

SUSTAINING REGIONS, the newsletter of ANZRSAI

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EDITOR

Your editor apologises for the late publication of this third edition of ANZRSAI Sustaining Regions and Newsletter, which has been due to a combination of procrastination and other business.

The First Call for Papers for the ANZRSAI Annual Conference is now available on our website www.anzrsai.org The conference is to be held at University of Wollongong from 5 to 7 December 2012 and a very interesting program is being planned by our conference team. Get your abstract in before 7 September.

In place of a Contributed paper this Sustaining Regions includes a common sense review of the proposed Murray Darling Basin legislation; this is Droplet 20 from Professor Mike Young and presented with the permission of the copyright owner, University of Adelaide. The Murray Darling Basin is one of the symptoms of the endemic parochialism within the Australian Federation which illustrate the wisdom New Zealand showed in staying out.

Your Council is giving special attention to the future of ANZRSAI and to an upgrade of the website. This Newsletter contains a note on the future of ANZRSAI and an outline of recent Council discussions. We welcome and appreciate your views.

SUSTAINING REGIONS, the newsletter of ANZRSAI

Sustaining Regions, the Newsletter of ANZRSAI invites contributions on research, policy and practice relevant to urban and regional communities. These can be commentary, articles, book reviews, and descriptions of policy initiatives. Contributions must reveal the author; they will not be refereed, and will not enjoy the copyright protection of a refereed journal. Authors seeking refereeing and copyright protection should approach Australasian Journal of Regional Studies www.anzrsai.org.

CONTRIBUTED PAPERS

Which is better – The Existing or Proposed Administrative Arrangements for the MDB Basin?

“Le bon Dieu est dans le detail.” Gustave Flaubert (1821-80)

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Droplet No. 20

13th April 2012

Droplets explore ideas and propositions, which if developed further, might improve water use. They develop ideas and search for fundamental concepts and building blocks that one might consider if not constrained by prior decisions.

In 2007, the Australian Government decided to totally recast the way the Murray Darling Basin's water would be managed and passed a Water Act 2007. This Act establishes a Murray Darling Basin Authority and requires it, among many other things, to prepare a Murray Darling Basin Plan. At the time the Act was being drafted, the architects of the Act decided that the Murray Darling Basin Plan would come into effect only after the Basin's allocation problems had been fixed. The Act sets out a suite of administrative arrangements to be used while the “gap” between the current and proposed limit on water use is closed.

The Murray Darling Basin Authority has now released a draft Murray Darling Basin Plan and is seeking comments on ways to improve it. The Proposed Plan has two functions. The first function is to define the size of the “gap” to be closed and when this “gap” must be closed by. Ministers have agreed that the gap will be closed – one way or other -- by 1st July 2019.¹ The Plan's second function is to set up a suite of administrative arrangements that will come into effect on 1st July 2019.

The administrative arrangements to apply until the “gap” is closed – by the way – are very good. During the seven years between now and 2019, no-one is suggesting that these arrangements will not work well. In fact, they appear to be consistent with world's best practice. Australian water managers have much to be proud of.

Put arguments about the size of the gap and speed of closure to one side. The Proposed Plan is 210 pages long. There is a lot of detail. It heralds the introduction of a totally new suite of administrative arrangements for the Basin.

Are administrative arrangements in the “Proposed Plan” better than the existing arrangements? If they are not, then why should the administrative arrangements in the proposed Plan be adopted? Is there devil in the detail that those worrying about the gap have forgotten to check?

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To answer the above questions, one needs to compare the administrative arrangements in the “Proposed Plan” with those being used today – and get one’s head around the Water Act’s 500+ pages of legislation.

1. Defining how much water can be used

Under current arrangements, the volumetric limit on the amount of water that can be diverted from the River for consumptive purposes is defined by placing a limit on the total amount of surface water that may be diverted by users in each part of the Basin. Known as the “cap,” this limit includes all water entitlements held by for the environment by bodies like the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder.ⁱⁱ

A region’s “cap” is calculated using modelsⁱⁱⁱ that adjust for changes in development and other conditions since 1993/94. Note that the models used include consideration of climatic conditions. Adjustments for variability and change – if it has occurred – must be made.^{iv}

Under the Proposed Plan, however, the option of using a formula (a model) to adjust for climate change, etc is rejected - even though section 22 of the Water Act requires the Plan deal with the “the effects of climate change.”^v The current Murray Darling Basin “cap” is replaced with a new framework that defines Sustainable Diversion Limits for each of the Basin’s water resources.

The new Sustainable Diversion Limit framework is more simplistic than those used currently to define the “cap” for each region. Instead of retaining the a formula (a model) to adjust for change, the Authority has opted for a fixed number. The fact that the proposed new Sustainable Diversion Limit framework does not adjust for annual variability (weather) is, to say the least, surprising.^{vi} One would expect the Proposed Plan to require sustainable diversion limits to adjust automatically both for climate change and for annual variability!^{vii}

2. Risk assignment between consumption and the environment

Under the original Murray Darling Basin Agreement, almost all the downside risks of climate change were assigned to the environment. Recognising the folly of this approach, the National Water Initiative requires governments to give the environment the same degree of security as all other entitlement holders. Recognised and admired around the world as a pragmatic way to solve a difficult problem, the approach of buying water for the environment and investing in savings projects that secure water entitlements is working and giving the environment the same degree of security as that given to irrigators. This is being achieved by transferring entitlements to the environment but not changing the way they are defined.

Under the Proposed Plan, however, all “held” environmental water is defined as being outside the sustainable diversion limit.^{viii} Irrigators are once again to be protected at the expense of the environment – a short-term strategy with seriously adverse long-term risks associated with it. The pro-rata sharing arrangement that Australian Governments have been building over most of the last decade is replaced with a return to the old arrangement that caused many of the Basin’s problems to emerge!

When environmental water entitlements are “held” inside the limit, a sharing arrangement is put in place. When an entitlement is moved outside the sustainable diversion limit, those who hold entitlements inside the limit are protected at the expense of those outside the limit. From a risk-

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management perspective, this means that the administrative arrangements underpinning the Proposed Basin Plan are worse than the current arrangements.

The Authority could have decided to keep to the existing way of defining the limit and opted to improve the sharing arrangement that governments have been building over the last few years. To do this, they would have had to place a limit on the total amount of water entitlements that may be issued in a region and then define the minimum proportion of these entitlements that must be held in the environment's interest.^{ix} Instead, however, the Authority has chosen to slide back to the flawed arrangement that governments have spent most of the last decade trying to fix.^x Puzzling!

3. Adaptive management

In the process of developing the Basin Plan, the Authority has stressed the importance of taking an adaptive approach. The current suite of administrative arrangements is very adaptive, water for the environment can be sourced from any location or any water user interested in negotiating with the Government. The portfolio of water held in the environment's interest can be re-arranged and local knowledge used to find better ways to deliver environmental outcomes.

Once the Proposed Plan comes into effect, however, this arrangement stops. The only way to change the limit on the amount of water that can be used for consumptive purposes is to amend the Basin Plan. To say the least, amending the Basin Plan is politically difficult and time consuming. In practice, the Plan is locked in stone. It can be changed only through a very complex and cumbersome administrative process. During a review of the Plan, local opportunities like, for example, consideration of the opportunity to increase a Sustainable Diversion Limit in return for investment in a new wetland control structure would be, in all probability, drowned out by the need to consider bigger issues!^{xi}

To retain the advantages that come from localism and adaptation, a register along the lines set out in Droplet 19 is needed. If localism is important then it would be better to leave the current administrative arrangements in place – at least until the capacity of the new Sustainable Diversion Limit framework and the raft of policy reforms associated with it have been tested.

4. Trading environmental water

Under current arrangements, any custodian of environmental water, including the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder, can sell water allocations to irrigators.^{xii} When they do this, the total amount of water used for consumptive purposes increases but the cap stays the same. The system works elegantly.

Under the Proposed Plan and, as already explained, a new approach is introduced. Sustainable Diversion Limits are calculated on the assumption that no sale of environmental water will occur and then a regulatory patch is introduced to allow this water to be traded.^{xiii} This rather strange arrangement appears to have been included in the Proposed Plan in an effort to get around some legislative impediments that arise because of the way the Authority has chosen to define sustainable diversion limits. If the Authority had not included this regulatory patch in the Proposed Plan and an environmental water holder chose to sell some environmental water, this water would jump immediately from outside to inside the Sustainable Diversion Limit and could cause the State, unwittingly, to breach a region's sustainable diversion limit. That is, the Commonwealth or any Non-

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Government Organisation that holds environmental water could cause a State to breach its responsibility.^{xiv}

Note also that, if it was not for the presence of this regulatory patch, States would need to reduce allocations by the amount that they expected environmental water holders to sell. That is, the sale of environmental water to consumptive water users would be nothing more than a tax on them!^{xv}

When looked at objectively, the need for this regulatory patch reveals how flawed the Authority's choice of the method to define sustainable diversion limits is. When the Act and Proposed Plan are read together, we come to the conclusion that this arrangement will be judged to be inconsistent with the powers given to the Authority under the Water Act. Expect the courts to force an amendment. The Act requires that the best available scientific knowledge be used.^{xvi} Leaving the possible sale of environmental water out of the models used to estimate a Sustainable Diversion Limit and then allow such sales to occur is far short of best scientific practice. In order to get around this problem, Sustainable Diversion Limits need to be defined in a manner that keeps environmental water within the limit on the total amount of water that may be diverted from a river.

5. Enforcing the limit on consumptive use

Under current arrangements, the "cap" on water use in each region is defined using a cumulative credit and debit system designed to stop the average amount of water used in a region from rising above a pre-defined limit.^{xvii} Whenever auditors find that the cumulative amount of water being diverted has risen to more than 20% above a region's cap, the State responsible for allowing the cap to be breached is required to explain why the breach has occurred; what actions are being taken to rectify the breach and how long it will take to bring the cap register back into balance.

In the Proposed Plan, there is no change to the 20% rule but a new enforcement mechanism is introduced. When a Sustainable Diversion Limit is breached by more than 20%, the Commonwealth Minister can decide to "step-in" and take over administration of a water resource region.^{xviii} Alternatively if the offending State and the Commonwealth agree, a mediator can be appointed.^{xix} Conceptually, this is an improvement over current arrangements. The Commonwealth's capacity to take over administration of one, but not all water resource regions in a State, must be questioned. In practice, one would be surprised if this ever happened.

A better solution would be amend the Water Act so that the Commonwealth is required to buy back sufficient water allocations to prevent the breach from occurring and send the bill to the breaching State.

The Proposed Basin Plan could recommend that the Act be amended along these lines. There is no reason why an independent Authority could not use the Proposed Plan to recommend changes to the Act.^{xx}

6. Revising the limit on diversion for consumptive purposes

Under current arrangements, the amount of water available for consumptive use can be changed by purchasing water entitlements and investing in infrastructure to achieve water savings -- there is no compulsion on any water user to give up any water. Changes are negotiated!

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Once the Proposed Plan comes into effect, however, the rules of the game change and, as pointed out above, the Plan becomes very difficult to change.

When it comes to changing that amount of water that may be allocated to consumptive water users, the Water Act expressly rules out compulsory acquisition. A different, more subtle, arrangement is introduced. After 2019, a sustainable diversion limits can be lowered only by amending the Plan. The Act then requires that entitlement holders be paid financial compensation for any reduction in the value of the reliability of their entitlement less 3%.^{xxi} Use of the internationally-acclaimed market-based approach to the resolution of any allocation problems that remain or emerge after 2019 is ruled out. Once again, an internationally-acclaimed practice is aborted.

7. Managing periods of low flow

The last decade alerted Australia to the need to plan carefully for dry times. As a result, the Water Act establishes a special set of water allocation rules that come into play whenever there is not enough water to guarantee conveyance to Wellington in South Australia (Tier 2 conditions) and whenever there is not enough water to meet critical human water needs (Tier 3 conditions).^{xxii}

The Proposed Plan makes no change to the Tier 2 and Tier 3 arrangements. In fact, because of the change in the way environmental water is accounted for, when compared with the arrangements that will apply on 30th June 2019, the Proposed Plan appears to increase the likelihood of entering Tier 2 or Tier 3 conditions.^{xxiii}

8. Interception of water by trees and capture of overland flow

Under the Proposed Plan, States will be required to adjust for the adverse effects on water availability of increased forestry, increases in farm-dam interception and increases in the capture of overland flows.^{xxiv} In this aspect, the Proposed Plan is much better than existing administrative arrangements. As the cap is defined by reference to the state of development in 1993/94, one would expect the independent Auditors responsible for assessing compliance with the cap to include these effects in the models used to assess cap compliance.

Missing from the Proposed Plan is a requirement for the adverse interception effects of biodiversity plantings to be fully accounted for.^{xxv} Under the Proposed Plan, if the planting is primarily for biodiversity reasons, no offset is required, if it is “primarily” to gain access to carbon credits then offset is required.

9. Ground-surface water interaction

Concerned about Australia’s failure to manage interactions between surface and groundwater systems, the National Water Commission recommended that the onus of proof on connection be reversed. In effect, this means that, unless a groundwater resource can be shown to not be connected to a river system, it should be continue to be considered a part of the surface resource and managed accordingly. This either has not happened or the evidence has not been made publicly available. Many people are questioning the wisdom of this decision.^{xxvi} Putting these numbers to one side, the Proposed Plan’s extension of the management regime to include groundwater use appears to be one of the few features of the Proposed Plan that is superior to current administrative arrangements.

10. Trading Rules plus the Salinity and Environmental Watering Plans

The last feature of the Proposed Plan to consider is the function of the proposed

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- i) Charging and trading rules;
- ii) The water quality and salinity management plan; and
- iii) The environmental watering plan.

In each of these cases, the Act contains considerable detail. Development of trading rules is delegated to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and under the Act, the Minister may make charging and trading rules even if no Murray Darling Basin Plan exists. Similarly, arrangements for the management of salinity and water quality are well developed in the Murray Darling Basin Agreement. A Basin Plan is not needed to keep these functions alive.

The development of an environmental watering plan, however, is new. As the Commonwealth Environmental Water Holder is still in the process of acquiring water for the environment, and has little experience in managing this water, it is clear that an environmental watering plan is needed. Given the difficulty in amending this plan, it is expected that it will be necessary to leave out detail and stay with high level concepts and objectives. Given the Commonwealth's lack of administrative experience in the management of environmental water, one could argue that it would be much wiser to begin with an environmental watering plan that can be amended continuously. If this was done, then the environmental watering plan could focus on much more of the detail than the proposed arrangement allows. In short, the Basin may be better off with an informal rather than a formal environmental watering plan.

[Where to from here?](#)

Are the administrative rules in the Proposed Plan better than those established through the Water Act 2007? Putting aside the debate about the volume of water needed to restore health to the Basin's rivers, aquifers and environment, the answer is "no." Switching from the existing administrative arrangements being used to manage the Basin's water resources to the administrative arrangements proposed for July 2019 would be a retrograde step. The existing arrangements are much better. Is there a way forward? The answer is "yes". The Commonwealth can, and should, keep on securing water for the environment. Everyone knows that the Basin's ecosystems need more water. This part of the strategy is working. There is no need to stop progress.

In the meantime, the administrative rules in the Proposed Plan and the framework for managing the Basin's water need to be improved. Amongst other things, there is a need for the Authority to be able to define sustainable diversion limits in a manner that preserves the current risk-sharing model and continues to treat all entitlement holders – including the environment – equally. There is also a need to enable management to be as adaptive after 2019 as it is today. Irrigators may also be interested in the repeal of the compulsory reduction with partial compensation arrangements that come into play after 2019.

In short, the rules and framework in the Proposed Plan need to be better than current administrative arrangements. As presently drafted, this Droplet finds that the proposed administrative arrangements are worse than the current ones. We conclude that the Basin and all those people would be better off if the Commonwealth Government continued to close the gap by 2019 and insisted on a major rewrite of the Proposed Plan's administrative arrangements.

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Note: To assist those interested in checking more of the detail, a series of endnotes with extracts from the Act and the Proposed Basin Plan were attached to this droplet, and are available under Droplet 20 at www.myyoung.net.au .

Authors' acknowledgements

We acknowledge the comments on drafts of this Droplet by Richard Davis, Peter Hoey, Anjali Kundu, David Paton, John Quiggin, John Radcliffe, Rob Rendell, Mark Siebentritt, Alistair Watson, John Williams, and several others whose names must remain anonymous.

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ANZRSAI acknowledges and thanks The University of Adelaide and the authors for permission to reproduce this section of Droplet 20.

Murray Darling Basin Plan: Some notes from the Adelaide public meetings

Few issues have demonstrated the failure of the Australian Federation to address effectively and equitably regional problems as clearly as 110 years of wilful negligence in the management of the Murray Darling Basin. The problems of the basin are marked by uncertainty about the economic and environmental effects of interventions, contested values and goals among the communities in the basin, and the complexity of the environmental, economic and social systems in the basin. This is truly a wicked problem.

Brian Head, in a recent article in *Regional Science Policy and Practice* (2011, 3(3): 219-231) argues that regional policy is prone to wicked problems and that wicked problems are likely to require a joined up solution. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority is attempting a joined up process leading to a solution over seven years.

Adoption of the draft Basin Plan is expected to occur in 2012 subject to passage by the Commonwealth Parliament. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority is proposing a pathway of consultation and adaptive water management over the period to 2019, during which time the sustainable diversion limits in the Basin Plan will not be enforceable, and the State Water Resource Plans must be developed and accredited as aligning with the sustainable diversion limits in the Basin Plan. (See 'Basin Plan implementation pathway process', Licensed from the Murray-Darling Basin Authority under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Australia Licence. MDBA publication number 28/11. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority, including the Commonwealth, does not necessarily endorse the content of this publication.)

A key point of contention has been the determination of an environmentally sustainable level of take (ESTL) that balances the various needs of the environment, water users and communities, with the constraints affecting the capacity to deliver water through the system to the targeted uses. Following much study and assessment the Murray-Darling Basin Authority calculated an Environmentally Sustainable Level of Take at 10,873 GL/y. While this requires taking 2,750 GL/y from the 2009 baseline, a total of 1,282 GL/y has already been returned or is planned to be returned following existing infrastructure investments. The amount remaining to be recovered is 1,468 GL/y. (See

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MDBA Fact Sheet 03/11. The proposed 'environmentally sustainable level of take' for surface water of the Murray-Darling Basin)

Some of the constraints on river flow are also a result of historical decisions, also taken without consideration for the effects on downstream water users, such as shacks and urban development on flood plains. There remain known unknowns, such as ground water flows.

The Australian Federation is not good at joined up solutions where the parochial interests of the States are involved. The South Australian Premier is reported as having given instructions to prepare a High Court challenge to the Plan if and when it is legislated; the other States will not be far behind.

This debate illustrates the seemingly perpetual paralysis of the Federation when the interests of the States are in conflict. Editor.

Regional Australia Institute

It is pleasing to see prominent Australian researchers accepting invitations to become Fellows of the Regional Australia Institute. These include Professor Andrew Beer, Professor A. J. Brown, Professor Chris Cocklin, Professor Graeme Hugo, Professor John Martin, Professor Fiona Haslam McKenzie, Professor John Tomaney, and Adjunct Professor Tony Sorensen, all of whom will be well known to members of ANZRSAI.

A Research Advisory Committee has been established consisting of Professor Sandra Harding (Chair), Professor Ngiare Brown, Professor Andrew Beer, Professor Graeme Hugo, and Professor John Tomaney. The committee is to assist in the development of a research agenda aligned with the vision and framework set by the RAI. A research agenda has been published and contains imperatives of

- bringing forward community perspectives, each piece of major research will be required to devote some of its resources to an investigation of relevant community perspectives;
- developing practical solutions, going beyond the identification and analysis of problems and focusing on realistic pathways for change, and
- building on existing work by related institutions domestically and internationally.

The research themes are

- providing accessible and robust benchmark information on position and potential,
- realising the most important opportunities in regions with significant unrealised potential, such as coal seam gas, broadband and fly-in fly-out mining,
- documenting consequences and perceptions of change, such as mining investment, downsizing of steel and aluminium, water buy-backs and the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, and urban to regional migration, and solutions providing successful transitions, and
- better government service delivery models and technologies and more effective engagement.

The Regional Australia Institute has now commissioned consultants to conduct a stocktake of regional research. Details of the announcement are given elsewhere in this edition. ANZRSAI will of course cooperate because regional research and practice are central to our being. However your editor continues to wonder why there has been no approach to or consultation with your Council on a matter so central to our being. Editor

CURRENT RESEARCH ABSTRACTS

Australasian Journal of Regional Studies

Vol. 18, No. 1, 2012

Export driven Regional Development: A comparison of policies based on Tiberi- Vipraio-Hodgkinson innovation strategies and networked information flows

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ABSTRACT: Sixteen supply-side and seven demand-side export promoting policies were simulated and examined for export and associated employment impacts. Policy design considered the spatial distributions of export promoting and constraining variables defined within the Tiberi-Vipraio Hodgkinson (TVH) regional innovation context typology (2000), and examined movements in their value-added industry support export enhancing information multipliers. These were derived using innovation indicator matrices (IIMs) within an extended input-output framework as designed by the author. The information sector was derived using a modified decomposition and aggregation (Jussawalla et al., 1988) whilst IIMs build upon DeBresson's (1999) innovative interactive matrices to show innovation strategy information spillover contributions rather than innovation inputs and outputs as an intermediate transactions quadrant subset. Policy simulations showed that information sharing consistent with the innovative milieu theory best stimulated exports and associated employment. That is, assistance to promote related scientific research delivered the best export, associated employment outcomes and related flow-on effects.

Adaptive Regions, Deliberative Power Spaces and the Sustainable Development Platform Method.

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ABSTRACT: Neo-liberal ideologies continue to pervade the regional sciences and Australian regional and economic development policy. But is neo-liberalism still our sharpest tool for creating adaptive regions in this post-globalised age of the 'me' individual? A paradigm shift is needed – one that takes us beyond neo-liberalism and social capitalism and towards a renewed social liberalism. Such a transformation, it is argued, would better suit emerging policy needs in an unstable world. In this paper, the Sustainable Development Platform Method's (SDPM) institutional governance design, core processes and knowledge sharing phases are explored to reveal their capacities for organising power structures and relationships. Using the SDPM, regional development agents can create Deliberative Power Spaces where relational and structural power transparency is increased and subjected to social scrutiny and community interaction. Increased community ownership of power within regional development praxis can facilitate regional adaptability whilst fostering increased social responsibility and re-embedded social economies.

Well-Being Economics and Regional Science

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ABSTRACT: In this Presidential Address delivered to the 35th ANZRS AI conference, the author recalls his introduction to regional

science during his 1981 Masters' studies. He recalls New Zealand's economic reforms (1984-1994), using Census data to illustrate how central government policies caused considerable hardship in all of New Zealand's regions. He reflects on changes since 1999, especially after the introduction of the regional partnerships programme in 2000 and the passing of the Local Government Act in 2002. In that context, he comments on what is termed here as the McCann critique, which cautions against the policy use of constructs not amenable to formal empirical evaluation. The paper finishes with a recent contribution by the author on 'well-being economics'. It shows how the 'market value-added' created by providers of goods and services in New Zealand's sport and outdoor recreation sector is outweighed by the 'personal value-added' that New Zealanders create for themselves by participating in sport and outdoor recreation activities.

Building Regional Adaptive Capability through a Local Government Insider-Researcher Network

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ABSTRACT: This paper reports on the development and early deployment stages of an on-going local government 'insider-researcher' network. This represents a new model for research engagement and development between regional universities and local councils. It serves as an infrastructure to generate multi-level benefits to the parties involved. That is: the development of knowledge and skills for the individual council employee participant; research and action on strategic projects for the councils involved; and, collaboration, knowledge development and exchange between councils and local tertiary institutions. This model may provide

impetus to other councils seeking ways to build their internal capabilities and capacities to be able to respond effectively to the diverse challenges faced in the regional government sector. Over time, the numerous and multidisciplinary research outputs generated from such an initiative contribute to sector knowledge and councils' abilities to initiate and lead effective changes in policy settings and sector practices.

Is there a Case for Regional Policy in Australia?

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ABSTRACT: This note draws on some European literature to address whether there is a case for regional policy in Australia. It concludes that a place-based approach does not provide all the answers to addressing problems associated with spatially uneven development (such as overheated housing markets, congestion of roads and public transport, and structural adjustment in carbon intensive industries), but it does provide a new way of tailoring responses to them as they impact upon people and businesses differently across regional cities, rural regions, and the outer suburbs of the capital cities.

AJRS Vol. 17, No. 3, 2011

A Doctor's Contribution to Regional Development in Katoomba, New South Wales, 1887-1907

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ABSTRACT: Regional and community innovations in Australia's early social and local-government history are often a reflection of the social, political and economic context in which they operate. This paper uses a microhistorical approach to explore the contribution of one individual, Dr John Spark, to the Municipality of Katoomba between 1887 and 1907. His local-government reforms relate to the financial management and reporting practices of the Katoomba Council during 1893-1894. These reforms included regular reporting and reviewing of major expenditure items, separate reporting of extraordinary items, separation of capital expenditure and recurrent expenditure, and the presentation of detailed comparative reports. Some of Spark's community involvement included his role as an advocate for sanatoriums in the Blue Mountains, resulting, in part, in the establishment of two sanatoriums at Wentworth Falls in 1903 and 1908. Spark's death in 1910 left a legacy of improved local-government reporting and inspired community service.

Spatial Effects of 'Mill' Closures: Does Distance Matter?

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ABSTRACT: When small towns experience a major shock, such as a 'mill' closure, the effects can be devastating. We analyse the effects of two major meat works closures in New Zealand, Patea (1982) and Whakatu (1986). These examples provide an interesting comparison: Whakatu is located close to a city, while Patea is relatively isolated. We describe

the impacts of these shocks on population, employment and housing in each town, and contrast adjustment dynamics resulting from their differing locations. Both towns experience negative population and employment impacts; however, consistent with benefits of a near-city location, the effects on Whakatu are mainly temporary, whereas the effects on Patea are more permanent. Population age-groups respond differently to the shocks, consistent with homeownership being a factor stifling migration responsiveness. The results have implications for regional development policy and programmes designed to stimulate homeownership.

Latecomers: Charting a Course for the Wine Industry in the New England Australia Region

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ABSTRACT: The Australian wine industry is currently experiencing a correction, ostensibly a victim of its own success. Some observers have concluded that prospects for the industry in the medium- to long-term are strong. However, a consortium of peak industry

organizations recently called for more radical approaches to industry restructuring to protect its core viability. Against these uncertain prospects, this paper adopts a multidisciplinary approach to analyse the prospects for one of Australia's newest wine regions, New England Australia. We argue that despite the barriers to its development, a commercially sound course can be charted for New England Australia. This course is based on a regional strategic alliance featuring leadership, improved inter-industry cooperation, niche marketing and a branding strategy focused on what is unique to the region.

REGIONS & PRACTICE

Campaign encourages sea-or-tree change

Regional Development Victoria has launched a new advertising campaign to encourage city-dwellers to consider a life in the country. The Good Move campaign shares first-hand stories from people across Victoria who have made the move, including how they overcame initial challenges.

The campaign will include a series of television advertisements on free to air stations to showcase the many benefits of life in regional and rural communities. The campaign was built on the back of new research that revealed just how many Melbourne residents were considering a change.

The research showed one in ten people living in Melbourne were considering a move to country Victoria within the next three years, while a further 39 per cent said they would consider it at some stage in the future. The campaign also builds on the success of Victoria's first Regional Victoria Living Expo, which was held in April and had more than 8000 visitors inquiring about life in regional and rural areas.

For more information visit the Good Move website. <http://www.goodmove.vic.gov.au/>

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Psychology clinic helps rural Australians

by Rachel Broadley

UniSA's Psychology Clinic is helping people in rural South Australia with the first video therapy service of its kind. The video therapy program, run in conjunction with Country Health SA, offers free, unlimited psychology services to clients in Port Augusta and surrounding communities via video-link at the same time as teaching trainee psychology clinicians.



Dr Susan Simpson, Clinic Director (pictured above), developed the idea after providing a similar service to residents of the Scottish islands of Shetland and Orkney while working as part of the mental health team in Aberdeen, Scotland.

She says the thrice-weekly service, which launched earlier this year, could help to address a shortage of psychology services in rural and remote areas.

“This service grew out of an awareness that there is a distinct shortage of clinical psychologists working in remote and rural parts of Australia, and consequently there is an

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inequitable psychology service provided to people living in remote areas,” Dr Simpson says.

“Three days each week we offer sessions to people living in Port Augusta who are referred to us by the community mental health team, provided by our Master in Clinical Psychology students.

“The students are enrolled in a two-year postgraduate course that enables them to

forget about the technology, and it’s great for our students to get experience offering this sort of service.

“We train the psychologists to become aware of other ways of expressing empathy – to use their voice more and to use more non-verbal gestures, for example. You can’t hand a patient a box of tissues, but you can be more expressive in the way you support them with what you say.”

“We’re conducting research over the year to see if a whole year of video therapy, with plenty of encouragement, support and supervision, will improve students’ confidence and competence using the technology to enable them to go on afterwards and offer that service to remote areas.

The students help clients with a variety of issues, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, self-esteem issues, schizophrenia and other psychotic illnesses, sleep disorders and eating disorders.

Each trainee is closely supervised by a qualified clinical psychologist, who observes the sessions under strict confidentiality.

Dr Simpson says the feedback has been encouraging.

become clinical psychologists once they’ve finished.

“The system itself is very straightforward and easy to use; it’s like using a telephone, and both clients and clinicians find that after about five minutes using the system it’s just like talking face-to-face.

“People are sometimes apprehensive to start with but once you start focusing on the difficulties a person is having, you tend to

“Research so far shows that clients are quite comfortable and consider the therapeutic relationship to be equal to the one they would have face-to-face – they aren’t inhibited by the technology at all,” she says.

“We hope to continue with the project and expand to Roxby Downs, Quorn and other more remote areas where historically it has been difficult to access psychology services.

“The benefits for students are that they are learning an innovative new way of offering psychological therapies that they won’t get anywhere else.

“Clients get a service they wouldn’t otherwise get, and when we forge ahead to other remote areas that will be even more the case.

“Hopefully people living in remote areas will benefit in the longer-term because psychologists will feel more willing, able and confident to provide therapies using technology which they hadn’t been in the past.”

Shirley Rochford, team leader of the Community Mental Health Team in Port Augusta, says the service is invaluable to clients. “This service is very important to us here in Port Augusta; I have already seen great benefits within our clients who are in the program,” she says.

“Their anxieties have reduced, their risks are minimal on updated assessments, we provide a debrief session for the clients afterwards if they wish to partake, and the staff feel supported in their endeavours to provide a holistic approach to their clients’ well-being and health outcomes.

“I feel that this service is now embedded into our working practices and programs. I foresee that UniSA video therapy will become a large part of our service delivery not only to ourselves but to the Port Augusta community and outlying areas of North and Far Western regions.”

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Productivity Commission: Role of Local Government as Regulator

On 18 July 2012 the Productivity Commission released its research report “Performance Benchmarking of Australian Business Regulation: Role of Local Government as Regulator”

The key points are as follows:

- Implementing and enforcing state and territory laws, rather than local laws, dominates local governments’ regulatory workload.
- While the Commonwealth has very limited powers to make laws for local government, it can influence them via national frameworks, such as food safety.
- In addition to local laws and quasi-regulatory instruments, rules can be imposed on business by ‘decisions’ determined under other laws, such as occurs with permits (including development approvals), licences, leases or

registrations. Although they can impose costs on business and/or be anti-competitive, local instruments do not face as much scrutiny as state, territory or Commonwealth regulation.

- Burdens on business arise from delays, information requirements, restrictions on approvals, fees and penalties. Local governments can also prevent a business from operating or realising opportunities. Building, planning and land-use regulations impose the largest burdens on business.

- Unnecessary business burdens will be lower when local governments regulate well. The most important gaps in the support from states to local governments are:

- insufficient consideration of local governments’ capacity to administer and enforce regulation before a new regulatory role is delegated to them
- limited guidance and training on how to administer and enforce regulations
- no clear indication and ranking of state regulatory priorities.

- Leading practices for the states and the Northern Territory, include:

- guidance to local government in writing regulation, such as Victoria’s Guidelines for Local Laws
- incentives for local governments to achieve scale and scope economies in regulatory functions
- periodic assessment of the stock of local regulation and state regulation requiring a local government role
- efficient cost recovery for local government regulatory functions
- guidance to local government in the scrutiny of the impact of laws
- graduated review and appeal systems for both local government decisions and processes
- having regulatory decisions made by bodies which take account of all impacts
- removing or managing the conflicting objectives between local governments’ regulatory and other functions

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– a comprehensive central register of the state laws for which local government has a role in administration, enforcement and/or referral.

The link for the report is:

<http://www.pc.gov.au/projects/study/regulationbenchmarking/localgov/report>

10th July 2012

Regional Arts Australia Awards 2012 – Winners Announcement

Regional Arts Australia is pleased announce and introduce you to our 7 National RAA Award winners for 2012.

The recipients of these awards will be presented at the RAA National Conference Kumuwuki Big Wave in Goolwa South Australia on Sunday 21 October 2012.

The RAA Awards program acknowledges the invaluable contribution volunteer leaders make to the cultural life of their local communities. These awards recognise outstanding contributions from a rural or regional arts based volunteer who has been involved in an arts project, event, organisation or community in regional Australia.

The RAA Awards program endeavours to acknowledge and inspire others to engage, lead and commit to the success of our art and cultural communities across Australia. The state and territory winners below will receive a complimentary registration to the RAA National Conference in Goolwa (all expenses paid) and public recognition through our high profile award presentation.

Regional Arts Australia's Patron His Excellency Mr Michael Bryce, AM, AE will be attending and presenting the awards to the 2012 recipients.

“The many thousands of individuals who volunteer their time and skills to ensuring the cultural health of their community is without doubt one of the key pillars of guaranteeing regional and remote arts opportunities exist,” said RAA Executive Director Jane Scott.

President of RAA, Lee Cole adds “Regional Arts Australia has a long history and commitment to volunteer engagement across all aspects of our operation. This Awards Program allows us to draw attention to the extraordinary difference individuals can make to their local communities through volunteering.”

Congratulations to our winners!

Western Australia – JENNY BROUN

Jenny Broun is the dynamic driving force behind an incredible arts explosion in Beverley. For the last 30 years her vision and leadership has seen Beverley Station Gallery and Platform Theatre become a focus point for the arts in the Wheatbelt region. Whilst being President in 2010, she raised funds to restore the old railway station into an arts gallery space for the Shire's art collection and accommodation for resident artists. In 2008, Jenny applied for grants to oversee the construction of the town's first outdoor theatre by converting the train platform into a stage-home to now two successful summer performance seasons. Jenny also designed the Station's entrance clock archway and gardens. Her longevity and commitment to her regional town is extraordinary. A leader in the arts and cultural life of Beverley for the past three decades, Jenny's nomination showed outstanding support from a wide range of people and demonstrated her value to the artistic life of Beverley.

Queensland – JENNIFER WRIGHT SUMMERS

Jennifer Wright Summers is an inaugural member of Arts Council Toowoomba formed

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in 2006. Jennifer's commitment to creating opportunities for regional artists is demonstrated through ACT's 'Avant Garden' and annual Postcard Projects, 'What is Blue' and 'ImpACT 2012' Exhibitions. She is a role model for artists in the region through mentoring and personally supporting artists in the staging of their exhibitions as well as her tireless encouragement and promotion of members' exhibitions and activities. Jennifer has been an advocate for the establishment of Toowoomba Regional Council's Public Art Policy which has utilized her capacity to build respected relationships between councillors, businesses, artists, consultants and local community members and most recently as the driving force behind ACT's Splashing Back Mosaic Project. Her volunteering skills include grant writing and successful auspicing and acquitting of grants, media writing, organising capacity building workshops and all aspects of project and committee management. As well as her own contribution to the arts through her sculptural, painting, musical and audio visual arts practice she volunteers her time to perform in the Women in Harmony Choir at local municipal events such as Lions Club Christmas Wonderland, Toowoomba Multicultural Day, Toowoomba Languages and Cultural Festival, Toowoomba Harmony Day and art exhibition openings, to name a few. Jennifer was chosen to win the award because she has demonstrated an outstanding contribution to the Arts in her community, her commitment to creating opportunity for regional artists and tireless volunteering work.

Tasmania – MARGARET BARLOW

Margaret Barlow has a long and broad involvement with many community arts organisations. She has been a long term volunteer with the Embroiders Guild; Spinners and Weavers Guild; Launceston Film Society; Friends of QVMAG and the Tasmanian Folk Federation as well as Tasmanian Regional Arts. Margaret has also committed higher level

support though her voluntary membership of the Festivale Committee, the Tasmanian Regional Arts Board and the Launceston Arts Council. Margaret has worked in health as an Occupational therapist and through this work has voluntarily supported many arts and health activities in the north of the state, including hosting exhibitions in the Launceston General Hospital. Margaret contributes to events and activities such as the Latrobe Chocolate Winterfest as an artist as well as taking part in arts and environment projects such as the NRM Project Hooked! Margaret represents the prime example of a volunteer working at many levels to support her communities. Through her advocacy, face to face work and energy she has been involved in the broadest range of community groups and organisations, many of which address arts and health or support the creative activities of people experiencing various disadvantages. She is a passionate advocate for the arts of regional communities and goes about supporting the arts in communities with quiet yet boundless enthusiasm as she has done for many years.

Victoria – LESLEY JACKSON

Lesley Jackson has notably devoted almost 30 years of her life to enhancing arts and culture in her community of Portland. Not only has she opened up her own home to artists and arts volunteers, but she has consistently identified gaps and needs in her community and committed to either personally resourcing projects, or discovering others able to input into worthy and quality arts work. Lesley has worked to create a sustainable arts environment and precinct and has significantly supported arts and cultural history in her community. Lesley's achievements include playing a significant role in creating an arts space for artists at Julia Street Creative space (formerly The Arts Company), former chairperson of Julia Street Creative Space and June Hedditch Studios, continually working on improving Portland's Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts,

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advocate for arts to be included in the Upwelling Festival and consequent participation in community projects on the Portland foreshore and shopping precinct, former Secretary of the Arts Portland/Heywood which initiated Jazz in the Vines and RAV projects, former member of the Glenelg Council Strategy Committee, former member of Historic Buildings Restoration Committee, previous member of the Victorian Arts Council, and a member of Portland Emerging Artists residency 1999-2004.

Northern Territory – STEVE ANDERSON

For the last 33 years, Steve Anderson has contributed many hours to the indigenous and non-indigenous arts communities in Alice Springs and Central Australia, both in an employed position at Bachelor Institute, having set up the Arts and Craft course 18 years ago, and in various volunteer roles, in the Top End and Central Australia. Steve has a long and comprehensive history of involvement with both Red Hot Arts Central Australia (RHACA) and the Alice Desert Festival (ADF). He has contributed his time and efforts both in a paid and volunteer capacity over the last ten years. From 2003 to 2006 Steve assumed the role of Treasurer on the board of the ADF; then in 2008 he worked in conjunction with RHACA to create screen printed banners for the ADF, commissioning local artists to do the designs. This prompted RHACA to continue to use screen printing as an accessible and collaborative art form suitable for the broad community here in Alice Springs and within Central Australia. Steve's tireless efforts and dedication to facilitate screen printing at RHACA has prompted the development of artists, increased employability of those artists and provided an avenue for community wellbeing and cohesiveness.

New South Wales – MERRILL FINDLAY

Merrill Findlay conceived and developed the inaugural 2011 Kalari-Lachlan Arts Festival

held in Forbes. The festival was a way to bring the Forbes indigenous and non-indigenous community together after a long period of drought. Merrill coordinated the involvement of a wide range of partners, spanning local council, churches, senior citizens, disabled people, sports groups, local business and youth groups. She was responsible for all aspects of media, funding, venues, community groups, liaising officer with council, partners, advertising and website creation. She used the talents of the local community to construct a festival committee across 14 individual Ministries. Additionally, she wrote the Kate Kelly Song Cycle, a chamber opera interpretation of the life of Ned Kelly's sister, which acknowledged local Chinese and Irish heritage of the area along with the Wiradjuri people. By instigating a major arts festival in Forbes, Merrill inspired a diverse section of the community to come together and celebrate the region. The festival engaged a broad range of project partners including Central West Astronomical Society, Forbes Netball, Lachlan Catchment Management Authority and NSW Probation and Parole Service. Merrill made the festival a success by creating an organisational structure that empowered community members to have a direct input into the festival. She worked tirelessly to secure ongoing funding for the festival, while committing to gaining new skills and attending training in order to drive its development. Merrill was praised by Canowindra Community Health for improving the mental health of Forbes residents, while Forbes Shire Council has confirmed the Kalari-Lachlan Arts Festival will now become a regular bi-annual event that it hopes to build into the major cultural event in its region over the next five to 10 years.

South Australia – KARYN ROBERTS

Karyn is a member of the Generations in Jazz Advisory Board, Executive Officer and Logistics Co-coordinator of the Event which she has been involved with for over 30 years. Generations in Jazz is now a well-established

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event in the Australian jazz calendar, held every year in Mount Gambier over 3 days during May bringing together many of Australia's most talented jazz musicians. This year's event featured 2,500 young performers including students from 22 schools across Australia. Karen is also a member of the committee responsible for establishing the Generations in Jazz program offered at Tenison Woods College which accepts only 18 students a year from across Australia. Karyn has become instrumental in the substantial growth of the event, artistically, culturally and economically which has provided significant cultural tourism benefits to Mount Gambier and the Limestone Coast region.

For all media enquiries please contact Abby Edwards, Regional Arts Australia
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Regional Australia Institute

Su McCluskey, Chief Executive Officer,
Regional Australia Institute has forwarded the following to all subscribers to
www.regionalaustralia.org.au.

The Regional Australia Institute is undertaking a Stocktake of Regional Research to catalogue existing research on regional issues.

The Stocktake will help make the knowledge from existing research more readily available to users of research in the community, government and industry.

Products from the Stocktake will include:

- An online searchable database of research undertaken since 2000 that anyone can search to identify existing knowledge on regional issues of interest
- A series of literature reviews summarising the state of knowledge for each RAI research theme

- A list of the datasets available for analysing regional issues; and
- A gap analysis to identify areas of knowledge where further effort is needed.

The aim of the stocktake is to make it much easier to identify and use relevant research when working on regional issues.

Why a Stocktake?

Many researchers and users of research in regions and government have identified the on going challenge of connecting with relevant existing knowledge about regional development to enable good policy and decisions to be made.

The Stocktake of Regional Research is a long term solution to this issue. It will benefit both the people involved in regional development who need easy access to the latest knowledge and also researchers who want to see their work taken up and used for the benefit of regions.

When will it be finished?

The Stocktake project is underway now. The initial work will be completed in October 2012 and is expected to be released on our website in early November.

However, the stocktake will be an on-going project. RAI will keep the information up to date so it remains useful and relevant over time. Information on new research will be uploaded on the database as it becomes available.

How you can help?

RAI needs your assistance in completing the stocktake process. We need help in identifying relevant research and in designing the on-line database so that it will be useful for you when it is finished.

As a first step, an online survey will be sent to all subscribers to [ww.regionalaustralia.org.au](http://www.regionalaustralia.org.au).

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ANZRSAI encourages members to contribute information to the project. To do so you should subscribe at www.regionalaustralia.org.au/subscribe

You will be sent an on-line survey.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

ANZRSAI Annual Conference University of Wollongong Connecting Regions: Research, Practice and Policy

5 – 7 December 2012

7th September 2012: Final date for submission of abstracts and proposals for sessions on particular topics.

30th September 2012 Final date for early bird registration.

28th October 2012 Final date for submission of full paper by authors wanting their contribution to be peer reviewed for the conference proceedings or considered for the best paper Awards.

11th November 2012 Final date for conference registration for paper presenters, for their paper to be confirmed in the programme.

25th November 2012 Final conference programme published on the conference website.

4th December 2012 Conference opens with a cocktail reception at The Wollongong City Gallery at 6:00pm.

The home page for the conference can be accessed via the Association's own website, www.anzrsai.org or directly at <http://www.uow.edu.au/commerce/research/conferences/2012anzrsaiconference/index.html>

2012 International Rural Network World Forum

Rural and Remote Resilience: Making the Priorities Possible

24 - 28 September 2012

University of South Australia

Whyalla, South Australia

[Call for Abstracts](#)

IRN 2012 aims to link community groups and practitioners with researchers / academics and or policy makers / industry. IRN 2012 will focus on the policy and governance challenges related to the differences between regional, rural and remote communities.

Topics include volunteers / volunteering, indigenous knowledge and its importance to the "local", regional, rural & remote labour markets, technology and how it advantages or disadvantages regional, rural & remote communities, water and development, climate change, macro- and micro-migration, leadership, governance, speed of change, mindsets of poverty, UN Millennium Development Goals and new ways of thinking about resilience. We are interested in hearing about practical applications of new knowledge – knowledge for communities, knowledge for businesses & productivity and knowledge that informs policy for regional, rural & remote places.

Abstracts must be submitted by email to irn2012.abstracts@unisa.edu.au Submission deadline is 29 February 2012. Final presentations for accepted abstracts must be received by 31 May 2012. Guidelines for the formatting of presentations and papers will be sent to successful participants.

Details from the organisers at irn2012.enquiries@unisa.edu.au
www.international-rural-network.org

ABOUT ANZRSAI

Future of ANZRSAI

During the 35th Annual Conference of ANZRSAI, the President convened an informal meeting of interested members to discuss the future of the Association. About 20 members participated. This document is a summary of the main themes in the discussion as recorded in handwritten notes made by the President during the meeting. It was tabled at the ANZRSAI Council meeting of February 2012.

The discussion began with some references to the challenging policy environment for regional science in Australia at present. The conference had received some sponsorship from DOTARS, but the Minister had not accepted our invitation to open the conference, nor had he offered to send a colleague or official.

Economic Development Australia (EDA) has good access to policy circles and thinks the presentations at the conference would be of considerable interest to policy advisors and practitioners. The Board of EDA meets in Parliament House every year and there are meetings with MPs. DORA also come along to meet with EDA. The group in BITRE are producing some great material – internationally rigorous, policy oriented, analytically sound, but not always getting through.

It was suggested that ANZRSAI should send a complimentary copy of its journal to all MPs and government departments. There are relevant cross-party committees in Parliament that should welcome authoritative analysis of regional issues. Our conference should be a way of cementing networks that public policy agencies can use to recruit skilled staff, to commission new research and to obtain

professional opinions. This might be the basis for seeking sponsorship from these agencies; to raise their profile among graduating research students.

It was suggested that the Association should issue a communiqué at the end of its conference, highlighting a few key points from the plenary sessions or submitted papers. Another suggestion was that our next conference should ask contributors to address ‘outcome questions’ such as:

- “What does your paper contribute to the discipline?”
- “How does the new knowledge in your paper help policymakers decide what to do?”

There was a discussion about the low numbers of members compared to a decade ago. It is clear that the Association has lost its practitioner base of that period, especially after the rise of alternative conferences that aim specifically for that group. It was suggested that this is partly a question of how people engage; practitioners and academics have different attitudes to written papers, for example. One person, however, was proud to adopt a title of “pracademic” and thought the distinction can be overemphasised.

Low numbers are not necessarily bad. The British and Irish section of RSAI is an example of an association with about 150 members and about 100 attending each year’s conference. The important point is that members should be able to recognise the benefits of belonging. There was strong support for the suggestion that a major benefit of ANZRSAI is its support of multi-disciplinary approaches to regional issues.

There was a discussion about how to be attractive to young scholars, first to interest them in the field of regional science and second to interest them in ANZRSAI. A young scholar commented that as a new academic it

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is personally important “to make a difference”; hence engaging with policy advisors as part of the conference would be valuable. This includes listening to presentations from policy analysts. The same person commented that ANZRSAI needs to make a particular effort to raise its profile among emerging researchers, since it is easily overlooked. This includes overseas students in Australian universities.

A specific suggestion was to host a research student colloquium either the day before the annual conference or as a dedicated conference stream. The aim would be to encourage and mentor emerging researchers in a supportive environment. Another specific suggestion was that our international linkages should be attractive to emerging researchers.

There was a suggestion that the Association should aim to foster quality regional science (for example, through its refereed journal, refereed conference proceedings and annual awards) in the face of non-spatial analyses being provided by many policy analysts. Quality does not mean “too academic” as many EDA practitioners seem to see ANZRSAI. Many of the papers at the Canberra conference, for example, would have been very relevant for practitioners.

More than one participant suggested that ANZRSAI has an image problem. One of our image problems is that we are (mis)perceived as over focused on rural and regional issues to the exclusion of major cities. There were 350 people at the State of Cities conference; a lot of those papers would fit within the ANZRSAI umbrella.

Perhaps ANZRSAI should run subgroups within its larger organisation; for example, a subgroup on “urban studies” that would allow focused interaction to take place within an overall regional science setting. Consider, for example, Brian Roberts’s report on the future of Australian cities. Another example might be

“environment and heritage” with specific inclusion of indigenous communities; could we draw on our networks to develop the theme of models of socio-economic and environmental development for indigenous communities?

One participant said that regional science reminded him of Mark Twain’s image of “a railway station in search of a town”! Similarly, we are a set of methods in search of a bigger picture. It’s not simply about the study of places, but about the study of relationships between places. Judith Brett’s public profile on what divides the bush from the city is a good example of how we can provide genuine frameworks with intellectual grunt about the big issues.

We need to communicate who we are and what we have to offer, including the use of social networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn. We should run a blog on regional science issues for practitioners and policy advisors. The current ANZRSAI website is not very accessible and needs to talk more about what we are doing. A good web design can be expensive, however.

We need to answer questions like:

- “What is our collective identity?”
- “What is our basic product?”
- “Who does it appeal to?”

There won’t be single answers to these questions; hence we need to cover the whole range in a strategic approach to marketing. For example, we have several audiences, including academics, practitioners, policy advisors and general public interest. Similarly, we offer several products, including the annual conference, the refereed journal, the regular newsletter, our international linkages and a conduit to valuable research networks and material.

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It was suggested that the next Census will produce more research and media attention that is an opportunity for ANZRSAI.

Paul Dalziel
ANZRSAI President 2009-2012

ANZRSAI Website

The Council of ANZRSAI is seeking to upgrade and improve the experience of all users of the ANZRSAI website. The website provides an opportunity to widen the engagement of ANZRSAI with the regional community of interest.

We hope that our website would compare well with the best of the other academic societies of a comparable scale. We aim to continue to provide access to an archive of refereed research publications, and to add news about conferences, regional initiatives, regional commentary, and what's hot, what's new, and what works in urban, rural or remote communities and places.

Please log on to the existing website and let us know via email your suggestions for content and features which would attract you to visit and improve the service ANZRSAI provides to you.

Council Meetings

The April and July 2012 meetings anticipated a small surplus in prospect for the 2011-12 year, with both revenue and expenditure down. Council agreed to send a reminder to unpaid members. Planning for the Annual Conference is well in hand. There was a discussion of updating the ANZRSAI website and logo. All current members are to be added to the ANZRSAI listserv, and conference announcements will be circulated there. Council noted with concern the extended illness of Professor Kingsley Haynes and wished him well in recovery.

ANZRSAI Council 2012

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AERU, Lincoln University, Canterbury NZ

Vice President (Australia)

Robyn Eversole
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