - experience with multiple instrument policy regimes.
3. CEW as comparative exercise?

- US-Australia, plus more.
- Bases for comparative policy analysis?
  - Political/legal system (federalism?).
  - Technological options.
  - Policy instruments.
  - Energy/water types and systems.
  - Availability of funding, personal rapport, desirable sabbatical destination…

- All valid, can be concurrent, compare and/or contrast, but need clarity of the logical and basis of comparison. (Rose, 2005)
Lesson-drawing in policy

- Three levels:
  1. Policy styles, broad approaches.
  2. Programs and policy “packages” (mimicry).
  3. Sub-program/policy elements and detail.

- Level 2 most common (and easy), but mimicry ≠ learning -- 1 and 3 better?

...and beware singular instrument preferences.

4. CEW++ (?)

- C-E-W creates a deservedly and usefully more complex problem for research and policy.
- But, other things also important, and linked:
  -- other environmental values
  -- amenity, sense of place
  -- equity and justice
  -- cultural and behavioural preferences.
- Hey! Sounds like sustainable development!
- Balance: focus needed, but CEW isn’t everything.
- NB: renewable energy, or water efficiency, is not normatively superior to other issues, and has no automatic right to exception from (for example) biodiversity conservation laws – be wary of excessive in-groupness (a universal human attribute: cf Boyden 1987).
5. Data availability

- Many gaps, some being filled, and vary across sectors and countries – useful comparative focus?

- But others:
  - behavioural, for policy design, as whole point is behaviour change.
  - fine scale consumption E&W (and transport, etc) in urban systems.
  - institutional, public admin detail...

- EG. We cannot evaluate Aust urban energy and water policy interventions, or understanding of key variables, due to privacy issues – empiricists versus modellers – AURIN.

- ...climate is not the only thing to downscale.

- **AND** – the statutory and institutional settings for information acquisition, knowledge management and distribution.
6. Standards of proof

- How important is the current economic status of renewable energy options?
- Or, is cost-benefit a subsidiary concern?
  -- for example, massive subsidies to oil, nuclear energy, desalination plants, irrigation schemes…?
- Who decides, on what basis, and at what level/type of uncertainty, on a course of technological or policy commitment?
  -- balance of prob, or beyond reasonable doubt.
  -- 95% confidence limits.
  -- trial by media.
  -- political belief.
  -- no-regrets …?
7. Prospects?

- Good site for tech & policy research, with rich variety of cross-country and –sector contexts.
- Many contesting-collaborating knowledge systems.
- Unclear policy/property rights & responsibilities.
- Stretched spatial/temporal scales.
- High levels of connectivity and uncertainty....
- Typical sust development problem – can profit from past research and policy.
- (And, existing E&W efficiency measures!)