

The Development Stages of Transformation of Water Policy Management in Victoria

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Abstract : The status quo of social-ecological systems is the results of not only natural processes but also the accumulated consequence of policies applied in the past. Often water management objectives are challenging and are only achieved to a limited degree on the ground. In choosing water management approaches, it is important to account for current conditions and important differences due to varied histories. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Victorian water management has evolved through a series of policy regime shifts. The main goal of this research to explore and identify the stages of the evolution of the water policy instruments as practiced in Victoria from 1890-2016. This comparative historical analysis has identified four stages in Victorian policy instrument development. In the first stage, the creation of policy instruments aimed to match the demand and supply of the resource (reserve condition). The second stage begins after natural system alone failed to balance supply and demand. The focus of the policy instrument shifted to an authority perspective in this stage. Later, the increasing number of actors interested in water led to another change in policy instrument. The third stage focused on the significant role of information from different relevant actors. The fourth and current stage is the most advanced, in that it involved the creation of a policy instrument for synergizing the previous three focal factors: reserve, authority, and information. When considering policy in other jurisdiction, these findings suggest that a key priority should be to reflect on the jurisdictions current position among these four evolutionary stages and try to make improve progressively rather than directly adopting approaches from elsewhere without understanding the current position.

Keywords : policy instrument, policy transformation, socio-ecological system, water management

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