

November 2002 Issue

**In this Issue**

**Community Capacity Building and Asset Mapping**

**By Angie Dedrick of Canada for Western WISE Network**

On Thursday 1 August 2002, the Western WISE Network held a Meeting led by International Guest Speaker **Angie Dedrick** of Canada. Angie Dedrick is an experienced community builder who is here in Geraldton with her husband and two small children for one year. She has over 8 years of experience in community development through her work with Community Building Resources, a small business based in Edmonton, Canada. Angie has worked with both urban and rural communities and is the co-creator of a model for Asset Based Community Building: Community Capacity Building and Asset Mapping. This model has been shared through workshops with over 80 different groups throughout Canada and the United States. Angie also has had specialized training in community organizing and has experience in sparking youth's interests and motivation to take part in the life of the community.

In this Meeting she defines Community Capacity Building and Asset Mapping as being " about communities developing and renewing friendships, and relationships through their purposeful discovery, connection, mobilization, and celebration of the skills, gifts and interests of the local people and groups."

Having explained that " the model... helps people to have the conversations about, what the gifts are, everybody has a gift everyone in your community has a single gift. It doesn't matter who you are there is something that each of us can give to our community. People don't recognise that they have gifts," she goes on to work with the group to identify the gifts they have. Her talk also outlines the six steps needed to develop community capacity and asset building as well as the the 4 things that make community building work: Relationship, Action, Food and Fun

**The Western WISE Network** which hosted this Meeting, is an adaptive communities initiative that builds community capacity and leadership of remote, rural people throughout the Mid West region of Western Australia in a unique network framework. It was developed in response to the needs of the Mullewa community and has now significantly expanded across four shires spanning across approximately 130 000 square kilometres. The WISE Network bi-monthly gatherings are currently held between Mullewa and Chapman Valley.

Highlighting positive role models (local, intrastate and interstate) as guest presenters is another important tenet of the Western WISE Network. The Network is owned by the participants who attend the gatherings and coordinated by the Mid West



Development Commission. Topics of interest identified by the participants are based on three priority areas for development: environment, community capacity building and sustainable enterprise development (triple bottom line). The gatherings are designed to motivate people, share information, develop new networks, build local leadership and link people in specialised fields to the community as well as promoting the complexities of remote, rural areas to decision-makers.

**For more information about WISE contact:** Jane Wardlaw Telephone: 9921 0711; Project Officer Mobile: 0408 210 285 Mid West Development Commission; PO Box 238, GERALDTON WA 6531

**Speech by Angie Dedrick  
Western WISE Network**

### **Angie Dedrick**

Angie Dedrick is an experienced community builder who is here in Geraldton with her husband and two small children for one year. She has over 8 years of experience in community development through her work with Community Building Resources, a small business based in Edmonton, Canada. Angie has worked with both urban and rural communities and is the co-creator of a model for Asset Based Community Building: Community Capacity Building and Asset Mapping. This model has been shared through workshops with over 80 different groups throughout Canada and the United States. Angie also has had specialized training in community organizing and has experience in sparking youth's interests and motivation to take part in the life of the community.

**For further information about Asset Based Community Building see: [www.cbr-aimhigh.com](http://www.cbr-aimhigh.com) Inquiries can be made to [raff@cbr-aimhigh.com](mailto:raff@cbr-aimhigh.com)**

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### **Transcript of Meeting, Morawa August 2002**

JANE:

First of all I'd like to start by thanking you all for coming to Morawa tonight, its such a great pleasure to be here, with such a diverse audience. This is our first WWN gathering which has hosted an international guest speaker. We also have a visitors from South Africa. People have travelled quite a long distances from across the region, and welcome also to people from Morawa, their first Network gathering.

At this time of the year it's always hard to leave your nice warm house and come out. I thought before I continue and introduce Angie I'd just wanted to make a few very special thank you's to some special people. Tonight would not have happened

without the help of the Shire of Morawa. They have donated funds to help fund this evening. So thank you very much to Graham Merrick and the Councillors, for their lateral thinking and helping us to host this meeting this evening.

The second person I just want to say a quick thank you to is Debbie Collins, Debbie's been a great volunteer in rousting up and spreading the word. Robyn Stevens also helped with that too, and it's because of their efforts we are actually hosting the WWN meeting here tonight. Robyn actually rang me up and said "Why don't you come down for a visit. We are losing a number of people here from our community and we'd like to see what ideas we could come up with".

Further thanks is extended to our local caterers - Ticky North and Maryanne for the beautiful food they have provided for us this evening.

Now for Western WISE Network - what is it? Just a very brief overview - it's a network that moves across the Mid West region to provide information on three particular areas: Community Development, Environmental Issues and Sustainable Enterprise Diversification. At each gathering we hold across the region we aim to highlight local role models and also bring in people from other regions of interstate to share their knowledge, skill and experiences in the hope we can take some of that information and apply it to our community, environment and business – thus, improving our quality of life.

Which leads me to welcome Angie. It's an amazing experience when you network with other people. You realise there what a dynamic and diverse region we are here in the Mid West. The region has many opportunities and at a time when we are feeling the economic pinch we come across these opportunities created by people and it provides us with a sense of place, ideas and opportunities.

Angie, here tonight is one of those people. She doesn't like to think of herself as an expert she said to me the other day "But I'm not an expert", however, her experiences and work conducted in Canada has lessons that we can learn and implement in our own communities. That is capacity building, focussing on the assets we have in our community – people, infrastructure and environment. Its really exciting to meet Angie and be reminded of the assets we all have and live amongst. There are so many of us 'out there' who are passionate about our community, and what it is that you can do to make a positive difference. The Network is proud to host Angie tonight. So without further ado I'll leave it up to Angie to tell you a bit more about her story and we will carry on for this evening, thanks Angie.

ANGIE:

Hello everybody and thanks for coming out to hear some of the things I've done. I don't think I'm an expert. I do have a lot of experience in community Building, I think its you guys who are the experts so I'm hoping that we can learn a little from my experiences and a little bit from each other. So before I get into the presentation. I'd like everyone to say their name where they are from and how you got your name

- whether it was from your mum or whatever .

Okay that was fun and interesting. Welcome! We have quite a diverse group here this evening. I think were going to have some fun tonight we have lots of people here tonight from Morawa that's good. What I'd like to share tonight is tell you about the work I do in Canada and the whole asset focus and the idea of building your community on this asset focus. I wanted to give you a few tools so were not just going to be sitting here tonight we're going to do some activities. Things you can go home and do in your own communities or possibly explore it further.

We don't have a real lot of time, so anyway this is the first time I've presented to a group drinking wine, so I think this is fun, I haven't had any cause if I do my cheeks will flare up so I'm not going to.

All right to just give you a bit of background, I'm actually trained as a dietician, I did a Bachelor of Science and good nutrition. During my internship, while I was training to be a dietician I met an amazing woman, Suzanne Roberts. She has been my mentor and introduced me to Community Development. She was flexible enough during my training to enable me to get out and do Community Development work and sort of 'pouch' it under something for dietetics community development, community nutrition, something like that.

Since then I've actually been working in Community Development, for about 8 years now and I absolutely love the work.. Its amazing when you start working with communities what you can do especially using the "asset focus" the things that people come up with, and what communities do. It really inspires me. It's something that I really love and something that I will probably continue to do for the rest of my life.

In fact I'm even working in the Community Development field here in Geraldton. I found a job at the QE2 Queen Elizabeth Centre in Geraldton, So I'm working with seniors and the Community. It's a wonderful place to work and what I'm going to share with you tonight is just something I believe in from the heart I think its something that everybody thinks about but sometimes we have to be reminded.

So I'll talk to you a little bit about "Asset based Community Development" "I'll tell you a little about that and then were going to do a little activity okay.

First of all I have to put my Canada Flag Up. Does anybody know about this glass here is it half full or is it half-empty? Half full and somebody said something else, did some body say both. It is 'Both' your right. When you're talking about communities and asset based Community Development. The important thing is what half you focus on. See you can actually focus on the negative things in your Community, what's wrong with your community, everyone's moving away the kids are vandalizing, there's lots of negative things that you can come up with. You could probably write them down all day long. But if you focus on the positive things then people become inspired to do something positive in their Community.

One of the main references or resources that we used when we started Community Development was a fellow named John MacNight and Jodie Kretzman, and I saw that Jane actually has his book here. This is his book and he actually describes it called "Building Communities from the Inside out" He describes the difference between how if you focus on the needs and you focus on the Community and he has the example of a "Neighborhood Needs Map". This is a description of it "a picture of a community and in the Community he has written down all the needs of the community.

- Unemployment
- Truancy
- Broken Families
- Slum Housing
- Illiteracy
- Graffiti
- Mental disability
- Welfare recipients
- Lead Poisoning
- Drop outs
- Gangs
- Broken Families
- Child Abuse

That's an example of a description on someone's community, its not very inspiring is it. Not a lot that would make you want to live there or feel proud of you're community. Whereas, if you talk about with your community about the assets of your community you can actually inspire people. Look at our 'community', we have the ocean, if not the ocean we have all these beautiful walkways, Kids that can paint beautiful scenery on the side of the walls, some people call that Graffiti but, maybe you can turn that around and make it into Art. Its just how you focus on your community.

I'm going to leave it here and you can have a look at it later. So what's an "Assets Focus" I'm going to use a few overheads so we will just turn down the lights a little bit.

Asset Based Development or Community Based Development there's a few different ways of referring to asset focus. What we have developed is over the past eight years we developed a model for community developing and this is the definition that we use when talking about it. When I say 'we' I mean the small business that I worked for in Canada "Community Building Resources". We are talking about communities developing and renewing friendships, and relationships through their purposeful discovery, connection, mobilization, and celebration of the skills, gifts and interests of the local people and groups. There's a lot of work there.

So the model that we have developed helps people to do all these things so it helps people to have the conversations about, what the gifts are, everybody has a gift

everyone in your community has a single gift. It doesn't matter who you are there is something that each of us can give to our community. People don't recognise that they have gifts. If I were to ask you most people would have to think about it its not something that they take off the top of their head. But everybody had a gift and if communities are going to grow, they have to find ways to discover those gifts and to engage people in sharing those gifts. They have to have a reason to start talking, and sometimes you have to go right out and talk to those people to find out what those gifts are.

The model that I'm going to share with you today, encourages you to have conversations and to talk to people, find ways and environments where people can become acquainted with one another and start to develop relationships where they would be motivated to support one another in their Community Building. The most important thing is that everybody has a gift and you have to find a way to use it. So what I want to do today here is to learn a little about our gifts.

I actually have a little questionnaire and I want you all to fill it out and then find somebody in the room that you don't know. Its more fun if you go and interview someone that you don't know. You can do it which ever way you want, do one interview and then be interviewed or do the interview together at the same time what ever you prefer. Have some fun and see what you can discover about each other. We're going to do something with those yellow stickers that you have.

(People working away on questionnaire)

Write the persons name and the gift that you discovered that they have. Then write it on the stickers you have and put it up here. I've got a paper up here that you can put it on, then well have a break.

Okay once your finished can you put it up here. Put the person's name that you interviewed on it and put in the box. Include the gifts that you discovered while you were interviewing them. I need three gifts you discovered on it.

Break

ANGIE:

Alright, thanks everybody for doing that interview, I loved hearing that buzz, Now, I want to hear from you, how did you like doing that interview? What did you learn about one another? Did you discover anything surprising? What are some of the unique discoveries that you found when you interviewed somebody?

(Audience responds)

Somebody likes swimming what other unique or surprising things did you discover? Somebody enjoys public speaking, wow you enjoy that, that is an asset. Ok anybody else discover anything unique? Someone was very interested in Local development,

okay that's good, anybody else want to say about a unique or surprising thing they discovered?

What I want to know now is what special or unique things did people want to do in there community?

More accommodation

A new public health care module

Okay now I'm looking for that dream thing something that's not here that people wish were here, so what special or unique things do people want to see happen in their community?

Sustainable foreshore development for Geraldton

University in Morawa

Community groups working together

Community shows enthusiasm for the community.

Okay that's great, Does anybody have a burning desire to add to this?

Something, that supports and motivates people.

5yr plan for the community.

Rural transaction centre.

Okay so these are some of the dreams that your group has discovered in talking to one another, we have a whole plethora of gifts that we have discovered in this room. Were actually going to look at those quickly a little later.

I'd like to tell you a little about the model I have to share with you, this model was piloted and trailed in a small community group. The community was really down and upset because their hospital was being pulled down and they couldn't see what else they could do. They were feeling very desperate about it.

What we did was a pilot with the community and then we talked to them about the gifts and assets in their community. That might sort of turn their thinking around and give them something positive and build from that.

So we actually built a model and the model has now been shared with over 80 different groups around Canada and the United States.

Its quite a simple model but it helps people to learn about how to start

conversations how to start talking about the gifts in your Community, and how to focus everybody's attention on the special or unique things you want to do.

I'm going to go through the model and I apologise that I have to go through it quickly we usually do 2 day workshops on the model. But it will give you an idea of what its all about.

First overhead The model that we have is called community capacity and asset building and there are actually six steps that we have.

What the model does it makes everybody excited about what they can do using their gift, this models helps you get everyone gathered around that idea to find out what their gifts are and how you can use them. So the six steps are

**Define a question find out what that star is.**

**Start talking to people like initiating moving towards that star, for example, We really want this Rural Transaction centre and start talking to people about it**

**Actually plan and design a way that you can talk to people.'**

Now the Questionnaire that we did today was one tool we use to find out what those gifts are in our community. You guys have actually given a fantastic job today. It's a step further people are talking to each other about things they have discovered and probably not just the things they have discovered by the questions the questionnaire is just a way to help you start. Sometimes its really hard to just go up to someone and ask them "hey what's your gift?". So this is an example of how can you get involved in your community by means of a questionnaire. Its not meant to be a pick off thing, where you say "okay thanks and seeya next time". For example, Garden "Oh you know how to do roses, do you know we are trying to develop a garden here with plants and roses, would you come and help with that?" So the questionnaire is just a way to get past that initial step where you don't have anything in common.

**Is to go out there and do the talking.**

**Pull it all together you have developed these questionnaires within your communities now you do something with that. Don't just go and talk to people and get them all excited you have got to do something. Use that information in some ways. A lot of people actually make asset maps and I'll show you one.**

**This is an asset map. This shows all the gifts that this community has around the 'spice of life part' of the map. So they are trying to find ways to motivate people to take part in their community so they talk to groups, businesses and people. To find out what they can contribute and these here are all the things they said they can do to contribute:**



**There is Community Connections, community support, there's Medical, Creative craft, all these clusters that they put on this map to show all these assets within the community.**

**You also need to talk to everyone whether you phone them or speak to them and tell them about this information. Some how you have to get that information back to people.**

**Those are basically the steps, all through that you have to have communication, so other people know what's going on and so they can come and be a part of it.**

Its really meant to encourage conversations, one on one conversations, its meant to stimulate the discovery of everybody's gift, so you have to talk to all the citizens the businesses everybody has to be a part of it.

It also can help to show how connected we can be.

I have another thing I'm going to do with you,

*(Organises activity amongst room. The activity is to match up two columns. On one column, a list of small community projects. The other column, a list of businesses. The group had to draw a line to match what the projects, each of the businesses sponsored.)*

The group that I was working with wanted to revitalise the park, so they raised money to purchase nursery items. It was really good because the park had become really run down and had a bit of a negative feel, there was actually a murder in that park, and so lots of people were afraid of the park. There was always broken bottles and so the neat thing was that, when people started planting the flowers other people said "hey what are you doing", then it got around that this group had tried to raise money to revitalise the park . Then a little later someone started to pick up the broken bottles. Now that park is actively used by the community again. Even the people that go there at night to drink, don't break their bottles any more they line them up on the picnic table so that when the lady comes over from across the street she doesn't have to pick up glass pieces just has to pick up the bottles now .

So the community reclaimed it and it's now a beautiful park.

One Community Hospital decided that they would increase their volume of cooking and take it to some of the inner city schools, where I am from, so these kids who would come to school and were not fed, now have a hot lunch. At least they are getting one good hot meal a day.

Retired Adults, Computer training, the schools left them open overnight so seniors could come in and learn how to use them.

Literacy Training is reaching the community not just businesses.

Work experience for kids, a store that is of interest to kids is now providing work experience.

Talks about a group called the CIA Community involved adolescents.

A group of high school kids, they formed a neighbourhood watch, teens programs, home care, this community rather than just function as a pharmacy began to hire nurses, and ran a health care program out of there.

Murals, they donated all the paint for mural painting in the community, and also financial training for the kids.

The point of that quiz is to show you that anybody can do anything but if you don't act you will never know about it.

You can't leave anybody out, A man might be a mechanic but he might also be an artist you just don't know. In community building you have to be open to everybody and everything.

RAFF

Is a beautiful simple acronym that we use to when we were working with these communities in Canada and the USA.

The model was working we had heard back, neat things from their community.

Great things were happening and we wanted to find out what they were. So we researched and interviewed them and had them interview others to find out what was making community building work and we came up with actually 2 pieces of research that we did. I have summaries here. We call it listen and learning 1& 2.

**The most interesting thing was the 4 things that made community building work.**

- **Relationship**
- **Action**
- **Food**
- **Fun**

Its so simple but what it means is when people come to a meeting, gathering or party or anything there has to be an opportunity to for then to build relationships with one another. People have to talk and people have to feel welcome when they come.

Action everyone has to be able to do something together. You cannot have a community and not do anything. Everybody has to have a piece of the action. Not just small groups of people who have gifts but the whole community has to be involved.

Food because everybody likes food, and food can actually be a spark for conversation. Common thing everybody eats and loves to eat and if you have food at a meeting it sparks conversation. It's just a simple way to get people talking together.

Fun

If it isn't fun people won't come back this is what we learned from the communities.

You have to have all these 4 things and you are going to have success in your community building.

If you use **RAFF** in everything you do even if you are having a meeting just a house meeting, if you have RAFF in it you won't believe the creativity that will come out of it. It's a great concept.

Now I'd like to take you back to that model, and does anyone have any questions or want's to know a little bit more about anything before I go on.

This binder is given out to everyone in our workshops. In it is all the references that we use in developing this model, it has all the steps and examples of how to do each step. When we do the workshop we work with the community and facilitate with the community to start planning. So if you have a plan we get together and so at the end of the 2 days we actually have a plan.

If we were to come into a workshop we would find someone in the community who would go out and talk to people and get those people who you think are important. And get a good concept and group of people and get them together.. Then we would spear head whatever you wanted to do.

You all can just feel the gifts that you have. Every community has it sometimes its just hard to pull it together.

Some times it can be because of personality differences, and your not use to looking at it that way. What often happens when we do these workshops, we pull all these people together and even the ones who you think are negative and wont be helpful, you bring them all in together, let them be a part to . So you then sort of struggle through it together and then by the end of the 2 days you have got a plan. But you have to include everybody and say "we need you here".

You have to invite them all. Everyone has a gift even if you can't think of what it might be.

Some times even those who are the most negative will give the most to your project.

RAFF, can be a part of everything you do, you can start tomorrow. This workshop is fantastic because it includes the wisdom and knowledge of every community we

have worked with because its your wisdom we are just feeding it back to you as a strategy , you are the experts its your wisdom and your knowledge. Some times you just need a little bit of push or a little bit of help with these ideas on how to pull it all together.

What I want to do is find out from you, we have all these special or unique gifts that we can do , So I thought just for fun we would have a look at them. Then think of how and what we can do to get these projects going.

First one

Community shows enthusiasm for Community.

I'm just going to read off some of the gifts and you tell me how you think they might help.

Love of reading, How can a person with a love of reading help the Community enthusiasm.

Research, perhaps research into community development ideas. This is Lynne she has a love of reading, "do you like reading aloud"? Well she just likes to do reading, silently. so, she could help with research.

Mary has the ability to do crosswords, so how could that be of benefit to the community. maybe do up a book for the community.

Gary is a good listener, so how could Gary being a good listener help people to be more enthusiastic about the community.

JANE

Listening to people is one of the key areas in helping communities . Being a good listener and taking the time to listen to what people have to say.

ANGIE: Being a good listener, sometimes we can learn a lot from what we catch people saying.

Ok what is a Business Connector

Steve the Businessman connections what could he do? Maybe he could get the local businesses to get being local projects by donating food or something like that.

Maybe if they all showed enthusiasm they could put on a big Community fair or event .

Ben appreciates nature, how can Ben help to show enthusiasm for the community? "Ecotours" what do you think Ben?

One more then

Ability to play Golf well, Maybe you could promote the Golf & country Club in your Area. Maybe we could have a big golf fair. Teach people how to play or something like that.

So that's what the idea is . you find out what peoples gifts are and then what ever those gifts are find out how that can help your community building. Its really just so simple. Talking about gifts an d finding out ways people can contribute.

Yes you are going to run into road blocks as you go, You have to keep focusing on the positives or you're never going to accomplish what you need to do. You can talk about the negatives all day long. It doesn't make anybody feel good about your community. Keep focusing on the positives and think about what's great about your community , Stop thinking about those negative thing and hopefully while you are thinking about the positives you can get around those negative things.

I can tell you a story about a group I worked with in Edmonton. They call themselves (something foundation) they are a group of 6 communities, within the central metropolitan area. Their communities lined a street which had become quite run down. There used to be a central road into the town it was very vibrant, but had become run down there were lots of pawn shops and people had began to move away. There were pornography shops and lots of bars it had really become a run down area.

These 6 communities people who had lived in there, stayed they grew up there and they loved their community. They wanted to revitalise that area. So rather than just say " we're going to get rid of those porn shops we're going to burn them down" they said okay they are there and they are a part of our community so lets focus on what we have in our community. Invite them to be a part and we'll see what happens.

They started to focus on the positives and have some community events , parades down the street. Things started to happen and people started to get involved. What ended up happening was those businesses that were there actually moved. There were now families coming up and down the street and the one big hotel in the area it used to have a strip joint in their bar, they didn't force them out. The hotel itself said were a family hotel and that now we are going to have a family restaurant, and so the stripper left. And so did the clientele with them. So they continued to focus on the positives in their community and said hey lets revitalise our parks. They used RAAF people used to come at 6 O'clock for supper and some viewed it as their social life.

So its all so easy what are the assets in your community , focus on it , get everybody involved. Get together and use RAAF.

I have a little draw to do now for some books called our book is your book it has the

model in it. As well as all of our references in it so it's a great little book.

I have 2 to give away and if anyone else wants one they cost \$15.00 and we can order one for you.

Any questions

Question about getting people together,

ANGIE

You all have terrific ideas , but if you use RAAF and use food people will come. Perhaps get the local bakery to sponsor you and have a lunch . people will come.

Also you have to have fun. Don't plan to just sit and talk . Plan some activities. On our website there are lots of ideas,

When people walk in there has to be someone right there at the door to greet them. Say "Come on in have a seat or come have something to eat". "Where are you from" . just be very enthusiastic. or else they are not going to want to be there.

I actually had an experience in Geraldton I have a toddler she 3yrs old, I went to a play group I thought this is going to be so much fun I'll meet some of the mums . Any way I walked in and there is this group of mums and children playing . and me there obviously being a new person. Not one person came to greet me . I had to figure it all out for my self , I didn't feel welcome and I didn't even want to go back. So you have to make people feel welcome and excited to come back. Be enthusiastic , energetic and have food..

JANE

Like the WWN were getting quite a few familiar faces.

Well thank you very much Angie

Jane thanks Shire again and Debbie, and all the helpers, Simple delights. The food was beautiful and Angie for her time she volunteered her time this evening. Thankyou very much . again . Please everyone fill in the evaluation forms.

We have the facilities and we would like to help you out as much as we can.

ANGIE

I do have a list of references here, with websites on the other side if you'd like a copy.

DEBBIE

To Angie on behalf of the community of Morawa I'd like to thank you very much for coming to Morawa I know it's a long way to travel from Geraldton and you are going back tonight. I have learnt a lot and I'm sure everyone here has too. I'd also like to thank Jane and WWN. I really urge every one to sign up and join the WWN you receive wonderful information via e-mail. Its really worth while.

### **The Australian Labor Party (ALP) Hawke-Wran Report**

After the November 2001 Federal election the Leader of the Federal Parliamentary Labor Party, Simon Crean, announced a comprehensive review of the ALP's organisation, structures and internal processes. To this end, the ALP National Executive resolved at its meeting of 13 December 2001 to establish a National Committee of Review to examine and report on the following matters:

1. Procedures to ensure the ALP attracts and preselects the best possible candidates to contest Federal seats;
2. Mechanisms to secure the best input to the Party's policy review and development processes;
3. Relationships between the ALP and the trade unions and other significant community and interest groups;
4. Strategies to increase the ALP's primary vote at Federal elections;
5. Measures to broaden and increase the membership of the Party and the involvement of the members in Party activity; and
6. Examination of internal processes within the ALP.

The Review was conducted jointly by the Hon. Bob Hawke AC and the Hon. Neville Wran AC QC. The National Executive Committee together with Helen Creed, Judith Downey and Marsha Thomson formed a reference body and resource for the Review.

**Contents of The Report include the following chapters:** The Consultation Process; What You Said; The Challenge for Labor; A Modern Role for Members; An Enduring Partnership: Labor and the Union Movement; Restating and Implementing Our Values; Getting the Best Candidates; Maintaining Community Relationships and Summary of Recommendations

**To view the entire Report see:**

<http://www.alp.org.au/dload/federal/media/reviewfinal.pdf>

### **How to Elect the President**

**By Dr Jocelyne A. Scutt**

Presented at the "Trust the Women National Conference" in Canberra, 12-14 June 2002

Jocelyne Scutt asks what system do we need for an Australian Republic? Her speech, "How to Elect the President" is an excellent attempt to ensure that women continue to consider this significant issue and "fashion an answer - a workable answer."

"The wit and wisdom of women needs to be exercised and built upon to ensure that witty and wise women are elected successively as President by all the witty, wise women making up the Australian electorate. How can we ensure this is to be done?"

She implores "all of us - all the Australian people (and most particularly for women) to determine what powers the head of state should have, what type of presidency or Republic."

To devise an Australian system "determined by principles of fairness, and with true community involvement" she suggests a full and open debate addressing the obstacles some say lie in the way of a directly elected President, in particular, the issue of money and funding. Her speech also includes strategies for a workable system.

**How to Elect the President**

**By Dr Jocelyne A. Scutt**

## **HOW TO ELECT THE PRESIDENT**

**By Dr Jocelyne A. Scutt**

(To view a previously featured CLW interview and bio of Dr Scutt see: [Dr Jocelyne Scutt](#) )

I acknowledge Aboriginal ownership of this land. I honour Indigenous Australians' power of preservation of country.

### **Votes for Women**

Voting counts. Without the vote, people are cut out of a central democratic right.

When workingclass women and middleclass women, and women from all backgrounds and origins of class, religion, race and ethnicity, and political belief, fought for the vote, they fought because they recognised that:

- the right to vote is fundamental to engagement in the political system;
- the right to vote is a right that should extend to all who are governed in any democratic system;
- the right to vote should not be dictated in terms of sex/gender of a country's citizens.



The right for Indigenous Australians - women and men - to vote was fought on the same basis: that the right to vote is fundamental to engagement in the polity, and that race as well as sex/gender should not dictate who votes, or who governs.

When this struggle was waged, women did not believe that every time women voted, women would vote for women. Nor did they believe that women should vote for women. But they knew that, without the right to vote, women were not and never would be a part of the political system, with a right to say who should govern, and how they should govern. They knew that women would never be elected under a system where women had no right to vote. And they knew that once women had the right to vote, the election of women would follow.

The urgency of the right to vote was recognised by women who had grown up in a system where political sinecures were occupied by men who had not been voted in, but were appointed by the crown of a foreign country, or took their place because lower houses, voted in by men alone, decided who should sit in upper houses. Women in this struggle had known only a system where men decided who should take public office, and who should be elected.

The fight for votes for women came out of a long tradition of women believing that the voices of women should be heard, and the votes of women should count. It was a workingclass tradition just as much as it was one that came from the middleclass, and in many respects it was founded more in workingclass notions of rights, than in that of the wealthy or class conscious (for all the wrong reasons) who had depended upon wealth and position as entitling some people to rights, or more rights than others.

The votes for women campaign won, ultimately, because it renounced the humbug that some people are superior to others when it comes to deciding who should govern, the humbug of a belief that 'the people' make poor choices - or 'worse' choices - when put to the test of voting governments in, and governments out. 'Trust the women' was founded in the very heart of the democratic ideal - that any woman should be trusted to use her head, and her heart, in elections. Women did not want to 'trust the men' alone, nor subscribe to a belief that men alone should be trusted. Nor did they want to 'trust' just some men - their husbands, fathers, grandfathers.

'Trust the women' meant trust all women to vote wisely and well - and if some did not, that was a fair enough outcome if democracy was to be met. It is this principle, and the principles of the 'trust the women' campaign we need to look to, when deciding on what system we need for an Australian republic.

### **A Vote for the President**

The majority of Australians want to elect the President. This expression of democracy is worth supporting for many reasons, not the least because it confirms a wish of the vast bulk of the population to be involved in political decision-making. Rather than saying 'it can't be done', or 'they don't know what they want', or 'it

looks democratic but the people cannot be “trusted”, or any one of a dozen or more negative dismissals of the will of people to vote in a President, let’s look positively at the question - and fashion an answer - even, let’s agree, a workable answer.

We need to put forward our own ideas and alternatives, and debate them constructively. We can bring out new ideas, fashion a new system, put forward the possibilities for discussion. There’s no rule that says we have to follow other country’s ideas, follow their way, or do what they have done. We do not need to adopt a system in use elsewhere, or deny the utility of a ‘direct election’ proposal because we cannot see anything beyond what’s operating elsewhere, in other nations, other countries, other states.

If we want an Australian Republic - and clearly, the majority do - we need to actively canvass ways of ensuring that ‘the people’ have a voice, and that a real 50% of that voice is female. Let’s devise our proposals, work out possibilities, and debate our own alternatives, so that the Australian Republic comes about through an equal women’s input at every stage.

We should not leave it up to those in positions of power to work it out ‘for’ us. Why should we, and why should they? If we do leave it up to them, we deserve what we get, and we know the outcome already. Certainly not ‘one of us’: hardly likely to be a woman of opinions, a member of the ‘monstrous regiment’, someone unprepared to ‘go along to get along’, one without privileges, or who renounces them, and one with too much lip.

Oh, sure, on their scheme, whatever it is these days, we’d have a woman President once in a while - possibly. May be every ten years or so - if we’re really, really lucky. Generally the powerful will choose some patrician male of the ‘respectable’ kind, with no knowledge of what it’s like to be female in man’s world, however the choosing’s done, and whether chosen by the Prime Minister, the government or government and opposition together. Why would it be any different, and why should it? We know that ‘merit’ is a male construct, where the meritorious are most often male. We know all about cloning - the ‘choice’ of ‘best’ is fashioned on who’s making the choice.

Why not bend our brains to make election by all of us possible, a system where women’s voices can be heard, and will be heard, with equal chances for women to take the presidential role, and speak for us, or at least in a voice we can connect with. And if, once in a while, under the ‘vote for President’ approach, the voice of the President seems foreign to us, antagonistic to our ideas and our ideals - well, we can change it next time around, or do our best to do so. After all, once a system is open to public view, the view of the public has a better chance of effecting change. And half that public is us, with all our strength and power.

Why not work out how we can do it, then lobby for it, instead of waiting until some other system is proposed, other ideas take precedence and we’re left with a cockeyed proposal yet again. We don’t need another route, where those in power

design a system suited to themselves, where one of them is slotted in, yet again, to a position in the ruling line-up, a sinecure for a failed politician, a churchman on the make, a retired man of business, retired judge or over-the-hill bureaucrat.

### **Making a Workable System**

The arguments against a democratic election are that:

- we will 'Americanise' Australia;
- the rich will be the only 'possibles' in any ballot;
- the rich will be the major backers of candidates, and 'their' candidate must therefore win;
- the media will 'control' the voting and the candidates;
- the political parties will 'control' them;
- we'll end up with some poor fool as President - an actor, 'celebrity', footballer or other sporting 'star';
- we just can't do it ...

These arguments are relevant to the present system, just as much (or more so) as to any alternative. They influence the 'elect the President' approach only if we let them. For we're just as likely, or perhaps even more so, to end up with a fool of a Governor General, or worse, when the Prime Minister or Parliament chooses. And 'Americanisation of Australia' is hardly impeded by the current system: rather, it's more likely where Prime Minister and/or Parliament choose, for they are more likely to be in thrall to American Presidents than ever the voting population is. It was not 'the people' who wanted 'all the way with LBJ', nor to be bushed and bamboozled by the current incumbent.

In any event, if we choose our own system, why would we need to follow that of anyone else? Australian inventiveness brought into being the industrial arbitration system with centralised wage fixing at its core; the first political party to grow out of the labour movement; the second most powerful 'Greens' political party in the world; the first jurisdiction where not only were women entitled to vote, but women were entitled to stand for Parliament; and so it goes. Why should our inventiveness and the ability to make it work not operate when it comes to electing a head of state?

We need to build into the system rules militating against the rich and the media, the powerful and the political parties, dictating the ballot paper and the outcome. This can be done through public funding, with a cap set on funding so that 'cheating' is exposed and 'silent' backing through 'under the counter' funding is ruled out of contention. It can be done through 'equal exposure' media rules, that ensure candidates equal time in the press, radio and television.

If a cap of, say, \$100,000 is set on campaign funding for all candidates, to come from the public purse, a limit can be set on the number of candidates in the ballot. In any event, and whatever the source of funding, ten to twenty on any presidential ballot

paper seems a fair number, making maximum expenditure \$2 million.

### **How, then, do candidates get onto the ballot paper?**

Why not:

- candidates nominated by a certain number of signatures (say 7000 or similar number) - of eligible voters; or
- two candidates from each state and territory (16) plus four (4) nominated in some other way; or
- each candidate nominated by five (5) presidential nominating organisations registered with the federal Electoral Commission - organisations with a minimum membership (say 3-5,000) of eligible voters who are members of one such organisation only.

If it's done by eligible voter numbers, each voter could nominate only one presidential candidate, by reference to the electoral roll - not a difficult matter to determine. We do it at every election, with voters 'signing off' on the voter role, and being ticked off at the voting booth. If it's done on a state/territory basis, each state and territory could have their own method of selection: there are differences already in voting systems between the states and territories, so that state/territory idiosyncrasies would be allowed to find expression in placing candidates on the presidential ballot paper.

In the third choice, of each candidate nominated by five (5) presidential nominating organisations registered with the federal Electoral Commission - women's organisations could play a major role. Women's organisations would be equal players in this third choice, in a system where all organisations stand on equal footing, no one organisation could rule alone, none alone could choose its candidate, or get its candidate onto the ballot paper alone. Each would be dependent upon ensuring that four other registered presidential nominating organisations would support their candidate. Each would be no more powerful than the others. Each would be obliged to find four other presidential nominating organisations to support the candidate they want.

Presidential nominating organisations could choose how they go about negotiating with other organisations to support their candidate. Groups such as Australian Women With Disabilities, the Union of Australian Women (UAW), YWCA, Australian Coalition of Refugee Women, the Foundation for Aboriginal and Islander Research (FAIRA), League of Women Voters, Black Women's Action, Soroptomists, Women's Electoral Lobby, National Council of Women, Australian Federation of Business and Professional Women, Women of the West Network, Women in Agriculture, Zonta, the Australian Women's Party, Emily's List, the Australian Nursing Federation, Country Women's Association (CWA), et al - even the Australian Women's Constitutional Convention - could join together, holding telephone hookups or national conventions to decide on the candidate they would put forward. Every three years (or five - depending upon the presidential term) the hookup, convention

or congress would be held, with organisations fielding their candidate and putting forward their arguments for the other organisations to support 'their' person.

The same would be true of other presidential nominating organisations - for Rotary to get its candidate up, it would have to find support from the Returned and Services League (RSL), Lions, the Masons and so on. The political parties would similarly be bound to find four other organisations to support their proposed candidate - and they would have to consider the candidates of the other organisations with which they negotiate to secure a place on the ballot for theirs.

It would mean compromise, negotiation, looking at candidates from other organisations, deciding that this time around, the organisations would support 'that' candidate, in return for support for 'this' candidate, from that organisation next time around.

With a term of office stipulated in the Constitution (say three or five years), the date of the election being set on a regular day, three or five years forward, public funding would be limited not only in the absolute amount for each candidate, but to a three or five year cycle.

### **Conclusion**

The wit and wisdom of women needs to be exercised and built upon to ensure that witty and wise women are elected successively as President by all the witty, wise women making up the Australian electorate. How can we ensure this is to be done?

We need a system where the powers of the head of state are clear and clearly defined, where every Australian knows what role the office brings with it, what powers are held by it. Whatever system we have, whether remaining with the present system of Governor General (constitutional monarchy), going to a directly elected President, a head of state coming into office by chosen by those in power, or whatever system, the powers and role of the office must be determined and set down. It is for us - all of us - all the Australian people (and most particularly for women) to determine what powers the head of state should have, what type of presidency or Republic.

Why not an Australian system, devised on our homeground, determined by principles of fairness, and with true community involvement? Why not full and open deliberation addressing all aspects of the system of the majority's choice, an Australian President by full and open, democratic election?

Why not a full and open debate addressing the obstacles some say lie in the way of a directly elected President? Why not a full and open opportunity to counter them?

Why not address the issue of money and funding, and the so-so-false proposition that direct election, and direct election only, is synonymous with money changing hands. That money cannot be controlled when the system's democratic, with a

directly elected President as the aim.

Why not debate on these issues? Allowing open, public debate transforms the question of a controlled Australian Republic into a opportunity for participation in deliberations extended to the 'out' groups who are so much more powerful in the present age, than ever we were in the past. Women, Indigenous Australians, ethnic minorities - that these voices are excluded from real participation, or participation on equal footing, from any system must surely make those professing to support women's right to be equally human, the rights of Indigenous women and men to hold equal power with non-Indigenous do more than ask questions.

If they don't even ask the questions, much less do more, shouldn't we be more than wary?

I don't want the Prime Minister to choose my country's head of state. I don't want the Parliament to choose my country's head of state. I prefer to stick with the basics. After all, if we trust the women, what's the problem with the women voting, alongside the men, for Australia's head of state?

I prefer to trust to the vote.

I prefer to trust the women.

JAS

### **How to Elect the President**

#### **Leadership of Women in the United Nations &**

#### **Farewell Speech by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson**

#### **U.N. Rights Chief Blasts Terror War**

"When Mary Robinson stepped down in September 2002 as United Nations High Commissioner for human rights, she became the third of those pioneering women to leave the system. Sadako Ogata retired last year as United Nations High Commissioner for refugees and Bertini ended her run as executive director of the World Food Program this spring. All three have been replaced by men."

"The face of power in the United Nations was transformed in the 1990s as women took over leadership of six important agencies..."

"That era, if glorious, was also brief." (Barbara Crossette - WENews)

In her Farewell speech, Mary Robinson referred to the progress that had been made in recent years in strengthening human rights as well of her concern about the future of human rights. She stressed that, "in combating terrorism the full range of human rights must be observed. It is a time for those who believe in human rights to keep

their nerve. Human rights are not expendable, whatever the circumstances. And I strongly believe that human rights will endure... Responding to terrorism will remain a major focus of international affairs over the coming years. But we must all continue to insist on respect for basic rights and fundamental freedoms in countering terrorist threats. We should not hesitate to draw attention to the relevant international standards and in particular to the non-degradable rights that must be protected at all times."

**Article by Barbara Crossette  
WE News  
&  
Farewell Speech in Geneva by Mary  
Robinson, High Commissioner for  
Human Rights**

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**By Clare Nullis, AM EDT**

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**Leadership of Women in the United Nations #**

**By Barbara Crossette - WEnews correspondent**

8 September 2002

(WOMENSENEWS)--The face of power in the United Nations was transformed in the 1990s as women took over leadership of six important agencies and Canadian Louise Frechette was named the organization's first deputy secretary general. But it wasn't just a matter of numbers. These women found common cause in expanding women's rights and, although they were based far apart--in New York, Rome and Geneva--they became close colleagues and friends, setting aside time to meet over a meal when United Nations business brought them together anywhere in the world.

"It was just fabulous," said Catherine Bertini, the American who headed the World Food Program, the largest international food-relief organization. "It was a special group."

That era, if glorious, was also brief.

When Mary Robinson stepped down on Wednesday as United Nations High Commissioner for human rights, she became the third of those pioneering women to leave the system. Sadako Ogata retired last year as United Nations High Commissioner for refugees and Bertini ended her run as executive director of the World Food Program this spring.

All three have been replaced by men.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, a former prime minister of Norway, said she will not seek a second term as director general of the World Health Organization when her first term ends next year. No successor has been chosen.

So far, only Nafis Sadik, who as the first woman to head a major agency, transformed the United Nations Population Fund from a non-controversial family-planning agency to an organization fighting for women's reproductive rights, was succeeded by another woman when she retired two years ago.

Apart from Brundtland, soon to depart from the World Health Organization, and the population fund's new executive director, Thoraya Obaid, a Saudi Arabian national, there is only one other woman now at the head of a major agency, Carol Bellamy, the executive director of UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. Bellamy, an American, was a former New York City Council president and United States Peace Corps director.

#### Leaders Helped Women's Rights in Difficult Decade

The 1990s was a disastrous decade for women, marked by vicious civil wars in which 90 percent of the casualties were civilians. Women were killed, forced to flee their homes, starved, brutalized, enslaved and raped, often in the refugee camps that were expected to shelter them.

The women who headed United Nations agencies pushed ameliorating measures that were often unpopular with governments, such as making the "morning after" pill available to refugee women.

Bertini said that when she arrived at the World Food Program in 1992 and asked why there were so few women in professional grades, she was told, "Well, we do logistics things--we do things with trucks and trains and planes, and these aren't women's things." She more than doubled the number of high-ranking women in the agency, then turned to the poor women who were its beneficiaries.

"We really had a sea change of policy to direct food aid to women," said Bertini, who now teaches at the University of Michigan and serves as U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan's roving envoy on humanitarian issues. "If we're going to have food and it's for ending hunger, then get it to the people who cook." Village women were also



entrusted with allocating supplies. Programs were introduced that gave free food to families who sent their girls to school.

Bertini stood down the Taliban, demanding that women be allowed to work in bakery projects in Afghanistan or there would be no bakeries. She was surprisingly successful.

At UNICEF, Bellamy began to explore the darker recesses of a child's world into areas of sexual abuse and family violence. She would argue that women as well as girls were her concern, since no child could develop freely if a mother suffered and had no status or rights.

Sadik, a Pakistani physician, ran the watershed 1994 Cairo conference on population and development, fending off foes from the American anti-abortion lobby and the Vatican to conservative Islamic governments. The meeting ended with a bold call for the right of women to decide how their bodies are used.

At the World Health Organization, Brundtland, a public health specialist, led a worldwide campaign against smoking and oversaw a global fund to fight AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Robinson, a human rights lawyer and former president of Ireland, had the stormiest tenure. When she became High Commissioner for Human Rights, she said that she wanted to listen to the concerns of people in developing nations, who often accused Western human rights organizations of finding fault only with poor countries.

Human rights advocates respected her, though, for strong stands she took for justice for the East Timorese brutalized by pro-Indonesian militias in 1999 and for more human rights protection in China. But she angered the Bush administration for what Washington called her failure to curb outbursts of anti-Semitism at the 2001 U.N. World Conference Against Racism in Durban, South Africa, and for her criticisms of American limitations on civil rights after the Sept. 11 attacks. Israel, also outraged by the Durban conference, blocked her attempt to lead a human rights monitoring mission into occupied Palestinian territories earlier this year.

There were also some criticisms from women. Robinson took a very low- key initial approach to Afghanistan under the Taliban, saying she needed to learn more about Islamic law. And in the spring of 2001, at a meeting in Teheran, Iran, to frame part of the agenda for the U.N. conference on racism, Robinson acquiesced to the government's demand that all women be covered from head to toe. It was an international gathering and many women were outraged.

"I would not equate the wearing of the veil with a repression of women as such," she told a BBC interviewer later that year, saying that she too had to cover her head and didn't like it. "I wouldn't do it if it was a custom, but it was part of the law and out of respect as high commissioner, I abide by laws," she said.

But by the end of her tenure, Robinson, who served on four-year term with a one-year extension, had become an outspoken critic of trafficking in girls and women. In a visit to Cambodia in August, she told the national parliament that something needed to be done about the 200,000 victims of traffickers in Southeast Asia alone.

"The women and children who are subjected to this inhumane cruelty are not foreign to us," she said. "They are our sisters and daughters; they are our children."

*Barbara Crossette was The New York Times U.N. bureau chief from 1994 to 2001.*

*#Leadership of Women in the United Nations title was added by CLW*

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## **FAREWELL SPEECH IN GENEVA BY MARY ROBINSON, HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

I would like to thank all those involved in organising this occasion. Yesterday I bade farewell to our New York colleagues and this is the last time I will address you as High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is both a sad and proud occasion for me.

It is sad because the past five years have been both difficult and eventful and I have had the privilege of working with so many wonderful friends and colleagues. I feel a deep sense of pride in what you represent. People outside Palais Wilson do not realise how hard you work or the dedication which you show to the cause of human rights. But I have seen that for myself and I appreciate your dedication and hard work. I wish to express my deep gratitude to all of you. It would simply not have been possible to do the job without your support and cooperation.

Somebody wrote that the High Commissioner should wake up each morning thinking of human rights. In my experience in the job, it has been difficult not to wake up in the morning thinking of all that needs to be done – even to avoid lying awake in the middle of the night thinking about that has not been easy! I know that for you, too, the burden has been heavy and that many have gone the extra mile for the human rights cause.

One great consolation to me as I leave Geneva is that I am leaving a strong, invigorated team in place in the Office of the High Commissioner. The fight for human rights will not be over next week or next month or next year. So we need to have the best people in place, committed to carrying on this vital work. And it has encouraged me greatly to watch the team here grow in strength and efficiency. The Office is well placed now to carry on the fight.

I think that a lot of progress has been made in recent years in strengthening human

rights. But I will not conceal from you that my concern about the future of human rights has grown over the past year. I am conscious that this is an uncertain time for those who champion the rights of the individual. Some voices are heard suggesting that after the terrible attacks in the United States on 11 September, human rights are somehow less important, that the security imperative outweighs other considerations. I do not believe that.

On the contrary, in combating terrorism the full range of human rights must be observed.

It is a time for those who believe in human rights to keep their nerve. Human rights are not expendable, whatever the circumstances. And I strongly believe that human rights will endure.

It has been a privilege to serve as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Ever since the General Assembly approved the Secretary-General's nomination, I have been deeply conscious of the trust that the international community placed in me. I have tried to live up to that trust. This job is not an easy one.

Whether as High Commissioner or as a colleague working in this Office here in Geneva, in New York or in the field one shoulders a heavy responsibility. The hopes of the desperate land on our desks. Often they cannot find a remedy from their own national courts or administrations. Their only hope of justice lies with the international community and institutions such as the Office of the High Commissioner. They look to us as their last hope. That is a basic reality that has guided me during the five years in this position and has motivated me in speaking out when the occasion required, even if what I had to say was not always popular.

There is a saying that if want to succeed you should speak softly but carry a big stick. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has no big stick except the appeal to the moral conscience of the world. I have tried to speak softly, but clearly, to governments, though from time to time I have found that the only way to get a result is to raise my voice a bit!

At the same time, I have urged from the start that the full range of human rights – economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political – must be our goal. We need a rounded human rights agenda which takes account of the needs of all. That agenda, I may add, is a most valuable asset in the fight against terrorism.

I will return to the impact of 11 September because the implications of that terrible event must be faced up to squarely. But I would like to spend some time identifying those areas where it seems to me that progress has been made over the past five years and to look at the potential for building on that progress - and the obstacles - that lie ahead.

When I take stock of where human rights stand today, the first thing I would mention is the fact that human rights are now firmly on the agenda of the international

community. If one thinks back twenty years to arguments about whether human rights were universal, whether they could be made operational, whether they have a serious place in the conduct of international relations, one would have to conclude that human rights have indeed come a long way. Most governments today will at least acknowledge that human rights have a role to play. Unfortunately that does not necessarily mean that they will observe human rights standards. You will often still hear governments arguing that they must place other factors first. The difference is that today those sorts of claims go against the tide of opinion. There is much greater recognition now of the centrality of human rights and the immense benefits a rights-based approach brings. That is a big step forward.

Our mandate is to give leadership in human rights, and I am glad we are doing so by being operational in the field. We are a small UN Office, so it is necessary to be strategic. But I am conscious of the different ways in which we have become operational. Last month I was able to assess the impact of the work of our colleagues in the Office in Cambodia, to visit East Timor again and see how the human rights unit in UNTAET had developed, and to meet Nick Howen in Bangkok and hear his views as regional representative for Asia on what our priorities should be.

After that I travelled with colleagues to the WSSD in Johannesburg. Thanks to well prepared speeches and speaking notes, I was able to make substantive and relevant interventions on issues such as the right to water, HIV/Aids, human rights and sustainable development, corporate responsibility and human rights and the environment. The human rights message was getting across – and it was badly needed. When I met civil society NGOs – environmental and development activists, as well as human rights activists – they expressed deep appreciation of the leadership our Office was giving. The civil society message was clear: no sustainable development without human rights.

Another advance I see is the consolidation of international human rights legislation. The momentum in this area was clearly shown at the Millennium Summit which saw 273 signatures, ratifications of or accessions to major human rights treaties and instruments undertaken by 84 States. The entry into force of the Optional Protocols to CEDAW and to the CRC on the involvement of children in armed conflict and sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography were particularly satisfying examples. It is worth recalling how difficult the process was in each of those cases and that many thought success would never come. But it did come and that is further proof that determination and perseverance can achieve results which make an enduring impact. It would be a wonderful advance if the one remaining ratification needed to bring the Convention on Migrant Workers into effect could be obtained in the coming weeks.

Getting treaties enacted and ratified is, of course, only the start. We must re-double our efforts in the time ahead to ensure that the legislation is put into practice, and that civil society plays its full part in ensuring implementation of these commitments.

I would like to say a special word here about the International Criminal Court. All of us should warmly welcome the fact that the ICC has become a reality. I find it particularly

welcome that the statute contains provision for the prosecution of rape as a war crime. Having an independent court will bring the perpetrators of human rights violations to account. Above all, it will have a deterrent effect on those contemplating such violations. As I said yesterday in New York, I regret the current attempts to undermine the legitimacy and effectiveness of the ICC, but I believe they will be short term, and that the ICC will prove its worth many times over.

A further area of progress has been in the mainstreaming of human rights in the work of the United Nations as a whole and in that of other international organisations. As in the other areas I have mentioned, there is room for improvement here also. But it is remarkable to see bodies such as UNDP and the World Bank take on the human rights dimensions when in the past they might have tended to regard these as difficult and sensitive. I am convinced that mainstreaming of both human rights and strong gender perspective is the key to making human rights acceptable everywhere, and I hope that the beginnings we have made will be built on.

Let me say a word about the role of the United Nations in protecting human rights which I believe is absolutely crucial. When I first took on the job of High Commissioner I expressed misgivings about the UN. Over 5 years as High Commissioner I have seen some positive developments, though I will say frankly that I would like to have seen more. What I am more and more convinced of is how important it is that the world have a United Nations that is efficient, aware, responsible. The UN is unique because it, alone among international organizations, can claim universal legitimacy.

I have made a number of proposals for strengthening the role of human rights within the UN. One specific proposal is that human rights guidelines be drawn up for use in implementation of the Millennium Development Goals agreed in the wake of the Millennium Declaration. Another idea I have suggested to the Secretary-General is to mark next year's anniversary of the Vienna Conference by devising a methodology to monitor progress made in reaching human rights goals. An Annual UN Progress Report on Human rights, carried out by independent experts, would bring an external view to bear on progress and on the challenges for the implementation of the Millennium Declaration human rights goals.

And the UN needs to look ahead to issues such as bioethics and the human rights dimension of scientific and technological developments, to issues which deserve more attention such as the rights of the disabled, to the use of the internet and information technology to promote respect for human rights.

As in all of its activities, the UN must demonstrate that its approach to human rights is effective and can bring real improvements to peoples' lives. I wish my successor well in pursuing this goal.

I want to make special mention of human rights defenders. I need not stress to you the pivotal role that human rights defenders play. But this is a good time to put on record how much I, and the international community, owe to the thousands of women and men who have stood up for the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration. Progress

has been made through the appointment of the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Human Rights Defenders, and Hina Jilani is doing excellent work in that capacity. Human rights defenders need our special care and attention as they stand in the front line of the struggle. It has been a privilege for me to get to know so many of them, to see their courage and perseverance, and to hope we can maintain the link in the future.

The chief threats to human rights can be seen in those forces which are the opposite of its strengths. For example:

- That governments will only pay lip service to their human rights commitments but will not live up to them.
- That international organisations may falter in their mainstreaming of human rights and gender.
- That the vigilance of civil society will be relaxed, the security argument bowed to.

I am confident that, together, we can deal with all of these threats. The continued vigilance of civil society is a key factor. I have always found it natural to link my work with civil society and I was glad to have the occasion in New York, yesterday, to express my deep appreciation for the support I have received from the NGO community over the past five years. I was concerned at the last session of the Commission on Human Rights that the voices of NGOs were not allowed to be heard as much as in the past. I urge NGOs to carry on their work and to focus activities, not only on governments, but on other key players such as the business community who have such a powerful role.

Returning to 11 September: I said at the start that I was apprehensive about the impact the aftermath has been having on human rights, At the annual meeting of the Special Rapporteurs and Chairs of the Treaty Bodies which took place recently in Geneva it was striking how many reports had come in from around the world of the erosion of civil liberties in the guise of combating terrorism. And it was noticeable and worrying at the last session of the Commission, that the pressure for action in some of the worst cases of human rights abuses was less strong this year.

Responding to terrorism will remain a major focus of international affairs over the coming years. But we must all continue to insist on respect for basic rights and fundamental freedoms in countering terrorist threats. We should not hesitate to draw attention to the relevant international standards and in particular to the non-derogable rights that must be protected at all times.

The happier side of my departure from Geneva is that I will take away with me so many precious memories. As a private citizen, I will remain committed to the cause of human rights. An area I am particularly interested in is the place of human rights in the globalised world and how we can work towards ethical standards of globalisation. A related issue of vital importance is national capacity building. When we look back at the history of the human rights movement, it is inevitable that we pay tribute to the extraordinary vision of Eleanor Roosevelt who recognised that what the world needed

was a universal, indivisible law on human rights. Now what is needed above all is the building up of national protection systems to ensure implementation of agreed human rights law. That fits well with one of my favourite Eleanor Roosevelt quotes: that human rights begin "in small places, close to home."

Ethical globalisation, national capacity building – these are linked areas where I see great challenges for all who are interested in human rights. I intend to devote time to developing ideas for strengthening these areas as part of the overall goal of embedding a culture of human rights.

Once again, my thanks to all of you for your support and my best wishes to my successor Sergio Vieira de Mello, and to you all in the struggle that lies ahead. As High Commissioner I have been conscious that the human rights mandate, more than any other, reflects who are the source and who should be the focus and inspiration of the United Nations, as reflected in the opening words of the Charter: *We the peoples...*

Thank you.

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Source:

<http://www.unhchr.ch/hurricane/hurricane.nsf/view01/608B646C44611148C1256C31002FF3E8?opendocument>

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## **U.N. Rights Chief Blasts Terror War**

**By CLARE NULLIS, Associated Press Writer**

8 September 2002, 3:38 AM EDT

GENEVA (AP) -- Departing U.N. human rights chief Mary Robinson, in a bleak assessment of the state of human rights, accused governments of hiding behind the ongoing war on terrorism to trample civil liberties and crush troublesome opponents.

"Suddenly the T-word is used all the time," Robinson said, referring to terrorism. "And that's the problem."

The United States, Russia and China were among the nations she said were ignoring civil rights in the name of combating international terrorist groups.

"Everything is justified by that T-word," the 58-year-old former Irish president said in

an interview with The Associated Press. "I hope that countries will put human rights back on the agenda because it tended to slip after September 11."

Robinson argued the Bush administration set the tone by holding detainees from Afghanistan without charge at the U.S. naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. She also criticized Washington's opposition to the new International Criminal Court.

"The world needs leadership in human rights and the United States could give great leadership. It's not giving it at the moment, unfortunately," said Robinson, who leaves her post Wednesday.

When Robinson took other governments to task for abuses in the post-Sept. 11 era, they often cited the United States as an example in arguing that human rights standards have changed, she said.

"And I've had to say the standards have not changed," Robinson said. "The United States must be seen to fully uphold international human rights and humanitarian standards. The attacks on New York didn't just kill many innocent people - they were an attack on freedom and democracy, and we must uphold these standards. And we can do that and effectively combat terrorism."

Robinson said a number of countries were using the excuse of fighting terrorism to clamp down on legitimate opposition and curtail freedom of expression. She singled out Russian military operations in the restive republic of Chechnya and China's clampdowns on Muslim Uigurs and in Tibet.

It was Robinson's willingness to use her office as U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights to criticize such big powers that made her a darling of activists like Amnesty International. But it ultimately caused her downfall. Robinson initially wanted to quit last year at the end of her four-year term, saying she was frustrated by a lack of funding. She was persuaded by U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan to stay an additional year, then she let it be known she was willing to remain in office until 2005. That offer was declined, diplomats have said, because of U.S. annoyance at her criticism of the Guantanamo detention camp and her perceived anti-Israel stance, and anger in Moscow over her persistent clamoring for an inquiry into the suppression of Chechen rebels.

"I do most of the work constructively, diplomatically ... but there are times when there must be a voice in the United Nations for the victims of violations," Robinson said.

One of Robinson's last visits was to China, where she said she had mixed feelings. On the one hand, she said, China has made big strides in technical programs to educate police, prison officers and judges about human rights treaties. "But on the side of the reality of human rights, I'm very worried," she said, citing recent arrests of labor leaders to quell unrest, the detention of a well-known AIDS activist and the continuing widespread use of the death penalty.



Despite her gloomy overall assessment, Robinson said she took heart from her perception that human rights are being increasingly accepted as a fundamental part of development.

Asked what she considered the worst human rights violation, she said, "Extreme poverty." She said the United States, in particular, needs to show more recognition of economic and social rights.

Robinson said she felt no bitterness at being eased out, saying she will be campaigning for a "more ethical globalization and a fairer world." She also wants to use her contacts to tap universities and foundations for more resources to promote human rights in developing countries.

Robinson said she was confident that her successor, Sergio Vieira de Mello, a Brazilian diplomat who headed the interim U.N. administration in East Timor, is capable and committed. And she offers him one bit of advice given to her by an Irish poet friend: "If you become too popular in that job, you're probably not doing a good job."

**Source:**

[http://customwire.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/UN\\_HUMAN\\_RIGHTS?SITE=FLPET&SECTION=HOME](http://customwire.ap.org/dynamic/stories/U/UN_HUMAN_RIGHTS?SITE=FLPET&SECTION=HOME)

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**Leadership of Women in the United Nations**

**The Tampa: One Year On**

**How the Human Spirit Responds to Oppression**

**Speech by Sr Susan Connelly**

24-25 August 2002, UTS Sydney Pax Christi Australia (NSW) Buddhist Peace Fellowship

In this presentation Sr Susan Connelly gave to the recent conference to commemorate the first anniversary of the Tampa incident, she speaks of the "faith-filled people" in Timor who found the strength to endure suffering and to sublimate it through their Christian faith. "They have shown that a solid belief system is able to give meaning to suffering, enabling the person to endure and to transcend."

However, she qualifies such endurance as "not the be all and end all of the virtues." In terms of the Australian response to the refugee and asylum seeker issues, she goes on to say,

"For religion to be of further use in the world of oppression, it must prove to have other effects. If people of religious persuasion are not challenged by their beliefs to work tooth and nail to confront oppressive persons, regimes and systems, even if their religion itself is one of the oppressors, then their interpretation of religion is to be questioned.

Those among us who can see that we are the oppressors must respond, and the required response is courage and willingness to make an opposing stand. Not for us the array of possible negative responses including denial, capitulation or apathy. Not for us the silence which hopes it will all just go away, or that it will be all right in the end, or that the good people will be rewarded in heaven. Silence, in this case, is collaboration. We are part of the affluent minority which oppresses many. What faith systems will sustain us and challenge us as we learn that we are on the oppressing side?"

Her thoughts are insightful in relation to the nature of leadership being driven by religious beliefs.

"Fundamentalists of every religious hue are in power and their abuse of religion makes them formidable oppressors indeed. It is happening in Muslim nations, but is apparent in the United States as well. The Bush administration is full of over-zealous fundamentalists, intent on applying their twisted little view of Christianity to Government policy, ignoring all the while the basic message of Christianity, that God identifies with the poor, that the oppressed of this world are where God is found. Fundamentalists are, by definition, heretics. Overt links between religion and politics are not quite so evident in Australia. Our current claim to fame appears to lie in being the lackey of a fundamentalist state."

She challenges the reader to learn from religious traditions "vital messages for both oppressed and oppressor."

**America's Weapons Of Mass  
Destruction**

**The Tampa: One Year On**

**How the Human Spirit Responds to Oppression**

**Speech by Sr Susan Connelly**

24-25 August 2002, UTS Sydney Pax Christi Australia (NSW) Buddhist Peace Fellowship

Reflection on the human spirit's response to oppression depends on the perspective from which we view the topic. Will it be from that of the oppressed person or that of the oppressor? I would like to offer some thoughts on both.

### **Response of the oppressed**

The possibilities of response for an oppressed person include madness, self-absorption, capitulation, despair or a willingness to become the oppressor if the chance arose. The possibilities also include sublimation, compassion, endurance, heroism, transcendence.

All races of people have examples of all of these responses to oppression. The ones I am most familiar with are those of the Timorese people to 25 years of a determined strategy of bullying by a power convinced of its own superiority. The Timorese were attacked in their person, their property and their culture by a concerted attempt to wipe them out, or to so change their identity that they would become another people altogether. To achieve this, a brutality on a huge scale was systematically employed, which instilled fear and terror into the people.

The scale of the suffering of the East Timorese people is illustrated by the fact that not a family can be found who has not been touched in some way by violent death over the last few generations. I ask myself, What has happened to the child who could not speak after witnessing the murder of her father, uncle and fourteen others in 1997? What has happened to the woman who stood not far from me as I was talking with two girls in June, 1999, because she thought she was on a line to tell her story to one of the Sisters from Australia? What are the secret thoughts of all those families whose loved ones were murdered in 1999 and who now know that unless the International community finds its voice, those who planned the deaths of their families will either not be charged or have already been acquitted in recent weeks? What has happened to the boys I knew whose thumbs were cut off? Where do they figure within the 70% unemployment rate in East Timor? Will they ever be employable?

I have witnessed first-hand a most astounding aspect of the response of the Timorese people to this suffering. It is faith. A solid wall of religious faith.

Within the challenges and consolations of Christian faith, most of the Timorese people found the strength to endure suffering and to sublimate it.

### **Mysticism of suffering**

One of our members, Joan Westblade, often tells the story which she experienced in the dark days of 1999 in East Timor when she stood with the people in the face of the growing instability of the situation and the realisation that the international community lacked the will to fulfil the promises of protection it had so recently and loudly made to the Timorese people.

She was talking with a group of people about their growing fears, when one lady said, "I ask Jesus why this is all happening, and he just turns his head away." Another in the group replied, "Perhaps he is crying too." These two statements had a profound effect on Joan and they are worth reflecting on, as they give an indication of the type of thinking, the underlying beliefs which sustained these people.

There is no sense of a weakening of faith in the existence of God in the face of the trauma they had suffered through the oppressive regime which seemed to be on the verge of triumph. The woman is not saying that maybe there's no God at all, and we only have ourselves to rely on. For her there was sorrow and bewilderment that the God she loved and served was inexplicably turning away. The question was, "Why is he turning" not "Does he exist?" God's presence is a given; it is God's manner which is the mystery.

The reply of the other woman is as instructive as it is representative of the values, attitudes and beliefs of the Timorese people as I have known them over the past ten years. In a gentle reflection on what her friend had just said, this woman makes a strong statement of faith in the compassion of the God she believes in. "Perhaps he is crying too." These are the type of responses they make; this is what they believe and this is what gave them the endurance which they showed throughout their long oppression.

This conversation was that of two mystics, although they would doubtless laugh in your face were you to say such to them. But for them religious belief is so necessary to life that it becomes the only vehicle of explanation of events which cause them so much grief and anguish. Believing in God when things are going smoothly is fairly unremarkable, as pious platitudes can roll easily off the willing tongue. But when the mystery of suffering takes hold on a human being's experience and when that human being maintains faith despite all evidence to the contrary, then faith enters the realm of the mystic.

A truly human response to oppression and suffering must flow from an underlying belief system capable of providing sufficient reason for the person not to succumb.

A sad reflection on our ability to get it all so wrong at times is shown in the almost constant phenomenon of people using religion to oppress others, examples of which are rampant in human history, including the present. It has been demonstrated that the ruling classes can use religious faith to preserve their ascendancy and to continue to oppress the people by enshrining class division, poverty and unfair sharing of wealth within the religion, e.g. using belief in an afterlife as an excuse for not trying to make this life any better.

Happily this has not happened on such a large scale in East Timor, and in fact it is the Church which has proved itself the one voice of freedom for the people when other great powers who could have made a difference, including Australia, were too busy using their power for their own ends, their "national interest.". As we all well remember, Australia's leaders had to be dragged kicking and screaming into the fray

on behalf of the Timorese. Belligerent warnings like those recently given to Iraq were never directed at Indonesia, not, I think, because of any real fear of Indonesia, but because it was not United States policy. Our fawning upon the US knows no bounds.

A Timorese lady I know told me that the only response they could make so many times to the destruction of their families and culture was silence. With their lives on the line, there was outward capitulation by many, but in the heart was the intense desire to remain who they were, to maintain their identity. Endurance required silence. The simple preservation of life required silence. Under the iron grip of the thug, the only hope for the children was silence.

Here is where the mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ fits. God identifies with humanity in the person of Jesus and in his death the mystery of human suffering reaches an inexplicable climax. Jesus' death is the culmination of a Divine life choosing to be one with the human even to the extent of the cessation of life. In no other way could God teach us that truly, it is the oppressed who are the locus of the Divine. Jesus' screams on the Cross were of horror at what was happening to him, of concern for his mother, a railing against the unreasonableness of it all and finally a supreme act of faith in the total loving ascendancy of God.

### **Response of the oppressor**

However, it seems to me to be more urgent in the present climate of Australian response to the refugee and asylum seeker issues and their underlying causes to reflect on how the human spirit can respond when it realises that it is part of the problem. In other words, how does my human spirit respond now that I have realised that I am part of an oppressive regime? Or how does yours?

Faith-filled people such as those I have described abound in Timor and illustrate the proven capacity for religious faith to sustain people in the face of huge trauma. They have shown that a solid belief system is able to give meaning to suffering, enabling the person to endure and to transcend.

Endurance, however, is not the be all and end all of the virtues, remarkable and all as it is. For religion to be of further use in the world of oppression, it must prove to have other effects. If people of religious persuasion are not challenged by their beliefs to work tooth and nail to confront oppressive persons, regimes and systems, even if their religion itself is one of the oppressors, then their interpretation of religion is to be questioned.

Those among us who can see that we are the oppressors must respond, and the required response is courage and willingness to make an opposing stand. Not for us the array of possible negative responses including denial, capitulation or apathy. Not for us the silence which hopes it will all just go away, or that it will be all right in the end, or that the good people will be rewarded in heaven. Silence, in this case, is collaboration. We are part of the affluent minority which oppresses many. What faith systems will sustain us and challenge us as we learn that we are on the

oppressing side?

What is happening in Australia to human beings, including children, in the name of our “national interest” should be wrenching our very gut.. This morning’s Herald carries a front-page story which must bring enormous comfort and satisfaction to the leadership of this nation. It tells of young Afghanian men languishing in Indonesia with no hope of coming to their favoured destination, Australia. The reason is that although this is the height of the boat season, there’s nothing doing. Australia’s policies have worked. The willingness to shrug off the drowning of 350 asylum seekers, the processing of others offshore, the punitive and abusive mismanagement of people in detention centres has successfully stemmed the tide of humanity trying to escape from their own nation’s woes, caused, more often than not, by the destructive policies of the West.

Is there to be rejoicing in the streets at this wonderful victory? Will the enormous benefits to Australia flowing from this huge success be documented? Indeed not. Instead, we have Conferences like this one on the anniversary of the symbol of our narrowness, Tampa Day. What indeed does it profit a man to gain the whole world and suffer the loss of the soul?

I believe that those who have the benefit of a belief system which sustains them in times of trial have a huge responsibility to act out of that belief system for the benefit of other humans when required. Religion is not a personal panacea, it is not a luxury to be engaged in when it suits.

We have to respond to today’s challenges, just as those in the past had to try to respond to the situations which confronted them. And I firmly believe that we cannot do it without a sincere willingness to learn from our traditions, those belief systems which have proved so comforting and challenging to people in the past.

Is the “absence of God” from our Western society a consequence not of the challenge to our reason and intellect of the possible existence of an unseen deity, but a cop-out from the absolute demands which that possible God could make? The major religions all have essential messages for the conduct of human life, and it is these messages which are truly in the “national interest”. The interpretation of the “national interest” in purely economic terms devastates our human spirit and no amount of Anzac wreaths or Akubra hats on politicians’ heads changes that.

There is an urgent necessity of claiming again our religious traditions and having the humility to face ourselves and our world in the light which those traditions throw. Otherwise, these very traditions will be hijacked by those for whom power is everything. The trappings of religion will be used to justify the greed and will to domination of the rich and powerful, as is happening right now.

Fundamentalists of every religious hue are in power and their abuse of religion makes them formidable oppressors indeed. It is happening in Muslim nations, but is apparent in the United States as well. The Bush administration is full of over-zealous

fundamentalists, intent on applying their twisted little view of Christianity to Government policy, ignoring all the while the basic message of Christianity, that God identifies with the poor, that the oppressed of this world are where God is found. Fundamentalists are, by definition, heretics.

Overt links between religion and politics are not quite so evident in Australia. Our current claim to fame appears to lie in being the lackey of a fundamentalist state. Is there anything lower?

The poet Dylan Thomas wrote upon the death of his father:

*"Do not go gently into that good night....*

*Rage, rage against the dying of the day"*

Our religious traditions have vital messages for both oppressed and oppressor. Let us re-discover them and share them. Let us challenge each other with them. Let us rage against the dying of the day.

Susan Connelly RSJ

24/08/02

## **Not this Country**

### **A Poem by Dr Jocelyne Scutt**

Dr Jocelyne Scutt's poem, *Not this Country*, resonates the disbelief and shame felt in acknowledging that it is our country in treating the foreigner as an "alien," and an "illegal," that has become "like a foreign land to us this way."

She pleads, "As people of conscience, we must take responsibility for what our country is, what our country does, and what our governments do in the name of our country, for they do it in our name. We must oppose the injustice done in our country's name, in the name of every one of us."



## **NOT THIS COUNTRY**

Jocelyne A. Scutt

Not this country

with a foot in the face

of persons

displaced

Not this country

behind barbed wire

barbed lips

mouths barred

feet shackled

mouths silent

speech silenced

Not this country

a hand turned to fist

in the faces marked foreign

out of place

in this place

marked 'ours only'

no difference

allowed.

Not this place

for the foreigner

made alien

marked illegal

black-arab-pockmarked

drawn in the lies of a Prime Minister's fear



fearing yellow-asians-leprous.

In a place called Woomera

wire fences, mouths wired

staff sentenced to silence

in exchange for a wage

Aliens sentenced

for life

to the wire

Private managements plundering

our pockets for profits

their faces pockmarked

hearts unrelenting

burying reason and rights

in the mud

of dishonour.

Dishonourable?

Not this country?

When even Nazi Germany

ran concentration camps

as shamed state houses

not as private enterprise

profit driven

Yes, this country.

It's like a foreign land to us

this way.

And if we don't do

something fast

We've lost it

The one we know

out on the horizon

sweeping plains

brown

bronzed in the sun

sunlit freedom

floating off to nowhere

fast

fastforwarded

While we're left

here

hearts bleeding

And in this country's concentration camps

hearts bleed

hearts bleeding

whilst mouths bleed, too

Ours, this country.

Jocelyne A. Scutt

May/June 2002

As people of conscience, we must take responsibility for what our country is, what our country does, and what our governments do in the name of our country, for they

do it in our name. We must oppose the injustice done in our country's name, in the name of every one of us.

We cannot leave 'our country' in the hands of those who have no compassion, do not care, or care only for themselves. This *is* our country, and we are responsible for it, and for its policies. We cannot turn that responsibility over to others, where leadership is lacking, or the leadership we have (so called) leads us so rapidly into the dark, if we are not already yet there.

It is for us to take action. We must open our hearts, where our government's heart is closed, and welcome all those who are homeless and who are running from harm.

That welcome must be in our own name, and that of this country.

When our country stands leaderless, it is up to all of us to lead. When our government stands compassionless, it is up to all of us to be compassionate. When our parliament stands careless, it is up to all of us to care.

Like 'sorry' to Indigenous Australians who have been here from time immemorial, 'welcome' to those newly arriving means - can mean - a new beginning.

To those who run from harm in boats, it is up to all of us to say: 'Welcome.' If we do not say 'welcome', no one else will do it for us.

JAS, 22 June 2002

### **The Development of Port Augusta as a Learning Community**

Port Augusta is a regional South Australian community of around 14,000 permanent residents. At the northern tip of the Spencer Gulf in South Australia, it sits on the edge of the Flinders Ranges, the point at which railways and highways from Alice Springs, Sydney, Perth and Adelaide converge. Twice it has undergone significant economic refocus – once, when road and rail eroded its status as a major port for freight and more recently as changes in the electricity and rail industry, and the loss of government and banking services locally, have seen local employment decrease. In the last two years Port Augusta's economy has begun a gradual positive shift capitalising on its location for tourism, freight and service industries. Port Augusta has a diverse community with over 17 aboriginal language groups residing within the city.

Against this background, the Port Augusta Council and the Attorney General's Department jointly funded the development of a Social Vision and Action Plan completed in mid-2000. One of the eight elements of the social wellbeing of Port Augusta was identified as "education and training to suit community needs". Spencer Institute of TAFE took the lead role of initiating a training forum that evolved into the Port Augusta learning community steering group and developed the

learning community concept. In 2001, Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) provided \$10,000 to the Port Augusta community to further this work.

Key figures are Mayor Joy Baluch and Brett Humphrys, an SA Attorney-General's Department senior project officer working with the council on the social vision and action plan. *Australian Training*, a Magazine of ANTA featured an interview where they were asked about learning and what it means for Port Augusta. (Source: ANTA)

## The Development of Port Augusta as a Learning Community

### The Development of Port Augusta as a Learning Community\*

Key figures are Mayor Joy Baluch and Brett Humphrys, an SA Attorney-General's Department senior project officer working with the council on the social vision and action plan. *Australian Training* asked them about learning and what it means for Port Augusta.

#### **Q What is Port Augusta's vision for learning?**

The learning community steering group has developed a vision statement which is:-

Port Augusta values and celebrates:

- social cohesion
- life long learning for all
- community partnerships
- economic regeneration
- informal, timely and inexpensive community training opportunities identified by the community;
- train the trainer type training for individuals that can provide future community training workshops;
- information dissemination that is accessible by all the community;
- networks of trust, respect for diversity and information flow;
- accessible training and employment strategies which meet both potential employee and employer needs;
- technology assistance which facilitate further accessibility of training opportunities; and
- partnerships with tertiary education institutions for local delivery.

#### **Q Why is learning central to the community's regeneration?**

Around the world communities are recognising the relationship between social capital and economic development as a pre-requisite to sustained economic vitality. By building one you contribute to building the other, and concentrating on one at the expense of the other is unproductive for both. Work on our Social Vision and

Action Plan identified low social capital as a real issue for our community, so it's logical that we tackle learning. We believe that developing the city as a learning community will help to develop networks of trust and respect for diversity and will capitalise on opportunities for young people to study and gain employment locally. We also know that job growth is most likely in tourism, hospitality, freight, logistics, retail and industry service sectors. We've got to have people with those skills to support that growth.

**Q How have you used the ANTA funds to progress the development of Port Augusta as learning community?**

We were able to employ a learning communities co-ordinator Kellie Carpenter. Spencer TAFE initiated a broad training forum, which includes community organisations and business associations as well as training providers to:

- identify the training and education needs of Port Augusta and support the delivery of identified programs;
- identify the local partnerships between the community, not-for-profit service providers and Government;
- design website and promotional strategies to promote the concept locally; and
- foster partnerships between education and training providers and employers to ensure training that relates to future employment opportunities.

**Q Do you believe a major training provider such as Spencer TAFE must be a part of any learning community?**

The success of learning communities is totally dependent on partnerships. Every community no matter how small or struggling, has resources which are more powerful together than just the simple sum of their parts. Training organisations have expertise, and usually things as basic as physical facilities for meetings and teaching, which are essential. Without the drive and enthusiasm of Steve Fawcett and the staff at Spencer TAFE, none of this would have happened in Port Augusta. Without a doubt, the answer to this question is a resounding “yes”.

**Q What lessons can you share with other communities?**

Partnerships, persistence and people. These are the three key phrases. Everyone has a stake in their community, whether it's small or large, financial or emotional. If you can bring people and organisations together, form partnerships and show them what might be able to be achieved --- set off the spark --- that's the first step. The hardest part is keeping it on track and rolling along. That's where the persistence comes in. Port Augusta has a broad vision for our future, a process to continue to engage community participation and a committed local steering committee. We will persist and we will succeed. We hope that our story inspires other communities like us.

\* CLW has titled this article.

Source: **ANTA Australian Training Magazine, September 2002 edition**

### **Women in Vocational Education and Training Survey**

Achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training (VET) is one of the five nationally agreed objectives of the VET system.

Among the groups who face particular disadvantage are:

- people with a disability
- Indigenous people
- Women
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and
- people in rural and remote areas.

Consultations are currently being conducted to inform the development of a national approach to the future management of women's issues in VET. Visit the **Women in VET - Futures** page to get involved.

How can you get involved?·

- You can contribute your feedback by reviewing the **Women in VET - Futures powerpoint presentation** and responding to the **Women in VET - Futures consultation survey**.
- You can invite your peers and colleagues to also provide feedback by referring them to this page. If you need further assistance to consult with your networks, please contact [equityinfo@anta.gov.au](mailto:equityinfo@anta.gov.au)

Also two national five-year strategies with implementation blueprints have been developed for two other groups facing particular disadvantage:

**Bridging Pathways** aims to increase opportunities for people with a disability in VET.

**Partners in a Learning Culture** aims to increase opportunities for Indigenous people in VET.

Source: ANTA <http://www.anta.gov.au/dapEquity.asp>

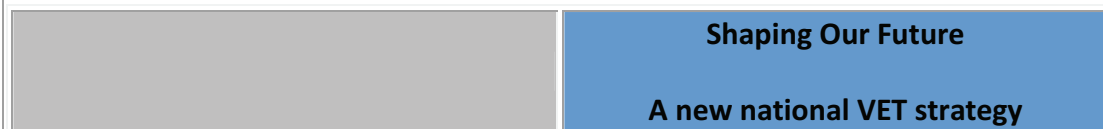
### **An Invitation by ANTA's CEO to Join in the Next National VET Strategy**

**By Moira Scollay, CEO of Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)**

Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for vocational education and training have agreed to the development of a strategy, guided by a national working group, that will provide vision and direction to VET to the end of the decade.

Australia has had two national strategies: the first *Towards a Skilled Australia 1994-1998* and the second, and current, *A Bridge to the Future 1998-2003*. Over the next eight months or so, with the aim of building on VET's strengths and achievements, a shared vision and direction that resonates with clients and stakeholders that will contribute to the social well-being, economic success and environmental sustainability of the nation is being developed. The national working group has now selected the phrase *Shaping our Future*.

*Shaping our Future*, which will consolidate possible issues and priorities for the next national strategy and will be available very early in 2003. Once this is released, the second stage of essential inputs will commence consisting of consultations with clients and stakeholders nationally and locally as well as around 25 regional forums across the States and Territories. Members of the working group will consider the accumulated advice and views from around the country and advise on how this should shape a draft new national strategy for consideration by the Ministers at their mid-year meeting next year.



### **An Invitation by ANTA's CEO to Join in the Next National VET Strategy**

**By Moira Scollay, CEO of Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)**

A journey of exploration, challenge and discovery has begun as Australia embarks on the development of the next national strategy for vocational education and training.

Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers for vocational education and training have agreed to the development of a strategy, guided by a national working group, that will provide vision and direction to VET to the end of the decade.

But before we go on, just what is a "national strategy" and what does it really mean to the daily work and lives of enterprises, learners, teachers, trainers and registered training organisations?

The national strategy is a medium term strategic document. It focuses on the operation of the National Training Framework, national objectives, policies, priorities and initiatives. The strategy also identifies agreed key performance measures for the system. Ministers determine the national strategy based on advice from ANTA, according to agreed national objectives and priorities. This is our reporting framework of course and my hope is that many of you will join in shaping the future objectives and priorities for VET.

Australia has had two national strategies: the first *Towards a Skilled Australia 1994-1998* and the second, and current, *A Bridge to the Future 1998-2003*. Over the next eight months or so, we have the opportunity to build on VET's strengths and

achievements. We can, and we must, build a shared vision and direction that resonates with our clients and our stakeholders across the country based on the proposition that this will contribute to the social well-being, economic success and environmental sustainability of the nation. If we get it right, the next strategy will position us to improve the reach of learning and skills development and generate more economic and social wealth for our country and its people. It's big, it's important, and it's going to take some time. Something so significant to our country and its future needs a clear and distinctive identity of its own to help us involve and engage clients, stakeholders and Australians at large. The national working group has now selected the phrase *Shaping our Future* and the logo pictured to identify the work associated with the next national strategy.

What goes into *Shaping our Future* will be gained in two stages. We will begin by getting initial client and stakeholder perspectives. Specialist consultants will conduct interviews with VET system leaders, industry (employer and employee) leaders and community leaders. To ensure we gain as broad a perspective as possible, we will run 30 focus groups to listen and collate the views of individuals, including users and non-users of the VET system, employers, employees, and training providers.

Research including an environmental scan and review will form an integral part of this initial stage. The environmental scan will highlight the developments and trends globally, nationally and locally that are likely to impact on VET in the medium term. We are undertaking a formative evaluation of the current national strategy, *A Bridge to the Future* analysing the wealth of reporting information completed over the life of the strategy. This will include an assessment of the contribution or impact of various initiatives and strategies in meeting the objectives and outcomes of *A Bridge to the Future* and a discussion on implications for the new national strategy.

All of this will assist in the development of the discussion paper, *Shaping our Future*, which will consolidate possible issues and priorities for the next national strategy. We want this paper to be spread far and wide, to inform and to generate debate and discussion. I anticipate that the discussion paper will be available very early in 2003.

The second stage of essential inputs will be gathered once we release the discussion paper. This will consist of consultations with clients and stakeholders nationally and locally as well as around 25 regional forums across the States and Territories. I am anticipating the members of the working group playing a strong leadership role throughout this stage, which will culminate in a gathering of invited leaders. They will consider the advice and views from around the country and how this should shape a draft new national strategy for consideration by the Ministers at their mid-year meeting next year.

I encourage every reader ... to join the expedition to develop the next national strategy. I have mentioned a few options for *Shaping our Future* already. Perhaps the best way to get started right now is to register your interest at [www.anta.gov.au/dapStrategy.asp](http://www.anta.gov.au/dapStrategy.asp) so that you receive updates of information during



the months ahead.

*Shaping Our Future* working group

The working group members are: David Collins (NSW), Phil Clarke (Vic), Zea Johnston (Qld), Chris Harrison (SA), Nigel Haywood (WA), Michael Stevens (Tas), Gerard Butler (NT), Stephen Bramah (ACT), Colin Walters (Commonwealth) and Gisela Gale (ANTA). ANTA general manager Paul Byrne chairs the group. Their contact details are available from ANTA's web page

Source: Australian Training, Sept 2002

**'Mapping the Future: a Discussion Paper' for Queensland women and girls - Have your say**

The Beattie Government has released the discussion paper - 'Mapping the Future: a Discussion Paper' for Queensland women and girls. This is part of the development of a five year agenda for Women and Girls, which will direct government action and funding priorities in this area.

The Office for Women have been seeking feedback on the Paper via a series of consultation sessions which were held around the state in September 2002. You can also provide your feedback online and in written submissions. The Office of Women's website has four separate forms to submit feedback on the various themes of the discussion paper. The form for health and well-being can be found at:  
[http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/con\\_wellbeing.html](http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/con_wellbeing.html)

Or you can complete the discussion paper feedback form manually by downloading the feedback form as either a PDF or word document. See  
[http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/con\\_feedback.html](http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/con_feedback.html)

You can obtain copies of the Discussion Paper via  
[http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/pdf/paper\\_text.pdf](http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/pdf/paper_text.pdf) (text),  
[http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/pdf/paper\\_cover.pdf](http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/pdf/paper_cover.pdf) (cover). It is also available as a word document  
[http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/Mapping\\_the\\_Future.dot](http://www.qldwoman.qld.gov.au/consultation/Mapping_the_Future.dot).

Queensland Office of Women: Postal address: PO Box 185, Albert Street Brisbane, Qld 4002, Australia Phone: (07) 3224 4062 Fax: (07) 3224 4272 Email: [ofw@premiers.qld.gov.au](mailto:ofw@premiers.qld.gov.au)

## **Keeping Kids Fit**

Childhood obesity was the subject of a special summit held at Parliament House Sydney in September 2002. In Australia almost a quarter of children between two and 17 years of age are considered overweight or obese.

Whilst this problem has worsened in the last 10 years, Health experts are concerned this trend may have serious consequences for these children as they grow into adulthood, and for the community and its health system. Now health experts are looking at ways to improve children's weight and health.

Will turning off the TV or computer by itself help your kids get fitter? Health experts advise that children need to be encouraged to get outdoors and be active. "Playing in the park, throwing a basketball around or going for a family bike ride are all active ways of spending fun times together," says Aloysa Hourigan, from Nutrition Australia. Having a pet will give children another reason to get outdoors.

A National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Paper on obesity covers findings in recent studies pertaining to the following questions:

- Who is getting fatter?
- Which groups are of concern?
- Why are overweight and obesity of concern?
- What causes overweight and obesity?
- Why focus on prevention?
- What needs to be done to prevent overweight and obesity and eating disorders?
- Will a focus on prevention lead to an increase in the prevalence of eating disorders amongst people in this age group is
- What is the strategic plan about?

The National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Paper on obesity is at <http://www.health.gov.au/nhmrc/publications/pdf/n21.pdf>

The NSW Health Department has more information on the summit and on childhood obesity at [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/obesitysummit/bgground\\_paper.html](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/obesitysummit/bgground_paper.html)

## **New Report: 100 Children Turn 10. A Longitudinal Study of Literacy**

### **Development From the Year Prior to School to the First Four Years of School**

The report, recently published in September 2002 by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST), provides information on longitudinal literacy outcomes of a sample group of children's school experiences from preschool to the first four years of school.

This project is a continuation of work published in the report 100 Children Go To School (1998). The report will provide information on longitudinal literacy outcomes

of a sample group of children's school experiences from preschool to the first four years of school. The school sites selected were chosen to bring in a range of Australian contexts including family, financial resources, home language, gender, ethnicity and geographic location. Research data was compiled from classroom observations and activities, including behavioural observations in relation to literacy exercises in the classrooms, interviews with parents and teachers, institutional documents and the children's work samples in relation to their literacy development. The site reports also outline the children's community and home life and how it reflects their school life and literacy development.

To view the Report see: **[100 Children Turn 10. A Longitudinal Study of Literacy](#)**

### **National Youth Roundtable - 2003 Applications Open**

The National Youth Roundtable 2002 is busy working on community projects in the areas of health, the environment, creative cultures, pathways to education and employment, social cohesion and rural issues. Roundtable members are consulting with the young people in their areas to gather input and inform their presentations to Government. If you are interested in any of the Roundtable projects, you can participate by sharing your thoughts and ideas through the online surveys.

For further information see: **[http://www.thesource.gov.au/youth\\_roundtable/](http://www.thesource.gov.au/youth_roundtable/)**

### **Professional Development - New Website for Teachers Launched**

The Quality Teacher Programme (QTP) has taken an important step forward with the release of its dedicated website. Designed to enable teachers to access QTP information and exchange their professional development experiences and learning outcomes, the site is expected to play an important role in the Howard Government's ongoing efforts to improve teacher quality throughout Australia.

See: **<http://www.qualityteaching.dest.gov.au/>**

Source: EdNA

### **Landmark Report into Boys' Education**

The report of the Inquiry into the Education of Boys, Boys: Getting it Right, conducted by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, has been released. It can be found at **<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/eofb/index.htm>**

The report recommends that scholarships be provided to redress the shortage of male teachers in schools. The committee argued that all students, particularly boys, would benefit from more teacher attention and set a goal of reducing class sizes to 20 by 2005.

Source: EdNA

## **Education Now to Build a Better Future**

This Briefing Paper prepared in August 2002 by the Global Campaign for Education for The Johannesburg World Summit argues that failure to end the global crisis in education makes sustainable development impossible by denying nearly a billion people the ability to make informed choices about their lives, their families and their societies. The Plan of Implementation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development recognises that education is critical to sustainable development, and reiterates existing international commitments to the Education for All goals and strategies agreed in Jomtien in 1990 and again in Dakar in 2000 - including universal primary education by 2015.

The Global Campaign for Education, a broad alliance of child rights activists, NGOs, and public sector and teachers' unions, with members in more than 150 countries, demands that in Johannesburg:

### **DEVELOPING COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS SHOULD:**

- Announce steps to end all fees and charges (including the costs of uniforms and books) for public primary education within the next three years.
- Commit to a sustained increase in budget allocations to basic education in order to reverse inequalities between rural and urban schools and build an effective public school system that delivers quality education to all communities.
- Pull out all the stops to get more girls into school and keep them there, in time to meet the 2005 target for gender parity in primary and secondary education.
- End discrimination against marginalised groups, such as indigenous people, ethnic minorities, the disabled, working children, and girls.

### **RICH COUNTRY GOVERNMENTS AND INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS SHOULD:**

- Increase aid to basic education, from the current low level of 2% of bilateral aid, to at least 10% of aid budgets.
- Commit the funds needed to back the Fast Track Partnership announced this June, which would enable high-performing countries to scale up and accelerate their own Education for All strategies, and ensure that realistic criteria are used to select and assess Fast Track countries, so that more countries can participate.
- Launch a financing framework to extend action to tackle the education crisis in countries beyond those included in the fast-track process.
- Clearly state their active opposition to fees and levies for primary education, and work with governments to find more equitable and sustainable ways to finance primary education.
- Suspend efforts to promote greater private sector involvement in the delivery of basic education - such as the World Bank Private Sector Development strategy and the USA's Millennium Challenge Account -until the

implications and impact of such policies in a developing country context have been thoroughly assessed.

To view the Briefing Paper, Education Now to Build a Better Future, see:

**<http://www.campaignforeducation.org/html/2002-docs/08-brief-joburg/frameset.shtml>**

Source: EdNA