

Institute for Land, Water and Society (ILWS)

STRATEGIC RESEARCH AREAS:

In December 2008, the ILWS Management Team reviewed the successes/outcomes and challenges of its Integration Programs (Sustainable Environmental Assets; Demographic Change; and Vibrant Rural and Regional Communities). These programs were established to further ILWS's ability to deliver against its remit and encourage further integrated research into the real-world issues facing regional Australia. To better achieve the strategic aims and goals of ILWS, it was agreed that focus should be redeveloped into more specific areas where ILWS has the research expertise, breadth of knowledge and interest. These will be called Strategic Research Areas.

A **Strategic Research Area** (SRA) can be described as a research area, whether established or emerging, that is:

- problem focussed (i.e., addresses and has impact on real world issues);
- team-based;
- interdisciplinary;
- underpinned by disciplinary excellence;
- output and outcome oriented

The capacity for members to propose an SRA is ongoing, although some deadlines may occur for funding allocation each year. The review and approval process will be iterative and provide opportunity for discussion between proponents and reviewers. In some cases guidance may be sought from members of the Advisory Board. Applications will be accepted throughout the year and into the future as strengths develop and new areas emerge. Expressions of interest for funding support from ILWS should be included in the application, although the emphasis for funding should be on external sources for projects under the SRA.

The **criteria** for establishing an SRA will include succinct identification of:

- **research issues, objectives and potential impacts of the research;**
- **a coordinator and team members with the experience and time to support the research area;**
- **existing or relevant past research projects (if applicable)**
- **funding opportunities for projects and specific activities;**
- **potential for high quality publications;**
- **comparative advantage for ILWS;**
- **mechanisms for integration;**
- **potential partners and stakeholders (internal and external) including potential international linkages; and the**
- **potential for development (including an outline of strengths, challenges and constraints).**

In selecting SRAs, specific weighting will be given to areas which are strategic for ILWS/CSU; proposers will be able to identify strategic opportunities for ILWS based in the first instance on reference to the ILWS reaccreditation approval and agreed priorities expressed through the annual workplan and annual reports (available on the members pages of the ILWS web site <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws/members/>) and discuss further ideas with the Director and members of the Management Team. All potential SRAs will be subject to review to ensure they can meet their goals and contribute to the development of ILWS.

It will be expected that many SRA's will support the submission of one or more ARC funding applications as well as other nationally competitive grants. It may also be appropriate to develop a CSU-supported Global Alliance. The nature of these expectations will be agreed with the research team and reviewed annually.

Leadership and management of SRA: the nominated research leader must demonstrate the capacity and capability to form the team and deliver the agreed outputs and outcomes. Research leaders are expected to report regularly to ILWS and ensure information is provided to ILWS for internal recording and review. Training/mentoring in leadership roles will be supported by ILWS.

Members of an SRA may be drawn from a number of groups. Teams may consist of:

- ♦ Full members of ILWS
- ♦ Early/Developing members
- ♦ Cross Centre members or members of other CSU Centres as appropriate
- ♦ Adjunct members of ILWS (eg consultants) and/or research from other related institutions
- ♦ Postgraduate student members whose projects are related to the SRA

SRA members are expected to make an active contribution to the group and would normally be a listed investigator on one or more of the existing research projects or on funding proposals developed by the SRA.

SRA teams can seek seed-funding from ILWS and support from ILWS staff. ILWS funding should essentially be to support the development of initial steps to implement the research. Examples of funded activities might include, but not be limited to:

- ♦ Funding for meetings of the group (travel/accommodation/meeting expenses)
- ♦ Travel for members to meet with stakeholders and funding bodies
- ♦ Funding a key researcher from outside CSU to visit the team and provide stimulus to the research
- ♦ Workshops to develop projects or disseminate findings (internal or externally focussed)
- ♦ Research assistance for the development of funding proposals (eg literature searches)
- ♦ Pilot studies which are expected to lead to larger funding proposals

Support for SRAs might be requested in the form of additional central ILWS staff resources in addition to actual funding from the ILWS budget. This support can include:

- ♦ advice on budgets;
- ♦ advice on application procedures and CSU regulations;
- ♦ assistance in liaison with CRGT and the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research);
- ♦ assistance with project human resources issues;
- ♦ advice and direct assistance in compiling funding proposals for internal CSU funding schemes;
- ♦ information on the research activities of other members of ILWS (eg adjuncts);
- ♦ organisation of meetings, workshops and project related travel;
- ♦ media and community relations activities

SRA teams are also encouraged to form external partnerships and engage with ILWS adjuncts. SRAs can be formally recognised without a financial contribution from ILWS, provided that there is sufficient funding from external sources or a well developed plan to obtain the necessary support.

In the future the SRAs will be the principal means of supporting research by ILWS members. In this sense the call for SRAs is open – if a proposal meets the above mentioned criteria and we can manage the necessary administrative load we can list the SRA. The processes are iterative and open to suggestions and proposals. It is anticipated that the allocation of research fellowships and PhD scholarships awarded by ILWS will also be largely aligned with the SRAs.

SRA Submission:

Attached is a pro forma providing a framework for submitting an SRA. Please contact Mark Morrison or myself if you would like to discuss any aspect of this issue.

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