

# Leading Issues Journal

November 2001 Issue

## In this Issue

### Time to Focus Learning on the Team

By Dr David Clutterbuck

As organisations continue to focus on how to capture human and organisational capital, Dr David Clutterbuck, one of Europe's most prolific and well-known management writers and thinkers discusses how this can be achieved with the premise that all organisations must be learning entities, or they die.

He explains that "The critical link between individual learning and organisational learning is the team. It is in the team that learning by the individual is most easily shared with others. It is in the team, too, that the organisation's aspirations and objectives can best be translated into learning goals and learning approaches."

How can teams best manage their learning?

Clutterbuck suggests that a "key part of team learning strategy is developing the learning networks that permit and encourage teams to cross-pollinate...To become a learning organisation, it is necessary to promote the freeing up of people to participate in a wide variety of teams at the same time. In this way, they can learn from the task, from the other individuals they work alongside and from the alternative resources to which those people introduce them."

More significantly, Clutterbuck argues that one of the most effective ways of sharing learning across teams is through mentoring. "Done well, this becomes a mutual learning opportunity with extensive spin-offs, both for the people directly involved and their team colleagues. In practice, well-managed mentoring is reflective space that bridges different pools of experience."

Pointing out that "the study of the learning team is a remarkable unexplored terrain," Clutterbuck believes that "the focus of learning will increasingly shift towards the team over the next decade," where "Learning how to learn together" will become the major focus in an organisation.

Time to focus learning on the team

By Dr David Clutterbuck

**Dr David Clutterbuck** is one of Europe's most prolific and well-known management writers and thinkers. He has written more than 40 books, and hundreds of articles. Co-founder of The European Mentoring Centre and of The Item Group (the leading independent provider of internal communication solutions), David also runs a thriving international consultancy, Clutterbuck Associates, which specialises in helping people in organisations develop the skills to help others.

## Time to Focus Learning on the Team

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**If we are to accelerate the pace and quality of learning in organisations, far more attention needs to be placed on learning within the team, says David Clutterbuck.**

Once upon a time there were only three ways of learning at work. You experimented for yourself, you were apprenticed to an experienced craftsman or you learnt by observation and discussion within the work team. The idea of sending people to training courses is a relatively new invention and it is probably past its peak. Among the many problems with the classroom approach are that it is rarely timed to meet the specific learning the individual needs right now, that it tends towards the theoretical rather than the practical (not always a bad thing *per se*), and that it does little to address the work environmental issues that so often confound attempts to implement what has been learned.

These are well-documented complaints and many organisations are widening the portfolio of learning approaches to tackle them. In particular, e-training or e-learning (it had to come!), the just-in-time, customised offspring of computer-based training, shows great potential — especially as artificial intelligence engines develop to the point where they direct us to appropriate learning as and when we need it.

However, these advances only tackle half the problem. They perpetuate the focus on *individual* learning at the expense of the potentially more valuable learning of the team *as a whole*. The average tenure of an individual with an organisation is increasingly short at all levels from bottom to top. Concentrating on the education of individuals helps to fulfil the new psychological contract, whereby the organisation and the individual expect to add value to each other while they are in association. But once the individual has gone, so has his or her learning. The new techniques of knowledge management in part address the issue. They allow for the organisation to capture some of the factual and technical competence of the employee. But they cannot capture the *wisdom* —

the experience of applying experience the employee has accumulated.

The notion of the learning organisation originates in this desire by organisations to capture and distribute the accumulated know-how of their employees — a desire that is increasingly being challenged by employees who see this intellectual property as belonging by rights to them. The reality, of course, is that all organisations are learning entities, or they die. What counts is the effectiveness of how the organisation acquires, distributes and applies learning. Effectiveness of acquisition applies both within the organisation (learning people create) and outside (learning that they harvest from a wide variety of other sources).

The critical link between individual learning and organisational learning is the team. It is in the team that learning by the individual is most easily shared with others. It is in the team, too, that the organisation's aspirations and objectives can best be translated into learning goals and learning approaches. Yet the study of the learning team is a remarkable unexplored terrain. Very little work has been done internationally to identify how teams can best manage their learning.

I am not alone in believing that the focus of learning will increasingly shift towards the team over the next decade.

A key part of team learning strategy is developing the learning networks that permit and encourage teams to cross-pollinate. The most effective medium for doing so, however, is not by the techniques of knowledge management, with their emphasis on electronic data capture and storage; it is through the real-time dispersal of people.

To become a learning organisation, it is necessary to promote the freeing up of people to participate in a wide variety of teams at the same time. In this way, they can learn from the task, from the other individuals they work alongside and from the alternative resources to which those people introduce them.

One of the most effective ways of sharing learning across teams is through mentoring. Done well, this becomes a mutual learning opportunity with extensive spin-offs, both for the people directly involved and their team colleagues. In practice, well-managed mentoring is reflective space that bridges different pools of experience.

One of the most valuable processes to emerge out of our research and its application has been the development of the team learning plan. Appraisal systems typically identify a number of areas in which the individual can improve and may (or may not) form the basis of a personal development plan.

Once the mechanics have been worked through, it is not unusual for the employee to be left largely to his or her own devices as to how to fulfil these personal development objectives. At best, there is an understanding between

the employee and the manager about intentions to provide learning opportunities — either classroom, or new tasks or both.

Our experience is that teams can be taught how to manage their learning processes more effectively, and this can make a major contribution to organisational performance. Over the next few years, we expect the emphasis of training for teams to move away from how to do the job towards how to add value. Learning how to learn together will be an essential part of this.

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## How Individuals can Learn

Extract from 'Mentoring in Action' By Dr David Clutterbuck

According to Clutterbuck, the three main options for individuals are: Self-Tuition ; Learning from others in your organisation; Learning from external sources.

The Mentor Option, however, the fastest growing developmental tool at senior management levels has a number of key benefits over traditional training and development approaches. Clutterbuck briefly explores what is mentoring, what are the deliverables and what is required to set up a mentoring programme.

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### How Individuals can Learn

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**The three main options for individuals are:**

**Self-Tuition** - for example, going on courses. This mode of learning is most effective when you have someone to act as a sounding board, with whom to talk through the issues. This discussion can stimulate further insight and reinforce the applicability of the learning

**Learning from others in your organisation** - the most effective self-learners establish a wide learning 'net' comprising people whom they regularly approach for learning. Surprisingly, the most valuable people in the learning net are not those directly senior to you, but your peers and often your direct reports. Consider asking your team members, 'What can I learn from you today?'

**Learning from external sources** - at the top it becomes more difficult, or more sensitive, to turn to your colleagues. This reticence may lead to the senior executive finding him or herself trapped into cycles of non-productive behaviour where there is no safe outlet. In this situation, an external mentor can provide an unthreatening sounding board for you to question assumptions and

behaviour that colleagues would not, or could not, challenge.

## **The Mentor Option**

Mentoring is currently probably the fastest growing developmental tool at senior management levels. It has a number of key benefits over traditional training and development approaches.

People in very senior positions can rarely afford to take significant time away from their work. If they do attend, say, a two-week course at a top business school, they frequently find that the learning is not sufficiently customised to focus on their current issues, in their timescales. Mentoring overcomes both of these problems, usually taking place in regular slots of perhaps two hours, spread over a long period. It is a process driven by the learner, not the teacher.

Effective director mentors require a special mix of skills and abilities. They need to have had relevant experience - a chest full of wisdom, upon which they can draw, having 'been there, felt it, done it'. They need to have a portfolio of developmental skills, ranging from coaching and counselling to networking and facilitation - and the ability to use elements of these with appropriate timing. They need a number of personal attributes, not least of which are a high degree of integrity, a natural empathy, and an easy communication style. They should also show respect for others and their values, have the ability to work through unstructured issues and be able to listen.

The mentor may act as a sounding board or as a critical friend. His or her role is to provide 'reflective space' in which the executive has the opportunity to review key work and personal issues, to consider options for behaving differently and more effectively, and to test out ideas in an unthreatening environment with someone, who can be trusted both explicitly and implicitly.

Properly used, the skilled mentor makes a difference not only to the performance of the individual director or executive, but to the board as a whole. Developing boards and individual directors will be one of the core challenges for tomorrow's company. How well they meet that challenge will determine how well they compete, grow and position themselves for the future.

### **Mentoring: What is Mentoring?**

Mentoring is one of the fastest growing methods of developing skills and talent in European organisations. It can be seen as the most intimate of learning approaches. One useful way of describing mentoring is that it is a means of assisting transitions in thinking patterns. Research into successful mentoring programmes indicates that they are normally:

- Relatively formal in the overall organisation, but with a great deal of flexibility

- Focused on clear learning objectives
- Supported by initial training of mentor and mentee
- Seen to benefit the mentee, the mentor and the organisation
- Introduced in a structured, planned manner

### **What are the deliverables?**

The payoff from a mentoring programme will normally be a mixture of the following:

- Easier recruitment of the best talent
- More rapid induction of the new recruits
- Improved staff retention
- Improved Equal Opportunities performance
- Increased effectiveness of formal training
- Reinforcement of cultural change
- Improving networking
- Reinforcement of other learning initiatives
- The requirement and schedule

**A mentoring programme** requires an investment of resources to instil mentoring as a natural part of 'the way we do things'. This would involve:

- programme planning and development
- how should the programme be launched?
- who should it be aimed at?
- what are the methods for evaluating success?
- responsibilities of mentor and mentee

## Responsibilities and Accountabilities of Boards and Directors

Extract from 'Mentoring in Action' by Dr David Clutterbuck

What is required to help people within senior management take the step from thinking like a manager to thinking like a director?

Based on Clutterbuck's findings of director's attitudes towards their own development, he suggests that there are six stereotypes: **The Arrogant:** 'I've learned all I need to know' type which is fortunately a shrinking category; **The Complacent:** 'I've not got that many years to go'; **The Harassed:** 'I simply don't have the time to think about my own development' which is probably the largest grouping; **The Guilty:** 'I've got this development plan, but I haven't done anything about it' which comprises another large group; **The Development Fanatic:** who absorbs every management guru's latest book, reads Harvard Business Review, keeps several learning logs and is doing another PhD; **The Balanced Developer:** who relates learning to personal and business needs, emphasises learning by teaching and spends as much, if not more, time thinking as reading.

With the view that "If a board isn't developing in competence it is unlikely that the company is," Clutterbuck focuses on how a Board can create a Board Development Plan.

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## Responsibilities and Accountabilities of Boards and Directors

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Not so many years ago, when a manager made it to the executive suite there was an assumption that the need for learning had largely passed. That isn't a tenable view any more. Increasingly, boards of all varieties are placing on the



agenda the development of both the board as a whole and the individual directors. They are also taking seriously the issue of how to help people within the senior management cadre take that critical but extremely difficult step from thinking like a manager to thinking like a director.

They are driven by a number of realisations. There is pressure from the general public to remedy the apparent disdain and indifference that businessmen and, more particularly, 'fat cat' directors and chief executives inflict upon their consumers. The flurry of corporate scandals around the world has fanned public concern into public outrage. Regulations to address public concerns about irregularities have been tightened up in the City and other financial centres. In the UK two high-profile committees, Cadbury and Greenwood, were established to review best practice and, despite criticism from some quarters about the focus on the financial elements of corporate governance, many plcs have adopted their recommendations. Furthermore, shareholders have begun to flex their muscles more adeptly and in the United States policies have been altered as a direct result of shareholder actions. This intensive spotlight on the machinations of the boardroom has undoubtedly heightened awareness of director's own responsibilities and accountabilities.

**Our experience of director's attitudes towards their own development suggests that there are six stereotypes...**

**The Arrogant:** 'I've learned all I need to know' type which is fortunately a shrinking category

**The Complacent:** 'I've not got that many years to go'

**The Harassed:** 'I simply don't have the time to think about my own development' which is probably the largest grouping

**The Guilty:** 'I've got this development plan, but I haven't done anything about it' which comprises another large group

**The Development Fanatic:** who absorbs every management guru's latest book, reads Harvard Business Review, keeps several learning logs and is doing another PhD

**The Balanced Developer:** who relates learning to personal and business needs, emphasises learning by teaching and spends as much, if not more, time thinking as reading.

### **How to develop boards and directors**

If a board isn't developing in competence it is unlikely that the company is. Yet relatively few boards have written Board Development Plans - detailed descriptions of the collective competence the board will require to face future

threats and opportunities, and how these will be acquired.

To create a Board Development Plan, the board needs to gain insight into:

- The current and desired quality of debate and questioning: achieving the right level of focus, constructive challenge and probing is not easy. Continuous improvement is critically important
- The quality, relevance and comprehensiveness of information provided. A variety of studies have passed comment on the poor quality of the documentation which many companies provide to their boards. The right balance between exhaustive detail and executive summary ensures that the discussion is well-informed
- The balance of capability and roles around the table. There are at least 14 key roles that need to be played within the effective board. Not everyone has to play all of them - indeed, it would require a chameleon to do so - but they all have to be covered. They also need to be respected and valued by the board as a whole, as part of the essential diversity that makes for meaningful debate
- The degree of 'collaborative independence' shown by the members. By collaborative independence we mean the ability to take an independent, objective view of the company as a whole and as a sum of the parts. For executive directors this means effectively leaving their functional allegiances at the door when they engage in a board discussion. For non-executives, it means that, although they have been nominated by a particular external entity (eg, a shareholder group, a large individual shareholder or bank) their duties are to the company as a whole. This last point is particularly topical as increasing numbers of non-executives believe that the company is not the shareholders but the stakeholders. The term 'stakeholder' embraces a wider audience than shareholder and could include suppliers, customers and the local community, for example
- How the board relates to stakeholders (in particular, employees and shareholders), especially in terms of communication and credibility. In many companies, employees have little or no idea what the board does, how it adds value, nor even who is on it and why!

## **Key Issues Facing Law in the 21st Century**

Key issues facing the legal profession in the 21st century were identified in a wide-ranging Discussion Paper released on 14 September 01, by the Law Council of Australia.

The results of a two year study by a special Law Council Taskforce headed by President, Anne Trimmer, the 2010 Discussion Paper examines, among other things, the type of environment the legal profession faces in the next 10 years, the threats and opportunities this new environment generates, and how best to

prepare for the future.

Put together after close consultation with legal practitioners, members of the judiciary, academics and regulators and drawing on the experiences of the American and Canadian Bar Associations, the Discussion Paper canvasses the present funding of legal education, the changing impact of technology on the legal profession, hours of work and pay, career satisfaction, equal opportunity, the need for a balanced lifestyle, clients and billing practices and calls for national uniform standards.

“The Discussion Paper sets out to establish, through research and interviews, the key drivers of change that will shape the future of the legal profession over the next 10 to 20 years,” Ms Trimmer said. “It should be used as a means to excite further debate within the profession and the community about the place and role of lawyers in a modern society.”

“I would like lawyer organisations, law schools, law firms and the wider community to use the material in the Discussion Paper as a means of generating discussion and outcomes. While there are issues covered in the Discussion Paper that lend themselves to future policy development by the Law Council, there are also many issues that can be taken up at a local level.”

The Discussion Paper says legal practices in the 21st century will be infinitely different from the workplaces of the last century, which were characterised by long hours, formal structures and billable hours. This is largely because of the expectations and aspirations of legal practitioners themselves. This is particularly true of women, who constitute the majority of law school graduates, and members of the so-called generation X who favour an appropriate work-life balance - recognition, variety and challenge - over money.

The Discussion Paper also establishes that one issue of major concern to lawyers is the ‘paradox of change.’ Lawyers are grappling with the challenges of deregulation, competition and technology while, at the same time, emphasising the core values of the legal profession. “This is not only because they go to the essence of being lawyers, but also because adherence to these core values may provide lawyers with a competitive edge against other service providers.”

Ms Trimmer also says “The Discussion Paper recognises the increasing need to develop uniform standards in all areas of regulation of the profession as the profession becomes increasingly mobile, and with the growth of firms practising across state borders.”

In its profile of the legal profession, the 2010 Discussion Paper also reveals that:

- 73.3% of all legal practitioners are male.
- 68.2% of employees in legal aid offices and community legal centres are female.

- Women are over-represented in the lower levels of the profession and under represented in the senior ranks and they leave in disproportionate numbers.
- Women lawyers generally earn less than their male counterparts.
- New technologies have created instant, cost effective access to legal resources making time spent less relevant in determining legal fees.
- Billing practices impact on clients as well as lawyers who face immense pressure to meet billable target hours.
- Most Australian solicitor practices are small: 56.3% have no more than 4 staff but 1.1% of practices employ 31.5% of all practising solicitors.
- Property including conveyancing is the most commonly practised area of law and commercial law earns the highest level of fees.
- Solicitors performed an average of 71 hours pro bono work during 1998/99. During the same period barristers undertook an average of 132 hours. A key factor among young lawyers when applying for jobs is the opportunity to participate in a pro bono scheme.

Source and copyright: Law Council of Australia

**To view the Executive Summary of The 2010 Discussion Paper and and the full Discussion Paper, click the link for the Law Council section of the publications page. From here, you will be able to access both items:**

**<http://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/publications.html#LCA>**

## **Bringing Home the Truth**

**By Justine Daly**

**Bringing Home the Truth** was written by Justine Daly for *Reportage Online*, the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism's (ACIJ) web magazine dedicated to high quality independent journalism. The ACIJ is part of the University of Technology, Sydney and is a non-profit organisation aiming to promote high quality journalism, particularly investigative journalism.

Justine Daly is a South African journalist who recently completed her Masters in Journalism at the University of Technology, Sydney. During her time in Australia, Ms. Daly became interested in the 'Stolen Generations' issue due to its potent influence on many Australian's everyday existence. Ms. Daly has since returned to live in South Africa and continues to explore social justice issues in her work.

Four years after Sir Ronald Wilson presented to the Federal Government *The Bringing Them Home Report*, he reflects on the criticism that the Report has received, how it changed his life and why the Government refused to support it.

"What they found shocked the nation, revealing Australia's neatly airbrushed history of forced removals. During the peak period of the assimilation policy, the 1920s and 50s, almost one child in three was taken

and institutionalised.

Two-thirds were under the age of five.

The lucky ones told of being fostered into good homes with all the benefits of a Western upbringing, but said they always felt like outcasts, shunned by both white and black.

Others told stories relating the torment of physical or sexual abuse at the hands of their carers, while some, middle-aged and with families of their own, had only just discovered their Aboriginality.



"It changed my life," Sir Ronald says. "Having middle-aged Aboriginal women weeping in front of you before they could even start to tell you their story, then to think I represented the race that had done these things - it was awful. Yet I was overwhelmed with a sense that they trusted me."

The great pity about the public's focus on the finding of genocide is that the report's other important conclusions and recommendations have been undermined.

Of the report's 54 recommendations, an apology from the State and Federal governments acknowledging Aboriginal Australians' suffering, and some form of monetary compensation, were at the top of the list."

**Bringing Home the Truth**

**By Justine Daly**

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### **Sir Ronald Wilson**

Genocide... It's one word among thousands but taken in isolation it damned an entire report, says Sir Ronald Wilson.

More than four years after Sir Ronald presented the Bringing Them Home report to the Federal Government, the furore surrounding the inquiry into the forced removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remains undiminished.

Recently Paul Kelly, international editor of The Australian, wrote: "The Bringing

Them Home report gave the victims a voice they had been denied and it highlighted a moral issue for the nation; yet its methodology was so flawed and its verdict of genocide so extreme that it provided no resolution to the injustice it identified."

Sir Ronald expressed shock at Kelly's view, adding that anyone who misunderstood the use of the word "genocide" has misread the report, allowing three or four pages in a 689-word document to colour their entire perception of the issue.

"I challenge anyone who challenges the methodology of the report, given the resources and time that we had. We reported the evidence we were given and we reported it faithfully", he said.

Referring to a conference in Western Australia in 1936 that focused on promoting assimilation, the report found that assimilation slowly eradicated Aboriginal culture by forcing Australian children of mixed descent to grow up in Western society.

Sir Ronald points to laws passed in the same state the same year that extended the Aboriginal affairs protector's legal guardianship over Aboriginal children up to the age of 21 and extinguishing any capacity, legal or otherwise, that the parents had to stop their child being taken away from them.

"It was genocide," says the former president of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Committee. "Although I didn't know it in the beginning, there's no doubt."

To make the point he notes the definition formulated under the 1948 Genocide Convention, which describes genocide as the destruction of the nature and character of one group by merging it with a larger group.

"In retrospect it's a pity we used the word. I guess we were concerned about making the case for reparation as strong as we could. But the validation for using it is still there — I've read it again and there's no reason to think that it would be any different if we were doing it again today."

Sir Ronald readily admits he had no idea what he was getting himself into in May 1995 when the then Labor government commissioned him to head the inquiry, alongside the Aboriginal Social Justice Commissioner, Mick Dodson.

Controversial from its inception, the report upset those who did not want to be reminded of Australia's dark history of white rule — that period between 1910 and 1970 when 45,000- 55 000 Aboriginal children were taken from their families and placed in foster or institutional care.

Over the course of two years Sir Ronald and Mr Dodson travelled throughout

the country calling for Australians in every capital city and many rural Aboriginal communities to come forward and give evidence.

During that time they examined more than 1000 written reports and received 777 submissions from individuals and organisations.

What they found shocked the nation, revealing Australia's neatly airbrushed history of forced removals. During the peak period of the assimilation policy, the 1920s and 50s, almost one child in three was taken and institutionalised.

Two-thirds were under the age of five.

The lucky ones told of being fostered into good homes with all the benefits of a Western upbringing, but said they always felt like outcasts, shunned by both white and black.

Others told stories relating the torment of physical or sexual abuse at the hands of their carers, while some, middle-aged and with families of their own, had only just discovered their Aboriginality.

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The great pity about the public's focus on the finding of genocide is that the report's other important conclusions and recommendations have been undermined.

Of the report's 54 recommendations, an apology from the State and Federal governments acknowledging Aboriginal Australians' suffering, and some form of monetary compensation, were at the top of the list.

However, despite most Australian churches, and all state and territory parliaments (except for the Northern Territory), apologising for past policies, the Federal Government has persistently refused to apologise on behalf of all Australians, and has ignored the report's recommendations of compensation.

And despite the government's promises to allocate \$63 million in funding to aid "practical assistance", by May last year, only \$13 million had been spent.

Sir Ronald blames the Government's lack of support on the fact that the idea for the inquiry originated while Labor was in office,

"They didn't have that sense of ownership as they would if it was their idea, so they poured cold water on the usefulness of the report."

According to Sir Ronald, the process of saying sorry has been proved throughout the world as a significant healing gesture, and, although an apology acknowledges the suffering of others, it does not have to imply guilt.

"John Howard doesn't think it's appropriate to say sorry for something that happened a long time ago and was in accordance with the laws of the time. Well, the report deals with contemporary suffering — people who have been away from their mothers for 30 years or more. Healing can only take place when the successor to those who made the laws expresses their regret and recognises the suffering caused."

By giving the Stolen Generations the chance to recall painful childhood memories, he believes the Bringing Them Home report has already kick-started this healing process.

Families have been reunited and many Aborigines report a sense of finally finding their true identities. But until a formal apology is made, the past will always overshadow the present.

Even today many indigenous Australians suffer from loss of self-esteem, lack of parenting skills, domestic violence and substance abuse — the festering symptoms of an unbandaged wound.

"People don't get over this kind of excessive control, it just kills their spirit," Sir Ronald says.

He says he will never forget one young man who appeared before the Inquiry:

David, 25, had been fostered by a wealthy white family that did everything it could for him, but at the age of 15 he asked a white girl to his school dance and "all hell broke loose".

Fearing further rejection, he turned to drugs and crime, and by his early 20s was a "complete wreck". By being brought up in Western society he had become stuck in the middle - estranged from his Aboriginality and rejected by his adopted culture.

In David's submission was one short sentence: "I love mum and dad, but I don't know who I am."

For Sir Ronald, this sums up Aboriginal anguish. "I don't know who I am — that's just about the worst thing you could wish on another human being. Because without knowing who you are and where you come from, you're adrift."

*This article was written by Justine Daly and published on 14th June, 2001 on Reportage Online, a web magazine of the Australian Centre for Independent Journalism's (ACIJ), part of the University of Technology, Sydney. Photo courtesy*



of ACIJ Reportage.

## **The Success Factors - Managing Change in Regional and Rural Australia**

*The Success Factors - Managing Change in Regional and Rural Australia* - a Report by the Regional Women's Advisory Council describing the key ingredients for managing change was released on 27 September 01.

The Council members are Jenny Hawkins (NSW); Janice Richardson (TAS); Elaine McKeon AO (QLD); Jenny Russell (QLD); Sue Middleton (WA); Elspeth Radford (SA); Moira O'Brien (NT); and Margaret Smith AO (NSW) and Cathy McGowan from Victoria. Established in September 1999, the Council advises the Deputy Prime Minister about issues affecting women in regional Australia.

\*In 1999, the Hon John Anderson MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, asked, "What is it that makes some regional, rural and remote communities 'work' while other communities struggle?" and "How can Government support communities?". As he consulted with communities around the country, he noted two quite different types of response to change.

The first type is presented in this study as 'successful at managing change'. It is characterised by an enthusiastic 'do it yourself' approach. The residents of these communities are 'up and at it' people.

The second general type of response is seen in communities that appear to be overwhelmed by change and have not as yet, begun to deal with it. The Minister wanted to know what made the difference.

The Minister asked the Regional Women's Advisory Council (the Council) to identify and advise on the characteristics of communities that successfully deal with change.

Action research was conducted in seven diverse communities across Australia, covering each State and the Northern Territory. Each was considered by external observers to be successful. The communities chosen were:

- Denmark (Western Australia)
- Griffith (New South Wales)
- Ceduna (South Australia)
- Hamilton (Victoria)
- Devonport (Tasmania)
- Tennant Creek (Northern Territory), and
- Cloncurry (Queensland) \*

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**Launch Speech by Cathy McGowan**

**The Success Factors - Managing change in regional and rural Australia Report by the Regional Women's Advisory Council :**

**Executive Report & Major findings of the study and implications**

## **The Success Factors - Managing change in regional and rural Australia Report**

### **Launch Speech by Cathy McGowan**

**The Regional Women's Advisory Council** was set up two years ago with representatives from all around Australia. The main purpose of Council is to give advice to government and Dept of T&RS. Our special project has been to provide "advice on managing change in rural, regional and remote Australia (triple Rs)" The result is this report - The Success Factors.

#### **The research project**

In an early meeting Minister Anderson outlined his interest in the topic and posed the question "from your perspective, as women, why are some communities managing change well, and others not so?"

The Regional Women's Unit in the Department of Transport and Regional Services managed the research project (and funded it). There have been a number of stake holders:

The research team Independent facilitator, researchers, case study communities, and our local co-ordinators

Communities in Australia both rural and non rural are very keen to learn the results.

All Governments (Federal, state and local) envisaged the results would have significant input into policy.

#### **Process of research**

Seven diverse communities were selected and we began a year ago in Denmark, WA in August 2000.

We have used action research methodology and open systems theory;

Local co-ordinators were involved as partners who were able to "harness" the movers and shakers in the community.

And the results are very practical Individual community reports, today's launch of the main report and a technical report is also available.

## **Key findings**

### **First Feelings**

The way people feel about their community has the most significant impact on a community's ability to manage change. This isn't rocket science. We have always know that feelings are important. Take the stock market for example: it's conventional wisdom that the level of confidence is directly related to movements in the market.

The research showed that when a community feels positive,  
... where there is a level of trust,  
... pride, joy, commitment and courage  
... celebrations,  
... optimism,  
... sense of fun,  
... of involvement,  
... applauding success,  
... they have managed success.

The women were very clear and strong on this point! Feelings about one's community and its success in managing change are very closely related; that a sense of belong to the community is very important, so too is caring for people and the environment and doing good for all people.

In the same way, poor change management is related to where there are negative feelings, disillusionment, sense of powerlessness, dislocation, reluctance to be involved, and a sense of no support.

### **Second Role of Volunteers**

The research has highlighted the special role of volunteers in creating these positive feelings in the community. Where people have a sense of connectedness and inclusion, they are prepared to become involved and these feelings becomes self-generating.

Adversely if there are feelings of powerlessness or exclusiveness, there is a feeling of frustration and unwillingness to become involved, volunteers tend to burn out, new volunteers are hard to find.

### **Third Other factors**

Another interesting finding in the research was the importance of diversity. Not only of skills, age, backgrounds and experiences, but also of the economic base.

There are many examples in the research where communities are diversifying their economic base, creating new enterprises and the result, often results in joy-filled festivals and celebrations, such as in Ceduna, the very successful Oyster festival. Women have played an important role in creating and developing these opportunities. It's very appropriate that many of these women of action are profiled in the book "Women Taking Action" also being launched today.

### **Strategy where to now?**

The regional statement issued by our Minister three weeks ago announced an innovative, strategic and planned approach to managing change in regional Australia. This framework, coupled with The Success Factors and a number of other report (Small Town Renewal - RIRDC report) offers great hope for the continued growth and development of regional, rural and remote Australia. The Report outlines three strategies

- ... Target communities where change is or can be perceived to have impact
- ... Particularly pay attention to involving young people and encouraging & supporting them to be part of volunteering
- ... Train (enhance) community people in the skills of working in an inclusive way have communities working with each other.

### **Role/s for Governments**

Government's role is clearly to be a partner, to support, and encourage.

- ... To help with the targeting of communities.
- ... Where appropriate, to provide a starting point,
- ... To facilitate the financial and social infra structure roads, telecommunication, health education, etc.
- ... To support voluntarism in our communities.
- ... To make it easier, not harder.

For all levels of government it is essential that recognition be given, and people understand that the way government works its practice and policy - can and obviously does - impact on feelings in community. Government is a player.

### **Researchers & Academic Institutions**

The Success Factor report, clearly makes the link between feeling good and successful managing of change. Now we need to better understand the economic implications of this. For example the benefit cost implications between policy interventions.

### **Role for Media**

For all our friends in the media, we need your help to get the message out to

those who couldn't be here today tell the story; inspire others to "begin".

### **Our role -women and men in rural communities**

The magic of this report is that it is for us! It is about what we, in this room, our friends and colleagues can do.

First to those who are "doing it" warm congratulations and thanks. Trust what you know, your experience. Our request is that in a spirit of generosity, you share your knowledge and mentor others.

For those who live in communities where things are hard, and for those who want to know where to start, may I be bold enough to offer a few suggestions:

1. Get involved. Only needs two other people (3's a great start)
2. Start with something easy: a coffee morning, cupp-a -tea, BBQ, dinner party, picnic, garden walk.
3. Invite others think diversity - think young people, new comers to the community. Invite others "in"

And when's **A great time to start would be October 15, World Rural Women's Day**. To celebrate WRWD why not do something special, generate those positive feelings, but make it easy.

Remember that Government are our partner check out the website grantslink.. or ring (free call) Country link 1800 026222 and ask them to send some information on programs. Contact the state based Rural Women's Networks.

In conclusion thank you to all our partners in this research project. It has been a major undertaking and as Chair of the Regional Women's Advisory Council I am proud and pleased to work with all our stakeholders. We have walked the talk of partnership, respect and commitment.

And finally ... my hope is that **The Success Factors** does for rural, regional and remote Australia what spring does for the cherry tree.

## **Executive Summary of The Success Factors - Managing change in regional and rural Australia Report**

The purpose of this research was:

*To identify the critical success factors, particularly those relating to community*

*capacity (human capital) that facilitate the economic/ employment, social and environmental outcomes for communities experiencing change.*

In 1999, the Hon John Anderson MP, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services, asked, "What is it that makes some regional, rural and remote communities 'work' while other communities struggle?" and "How can Government support communities?". As he consulted with communities around the country, he noted two quite different types of response to change.

The first type is presented in this study as 'successful at managing change'. It is characterised by an enthusiastic 'do it yourself' approach. The residents of these communities are 'up and at it' people.

The second general type of response is seen in communities that appear to be overwhelmed by change and have not as yet, begun to deal with it. The Minister wanted to know what made the difference.

The Minister asked the Regional Women's Advisory Council (the Council) to identify and advise on the characteristics of communities that successfully deal with change. In response, the Council commissioned an action research project in regional, rural and remote communities across Australia, during 2000 and 2001. The Regional and Rural Women's Unit within the Department of Transport and Regional Services managed the project and were active members of the research team..

Action research was conducted in seven diverse communities across Australia, covering each State and the Northern Territory. Each was considered by external observers to be successful. The communities chosen were:

- Denmark (Western Australia)
- Griffith (New South Wales)
- Ceduna (South Australia)
- Hamilton (Victoria)
- Devonport (Tasmania)
- Tennant Creek (Northern Territory), and
- Cloncurry (Queensland).

Rapid global and national economic and social change has profoundly affected rural and regional Australia. Such changes as migration to the coastal belt, relocation of services from smaller to larger centres and industrial restructuring along with improvements in efficiency, have left rural and regional Australia scrambling to adapt.

Evidence of the impacts of these changes includes:

- young people are leaving to find education, employment and greater

self-esteem

- volunteers are ageing and burning out as demand for their services increases, and
- others are reluctant to get involved.

Previous studies have shown that not all communities are coping well with the changes and the resulting uncertainty - but some are. The seven communities in this study were selected because they were judged to be relatively successful at managing this change and could be expected to be able to identify the major factors that had contributed to their success.

A program of action research was conducted in these seven communities, with women who were selected by the communities themselves. Women have long been the backbone of community volunteering and are responsible for many of the success stories in Australia today. The views of these rural and regional women needed to be heard clearly and strongly.

The project was done in two phases. The first phase involved the first three communities and explored all the factors/variables and the best way of approaching them in rural and regional Australia. The second reviewed all the findings of the first phase and developed a standardised research format and process to apply to the remaining four communities. The research comprised workshop and questionnaire components and had the explicit joint purposes of making a contribution to:

- knowledge about the factors in successful community development, and
- the communities with which it worked, through its action component in particular.

It integrated workshop and questionnaire data in its search for the major factors in, and barriers to, success at managing change, including and testing all major factors and barriers found in previous studies, in the words the women in the exploratory phase used in their workshops.

The major finding of this study is that the way the women feel about their communities:

- makes the largest direct contribution to ratings of success at managing change, and
- is the link between the factors involved in being successful and those ratings of success.

Conceptual factors ↔ sense of community ↔ **positive feelings** ↔ success

Questionnaire data showed the factors, grouped into their concepts, led to a sense of community that then led to positive feelings about the community and ratings of success. However, the workshop data showed that when the women

became more positive, they also had a greater sense of community and determination to do more. Factors in success, a sense of community and feeling positive spiral upwards together to produce more success.

While feelings have been implicated as important factors in other studies, this study appears to be the first to identify them as the single most important success factor in managing change. This is demonstrated by the following findings:

- positive feelings make the largest contribution to high ratings of success
- negative feelings make the largest contribution to low ratings of success
- trust was the only factor that made an additional contribution to success, and
- the reluctance to get involved was the only factor that made an additional contribution to a lack of success.

Statistical analyses found that the factors that make the largest contribution to 'positive feelings' are volunteering and a set of factors that lead to more ideal communities (called 'ideals' in this report). These ideals are:

- a sense of belonging, or in this case, sense of community
- caring for, and cultivating, growth
- 'doing good' for all people, and
- appreciating beauty and the importance of leading full lives in a healthy environment.

Confirming previous studies, we found that the factors that make the largest contribution to the set of ideals are:

- working in responsible, democratic groups
- trust and an environment that encourages this trust
- strong community leaders, and
- creativity.

The barriers that make the largest contribution to the development of negative feelings about communities are:

- economic rationalism at the local level (demonstrated by 'not including the broader community in future planning', and 'not planning for the next generation of leaders and volunteers')
- superficiality ('the amount of drug and alcohol use'), and
- 'inadequate support for rural and regional Australia' (which is linked to, or results from, economic rationalism at the national level).

The identification of economic rationalism and the reluctance to get involved as major barriers illustrate trends that have developed in Australian culture over time. The workshop data also showed that social polarisation, described in this



report as 'making distinctions between people', is a widespread barrier. This finding supports another recent Australian study and suggests there has been a major shift in Australian culture - there was no evidence of social polarisation twenty years ago.

The women also frequently mentioned social engineering as having had a significant impact on their communities. This reflects recent economic and social changes and confirms that these changes have profoundly affected rural and regional Australia.

This study has reaffirmed the vital importance of volunteering in rural and regional communities. However, it also shows that the reluctance by many to make a commitment is significantly reducing the rate of volunteering. When younger people in particular see others being reluctant to get involved in community activities, it reduces the chance that they will volunteer.

As demographers suggest, smaller centres will continue to be most affected by social and economic change and they are at greater risk of becoming demoralised over time. Younger people need more opportunities to create and implement their own ways of increasing the community's options, viability and quality of life.

The study suggests a strategy to simultaneously achieve:

- an increase in volunteering
- a reduction in people's reluctance to get involved, and
- more widespread success.

The critical factor is to get more people involved. Volunteering is contagious - it leads to more volunteering. The strategy translates into a further program of action research focusing on smaller centres and young people - the future leaders.

This program requires an additional workshop component to train a selection of rural and regional people in the best principles and practices of action research. This would:

- avoid potential problems
- build further capacity to manage change successfully
- reduce dependence on outside resources, and
- increase the chances of sustainability.

The workshop could itself be a motivating and energising experience, generating more of the positive feelings that have been critical to success in managing change.

## **Major findings of the study and implications**

Some of the following findings of this study would appear to have implications for policy-making at all levels of government, and for organisations working in rural and regional Australia.

1. The demographic and industrial diversity of rural and regional Australia was confirmed. Communities also identified a diverse range of barriers they had encountered. People from different generations and backgrounds felt differently about changes in their communities. The extent of this diversity confirms that 'one size definitely does not fit all' in rural and regional Australia.

2. Volunteering has consistently been identified in the study as a critical factor for the future success of rural and regional communities. It has been the single most important factor in people feeling good about their communities, and hence working for their communities' greater success. Yet the rate of volunteering is declining at a time when it is most needed to increase. Older volunteers are burning out and younger people are being discouraged from participating by the prevalence of barriers that make them feel negative about their communities.

3. The most serious barrier identified was people feeling negative about their community. The second most serious barrier was the reluctance of some to get involved. When young people see this reluctance in others, they are less likely to volunteer themselves. The women put 'giving kids opportunities to be involved' high on their list of important factors - they consider it critical that these opportunities are provided. Young people can work together in responsible groups, creating and implementing their own solutions to the dilemmas they face. In the process, they gain a sense of purpose. These dilemmas include inadequate educational and employment opportunities and a lack of recognition of their achievements. If youth continues to desert rural and regional Australia, where will the next generation of leaders and volunteers come from?

4. Economic rationalism contributed most powerfully to negative feelings. Communities want to, and given half a chance can, overcome their barriers - particularly those at the local level. Discrete problems, such as the level of drug and alcohol use, have led some to develop negative feelings about their communities. However, they have also been the catalyst for older volunteers to initiate community action. Broad State, national and international policies or philosophies, such as economic rationalism, present greater difficulties for communities. However, even here, some had made successful efforts to compensate for losses incurred within their communities. Once again the critical point is that some communities need opportunities to get started on the process of feeling better about themselves and developing success stories.

5. This study has improved our understanding of how best to strategically intervene in rural and regional communities. It has also demonstrated that communities have significant knowledge and resources available to work together to successfully deal with change. Communities have no problem

identifying their leaders who can turn barriers into opportunities. With a little topping-up of this knowledge, and advice on how to avoid potential problems, more communities can successfully manage the changes, and resulting challenges, they are facing.

Source: The Success Factors - Managing Change in Regional and Rural Australia Report, Rural Women's Advisory Council, Copyright 2001, Commonwealth of Australia

\* Source: The Success Factors - Managing Change in Regional and Rural Australia Report, Rural Women's Advisory Council, Copyright 2001, Commonwealth of Australia

## **From Family to Region - Building Links for a Sustainable Future**

**By Cathy McGowan, President, Australian Women in Agriculture**

Cathy is the national President of Australian Women in Agriculture, (AWiA) the peak organisation representing women with an interest in agriculture. She is also the chair of The (National) Regional Women's Advisory Council. This Council advises the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services on policy issues relevant to communities in rural, regional and remote Australia. In September 01, The Australian Financial Review nominated Cathy McGowan in the NGO section as one of the five most powerful people in her role as President of AWiA and Chair of the Regional Women's Advisory Council.

The speech, "From Family to Region - Building links for a sustainable future," was presented by Cathy McGowan as part of the Darling Downs Sustainable Regional Development Seminar Series by the University of Southern Queensland (USQ) in Toowoomba on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

Based on her experience of being part of the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of farmers in northeast Victoria, working and living in the community with other farming families around the Darling Downs, Cathy explores what sustainable regional development needs to incorporate and be based on. She argues that various levels of understanding are critical for such development to occur as she moves from the big picture, the local economy and environment, to the microcosm, the family unit and the individuals therein.

"It is my assumption that in regional Australia - People can and do make a difference; people can and do learn and change, and people gathered in families make a particular type of difference. Their emotions, their goals, their needs and aspirations, their values, their history and their relationships all have a big role to play in sustainable regional development."

She advises that governments "Put families at the heart of policy," that Regional Universities can research, document and articulate local knowledge. While Universities can "teach us new and different skills; of conflict resolution of



succession planning, they can reward and acknowledge the characteristics of community building and sustainable development."

Her conclusion, "Our role is to remind others that it will be the people, working in their families and communities who create sustainable regions, " is echoed in "The Success Factors - Managing Change in Regional and Rural Australia" introduced above.

"The way people feel about their community has the most significant impact on a community's ability to manage change... The research showed that when a community feels positive, ... where there is a level of trust, ... pride, joy, commitment and courage ... celebrations, ... optimism, ... sense of fun, ... of involvement, ... applauding success, ... they have managed success... In the same way, poor change management is related to where there are negative feelings, disillusionment, sense of powerlessness, dislocation, reluctance to be involved, and a sense of no support." (The Success Factors Report)

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**From family to region - building links for a sustainable future**

**By Cathy McGowan**

## ***Cathy McGowan***

Cathy McGowan was born and raised in North East Victoria, Australia. Cathy completed her undergraduate degree at Monash University in Victoria, where she majored in Economics and History.

She was awarded her Masters degree in Applied Science in Agriculture and Rural Development from the University of Western Sydney at Hawkesbury (NSW) where she studied the role and contribution of women to Australian Agriculture. Cathy is now employed (on a part time basis) by Hawkesbury supporting post graduate students.

However her main work is as a rural community consultant. In this capacity Cathy has worked for 16 years in the fields of social, community and political research. She has particular expertise in the area of participatory approaches to community consultations. Cathy has undertaken projects with a diverse range of agricultural organisations, including the dairy and wool industries. She has researched and presented position papers for various community and government agencies on rural development issues both in Australia and

overseas; she is a skilled trainer and has developed training material for community and industry organisations.

Her research experience covers many topics including, social issues impacting on the dairy industry, the delivery of support services in rural areas, such as child care and palliative care for farm families, rural health issues and leadership skills.

She is currently commissioned by the Horticulture Research and Development Corporation (HRDC) to develop leadership programs to enhance women's contribution to the horticultural industries. In this context she is working with farmers, manufactures and industry organisations.

Cathy is the national President of Australian Women in Agriculture, (AWiA) the peak organisation representing women with an interest in agriculture. She is also the chair of The (National) Regional Women's Advisory Council. This Council advises the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Transport and Regional Services on policy issues relevant to communities in rural, regional and remote Australia.

In October 01 the Women in Dairy project won an international award for excellence in extension (given by the Australian Pacific Extension Network) Cathy has been one of the managers of this project. The Australian Financial Review nominated Cathy McGowan in the NGO section as one of the five most powerful people in her role as President of AWiA and Chair of the Regional Women's Advisory Council. (AFR Sept 28th, Power in Australia). On Oct 15 - World Rural Women's Day, the Governor General launched a book in Orange, NSW "Ordinary Lives Extraordinary People" by Margaret Carroll which profiles a number of rural people, including Cathy McGowan.

Cathy enjoys farming and gardening and actively participates in local community projects such as landcare.

## **From Family to Region - Building Links for a Sustainable Future**

**By Cathy McGowan, President, Australian Women in Agriculture**

Darling Downs Sustainable Regional Development Seminar Series, University of Southern Queensland (USQ) Toowoomba June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2001

"If we keep going in the same direction, we shall end up where we are headed."

In this inaugural lecture, I am proposing that families play a pivotal role in regional development. I will be offering practical suggestions on ways of involving families; suggestions based around family friendly processes for regional development and sustainability.

I am delighted to give this address for a number of reasons. "From Family to Region - building links for a sustainable future" My first reason is personal. Toowoomba and the Darling Downs are an important part of my life and that of my "family". Members of my extended family live here. It is a place for holidays, adventures and family connected-ness. Through the efforts of my sister-in-law I have been introduced to some of the history of this most historic part of Australia. I have come to know the many characters and stories which form the basis of our shared national ethos. These include the locations and stories of Mary Grant Bruce Billabong, Steel Rudd's and the Durak family. I have a personal interest in this community building a sustainable future.

The second reason is professional. I work in the area of Rural Sociology. In my work as a rural community consultant, I strive to better understand why we do, what we do and how we can do it better. Currently, I am employed at the University of Western Sydney at Hawkesbury (NSW) in agricultural and rural development. One of the subjects I 'teach' is based around the skills of building sustainable communities. Many of my students are parents, they are also residents of regional Australia and their priorities include sustainable families living in sustainable regions.

Another reason is my interest in public policy and working with governments to support rural communities. I am Chair of the (Federal) Regional Women's Advisory Council. This group works with the Department of Transport and Regional Services and provides advice to the Deputy Prime Minister Mr John Anderson. We are currently undertaking a major research project, The Success Factors, which is investigating strategies for managing change by rural communities.

And my other interest arises from being the president of the peak, national, non-government organisation, Australian Women in Agriculture. One of the core values of AWiA is caring for people, rural families and communities and the environment, and the enhanced development to ensure the viability of future agricultural productivity.

I have a strong commitment to the role of families in all their forms and their ability to build the foundations for a strong, sustainable future, in our regions.

My life to date is firmly located within the context of family, in community and in sustainable development. I am part of the 6<sup>th</sup> generation of farmers in northeast Victoria. I live and work in the community in which I was born. My grandparents, aunts and uncles live within half an hour's drive. Like many families in my community, and families around the Darling Downs, we "care" about where we live. Our family members are active in land care, in the fire brigade, in the local Middle Indigo Primary School. Close relatives have been active in local government and on many community groups. As a family we have made a long-term investment to our community. In many ways I am shaped by my community and by the environment in which I live.

It is my belief that people who “care” for the land, farm differently – and families who “care” for the land, farm and live differently.

I believe families, and farming families in particular, bring some unique perspectives to the concept of development. However I do not want to paint too rosy a picture of ‘families’, or gloss over problems that exist, rather to set a scene for building sustainable regions, based on my own experience of working with farming families.

In my experience, families as a social unit combine and bring into a balance economic, social and environmental ways of being. They work across age and gender; are committed to the long term - they have kids!; handle and manage complexity; they work in a voluntary capacity; are generous; are skilled, are multi-functional.

For regional development to be sustainable it needs to work across traditional disciplines and to be in balance with economic, social and environmental factors.

Members of farming family, usually have extensive local knowledge of the land, the seasons, people and resources. Local families know things about the land and about the sociology of working together. They have experience of working together, with neighbours, in good times and in hard times, of working together to survive and overcome fire, flood or drought. They manage conflict.

Sustainable regional development needs to be able to understand its local environment and to empower people together—to work cross their differences.

98% of Australian farm businesses are family businesses; these are groups of people – men, women, children, grands and teenagers working together. And farming families are productive – entrepreneurial, risk takers, self-employed. These families are interdependent and together they form communities and associations. They have enormous economic power.

Sustainable regional development needs to be firmly located in strong local economic development.

I believe, and it is also my experience that in the design, planning and application of regional development, and particularly sustainable regional development, families as a unit are largely ignored. Their potential and actuality is rarely recognised or acknowledge. They are taken for granted. This is particularly my experience with farming families. As a unit they become invisible. Occasionally, recognition may be given to the mythical individual male ‘farmer’ also known as the ‘land holder’.

The major players become the ‘paid’ people, the professionals, the ones with a financial interest. I have yet to experience the selection criteria for a position on

one of the regional development planning groups where the skills of mothering and community building are recognised - wanted "practicing mother with references from her children"

**It is my assumption that in regional Australia -**

People can and do make a difference; people can and do learn and change, and people gathered in families make a particular type of difference. Their emotions, their goals, their needs and aspirations, their values, their history and their relationships all have a big role to play in sustainable regional development.

But... If we keep going in the same direction we shall end up where we are headed. If we continue to ignore the complexity and inter-relationships between individuals, families and communities we shall miss the opportunities offered to work with them to create the future. Our mistake will be that we make the assumption that families are unimportant, and we fail to give them the resources they need to grow and develop, and to help them access to skills and training.

Things do change...and...people do change. We can change our direction. It's not too late ...Bill Ford, Junior, great, great grand son of Henry (this story was reported in the Bulletin 22 May 2001). Expressed his goal for the Ford Company as being able to...

*"Build totally recyclable cars which clean the air as they drive and are produced from a new eco factory, where birds nest."*

So, if the car industry can change, can develop such a vision of sustainability, I believe its possible for us as well.

In managing this change there is a strong role for government and institutions such as Universities.

Current Government Policy - Put families at the heart of policy. Make it easier for families, rather than harder for families. Build public policy around child care and family friendly work places. Acknowledge that families are made up of individuals, who have opinions, often these are differing opinions. Provide opportunities for individuals and 'units' to be consulted. It's important for governments to ask people what they want – listen to their answers and do what they say. To understand their goals and help them work towards achieving their own aspirations – to make it easier not harder. Work in partner-ship with families.

Assume most families want to stay 'put' in their own environment, that they want to belong, that they care about where they live and care about their community. Most families want to continue to live in rural, regional or remote Australia. If they are farming they want to stay farming. The role for government



is to help them do this rather than making it harder.

An important role for government is to understand that individuals in families can be both separate and together. They can be both part of a family and an individual. As individuals they have different interests, skills and experiences; Different things to offer a community. Different goals and aspirations. Different ways of being together.

They also share common values. They are generous and keen to share their knowledge and experience. They can handle complexity and manage change,

They will survive,

They are economic beings, as well as social beings,

They care for the land, and for each other,

They want to live in a society as well as an economy,

They may not be “very” good at all this stuff but they are “good enough.”

How do we ‘go about’ the business of putting the family at the heart of sustainable regional development?

It means we, as a community can work from our strengths, not our weaknesses. Working with families and with their goals and expectations, provides the strongest possible motivation for the community and business to create the sort of future it needs and wants.

And the motivations can be for money, for education, for security, for a social life, for meaningful work, for community recognition, for a healthy lifestyle and for a future for their children.

And at the community level – what would it mean if we put families first? We would acknowledge ‘local’ knowledge, networks and experience. We would provide opportunities for locals to be together and build relationships.

We would welcome newcomers to the community and invite them to share their skills and knowledge. We would work with women, with young people; we would engage schools and sporting clubs. We would work with men. We would work together and we would work separately.

We would be solutions focused. Articulate our assumptions and expectations. Be clear about our values. Make our families and the individuals – all of them – visible. Our language would be inclusive of men and women, young and old and across occupations.

Some Government programs are already working in this direction. It's important to build and support them. Farm bis (AFFA); Building Stronger Families and Communities (FACs) Regional Solutions (DTRS) and RTC – regional telecentres.

Lets have a national plan (similar to the salinity action plan and the national competition policy) for sustainable rural communities and regions built around the assumptions outlined above. Reward institutions and authorities which make it easier for families and for individuals to work together across generations and differences.

However, there are some barriers to achieving this most desirable 'future'.

We need to think clearly about what we measure. Governments tend to value efficiency over effectiveness; communities and sustainable regional development tends to value effectiveness. In my experience, this mismatch of expectations leads to confusion. As a result we – that is communities working with government, are not clear about what we are trying to achieve – we are not clear of the goals we are striving for. We need to agree on what we are going to measure what success will look like.

Stereotypes of people and regions limit our effectiveness. In a recent survey, children were asked to draw a picture of a 'farmer' and 3% drew a farmer as a woman. This is a stereo type of who produces our food and manages the land. Most women come to farming by marriage – they are farmers, partners in the business and the family and frequently, they have different career paths and skills. We speak of 'the farmer' and the stereotype is of a white Anglo male. Rural Australia is not homogeneous, nor are its families the same. We must acknowledge and learn to work with difference. We must do the research and investigation that gives us an accurate picture of our people and regions.

### **Role for Universities**

Regional Universities can begin by undertaking this research, and to document and articulate local knowledge. Help us to 'see our selves'. Help us to gain the knowledge of who we are, what we do, how we like to work, our preferences and our differences.

Regional universities can teach the theory and practice of Australian rural sociology to those who work with rural communities. Universities can help make this knowledge accessible to professionals working - as land care facilitators, as advisors in natural resource management, as doctors, bank managers as newspaper editors. Universities can run short courses; one-day events and workshops for presidents of local community groups; offer induction programs for visiting doctors, nurses, clergy or bank managers. They can hold up the mirror that allows us to see ourselves, to learn from our own experiences and set our own direction.

Universities can create spaces, such as this forum, for new ideas to emerge, new partnerships to be forged, and new relationships to grow.

They can provide jobs and a focus for young people in rural Australia. They can help challenge the stereotypes of family, of farmer, of gender, of rural.

They can credit the skills and local knowledge we all have. Teach us new and different skills; of conflict resolution of succession planning.

They can reward and acknowledge the characteristics of community building and sustainable development.

There is a role for all of us in setting a new direction for sustainable regional development...to know and trust that...rural families will always be with us. To know that we – as families – are not going anywhere else. That our roots are too deep. Our connections are too strong. That we have made a commitment to be here for the long term. That we have a vested interest in sustainable regional development.

Our role is to remind others that it will be the people, working in their families and communities who create sustainable regions. With skill and assistance we will use technology and science as tools, we will build the relationships, the sense of confidence, of belonging.

There is a Chinese saying that “If we keep going in the same direction, we shall end up where we are headed” I want to be part of a movement to change direction.

#### References

Emery M, 2001 The Success Factors for managing change. Department of Transport and Regional Services, Canberra (Copies via Country link 1800 026222)

## **Women Taking Action - Making a Difference in Regional and Rural Communities**

This Report also produced by the Regional Women's Advisory Council profiles about 74 women from all over Australia who are managing change in a manner discussed in the previous items.

**To view Women Taking Action click here:**

[http://www.dotrs.gov.au/rural/women/women\\_taking\\_action/index.htm](http://www.dotrs.gov.au/rural/women/women_taking_action/index.htm)

## **Having a Life: Work, Family, Fairness and Community in 2000**

**By Barbara Pocock**

**Dr Barbara Pocock from the Centre for Labour Research, Department of Social Inquiry at Adelaide University authored this Report which was released in May 2001. This report examines what work is doing to Australians, by means of research amongst 150 Australian women and a small number of men.**

Dr. Barbara Pocock has been teaching and lecturing at Labour Studies, now Department of Social Inquiry, since 1987. She has been involved in unions since her working life began twenty years ago, and has worked in a wide variety of jobs: shearing sheds in New Zealand and Australia, the NSW public sector, the banking and researching the textiles clothing and footwear industries and as Workers Rights Officer at the United Trades and Labor Council of South Australia. She has been a workplace representative, conference delegate, committee member and full-time union officer in a variety of settings and industries. Barbara is a senior lecturer with extensive research experience. In recent years this has included research about the labour market, the labour movement and trade unions, gender pay equity, gender politics in unions, and industrial relations issues more broadly.

**To access the Report, Having a Life: Work, Family, Fairness and Community in 2000, click here:**

[http://arts.adelaide.edu.au/social\\_inquiry/download/HavingALife.pdf](http://arts.adelaide.edu.au/social_inquiry/download/HavingALife.pdf)

## **Beyond 2001-Child Care for Australia Report - Early childhood services in Australia**

A Report, *Beyond 2001-Child Care for Australia* by the Commonwealth Child Care Advisory Council was released in September 01.

According to Senator Vanstone, Minister for Family and Community Services, the Report shows that early childhood services are fragmented, calling for a national vision and a framework to improve early childhood services in Australia.

"Child care gets a massive investment through the Federal Government's Child Care Benefit, however child health services and preschools are a state government responsibility...The report argues that we need a national framework for early childhood services that recognises the importance of children's early years as a foundation for life. We need to improve the status and standing of children and their carers. The best interests of children should be a central focus of Australian society. We need to look at ways to improve staff retention and training to support the highest possible quality of child care service in Australia. We need to improve access for those who most need early childhood education and care, including children at risk and those with additional needs." (Senator Vanstone)

The need for a more co-ordinated system is also supported by a number of other organisations, including the recently formed Australian Council on Children and Parenting and the National Investment in the Early Years network.

**To access the Report, Beyond 2001-Child Care for Australia click here:**

<http://www.facs.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/childcare/services-chldcare.htm>