Department of Sustainability and Environment

A reflection on how an evaluation process influenced policy

Evaluating the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy

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Clear Horizon

Victoria
The Place To Be

Overview of presentation

- Background to Victorian Biodiversity Strategy
- Purpose of the evaluation
- How do you evaluate a strategy?
- Overview of methodology
- Process steps
- Issues and achievements
- Skills needed by an evaluator
- Influence on renewed strategy

Background to strategy

Victorian Biodiversity Strategy 1997 (VBS)

- Complements the National Strategy and the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee* Act 1988
- Issued as three volumes
  1. *Sustaining our living wealth*
  2. *Our Living Wealth*
  3. *Directions in Management*

Objectives of the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy

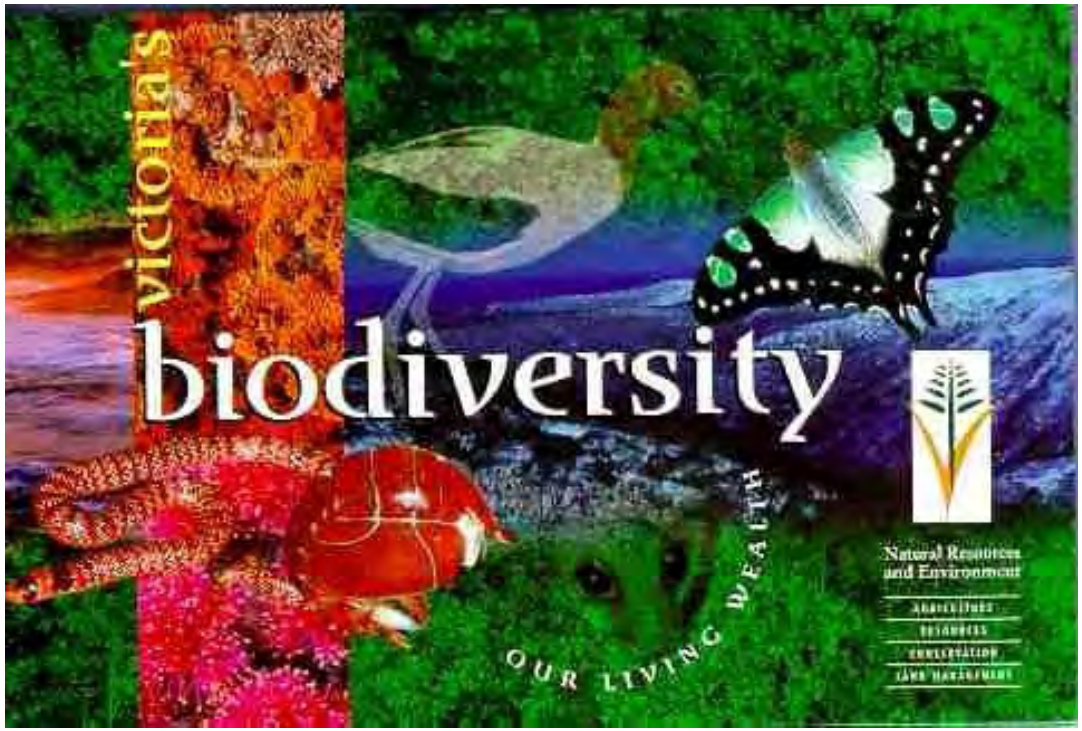
"There will be a reversal, across the entire landscape, of the long-term decline in the extent and quality of **native vegetation**, leading to a net gain with the first target being no net loss by the year 2001.

Key concepts it attempted to promote

- **Clarifying concepts**: assets, bioregions, net gain, connecting biodiversity to place, condition
- **Conveying what change is required**
  - 2020 vision (volume 3),
  - magnitude of loss (2 graphic maps of pre-1750 and now).
- **Expressing intent of *Flora & Fauna Guarantee Act* 1988** in practical goals that enable planning and measurement of effectiveness
- **Promoting new conceptual approaches**, such as:
  - precautionary principle
  - adaptive management

Evaluation of the VBS

Evaluation and renewal announced in Victoria's Sustainability Action Statement 2006



Evaluation & Renewal of VBS

- To build on the success of the 1997 Strategy
- Incorporate new thinking about ecosystem function
- Address emerging influence of climate change

Evaluation of VBS

Clear Horizon was engaged to evaluate the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy

How do you evaluate a strategy?

- Little published about how to evaluate strategies aimed at multiple partnerships

- What constitutes a strategy?
  - a plan - a means of getting from one place to another
  - a position
  - a perspective - a vision and/or direction.

- In this case we took ‘strategy’ to be a directional construct rather than an operational one.

How we evaluate strategies cont..

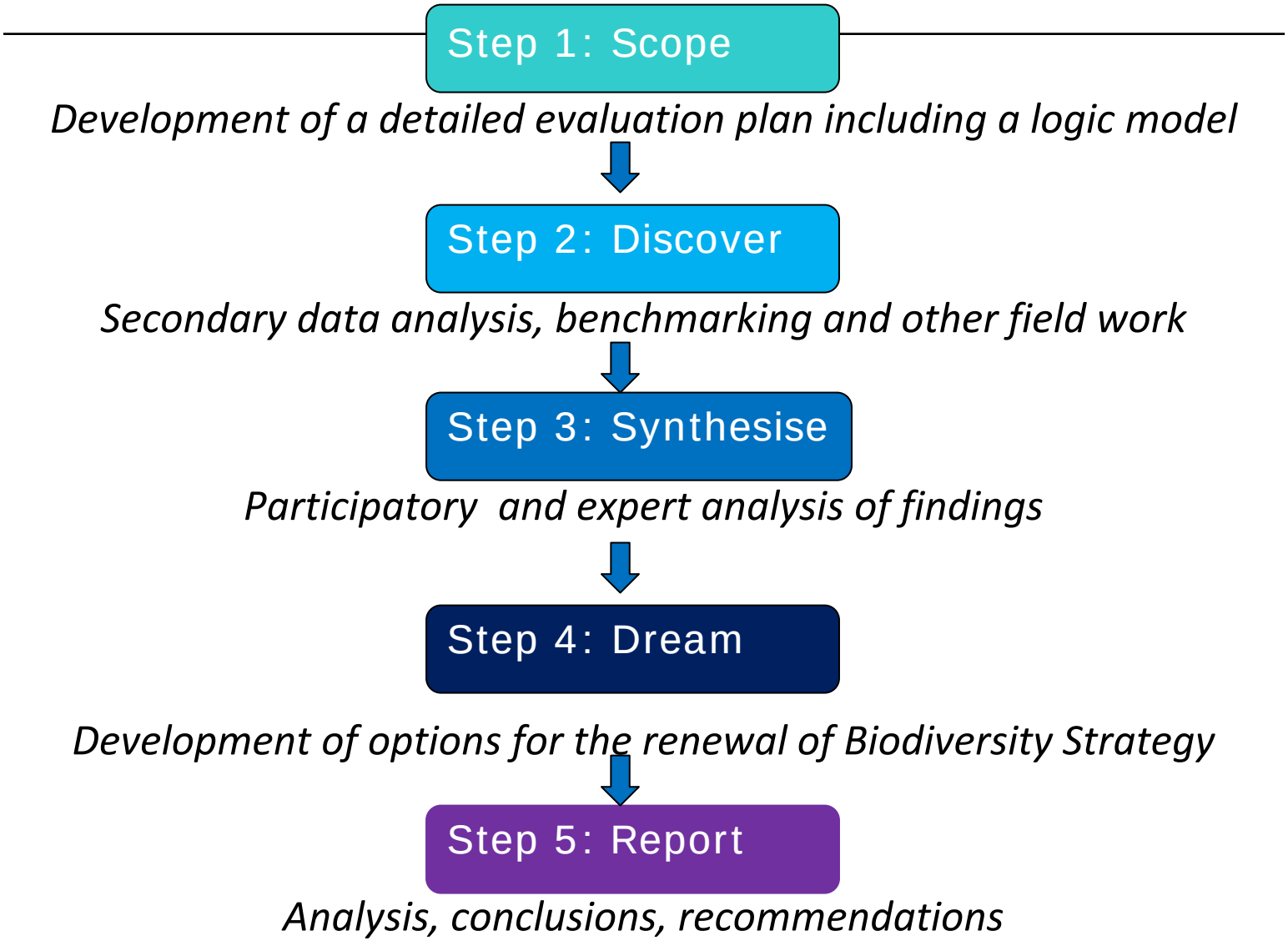
- We acknowledge the important role in mobilizing diverse groups of stakeholders towards a common set of goals.

- Under this view, strategy evaluation is concerned with:
  - the health and emergence of partnerships
  - extent to which strategic directions have been embraced by partners
  - other forms of cultural change
  - ***as well*** as the extent to which stretch targets are reached.

How we evaluate strategies cont..

- Therefore multi-partnership strategy evaluations need to focus upon the extent to which stakeholders were mobilized towards a common set of goals
- Why not just on the 'state of the environment goals'
  - The achievement of goals cannot be attributed directly to the Strategy directly – a whole plethora of stakeholders / funding sources contributed
  - Strategy goals are generally set as long term 'stretch targets' to encourage people and agencies to strive to achieve them.
- So other questions are important too!

Overview of methodology



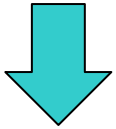
Overview of methodology

Step 1: Scope

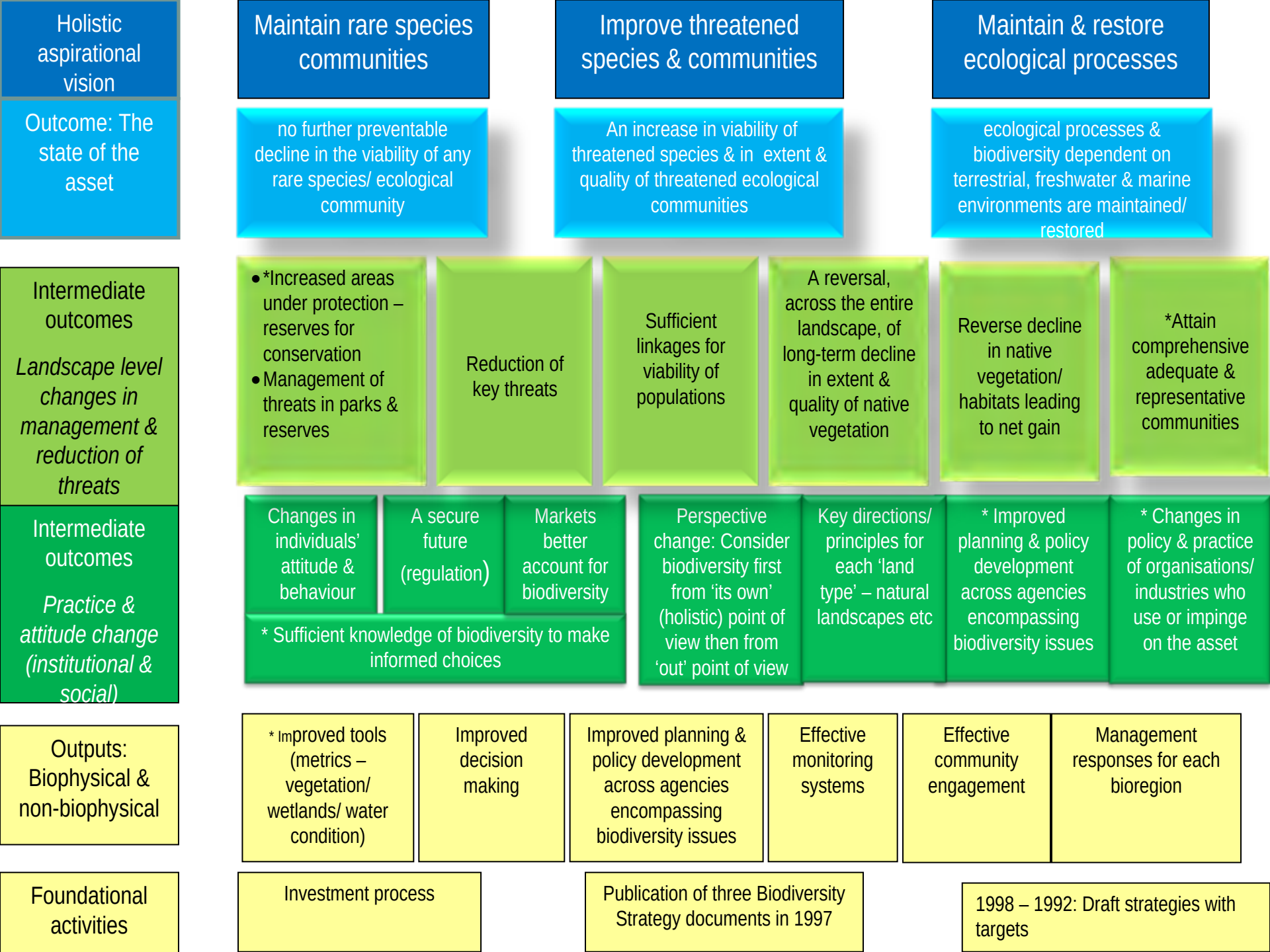
Planning workshop with 8 participants:

1. *Refinement of a program logic model*
2. *Refinement of key evaluation questions*
3. *Determination of sample*
4. *Determination of secondary documents to review*

Leading to:



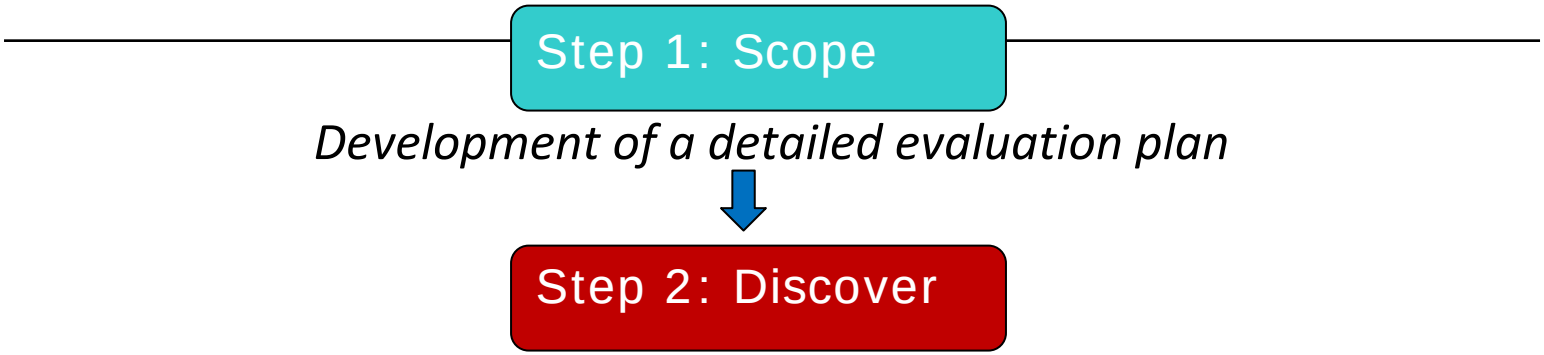
Development of a detailed evaluation plan


Holistic aspirational vision
Maintain rare species communities
Improve threatened species & communities
Maintain & restore ecological processes
Outcome: The state of the asset
no further preventable decline in the viability of any rare species/ ecological community
An increase in viability of threatened species & in extent & quality of threatened ecological communities
ecological processes & biodiversity dependent on terrestrial, freshwater & marine environments are maintained/ restored
Intermediate outcomes
Landscape level changes in management & reduction of threats
*Increased areas under protection – reserves for conservation
Management of threats in parks & reserves
Reduction of key threats
Sufficient linkages for viability of populations
A reversal, across the entire landscape, of long-term decline in extent & quality of native vegetation
Reverse decline in native vegetation/ habitats leading to net gain
*Attain comprehensive adequate & representative communities
Intermediate outcomes
Practice & attitude change (institutional & social)
Changes in individuals' attitude & behaviour
A secure future (regulation)
Markets better account for biodiversity
* Sufficient knowledge of biodiversity to make informed choices
Perspective change: Consider biodiversity first from 'its own' (holistic) point of view then from 'out' point of view
Key directions/ principles for each 'land type' – natural landscapes etc
* Improved planning & policy development across agencies encompassing biodiversity issues
* Changes in policy & practice of organisations/ industries who use or impinge on the asset
Outputs: Biophysical & non-biophysical
* Improved tools (metrics – vegetation/ wetlands/ water condition)
Improved decision making
Improved planning & policy development across agencies encompassing biodiversity issues
Effective monitoring systems
Effective community engagement
Management responses for each bioregion
Foundational activities
Investment process
Publication of three Biodiversity Strategy documents in 1997
1998 – 1992: Draft strategies with targets

Key questions used to guide the evaluation

1. To what extent did the VBS influence key stakeholders?
2. How does the strategy align with the Government's current priorities and the DSE outcomes framework? Are there opportunities for further alignment?
3. To what extent have the objectives of the Strategy been realised?
4. To what extent were the objectives adequate?
5. What factors, positive and negative, have impacted on the implementation and relevance of this Strategy and in what ways?
6. How could the Biodiversity Strategy be improved to be more efficient, effective and adaptive to emerging issues?

Overview of methodology



Secondary data analysis, benchmarking and other field work

Rationale for the approach was influenced by

- the dearth of literature on how to evaluate strategies
- the need for exploratory and in-depth qualitative techniques to unexplore unknowns and cultural changes
- innovative participatory processes to engage a wide range of views
- the appropriateness of a strengths-based approach to inform strategy renewal

Methods used

Primary data collection

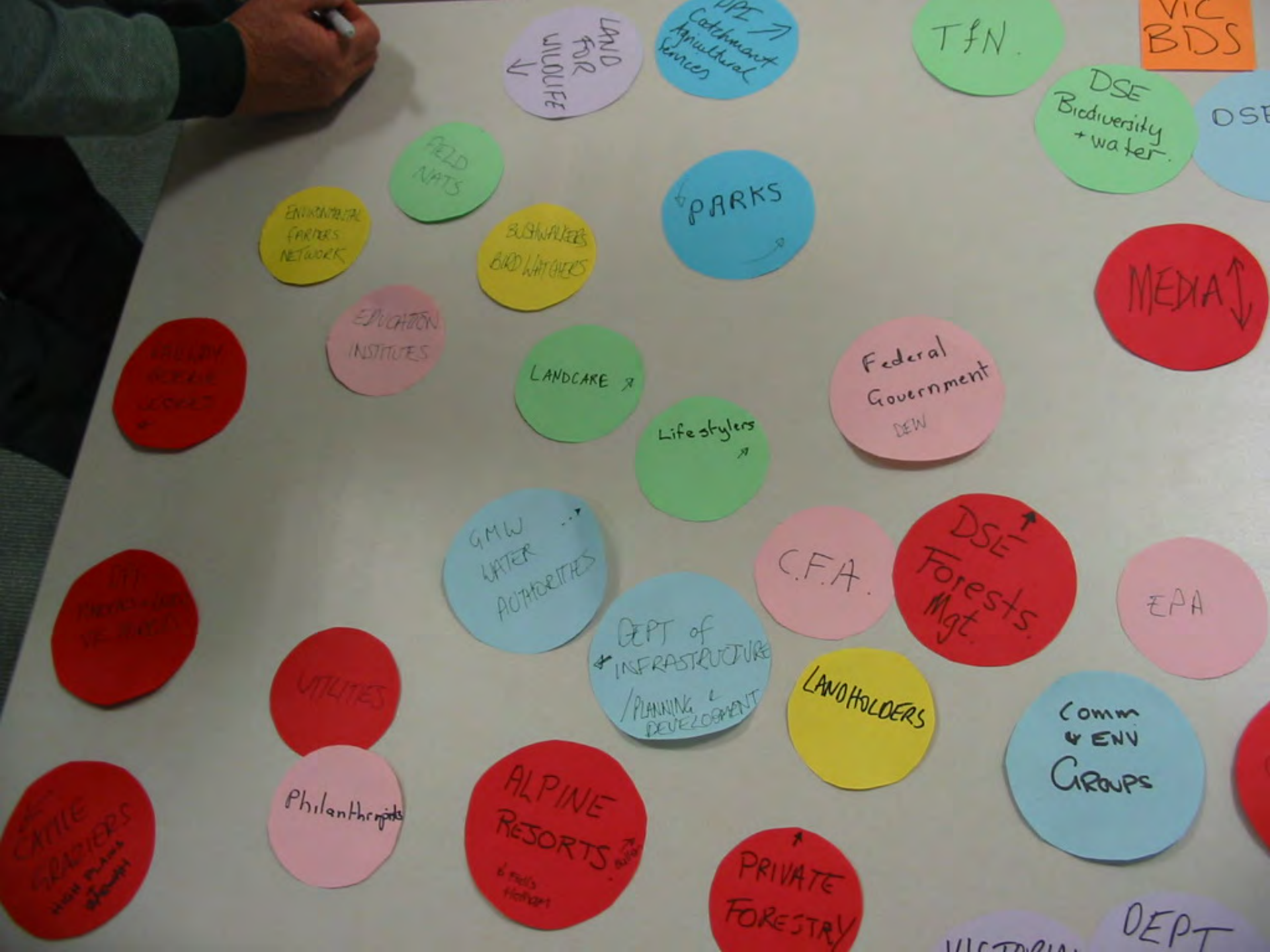
- Group discussions in 5 regions using visual models
- Group discussion with key informants from DSE
- Key informant interviews with people in key strategic/ policy positions outside DSE
- Individual interviews with key 'resource users' to understand how, if at all, the Strategy has influenced their policies

Content analysis

- Literature review of other key strategies to identify evidence of influence
- Examination of key Government strategies to determine the degree of alignment - secondary analysis of documents

Collating and synthesizing secondary data about state of environment objectives

- Collation of data for two bioregions
- Science panel to gain expert opinion as to the extent to which the objectives of the strategy were achieved


LAND FOR WILDLIFE
PPE Catchment Agricultural Services
TfN.
VIC BDS
DSE Biodiversity + water.
FIELD NATS
PARKS
ENVIRONMENTAL FARMERS NETWORK
BUSHWALKERS BIRD WATCHERS
MEDIA
EDUCATION INSTITUTES
LANDCARE
Federal Government
DEW
Life stylers
GMW WATER AUTHORITIES
C.F.A.
DSE Forests Mgt.
EPA
DEPT of INFRASTRUCTURE / PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT
UTILITIES
LANDHOLDERS
Comm & ENV GROUPS
Philanthropists
ALPINE RESORTS
PRIVATE FORESTRY
DEPT

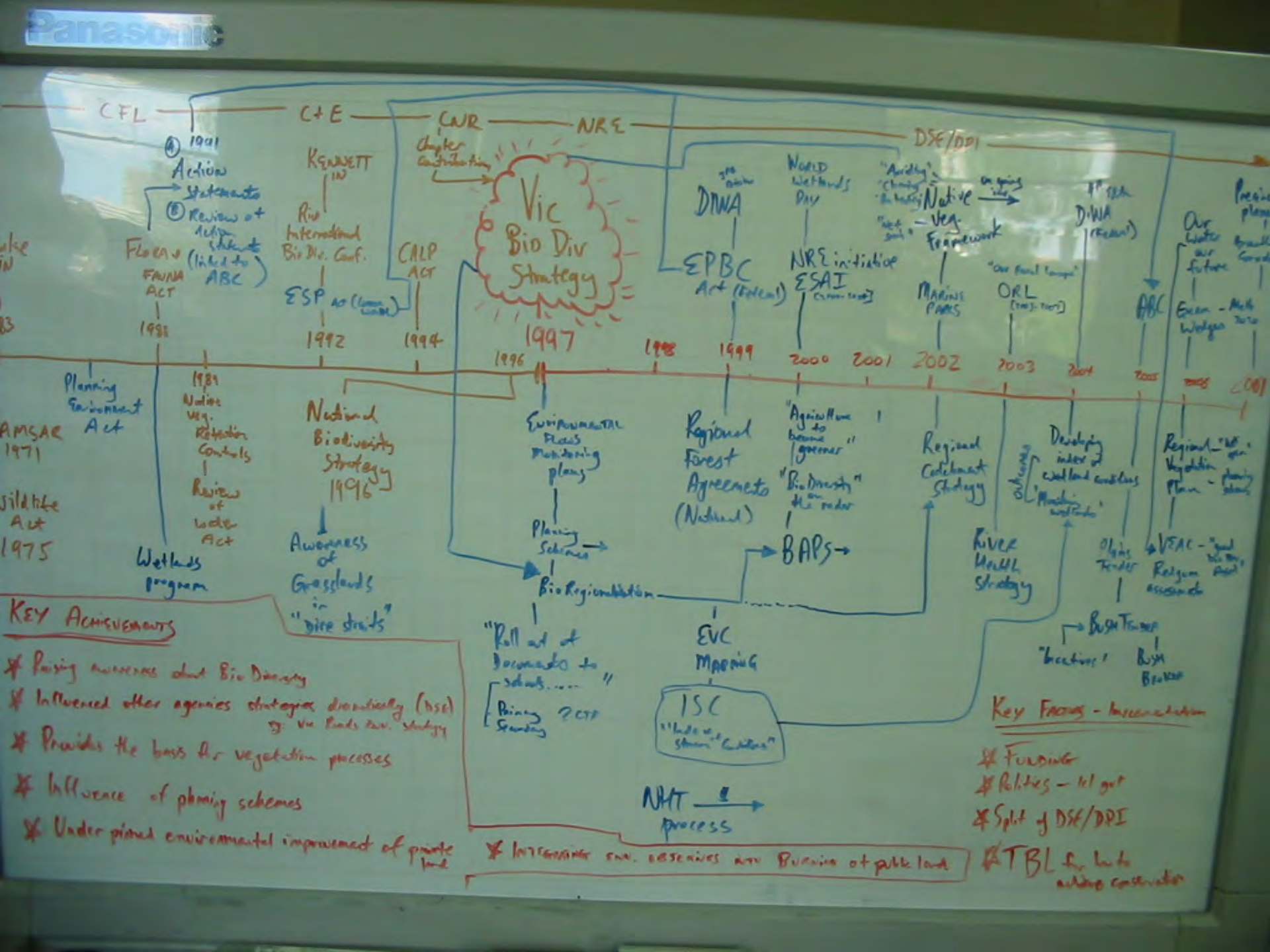
Top 5 achievements

1. Public Awareness outside DSE
2. Action - Conserving + maintaining for BioDiversity
3. Bio regionalisation
4. Partnerships
5. Framework for investment + action

Factors Affecting Implementation

- No dollars with strategy (and for implementation)
- Not prioritised
- "on song"
- No direction: Or How it could be achieved on the ground.

BioDiv Timeline


CFL
C+E
CNR
NRE
DSE/DDI
1991
Action Statements
Review of Act
(linked to ABC)
Flora & Fauna Act
1988
Kennett
Rio International Bio Div. Conf.
ESP
1992
CALP Act
1994
Vic Bio Div Strategy
1997
DNA
EPBC Act (Federal)
World Wetlands Day
NRE initiative
ESAI
Native Veg. Framework
Marine Parks
ORL
DNA
ABC
Planning Environment Act
1989 Native Veg. Retention Controls
Review of Water Act
Wetlands program
National Biodiversity Strategy 1996
Awareness of Grasslands in "dire straits"
Environmental Flows Monitoring plans
Planning Schemes
Bio Regionalisation
"Roll out of documents to schools..."
Regional Forest Agreements (Nthland)
"Agriculture to become greener"
"Bio Diversity" on the radar
BAPs
Regional Catchment Strategy
River Health Strategy
Developing index of wetland condition
Olgas Tender
Bush Tender
Bush Broker
Our water our future
Regional Veg. Plan
VEAC
EVC Mapping
ISC
NHT process
1996
1998
1999
2000
2001
2002
2003
2004
2005
2006
2007
2008
Key Achievements
Raising awareness about Bio Diversity
Influenced other agencies strategies dramatically (bsc)
Provides the basis for vegetation processes
Influence of planning schemes
Underpinned environmental improvement of private land
Intensive env. decisions on Purchase of public land
Key Facing - Implementation
Funding
Politics - Nil gst
Split of DSE/DPI
TBL & Integrated conservation

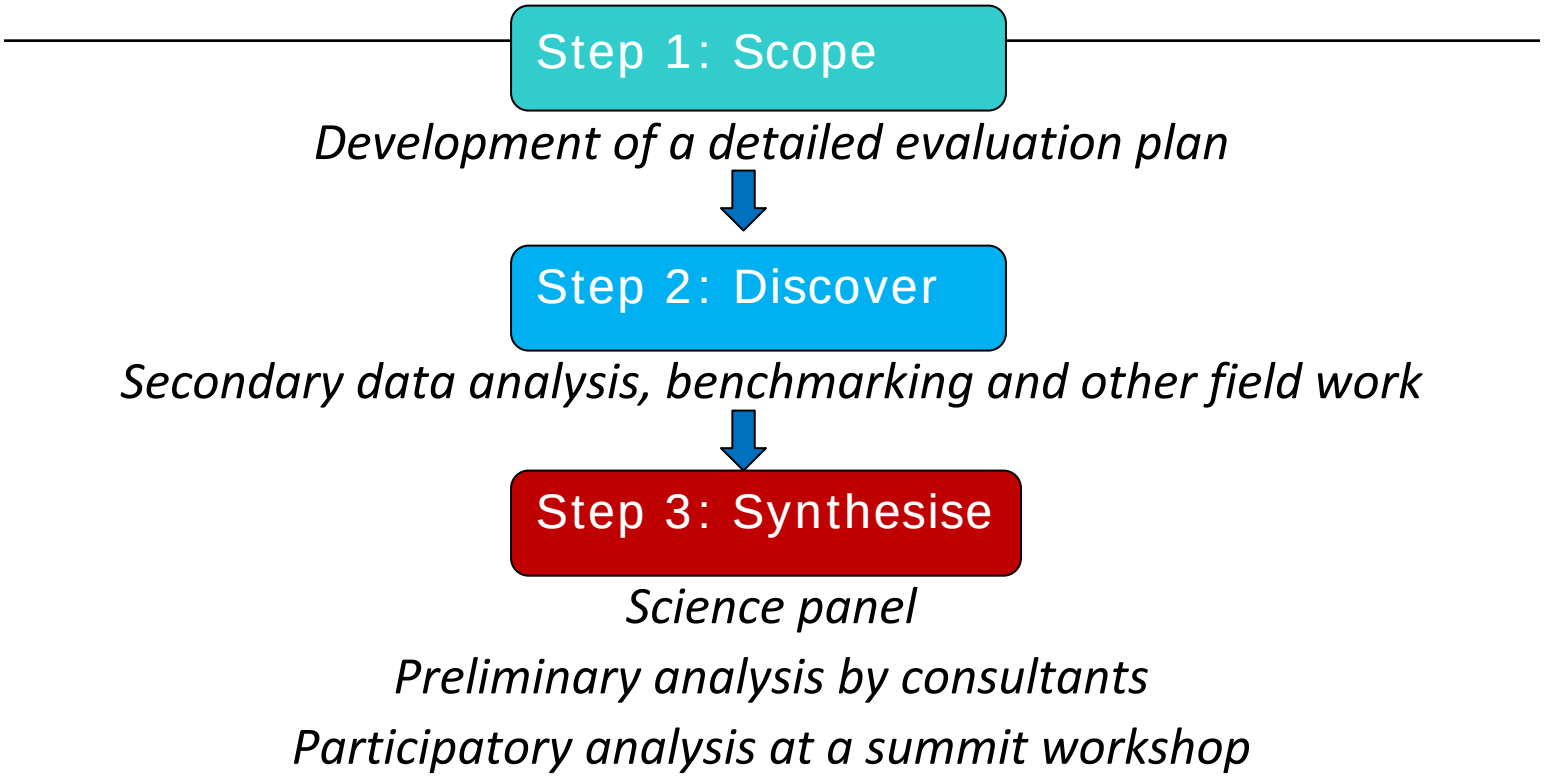
Question		Key method	Who/what
1.1 To what extent has the Strategy lead to an increase in people's understanding & appreciation of the key concepts promoted in the strategy?		1. Literature review of other key strategies	10 regional catchment strategies 5 other key Govt. strategies
1.2 To what extent did key stakeholders adopt key concepts in their policies/strategies (direction)?		2. Group discussions in 5 regions	A range of regional stakeholders, DSE and external
		3. Group discussions with key informants from DSE (2)	Group discussion DSE
		4. Key informant interviews with people in key strategic/ policy positions outside DSE	Key informants External &internal
1.3 To what extent did the Strategy influence the key 'resource users'?		5. Individual interviews with key 'resource users'	Industry users of Biodiversity asset
2. How does the Strategy align with Government's current priorities and DSE outcomes framework? Are there opportunities for further alignment?		6. Secondary analysis of key Government strategies	GVT DSE framework
3. To what extent have the objectives of the Strategy been realised?		7. Collation of data for two bioregions against the program logic model	During regional group discussions
		8.workshop with scientists to make judgements as to extent environmental goals had been achieved	Science panel
4. To what extent were the objectives adequate?		This question was addressed by methods 3, 4 and 8.	
5. What factors, positive and negative, have impacted on the implementation and relevance of this Strategy and in what ways?		This question was addressed by Methods 2, 3, 4 and 5.	
6. How did the Victorian Biodiversity Strategy compare with other biodiversity Strategies?		Review of the Draft Evaluation of National Biodiversity Strategy which compares each of the State Strategies. - also asked in semi-structured interviews	Review Evaluation of National Biodiversity Evaluation Ask during interviews
7. How could the Strategy be improved to be more efficient, effective and adaptive to emerging issues?		This question was also informed by Methods 2, 3, 4 and 5.	

Summary of Informants

- Total of 109 individuals were consulted
  - 28 one-to-one interviews, 81 as part of group interviews
- 50 were DSE staff (30 regional staff, 21 head office)
- 59 non DSE:
  - 5 Environmental groups and NGOs reps
  - 10 regional natural resource management representatives
  - 7 industry group representatives (mining, hunting, rail, roads)
  - 6 local government representatives
  - 12 other State Government
  - 3 Trust for Nature
  - 6 Academics
  - 3 Water authorities
  - 4 Consultants and others

- Time period: Mid March to May 2007
- All field work collected in 8 weeks – full or partial transcripts taken. Huge variety in views and opinions!

Overview of methodology



a) Preliminary data analysis & synthesis by consultants

- Full or partial transcripts taken from interviews
- Analysed qualitatively to develop preliminary key achievements / key issues
- 36 vignettes extracted to use at *summit workshop*. Included all vignettes that described achievements
- 13 key issues themes identified and quotes extracted for summit workshop
- Content analysis on secondary documents also conducted
- Collation of evidence-based 'performance story' case study for 2 bioregions

b) Science panel

- Six academics were invited to a science panel
- They were provided with:
  - The case studies from 2 bio-regions
  - The draft ‘results chart for each objective
- They were invited to:
  - scrutinise data
  - provide statements about extent to which the strategy contributed to outcomes.

c) Participatory analysis at a summit workshop

- 90 people attended (State govt, Local Govt, CMAs, industry groups, environmental groups and NGOs)

Morning spent:

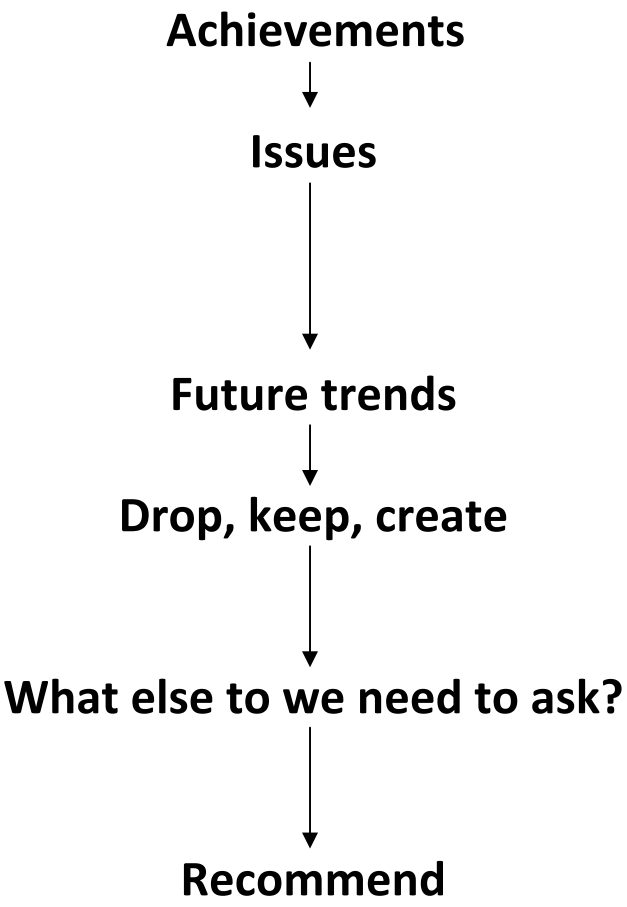
- Analysing the vignettes,
- Selecting most significant vignettes to go into report
- Analysing the key issues tables, and prioritising the issues in terms of those we need to address

Why hold an evaluation summit workshop?

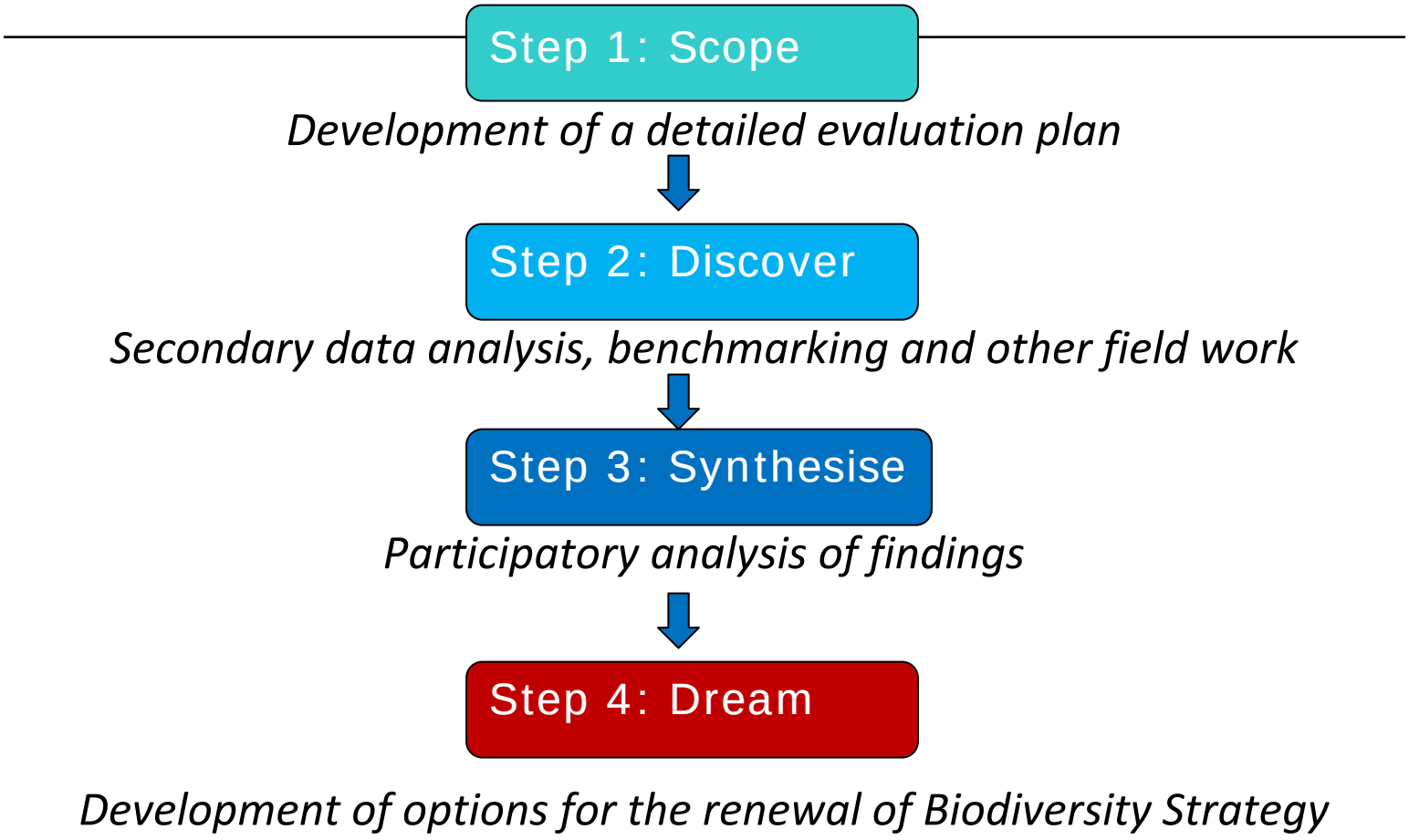
- Judgments about achievements and issues can be based on a range of people's views – not just the evaluators
- Use of vignettes – allows a level of engagement and deliberation about a complex range of issues in a concrete manner
- Summit itself can influence people to act!
- Draft recommendations reflect a range of views and are more likely to be implemented – which is the big failure in many evaluations
- It's real time evaluation

Overview of workshop process

- What's the best of what was achieved by the Strategy?
- What are the key issues, weaknesses of the Strategy that we need to address next time?
- What does the future have in store?
- Therefore, given achievements, issues, future trends, what do we need to drop, keep, create?
- What provocative questions do we need to raise?
- Given all this, what do we recommend for the next strategy?



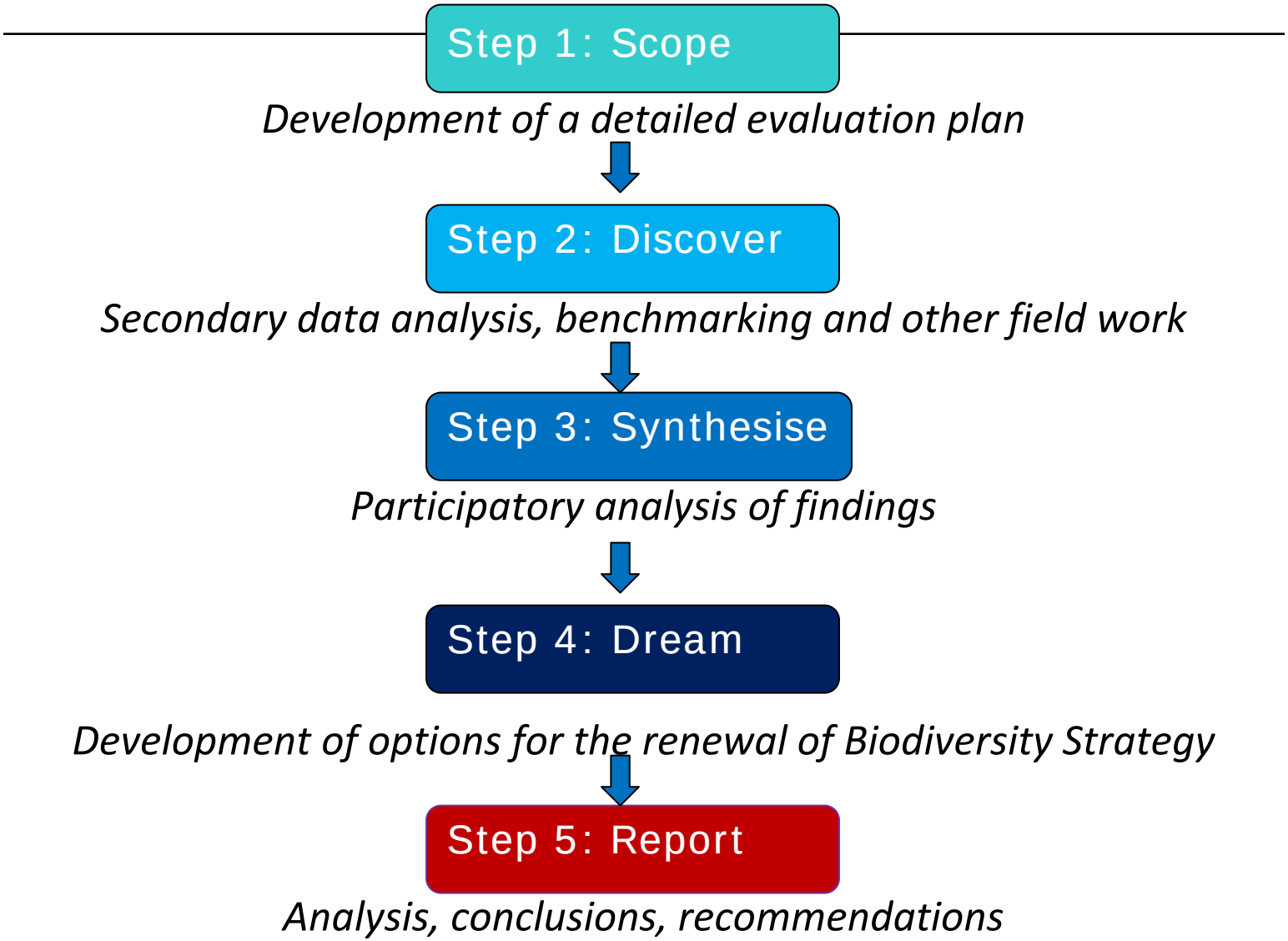
Overview of methodology



Development of recommendations

- In the afternoon of the summit workshop, participants were invited to develop a set of draft recommendations using a facilitated process
- After this a smaller workshop was held to aggregate the recommendations into themes and develop action plans around them.

Overview of methodology



Creating the report

- A draft report was written after the summit workshop it was reviewed several times before completion. It took nearly 6 months to agree upon – by then the white paper was written and influenced by the *process of the evaluation*

Issues and achievements

- Science panel was very tricky to facilitate and somewhat risky
- Report took a long time and many versions to sign off
- Short time frames meant that case studies were limited – data trawling takes a long time!
- Effort was underestimated by consultant!
- Multi-method approach using visual tools seemed to engage people well
- Summit workshop was a big success
- Great engagement and dialogue occurred between opposing parties
- Vignettes facilitated this dialogue – stepping into someone else's shoes
- Qualitative methods good at exploring possible attribution
- Logic was vital

Skill sets needed by evaluator

- Facilitation of large groups with conflicting views
- Working with a wide range of stakeholders and negotiating view points
- Qualitative and quantitative analysis
- Courage!

Influence the evaluation had on the next steps

Recommendations for the new Strategy

- Create a comprehensive **implementation plan**

- Adopt a **whole of government approach** to biodiversity management

Recommendations continuued:

- Develop **partnerships** with business and industry
- **Build capacity** to implement biodiversity outcomes
- Raise public **awareness** of biodiversity

What happened afterwards?

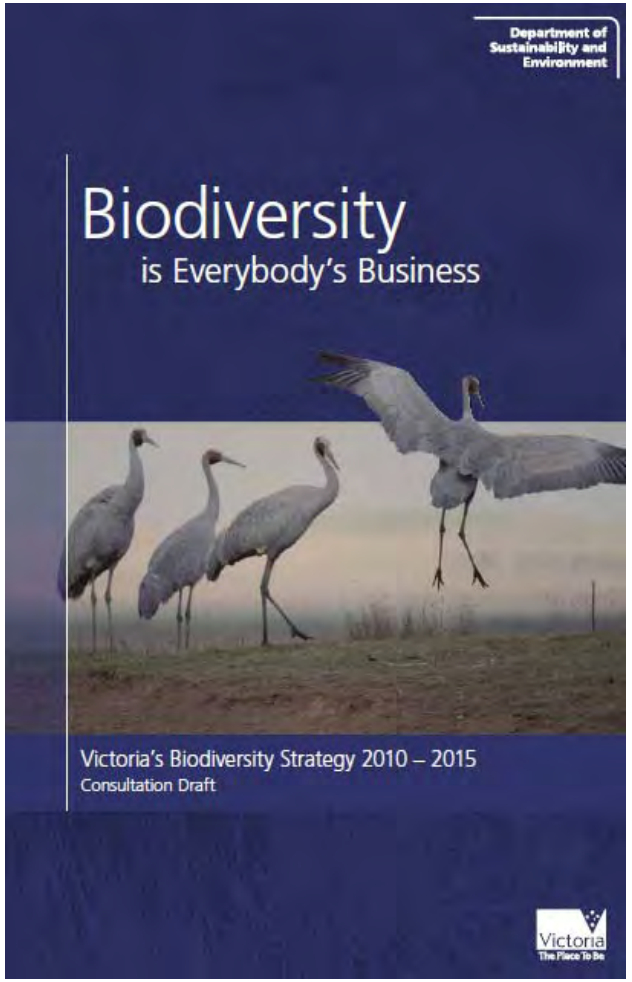
It took some time.....

- White paper occupied the Department's attention – launched Dec 2009 – some of recommendations were included.

- Renewal of biodiversity Strategy began in 1998 and was subject to lengthy public consultation

Renewed Strategy

- Consultation on draft until June 2010
- Submissions being considered
- Final Strategy yet to be released



Influence on new strategy?

- The renewed strategy lists all the recommendations
- makes a statement about how all of these recommendations will be addressed
- AND builds on the recommendations for greater stakeholder engagement

Partnership approach taken in renewed strategy consistent with recommendations!

Partnership Development Group

- government, non government, industry and community representatives
- Strategic input
- Opportunities for collaboration
- Exchange of information

Stakeholder engagement *process* was influenced by evaluation process and recommendations

- Traditional and non traditional biodiversity stakeholders
- Series of workshops
- Systems thinking approach (social, environmental and economic aspects of biodiversity)
- Critical enablers emerged
- Seven key elements in draft Strategy