Enabling community change through social media in the Murray-Darling Basin

What is the project about?
This project will lead to an understanding of how social media tools are used and how the Murray-Darling Basin Future could utilise these tools:

- What are the influencing factors in the communication process?
- Are there barriers to communication such as power relationships in these communities?
- How can communication be best disseminated?
- And how can social media be utilised in management and government?
- Do different demographics use social media differently in these communities and how?

Why is it important?
Traditional communication practices by the Federal Government have failed in the Basin, leading to anger and anxiety within the communities. With the help of social media a better approach in communication is possible. The project is important to understand how this approach is best suited for rural areas like the Basin and how it will contribute to resolve the conflict between the stakeholders.

Who is involved?
This project involves researchers at the University of Canberra and at James Cook University. With the project being cross-disciplinary they have their research areas in communication, marketing, urban and regional planning, e-marketing, innovation and social media.

How will the research be conducted?
There will be 3 stages. We will:

- Explore how social media is used and is leading to community change in the MDB
- Using survey data we will develop a model for best-practice communication using social media tools in rural areas
- Finally, we will go back to the Basin communities and disseminate the research findings there

What will be delivered?
As well as providing a novel approach to communication and community building in the Basin, the project will grow research quality and capacity for Early Career Researchers at UC. The project will deliver:

- 7 publications in peer-reviewed journals and 6 conference papers
- An edited book
- Several research workshops in the MDB
- a completed PhD

What is the timeframe?
The project starts in January 2012, with progressive delivery of research outputs through to 2015.

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