



ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND NRM PRACTICE: WHERE THE RUBBER HITS THE ROAD

Dr Roel Plant, Institute for Sustainable Futures (UTS)

- Self-funded university research institute since 1996
- Currently ~30 research staff, ~25 PhD students
- Create change towards sustainable futures
- Build independent capacity by diffusing knowledge and skills
- Trans-disciplinary approach
 - ▣ Staff backgrounds include engineering, architecture, management, economics, science, social sciences, international development, political studies, etc.

Presentation Outline

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- Introduction (10 mins)
 - ▣ Background and Objectives
 - ▣ Principles and Approach
- Part I: International Trends (10 mins)
- Part II: Academic Literature (10 mins)
- Part III: Practitioners' Experiences (20 mins)
- Conclusions (10 mins)

Background to LWA Study

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- 2003: CSIRO's ES Research
- 2007: Currency of ES concept in US and Europe
- 2008: Review of ES in Australian Environmental Research
- 2009: LWA supported extension of review into
 - ▣ grey literature
 - ▣ practitioners' experiences

Study Objectives

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- To review the Australian grey literature on Ecosystem Services
 - ▣ Has the ES concept been increasingly utilised?
 - ▣ What is the nature of this literature?
- To develop an understanding of practitioners' experiences with Ecosystem Services
 - ▣ What worked?
 - ▣ What didn't work?
 - ▣ What can be done better?

Definitions

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- 'Ecosystem Services' - the benefits to people from nature
- 'Academic' literature - anything that's published in peer reviewed academic journals
- 'Grey' literature – anything that's not published in peer reviewed academic journals
- 'NRM Practitioners' – CMA staff

The ES Concept

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- Original ES literature made three points:
 - ▣ We need to recognise the dependence of people on ecosystems
 - ▣ We need to express dependence in ways that a broader range of people can understand and engage in
 - ▣ We get better outcomes if we consider the full suite of benefits from nature

Approach

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- Review of non-academic Australian ES resources based on web search and expert advice
- Semi-structured interviews with seven CMAs
- Informal conversations with selected ES experts to discuss approach and findings

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Part I

International Trends

International Trends – Policy

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- 2007: G8 ‘Potsdam Initiative’: The Economics of Ecosystems & Biodiversity (TEEB)
 - ▣ Interim report presented at 2008 CBD-COP9 (Bonn)
 - ▣ Final results presented at 2010 CBD-COP10 (Nagoya)
- 2009: USDA Office of ES & Markets
 - ▣ New technical guidelines and science-based methods to assess environmental services
 - ▣ Focus on US agriculture producers

International Trends – Key Reports

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- European Communities (2008)
 - ▣ *The Economics of Ecosystems & Biodiversity. An Interim Report.* EC, Cambridge, UK
- Braat & Ten Brink (eds) (2008)
 - ▣ *The Cost of Policy Inaction.* Alterra, Wageningen
- EASAC (2009)
 - ▣ *Ecosystem Services and Biodiversity in Europe.* Royal Society, UK

Presentation Outline

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Part II

Academic Literature

International ES Literature

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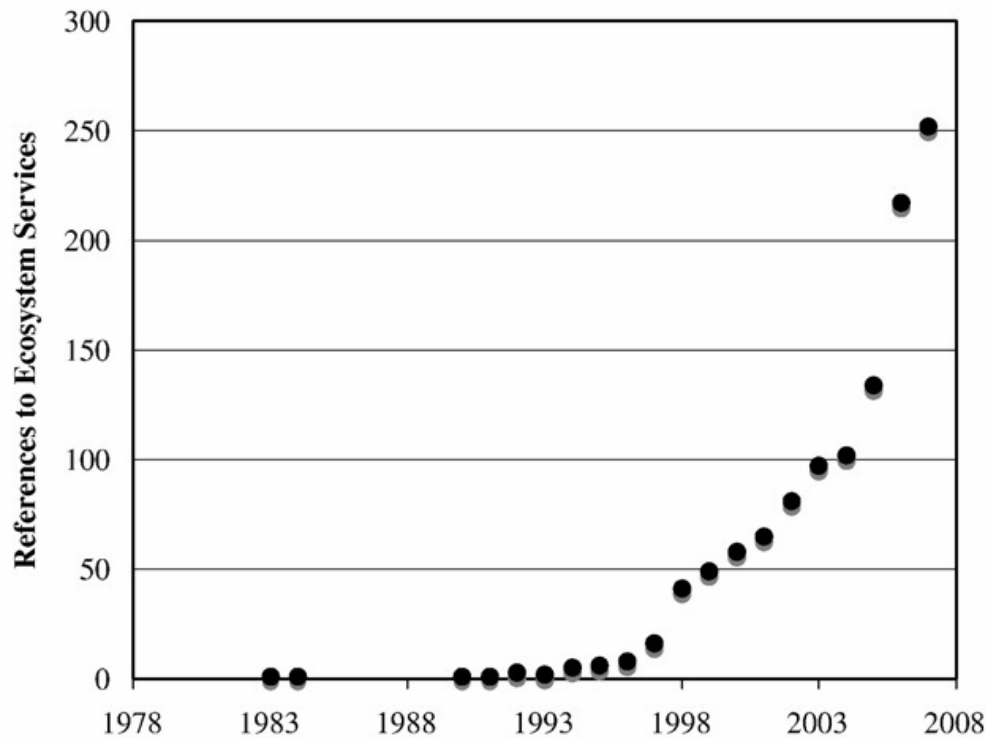


Fig. 1 –Number of papers using the term “ecosystem services” or “ecological services” in an ISI Web of Science search through 2007. Source: Fisher et al. (2009)

Objective of Academic Review

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- To review the uptake of the Ecosystem Services concept in Australian research and practice
 - ▣ Has the concept been increasingly utilized?
 - ▣ How has the concept been adopted

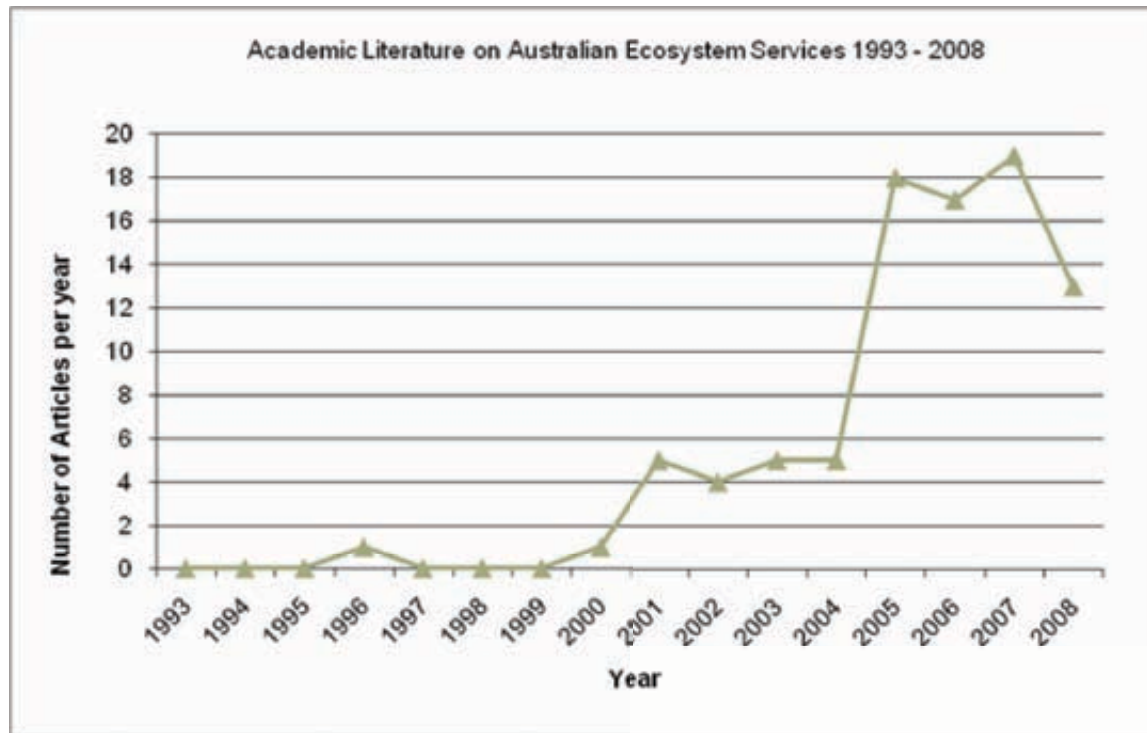
Approach

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- Journal search 2008/09
 - ▣ Keywords “ecosystem services” and “australia”
 - ▣ Databases:
 - CSA Ecology Abstracts
 - Blackwell Synergy
 - Web of Science
- Raw search results: ~330 unique entries
 - ▣ Discarded book reviews, editorials, etc.
 - ▣ Manual screening for relevance to AU: ~100 papers

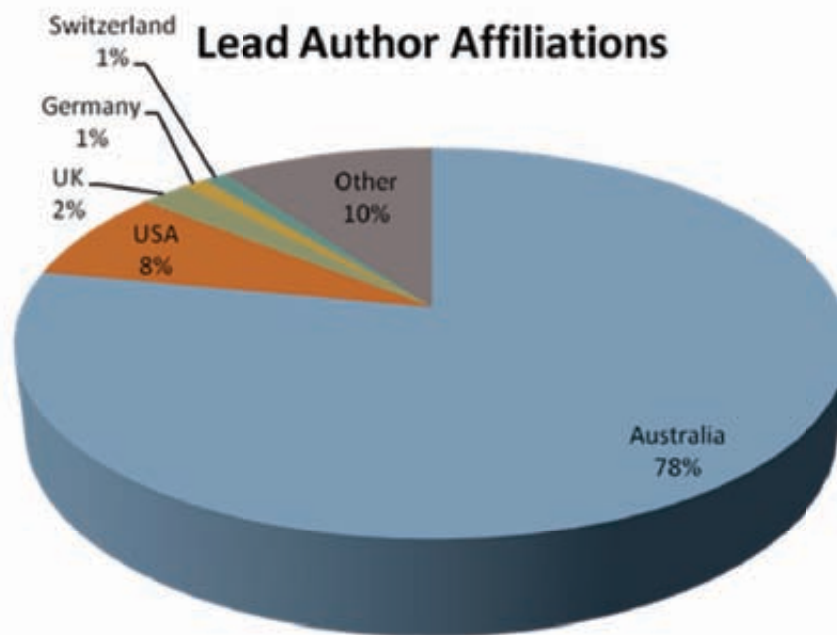
Results – Uptake of the ES Concept

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Author Affiliations

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How has the ES concept been used?

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- Bio-Physical (~35 papers)
 - ▣ Sales piece for traditional research, e.g. pollination
 - ▣ Water-related ecosystems
 - ▣ Production ecosystems, e.g. fisheries, forestry, agriculture
- Valuation (~15 papers)
- Policy Design and Governance (~25 papers)
 - ▣ Markets for Ecosystem Services

Findings

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- Increasing uptake in academic literature
- Lots of 'sales pieces'
- Emphasis on ecology and economic valuation
- Gap in the 'middle' - few explicit linkages between ES concept and (disciplinary) approaches
- Lots of potentially relevant Australian literature 'under the radar' because not explicitly labelled as ES

Presentation Outline

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Part III Practitioners' Experience

Approach

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- Seven CMAs in three 'clusters'
 - ▣ Experienced: Goulburn-Broken, North Central
 - ▣ Intermediate: Namoi, Border Rivers-Gwydir, Murray
 - ▣ Beginners: Murrumbidgee, Lachlan
- Semi-structured face to face interviews
 - ▣ Part A: Introduction (10min)
 - ▣ Part B: Understanding of ES concept (15min)
 - ▣ Part C: Experience with ES concept (30min)
 - ▣ Part D: Other frameworks & NRM issues (30min)
- All interviews (12 hrs total) recorded & transcribed

Understanding of ES Concept

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- the term was not widely used or understood by the broader community
- some had used it and moved to habitat hectares, stewardship terms or multiple outcomes terminology
- the concept was seen as background, necessary for grant success, useful and innocuous

Examples of CMA Projects - VIC

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- Goulburn-Broken CMA
 - CSIRO Ecosystem Services Project
 - ecosystemservicesproject.org
- Corangamite CMA / DSE
 - “ecoTender”
- North Central CMA
 - Literature review Reid & Williams (2008)
 - Investment Framework For Environmental Resources
 - cyllene.uwa.edu.au/~dpannell/inffer.htm

Examples of CMA Projects – NSW

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- Border Rivers-Gwydir/Namoi/Western CMA
 - Biodiversity and Production Dual Outcomes
 - agbiodiversity.net
 - Moree Plains Biodiversity Extension Project
- Sydney Catchment Authority
 - Catchment as Business Assets
- North Central / Mallee CMA
 - Wimmera Mallee Ecosystem Function Project
- Murrumbidgee CMA
 - Landholder stewardship payments

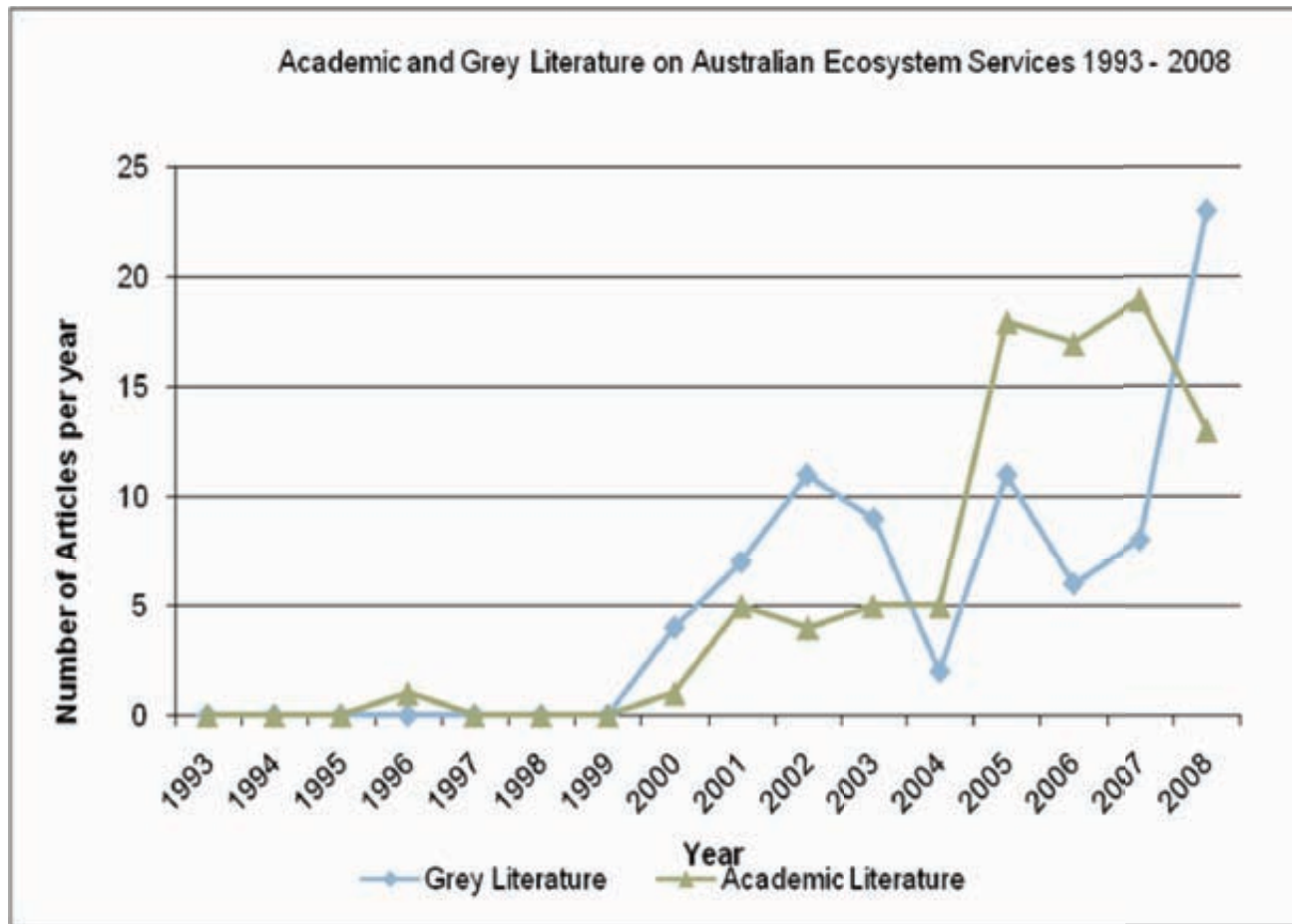
Other Frameworks suggested

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- Comprehensive Adequate Representative (Namoi)
 - ▣ Have certain amount of landscape units intact across landscape
- Change Management (Namoi)
 - ▣ ~Resilient communities; Resilience is an outcome
- Multi-Criteria Analysis (Namoi)
 - ▣ Development Pressure
- INFFER (North Central, Goulburn-Broken)

'Grey' ES Literature

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Key Resources

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- CSIRO
 - ▣ Natural Assets, Natural Values
 - ▣ MBIs
- Cotton Catchment Communities CRC
- DSE-VIC
 - ▣ ecoTender
- Miscellaneous
 - ▣ Brochures, media releases, PowerPoints, etc.

Gaps & Challenges

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- People saw the challenges of complexity, the notion of value as opposed to assets, understanding functions before using interventions
- Limited diffusion of the idea

Conclusions

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- Principle 1: dependence of people on ecosystems
 - ▣ Thinking about *value* of natural resources has broadly found its way into NRM practice
 - ▣ Notion of *dependence* seems less prominent
- Principle 2: engage/inform broader range of people
 - ▣ ES rarely used for engagement and consultation
- Principle 3: consider the full suite of benefits
 - ▣ Focus on single (or small bundle of) ES – ‘production vs. biodiversity’

Conclusions – Cont'd

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- VIC practitioners more experienced
 - ▣ moved on to asset-based frameworks, e.g. INFFER
 - ▣ Proactive approach to target
- NSW less experienced
 - ▣ Limited awareness of ES resources
 - ▣ Reactive approach - Fed/State targets drive agenda
- ES concept primarily lives on in MBI and stewardship programs

Research Priorities

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- Innovative knowledge sharing approaches
 - ▣ Lack of mechanisms that can appropriately accommodate and communicate the complexity of concepts
 - ▣ Web portals and toolbars are a good starting point, but more is needed for R&D outputs and practical experiences to reach a broader NRM audience – and get used

Research Priorities – Cont'd

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- Minimal models for ES trade-offs
 - ▣ Science of ecosystem production functions identified as key research priority (Daily & Matson 2009)
 - ▣ Current models often too complex to play a role in investment decisions involving ES trade-offs
 - ▣ Minimal models (e.g. Anderies *et al.* 2004) have potential to overcome this significant limitation of dynamic models

Final Considerations

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- “Is the ES *concept* useful or not?”
 - ▣ Irrelevant question as humans depend on nature, whether we like it or not
- “Is the ES *approach* useful or not?”
 - ▣ Flawed question as approach pertains to disciplinary tools (e.g. CBA, MCA) and divert our attention from the concept

Acknowledgments

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- Sally Egan, Guy Geeves, Leah Mackinnon, Rod McLennan, Carla Miles, Geoff Park, Emmo Willinck, Ray Willis
- Nick Abel, Steve Cork, Paul Ryan, Richard Thackway
- Stuart Pearson, Ken Moore
- May Samali, Brad Murray