



Strategic Assessments Down Under: Progress and Insights

Progress and Insights....

- Australian Context
- Application = Where, What and Why
- Case Studies = Great Barrier Reef & Tasmanian irrigated agriculture development
- What have we learned?
- What to consider ?

Strategic assessments under Australia's national environment law

- Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
- Defines the Australian government's role in protecting the environment
- Protects and manages *matters of national environmental significance*
- Specifies impact assessment procedures and approval powers

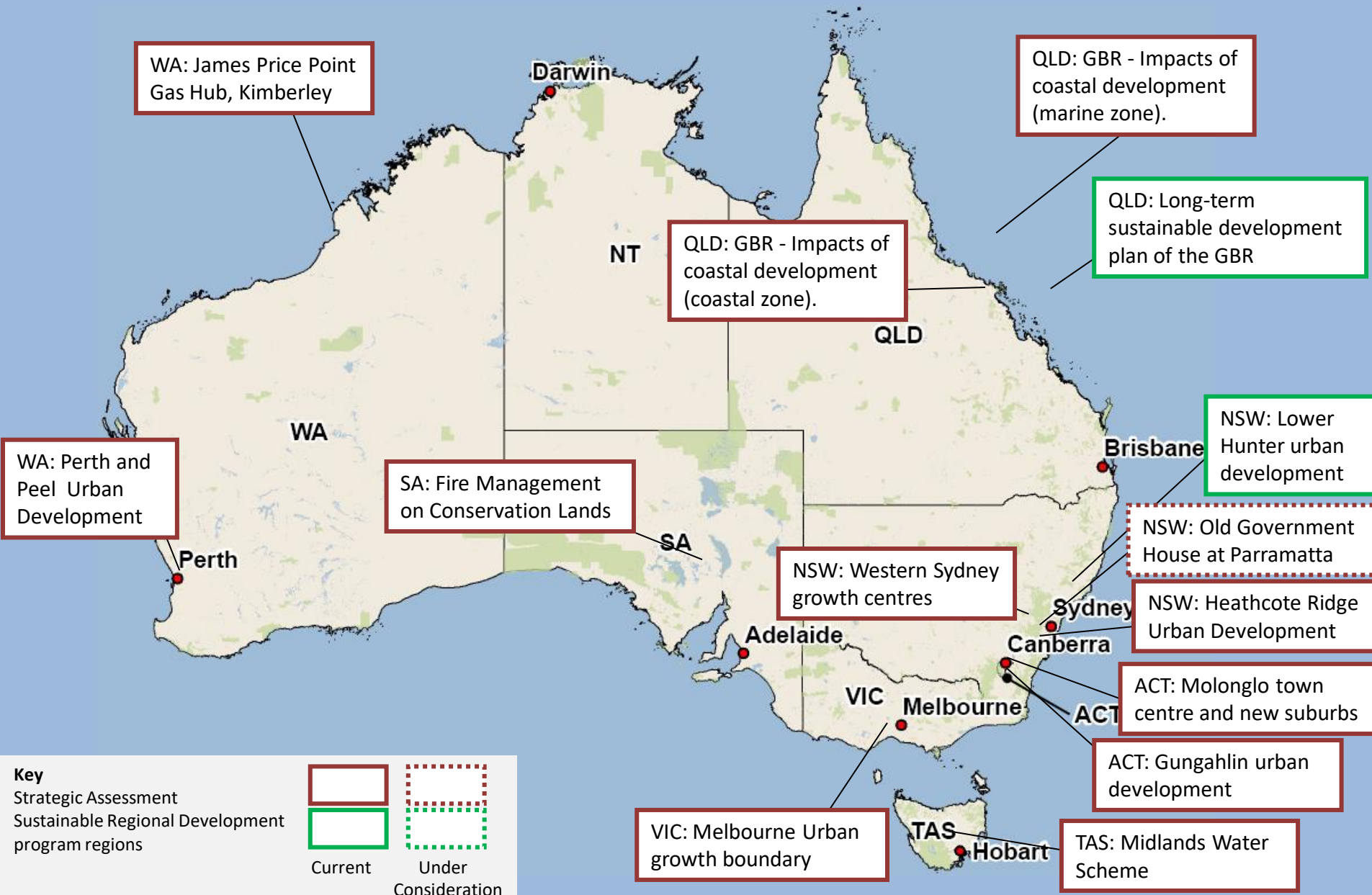
Matters of National Environmental Significance

1. World heritage properties
2. Wetlands of international importance
3. National heritage places
4. Nationally threatened species and ecological communities
5. Migratory species and cetaceans
6. Nuclear actions
7. Commonwealth marine areas
8. The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

Legal provisions and steps

- Strategic assessments undertaken by agreement
- Impacts of implementing a plan, policy or program on MNES documented in an Assessment Report
- Minister may endorse plan, policy or program
- Minister may approve classes of action undertaken in accordance with the endorsed plan, policy or program

Strategic Assessments and Sustainable Regional Development program regions



Types of 'plans, policies and programs'

- Urban development (metropolitan, large integrated developments)
- Natural resource protection (Great Barrier Reef; Bushfire management)
- Resources (iron ore mining, Pilbara; coal mining Upper Hunter; LNG processing, Browse)
- Government regulatory approaches (NOPSEMA)
- Agricultural expansion (Irrigation development)

Great Barrier Reef = Why?

- World Heritage Committee expressed concerns in 2012
- Australian and Queensland governments agreed with WHC on 3 year program
- Existing statutory requirement for 5 year reviews
- Comprehensive Strategic Assessment



Great Barrier Reef Outlook Report



- A five-yearly snapshot
- Assesses the Reef's condition, threats, management and likely future
- Prepared under the *Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Act 1975*

Great Barrier Reef Region Strategic Assessment



- Point in time
- Part of comprehensive strategic assessment for World Heritage Area
- Endorsed under *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- Makes recommendations
- Includes a 25-year management program

Reef 2050

Long Term Sustainability Plan

- Developed by Australian and Queensland government together (with identified lead agencies and regular inter-departmental committees)
- Built on recommendations of strategic assessments
- Worked collaboratively with Partnership Group (industry, NGOS, local government) eg workshops for each thematic program logic
- Adaptive management built on integrated monitoring and reporting

Long Term Sustainability



Case study: Midlands Irrigation Scheme, Tasmania

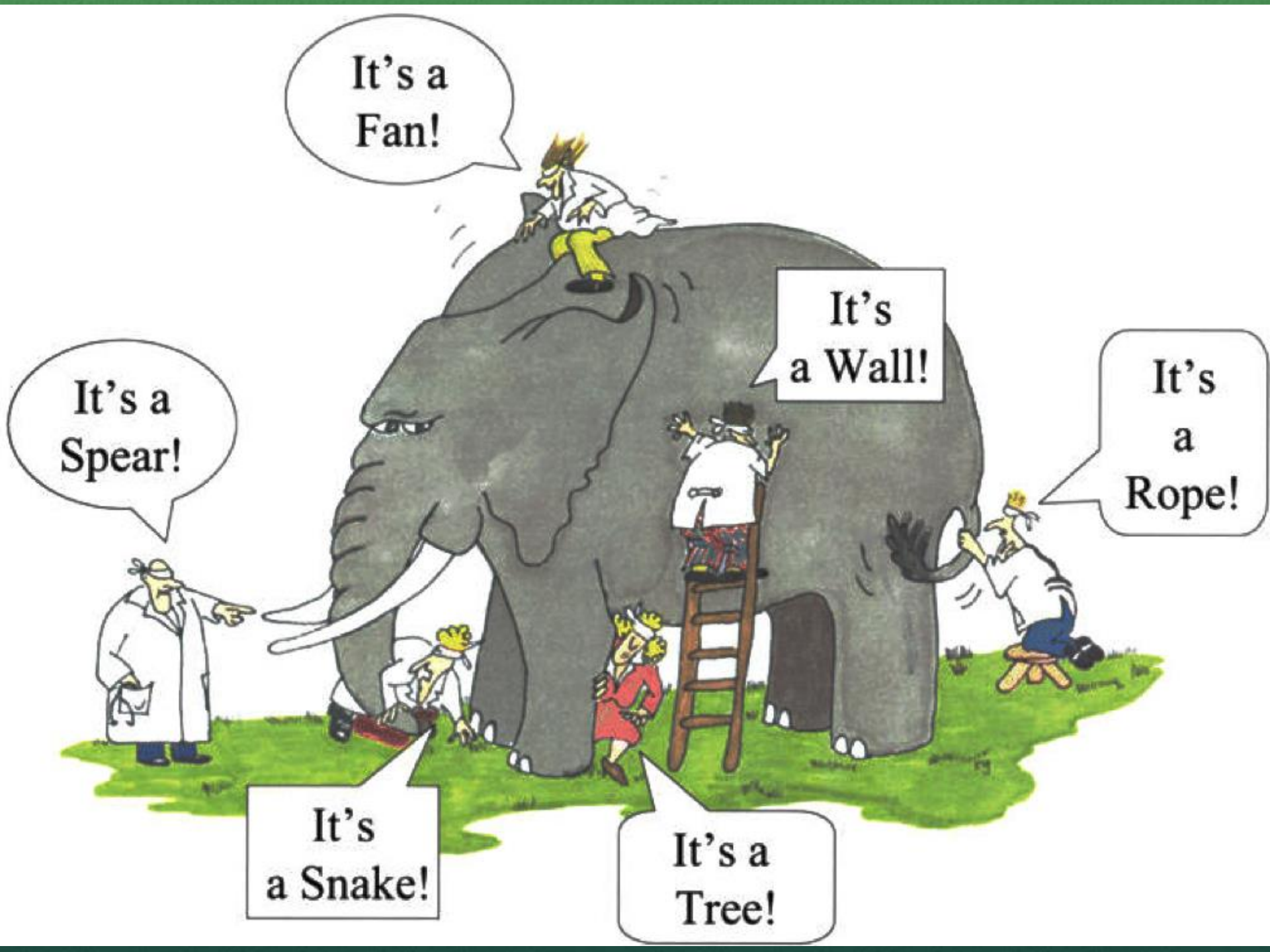
- Assessment of irrigated agriculture development strategy
- Commits to zero clearance of critically endangered grasslands & no significant impacts to MNES
- Endorsed a rules-based assessment applied on a case by case basis to individual properties (using existing property planning modules; linked to water access)
- Landscape scale monitoring protocol in place for adaptive management

What have we learned?

- Size (and scope= what is being assessed) does matter
- Design for a range of circumstances (flexibility vs commitment eg offsetting fund & focus on assurance)
- Not just a 'big' EIA = its about establishing a clear transparent & enduring decision-making framework; specify target/ outcomes and manage towards it
- Community consultation challenging

Ingredients for success

- Timing
- Imperative
- Leadership
- Collaboration at all levels
- Honesty
- Expectation management
- Outcome focus
- Agreed timelines and project management



It's a
Fan!

It's a
Spear!

It's
a Wall!

It's
a
Rope!

It's
a Snake!

It's a
Tree!

What else to consider?

- SEA is a team sport; may need to include 'coaching' / capacity building as part of the journey
- Language is important
- So is governance; during the assessment and into longer term governance
- Use existing mechanisms wherever possible; integrate SEA processes into normal procedures (e.g. Western Sydney Growth Centres)

