Coastal governance, institutional arrangements

Estuaries Of Australia In 2050 And Beyond

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I will summarise the results of the Springer book due to appear in late 2013 and that I edited about the Estuaries of Australia in 2050 and beyond. Seventeen key estuaries were selected, being located all around the Australian continent, from the densely populated, temperate wet southeast corner, to the very lightly populated tropical northern region, and including the industrial and the fast-growing urban regions, the industrial belt, and the estuaries located downstream of fast-growing large-scale irrigation projects both in temperate and tropical climates. These chapters were written by the leading estuarine scientists in the country. As a summary, the future health of these estuaries by 2050 and beyond may have three trajectories. In the populated areas the estuarine health may be determined by the extent to which politicians will allow the developers - who persistently find ways to bypass or twist poorly worded (maybe intentionally so) environmental protection laws - to override the community -which is increasingly aware of the dependence of its quality of life on a healthy biodiversity. In some of these estuaries the community is already now prevailing; in others it is not. In the sparsely populated coastal areas - a rarity in this world - three estuarine trajectories may develop. Firstly, there are a number of pristine estuaries, which is something quite unique and precious in the world, and the maintenance of their health will require reversing the present management attitude of benign neglect. Secondly, in the presence of irrigation projects in the watershed entirely within a state, estuarine environmental degradation may worsen in view of the states' attitude of development at all costs, an attitude that is made possible by the lack of independence of the states' Environmental Protection Agency. Thirdly, in the presence of irrigation projects in the watershed shared amongst several states, the estuarine trajectory - for the better or for the worse in 2050 - will depend on a resolution, or otherwise, of the political conflict about who owns the freshwater between the Australian state governments and the Australian government.