Environmental Observations as a Basis for Environmental Intelligence

Actions to address regional environmental protection challenges facing Australia and New Zealand are developed at the highest level of government by the Environmental Protection and Heritage Council (EPHC), made up of Environment Ministers from all Australian state and territory governments, the New Zealand government and the Australian government (as Chair). The EPHC vision includes the objective: “to enhance social, human health, economic and environmental outcomes in a sustainable manner for current and future generations”.

Careful management of landscapes, oceans, water, atmosphere and biodiversity will be key to achieving those outcomes. To responsibly manage this natural capital, comprehensive, trusted and timely environmental information is required. Underlying this information must be an environmental observation system that yields the data without which the “environmental intelligence” necessary for sound policy development, decision making and action will be impossible to generate.

In Australia the Australian Government has implemented a new initiative – the National Plan for Environmental Information – aimed at improving the quality and coverage of Australia’s environmental information. It will coordinate and prioritise the way the Australian Government collects, manages and uses environmental information in a long-term approach to building and improving our ability to generate environmental intelligence. Here we will review the crucial role played by environmental observations as a basis for environmental intelligence.