Foreword

This report on the Symposium titled ‘Australian Values - Rural Policies’ is a contribution to the debate on Australian values and rural policies.

The Symposium brought together people with a common interest in rural policy. It was born out of a concern that what is happening in rural Australia is not well aligned with what rural and urban Australians want for rural Australia.

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Peter O’Brien
Managing Director
Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
Acknowledgments

Snow Barlow and I conceived the holding of a seminar to acknowledge the public service contributions of Onko Kingma. The extent and strength of support for the proposal transformed it into a two-day Symposium on Australian Values-Rural Policies. The Symposium was held in Old Parliament House, Canberra in late 2000.

The Symposium could not have been held without the generous and insightful contributions of participants. Particular thanks go to Hon. Ian Sinclair who despite a busy schedule and (I suspect) concerns about what the outcome might be agreed to be Symposium Chair.

This report on the Symposium would not have been possible without the practical and motivational support of my co-editors, Cate Turner and John Drinan; and the editing, presentational and communication skills of Laurie Lewis.

My own company, Synapse Research & Consulting Pty Ltd provided the bulk of the financial resources required for the holding of the Symposium and for the preparation of this report. Most Symposium participants provided their time free of charge and met their own costs. The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, the University of Queensland Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation and the Dairy Research and Development Corporation provided additional funds.

The Symposium people and the Symposium topic opened doors to rooms for me that I never knew existed. Some of those rooms remain dark places but I am the better for being there. Thanks.

Tony Gleeson
Convenor
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1. Digging Deeper: Reflections on a Symposium on Australian Values – Rural Policies

Tony Gleeson, Cate Turner, Bob Beeton and John Drinan

The Symposium

A Symposium titled ‘Australian Values - Rural Policies’ was held at Old Parliament House, Canberra in the year 2000. This is an overview of the Symposium discussions enriched by reflections some four years on.

The Symposium brought together people with a common interest in rural policy. It was born out of a concern that what is happening in rural Australia is not well aligned with what rural and urban Australians want for rural Australia.

The Symposium was designed to embrace risks, uncertainty and ambiguity. Diversity provides a basic stepping-stone for the evolution of new ways and ideas. A respect for alternative concepts and directions is crucial to creating good policy.

This report on the Symposium is a contribution to the debate on Australian values and rural policies. The challenge for this paper is to develop a construct that enables the deliberations at the Symposium to be built upon, to be incorporated into policy processes, in short to have a lasting impact.

Context

The Australian identity is shaped more by the bush and by sport than by any other single factor and Australians pay dearly to support the ‘bush’ through a vast array of rural programs. But are they getting what they want? Do these rural programs reflect their beliefs and values? Should the values that guide policy development be explicit?

How do we build cultural diversity into policy frameworks? Are there distinctive urban, suburban and rural cultures and, if so, how are they inter-related? How do cultures mediate and reflect economic, technological, political, environmental, social and spiritual trends?

How do we avoid creating a ‘victim mentality’ when some people feel overwhelmed by others’ cultures? What do we learn from the past, in studying indigenous and agrarian histories? What binds and separates us - the changing basis for class from hereditary, property, wealth to education, information and knowledge?

What does the history of land tenure tell us - the history of property rights that takes us to the point where we sanction rights to exclude the interests of all others? Has the mythology of the failure of the commons been surpassed by the reality of the failure of tenured ownership?

Why do we reject multi-functionality in the world trade context, when rural communities know it to be a reality? To what extent have ‘rural’ issues been overshadowed by a concentration on those involved in agriculture?

How do we weigh up the choices inherent in market and non-market systems? Where is the line between what can and cannot be bought and sold? What are the implications of the commodification (pricing for exchange) of environmental values? Should the concept of ‘duty of care’, for instance, extend into the arenas of visual amenity and biodiversity?
What are the implications of commodification of information? What are the points of tension in economic analyses that depend upon assumptions of ‘perfect information’ and on the commodification of information?

What are the equity implications of second and third parties commodifying germ plasm which was previously considered a common property?

In other words as a society, how do we determine what to commodify through price mechanisms and what to gift?

In short, how do we ensure our institutions\(^1\) reflect our values and aspirations?

**Symposium Essays**
The Symposium began by asking participants, other than those presenting papers, to submit short essays. These essays looked at how Australian values are reflected in rural policies, and how they can be better incorporated to achieve outcomes that are representative of the views of all Australians: both rural and urban. These essays provided a valuable backdrop to the Symposium discussions and they appear towards the back of this publication. They posed broad questions such as:

- Is there a need for institutional reform to better incorporate a range of values into rural policies?
- How do we reconcile the differences and appreciate the similarities between urban and rural values?
- Are traditional rural values appropriate for dealing with the challenges posed by globalisation and other future concerns, or do they require change?

A synopsis of the essays follows.

**Regional solutions to regional problems: rural community participation and empowerment**
Several Symposium participants suggested that rural community empowerment through involvement in policy development and implementation, coupled with a focus on promoting social cohesion rather than competition, will create the conditions for rural people to progress toward ecologically sustainable development.\(^2\)

Many also saw the need for a shift away from centralised yet fragmented policy formation and toward a “regional planning systems approach”.\(^3\) There are deficiencies in creating a single blueprint for rural Australia, or even for particular regions. There is a need to create a flexible approach that allows rural communities to assess their own unique assets and goals, and work collaboratively toward achieving and enhancing these with the assistance of regionalised governance.

The issue of community empowerment is complex, and an important factor is the nature of the assistance required. While governments are “exhorting rural citizens to build upon the community’s social capital”\(^4\) and to become self-reliant, the “de-traditionalisation”\(^5\) of rural communities in the face of economic downturns and globalisation is at the same time eroding that very social capital.\(^6\) Some Symposium participants need for government intervention in the form of strong economic policies to weather the storms of globalisation experienced in rural communities before community development can progress.\(^7\)

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\(1\) Institutions include the organisations formed by government, industries and communities and their policies and programs. They include traditions and the norms and practices of groups and are the determinants of human behaviour that act beyond the individual. Gleeson, T. and Piper, K. (2002) ‘Institutional Reform in Rural Australia: Defining and Allocating Property Rights’ in Property: Rights and Responsibilities. Current Australian Thinking. Canberra: Land and Water Australia.

\(2\) Klieve, H., Douglas, J., Beynon, N.

\(3\) Morris, S.

\(4\) Lawrence, G.

\(5\) Ibid

\(6\) Lawrence, G., Chudleigh, J.

\(7\) Ibid
Others highlight the inadequacy of current local, state and national political and legal institutional arrangements to allow for positive community involvement, and emphasise the need for strengthening local government in rural Australia. They call for political leaders to address these concerns, or face difficulty in translating regional resource planning objectives into action due to a lack of ownership of the process at the local level.

Creating adequate conditions to ensure that rural people determine their own futures is also reflected in Symposium participants’ call for adequate health and welfare conditions for rural Australia. There were criticisms of government policies that promote the economic prosperity of larger farmers to the detriment and poverty of smaller, community-oriented farmers while concurrently emphasising the need for social capital.

**Consideration of a diversity of values in policy**

Many Symposium participants highlighted the need for multiple perspectives on the issue of sustainable rural development, and the inclusion of a diversity of values into policy.

The multicultural reality of Australia is reflected in the diversity of approaches to land management and social networks in this country. Of particular importance is the intrinsic link between cultural values and perceptions of land, with farming practices. Policies that attempt to address the issue of sustainable land management from a narrow, utilitarian-economic perspective may be insufficient to bring about change in unsustainable practices that have strong cultural origins, and will serve to alienate many rural people.

Multiculturalism is only one factor amidst many that influences culture and values. “Age, educational level, gender, cultural background, geographical location and political philosophy” all contribute to this diversity of understanding. The key, suggest Symposium participants, is to explore ways that these values can be harmonised and included, rather than homogenised or positioned as conflicting. Ignoring diversity is not the only catalyst for problems. The dangers of creating a singular moral culture, be it environmental, global, market or any other, lie in the accompanying risk of fundamentalism, change resistance, and lack of sustenance for social systems.

Working within a particular community of interest necessarily produces values related to that sphere, and encourages a form of myopia that can exclude understandings of other spheres of activity. Many government representatives working in particular ‘silos’ do not take a ‘whole-of-government’ approach in the same way that many corporations do not consider the flow on effects of their activities on social and environmental systems – or their responsibilities as corporate citizens to these systems. Scientists, economists, urban politicians and land managers may perceive the same issue utilising differing value sets and priorities, and where these differences are not considered and integrated, fragmented policies result.

The challenge is to discover ways in which a diversity of values and perspectives may be recognised, and then appreciated and incorporated to form integrated and holistic policies. These policies would enhance sustainable regional development without creating a monolithic culture, however broad. The question is: how might this be achieved?

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8 Blesing, D., Beynon, N.
9 Beynon, N.
10 Lowe, S.
11 Botterill, L.
12 Gregory, G.
13 Elix, J.
14 Ibid
15 Klieve, H., Gray, I.
16 Upitis, A.
17 Upitis, A., Muston, R.
18 Cary, J.
Recognising the urban/rural divide
The environmental, economic and social problems evident in rural Australia require the assistance of urban Australia, yet the question was raised: why would urban Australia bother?19 We are no longer ‘riding on the sheep’s back’ economically, although many urban industries survive through indirect services and value adding to rural outputs of production. The answer is not simple, and may reside more appropriately in the aspects of the bush that provide urban Australians with decreased urban population pressures, opportunities for hobby farming, and more ephemerally, identity, recreation, and access to the bush itself.20

Fostering understanding of the value of rural communities to urban society
Urban Australians lack understanding of the connections between the foods they consume, and the realities of farm production and life. This contributes to the devaluing of rural communities, and, consequently, de-prioritising of rural concerns in urban Australia.21 An educational process involving urban Australians directly experiencing farm life could be of benefit in the sharing of understandings and development of mutual appreciation.22 However it might be equally important to improve farmer’s understanding of urban life.

The need for an integrated approach to planning and policy
It has been identified that Australia needs a clearer and more focused understanding of what constitutes rural life, and that this understanding should not simply be limited to the commodity and financial performance of the bush.23 Examining current approaches to planning and policy should be refocused on developing a functional conceptual framework that enables perceiving, investigating and interpreting ‘bush’ issues in such a way as to assist us to “do it better”.24

Symposium Participants discussed the need for a challenging and innovative forward view, strongly underpinned by an understanding of historic and social evolutionary change processes. Some of the contributed essays suggested that such a forward view might need to include the creation of new value and policy frameworks in order to achieve sustainable regional development outcomes, while capturing the inherent value of traditional views and practices.25

Recognising strengths and weaknesses in current value systems
Many of the traditional values of rural Australians have made positive contributions to land management and social development. Values of rural living, family, community, stewardship of resources, and farming generally have allowed agriculture to become an important industry in Australia.26 The erosion of these values has resulted in increased pressure on rural communities, and regional development initiatives are focussed upon rebuilding these vital resources. But are these values sufficient or appropriate to handle the changing conditions in rural Australia, particularly in a global market and environment context?27

One suggestion is that the rural mythology accepted by the majority of Australians – pro-bush, romanticised notions of the ‘man on the land’ – is in need of reframing to forge a sense of place that is shared by all Australians, urban and rural.28 Another myth-image is that of the (predominantly male) rural Australian environmental vandal which does not do justice to the reality of farming life.

19 Drinan, J.
20 Inall, N., Drinan, J.
21 McGinn, S.
22 Ibid
23 Nicholls, A. and Slater, R.
24 Martin, P.
25 Price, R.
26 Gray, I.
27 Holmes, J.
28 Fitzpatrick, L., George, S.
Forging new concepts of value

Change is difficult to achieve unless the ineffectiveness of past and present policies and actions is recognised. Such change may demand an investment in new leaders, skills and technology, and a reframing of values to include support for the environment in its own right, and inclusion of the diverse range of voices in our society. Part of this recognition and change may involve the forging of new concepts of value, practice and framework, particularly of land and social systems, in rural Australia.

Valuing land in terms of its ‘multifunctionality’ rather than its mono-use may help address the changing nature of farming, farm family ownership and rising environmental challenges. Numerous and new uses for land may assist in overcoming degradation, and create new opportunities for land managers to enhance social as well as economic welfare.

For Australia, and most Western civilisations, the valuation of land is often purely instrumental or utilitarian. The notion of intergenerational ‘custodianship’ and recognition of the value of indigenous perspectives of land may present an interesting alternative to traditional land ownership models, and lead to more sustainable land management. Further it may be important to find ways for “…allowing non-indigenous farmers and pastoralists to more openly acknowledge and explore their own intuitions of spirit in the land”. In this way, a more holistic concern for ecological balance and broader community and human values may be achieved.

Finally, Symposium participants expressed the need for rural communities to seek desirable visions of their futures in addition to seeking answers from the past. “Debating the detail is an all too comfortable distraction…it’s the creating, the inspiring, the sharing the owning of a vision that is critical. Yet vision seems to be the one element missing from the recipe for rural revival”.

Symposium Presentations

Leading the Symposium presentations the Symposium Convenor, Tony Gleeson pointed to the need for a new vision for Australian institutions and policy: an enlightened vision that recognises market and non-market values as being vital to Australian culture and well being.

Gleeson argued that the agricultural centric nature of rural policies does more to conceal than to enhance the value that urban and rural Australians place upon rural culture and rural landscapes.

Exaggeration of the importance of agricultural production to the Australian economy has led to rural policies that attempt to grapple with concepts such as ecological sustainability and community development within a narrow framework; a framework that supposes that economic viability should precede responsible resource management and that profitable monocultures take precedence over the diversity and multifunctional nature of rural communities.

29 Blesing, D.
30 Ibid
31 Zethoven, L., Campbell, A.
32 Chadleigh, J.
33 Wilson, G.
34 Perkins, I.
35 Rigby, K.
36 Ibid
37 Robinson, E., Blesing, D.
38 Lawrence, G.
39 Robinson, E.
“There is a need to unshackle us from the chains of past analyses. There is a need for the birth of new institutions to re-represent rural Australia. Tinkering at the edges of a failed policy framework is more likely to prolong the suffering than meet the realistic aspirations that Australians generally have for rural Australia” (Gleeson 2000).

As second speaker, Tom O’Regan added value to these questions. He placed the lens upon the meaning of culture and the importance of the way institutions, their instruments (the media), and the broader community understand and portray rural culture. In essence, culture has become an endpoint of policy as much as an influential factor.

Given the tendency of judgements, divisions and competing assertions to be made in the name of ‘culture’, O’Regan found it unsurprising that the real concerns of rural communities have gone unrecognised and have been placed in opposition to urban values. Many departments are following the trend of “starting with culture” when developing policies. This means that there is more consideration placed on the importance of balancing cultural differences as well as achieving sustainable futures that fostering cultural diversity. Enhancing the identity of individual cultures, coupled with increasing the appreciation and understanding of other cultures will, O’Regan believes, provide a platform from which mutually beneficial policies can be created.

David Sheppard used the New Zealand example to highlight the need for the inclusion of non-market and cultural values in rural and resource management policies. Sustainable development is more likely to be achieved where a view of resource value and use is derived from an understanding of the diverse cultural significance of all land and resource custodians, particularly indigenous ones. Compromises to the methods of land use may then be justified on cultural grounds where they are lacking a basis in pure economic benefit.

“The understanding is developing that the environment, properly understood, includes the social and economic wellbeing of a community, and that can extend to the cultural and spiritual health of minority sections of the community, especially the indigenous people” (Sheppard 2000).

It is difficult to achieve this balance in practice. In the New Zealand situation, courts played a large role in balancing competing concerns and structuring novel land tenure arrangements. It is important to note that the level of understanding of Maori culture in New Zealand far outweighs that of Aboriginal culture in Australia. Nevertheless, the Mabo and Wik cases in Australia serve to highlight the role of the legal system can take in influencing the institutional structure within which cultural values are recognised and taken into account in this country.

Despite the progress made through the courts, the plight of indigenous Australians in rural communities has received little relief. Peter Yu highlighted the negative consequences of policies that fail to adequately incorporate Aboriginal customs and culture through his moving recount of the situation in the Kimberleys. Policy fragmentation and a top down approach to Aboriginal concerns have divided the community and disempowered local people. He cited land tenure reform as one of the major requirements of institutional reform: perhaps the New Zealand lessons shared by David Sheppard may be of benefit to Australians in dealing with this issue. Peter Yu advocated a regional management approach together with a strengthening of community education and understanding in order to alleviate the deluge of social and cultural problems that threaten the fabric of rural communities in the Kimberleys.

Cathy McGowan took the concept of regional management further and stated that neither formal institutions, nor premises of natural resource management, should be the determinants of rural policies.
Coming from a rural perspective, McGowan presented the view that groups founded on local rural community values will present the best solutions to rural problems – that is, problems fundamentally associated with families, communities and rural people. Her perspective highlighted the often opposing views of rural people and policy-makers, and offered up for debate the notion of whether balancing competing values is as important as recognising the values of those most closely working with the land.

Understanding the meaning of culture, the myths that influence and are influenced by culture, and how differing cultural viewpoints may be incorporated at different levels of policy are important contributors to the process of institutional revitalisation. A broader view of rural communities and the divergent cultures that exist within them is needed. Additionally it is arguable that we need to incorporate an understanding of the urban perspective into rural policy development.

Richard Stayner provided a comprehensive insight on the realities of farm life importantly illustrating the tensions between agrarian (stable) and industrial (mobility) values. He introduced the term ‘orientation to change’ by which he means the collection of attitudes and values that reflect the readiness of residents to imagine and pursue a changed future.

Stayner called on us to acknowledge and absorb the lessons of failed attempts to use primary industry development to create self-sustaining levels of population, towns and economic activity in rural regions. He added his weight to calls for institutional reform that protects a broader range of market and non-market values than what currently occurs.

Stayner pointed also to general absence of an historical analysis to help understand the drivers of beliefs and values, a deficiency that was not addressed in the Symposium. Other analytical limitations arise because of the lack of distinction between ‘farm’, ‘rural’ and ‘remote’ and because the farm statistical base traditionally over emphasises the ‘iconic’ broad acre industries at the expense of intensive horticultural and livestock industries.

Alistair Watson presented a broad picture of agriculture in the Australian economy leading into a critique of environmental and trade policies. The principal purpose of his paper was to illuminate the economic and political background to contemporary Australian agriculture.

Watson approaches these topics from the perspective of a professional policy analyst with a deep belief in equity and efficiency. He is scathing on the preferential treatment of farmers for welfare assistance and he concludes his paper with a call for clarity of policy purpose so that, for instance, environmental funding does not become a backdoor way of dealing with the welfare problems of farmers. These are valid points though some would argue with his assertion that the problem with concepts like multifunctionality and stewardship is that there are no obvious criteria by which specific proposals can be judged.

Watson notes, paradoxically, that when by usual measures the economic significance of agriculture is diminished, the political influence continues to be substantial. The reasons for the changed political relationship between regional and urban Australia are not yet fully understood by participants, let alone disinterested observers.

A tentative conclusion from the conjectures and arguments assembled in Watson’s paper is that Australian agriculture is shifting away from its longstanding commercial focus towards the dependent status typical of agriculture in other high-income countries. This is creating unresolved tensions within and beyond the agricultural sector. Overseas experience provides no guidance on how to construct and maintain a credible assistance regime for a predominantly export-dependent agriculture like Australia.
Watson pointed to the common patterns in Australian and overseas experience of agricultural development. The traditional economic explanation of the declining significance of the agricultural sector in wealthy countries based on the writings of Theodore Schultz (1953) and others has the following ingredients:

- Food has a low-income elasticity of demand. As income rises, demand for services associated with food increases but not demand for food per se.

- The supply of food increases with development and application of new techniques of production. The application of the techniques is encouraged by the competitive structure of farming. The importance of purchased off-farm inputs used in farming increases relative to on-farm inputs of land and labour.

The combination of increasing supply and relatively stable demand leads to low prices and incomes in agriculture unless migration from agriculture is sufficient to remove the differential between agricultural and non-agricultural earnings.

Rosemary Lyster employed an ecofeminist critique of the dominant economic perspective. She cited national competition policy and various other economic policies as explicitly denying the role of culture and values (particularly those of women) whilst employing market values as the sole determinant of resource allocation.

“…[T]he impact of these processes and policies on natural resource management has been substantial. First, it is now generally accepted that the decision-making processes of global capital are insular and lack political legitimacy. The effect of this is that the prevailing economic theory is not tested or contested but simply accepted as given. ... Second, the adoption of markets as regulatory instruments removes decision-making from the political influence of interested and affected parties. Third, where vestiges of participation remain the construction of those sites is such that the voices of the ‘other’ may be silenced or marginalised” (Lyster 2000).

Onko Kingma and Ian Falk argued the present policy philosophy which allows the means (that is, the market) to determine the ends (market outcomes) is no longer satisfactory as a basis for creating an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable society.

Debate on values and how we want to live will likely highlight the need for change in the institutional base. Consideration of a preferred vision and societal structure for Australia (our goals) before deciding on how we should achieve them implies prior knowledge about values, desired outcomes and futures for (rural) Australia.

Kingma and Falk argued that new institutions are required before there will be a significant shift to a different culture. Some of the values and requirements for such a shift are discussed in their paper. Kingma and Falk maintained that concepts of ‘community’ and social capital are central to such a shift. Enabling policies will be essential to restore the trust, capacity and incentive to generate the required innovative cycle and create social capital. Revision in the way in which money is perceived, as a public service rather than a speculative commodity, will enable change – local exchange trading systems will be valuable in the first instance. Similarly, revision in concepts of work, the role and scale of business and the scale of institutions, will be important. Minimum income policies can act to break the tyranny of a ‘free’ market based society. An informed debate on rights/obligations and responsibilities/privileges inclusive of those who either have no property rights or have no power to argue for rights, will aid a shift to a different culture. Finally, special policies should be implemented to enfranchise women and foster the creative arts. By embodying the values, ways of thinking and work patterns required at this time, women can help as a catalyst for change.

Similarly, the arts can help to accelerate change because they foster those community social and cultural processes, relationships and broader concepts of work required to achieve a shift to a different society.

Bob Beeton maintained that resource management and social problems in rural Australia are a symptom of institutional failure. Having chronicled the forces acting on rural Australia, Beeton suggests there are opportunities for institutional renewal. However taking advantage of these opportunities requires integrated effort between and within the various levels of Government and between government and communities. Beeton sees the need for investment in modern infrastructure to enable many small solutions in empowered communities to flourish.

In the last presentation Selwyn Heilbron argued that the liberalisation of global trade and developments in information technology have combined to force the direction and pace of change for all economies and sectors, including rural economies and the agricultural sector. Heilbron noted that these developments challenge some longstanding values and premises of industry participants, such as independence, open-access markets, the dominant role of the firm, open-access information and R&D.

It seemed to Heilbron that the forces of globalisation do reflect many of the values held as important. Independence, initiative, flexibility, innovation – these are all key values of both rural Australia and globalisation. However equally the pace of change and the widespread insecurity that inevitably result (and will probably be accentuated in future), mean that we certainly will need to try and understand better how these forces work. Our adjustment initiatives will need to be better tuned to the pace of change and its impact too.

Symposium Themes
Onko Kingma identified the following themes as having emerged from the Symposium essays, presentations and discussions:

- **There is clearly a need to do something different!** More of the same is not enough. There is no choice but to explore new options. This is not an insurmountable problem. All that is needed in the first instance is a recognition that we need to and can do better.

- **A purely economic view is too narrow!** Ecological and social issues must also come together with economic issues to allow an holistic approach to change.

- **Much of change required is institutional in nature!** ‘Institutions’ encompass the systems of governance applying at all levels of society - the laws, regulations, codes and standards; the policies and programs established by government, industries and communities to influence behaviour; the commercial practices including the operations of markets; the organisations formed by government, industries, business and communities; and the norms and practices of groups. Social capital underlies and provides the basis for relationships within this institutional structure. As noted above, problems of institutional failure dominate rural policy today and this is where review is required.

- **An outward looking, global perspective will always be important!** In the process of shifting to a different culture, we must be cautious not to reject important parts of present policies and industry structures, particularly in areas such as value adding, agribusiness, food and food safety, quarantine, health, and so on. Strong industries and communities should operate in an ecologically sustainable way and use leading edge technologies and management processes, and make effective use of financial, human, knowledge, infrastructure and physical capital.

- **Control processes do not work!** Stakeholder processes which are inclusive and participative and which result in ‘ownership’ at the local level give the best results.
• Development must be local to the extent possible but recognise the realities of a global open economy! ‘Top-down’ processes must be balanced by ‘bottom-up’ processes in order to give expression to community values and aspirations. Issues of scale and structure of business enterprise and government are important. There should be open analysis of issues such as the direction and nature of technological change, biodiversity, biotechnology, information technology, agribusiness, and government structures, to inform debate and community based processes.

• Mechanisms for solutions often already lie within communities! Research shows in many cases the human and physical resources for innovative community development already lie within communities. The issue is to mobilise these resources through creation of a learning environment.

• Mindset is important! The skills base, leadership, availability of sound R&D results and effective communication and consultation arrangements are essential for conflict resolution and community decision making. This requires creation of a learning culture and processes.

• Education and development is crucial! The development of a learning culture and processes can only begin to happen through the provision of education and learning opportunities for all members of rural communities.

• Ways in which decisions are made are important! In many cases groups and communities are disenfranchised or unable to participate in the processes of growth. Decision-making should be inclusive and based on sound information and analytical results underpinned by effective decision support systems.

• Governments have a clear role! This role extends beyond leadership and facilitation to partnership and joint ventures to ensure community aspirations are met.

• Policy action of a catalytic nature is important! Policies and programs which help to bring about a learning culture can act as catalysts leading to institutional change. In the first instance, strong policies are required in areas such as: processes for public debate and dialogue on change; strategies for consultation and communication at all levels; appropriate R&D to generate better understanding of economic, environmental and social systems; improving the capacity of stakeholders at all levels; and initiatives which encourage diversity, such as in the arts, in Indigenous cultures and to empower women.

Institutional relevance

As noted earlier, the key outcome of the Symposium was that institutions affecting rural Australia need to be informed and shaped by a broader suite of beliefs, values, norms and attitudes than happens now. The challenge that we will now address is how this might be done.

The Symposium noted that institutional arrangements are underpinned by beliefs, values and attitudes even though these attributes may not be explicitly acknowledged, when shared these attributes constitute culture, a socially constructed and shared system of meanings.

Institutional arrangements include the traditions and the norms and practices of groups, the organisations formed by government, industries and communities and their policies and programs, including laws, regulations, codes of practice, and the operation of markets. The institutional framework influences and enables individuals to act in the public good. It is this framework that enables governance, the exercise of political power to manage a nation’s affairs.

We need to recognise also that institutional arrangements actually influence our beliefs and values. For instance, Landcare began as a reflection of the beliefs and values of some concerned citizens, gradually became institutionalised and converted others towards a stewardship mindset. It is this mutuality that enables evolution of both policy and social behaviour.

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Whilst there are economic and technical dimensions to the deteriorating ecological and social conditions in rural Australia, achieving institutional change is fundamentally a challenge of how we use political power in the public, private and community sectors to manage our affairs. This is a challenge requiring considerable insight and creativity, for solutions are not readily apparent.

**Developing and Expressing Culture**

Beliefs, values and norms characterise a culture and are learnt from living within a community. The following definitions are drawn from Rogers et al.⁴⁵:

- **A belief is a symbolic statement about reality.** Beliefs are something accepted as true, especially a particular tenet, or body of tenets. There are, of course, personal beliefs, but it is the collection of shared beliefs that help give definition to a culture and defines group perspectives.

- **Values are symbolic statements of what is right and important.** Values are those qualities regarded by a person or group as important or desirable - a set of standards and principles. Values tend to be culturally determined and affect the development of attitudes. They help define propriety within a culture. Again, these influence response to a particular situation.

- **Norms are symbolic statements of expected behaviour.** Within a culture, they define the limits of acceptable behaviour, especially for community members. There are levels of normative expectations within a culture that are maintained by reward or punishment.

These ideational elements of a culture, the beliefs, values and norms, are expressed as attitudes, with the collective influencing behaviour. Attitudes are a state of mind or feeling with regard to some matter.

But how do cultures develop and how are they expressed in individual and group action?

There is a range of theories operating at the individual and social levels about how culture is developed and expressed. These theories essentially concern the establishment of conceptual frameworks that enable us to interpret reality and to move from one reality to another.

> “Concepts are tools for thinking not only about how reality gets made, but about how else it could possibly be made … without concepts all we have is nostalgia for how things once were, or impossible, unobtainable ideals” (Wark 1999).⁴⁶

Kelly’s (1955)⁴⁷ personal construct theory of personality development, describes how people go about their daily life trying to make sense of the events surrounding them. The theory maintains that people are in charge of what they do in the world, rather than merely reacting to events. Kelly sees individual action as a process of continuous choice based on perceived alternatives or constructs. These are bipolar opposites, for example good or bad, linked by implications; and organised hierarchically so that some are super-ordinate. The theory sees people as ‘scientists’ seeking to predict and control events with which they are involved.⁴⁸ The basic postulate is that for each individual, reality is what he or she construes it to be. A person construes reality, commits to the construction and lives through it.⁴⁹

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⁴⁶ Wark, McKenzie 1999, Celebrities, Culture and Cyberspace, the Light on the Hill in a Postmodern World, Pluto Press, Australia.


Craik’s (1952) concept of mental models is similar to Kelly’s theory in that it focuses on the human ability to predict outcomes through reasoning based on previous experience. People apply mental models to simulate the future and to evaluate options. In this type of reasoning, a mental model is required of the physical, biological and technological processes involved. This need not be an objective and real model of reality, only one that works.

A natural extension of the works of Craik and Kelly is to add the dimension of social influence. Personal constructs develop not only through assessment of life events but are also filtered through a social and cultural screen. Moscovici (1984) calls these constructs social representations. These representations of reality help:

“...to establish an order which will enable individuals to orientate themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and ... to enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code of social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of the world and their individual and group history” (Moscovici, 1973:xiii).

Social representations are concepts, statements and explanations originating in daily life in the course of inter-individual communications. As such, social representations are the equivalent of personal constructs (see Kelly, 1955) or mental models (see Craik, 1952), but acting at the social rather than individual level.

Moscovici (1992) proposes social representations can be created and communicated by:

- Diffusion, where common knowledge exists and is created with little differentiation between group members;
- Propagation, where new information is shared between group members and integrated into the existing social representations; and
- Propaganda, where social conflict (and hence probably personal ideological conflict) is involved.

Abel et al (1998) in a comprehensive review theorise that barriers to communication occur when mental models are incompatible. Such barriers cannot be bridged by increasing the volume of information as that would strengthen the barrier by reinforcing a mental model. They postulate that the key is relevance and social relationship. However, even when a barrier is bridged it does not necessarily lead to the expected adoption or change.

Thus, individuals develop perspectives of reality based on life experiences. These are expressed as beliefs, values and attitudes and ultimately behaviour. Being part of a group or culture influences these, so that shared cultural elements are reinforced and response and behaviour becomes predictable (comfortable). Being part of a cultural group can provide benefits. However where new issues arise or new ideas are introduced ‘group think’ can limit acceptance of new and differing ideas. This has major implications for finding and defining problems and for the generation of solutions.

Where values are being incorporated in policy the process is often not explicit. This creates difficulties in defining exactly which (and whose) values are being included and excluded at any given time.

It also impedes the identification and creation of new, more creative policies that reflect a broader range of values.

The importance of values lies in their deep, underlying influence upon thought and action and we need to understand the complexity of their interrelationships. We need a way to consider values that enables reflection upon both the breadth and the depth of those values and of the policy making process. In this way, new, more integral understandings can emerge, and with them strategies for the renewal of Australian policies.

**Relationships between values, policies and actions: canvassing the depth**

The relationships between actions, policies and values have important implications for the analysis of Australian policy and rural values. If one is analysed in isolation to the others, the bigger picture is lost, and clues remain hidden as to how we might incorporate a broader range of values into policy.

As we move from an investigation of action to policy to values, our analysis gains depth. When the scope of inquiry expands to be inclusive of the many types of values, policies and actions that exist, our analysis gains breadth. When all three are investigated, values, policies and actions with an understanding of their scope and interrelationships, then our analysis gains complexity or meaning and allows for new understandings to be created. When action, policies and values are situated in a deep context, the levels of analysis can be described as ‘layers of meaning’.

In other words, actions may be understood, in the first instance, by an appreciation of the policies that underpin them. Analysis of policies then requires appreciation of the contexts in which they were established, a key element of which is the values that the policy makers chose to express. In turn, these values are reflective, to some degree at least, of an even deeper layer, that of beliefs. A full appreciation of the bases to action, then, requires analyses at all of these levels.

**Action and reaction (what is happening?)**

Action and reaction are by themselves short-term, surface responses to a more complex underlying thought process. Action is the mechanism through which things get done, and it is a highly important factor for consideration. But when action and reaction are examined without an eye to the thought processes that lie beneath them, the resulting interpretation of individuals’ responses is often shallow.

The mainstream media are primarily concerned with action and reaction. This level of analysis is usually only able to observe the actions of institutions and the highly charged, emotional and impassioned people’s responses to particular concerns. Analysis at this layer does not seek to explore the deeper reasons for these responses.

In a rural values context, the action and reaction level of analysis may, for example, highlight angry ‘farmers’ pitted against equally perturbed ‘bureaucrats’ in response to a withdrawal of protectionism, or perhaps against a defiant mob of ‘greenies’ chained to trees. It would portray (and cease to move people beyond) feelings of frustration, disempowerment and external blame. In a policy context, data and ‘facts’ would be thrown back and forth with little interpretation, and used to expediently prop up particular arguments. Policies that result exclusively from this type of analysis risk being ad hoc and reactive.

Action and reaction is the most obvious level at which issues emerge. Analysis at this level does not address the question of what seems to be going on; it merely describes and reacts to what is happening at the time.

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57 The model developed here is an adaptation of Sohail Inayatullah’s ‘Causal Layered Analysis’, a critical futures method of analysis. More information about this model and Inayatullah may be found at www.metafuture.org. Depth and breadth concepts are derived from both Sohail Inayatullah and works by Richard Slaughter (see Slaughter, R. (1999) Futures for the Third Millennium: Enabling the forward view. Sydney: Prospect Media)
In fact, most public debate is determined by journalistic criteria (Sandman, 1998)\(^58\) In such a context, four biases influence the cycles of action and reaction: alarm prevails over reassurance; extremes over the middle; opinions over data; and outrage (the elements that make people angry) over hazard (the objective mathematical odds).

**Policy and systematisation (what seems to be going on?)**

This is the level at which thought processes are systematized and structured. Most policy making usually occurs within this frame of analysis. It seeks to address what seems to be going on.

Data, facts, actions and reactions are placed in a context and provide inputs for a deeper level of thought to occur. The relationships within and between groups and institutions become important (where they can be measured), as do the relationships between strategy and action. The role of the state and other actors and interests is often explored at this level. The underlying (direct) causes of action are considered here, and are understood as being influenced by factors such as social, historical, political, economic and biophysical systems. At this level, root problems can be identified and solutions that involve more complex and longer-term strategies can be created.

In a rural values context, the ‘farmers’ versus ‘bureaucrats’ scenario would be reinterpreted to include an understanding that agriculturalists and rural communities might be experiencing the erosion of social and economic capital. From a policy perspective, policy makers may be seen to be designing strategies to establish a viable national economic position in the context of new international relationships that necessitate trade-offs. Policy solutions at this level may include the initiation of studies into the economic and social effects upon rural communities. They may create partnerships between industry and government or development of a consultation process to identify information on industry and community preferences. In this way, it is assumed that all the required information to produce the best policy will be identified and incorporated.

While this level of analysis seeks to create a more comprehensive picture of what seems to be going on through the incorporation of an array of measurable information, it leaves out a critical element.

“"The data is often questioned, however, the language of questioning does not contest the paradigm in which the issue is framed. It remains obedient to it" (Inayatullah 2001).\(^59\)

The systems, structures and processes that are in operation are left unquestioned. Actors are able to play their part with their modes of operation, experiences and observations being aligned with the dominant way of doing things. Williams reinforce this in a review of Australian Natural Resource Management (Williams, 2004 unpublished). Williams recognized the problem of conflicting actors in terms of agent based theory (de Rosis 1999; Conte & Dignum 2001; Doran 2001; Douglas 2001; Pahl-Wostl 2002; Skvoretz 2003)\(^60\) where a multiplicity of agents pursue individual and organisational agendas in a fashion that suits their own interests and predilections. Often such agents have conflicting goal sets, different political and cultural backgrounds and limited knowledge and awareness of each other's issues. These differences can be a strength when they enrich the debate and a weakness when the demands of alignment overcome the need for debate. These dissonances can only be understood and addressed in terms human behaviour.


Values and beliefs (what is really going on?)

Values

To reiterate our earlier definition:

*Values are symbolic statements of what is right and important.* Values are those qualities regarded by a person or group as important or desirable - a set of standards and principles. Values affect the development of attitudes. They help define propriety within a culture. Again, these influence response to a particular situation.

We have already observed that values underpin and are reflected in the systems and codified structures through which actions are organised, interpreted and advocated – in this context, policy. To fail to understand the range of values that are held by organisations, communities and individuals, and the way in which particular values influence the way that actions are codified (and attitudes shaped), is to ignore a fundamental causal layer of the picture.

Where particular values are reflected in policies to the exclusion of others without an explicit recognition of this, the perspectives of the people who hold these marginalised values are implicitly excluded from consideration. The many policies and actions that may be produced to cater for the perceived needs of these people will fail to hit the mark. This is because they will be derived from a set of values that do not underpin the norms, attitudes, actions and reactions of the people the policies are designed to target or assist. They may achieve compliance in the short term, but cannot bring about or cater for change in the longer term due to their lack of consistency with these deeper drivers.

From a rural policy perspective, policies designed to improve international competitiveness may reflect the underlying value of national economic welfare and hence focus upon the contribution that agriculture plays to the economy. While this is a reasonable approach, holding this value alone serves to exclude the importance of rural life and the multifunctional role that farming also plays for rural and urban communities. Policies designed to improve the profitability of agriculture, while potentially helpful to farmers in the short term, will cease to support and evolve the institutional, social, and individual structures that provide the functional operating context of farming and rural Australia.

Belief systems

The types of values that are included and excluded or held to be important are determined by belief systems.

Again, to reiterate:

*A belief is a symbolic statement about reality.* Beliefs are something accepted as true, especially a particular tenet, or body of tenets. There are, of course, personal beliefs, but it is the collection of shared beliefs that help give definition to a culture and defines group perspectives.

These shared beliefs or belief systems represent the way that values are contextualised. They form a collective view of reality, and it is from this perspective of reality that values emerge. These belief systems determine which values can be recognised, and which will hence have a greater claim to validity for those that share particular beliefs about reality.

For example, from within a belief system that perceives rural Australia to be a unified system of agricultural endeavour, the view that there *could* be a multiplicity of personal and community values relating to the variety of aspects of farming life is simply not available for consideration. Those holding these beliefs will perceive a divergence of values as aberrance, and will seek to streamline these values in accordance with their vision of reality. The values that emerge from such a belief system will relate to the importance of production quotas, economic viability, efficiency, and the like. These values may then be translated into policies that encourage understanding of, and compliance with, scientific and economically derived techniques for improving production efficiency without consideration of how preferable these methods may be for people to utilise, for example.
The promotion of agribusiness on the ground of efficiency can be seen to emerge from such a belief system.

Without examination of the often-implicit belief systems and values that shape perceptions of reality and the give rise to the relative importance of various aspects of this reality, it becomes increasingly difficult to recognise innovation, let alone foster it. We require belief systems that can conceive of the diversity of values that exist in rural Australia, and that also recognise the worth of maintaining this diversity in order for innovation to occur. And we require a valuing of this diversity that can give rise to the integration of a multiplicity of values into policy without losing the distinctive nature of each.

The implicit, unexamined incorporation of particular values and belief systems within policy is likely to perpetuate the same type of problem framing, and give rise to the same solutions that have been seen in the past. In order to encourage change adaptation, a reframing of old ideas is required, which requires an understanding of the breadth and depth of the nature of rurality and the creation of policy, rather than the continued application of surface level analysis.

This may be a pathway that will lead to more preferable futures for rural Australians – but it cannot be realised where a lack of understanding of the relationships between actors, actions, attitudes, policies, values and beliefs occurs. It will be important to recognise that in order to develop effective policies, it is necessary to identify which level of depth and breadth of examination is most appropriate to examine. The deeper the level of consideration, the more fundamental and long-term the impact can become – and the more likely it will to foster innovation and change that is acceptable to a sufficient a diverse number of actors to take root.

**Stories and Images**

At the deepest level of conception within this model, the artworks, images, legends, poetry and music that express a multiplicity of values and beliefs come into play. These artefacts provide opportunities to bring forth a sense of commonality whilst appreciating divergence of understandings and engagement. They also create potential for great change in perspective without the need for intellectual debate and conflict.

The works of Banjo Patterson (and others) evoke a sense of humanity that spans the intellectual, emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects of people. These iconic images bring insight to what it means to be living in rural Australia, and Tom O’Regan’s work is testimony to the capacity that art has to bring together divergent values and beliefs. It is perhaps these aspects of life and living that are most understated in policy development, and yet hold the most potential for exploring possibilities for perceptual integration and transformation.

Reclaiming and appreciating the value that such portrayals can provide may be a way through which belief systems can be broadened and a diversity of values can be recognised and accommodated. At the very least, creation of new images of rural experience may provide the space within which common frames of reference can emerge.

**Pointers for rural policy development and review**

As stated earlier the challenge is to develop ways that enable the deliberations at the Symposium to be built upon, to be incorporated into policy processes: in short to have a lasting impact. In other words, how do we develop and evolve rural policies that reflect broader, more inclusive, more diverse sets of beliefs and values that appeal to a diversity of actors and contexts.

Perhaps the simple answer is that we need to create an awareness of this need. We need also an awareness of the degree to which existing institutions, in particular organisations and processes limit our capacity to develop rural policies that are less sectoral and less set on values and aspirations that are based on outdated understandings.
The following pointers, if extended and refined, would provide useful guidance in the development of policies that reflect broader sets of beliefs and values:

- **Diversity** – Diversity is important as it enables evolution and regeneration. However recognition of the diversity of beliefs and values relevant to rural policy has been constrained by the acceptance of a narrow agricultural (production) construct.

- **Transparency** - Different beliefs and values need to be explicit so that they can be understood, and tested over time.

- **Engagement** - Policy development should proceed from a base in knowledge of who will be affected now and in the future and of the values and aspirations they hold and are likely to hold in the future. The policy development process should engage relevant groups of people and bring about an accommodation, or if not that at least an understanding of their diverse views.

- **Legitimacy** - There needs to be consideration across a broad spatial and intergenerational canvass of the interests of communities affected by rural policies. The tension between the interests of those who are currently and directly affected and the interests of those who are once removed and indirectly affected needs to be recognised. The interests of those with property rights should be balanced against the interests of those who do not hold property rights.

- **Relevant Structures and Processes** - Incorporating a diversity of values into policy may only occur when the systems and policy-making structures are questioned for their appropriateness. People with differing values, discourses and communication methods (such as women, indigenous peoples, urban males, etc) will not be able to actively and meaningfully participate in processes where structures and processes for policy development prioritise one set of values above all others.

- **Independence** – The policy development process needs to engage relevant communities of interest and not be beholden to particular sectoral interests. This dual requirement for engagement and independency needs to be reflected in public sector cultures, structures and processes.

- **Timelines** - The processes for policy development and adaptation should reflect the likely time line for policy effect; that is if the policy is to have a long-term impact then it is necessary to take a longer-term view on what might be prevailing beliefs and values.

- **Precaution** - If the policy is likely to have an irreversible effect then there is a greater need for caution, for the application of the precautionary principle and for clear points for policy review and adaptation.

There is a need for Australians to have conversations about what to do for and in rural Australia. These conversations need to draw on our intuition and imagination and for the resultant insights and images to be elaborated on and validated through analysis.

We need to be able to embrace risks, uncertainty and ambiguity to imagine new futures. Hence these conversations about rural Australia need to happen in safe places for they will challenge our long held beliefs and values, beliefs and values long reinforced by the institutions and power balances to which they gave birth.

Hopefully the Symposium on **Australian Values - Rural Policies** and this resultant report will play a role in promoting these conversations about rural Australia in kitchens, on doorsteps, in community halls, down by the creek and in policy forums throughout Australia.
2. Introduction to the Symposium

Rt Hon Ian Sinclair, Chair, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal

You have probably all heard the story reported back in October 1985 of an American voice that came over the ether to say "This is 3000. Will you change your course 15 degrees north? I repeat, 15 degrees north." A Canadian voice came back, "Please change your course 15 degrees south. I repeat, 15 degrees south".

The American voice came back and said, "This is the Commander of the USS Lincoln, the second largest vessel in the United States Atlantic Fleet. I have with me three cruisers, six destroyers and a number of support vessels. Please change your course 15 degrees north". The Canadian voice came back, "I repeat, will you change your course 15 degrees south."

The American voice came back and said, "I repeat, this is an American battle fleet. We intend to take action unless you immediately change your course 15 degrees north." The Canadian voice came back, "This is the Newfoundland Lighthouse. Over to you."

Considering the analysis of rural policy this is probably a good place to start. Many look at rural policy a bit like a lighthouse. We have our own ideas of which direction we want to steer. We have our own perspectives but it is very difficult to get the movement that we need.

I guess there are four aspects of rural policy. The first is the economics of it. Without going to globalisation I think there are a couple of things worth saying about the economics of rural industry. The one that still concerns me is practising farmers to a great degree - except perhaps in the wine industry and a few other select industries - are price takers not price setters.

How you become master of your economic destiny is extremely difficult. Without going into that argument, the second field we should all be conscious about is the forces of social change. Everything from the ageing of the population to the fact that most young people have left our rural communities, to the fact that women are playing far more significant roles (in farming) than in any field of Australian industry, to the fact that we really do have major problems with the aged and people living longer. How are we going to house them adequately and how are we going to provide a reasonable measure of health security in a domain where the old hospital that was an icon on a hill no longer represents current work practices or the provision of health assistance to the community.

The third, of course, is environmental awareness. We are generally far more conscious of the environment than we ever were. We used to be aware of it but we always supported a raft of other issues. Now the environment is paramount. Environmental degradation is a major challenge and I think all of us realise it has to be addressed as a fundamental issue.

Probably more fundamental than all of those, because they are all things we see around us, is technology. I do not think anything has really changed in respect of land crops more than technology. It provides new methods of using our resources. It provides new access to markets.

Around those parameters essentially what I see is a series of papers and discussions about Australian values and rural policies. The papers themselves all look quite fascinating to me.

The real problem I think is to look not only out there but look very much at the people who are part of it. It is not just about the people west of the range or out in the outback and onwards. It is a matter of Australians as a whole trying to resolve problems that are common to us as a country. One of our problems in agriculture is that we produce far more than we can consume. What we produce we sell in a market which is unpredictable, which is affected by a whole raft of forces, all of which are very difficult to predict and yet which essentially determine whether or not we are going to be viable and what we do.
It is with a great deal of pleasure in setting the context that I invite Tony Gleeson and Snow Barlow to present the first paper.
3. Australian Values – Rural Policy

Tony Gleeson and Snow Barlow

Introduction

Australians, indigenous and non-indigenous, identify with the bush. They may not live there anymore but the bush is important to their identity.

Bennett, Emmison and Frow (1999)\(^1\) draw on their “Australian Everyday Cultures” survey to conclude that about 75% of Australians believe in a distinctive Australian culture and that sport and the bush are the major single determinants of this culture.

Mackay (1999)\(^2\) makes a distinction between culture and mythology and suggests that Australian culture is more urban and diverse than rural myths admit. However the problem might be with reality, not myth for endless fields of monocultural agriculture may not accurately depict the bush upon which our national identity is apparently so strongly based.

Increasingly rural Australians claim urban oriented policies and institutions disadvantage them. But if this is the case then it is not just rural Australians who are disadvantaged by rural policies and institutions. All Australians are the worse for policies and institutions which do little to strengthen the capacity of communities, whether they be rural or urban, to protect and nurture the social fabric.

There is a need to unshackle us from the chains of past analyses. There is a need for the birth of new institutions to re-represent rural Australia. Tinkering at the edges of a failed policy framework is more likely to prolong the suffering than meet the realistic aspirations that Australians generally have for rural Australia.

“It is not enough to teach people how to swim better in a tide, a time comes when people have to do more than swim more effectively. They have to get together and say: This river seems to be going in the wrong direction and somehow it has to be stopped--- and it has to be redirected” (Wiseman, 1998).\(^3\)

For some it would be comforting to hear that this Symposium arose out of rigorous analysis. But no, Snow Barlow and I conceived it over a bottle of fine wine on a Queensland beach. The conception was relatively painless, the first great challenge being what to call it.

It began as The Kingma Symposium in recognition of Onko Kingma’s contribution to rural policy. However Onko’s modesty forced a title change and it subsequently became The Symposium on Conceptual Frameworks for Rural Policies. This seemed an equally appropriate title, for concepts enable us to us to abstract from reality and hence envision a different future. But there was unease with the abstract and that forced a second change to what we now have: The Symposium on Australian Values –Rural Policies.

The term “rural” is used variously to describe a place, an activity or a social construct. Unfortunately the term is often used interchangeably with agriculture. This reflects the historical significance of agriculture and contributes to the ongoing confusion that arises when we speak about rurality. There is however, no sector more comprehensively surveyed and so completely analysed as the traditional broadacre agricultural sector. Hence one could be forgiven for thinking that at least the basic agricultural parameters would be well understood. But this is not the case and the myths so created continue to distort how we view and respond to rural Australia.

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Let’s consider a few examples: economic growth, export-import performance, employment, assistance, ecological sustainability, and multi-functionality.

**Economic Growth**

Australians, and more particularly white farmers and their related institutions, generally begin with the judgement that the purpose of farming is to contribute to national economic growth through the production of food and fibre products. They then surmise that Australia needs to be competitive in global markets for agricultural products. This in turn leads to the conclusion that the universal and dominant drivers of agricultural policy and land management practice are the interrelated needs to increase the value and productivity of agricultural production.

And we are encouraged to believe that Australian farmers really are doing a pretty fair job in achieving just that. Take for instance recent advice from ABARE to the Department of Transport and Regional Services:

> “Between 1955-56 and 1998-99, the volume of farm production rose by 187 percent. Despite falling real prices for farm product, the real gross value of farm production rose by over 25 percent. However, with rising costs of production, the net value of farm production fell by around 54 percent in real terms” (ABARE 1999).

But it all depends on what slant one wants to put on it, what phrases one uses, what institutional baggage one carries. Certainly some individuals in some industries do well but in an aggregate sense we really have not been doing too well. It is time to stop and reflect.

Since the early 1970s, there has virtually been no change in the real gross value of Australian agricultural output, notwithstanding a two-fold increase in the real value of world trade in agricultural products. Agriculture is an increasingly unattractive national investment with aggregate real net farm income falling two-fold over the twenty years to 1994-1995.

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Adapted from Synapse (1997)\textsuperscript{5}

Export - Import Performance
We are also encouraged to take a “Pollyanna” view of the export-import performance of the food and fibre sectors.

It is generally understood that approximately 75\% by value of Australian agricultural products are exported and that those exports represent about 20\% of all Australian exports (see ABS 1996; DPIE 1997).\textsuperscript{6} However, comparable production, export and import statistics across industry sectors are not readily available. The proportion by value of agricultural products exported is sometimes inflated by comparing two statistics that are not comparable - the value of production at the farm gate and the value of processed exports. Some analyses estimate the proportion of agricultural products exported to be as low as 33\% (see DITAC 1993).\textsuperscript{7}

A clearer picture emerges when one examines the export-import statistics for the food and fibre industries. These industries combined account for approximately 30\% of Australian merchandise exports. Over the ten years to 1996/97, the ratio of imports to exports of non-manufactured food and fibre products\textsuperscript{8} was about 1:4.5, that is imports equated to about 23\% of exports. For manufactured food and fibre products\textsuperscript{9}, the ratio was approximately reversed with exports equating to about 18\% of imports (ABS 1998c).\textsuperscript{10} The overall outcome for the food and fibre based industries is that, in general terms, Australia imported by value about half as much as it exported, with net exports in 1996/97 being valued at about $12 billion.

\textsuperscript{7} Department of Industry, Technology and Commerce (1993) Innovation in Australia’s Services Industries, Australian Centre for Innovation and International Competitiveness, University of Sydney, AGPS, Canberra.
\textsuperscript{8} Standard International Trade Classifications 0,1,2 except 27 and 28.
\textsuperscript{9} Standard International Trade Classifications 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 84 and 85.
\textsuperscript{10} Australian Bureau of Statistics (1998) International Merchandise Trade, ABS. Cat. 5422.0.
Interestingly, if one accepts the widely published current estimates that the values of agricultural production and exports are about $28 billion and $23 billion respectively, one is confronted with the statistical improbability that imports of non-manufactured food and fibre products equate to approximately 45% of the total value of domestic consumption of about $11 billion.

Another widely held belief is that Australians, and particularly the urban café society service sector, rely heavily on exports from primary industries. Maybe, but again it depends on what slant one takes. In fact, when both direct and indirect inputs from the service sector are taken into account, the service sector contributes about 40% of the value added to Australian exports as compared to about 14% from the agricultural sector. This simply reflects the fact that sectoral inter-dependencies are a feature of maturing economies (see Deeley, 1991).11

Employment
ABARE began its 1999 report to the Department of Transport and Regional Services with the statement that:

“Agriculture is the dominant industry in inland and remote Australia”

However, the report itself presents figures indicating that agriculture accounts for only 15% of employment in inland and remote Australia. In fact, in the twenty years to the early 1990s, employment in agriculture in rural Australia halved, while total employment in rural Australia doubled (Synapse 1998).

Assistance
How often have you heard that subsidising Australian agriculture is not a realistic option because of our small population and our high ratio of exports to domestic consumption? Yet reflect on the fact that assistance to Australian agriculture is now higher or as high as assistance to any other sector. Throughout the 1980s and the 1990s, assistance to agriculture equated to between 50% and 100% of net farm income, and was in addition to very significant environmental expenditures.

So at least some widely held conclusions about Australian agriculture may not be valid. Policies for Australian agriculture, let alone policies for rural Australia, may be based on false premises.

Should Australians support Australian agriculture primarily because of its contribution to economic growth and/or exports? And if so are those policies likely to achieve the sorts of visions we might have for rural Australia?

Let’s consider some more examples.

**Ecological Sustainability**

The environmental performance of the agricultural sector is well documented and there is little to suggest that it will markedly improve with existing policies and programs.

The ecological imprint of human economic activity is clearly the largest threat to ecological sustainability. Yet it is widely believed that agricultural profitability is a prerequisite for ecological sustainability. Surely it would require a peculiar twist of logic to assert that the economic returns from the current uses of resources should be the prime determinant of how those resources might be best managed in the future.

Initiatives in the 1980s to promote ecologically sustainable development were quickly captured by existing industries. Aided and abetted by their public sector bedfellows, existing industries sought public help to defray the private costs of ecological sustainability. And twenty years on this game is still being played out, as the following examples show.

The use of public funds to breed a salt tolerant cereal for growing in salt affected areas of the Murray Darling Basin may assist individual land holders but it is unlikely to provide a useful return to the taxpayer. Another example of the agri-export-centric mindset to public investment in rural Australia is a program operating in the Gascoyne region of Western Australia. This is one of Western Australia’s regional resource management programs but it is difficult to conceive how tax payers might benefit from a publicly funded program to support diversification from growing wool to growing sheep meat. In Queensland substantial public funds are allocated to improving on-farm water use efficiency with no measures in place to redirect saved water. And future generations will pay for the environmental damage fostered by the cyclical dumping of bucket loads of taxpayers’ money into the Queensland sugar industry.

Unfortunately however the problems are more deep-rooted than is reflected in a few misguided programs.

In his recent book “Seize the Future” Alan Oxley (2000)\(^{12}\), one of Australia’s most accomplished trade negotiators, observed that Australia has secured enormous benefits from adopting modern farming techniques. Not only has this generated wealth, Oxley says, to improve standards of living, but it has also made Australia an important supplier of food to the world. “Is not,” Oxley asks, “the alteration of landscape to make the continent a global supplier of food a worthwhile thing to have done?”

In a further comment on Australia’s ecological challenges, Oxley acknowledges that there are some real problems on the coast, the first mentioned being long-term doubts about whether the high-rise buildings on the Gold Coast (in Queensland) can withstand the very heavy storms which hit that coast every few years.

Surely the values underpinning these observations influence Australian approaches to world trade negotiations. Are they the values of today’s Australians? Are they the values of tomorrow’s Australians?

It should come as no surprise then, in writing on Australia and the politics of globalisation, that Wiseman (1998) states that the achievement of international consensus on crucial environmental issues has been made even more difficult by international trade agreements often designed to oppose and prevent international environmental regulation.

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Multi-functionality
This leads us into the phenomenon of multi-functionality which, simply put, recognises the many purposes of farms. Australian governments seem to have a great deal of trouble with the concept, which is strange given that Australian farmers have fully embraced the idea that farms are not just for the growing of agricultural products. This is dramatically illustrated by the fact that through the mid to late 1990’s about 45 percent of broadacre farmers earned two thirds of their net income off-farm. This form of adjustment by farm households has enormous implications for farm policy and for the future of rural Australia.

Thirty years ago the Council for Aboriginal Affairs recognised that, for economic, cultural and political purposes, Aborigines’ leasehold should be multi-purpose. Furthermore the Council believed that social should be included in the definition of multi-purpose. In fact the needs of the Gurindji people in relation to the Wave Hill land claim had been expressed as being the protection of sacred and ceremonial places, the provision of a residential area and the provision of an area for a viable pastoral enterprise (Rowse, 2000).13

The aspirations of neither rural nor urban Australians are likely to be well served by land use policies based on the premise that the prime use of natural resources should be expansion of agricultural activity.

The Future
Building a robust future for rural Australia means we have to address complex issues and systems, and we cannot do this on the terms of the past. This demands insightful thinking, made difficult if we have fixations on particular ways of thinking.

If for instance we visualise a landscape as being dominated by introduced pasture species, fences and watering points, then it is virtually impossible to conceive of it not being occupied by domestic livestock. Having so envisioned the landscape, we then look to define the problem and the solution in relation to the economic and ecological implications of livestock production. Furthermore, given the dominance of the scientific and economic disciplines, more often than not we will seek an explanation based on analysis of scientific and economic facts. The critical potential contributions from imagination and intuition are lost.

“…insight and a consequent drive for achievement...fuel a thought process which is basically creative and intuitive rather than rational. Strategists do not reject analysis...but they use it only to stimulate the creative process...to test new ideas.”
(Ohmae, 1980)14

Work is another interesting case study of how removing fixation on particular ways of thinking by rejecting traditional analysis opens our minds to alternative solutions. In statistical terms, worker’s overtime in Australia equates roughly to about 500,000 jobs. Unemployment equates to about 10% of the work-time spent by the employed. Now if we are to value the right to work, then work should be seen to be an output of, rather than input into, economic activity. Hence one might argue for it to be shared equitably. This would seem to be a value of particular importance given that unemployment among under-25-year-olds represents about 40% of total unemployment. And given the shortage of paid work, those who do not find this proposition attractive should be prepared to reasonably support those people who elect to forego their right to paid work.

These examples demonstrate that a focus on what has been or what is will prevent us from moving forward through, instead, imagining a different future. We will not move forward by adopting the same thinking and strategies that have led us to where we are.

The first step in this process is to reject the simplistic notion that we have three separate spheres for policy - the economic, the environmental and the social: the so-called triple-bottom-line.

Oxley states that the perpetual problem in managing the environment is balancing respect for environmental values with economic values. This is muddled thinking: the economy doesn’t have values. The economy is an artificial construct to help us to achieve our aspirations. These aspirations reflect our individual, social and spiritual values. The environment, on the other hand, is a natural construct which, depending on our culture, affects our individual, social and spiritual values.

As stated by Frow (1997) in his essay on gift and commodity, the struggle is waged over the line between what can be properly bought and sold and what cannot. In general, the commodification of persons, that is, the trade in slaves, is rejected. Apart from this, the demarcations become blurred. However what is clear, according to Frow, is a progression from property rights that confer limited rights of exclusion to the concept of a property right as being essentially the right to exclude all others. Hence, as more and more values are commodified, there builds a social expectation that the right to exclude and to alienate becomes the social expectation for all forms of value. Frow (1997) states the commodity form does three things.

First, it channels resources; second, it transforms the purpose of production to the generation of profits; and third, it transforms previously or potentially common resources into private resources.

To these I would add that it breaks down the social constructs that guide the actions of, and strengthen, communities. For instance it is not the inclusiveness of the common property right that leads to the tragedy of the commons but rather the breakdown of the social norms that might govern the use of resources held in common.

The commodification of the genetic commons is another classic example of this phenomenon. Kloppenburg (see Frow 1997), writing on the political economy of plant biotechnology, observes that capital systematically seeks not only to make a commodity of all use-values but also to create new needs whose satisfaction entails new use-values that in turn can be commodified. That is, investments in genetic resources have transformed a public resource into a private resource.

Titmuss has described the role of social policy to be, on the one hand, to free people of the market constraint on giving to unnamed strangers and on the other, to restrict their freedom to decide on to whom to gift. So that the gift as gift ought not to appear as gift either to the donee or to the donor. Hence gifting is not defined by the object gifted but rather by the transactional or social context within which it occurs (see Frow1997).

This interpretation cuts across the concept of mutual obligation and it may have deep meaning in relation to the allocation via market mechanisms of resources upon which life depends. For instance, as we move from resources being nature’s gifts to societies, to resources being traded between cultures and generations, then we will need to earn the right to purchase these resources. In this situation, materially rich societies and individuals will earn preferential rights to life.

Wiseman (1998) sees our task as one of managing economic globalisation while holding together social solidarity and cultural identity. He calls for new policy frameworks and institutions based on modern assessments of social values to do with work, family, and community, and on ecological values.

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Wark (1999) highlights how difficult this task might be in his discussions of the interplays between the urbanity, suburbanity and rurality of Australian culture, and in particular of the resistance in the suburban hinterlands and rural and remote areas to the urban culture and its values. If this isn’t complicated enough, we have also to deal with the conflict, plurality, discontinuity, contradiction, fragmentation, subjectivity, ambivalence and populism of postmodernity.

Mackay (1999) presents us as a society deeply divided on economic and employment grounds wherein depression is the fifth most common disorder being treated by general practitioners. There is an eclectic mix of values aligned on the one hand to materialism, security and the traditional family, and on the other with the postmodern values of accepting uncertainty, of relativism and of a more inclusive spirituality.

Perhaps the way forward is to take solace in Frow’s observation that at the heart of most theories of the postmodern is an extension of commodification to many areas of life. This extension, muses Frow, enables the machinery of economic growth to swallow more and more of the facets of life thus destroying the very aspirations whose fulfilment seems to lead the drive for economic growth. Eventually this system must self-destruct - as neatly, if not sensitively put by Oxley:

“if the resource (say water) is not big enough we should make it more expensive to make sure it is used more effectively”.

This would seem to be a formula based on the somewhat tenuous assertion that the rich are so much more astute than the poor. But history would tell us that systems based on this premise are politically unstable.

A Way Forward
In this paper my intention has been to question some of the assumptions underpinning agricultural and rural policies and to suggest that we need more flexible and integrated institutional arrangements. Other presenters will give their own perspectives on the issues confronting us and pose ways to move forward.

I suggest that future policies and institutional arrangements for and affecting rural Australia need to be characterised by:

Being more explicitly based on the broad sets of values held by both rural and urban Australians rather than on narrow sectoral based values;

being more integrated across the three tiers of government and the regional community, broadly represented, and

by the resourcing of local communities from pooled funds to achieve agreed goals, across Shire boundaries as appropriate.

Thank you all for accepting your invitations to attend this Symposium on Australian Values - Rural Policies. I hope for each of you that it is a new, expanding and fun experience.

16 Wark, McKenzie (1999) Celebrities, Culture and Cyberspace, the Light on the Hill in a Postmodern World, Pluto Press, Australia
17 Sponsored by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, the University of Queensland, the Dairy Research and Development Corporation, and Synapse Research and Consulting.
Discussion
Chair: Rt Hon Ian Sinclair

Ian Sinclair: It seemed to me from what Tony Gleeson is saying that we will not look forward by analysing what has been or what is, rather by imagining a future.

Roslyn Prinsley: I believe Tony is right, the only way we can go forward is to think about completely new scenarios and new ways of doing things and where we want to be. But I do believe that if you look back into history you can learn a lot. So I think you need to have a combination of the two, not just disregard everything that has happened before and say, "We are going to have a wonderful New World". Say, "This is the wonderful New World we want and what can we learn from the past?"

Tony Gleeson: Thanks Roslyn. We have spent an enormous amount of time analysing the intricacies of this or that commodity sector or this or that farm statistic. I think we just haven't got the balance right. I think we need to do imagining to help us construct the analyses rather than the other way around. But I don't disagree fundamentally with you. In fact, I think whilst we will pickup some inkling of the cultural, there was always the intention when we started this thing that we would have a stronger input from the historical than what we do have.

Ian Sinclair: Any others?

Jock Douglas: Tony, your first two points that you put at the end here to stimulate discussion come out extremely well: being more explicitly based on broad sets of values established by both rural and urban rather than on narrow sectoral based values and being more integrated across the three tiers of government and community. The third one, though, can you develop that a bit because it looks to be a mechanistic process based type of conclusion to do with resourcing of local governments from pooled funds to achieve agreed goals.

Tony Gleeson: I will try. We spend a lot of time these days trying to manage discrete programs and discrete funding arrangements for this or that purpose, and that is at all levels. However there is an enormous amount of work going on which illustrates the high capacity of communities to take an appropriately broadly based approach if the incentive is there.

The enormous diversity around Australia is another factor. I am not envious of Commonwealth public servants dreaming up programs that will apply generally to rural Australia. It is in fact not a useful task. We have to break down some of the barriers to be useful, and one of them I think is the structures and processes that we use to service rural Australia. It strikes me as incongruous that we have the same structures in Brussels, in Brisbane, in Bourke, in Boulia. They are quite different places requiring different structures. We may need discrete specialised instrumentalities in Canberra and Brisbane, but we don't need them in Bourke or Boulia where we need integrated services.

I am also suggesting that the various providers of resources get their act together. In fact, last night in the hotel my colleague veterinarians were discussing the follow on from the brucellosis and tuberculosis eradication campaign, which ran in Australia from one war to the other, or so it felt at times. There was an agreement between industry and State and Commonwealth governments as to how it would operate. There were a few problems at the edges but fundamentally it was a good process and we ought to be using some of those models more broadly to service rural communities. Now whether or not the operator is local government or somebody else is a secondary issue.

George Wilson: Tony, in your graph showing export performances you have the export performance of the services sector much lower than I would have anticipated.

Tony Gleeson: The graphs are based on 1986/87 data on direct and indirect export contributions from each sector. I am not aware of a more recent analysis that surely would accentuate the point that the service sector is an important contributor to exports.

George Wilson: It occurred to me that it is not doing justice to the tourist industry.

Tony Gleeson: That is important if you wish to continue the sectoral approach but we need to be careful. The point I make is that it is actually the inputs from the service sector into the other sectors that is important.
4. Cultural Influences
Tom O’Regan

Prologue
Our eyes are drawn immediately to the river we put it into focus. Out of habit we give the water and the trees a delineation they do not in fact have. Then we realise it’s not what is in focus. What is in focus and is the centre of attention is the flower—the small bit of the whole. But this is not a “bad photo”. It foregrounds the flower, but not at the expense of the river. The flower is, after all, firmly situated on the river’s banks. It does not stand in the way of the river, instead the flower seems to be emblematic of the river. We still see the river now but more indistinctly. This photograph asks us to attend to the flower in the context of the river. If the two were in focus we would overlook the flower subsuming it in the river. It would be just another photograph. This way, however, we get both the river and the flower. The river is the Darling River near Bourke in New South Wales.

This is a photograph taken by photojournalism students and staff from the Queensland College of Art (QCA) at Griffith University in Brisbane for the Bourke Shire Council. It is part of a photographic essay of Bourke and environs commissioned by the Council in connection with the development of their Back o’ Bourke heritage and exhibition centre due for partial completion in 2001. The ‘4000 images’ already compiled include archival photographs and a contemporary photojournalistic record of the people, landscape, natural and cultural heritage and industries of Bourke.

The taking of these photographs has been a learning experience for all concerned. According to Earle Bridger the head of Photojournalism at the QCA the Back o’ Bourke committee members were sometimes surprised by the photos that came back to them just as the students were themselves surprised at what the committee wanted them to photograph. Hearing Earle talk about the experience it is clear that a dialogue and cultural exchange took place between local people and the photographers during the course of taking these images. The Committee learnt to see Bourke and its environs through an outsider’s eye—the metropolitan eye of the students and staff members. At first there was some concern about the choice of subject and material with the Committee. Were photographs like this bad photographs? Shouldn’t the river be in focus? Was this too “arty” to serve the purposes of a museum and heritage centre? The images the Committee were supplied were certainly not the kind of “postcard” commercial photography that Committee members were used to. There was initially some anxiety, negotiation, trial and error, feedback and reflection as the photographs circulated before diverse audiences. Committee members sometimes arrived at a different view of the same photographs over time - some images grew on them. This particular photograph is the first of several photographs featured on the gallery page of the Back o’Bourke website (url: http://www.backobourke.com.au/people.htm). For their part students and staff had to confront at first hand a rural and regional reality with its life rhythms, priorities and concerns which were not always theirs. This two-way process will, I suspect, be regarded as just as important to all concerned in time as the finished product.

The process involved is at model of a certain kind of community cultural development. It is a story of adjustment and readjustment of collective vision. It is a site of cultural exchange between city and country; it’s about the city in the country; it’s about adjusting without compromising local “vision” in ways which benefit both the local community and the city. It is a process of making the country relevant to the city—something they have to pass through and en-vision. And these are all profoundly cultural matters. After all the Back o’ Bourke committee is pinning its hopes upon making culture matter—of reconstructing Bourke as a significant cultural tourism site.

The photographs from the Back o’ Bourke photographic essay provide an important counterpoint to this essay. A picture is often said to be worth a 1,000 words—those who attended the Rural Values Symposium would certainly corroborate on this score. These images certainly spoke to them and me in powerful ways which my written presentation only partially accommodates. The photographs were made available to the author courtesy of Earle Bridger for use in the limited context of the Rural Values Symposium in Old Parliament House and for encouraging public discussion about the Back o’ Bourke Exhibition and Heritage Centre. This marked the second showing of these photographs at Old Parliament House in Canberra. In late 1999 an exhibition of these photographs—contemporary and archival—were opened by the Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson.

Placing Culture
We now regard “culture” as something that not only needs to be taken into account, but also needs to be nurtured and advanced through active policy. Culture has become both a target and an object of intervention. We talk about transforming “workplace cultures”, implementing education programmes to alter “traditional cultural practices” of, for example, female circumcision, and we see a commitment to the development and expression of culture and cultures in support for Australian creativity and multicultural policy making. No longer just a factor that needs to be accommodated as kind of (extra) impost on the firm, the government, or the community, culture has become a starting and end point. It is a key “outcome” to be delivered on through a variety of objectives—to use the contemporary government parlance. “Culture” has become inescapably coupled with “development” and “identity”.

In this guise “Culture” becomes a place to start talking about “rural reconstruction”—commodious enough to encompass the economic but solid enough not to be subsumed by it. It gives rise to the possibility of connecting culture with sustainability—culture as a part of an agenda of sustainable development. Culture also provides a means to both articulate the fundamental values at the core of policy programs, citizenship and identity; and to assess the values that are expressed in particular policy programs.
Culture reflects our values and culture determines those values. Culture becomes here not just a consideration to be taken into account when thinking about development but rather becomes the basis for it.

What is it that makes this photograph of a shearing shed ruin so evocative and beautiful? There is no human presence here yet the image feels saturated with a human presence. We look at it reconstructing it as if it was not a ruin, filling in the shearers and sheep, rebuilding the roof until the image becomes a ruin and not a ruin simultaneously.

But culture is not only increasingly the central business of the programs and strategies of governments and businesses. It is also a way in which we as a people organise, recognise and think about our political, social and economic differences. We use it to make political claims—when Pauline Hanson, for example, presented herself as an “indigenous person” who was “speaking up for her own culture”. This was a culture, she claimed, that was being excluded, devalued and marginalised by a (multicultural) ruling elite. In this she was enacting a rhetorical cultural standpoint already registered publicly and a part of self-determination paradigms. The political activism of numerous Aboriginal, women and ethnic community spokespersons turned on having their cultural differences recognised and accommodated in institutions, workplaces, and the political system itself. Culture is here a framework for situating, recognising and claiming the just demands of disadvantaged social groups. On a number of social indicators rural and regional Australia is certainly disadvantaged and spokespersons of rural and regional Australia do sometimes conceive of themselves as a distinct cultural grouping.

Culture is also a way of comprehending society by commentators as in the numerous articles over the last four years exploring the “great divide”—political and cultural—between regional and metropolitan Australia. Writers sometimes also talk of the “culture wars”. Culture here is foundational to the various social-group, social movement, life-style enclaves we commonly associate with an identity politics—as in the “gay culture”—and it has become synonymous with single issue activism and complaint as in Robert Hughes’ famous “culture of complaint”.

*Copyright, Back o’ Bourke and Queensland College of Art 1999.*
Such complaint often includes concerns over media representation and portrayal. In the context of a discussion of rural and regional Australia this might be concerns over the misrepresentation of the country to the city. So, for example, the contemporary focus on land clearing can seem to paint all farmers as environmental vandals who by virtue of their actions can lay no claim to be custodians of the land and environment. Culture is becoming a lens through which a rural and metropolitan divide is apprehended in our public discourse.

The cultures dealt with here also represent a political and governmental management issue. They signal the existence of populations whose differences and complaints have to be productively managed, politically exploited and, perhaps, reconciled. Culture is *prima facie* a problem for government to deal with. It is a site of communal division. But, equally, it is proffered as a solution to the same intractable differences and conflicts. A “cultural resolution” is often the instrument sought to conciliate non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal interests in land, land use and the competing cultural heritages claims on that land.

But what is the *culture* here that has become capable of sustaining such robust uses? It is customary to answer that question by drawing a distinction between aesthetic culture and anthropological culture. Between culture meaning the creative arts and what a cultivated person possesses—the capacity to discriminate so as to ‘appreciate “the best that has been thought and written”’ (Ryan, 1998: 63)\(^2\) and culture meaning ‘something that societies must possess by definition: the congeries of beliefs, values, and attachments that give those societies their character, and allow their members to makes sense of their lives’. Alan Ryan usefully calls this second sense ‘adjectival culture’ in the sense that ‘youth culture, drug culture, gang culture, or prison culture are cultures’—we often call these subcultures.

This is one of a series of photographs of people placed amidst their environment, their locale. The dogs are looking off-screen left and right. They are clearly engaged elsewhere with what lies outside the photograph. They encourage us to fill out the space we don’t see. This gives this photograph a quality of expansiveness and of motion contributed by the motorbike. Only the rural worker/grazier engages our attention.

It is this second aspect of culture that is mostly at stake when we talk of rural values and think about rural and regional Australia as having particular cultural identities and being subject to particular cultural influences. But as Alan Ryan notes the two are often coupled as when we regard, using the first definition, a society as having “no culture”. (We often talk of the difficulties in having Australian culture recognised and valued for itself – this is the cultural cringe; Aboriginal and Islanders speak of similar difficulties in establishing cultural recognition and cultural valuation from the broader mainstream and themselves; and there is now a chorus of voices arguing for recognition of regional and rural Australia as a distinctive culture.)

This second definition covers much territory: both micro and macro communities from the school culture to the rural culture to the Australian culture. It covers the geographically located as in “rural Australia” and the geographically dispersed as in the Greek community. It covers a majority ethnicity which people have in mind when they talk of the Anglo or Anglo-Celtic cultural core of Australia. It covers the various ethnic minorities formed by immigration as in the Vietnamese and Lebanese communities. It covers what Canadian philosopher, Will Kymlicka (1996: 19) calls ‘national minorities’ — the Basques and the ‘first peoples’ of Australia, New Zealand, and the Americas. For Kymlicka these are ‘distinct and potentially self-governing societies incorporated into a larger state’. It covers disadvantaged and marginalised social groups — there is a ‘sense in which the disabled form separate cultures within the larger society’. And finally it also covers those many “lifestyle” segments which sophisticated market research is elaborating and canny entrepreneurs are bringing into existence from Generation X to the Net Generation.

In this last guise Joseph Turow (1997: 3) points to ‘the new portraits of society that advertisers and media personnel invoke involve the blending of income, generation, marital status, and gender into a soup of geographical and psychological profiles they call “lifestyles”’. With the rise of segment-defined communication ‘small slices of society’ are able to ‘talk to themselves’ and construct more complete “worlds”. Governments are increasingly recognising these “lifestyles” so as to not only better target and deliver services but also to win elections. They are also finding these “lifestyles” to be geo-demographic populations — particular demographies which are located in particular geographies. As election guru Jonathon Robbin (1980: 28) claims people ‘create or choose established neighbourhoods which conform to their lifestyle of the moment’. In this ways ‘the neighbourhood or community … make up a distinct social group which shares demographic and economic characteristics’. And this is as true of the countryside as anywhere else.

Each of these senses of culture entail not only different cultural communities but also different claims for group recognition. So, for example, Kymlicka (1996: 31) talks of ‘polyethnic rights’ and instruments which are ‘intended to help ethnic groups and religious minorities express their cultural particularity and pride without it hampering their success in the economic and political institutions of the dominant society’. He talks of the particular ‘self-determination’ rights and instruments claimed by indigenous peoples and enacted in the very structure of ATSIC. By the same token the various “lifestyle” segments may recognise themselves politically. The “Shotguns and Pickup Trucks” that is listed in one American marketing research social segmentation analysis is characterised by ‘small rural towns with more mobile homes than the norm, more large families with school-age children, and more blue-collar workers with only a high school education’ (Turow, 1997: 47). It is obviously an important political constituency for gun lobbies in the US. In Australia its equivalent is important to both the National Party and One Nation.

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This is a veritable “cultural soup” of confusing and colliding identities, and definitions which entail different programs and conflicting priorities. The problem contemporary society faces is not so much one of de-culturalising the social and political landscape to remove “the [cultural] overheating”, as it is one of directing and shaping the terms of cultural interaction. Michael Schudson (1994: 42-3) captures this well when he writes:

Culture may be integrative, but it may also be disintegrative at the same time. It may ally acquiescent citizens under a common regime and common symbols, but it may also prove a focal point for division, contention, and conflict. In their cultural policy nation-states provide less cultural unity than authoritative statements of the terms in which union and division will be negotiated.

This is an intersubjective priority. Governments seek to facilitate the positive interaction—and even (re)formation)—of identities in ways conducive to positive dialogue and the promotion of feasible harmony. Without such shaping Joseph Turow (1997: 2) argues there will be greater fear, less communication, less sense of cohesion and common purpose in the various ‘equivalents of gated communities’.

The shearing shed and outbuildings are framed by the window of a motorcar just as we would be as tourists arriving or as farm workers driving up to work in the buildings. The image suggests the mobility of the car/truck but it is obviously a rusty immoveable ruin. The farm buildings it frames remain in active use. Activity amidst ruin, heritage amidst daily life. The old vehicle rusting in the sun marks once again suggests a human presence—our human presence—in a scene without any visible presence.

Any discussion of cultural influences in rural and regional Australia has to start with a recognition of the ways in which governmental thinking and these several understandings of culture available in the public sphere permeate thinking about rural values. They help structure the field of rural activism and identity formation alike. In such a culturally charged atmosphere it is not surprising that claims are made for the distinctiveness of regional and rural identities and communities. It’s not surprising that rural policies and approaches which respect regional and rural people’s choices and values are being foregrounded. It is clear too that claims are made for regional and rural people as both disadvantaged and distinct in ways which require both affirmation and respect for them. And it’s clear that competing cultural heritages are being foregrounded as first people’s claims based on their affinities with land exist in uneasy relationship with a parallel articulation of rural and regional people’s affiliation to and custodianship of places and land.

Given rural depopulation and the well-cited diminishing reach of services (and this at a time when the services economy has become synonymous with the knowledge economy), the concern is for the very survival of a “way of life” and its associated social fabric. This is first and foremost a concern for the erosion of a culture—the reduction of amenities, the very survival of identities, the inter-generational transfer of culture and values and the decline of a critical mass of population.

But as other speakers at this Symposium have made clear this is not always posed as a cultural issue. Rather it’s often posed as an economic issue. We are so used to seeing the rural through the prism of an economic calculus that we haven’t seen how close these concerns are to the kind of concerns that are articulated by various ethnic communities councils and have underwritten the provision of various services, facilities and programs designed to support cultural maintenance. (But to go down this route we have probably got to decouple these cultural dimensions from economic actions—even if it is only to recouple them again in a different way at a later point.) The “starting from culture” we are beginning to see is, perhaps, part of a process of normalising the rural and regional upon policy, political and personal horizons.

*copyright, Back o’ Bourke and Queensland College of Art 1999.*
Culture and Development

“Starting from culture” has become all the more significant locally and internationally in that it is increasingly coupled with “sustainable development”—which yokes culture to both social and economic well-being and promotes positive interaction amongst the diverse peoples and orders of society. This is not unfamiliar territory. It fits with UNESCO’s 1982 definition of culture which read

...in its widest sense, culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only the arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

This is not just a statement about the relevance of the development of a cultural (arts) policy but a statement of a larger truth about culture’s relevance. It is a manifesto for the leaking out of culture beyond its previously restricted domain. Cultural development is becoming a fundamental plank in social and community well-being. When culture is connected to social and economic well-being it is too important to be left to “cultural agencies”. As UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in 1998 put it:

The World Decade for Cultural Development stressed the importance of acknowledging the cultural dimension of development; asserting and enhancing cultural identities; broadening participation in cultural life; and promoting international cultural co-operation; (12)

In this view ‘Sustainable development and the flourishing of culture are interdependent’ (13).

This is an explicit rendering of an equivalence between culture and development. UN’s Our Creative Diversity (November 1995) noted that ‘when culture is understood as the basis of development the very notion of cultural policy has to be considerably broadened’. The broadened focus shifts the fulcrum of attention onto sustainable communities which are in turn built around identities. Such a position is now taken very seriously by a variety of actors at a state and local government levels including the Bourke Shire Council and (at the time of writing) the Beattie Labor government in Qld. It provides one way of thinking about a cultural paradigm for rural and regional revival.

Such an approach has a number of entailments. Firstly it requires the involvement of the more central governmental agencies rather than the peripheral arts/cultural agencies. This is the terrain of Premiers and Cabinet and State Development for state and territory governments. For the Bourke Shire Council it is central business for the whole of council. It also requires coordination needing a whole of community effort to provide a whole of community benefit. This has given rise to the idea of a “whole of government” approach as a means of being able to coordinate the existing capabilities of the regions and turn them into productive competencies working with rather than against each other.

The Bourke Shire Council envisages its Back o’ Bourke Centre as a means of coordinating and achieving several of its ambitions. It is about community well-being provided through the projected impacts of the Centre: ‘100,000 more visitors in the region’, ‘160,000 extra bed nights’, ‘30 million dollar increase in spending in the region’, the highlighting of the ‘positive aspects of locating industry in the region’, the ‘increased social, cultural and historical awareness’ and the ‘increased opportunities for educators in the region’ (Back o’ Bourke 2000). The Centre is seen to be a means of realising aspects of its social plan relating to the provision of amenities particularly for youth. It is being developed to provide gainful employment and training for youth. It is projected as an instrument for developing “regional pride” and sense of place particularly amongst young people. It is a tangible vehicle for the bringing together of Bourke’s two solitudes—its Aboriginal and White communities.

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It also places on a single continuum cultural and natural heritage, history and ecology, a museum, the town’s historical buildings, the river and the national parks system. Education and training is explicitly linked here to community capacity-building through the agency of cultural tourism. The Centre is being developed as a means of providing Bourke with a new focal point. It is about building another, contemporary vision of Bourke built on recognising its historical place and its possible future place on the Murray Darling system. It is an instrument for Bourke to recover and remember its historical position as ‘the meeting place of four states’ on the Darling River.

![The Darling River Bank.](copyright, Back o’ Bourke and Queensland College of Art 1999.]

**Culture and Social Harmony**

If culture and development is one component of “starting from culture” another is the importance of culture in securing social harmony and healing wounds. Governments, politicians and individuals are increasingly concerned with promoting harmony, tolerance, dialogue and reconciliation in place of division amongst diverse social, political and ethnic orders. The Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development in 1998 (p. 13) of UNESCO gave this a particularly high priority.

The dialogue between cultures appears to be one of the fundamental cultural and political challenges for the world today; it is an essential condition of peaceful coexistence. (1998: 13)

Governments, non-government organisations and individuals have developed a variety of techniques and strategies to foster dialogue and understanding. One technique for harmony creation in Australian has been the multicultural policy making embodied in the Special Broadcasting Service (SBS). Such policy making lumped together under the one umbrella disparate cultural claims which needed to be met through active policy. SBS is a minoritarian service encompassing ethnic and religious minorities, Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders, sexual minorities, the disabled and with its expansion to regional Australia in the 1990s the regional community.
Within such a version of multiculturalism what Will Kymlicka (1996: 19) calls ‘lifestyle enclaves, social movements, and voluntary associations’ are also included as communities whose values, identities and orientations need to be not only respectfully included but to be affirmed.

Another contemporary approach to the management of cultural diversity in Australia starts from a slightly different place. This can be seen in the reaffirmation of multiculturalism as a policy of state in 1999 by the National Multicultural Advisory Council (1999: 1-4). Multiculturalism was no longer promoted as delivering a cultural assertiveness to newly empowered groups as in the Keating years. Instead its focus was placed on ‘social harmony’: the spaces between communities, on building bridges and developing solidarities among communities. Multiculturalism became an intercommunal policy developed to build a tolerant and open society. Rights were, of course, still foregrounded, but so too were obligations and needs. Culture and cultural identity was increasingly understood relationally—a matter to be judged on the basis of the quality of the relations between individuals, and between groups of people. It follows from this that the gulf separating rural and urban communities requires bridges not the silos of separate warring solitudes. It requires interaction and dialogue. It requires instruments for translation. Policy makers, politicians, foundations, groups have been looking for instruments to help them in their translation tasks. Within the context of metropolitan/rural divide; the city and the country this policy priority emphasises initiatives and programmes that positively connect the city and country—that affirm rural and regional identities but do so relationally in the context of the city. The photographic essay commissioned by the Bourke Shire Council is providing one such instrument for the people of Bourke connecting them to those who would be engaged by the Back o’ Bourke.

One instrument for delivering this relational program is cultural tourism. It has become an important bearer of some of these priorities in a rural and regional context and is at the centre of a major Federal and state government Centenary of Federation initiative—Qld Heritage Trails and the actions of the Bourke Shire Council in its development of the Back o’ Bourke Heritage Centre.

Cultural tourism establishes a relation between rural and metropolitan Australia based on the exchange between guest and host. To be successful it requires the metropolitan subject to be the guest of the country-person whether in farm-stays, motel and Hotel accommodation, or as a visitor to the various museums, natural and cultural heritage sites and national parks of the region. In turn it requires the local communities to develop their own capacity to deal with visitors. Our two examples—the Qld Heritage Trails and the Back o’ Bourke Heritage Centre—provide examples of top-down and bottom-up initiatives based on this thinking.

The contemporary enthusiasm of the Beattie Qld government for its Heritage Trails Network can be partially understood in this context. The network becomes a means of practically closing the gap between the bush and the city by bringing the city to the bush. It is about giving rural and regional communities a share in the important and growing industry of tourism. It is based on an exchange where the tourist pays for bush services. It is about enabling these various communities, affirming their local identity and projecting these identities on a national and international stage. It is also about guaranteeing the sustainability of these communities through government at all levels working in partnership. So it is that the network ‘is a partnership between the Queensland Government, the Commonwealth Government, and Queensland communities’ working together to ‘enable communities to work with their heritage places, collections and stories to stimulate economic activity and increase employment.’ (Heritage Trails, 2000) It signals governmental concern to do something about complaints of a forgotten bush by empowering communities. And it signals a government commitment to generate a “services industry” capacity in the bush through the development of contemporary museum and heritage best practice in the various museums around Qld.

In this vision communities are not being empowered only to remain the same. The network is envisaged as a positive community change agent. The network’s literature is a model of a certain kind of “reconciliation”:

Every site will present indigenous cultural heritage information and recognise the contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to the development and growth of the Queensland economy (Issue 1, Qld Heritage Trails Network News, Winter 2000: 1)

We learn also that ‘the contributions of a diverse range of ethnic groups’ will be presented ranging from ‘the contributions of Chinese immigrants to the development of agriculture in North Queensland Promoted and the intrinsic role played by South Sea Islander people in the success of the State’s sugar industry’ (p. 1). Identity is affirmed here through heritage and the past and an adjustment is made towards a greater inclusiveness of the historical record.

The Heritage Trails pushes then a coincidence of a tourism and a political and economic logic. The tourism logic is to build the tourist asset and the diversity of experience—to take advantage of the desire for the exotic and ‘to add value to our tourism and heritage resources’ (Heritage Trails 2000). The political and economic logic is to not only support and affirm identities but to do so in ways which impose upon these communities some requirements to change by translating themselves for others. In this case they have to translate themselves through the eyes of a city and international tourist. But this thinking about what “we can offer others” in any exchange is also the means to, at the same time, ‘help us to define our local identities, and bolster pride in our local communities’.

The emphasis placed in its title on the Network also emphasises the “services economy” connections of this cultural heritage project. The Heritage Network is connected up to governmental priorities for a “smart state”, an “intelligent” or “clever” country. Cultural tourism becomes here a vehicle for the dissemination of computing and information technology capacity to the regions just as the various regional museums become themselves part of the broader move towards “intangible”—screen-based exhibition—at the expense of a “material object” focus. Of central importance to this schema is the very notion of the network and the value placed on the network as a means of turning diverse and dispersed resources and capabilities into something more than the simple sum of their parts. As Manuel Castells (1996: 471-2)11 puts it:

Networks are open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as long as they are able to communicate within the network, namely as long as they share the same communication codes (for example, values or performance goals). A network-based social structure is a highly dynamic, open system, susceptible to innovating without threatening its balance. Networks are appropriate instruments for a capitalist economy based on innovation, globalization, and decentralized concentration; for work, workers, and firms based on flexibility, and adaptability; for a culture of endless deconstruction and reconstruction; for a polity geared towards the instant processing of new values and public moods; and for a social organization aiming at the supersession of space and the annihilation of time. Since networks are multiple, the interoperating codes and switches between networks become the fundamental sources in shaping, guiding, and misguiding societies.

The Heritage Trails Network is designed as part of this “network thinking”. It is designed to generate linked capacity. It is about getting the geographical nodes in the network—the different museums—to think of themselves as connected and related, and to have them cooperate with each other. The network will work effectively when each museum member node values and identifies with the network connecting their own local horizon to the broader schema.

This will require each museum to see the other museums in the network as part of a broader collective effort—not as the “competition” whose visitors are to be captured for one’s own museum, whose “good” exhibits are to be emulated or whose products are to also sold. It requires a coordination of the dynamics of difference and similarity as each museum specialises in some way and links its specialisation to “themes” which can be coordinated on an ongoing basis across the network. It is also about the creation of distinct product for these locations.

The network is an instrument for realising community identity-building and community empowering. It affirms traditional rural identities and values while inserting Aboriginal and multicultural issues firmly into the picture. It fits with governmental agendas for the “smart state” emphasising as it does information and computing technologies in contemporary museum spaces. It is about “diversifying” the rural and regional industrial and employment base at a time when agriculture and mining are widely seen as insufficient to maintain viable communities. It connects rural and regional Qld to the fast growing and increasingly important tourism sector arguably adding value to the international attractions of the Gold Coast and the Barrier Reef and allowing rural and regional communities to benefit from this industry. The Heritage Trails brings together social policy, tourism policy, information and communications technology policy, cultural policy and cultural heritage policy, foregrounding cultural and industry development alike in a rhetoric of sustainable communities.

Foundational to the Heritage Trails and the Back o’ Bourke initiative is the recognition that rural and regional Australia is already incorporated into the metropolitan and international economies. It is not a matter of preserving these communities from the predations of both but of re-envisaging the terms of their interconnection. As William MacNeill (1998: 17)\(^{12}\) observes ‘rural populations’ have been ‘incorporated into urban-managed economic and information networks’ from the 19th century. Furthermore the changes this incorporation has brought about do not ‘depend on migration into town, for, in proportion as buying and selling penetrated rural communities, urban-style occupations and outlooks seeped into the countryside, narrowing the age-old gap between food producers and food consumers’.

Managing this incorporation more on the terms of those rural and regional communities themselves is the central issue and ambition of both the Heritage Trails Network and the Back o’ Bourke Exhibition and Training Centre. In the case of Back o’ Bourke this is very much a grass roots initiative generated by the Bourke Shire Council with support from the local community. It promotes an agenda of greater incorporation not continued disconnection and marginalisation. It is an agenda for unleashing rural capacity and ingenuity.

Some of the same concerns can be seen in the town of Tenterfield in northern New South Wales. Situated on the New England Highway connecting the largest and third largest of Australian cities, Sydney and Brisbane, the Highway is of considerable importance to the town helping as it does to sustain many of the town’s amenities. But this is a town which has chosen to take a strikingly different path than other highway towns. There is no KFC, no McDonalds, no Woolworths or Coles supermarkets, no tourist radio. In its stead there are local stores and eateries not part of any franchise and instead of tourist radio there is their local community radio station which has become a focal point of the town. This is the radio station that is heard on the main street of Tenterfield and not the commercial radio stations broadcast from further up the road. Tenterfield remains Tenterfield. It still connects with and relies upon the highway but it also remains distinctive and local in surprising ways.

It does through its connecting of its volunteer and community service dimensions with its for profit activities and local council. The radio station is able to do this in a way that just another “tourist radio” station would not. Perhaps what we see in Tenterfield and Bourke is part of a larger move of reclaiming the local and the locale from those larger national and international, economic and political contexts which threaten to overwhelm and marginalise the local dimension just as they provide the local with its continuing sustainability. This is part of a move to develop and value “location” and “locale” in the marketing of services. Courtesy of the French and the European Community the Australian wine industry has been similarly forced to further specify and foreground its wine regions now that labels like Champagne are no longer available to it. Our wine industry has been required to be original and one of the ways it is doing it is through promoting our wine growing regions which are, as a consequence, becoming more distinct. What is valued here is the locality, the produce of the locality. If so much of agricultural expansion was historically dependent on being able to service a market with substitutable product, the region now becomes a means of branding difference and specialty of product. In this culture is part of the economy and cultural definitions are part of the solution.

**Conclusion**
Cultural development is ultimately about people, about inserting the figure (back) in the landscape.
Discussion

Chair: Rt Hon Ian Sinclair

Ian Sinclair: Now what Tom O'Regan has done is shown us quite a different culture in the future. It is quite fascinating looking at these towns, Bourke and Tenterfield from the perspectives of those of us who live in these communities and of those who live outside. The picture that Tom was portraying to us is not as we see ourselves but as others behold us. Can I have a contribution, a question?

Onko Kingma: Tom spoke about the Irish culture, and on the other hand he spoke about the need to recognise geographic place and so forth as relating to culture and subcultures. Can you say a little bit more about the erosion of culture, because that seems to me to be a different concept to the recognition point that you make, Tom?

Tom O'Regan: The two are, I think, inescapably linked. There would be no need for a program of cultural revival if there weren’t a sense that the culture was being eroded. Historically most of the successful reinventions of traditions and cultural revival have all come out of, if you like, perceptions and the reality of significant cultural erosion. I think the two are always linked. To take Ian's point, it is not just a matter of how we see ourselves but also a matter of how others see us. It is the attempt to find an adjustment between those two perspectives.

Snow Barlow: Tom, you talk about an adjustment of culture. Is it possible that by people in these regions seeing how others see them that there can be an evolution of culture, because ultimately if it is going to be something that is ongoing and futuristic it has got to be an evolution of something. It is not always just an adjustment, it needs to be something that evolves.

Tom O'Regan: I couldn't agree more. I think because I was trying to emphasise the relationship between potentially two conflicting visions and conflicting values that I was necessarily focusing on accommodation to each other. But quite clearly these things can only emerge in an evolutionary process and they cannot be imposed.
5. A Reality Check: What is Happening in Rural Australia

Richard Stayner

Introduction

My task is to give you a brief and necessarily selective sketch of certain aspects of Australia's rural industries and communities, important changes that are occurring in them, and key pressures on them. From this I distil some observations about the values and attitudes that are held by rural people about their work, communities, and place in national life. I shall also consider briefly how these values bear on current and prospective policies for rural industries, rural residents and rural places.

This task is daunting because of the diversity and vastness of Australia's rural areas. Therefore, the generalisations I shall be making require detailed qualification and refinement. The issues facing different rural industries and regions are often fundamentally different, and may require different responses. As well, discussion of the current issues should ideally be based on a deeper understanding of the historical context than I can offer here. The cultural and attitudinal landscape is more influenced by history than we often acknowledge.

Ideally, I should begin by clarifying the concept of ‘values’ and elaborating the different ways in which the word is used. The psychology literature provides extensive discussion of the nature of values (for example, Rokeach, 1973). Here, I trust that a few brief points are sufficient to allow our discussion to proceed fruitfully.

‘Values’ can refer to the characteristics of a thing (clean air, wilderness); or to the values a person has (in the sense for instance that a specific mode of conduct is preferable to its opposite). Values are sometimes distinguished from beliefs and attitudes in a hierarchy of descending relative stability, in which ‘beliefs’ are taken to be the most enduring and attitudes the least. But it is useful to note that all three are subject to adaptation in the light of people’s experiences. In this paper I shall be discussing both the values of rural people (‘rural values’) and the values held about rural places and people by the wider population (‘Australian values”).

Values are not universal and homogeneous (if they were there would be fewer policy dilemmas) but multiple and conflicting. This is so at all levels: within government (where different departments typically reflect different values), down through industries, regions, communities, organisations, businesses, and families and even within individuals – people are not internally consistent in the values they hold and express. Accordingly, policy has a tough task attempting to reconcile all this.

Values are themselves adaptable; and one of the things that influence them is government action or advocacy. Of course there are disagreements over the extent to which governments can and should take the lead in value formation, rather than accepting existing community values as constraints on policy.

Values are not directly observable. They can be identified either by asking people carefully constructed questions, the answers to which are interpreted as indicative of their values, or by observing behaviour and inferring people’s values from that.

The multiplicity of values, and their inherent subjectivity, makes it difficult to construct a common scale of measurement that might allow for their comparison and trade-off (which is the essence of policy making). This explains both the attraction, and the ultimate limits, of using economic values as the ‘measure of all things’; that is, as the means of combining a vast range of diverse values within a single measure.

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This Symposium is held at a time of great uneasiness, indeed hostility, in many quarters regarding the alleged domination of ‘economic’ values. Most economists, however, readily acknowledge the limits of the discipline, and that its methods are open to overuse. There is also legitimate concern over the arbitrary or inconsistent ways in which other ill-defined values can be factored into the policy process. Accordingly, this paper is merely a step towards a clearer specification of the values of rural residents, and those held about rural Australia by the wider population.

Where is rural Australia?
In the popular imagination, 'rural Australia' is often seen as synonymous with the farm sector, but this is far from an accurate perception today, despite the fact that in earlier times it may have been adequate. Such a view distracts from a true understanding of, and response to, the problems of rural Australia.

There is no single correct way of defining rural Australia. For convenience, I define it as those areas outside the major metropolitan regions, namely the State and Territory capitals and other population centres with 100 000 or more people, together with their associated Statistical Divisions and Sub-divisions (Australian Bureau of Statistics boundaries). On this definition, only 0.6 per cent of the total land area is metropolitan. Even within the metropolitan regions there are pockets that might 'look' rural to many people; indeed significant agricultural production takes place within them.

The remaining 99.4 per cent (what I am calling rural) is sometimes further divided into rural and remote, on the basis of criteria that take into account population density and distance from the larger centres. The remote areas are very sparsely settled indeed; only about 3 per cent of Australians live in the 85 per cent of the continent which is called remote, while about another 26 per cent live in the 14 per cent of the continent called rural on this criterion. While the vast majority of the total value of primary production comes from these rural areas, significant primary production is still carried out in the remote areas, mainly broad-acre grazing and cropping, and mining. The life experiences and concerns of the people and industries of remote areas are sufficiently different that they deserve separate consideration. Indeed it may be that the experience of isolation has itself significantly shaped rural values. In this paper, however, I do not distinguish between remote and rural, but include them both in the term 'rural'. The dichotomy between metropolitan and rural ('Sydney or the bush') is, of course, oversimplified; in reality, most rural characteristics are distributed over a continuum.

Who lives in rural Australia?
Around 5.1 million people (29 per cent of the total population) live in the areas I have defined as rural (ABS Census 1996). The rural population grew over the period 1991 to 1996 only slightly more slowly than the Australian population as a whole (5.2 per cent vs 6.2 per cent). The fact that it almost matched the national trend is contrary to the impression given in the popular media of widespread rural decline. Admittedly, this population growth was very uneven geographically.

Rural areas had slightly higher proportions of younger people (aged under 15 years) and older people (aged over 60 years) than did metropolitan areas. Of those aged from 15 to 64 years, a lower proportion of rural people than metropolitan people had some form of educational qualifications (30 per cent vs 37 per cent), but the proportion with qualifications has risen substantially in both metropolitan and rural areas since 1991.

Within this overall net growth, however, there are some significant trends. Some of these are:
- dramatic net migration gains in non-metropolitan, coastal and near-coastal areas in the east and south-east, particularly of retired people from both metropolitan areas and inland rural areas;
- net migration of people from the farm sector and smaller inland towns into the larger inland towns (sometimes called 'regional centres') and into the smaller communities within commuting distance of the larger towns; and
- continuing net migration losses from rural areas of young people to the metropolitan areas and some regional centres.
Hugo (2000) analyses the characteristics of the non-metropolitan population, and detects an increasing tendency towards convergence in the [demographic] characteristics of the metropolitan and non-metropolitan populations. This convergence is a function of increased mobility afforded by transport developments, improved communication systems and efforts by governments to redress inequalities between metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas in provision of services.

We are still a highly mobile people. On Census date in 1991 only about 60 per cent of us were living at the same address as we did just five years earlier. In more than two-thirds of even the rural Statistical Sub-divisions, over 30 per cent of residents had moved from another Local Government Area since the previous Census; that is, they hadn't merely moved across town.

There are some 1636 towns of between 200 and 50 000 people in Australia, some of them within the metropolitan fringe. Australia has only eight medium sized cities of between 50 000 and 100 000 people, and one of these is a Territory capital (Darwin). Of the metropolitan centres, only Canberra is inland. Given the broad structural forces making for increasing returns to settlement size (i.e., a place is more likely to grow if it is big already) this means that inland Australia has few rural centres with a high inherent potential for population growth.

**What do rural people do?**

The structure of employment in rural Australia is surprisingly close to that of metropolitan Australia, apart from the concentration of the agriculture, fishing, forestry and mining industries in rural areas, and finance and business services in metropolitan areas. The following table shows the percentage of the rural and metropolitan workforce employed in each industry (ABS Census 1996).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Rural (%)</th>
<th>Metropolitan (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, forestry, fishing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity, gas &amp; water</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale &amp; retail trade</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport &amp; storage</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance, property &amp; business services</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government admin., defence</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; community services</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreational &amp; other services</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The agriculture group accounts directly for only 14 per cent of the workforce even in rural Australia. Of course, some of those who work in other industry categories are involved in activities closely related to the farm sector, and so could be seen as dependent on it in some sense. Wholesale and retail trade accounts for the highest proportion of the rural workforce (19 per cent), followed by the agriculture group and manufacturing. Much of this rural manufacturing is in the transformation of primary products such as the further processing of food and fibre as well as minerals and forest products. Apart from agriculture, the largest difference between rural and metropolitan employment is in finance and business services, which accounts for twice the proportion of the workforce in metropolitan areas as it does in rural areas.

The shift to a so-called 'post-industrial' economic structure has resulted in a rise in employment in the tertiary or service sectors. Rural areas have shared to a considerable extent in this shift: note the proportions employed in the health, community services, and recreational and other services industries in the above table.

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The patterns and diversity of economic and social conditions in rural Australia are further illustrated in the BRS social atlas *Country Matters* (Haberkorn et al., 1999).³

**Current realities in the farm sector**
The farm sector contributed just over $17.6 billion to Australian gross product in 1998-99 (3.0 per cent of GDP), and employed about 366,000 people (4.2 per cent of total employment). Thirty years earlier, the farm sector had contributed about 10 per cent of GDP and about 8 per cent of total employment, indicating significant structural change over the period. Including the forestry, fishing and hunting industries raises these contributions slightly, to about 3.2 per cent of gross product and 4.9 per cent of employment. The mining industry contributed 4.1 per cent of Australian gross product in 1998-99, up from about 2 per cent 30 years earlier. In 1998-99 it employed about 80,000 people (just under 1 per cent of total employment).

The farm sector accounts for a large (but declining) proportion of Australia's exports. In 1998-99 it accounted for about 20 per cent of total exports, down from over 40 per cent thirty years earlier. Forestry and fisheries added about another 2.6 per cent to exports, while the resources sector contributed a further 35 per cent, which was up from around 20 per cent thirty years before. Some exports of resources originate in non-rural areas (for example, off-shore gas).

In 1997-98 there were about 115,000 agricultural establishments (defined as those with an estimated value of agricultural operations of at least $22,500) in Australia. This was about nine per cent fewer than ten years previously. The economic performance of these farms varies enormously, both between and within industries and regions, and over time. Some important indicators of the recent performance of the broad-acre grazing and cropping industries are now summarised.

- **Farm cash income**
  In 1997-98 the average farm cash income (cash receipts less cash costs) of Australian broadacre grazing and cropping farms was $48,500. This average conceals a wide range of performance. Some idea of the distribution of farm cash income is given by the fact that while about 17 per cent of these farms had cash incomes over $100,000, about 23 per cent of them had a negative farm cash income.

- **Farm business profit**
  The average broad-acre farm made a loss of just over $2,000 in 1997-98 (that is, after allowance for depreciation and imputed costs of operator and family labour). While about 65 per cent of farms were estimated to make a business loss, about 20 per cent made a profit of over $25,000. This suggests that many Australian farmers are able to remain in the industry only by rewarding themselves and their families poorly (or in other words, by their tolerance of poverty), and/or by relying on off-farm sources of income.

- **Farm capital**
  The average broad-acre farm had about $1.26 million in capital, but 7 per cent had capital of over $3 million, and nearly one-fifth had capital of less than half a million dollars. Thus, Australian farmers are often described as 'asset rich but cash poor'. This raises contentious issues relating to their eligibility for income support within broad welfare programs.

- **Rates of return**
  Rates of return on capital in Australian broadacre farming have typically been low. In 1997-98 the average was around 1.0 per cent. If capital appreciation (mainly reflecting generally rising value of land) is included, it rises to around 2.8 per cent.

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• Off-farm income

Off-farm sources of income are becoming more important to Australian farmers in recent years, especially to the smaller farmers. In 1997-98, those farms earning some income off-farm averaged over $18,000 from that source.

A more detailed picture of the diverse performance of Australian farms can be found in the annual Farm Surveys Report (for example, ABARE 1999).4

The industries covered in these figures (for broad-acre farming) exclude some important types of farm production, such as dairying, sugar, horticulture, wine and intensive livestock production. Many of the growth nodes of Australian agriculture are to be found within these and other emerging industries, and understanding the social and attitudinal factors responsible for their growth may be important for the future development of other industries. There may, however, be good reasons why their experience may not be easily or widely emulated in the broad-acre grazing and cropping industries.

In order to give more meaning to these figures, certain aspects of the economic, social and biophysical environments of the farm sector are now briefly noted:

- Australian farmers operate in an environment with two important sources of risk; namely, the volatility of the prices they receive, influenced predominantly by international markets to which they are largely exposed, and the risks associated with our highly variable climate, which results in highly variable yields and costs. Values or beliefs regarding the extent to which farmers themselves should bear the responsibility for these risks are central to (but usually only implicit in) farm policy.

- The relatively uncontrollable nature of these two sources of risk helps explain why there is relatively little involvement of ‘corporate capital’ in the Australian farm sector. While non-family companies are important in some regions and sections of some industries, over 95 per cent of farms are family owned and operated. When a family farmer leaves the industry, the farm is usually taken over by another farmer.

- The bio-physical environment has presented unusually difficult challenges. The learning process for farmers and governments with regard to the development of agriculture has been long, difficult and costly, in terms of human and environmental damage. The declining productivity of some agricultural resources, often as a result of past farming practices, presents acute adjustment challenges in some regions and industries. Of particular relevance is the growing impact of salinity in the Murray-Darling Basin, which accounts for most of the agricultural production and related food industries in inland southeastern Australia.

- The terms of trade for Australian farmers (the ratio of prices received for their output to the prices paid for their inputs) has been trending downwards for several decades, as a result of factors associated with the development of the national and international economies. Australian farmers have responded to this by expanding the scale of their operations in both land-extensive and capital-intensive ways. This has been accompanied by the adoption of a range of technologies, the development of which has been assisted by considerable public investment in agricultural research and development. This response has required the large-scale substitution of capital for labour on Australian farms, not least because of the rising cost of labour in our maturing economy, making the employment of non-family labour increasingly expensive.

The capital costs of farming are high and getting higher. A major component is the cost of land, whose value is inflated by factors associated with the value orientations of many farm families, especially attitudes to land ownership and inheritance, and values relating to the inheritance of the occupation of farming.

The financing of expansion by family farmers is inherently risky, because of both the relatively low returns to capital and the riskiness of debt finance in a deregulated finance market where interest rates can be volatile. Raising equity finance from non-family sources is difficult for a number of reasons, including differences in the ways family and non-family investors value the family’s past involvement in the business.

The farm sector therefore experiences chronic adjustment problems, as a result of a number of factors. These include its volatile economic and climatic environments, the relatively easy entry to the industry, the internal dynamics of farm families, and the psychic attachment of farm people to both the occupation of farming and to the land itself. These adjustment problems are represented by low incomes, very low rates of return on capital, and low rates of exit from the industry.

Current realities in rural communities

The adjustment of the farm sector noted above, involving the substitution of capital for labour on farms, has in turn changed the economic and social structure of rural communities. Many of the value-adding processes have moved from on- or near-farm to regional centres and metropolitan areas.

On the input side, most farm machinery is made in metropolitan centres or overseas, while economies of size have led to the concentration of machinery dealers in the regional centres serving large catchments. Similar changes have occurred in the location of other value-adding inputs. Greater use of debt financing by the farm sector results in the leakage of debt service payments from the region. Technological changes in banking have generated economies of size in the provision of banking services that have led to their closure in many smaller centres. Agricultural research, farm chemicals, plant and animal genetic material, information and communications equipment, and other purchased inputs all display scale economies in their development and manufacture, which are therefore concentrated in fewer places, not necessarily rural.

Finally, better communications and transport technologies have allowed farmers to obtain these inputs from high volume, non-local sources at lower costs. This has often led to the social and business networks of farmers and their families being spread far beyond the local communities with which they have had most of their traditional relationships. This may be altering the depth and effectiveness of the ‘social capital’ in rural communities (see below).

‘Downstream’ from the farm gate, there have been analogous technological and other changes, leading to scale economies in the further processing of farm commodities, and their concentration in fewer (often non-rural) places. For example, technological innovation in livestock selling has reduced the role of many local saleyards, and scale economies in meat processing have reduced the competitiveness of many of the abattoirs in rural regions. Australia's newest and largest meatworks is located in a metropolitan area, and sources its stock from up to 700 kilometres away. The location of larger scale processing facilities is also influenced by:

- the advantages of sourcing supply over a full year;
- the need to draw supplies of raw materials from several regions due to the seasonality of production and the variability of commodity characteristics in many farm industries; and
- the relatively low density of production per unit area in broad-acre farming industries.
These factors confer no special advantages on dispersed rural locations. Simultaneously but independently, other industry sectors represented in rural regions, such as retailing, medical services, education and recreation, have experienced technological changes leading to scale economies, changing customer needs or preferences, and improved access of customers to non-local providers. Consequently, only some of the explanation for the reduced breadth and depth of regional economies is the result of changes in the structure and purchasing power of the farm sector and the businesses dealing with it.

These trends have altered both the spatial distribution of economic activity among the towns in rural regions and the mix and level of economic activity within those towns. The nature of rural communities is changing. Where once they were places where people lived, worked and spent much of their income, there has been an ‘uncoupling’ of these three functions (Stayner and Reeve, 1990). Rural places now offer less economic, social, and cultural cohesion than is implied by the nostalgic image of the ‘country town’. The small size of many rural settlements is making it increasingly difficult for them to deliver the range of goods, services, and quality of life to which rural people increasingly aspire. Some places have experienced the positive feedback (or spiral of decline) between reduced ability to provide services and a declining population.

At the same time, some rural places have recently experienced high rates of in-migration, which has placed considerable stress on their capacity to provide residents with adequate infrastructure and services. In some places, many of the in-migrants have had particularly low personal and financial resources, and relatively high levels of disadvantage or dysfunction. In many places, the values and aspirations of the in-migrants have been significantly different from those of the established residents, and this has further challenged the identity and social cohesion of those communities.

Traditionally, rural Australia was a place where work largely involved the exploitation and transformation of natural resources – whether they were cropping or grazing lands, forests, fisheries or minerals. This implied particular employment opportunities, educational requirements and occupational identities, especially for young men. These work roles helped establish certain rural cultural identities, now being challenged by recent restructuring of the economy, which has tended to favour more highly (or differently) skilled young people, especially women. In many rural places, young men (especially) have had difficulty responding to these new values, and this has led to severe social pathologies in some rural places.

An important productive asset of communities is their social capital. This can be defined as ‘features of social organisation, such as networks, norms, and trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit’ (Putnam, 1993). The structural forces at work on rural communities have been tending to erode it. In brief, it is eroded by individual mobility, and by the movement of functions from the public or collective realm into the private or market realm. The public good aspects of social capital make it vulnerable to market failure. The networks of contact, trust and reciprocal obligation on which it depends are being stretched very thinly in many rural places, especially those from which well connected people are moving.

**Value aspects of adjustment challenges in the farm sector**

While many of the problems facing the Australian farm and rural sectors are specific to particular industries and regions, some general issues can be identified. The fact that these can be posed as adjustment problems is consistent with the historical reality of Australia’s rural regions and industries.

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Rural Australia has never been a ‘stable state,’ despite the images of timeless regeneration that the word ‘rural’ may conjure up. Continual stress and change have instead been the experience, and Australian farmers and other rural residents have a well-earned reputation for innovation, adaptability, and mobility. Perhaps, though, recent reactions of rural Australians via the ballot box are an expression of their bewilderment at the pace of change.

Farm people face inherent conflicts between two powerful sets of values: those of the market system, which require farmers to make a living at least roughly commensurate with the standards available elsewhere in the economy, and those associated with the integrity and continuity of the family and its attachments to place and to the occupation of farming. This conflict is essentially between mobility (of resources, as required by ‘the market’) and stability.

Alternatively, it has been characterised as a conflict between industrial and agrarian values (Barlett, 1993). The dimensions of agrarian values include the following:

‘Personal empowerment and pride in meaningful work … that clearly serves a wider societal need.

The linkage of work and family, of long-term ties not only to kin but to a like-minded community;

The combination of work and family with place and a sense of attachment to land and region.

The sense that work and play, effort and leisure, flow into each other and grow out of each other.

A sense of daily connectedness to nature and to deeper spiritual realities embodied in the work process.’ (Barlett, 1993, pp 6-7).

Agrarian values are implicit in what some have called ‘agricultural fundamentalism’ (Campbell, 1980). Elements of these values also appear strongly in the notion of ‘countrymindedness’ (Aitkin, 1988). Aitkin has described this as including:

‘Farming and grazing, and rural pursuits generally, are virtuous, ennobling, and co-operative; they bring out the best in people.

In contrast, city life is competitive and nasty, as well as parasitical.

The characteristic Australian is a countryman, and the core elements of national character come from the struggles of country people to tame their environment and make it productive. City people are much the same the world over’. (p. 56).

On the one hand, our economic system values the mobility of resources in response to changing economic circumstances (the opportunities and rewards of the market system), including the ability of people to move from place to place and from job to job. On the other hand, our culture places a high value on the integrity and stability of the family. But since the economic unit of the farm business is so closely entwined with the social unit of the family, there will inevitably be tensions and conflicts. Of course, farm families are not unique in having to deal with such conflicts, but the family farm has been imbued with greater emotional and even moral content than have other family businesses.

Values relating to entry to the occupation of farming strongly influence farm business decisions. Traditionally, farming has been seen as an inherited occupation.

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Farm families themselves reproduce new entrants to the industry, but for several decades now the rate of reproduction of potential new entrants from this source alone has exceeded the capacity of the industry to absorb them (given the long-term substitution of capital for labour). Nevertheless, farmers continue to express a desire for at least one of their children to carry on farming. In our study of succession and inheritance on Australian family farms, 76 per cent of survey respondents agreed that ‘family farming ideally means that your farm is passed on to your children’, and 75 per cent agreed that ‘if your children want to get into farming, you have a responsibility to help them do it’ (Kaine, Crosby and Stayner, 199710, emphasis added). At the same time, only 55 per cent thought that at least one of their children had a future in farming, and 96 per cent agreed that ‘these days, all children on family farms should be given a choice between a farming and a non-farming career.’ Forty-one per cent of respondents said they had encouraged their children to take over their farm, while 46 per cent had neither encouraged nor discouraged it. While a strong residual of agrarian values is evident in these data, there is also an acceptance of the reality that farming is but one of a range of employment options in an industrial or post-industrial economy.

Somewhat at odds with this acceptance is the way farming is portrayed in the media as an inherited occupation. In stories on farming, especially those dealing with a threat to a farm’s future, the number of generations that a family has been farming, and that a piece of land has been in a particular family (patrilineal inheritance is usually implied), are usually stated as key pieces of information. The implication is that the longer the time, the stronger the right to continued operation. Other rural occupations are sometimes ascribed a similar implied value (loggers, fishermen, sleeper cutters).

In another study (Stayner, 1997)11, we surveyed the views of entrants to farming, particularly recent graduates of agricultural colleges, on the values they attached to the occupation of farming. Respondents tended to believe that descriptors of the intrinsic rewards of farming (lifestyle, outdoor life, being your own boss) described a farming career better than did its instrumental rewards (financial security, employment prospects). This is consistent with agrarian values. But those who had decided not to enter farming gave as their reason the perceived lack of instrumental rewards; for example, that the industry did not offer an adequate return on their investment in their own human capital. For them, industrial values outweighed agrarian ones. We also found that many entrants to farming these days have had a significant period of employment in another industry before their entry to farming. This may be significantly diluting the agrarian content of the values that entrants are taking into farming. For example, the idea that farming is a lifetime vocation is weakening. Farming is increasingly seen as only one of a number of pursuits in which a family engages.

The transfer of ownership and control of farm assets from one generation to the next within farm families often occurs (or is inhibited) in ways that erode the performance of farm businesses and the motivation and harmony of the farm families (Gamble et al., 1995). The stumbling blocks include long-standing habits of communication within families, and the conflicting desires and values of returning and non-returning siblings. Many farm families experience a very strong form of place attachment, which needs to be more thoroughly understood (see, for example, ‘Leaving Windermere Station’ in Read, 1996).12

Other adjustment challenges are related to the need for improvements in the ways human capital (knowledge, skills and attitudes) is acquired, renewed and used by Australian farmers. While many farm families now attach a higher value to formal learning than they have in the past, there are still strong and frequent expressions of scepticism and even hostility by farmers towards ‘experts’ of all kinds. Amongst the relevant skills are those required to make the transition from being producers of basic commodities to being producers of differentiated products for increasingly complex and sophisticated markets.

Farmers may need to become much more aware of (if not involved in) the marketing chain beyond the farm gate, and in building closer relationships with a wide range of people in that chain. Building such relationships will challenge the culture and values of many Australian farmers.

The physical and social isolation of farmers has meant that the values of self-reliance, individualism, perseverance and tenacity were usually seen as virtues. These virtues can become burdens, however, when they are expressed as a determination to ‘battle on’ during periods of threat to the farm business ‘even if we end up with nothing’. This determination may be based on the desire to retain inherited land in family ownership, or on a belief that there are no alternative feasible or acceptable occupations (cf. ‘countrymindedness’). Nor is ‘self-reliance’ an adaptive attribute when farmers need to take some form of collective action in order to respond to adjustment pressures.

There is some evidence, however, that many farm families, in reflecting on their experience of recent financial crises, have begun to place a higher priority on keeping their family together than on ‘saving the farm’ at all costs. Two recent television programs, Chinchilla Dry, set in Queensland, and The Farmer’s Wife, set in the U.S., tellingly illustrate this. Changes in the attitudes, values and influence of farm women, many of whom worked off-farm during the most financially stressed times, seem to have been crucial in this re-ordering of priorities. These changes have paralleled changes in the values and roles of women elsewhere in society, and are likely to weaken the transmission of agrarian values to the next generation within farm families.

Declining access to a range of goods and services in rural areas is also affecting the quality of life of farm families, and their willingness to continue to live in rural areas. This is further evidence of a weakening of agrarian values.

There are increasing examples of farmers joining together to achieve some collective purpose, in Landcare and areas relating to on-farm production and the further processing and marketing of their products. The future challenges to farming will require farmers to find new forms of collective endeavour and collective identification, and many are doing so.

It may be that, overall, there has been a gradual shift away from agrarian values and towards industrial ones. In this sense, the values actually held by farm people today may be less strongly agrarian than is assumed by the policy-makers. Agrarian values continue to provide convenient rhetorical shorthand for politicians to resort to when pressure from the farm sector builds up and special consideration towards farmers is deemed to be necessary (both Labor and Coalition Prime Ministers have resorted to such rhetoric).

There are major challenges in arresting the deteriorating condition of a number of the biophysical resources on which rural industries depend. Dealing with these problems will require not only institutional reform and the acquisition of new technical expertise by farmers, but also modifications to the dominant farming ethic, a more sophisticated definition and understanding of property rights in land, and new cultural icons. There are some promising movements in these directions, but also many signs that there is a long way to go.

The broad-acre grazing and cropping industries continue to provide most of the cultural icons of Australian agriculture. Some valuable lessons for the future, however, are to be found in the non-traditional growth nodes of agriculture, from which new icons of Australian farming might be taken. Given that factors internal to the farm family inhibit the rate of generational change, the necessary cultural adjustments may take some time to achieve, at least in the traditional industries.

**Values relating to rural places**

Like farm families, rural communities are also the meeting ground for powerful but conflicting values. The economic system requires and rewards the mobility of resources, including people.
In pursuit of economic and other objectives, people value the freedom to move from job to job and from place to place. On the other hand, certain social and cultural perceptions put a high value on the stability and cohesion of rural places, and these may be eroded by such mobility. For example, while there are frequent laments about the rate of exit of young people from rural communities (since it can undermine local economic and social values), we are happy for young people (and perhaps especially our own children) to seek broader economic, social and cultural horizons.

There is considerable historical evidence to support a faith in the value of mobility. Australia is largely populated by immigrants who were seeking economic liberation perhaps as much as anything else, and who revelled in the virtually enforced mobility of a 'frontier' society. At least until now, spatial mobility has served us well. Apart from Aboriginal communities, there have been few pockets of chronic poverty; people have typically moved from place to place in search of economic and other betterment. A major reason for Federation was to achieve a single continental market; that is, to enhance the mobility of goods and services. Other past government attempts to influence directly the size and spatial distribution of rural populations through policies such as Soldier Settlement, 'northern development', growth centres, and other closer settlement and land settlement schemes have had at best mixed results; at times their economic, social and environmental costs have been very high.

But the balance sheet on mobility may be changing. Gregory and Hunter's (1995) work on the spatial dimensions of inequality within the major cities seems to show that geographic pockets of poverty and other disadvantage are becoming entrenched. Mobility may be losing both its capacity to redress inequality and its attractiveness to people. Perhaps the personal costs of mobility are increasing, and people's geographic roots are becoming harder and more costly to transplant. Perhaps mobility works best in a 'frontier' society or economy. On the other hand, given the homogenisation of mass culture, we might expect mobility to be easier, and less costly (at least psychologically) to people. Regardless of how these opposing factors may balance out, more is now heard, and not only from rural people, about their reluctance to change their relationship to particular places, and about the values they put on the preservation of such relationships to place (see, for example, Read, 1996). A closer look at the costs as well as benefits of mobility is therefore needed.

The mobility required by market forces can erode the value of community-specific assets such as attachment to place, local knowledge, local networks, contacts and allegiances, social cohesion, and so on. Not only do we value these assets as ends in themselves, they appear to make important contributions to local economic performance. It is also possible to demonstrate that significant 'market failures' exist in the production and use of these place-specific intangible assets.

Attachment to place does seem to be a deeply held value in many people (see Read, 1996), and is a component of the social capital of a community. Social capital is necessary for rural people to adapt to the challenges posed by their environment.

It is also important to note that the range and complexity of the goods and services to which people aspire is vastly different from what it was, even within living memory. Whereas 50 years ago a combination of a country GP and a rudimentary hospital might have been able to deliver most of the medical procedures that were available to anyone, anywhere, today the same combination is able to deliver a minute proportion of the medical services which people see as the minimum acceptable.

The capacity of communities to respond effectively to the challenges posed by a changing world depends partly on their ‘orientation to change’. This term is an attempt to summarise a collection of attitudes and values that reflect the readiness of residents to imagine and pursue a changed future for their place.

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Policy values: efficiency and equity

Given the fundamental fact of scarcity – the inevitability of unmet needs in the face of finite resources – it is widely accepted that it is desirable to find ways of satisfying more needs with the same resources, or the same needs with less resources. This leads to the general acceptance of efficiency as a desirable value in organising the production of goods and services. From a policy perspective, efficiency is best defined as maximising desired social outcomes (whatever they might be) per unit of input. Defining desired social outcomes in convenient ways, however, so that trade-offs can be analysed, is usually very difficult. Therefore, efficiency is often construed more narrowly, as the use of the nation's resources so as to maximise the total value of the nation's measured output.

In a market-based economy, this is done by encouraging producers to be responsive to market signals and rewards. This requires productive resources, including people, to move relatively freely between alternative uses, occupations and places. This objective requires farmers to respond to declining rewards from farming either by changing what they produce, how they produce it, or, if these measures are insufficient, by leaving the industry. However, the occupation of farming is characterised by a number of attitudes that tend to inhibit the movement of people out of the industry, thus potentially reducing its efficiency. For various reasons, farm people sometimes endure extended periods of low income in the hope (often unfounded) of returning to viability. These periods can be marked by severe individual and social damage.

Policy recognises that unfettered markets often do not achieve desirable outcomes, and sometimes do not work at all. When markets fail to transmit signals that reflect the full social costs and benefits of the alternative uses of scarce resources, governments may judge that intervention is warranted. For example, governments may consider that farmers generate social benefits greater than the value of the output of their farm businesses. These benefits may be in the form of symbolic or cultural values appreciated by the wider community. There is some indirect evidence that the wider community does place an extra-market value on the farm sector. This evidence includes the general acceptance of the rationale for programs aimed at the survival and revival of farm businesses experiencing financial threat, even though this threat may be the result of events that would be seen as normal business risks in other industries. Governments in this and other countries have in the past provided assistance to the farm sector on such grounds, but the content of current Australian Government programs implies that this tendency is weakening here.

Equity objectives relate to what the wider community considers 'fair' or 'equitable'. Important dimensions of people's well-being (or welfare) are dependent upon their income; indeed income is often seen as the most convenient single measure of one's well-being. Therefore, when farmers temporarily experience severely depressed incomes, and have inadequate resources of their own to provide their families with basic necessities, the wider community may consider it 'fair' to support them, on the same grounds as are others who are unable to earn an adequate income, such as job seekers or the elderly, and for whom a 'welfare' problem is said to exist. The programs which governments provide for these groups, on equity grounds, are sometimes loosely called 'welfare' programs. Unfortunately, perhaps, the word welfare often carries some stigma in our culture, and certainly amongst farmers.

An important condition on the equity objective is the view that people should be required to draw on their own resources before calling on the community (through government) to support them. This criterion gives rise to the application of assets tests in determining eligibility for various forms of social security assistance. Assets tests have been the subject of considerable criticism by farmers and their organisations, who argue that during cyclical downturns, when their incomes are severely depressed, farmers are effectively unable to draw on, or borrow against, their often considerable assets, and so are 'unfairly' rendered ineligible for assistance in the form of income support. This matter was discussed at some length by the Special Rural Task Force (1997), which considered the implications of assets tests on farmers' eligibility for social security assistance. Its report led to the design of special eligibility conditions for farmers in the Retiring Farmers' Assistance Scheme and the Farm Families Restart Scheme.
A further rationale on equity grounds for supporting farm families experiencing severe adjustment stress is that assistance is necessary in order to achieve a fairer sharing of the costs of industry adjustment. While it is in the national interest to pursue policies aimed at improving the efficiency of the industry (because there are presumably net benefits to the nation as a whole), the costs of the industry adjustment that results from the pursuit of such efficiency objectives are largely borne by (some) farm people, and the wider community might see this as unfair or inequitable (farmers certainly do!). Accordingly, this justifies special assistance to those bearing most of these adjustment costs.

Yet another rationale on equity grounds for special programs for the farm sector relates to the ‘special’ needs of that sector. Governments provide a wide range of programs for various groups in the community with special needs, or in order to alleviate undue avoidable stress. These programs include courses in English for non-English speaking migrants, to provide them with tools for participation in the economy and with the minimum conditions for effective citizenship; refuges for victims of domestic violence; and the provision of special equipment for people with disabilities. In this vein, it is implied that farmers’ experience of adjustment stress is sufficiently acute and different from that of other groups to justify the provision of programs specifically targeted at their needs. [It is not necessary to argue that the adjustment traumas of farmers and their families are greater than that of other groups experiencing industry adjustment, merely that their experiences are different and not adequately addressed by generic welfare programs].

It will be noticed that the language used to discuss policy values is imprecise and subjective; terms like desired social outcomes, fairness, equity, undue stress, and so on, rely on a careful consideration of broadly held values, which are neither easily observable nor unchanging.

In certain circumstances the policy objectives of efficiency and equity conflict with each other, in terms of the way they would require farmers in difficulty to be treated. A policy that might be desirable on equity grounds might weaken the effectiveness of policies intended to achieve efficiency objectives, and conversely, comprehensive pursuit of policies designed to achieve efficiency objectives might hamper the achievement of equity objectives. This is particularly likely in relation to the farm sector because of the difficulty of separating the well-being of farm families from that of their businesses. Assistance to the farm family on equity grounds may also indirectly support the farm business, thus weakening the incentive for farmers to respond to the economic signals relating to the viability of the farm business.

Currently, there is a concerted attempt by the Commonwealth Government to fully implement the efficiency objective (underpinned by further attempts to design appropriate welfare safety nets for farmers) by stressing the need for 'self-reliance' on the part of farmers, and by the continuing dismantling of farm business support mechanisms. This is code for saying that there should be no further interference by governments with market signals, and that farmers should no longer assume that they can rely on governments to underwrite the inherent risks of farming. Of course, whether the nerve of any government will hold during the periodic severe crises that will inevitably continue to beset the farm sector, remains to be seen. The program menu still offers 'exceptional circumstances' provisions that may be invoked to deal with short-term crises, but they inevitably mix business assistance with welfare measures.

Amongst those farmers who have taken steps to manage their risky environment and are able to survive without government support, there is some resentment that governments continue to 'bail out' those whom they see as imprudent, and continue to declare as 'exceptional' circumstances for which they have planned, and are able to manage. Although this resentment is rarely voiced, anecdotal evidence suggests that it may be increasing.
Reflecting rural values in government policies

The policy settings of the Commonwealth Government towards rural Australia have mainly been found in policies for rural industries, which are dominated by economic efficiency objectives, underpinned by generic social policies targeted at individuals and families, regardless of where they live. In the past decade or so there have been relatively few programs which pay specific attention to rural places as such, although this has not always been the case. There are currently an increasing number of experiments in place-specific rural policies and programs.

While the rhetoric of farm policy has recently been directed towards the efficient adjustment of the farm sector, the successive versions of the principal adjustment program, the Rural Adjustment Scheme (RAS), have contained elements that have been difficult to reconcile with the stated efficiency objectives. The RAS may have been a convenient mechanism to deliver welfare assistance to the farm sector, especially at times of acute financial stress which are symptoms of its inherently risky environment (Stayner, 1995). That is, while the declared efficiency rationale saw agriculture as just another industry, the ways programs have been applied suggest that governments have continued to believe that farmers and farming deserve special treatment, partly because of their iconic status in Australia's cultural landscape. 'Multifunctionality' seems to have been a part of Australia's farm policy too!

Governments have started to respond to strong expressions (through both Federal and State elections) of dissatisfaction of rural people, concerning the decline of social and economic fabric in rural communities, by attempting to develop programs for the reversal, or at least amelioration, of the observed trends. The efficiency rationale for such responses is not obvious in a policy environment that stresses the mobility of resources, including the need for people to move between jobs and places. In their responses, governments are increasingly calling on the presumed powers of rural communities for them to become 'partners' with government in developing and delivering programs of self-help for rural communities. In many rural places, however, the depth and breadth of social capital is not sufficient to allow communities to respond to, and participate effectively in, such programs.

In policy terms, this conflict might be paraphrased as 'jobs to people versus people to jobs,' or, as Bolton (1992) put it, 'place prosperity versus people prosperity.' In other words, a trade-off is posed between, on the one hand, policies which focus on promoting the prosperity of places by enhancing their ability to provide jobs for local people, and, on the other hand, policies which focus on the well-being of individuals independently of their location. The latter include policies for enhancing the aggregate capacity of the national economy to generate jobs, albeit in places which might require people to move to them.

There is no doubt which set of values dominated rural policy in the period of dramatic reform of the Australian economy from the mid-1980s to the late 1990s. Rural policy in Australia was then little more than an amalgam of industry policy (that is, policies aimed at the efficient operation of rural industries) underpinned by generic social safety nets aimed at those in need, including the casualties of economic adjustment processes, regardless of where they live.

A policy environment that places almost exclusive emphasis on the mobility required for the efficient operation of markets risks overlooking and therefore diminishing important place-dependent values. Should such values be considered in the development of rural policies which address the problems of particular places, and can this be done without slipping over into rural fundamentalism? Is the erosion of social capital in rural communities of any relevance to levels of government other than local government?

Bolton (1992, p. 192) invoked ‘sense of place’ as one of three factors which could justify the use of place-specific policies for rural development.

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Noting that social capital is productive and has local ‘public goods’ aspects, he observed that ‘... (t)he critical question for state and national policy is whether the ‘publicness’ extends over a wider range of space than the community itself.’ (p. 193).

This raises three specific questions, adapted from Bolton (1992, p. 193):

1. How valuable is the social capital in particular places for the larger region, and for the nation? Should and do people in Sydney care whether a strong sense of place exists in other towns in New South Wales, or in the Eyre Peninsula, on the Atherton Tablelands, or in a Pilbara mining town?

2. If the sense of place is a valuable social asset for the larger region and nation, what are the appropriate roles for state and national governments? Is the value sufficiently high to justify government action? Are there appropriate policy instruments?

3. Does reliance on ‘people-prosperity' policies, to the exclusion of place policies, allow the social capital to erode at a rate that is too rapid for the region/nation?

A changing vision for rural Australia

The history of Australian land settlement has created some dominant stereotypes concerning the 'identity' of rural Australia, the values it enshrines and expresses, and the role of government in its development (Lees, 1997). These might be roughly described as 'frontier' or 'nation building' stereotypes. These identities and stereotypes are no longer either accurate or helpful in addressing many of the challenges facing rural Australia. We now need a broader specification of the contributions and aspirations of rural people, and of the value of rural places, than may have been adequate during the frontier phase of our history.

We need to go beyond a development ‘vision’ based on seeing rural Australia as merely the site for the exploitation or extraction of natural resources, and as the site for the efficient production and further processing of food, fibre, and minerals. This vision has been the basis of policies of land settlement and economic development since colonial times. Although it has achieved much, it has often been won at considerable economic, environmental and social cost.

For example, the colonial imperative of 'filling in the empty spaces on the map' was achieved by ignoring the values that the original inhabitants attached to the land. The costs of that oversight are still being felt, but there are encouraging examples of land-holders and indigenous people creating new ways of reconciling some of the underlying conflicts. This has required the evolution of a new understanding of the values that both indigenous and non-indigenous people attach to land, and will require the evolution of new institutions that reflect and preserve those values.

The lessons of failed attempts to use primary industry development to create self-sustaining levels of population, towns and economic activity in rural regions need to be acknowledged and absorbed. Fortunately, rural Australia is now the setting for the expression of a much wider range of aspirations and values (environmental, cultural, and spiritual) than is contained within the historical vision. Some examples, which need considerable elaboration and refinement, can be identified.

- Rural regions can have value as sites for the evolution and expression of an alternative ethic towards our natural resource endowments. In contrast to the 'frontier' ethic which required taming and transformation, a 'stewardship' ethic is now required for the sustainability of primary industries, as well as for less utilitarian reasons.

- Rural Australia is the site for some important symbolic values and identities. Some of these have been developed into tourism enterprises.

- Rural Australia is a site for creative and spiritual generation and regeneration, in art, literature and film, and in the direct experience of nature and space. This value is increasingly shared by both indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

- Important values attach to native flora and fauna. Their preservation and exploitation raise important questions and conflicts.

- There is a range of tourism values, and these also raise important issues regarding the type and intensity of use.

- Many rural places have important scientific, educational and research values; for example, archaeological sites and remnants of flora and fauna of world significance.

- Some of these values offer opportunities for the development of markets, others do not. There are disagreements, sometimes sharp, over the weight these alternative values should be given. The challenge is to design institutions (market and non-market) that protect, enhance, and reflect these values.

Acknowledgment
The author would like to record his deep appreciation for assistance and comments of Gordon Gregory in the preparation of this paper, but claims full responsibility for remaining errors and oversights.

Discussion
Chair: John Drinan

Linda Botterill: I would like to pick up a point that Richard made towards the end of his presentation, and perhaps turn it on its head a little. He suggested when we have developed policies in rural Australia in recent years within the economic framework of government, agrarian values have somehow been sneaking into policy responses and that these perhaps need to be a little more articulated. I would like to suggest it is the other way around. The policy process has been so completely dominated by economics that there is not often a lot of room for agrarian values to be looked at. Where they have been sneaked in it is because of people working within a system who felt perhaps there is more to rural Australia than the economics. We actually need to go back one step. Rather than clarify the agrarian values that are sneaking into our economic policies we need to be looking at the values that are inherent in the economic model that we use to develop those policies in the first place.

Richard Stayner: That is fine. I have been in discussions on that so many times I don't know whether we are going to make much progress on that here. Can I deflect it a little bit and make a couple of other comments? I think the history of Australian agriculture has been one of farmers, by and large, responding very adaptively to the demands of markets. I am not saying there hasn't been a lot of pain and dislocation and social damage, that is taken as read but farmers' experience and habits has been that they have been competitively minded people who have been adaptable, innovative, all of that sort of thing. It is just that when crises occur, as you would expect, people look for any assistance and any sort of rhetorical shorthand to get government on its side. Government has been saying they have been pursuing an economic efficiency line but when real crises occur agrarian values provide a convenient rhetorical shorthand for policy makers or politicians to resort to in order to provide what might be very well needed assistance for one industry or another.

Both Coalition and Labor Prime Ministers have done this. All I am saying is that that could be quite legitimate, but let us have a more open discussion about whether or not Australian farmers are basically agrarian at the moment or are they basically market orientated. There is a fair bit of evidence that the expressions of agrarian values might be more intermittent than temporary, whereas the expressions of market values have been there from the start. I am overstating it for effect but I would just like to point that out.

Kate Rigby: Richard the way you presented it was that agrarian values were losing out to industrial values on the land and this was inevitable and, it seemed to me, a counter positive process. I would ask, first of all, is there anything of value that is being lost with the suppression of agrarian values and is there any alternative to this opposition of rather conservative agrarian values on the one hand and modernist industrial values on the other? Do you see any signs of an alternative to those two modalities?
Richard Stayner: Australian farmers hard hit by drought seem to ask "Do I want to keep my farm business if it means losing my family?" The response being, by and large, "My family is more important than my farm business". We will abandon one agrarian value which is keeping this piece of inherited land in the family and I put a higher value on the survival of my family, my social unit, than I do on the survival of this business entity". Now, that might be the triumph of agrarian over industrial values. I am trying not to say which way I think it should go or that it is inevitable. All I was trying to do was make some observations about what Australian farmers seem to be doing.

Geoff Lawrence: I enjoyed your paper and I have just been reading through it. I noticed you said towards the end that we need to change our ethos from a frontier mentality to perhaps a stewardship ethic. What I would like to suggest is, the farmers that I know and interview often have a very strong ethic of stewardship. If you think about stewardship in the sense of Landcare, we have had 10 years of Landcare. Yet we have seen the environmental problems of Australia worsen rather than get better. It is all right to have a value of stewardship or ethic, but somehow or other there has to be policy rules in place to allow that ethic to come to the fore. At the moment we are not seeing that, so just having that value of stewardship by itself, I would contend, is not nearly enough.

Richard Stayner: I would have to agree. It is not my area, Geoff, as you may know, so I won't wade into it.

John Holmes: I think when we are looking at the values held by rural land owners we need to probe more deeply into the great diversity of the values you find there. Some studies have shown, for example, that the larger, more prosperous ones are highly instrumental in their orientation. Ones that are much more entrepreneurial can add some valuable information by illustrating that you can be innovative and do a good job. I think the big issue we have got, is that those who are doing it tough are the ones who are holding on to the traditional intrinsic values, the values about identity and survival, a sense of affiliation with the hardships of the life that they lead. That is a basic structural problem.

When I studied pastoralists in the Mulga country in 1984 it was already strongly in evidence. A survey I did in South Australia about five or six years ago with the South Australian Farmers' Federation showed that the intrinsic values, the identification with the life of pastoralists, the survivor in the outback needing aid in order to survive has become a very strong element in the value of orientation; and it has been strengthened over the last 10 or 15 years. When it comes to rural adjustment these people are developing a certain siege mentality by which they are feeling that the rest of Australia is no longer in sympathy with them. It is growing quite strongly. We really need to program in those value orientations not just solely to break the mould but if we are going to get very far with sensible policies. Do you have anything to say?

Richard Stayner: Yes, I agree. Thank you for that comment, John. As I said in my paper, we can't talk about values as though they were homogenous or universal. Anything you say about values will be wrong for some people. I think it is right that we need more research, if you like, on describing the practice of values and how they lock into each other, and how one set of values might imply another and so forth.

Colleagues of mine at the University of New England, Ian Reid and Allan Black, did a big survey in 1993 on the attitudes of Australian farmers towards environmental values. They are right at the moment repeating that survey as part of the rural values survey. It is a very heterogeneous story, but we need to really sit down and be careful about how to describe those patterns. Once you do have that sort of information you can make more useful statements about those particular people and those particular circumstances.

George Wilson: When you observe Australians exploring the outback they are almost invariably Anglo-Celtic. They are the old Australians. I wonder whether there are grounds for further research. As you say, just aggregating these things sometimes may be hiding other issues, and we probably need to look more at who is holding these values.
6. Incorporating Values into Policy & Legal Frameworks

David Sheppard

Previous rural practices in New Zealand have led to degradation of the environment and the need for new policies. Current understanding of the environment extends to cultural health of minority sections of the community, especially indigenous people. Sound rural policies should enable them to provide for their needs, and make use of their experience in respecting the environment. The notion of holding land in trust supports the collective interest in sustainable management of the environment. Policies that restrain landowners from using natural resources as they choose can be justified for those purposes. Developing policies that reflect cultural attitudes and experience requires sensitivity and may be time-consuming. People of the culture concerned may be included in the policy development process. Education may be needed to gain acceptance of policies that reflect cultural traditions. Examples from the experience of the New Zealand Environment Court show how Maori cultural values have been given place in regional policy-making, and illustrate difficulties in identifying local features of cultural and spiritual value.

Why we need new rural policies for the future

The state of the environment in New Zealand is much poorer than it was a couple of centuries ago, before Europeans settled there, when the islands had been occupied by scattered Maori tribes for six or more centuries. The degradation of the rural environment since then is shown by species lost or nearly lost; areas of native forest decimated; lakes, rivers and harbours silted up and contaminated; major erosion; and aquifers so overdrawn that the structures are incapable of recharge.

Maori had been responsible for some damage to the environment before 1800 too. They learned from their overuse of resources, and developed policies for the future. Much greater degradation has resulted from European settlement, and development of rural industries as well as larger cities and towns.

New Zealand is now developing new rural policies. Among the spurs for this are changing export markets, obligations under international conventions for the sustainability of the global environment, and pressure from Maori people for practices which accord with their cultural and spiritual practices.

Why making new policies should be informed by cultural and spiritual values of Maori, the indigenous people of the land.

Currently there is growing acceptance of the value of ethnic and tribal cultures. In the UK, some autonomy has been granted to mainly Celtic provinces of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Canada, some autonomy has been granted to the mainly Inuit province of Nunavut, and the Francophone culture of Quebec has long been influential. In the USA, Indian reservations are well established, African-American and Hispanic cultures are provided for in various ways. Resistance to minority cultures has given prolonged trouble, as with the Basques in Spain, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, the Catholics in East Timor, the Indians in Fiji, and so on.

The understanding is developing that the environment, properly understood, includes the social and economic wellbeing of a community, and that can extend to the cultural and spiritual health of minority sections of the community, especially the indigenous people.

Although Maori settled in the islands now called New Zealand only about eight centuries ago, they are the indigenous people of the country. The status of Maori tribes was recognised in the Treaty of Waitangi between Queen Victoria and the Maori chiefs in 1840, by which the Crown guaranteed the tribes exclusive and undisturbed possession of their land, forests, fisheries and other properties so long as they wish to retain them, and the rights and privileges of British subjects.
Policies that enable Maori people to provide for their cultural and spiritual needs is also justified for the health and wellbeing of a valued section of the community. We need to value all people for their true worth. In addition, some of their cultural and spiritual values are now being seen as consistent with the sustainability of the resources of the environment for future generations, avoiding, remediing or mitigating pollution or other abuse of land, water and air, and protecting the diversity of natural life.

Maori people are now in a state of revival, but in many respects they are still not taking their full part in the community. That is not a healthy condition for the future. It is a New Zealand value (and, I believe, an Australian value –“mateship”) that when your neighbour is in trouble, or not coping well, you give encouragement and a helping hand.

For more than a quarter of a century now the NZ law governing use of land has directed decision-makers to recognise and provide for the relationship of Maori and their culture and traditions with their ancestral lands, waters, sites, sacred places and other treasures. Initially it was supposed that to deserve that protection, ancestral lands had still to be in the ownership of the Maori people, but that has long been rejected as too narrow. The reality is that by whatever means a piece of land was alienated from Maori customary ownership, and however long ago, Maori people of the district may still feel a strong cultural or spiritual relationship with it because of past occupation by their ancestors, because of memorable events that may have occurred there (such as battles, or the burial of chiefs), or because it contains places of cultural or religious practice, corresponding with shrines.

There are two aspects to indigenous culture about use of resources. First there is a duty to indigenous peoples. It is more than a duty – it is in the interests of the whole community to respect their distinctive culture and values. This is necessary for the relationship of trust and confidence essential for a healthy community. Secondly, indigenous cultural practices are capable of contributing to the health of the environment. It is not just indigenous peoples who benefit from adoption of policies that are informed by their cultural practices. Over centuries of living in this particular environment, they have learned truths about the environment that deserve to be respected. They deserve that not only because that is important for the wellbeing of the indigenous people, but also because, stripped of cultural overlay, they reflect accumulated experience of practices that lead to environmental harm, and of those that do not.

Why curbing landowners’ rights for cultural reasons should be acceptable
Owners of rural land have long asserted rights to make use of their own land as they choose. That includes rejecting any interference with what stock they graze, the intensity of stocking, what crops they choose to sow, what shelter they plant, how much water they take from their own wells or creeks, and where they dispose of waste water.

Restraints on rural landowners’ freedoms for environmental values have slowly been recognised in many communities. Limits to taking water have been accepted to protect the physical capacity of underground aquifers, and to reduce saltwater intrusion. Treatment of waste-water prior to disposal has been accepted to limit pollution of water bodies. It is accepted that for effective drainage, the depths of drains need to be related over a catchment. Even limits on areas planted in one variety of tree may be reluctantly accepted for the problems that monoculture brings (although the social effects of depopulation from converting from pasture to afforestation may not be as widely accepted as justifying control). Rotating of crops and fallow years are regarded as owners’ prerogatives, not to be imposed by others.

Can owners accept further restraints on the use of rural land, not to avoid adverse effects on the resources of a district, or for greater efficiency among the farmers of the area, but on account of the cultural claims of indigenous minority peoples? The claims may be based on what superficially may seem to be superstitious practices or beliefs, by people who may have freely sold the land for what were market prices at the time.
Each building and piece of land has its own unique history and circumstances. An owner of land with riparian rights may be expected to allow public access along the edge of the shore or banks, or even to dedicate a riparian strip on subdivision. An owner of land that happens to be near an airport may be restricted in the use of electronic devices, or bright lights near the flight path, or erecting tall masts or growing trees above a certain height. The owner may even have a limit on the number of people who may congregate on the land, to minimise possible loss in the event of a plane crash.

Heritage values of people of European origin can justify restricting landowners’ freedom to demolish buildings where important events occurred, or where important people are buried, or where religious practices have been observed over generations. In extreme cases, the owner might be compensated at the public expense, but often restrictions are thought not to be so great as to call for full compensation, in particular where the land or building can still be put to productive use.

Likewise an owner might be expected not to fell a landmark tree on the land, even though that might limit considerably the profitable development that would otherwise be permitted.

These cases exemplify a general acceptance of limits to the rights of landowners. Immigrants of the recent centuries share with the indigenous peoples the notion of holding land in trust. That notion is inherent in the concept of sustainable use of resources, and in the indigenous saying:

_We do not inherit the land from our ancestors; we borrow it from our grandchildren._

**Why applying cultural values in policy-making needs discerning judgment.**

Maori people sometimes say that ‘westerners’ are not really capable of understanding their cultural and the spiritual values. That is valid if they mean the depth of understanding that comes of spending much of one’s life immersed in the culture which is the heritage of what makes their culture distinct. No doubt the remark also reflects disappointment with partial misunderstandings. To be credible, those who seek to understand and respond to cultural values need to have, and show, a sincere willingness to learn. Any hypocrisy, a paternalistic attitude, is soon evident, and the process derailed.

Just like western people, indigenous people will not fail to have their own interests at heart. Further, just like any people, even tribal peoples have differences of attitudes within a tribe or other grouping – differences between generations, differences between those who take part in the life of the general community and those who have not done so, and differences from personalities. In addition, there are likely to be greater differences between tribes. These political differences have to be expected and allowed for.

It is the nature of cultural or spiritual values that they are not apt to be understood as being one single homogeneous truth. Those values need to be understood as well as practicable as a contribution to the development of policy. Because of the difficulties of understanding, and so as to gain the best result, and one which the indigenous people will share, the ideal is that they take their own part, in their own way, in the policy development process.

So in the New Zealand experience it is not helpful to address cultural issues in a limited, narrow or formalistic way. Rather it has been found helpful to follow three steps; First, early and careful identification of the relevant cultural interests. This may be time-consuming and require sensitivity, because more than one group may have an interest, because they may be divided, and because their own traditional processes take time. Secondly, careful assessment is needed of the way in which the cultural interests should be addressed. This usually requires consultation, and may deserve creativity. Thirdly, careful consideration is needed about how cultural interests should be weighed with conflicting goals and interests. This may call for difficult judgments of priorities, and full explanations of options. People of the culture concerned may be included in all those processes.

No doubt institutional measures may be needed for cultural values to be given their place in policy-making.
So (in common with New Zealand law) the definition of the term ‘environment’ in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)\(^1\) includes cultural aspects of people and communities and of the qualities and characteristics of locations, places and areas. Even so, imposition by law will not generally be enough. For successful policy, education will probably also be needed to gain the community support, or at least acceptance.

**Illustrations of addressing these challenges from the experience of the New Zealand Environment Court**

These examples illustrate the challenges, rather than suggest that they have been successfully overcome. First, two cases where Maori cultural interests were given place in regional policy-making.

Maori cultural interests were raised in proceedings to set minimum flows in a river from which water is diverted to another catchment for hydro-electricity generation.\(^2\) The Maori tribe claimed that the minimum flow should be 100% of the natural flow of the river because of its status in their culture and its spiritual value for them; because the diversion without consultation with them was an affront to their mana; and because the diversion had adverse effects on their fisheries, navigation, and on the appearance of the river. It was their case that compromise was not really possible while their mana remained unacknowledged. Various conservation interests also contended that the minimum flow should be set, at the cost of restrict the electricity diversions, in order to ameliorate the changes to ecological systems, human uses and intrinsic values of the river from the diversion. Representatives of a Maori tribe through whose district the diversions flow contended that that the minimum flows should be set so that the diversions were not reduced.

It was established that the production from the water diverted from the river represented about 3.5% of the nation’s generation of electrical energy. Restriction of the diversion to maintain a minimum flow in the river would cause a loss of that value and reduce the utility of power stations.

It was also established that for members of the Maori tribe who adhere to their cultural traditions, the river was of central cultural and spiritual significance, from which they derive status and prestige. In their culture the river has spiritual life force, and they look to it for spiritual sustenance and healing. Their traditional practices include taking fish and shellfish for cultural practices.

The court\(^3\) held that the matters put forward by the Maori tribe deserved considerable weight, so that if there were not competing interests the cultural needs would be sufficient to justify restoring the natural flow. The court also found that natural features of the river were adversely affected to a considerable degree by the consequences of the diversions. The natural hydrological pattern of flows was altered in a number of respects. A minimum flow regime, which led to suspension or substantial limitation of the diversions, would result in several benefits for natural features of the river.

The court had to weigh, and balance the competing claims, and found that the adverse effects were so substantial that the diversion should not continue even at the expense of its high value for electricity generation; but that it would be disproportionate to completely suspend the diversion. The restriction should not exceed the minimum necessary to meet the competing claims.

In a case about another river\(^4\) the question was whether the policy should be to protect it from hydro dams. The local tribe claimed that the river was theirs, and always had been, and asserted that they had the exclusive right to make decisions about what happens to the river. They opposed the making of a conservation order because that would represent a unilateral exercise of the Crown’s power ahead of their traditional right to control use of the river. The court found that these assertions were inconsistent with the statutory regime under which the proceedings were held, and that it had to apply the law as it was, and not as the tribe claimed it ought to be.

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1. Section 528.
3. At that time the Environment Court was called the Planning Tribunal.
In Te Awatapu O Taumarere v Northland Regional Council a Maori group challenged certain provisions in a planning instrument, seeking to include cultural purposes among the purposes for which water quality is to be maintained or enhanced. Its case was based on the longstanding relationship of Maori with the waters concerned, and their cultural and spiritual connections with it.

The Regional Council argued that the other purposes for which water quality is to be maintained are measurable, and that a blanket requirement for waters to be managed for cultural purposes would not be consistent with sustainable management of the water for other purposes, and could effectively prevent discharges.

The Court recognised the Maori have a holistic view of the environment, and that to them poor water quality denigrates the life force of the water. The Court noted the Maori attitude to a particular discharge would depend on its nature and the value of the particular stretch of water, because different cultural considerations apply to different bodies of water.

The appellant also sought to include gathering of shellfish for human consumption as a purpose for which the quality of water is to be maintained and enhanced, relying on the Maori cultural practice of gathering of shellfish there. The Regional Council contended that the amendment would not be appropriate because the waters are not suitable for shellfish gathering in that faecal bacterial levels in those waters exceeded the relevant standards.

The Court held that the relevant objective was a statement that the waters should be suitable for the stated purposes, and observed that policies for attaining the objective might include education of pastoral farmers in the value of riparian strips and their management.

There follow summaries of three cases that illustrate the difficulties that may arise in identifying local features of cultural and spiritual value.

In Te Rohe Potae O Matangirau Trust v Northland Regional Council a proposal to extend an existing oyster farm was opposed by a local Maori group on the ground that the extension would interfere with their customary use of that part of the harbour, and with cultural and spiritual significance of the site and area. Three claims were made: that the extension was in a traditional food-gathering area; that sacred places would be infringed; and that the proposal would affect the traditional role of guardianship of the resources.

Counsel for the Maori group submitted that the Court would not have to reconcile opposing views about sacredness or cultural importance, and that it would be sufficient that the appellant had reasonable and genuine ground for its beliefs. That was contested by counsel. On that point the Court held that it is sometimes necessary to make findings about the existence and nature of sacred places and of cultural and spiritual attitudes as part of the process of deciding an application, and in those cases the question has to be decided in the same way as other questions of fact are decided, on evidence of probative value. Where claims are challenged, the question is not to be resolved simply by accepting an assertion of belief, even by an elder. The witnesses that the parties call have to be heard and considered and then a finding made on the balance of probabilities.

Following that method, the Court found no basis in the evidence that the site for the oyster-farm extension was a traditional food-gathering area, or that sacred places would be directly infringed by the extension, or that the proposal would affect the traditional role of guardianship of the resources.

In CDL Land v Whangarei District Council the issue was whether a block of land should be rezoned from Rural to low-density Residential.

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5 Environment Court Decision A34/98.
6 Environment Court Decision A107/96.
7 Environment Court Decision A99/96.
The owner had attempted to consult with the local Maori tribe, but they had failed to respond. The Court rejected a claim that the proceedings should fail on the ground of inadequate consultation.

However after hearing the evidence of Maori witnesses, the Court found that a particular Maori tribe had a special relationship with the land, in that ancestors were buried there, it contained sacred trees and burial places, and water from a stream through the land is taken to wash the sick.

The owners submitted that it would be unreasonable for the land just to be left, incapable of use. However the Court decided that to rezone the land in a way that would allow subdivision and residential occupation would not recognise or provide for the Maori cultural and traditional relationship with the land.

Arrigato v Rodney District Council\(^8\) concerned a proposal for subdivision of a 149-hectare block of coastal land into 14 lots. The applicant claimed that it had the support of local Maori, and the chairman of the local Maori trust board gave evidence on behalf of the tribe to that effect, acknowledging that the site of an historic Maori fort was appropriately protected. However other Maori opposed the development, claiming that it would affect cultural heritage values, particularly in respect of a ridge associated with inter-tribal battles in prehistoric times, said to be sacred in that warriors had been buried there. The trust-board chairman contradicted their evidence. The Court preferred the evidence of the chairman, and found that the proposal respected Maori spiritual and cultural values.

**Conclusion**

In New Zealand, Maori cultural and spiritual values are considered in making rural policies, both in recognising their distinctive culture, and because they are capable of contributing to best quality policies. Those values are among the full range of factors that are considered in settling policies for sustainable management of the environment in the wider sense.

However discovering and evaluating Maori cultural and spiritual values and deciding how they are to be reflected in making policy is a challenge. It requires humility and patience; but it also needs discernment to evaluate what may be conflicting claims, and to decide how those deserving more weight are to be included in general policy where other values conflict. For community support or at least acceptance, education is needed in tandem with institutional measures.

**Discussion**

Chair: John Drinan

**John Drinan:** Thank you very much David Sheppard. Could we now have questions or comments, please?

**Kate Rigby:** I would like to just note a certain historical irony that struck me listening to Justice Sheppard's presentation. In order for the development of mercantile capitalism and subsequent industrialisation to get under way in Europe it was necessary to actually suppress certain traditional values, ways of perceiving land that were an impediment to the construction of the natural wealth as a resource. One of the outcomes of that whole process of mercantile capitalism and so on was the colonisation of places like New Zealand and Australia. In these places, the settler societies now have to come to terms with the cultures of indigenous peoples who retain those non-mercantile spiritual values with regard to land that we have suppressed within our own culture. It is a very interesting kind of irony there that we have to confront what we have suppressed, and perhaps in that confrontation we may need to remember our own traditions of non-mercantile valuation of the natural world. That is just a historical observation.

**David Sheppard:** I accept Kate's irony, of course. Is it possible, though, that the suppression of spiritual values is not quite so strong in the case of settlers from the Celtic fringe as it was from the heartland?

**Kate Rigby:** It may well be.

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\(^8\) [2000] NZRMA 241.
Ian Perkins: I would like to ask David Sheppard a question. I think your "curbing land owner rights for cultural reasons should be acceptable" is a very interesting question. Here in Australia we have largely a very exclusive notion of land ownership. It has crept into freehold land, into leasehold land. I was wondering whether you have any examples of how land owners' rights, and I am referring more to farmers, have been curbed. I think here in Australia there would be a range of reasons for curbing rights including, environmental, ecological, native title, cultural, spiritual. Do you have any examples of how that might have happened in New Zealand?

David Sheppard: Certainly the dairying industry has to accept very considerable restraints on the disposal of wastewater for the benefit of the quality of waters in the base. The high country sheep farmers have had to accept some restraints on their pastoral lease use of land for the community benefit, partly for pure environmental values in the high country but also for more social values, to allow people to enjoy that area even though it wasn't originally open for the public to use under their pastoral leases.

So those are two examples that come to mind immediately. Another one that may be relevant is restraints upon the felling of native forest. That is very controversial in New Zealand at the moment, but we are trying to retain quite a lot of what is left of our native forest. There are communities who for a hundred years have been surviving by felling the forest and dwelling in it. So those restraints too, while controversial, I think are accepted in the community as a whole, though there are problems about how they are imposed on a particular locality.

Onko Kingma: Can I ask you a question, David? On the one hand you paint a society that is extraordinarily cohesive and able to come to consensus judgments about resource use. But on the other hand you have got a natural resources management act which was forced through on the basis of no dialogue and with the attitude, as I understand it, that "We'll sort it all out in court later on in terms of detail". As we discussed, the amendment to the Act is many times larger than the Act itself. So I am on a bit of a limb because I believe it is only through dialogue and engagement of community and gaining understanding that you are able, in the end, to get the sort of ends that you were talking about. But, on the other hand, I question whether that can be achieved by dialogue because underlying your personal position is an issue about the courts and law, enforcement of law and property rights. So do you see the tensions I am talking about there?

David Sheppard: I am not sure I agree with the basic premise that current legislation was forced through without any community support. In fact, it was prepared over a period of two or three years with quite a lot of consultation under a government of one conviction. It was in the parliament at the time of the general election when the government changed to the other complexion, and was carried through and enacted by that government. So I think those things alone indicate that there was some general public support for at least the general notion in the legislation.

I suppose there are three fundamental parts to it. First, an acceptance of the goal of sustainable management of natural and physical resources. Second, integrating the various processes by which decision making in the environment takes place. And third, continuing and perhaps furthering the notion of public participation in those processes. So that while, no doubt, there will be some opposition, on the whole I don't think that there was a situation of legislation really being imposed on an unwilling populace. Certainly it was put through with a bit of a rush for political reasons. I think that the new government didn't want to have to hold up getting onto its own agenda while attending to what was left from the previous government's agenda, even though they basically agreed with it. So there wasn't as much time spent on the policy as might have been. That has been attended to over the last decade at some considerable cost to the community, I suppose, by the courts and by amendments to the legislation. It isn't the ideal way to do legislation, but it is probably the practical way in the modern age. These days governments aren't willing to take four or five years to redevelop any piece of legislation.

Gordon Gregory: I am not sure mine is a simple question to the panel or a rhetorical question. But much has been made and is being made of the notion of rights. I have some understanding of what the concept means in the economic paradigm, but I am not clear what it might mean in anthropological, cultural, sociological or political contexts. It seems to me several times when we have used the notion of "rights" it has the implicit assumption that we are talking about rights from the point of view of the economic paradigm. If someone wants to answer the question I would like to hear the answer.

David Sheppard: There is a growing feeling that ownership of land isn't a complete set of rights, that there is this notion of holding it in trust for the future.

John Drinan: We need to stop at this point. Thank you for your participation in this last session. It was a very stimulating one.
7. A People Oriented Rural Reality
Cathy McGowan

Introduction

You may know the story quoted in Covey’s "Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” about the road and the jungle. The story basically runs as follows: "A group of engineers is proudly building a beautifully straight road through very tough conditions, overcoming every single barrier. They are righteous in their cause. They are confident, competitive, and competent, and pay enormous attention to detail. A bright spark, perhaps sensing personal or career advancement, decides to check out the bigger picture. He climbs a huge tree to have a look around. The workers below yell out, looking for affirmation, "Tell us what you see. How is it going? How much further?" Slowly, carefully and courageously, the climber calls back, "Great road. Wrong jungle."

I think this story is a metaphor for Australian Agriculture. We have built a great road – but are increasingly recognising - and today's symposium is evidence of this – that, to a degree, we feel we are lost in the jungle. We have lost sight of the destination and the vision. What was fine for the 1950’s no longer works for the Twenty First Century. We are caught in the content - the building of the road - and have lost sight of the importance of the why and the how.

My realities

My topic here is rural realities. The assumption underlying my presentation is that the personal is political. I would like to describe some aspects of my reality which I believe are a microcosm of rural Australia. Let me begin by a reference to some of my relationships and values, in particular, my relationship with my country and my community.

My country: My country is the Indigo Valley in North East Victoria. It is a U- shaped, very old valley. It can be cold and in May we had snow. I have the stewardship of a small lot of this land that is debt free and I grow medium fine merino wool. The rainfall over the valley is between 36 and 40 inches annually. We have had a lot of rain this Spring. The water flows onto my hills, into the gullies, into the valley and then into the Murray River about 30 kilometres away from where I live. Along the Murray, the water flows to Adelaide, where among other uses, people drink it.

In our valley, our Landcare group is very concerned about increasing dry land salinity and the consequences of our water usage. Our group is active and has been going since 1986. We have developed a whole of catchment plan and recently introduced "Welcome to Newcomer" events in our valley. Our Landcare group is creative and is evolving as a new institution with new ways of working. It has strong values of community and connectedness.

My community: I would like to acknowledge my relationship with my mother. In particular for her gift of life, her gift of care, her gift of food and for being my first teacher. I live in her country. Our family have been there for six generations. It was she who gave me my first introduction to social capital. She taught me how important it is to build relationships, to repair relationships both within the family, between individuals, and also, importantly, within the community in which I live. I want to be buried next to my mother. She lies in the Yackandandah Cemetery beside my two sisters and my grandparents.

I would also like to acknowledge my relationship with my father. It was his love of land that actually encouraged me to buy my farm. He is a man of great faith and generosity. He provided the dollars for my education. He shared many of his skill in farming, and he has been my professional mentor. Interestingly, as I get older, he is also the wisest teacher I have in tolerance. He keeps reminding me of the importance of listening.
There are other relationships - with my neighbours, my brother and sister. Some of the neighbours are newcomers to the community from Sydney and Melbourne. However, many have lived in this same valley for generations. I also acknowledge our relationship and my dependence on them.

**My other roles:** Other aspects of my reality are my qualifications for talking today. I have been asked to speak because I am the elected president of Australian Women in Agriculture. It gives me great delight to be here in that role. I am also a consultant running a small business where I specialise in rural community development. I am also an educator at the University of Western Sydney at Hawkesbury.

**Rural Realities**

I will start with what I know best. I do know rural communities. I do know about social capital, and I also know about being a woman in rural Australia. I am also basing my comments on three theorists who have influenced me.

Lynn Sykes, from Dubbo, is an Australian sociologist. She reminds us that the greatest threat to Australian agricultural sustainability is family break-up. She names divorce and suicide as increasingly prevalent. She points out that we can have the most economically sustainable farming unit we could possibly want but, because 96 per cent of our agriculture is based around family farms, when that family is no longer functional and breaks up, the economic unit itself is rarely sustainable.

The second theorist is Marilyn Waring. She is a New Zealand economist, and her book is "Counting for Nothing". She stresses the importance of getting the economics right. When she says "right", she means being truthful in what we include in the economic equations. *An example: Some may remember the crash of the tanker, the Exxon Valdez, in Alaska a few years ago. The economic calculations of that particular disaster showed major growth for that area of North America: in employment, infrastructure, in almost every area of the economy. Yet it was a major ecological disaster. Marilyn Waring points out that, in traditional economics, we usually fail to count the negative side - the unintended consequences. In our economic calculations and national accounts, she argues we need a positive and a negative side. We need to count in the costs of the unintended consequences of our actions.*

The third theorist is Carol Gilligan. She is an American psychologist who wrote the book, "In a Different Voice". She reminds us that we do have differences - different values and different priorities. She introduced me to the concept of the ‘voice’ difference based on gender. She explains that, in traditional agriculture and other forms of work, we assume that for "he" we should read "she". Carol Gilligan dispels the myth of this generalisation. She argues there are significant differences, particularly when men and women make moral decisions.

It is my contention that, in rural Australia, institutional frameworks need to change. I am hoping this symposium will help us to set a very clear, deliberate direction, with a destination clearly in mind, for this change to occur.

My second contention is that the priority given to natural resource management in Australia is misplaced. I believe the priorities should be on people, and capacity building within people and communities. The current emphasis on natural resource management misses the main issue: it always will be people and the ability of people to make good decisions that will be top, middle and bottom lines of what we do with our natural resources.

I believe that our relationships, particularly our relationships with each other and the land, are significant. We need to understand these much, much better. Building capacity is a key to doing this better.
There is a metaphor that helps illustrate this concept. It is a bit like a bird - ideally, a well-balanced bird flying with both wings. We have a really well developed right wing in agriculture. It is the technical side, the efficiency side. We probably lead the world in being able to flap this wing really well. We have great scientists, who are well educated and do a superb job. The other wing of the bird I would call the social side. It is about communication and personal capacity. This wing is always getting ready to fly but gets slapped down. Because it is not seen as economically important, or because it is seen as feminist, too young or too hard, there is no support. For whatever reason it can't get up.

What I see happening in Australian rural communities is that this poor bird is totally out of balance - how can any bird flying like this be sustainable? The ‘bird’ goes up, catches a few hot air currents and comes crashing down. It has to be balanced. While we keep concentrating on managing resources, building up the right, technical wing, the problems will remain unsolved. The bird can’t fly. It is similar to the engineers in the jungle building a straight road but not knowing where they are going.

A New Rural Reality

I would like to outline two examples of a possible new reality where the concentration is on people, and there is balance between the left and right wings, and strong emphasis on education and learning.

**Australian Women in Agriculture:** Australian Women in Agriculture (AWiA) is dear to my heart because it is a place where my values, behaviours and beliefs come together. It is a national agricultural organisation, crossing all industries and States. We are based on networks and relationships. Over a third of our members actively work on e-mail. I am delighted to say we have Aboriginal members as well, particularly from the Northern Territory. We are an inclusive group. We have members who are pastoralists, agriculturalists, scientists and farmers. We have members who are in agribusiness, media and the bureaucracies, and even in politics.

Members of AWiA are creating new ways of working - a new institutional framework. Here and now it is operating in rural Australia and in our cities. It is very different from the more traditional agricultural organizations. One of its main agenda items is education and training of members, and another is natural resource management. I am hoping that over the next few years you will hear a great deal more AWiA and our impact on matters such as natural resource management, trade and globalisation.

**Women in the Dairy Industry:** The second example of this new rural reality is a dairy industry leadership program that I have been involved in for the last five years. I would like to acknowledge the sponsorship of the Dairy Research and Development Corporation in establishing this mainstream program, which is solidly based on relationships and the assumption that everybody in the dairy industry has the capacity to contribute. It assumes that capacity can grow and is actually in abundance, so there is no limit to what people can do.

The participants of the Women in the Dairy Industry program have demonstrated that this assumption is well based. They have played a major part in the structural development of the dairy industry. They have run on-farm courses in occupational health and safety and succession planning. They have addressed change in the dairy industry, not just in individual farms but also the whole community, so all may come to terms with it. Participants of the program work actively within the industry, in schools, hospitals and a variety of other areas. It is a network and is extraordinarily effective and vibrant.
Conclusion

To summarise, I have a belief and a passion that the rural reality I know has a long-term future. It is sustainable. It is solidly built around education, building capacity within individuals and within communities.

It is about giving priority to developing people's ability and skills, giving them access to the necessary infrastructure, and believing they are then able to solve their own problems. There is a saying that the problems of the present will not be solved with the thinking of the past. We do need a new way of thinking. I believe that people will find that. I believe it is the people in my Indigo Valley Landcare group, the AWiA and Women in Dairy who will find it for us.

Going back to the story at the beginning, we need to have clarity about what we are trying to achieve. What is the destination? What forest do we want to be in? I am sure relationships with the land and with each other are central.

To end on a very personal note, I know I will have arrived at my destination when I go to a board meeting of the National Farmers' Federation or any agribusiness in Australia and the managing director says: "Welcome aboard. Your past as chief executive officer for a farm family is impressive enough but the references from your children really won it".

Discussion

Chair: Sue George

Sue George: We have a few minutes for questions.

Jane Elix: I have a question, Cathy. From my own work I am aware of differences of experience between women and men in agriculture. You mentioned the issue of women's differences in moral decision making from men. I am interested in hearing a bit more about where you see those differences and how they impact on the discussion today and the concept of values.

Cathy McGowan: Can I give you the example of the succession issue. If you go to a farm where you have two generations, mum, dad and the kids, working on it and you look at the values and moral decisions going with the values, the father and the son usually have a very strong loyalty to that land. They have inherited the land and they pass it on. More than making money they carry that huge sense of loyalty and responsibility. While the mother, the daughter-in-law, the women, will have a sense of loyalty to the land very rarely do they inherit. They have a different sense of loyalty, a much stronger sense of justice or fairness.

When you are doing a farm succession plan you recognise there are different values at play here. You find they are not hierarchical. Sometimes dad will say his sense of loyalty is much more important than her sense of fairness. Our task is to get the values coming together. The father would want the loyalty to be recognised and land to be passed on to a son or daughter. The mother says, "What about fairness and justice?" This means selling up the farm, everyone gets treated fairly. So that is an example of how those different values play out. It is not that they are either right or wrong.

Perhaps another one too is about education. You know, like a farm man who wants to spend money on the technical side, mum wants to spend it on the farm, holiday or educating the kids or other things that are not technical. Australian women see that constantly, that struggle about bringing the values together without one being dominant.

Jane Elix: What do you suggest as an appropriate process for bringing together of values rather than simply describing them?
Onko Kingma: It is in the whole diversity debate, isn't it, Cathy? A huge emphasis on organisations attempting to bring in diversity and recognition of the fact that women not only make decisions differently but their values are in fact the sort of values that should be infused into their organisation.

Cathy McGowan: It also helps if that family has some sense of what they actually want to achieve. Do they want to stay together as a family as a goal, as a destination, or is their primary purpose being a business entity and can they reconcile the two? If the primary purpose is business then that helps resolve the issue a little bit. But, anyhow, sitting around talking usually brings it to fruition. Perhaps Peter Yu might comment?

Peter Yu: I am certainly no expert on it, but I think it is probably a little bit slower than what is happening elsewhere. It still seems to be fairly much traditional role-playing relationships. People are trying for survival on a day-to-day basis. I don't want to sound pessimistic, but I think there are some very fundamental dynamics operating here. And it is largely, I think, perhaps to do with the state of the economy, especially in agriculture. Also in remote areas, I suppose, particularly indigenous society, people have to say that if it wasn't for women we probably wouldn't have survived, to some extent, in terms of traditional qualities and responsibilities that women have had as mothers and wives under, I think, considerable duress. The emotional trauma in that sort of society, even in terms of development, is a big downside.

Shelagh Lowe: It seems to me that a lot of the focus that we have had so far has been on agriculture. We tend to be glossing over the other people that make up rural communities, be it mining, fishing and other things, like forestry. Also those people that live within rural communities quite often marry farmers who might be providing the school teaching, and people working within health service industries. We really need to not focus on agriculture but really look at everyone who is living in rural communities.

Jock Douglas: Cathy mentioned before the property management planning processes. It seems to me there is a need for some sort of catalytic event to change the hierarchy or thinking of families. When families come together in a group, in a group in a district, and discuss where they are going, how they are going to get there, what their aim is going to be, then the young people particularly hang on that and the women just use the process to quietly to challenge the power processes that are there. There is a catalytic event which is provided by the planning process, which I think is really important. You also get people branching out in innovation, entrepreneurial, rural leadership programs. All sorts of things can happen from there. So just sort of breaking the mould of events and challenging people's thinking and doing it on a really intensive basis, in my view, is still very important in getting innovation, entrepreneurship and things happening out there in agriculture and elsewhere.

Sue George: Thank you all very much. I would now invite the Symposium Chair, Ian Sinclair to moderate presentations of the outcomes from four discussion groups.

Ian Sinclair: Would the spokesperson of the first group present their views to us, please?

Richard Price: We had three issues. The first was trust and frankness, two interrelated issues, I suppose. Second, whose values are we indeed talking about? And the third issue was understanding what is actually rural.

The first of the issues, trust and frankness, arose out of a discussion that we had on place and how place is defined- whether we define it by geography, whether or not you live there, or if it is by interest, in which case you may not actually live in an area but be part of communities of interest. So if it is by interest then what is the process of engagement for relationships, the process of engagement for decision-making and articulation of those goals, and all the sorts of things that integrated catchment management is about?
What is the process that you can go through that actually engenders trust in that process? And, possibly more importantly, a process that engenders honesty, because there are plenty of examples of where people will say one thing under one set of circumstances but not actually articulate those when it is quite important when there is another process of engagement. We were thinking particularly in terms of many politicians who will actually withhold information when they are out there in rural Australia, and bureaucrats, of course, and those in the private sector. And, now that I think about it, academics. Sociologists? - Maybe not!

The second issue is: whose values are we indeed talking about? I guess we can all be accused of making generalisations. In fact I am going to accuse everyone I heard this morning of this argument of making generalisations myself included. But we are often talking about agriculture when we are talking about rural, and we were pulled up on that. In fact, if we go back to Tony's talk this morning and start to look at the statistics he was using, we are talking about more than agriculture.

I guess if you go back to the first argument about whose community is it, we are not necessarily talking about the people living in rural Australia as well. It is a shared place and shared space. We make generalisations about rural communities all being the same, and in our group we agreed there is definitely a difference between rural Australia and remote parts of rural Australia. Certainly there are very, very different catchments across Australia, those that might be agriculturally dominant and those that are not. Also there is a huge difference placed upon land ownership. I can think of catchments that appear to be very similar in Victoria, for example, where one catchment will be 60 per cent owned by people who actually reside on that land and the next catchment over is almost 90 per cent.

So we make a lot of generalisations. I guess we also make a lot of generalisations about urban communities and people. They tend to be dominating many of the political processes in this country. I come from the western suburbs of Sydney. We certainly don't think about many of the issues that urban people are accused of thinking about. I am a Parramatta supporter. That reflects a whole lot of western Sydney values, but there are also people who support Sydney City, the rich people who drink champagne in Bondi and map out environmental directions for the country. The bottom line is that we can't generalise about urban either when we talk about urban versus rural divide.

The third issue was understanding what is rural. How do we actually get ourselves out of this agricultural paradigm? What is the process of thinking beyond it? What is the process of engagement? How do we come to understand the full range of values that exist? How do we allow the full range of perceptions to have some form of legitimacy?

The final concept we arrived at is the ecological footprint. In Australia each of us uses about 6 hectares to feed and clothe us and to carry our wastes. If you have a look at a list of all the countries around the world, it is about the fifth highest. The world average is 1.2 hectares per person. That made us think about how we look at ourselves as a continent and not just as rural and urban communities. How can we actually start to look at urban populations and urban landscapes in a similar way to the way we see rural landscapes. How we might envisage our urban landscapes being food producing as well as food preservers.

Felicity Stewart: The first point for our group was institutional failure, a poor ability to manage inter-sectoral issues, which comes to matters within government decision-making processes which are sectored off, for example, water and soil.

The second point was to do with integration of policy and legislation. I think most of us are aware that the law is often very much behind the policy stage and, as a practising lawyer, I can tell you, it is one of the most infuriating things, this lag between what is policy and what is law. It is a problem I am sure we can overcome.

Thirdly bottom-up and top-down processes are missing each other.
Ian Sinclair: Thank you, Felicity. Group three?

Bruce McKenzie: We talked about lots of things. We talked about consultation and whether consultations were causing people to become fatigued resulting in a loss of interest in engaging in important issues. We contrasted the internal and external agendas that go on within communities. It was also raised that quite often the consultation- word and process- were used to manipulate communities, with an associated lack of trust.

The next point we referred to was the valuing or non-valuing of existing knowledge in communities. We also engaged very early on about separating out agricultural, community, regional, remote, rural and such like. These are distinctive areas of issues and you can’t generalise. This concept of needing to value knowledge, where it is and what people have, is fundamental. It is not part of our system of decision-making or policy making in Australia necessarily to value any knowledge other than that which is formalised and which is ours.

The next point we made reference to was the idea of hierarchy of value usage and the way the hierarchy is set up. It tends to be driven by the market. If it has a high value adding then it is seen as important. We did refer to water at this stage, using the example for how Sydney Water Board’s need for water and valuing of water is held at the top of a hierarchy while indigenous people's use of water, or valuing of water, or spiritual significance of water, was not rated at all.

The next point was that development tends to be driven by personal profiles, by the sort of things that people need. Gordon Gregory pointed out his opinion that there are two points that we need to take into account if we are looking at why people behave the way they do in rural communities. One of those was a base point that you need to operate at a certain level to meet your fundamental needs, your survival needs, to look after yourself. If you are a person with 14 children and numerous relatives who come around, you obviously are at a different point on the development scale than someone who is by themselves and quite happy to live in a subsistence situation.

The other point on this line, depending on how driven and ambitious you are, some people will never be satisfied until every tree is chopped down and every plot of dirt is turned over and planted with something, whereas others reach their satisfaction point much earlier. These two points were critical in our understanding in the way communities valued development.

Our second last point was that there are two aspects of change that need to be taken into account which relate to incentive. One is compensation to enable people to sense that they hadn't wasted their life up to this point if they were required to change directions- there is some recognition and compensation for what they had invested. The other is that most changes that have occurred in rural Australia have been carrot led, that there was something out there, a tax break or something or other, that caused people to make the change. Rarely did it come from some alter ego driving us in that direction.

The final point was the very fundamental one of who facilitates this values debate? There was little argument in our group that it was an important debate to have. But who was actually going to cause it to happen? Is it going to be a press-led thing like the Australian Newspaper’s letters, or is it the “towards a future” debate last year, or is there some paper like the Land that would take seriously a rural debate and lead us in that direction? Or would it come out of a formal legalistic or legislative approach? Some doubt about that. Or, what other forum might be got up? Our group finished with a question mark very firmly in our minds that somewhere they had to be initiating this debate on a much broader scale than we have at the moment in this room.

Ian Sinclair: Fascinating! We all talked about entirely different subjects. The 4th group, I know, have three spokespeople.
Richard Stayner: Just as an ice-breaker, I threw in one of the things that I had written down when we were asked to write down things that we were passionate about. I think at the top of my list was the recollection of, a couple of months ago on the University of New England's internal Internet/intranet discussion group, a desperate plea posted for a school teacher to go to Mungindi to teach English. Now, Mungindi is a fairly small settlement on the Queensland/New South Wales border. It is not exactly the end of the Earth. There are lots of places more remote and disadvantaged, but Mungindi is perhaps not the apple of the north either.

Part of this Internet message was that this person didn't even have to be a trained English teacher. "We will take anyone". That means it could be a manual arts teacher. "We will bring you up to Mungindi and you can be responsible for stimulating the minds of our young folk as far as English education goes". That is something I get very cranky about.

I had just been reading various well-meaning and quite expert reports on the mal-distribution of information technology infrastructure across the Australian bush and what principles we might use to determine fairer access of Australian rural remote people to IT. It just struck me that if our society couldn't get its values straight enough to provide a senior high school English teacher to the folks in Mungindi, then that was criminal negligence. There are some fairly well off cotton cockies around Mungindi, and maybe they can afford to send their kids to boarding schools, but the ones that are left behind are going to be locked into the sort of self-reinforcing disadvantage that we hear so much about.

Now, okay, that was my passion. There are lots of passions about, and lots of people are passionate about lots of different rural services. How do we go from there to principle? How might we frame some value statements that might help inform the development of policy in general, delivering services to rural and remote people? I don't know. I am not used to framing those sorts of questions, but maybe you can say something along the lines of, "Well, you need at least to give people access to the mix and range and intensity of services that prepare them for effective participation not only in today's world but tomorrow's".

That sounds all very fine but it is just too glib, because the range and mix of services that people aspire to, and the level of those services that they aspire to these days is much more complex than it was in times gone past when it was possible to just say everybody should have access to a direct dial phone or a GP in the local place and so forth. Now, I know we can't go as far as saying that there must be a teaching hospital and a university in Mungindi. There are resource questions here.

So I guess I am just posing the question: how do we frame the values that might help policy-makers make those sorts of resource allocation decisions? Information technology can't do it all. I guess, the reason why the senior school English teacher was such a telling example was that the very essence of education, or the most important experiences of my secondary schooling was being in a room full of 16-year-olds, you know, testosterone-charged boys, and a pretty unruly bunch, and being engaged by a man who showed us that there were a lot more important things than what was on the syllabus; of seeing demonstrated to me that abstract questions of the mind were quite important. I haven't yet seen a website that can do that. That's why I am still passionate about getting a schoolteacher for those kids at Mungindi.

Linda Botterill: After Richard's contribution we took it to a slightly more abstract level and asked the question about how we then incorporate values into the policy development process. Looking at how policy is developed by politicians and by public servants tends to be an incremental process. Who gets involved? Who gets consulted? One of the things that we were debating was whether the prevailing economic model, which tends to give priority to market values, can actually incorporate some of the other values that Cathy was talking about, the bird, the social, the spiritual- some of the non-economic values. How do we incorporate those into a policy process that in recent years very much appears to be dominated by the economists?
We tend to agree on policy in terms of the means but not the ends. Where is that road taking us? Where are those policy roads going? So we then got onto the question of how do we debate values, the sort of thing that Bruce Mckenzie just referred to. That led to a bit of a debate again. Whose values are we talking about? Are we talking about urban values, rural values or some nebulous thing called "Australian values"?

It also raised the question of perhaps looking at some form of central planning and determining the values and working from there on. That was the question, and we had quite a lively debate from that point on how do we actually determine what these values are and how we incorporate them in the policy process? From my perspective, as a political scientist, I am very, very interested in this because I do think we have focussed on getting policy achieved rather than the ends. I personally see economic theory as a tool rather than a goal. I think it is something we need to be debating as a community.

**Selwyn Heilbron:** With the benefit of hindsight, one piece of analysis or presentation that was possibly missing from this morning's session would have been an analysis of the way the political services translate values into policies. We came to discuss the fact that we heard a fair amount about different values and value systems and about the outcomes of various policies affecting rural communities, but we actually haven't heard a hell of a lot about the way in which the democratic political system actually serves to translate values into policies and the way it is done. I guess the point being, even if you have clearly held values there may be structural constraints or impediments preventing you, as a community or an individual group, from seeing those values actually translated into policy. I guess there is always potential trade-off between what an individual community or sector believes in and the broader views of the population working through the political system. The question I guess is how should policy be developed in a way to better reflect individual or group values without at the same time undermining other values perhaps equally strongly held in the community.

That, I guess, leads you to a question of whether we really are clear about the values that are embodied in current policy or through all areas, and future values that might prevail. I just point out that the chairman suggested that I might have actually been flattering Australian politicians to suggest there had been any consideration of values to come to rural policy in Australia.

**Ian Sinclair:** Thank you very much. We realise the topic for our two days is Australian values - rural policies. It is interesting across the dimension of that debate how much Tony, intentionally or otherwise, has actually been able to facilitate at least the opening of those questions in the presentation.
Towards a True Partnership of all the Peoples of the Kimberley

Peter Yu

All of us living in Australia are used to talking about big distances and isolation - but, at about 423,000 square kilometres, the Kimberley is geographically huge - even by Australian standards. And from the point of view of those who don’t live there, it is a particularly isolated place. The nearest large towns to the west and east of the region are about 500 km by air. The distance between Broome and Kununurra, the largest towns in the region, is more than 1,000 km - a very solid day’s drive. To get to Perth is twice that distance and where we sit today, in Canberra, I’m 7,000 km away from home.

Today I want to talk about how distance, poverty and outdated systems of land tenure and governance create an untenable situation in the Kimberley. Preoccupying all of us here today is the reality that the lives of many rural Australians have become marked by a declining standard of living and by the withdrawal of government and other services such as banks, schools, hospitals and post offices.

At first glance the Kimberley, as a region, does not appear to share these problems of rural decline. The population is growing, services in Broome and Kununurra are increasing, and the standard of living in those towns is significantly improved for many of their residents, when compared with only a few years ago. But you don’t have to scratch hard to find that the region is divided in economic and social terms - and that divide is mirrored in its geography.

Despite the region’s size, the Kimberley population is small but growing. In 1996, there were about 32,000 people living in the region, 10,000 more than in 1991. This increase is centred in Broome and Kununurra, and rides on the back of a growth in pearling, tourism and irrigated agriculture. It’s worth noting that the region is still under settlement from outside. In 1991, almost half of the Kimberley’s population were Aboriginal people; by 1996, that had shrunk to about 35%.

The non-Aboriginal population tends to live in the main towns of Broome, Derby, and Kununurra, while Aboriginal people are almost evenly divided between the towns and small communities in the bush. Non-Aboriginal residents are concentrated in the 20-44 age group while half of the Aboriginal population is under 20 years old. Sixty per cent of young Aboriginal people aged 15-24 years live outside towns in the hundreds of remote communities or villages, with as few as 15 people living in them. By comparison, non-Aboriginal people in the 15-19 age group are almost absent, having moved elsewhere for post secondary education and training.

About one quarter of the non-Aboriginal population living outside the towns can be found in one or two large settlements such as mine sites, where they fly in for a couple of weeks work, and then fly out back to families based elsewhere, taking their pay with them. Aboriginal people are the only stable population of the Kimberley. In 1991, more than 8 out of 10 Aboriginal people over 5 years old had been living at the same address or in the same area five years previously, compared to only 3 out of 10 non-Aboriginal people.

But the other thing that is stable - depressingly so - is the seemingly endemic poverty of Kimberley Aboriginal people, a poverty so incontrovertible as to be described as systemic. While Broome and Kununurra experience economic growth - and their white inhabitants become wealthier - their Aboriginal populations are increasingly marginalised, enduring a shocking poverty. What can be called the Kimberley’s Aboriginal hinterland, centred around the Fitzroy Valley and Halls Creek, is almost crushed with the weight of a welfare economy - a false economy which entrenches poverty and hopelessness.

Unless the impoverishment of Indigenous people is addressed, it will be impossible for the Kimberley to sustain its current economic and social development.
The region’s extremities, centred on Broome and Kununurra, will become the focus for worsening social problems as poverty in the Aboriginal hinterland increases. This is the significant issue before the region’s administrators and residents alike.

Although Aboriginal poverty - and all the awful social problems that go with it - seems to be intractable, it is not. It does not arise because Aboriginal people are innately lazy or hopeless - our continued existence in the face of oppressive colonialism is testament to that. It exists because, in so many of the places in which my people now live, our old systems of purpose and authority have been broken down, with nothing replacing them other than a confusing miasma of government programs and projects.

The welfare colonialism begun in the 1970s, and continued today, has entrenched both a dependence and an alienation that are shattering in their impact. An example is the Community Development Employment Program, CDEP - the prototype 'work for the dole' scheme. Introduced not as an employment program, but as a means of meeting basic community service functions such as rubbish collection, it has created a range of dead end, go nowhere 'jobs' in hundreds of remote communities. It pays less than unemployment benefits, but holds out no incentive to do better. It’s a millstone around the necks of communities who cannot create real enterprise with real jobs and real opportunity. They’re so tied up meeting the demands of the bureaucratic paper trail involved in running the CDEP scheme that there’s little room left for innovation and risk.

Or another example - the Aboriginal community radio sector, one of the most audible declarations of a culture that is alive and well. There’s money available for training young broadcasters while they do a three year university course in Aboriginal broadcasting, but the stations have no ongoing funding to keep those kids in a job once they have finished their studies. They are training for nothing. Few are likely to get jobs in the mainstream media, because that is not what they have trained for. Instead they leave the stations when their time is up - sometimes to go on CDEP, or - if they’re in town - on the dole. Because the stations operate on circumscribed community licences, it’s hard for them to source independent commercial funds which would help them create real jobs.

Depression isn’t a passing phase for young Aboriginal people; it’s a way of life. Morbidity rates and levels of hospitalisation of Aboriginal people are very high in the Kimberley, youth suicide is increasing at alarming rates and imprisonment is high. Only 20% of the Kimberley Aboriginal population has a job.

The problems faced by Aboriginal people are a problem for the entire community. Somewhere like Broome, poverty lives right next door and knocks on your comfort zone every night, with violence, illness and hungry kids. Solutions will be a long way off until the white and black populations together acknowledge the poverty and find opportunities for real partnership. It’s time for governments and the broader white community to stop being so patronising about the issues, and focus on the tough decisions required to generate solutions. And its time for Aboriginal people to own our problems - to open ourselves to the responsibilities that come with properly taking charge of our lives.

Since the 1980s, there’s been significant investment by the Federal Government in Aboriginal owned and managed service agencies - part of the self determination agenda. In the Kimberley, a community-based organisational infrastructure exists. It includes Aboriginal medical services, cultural support organisations, indigenous art centres, women's services, youth services, indigenous media groups and CDEP projects. As well, there are numerous State and Federal Government agencies which often duplicate services.

There is little co-operation and integration between the community and government sectors. I am now quite cautious about the role of many of the Aboriginal community service organisations, whose existence, I believe, allows the government to escape its responsibilities to all citizens. Take Aboriginal medical services, for example.
In some towns in the Kimberley there are duplicate government and Aboriginal health services, even though the population of the area may be overwhelmingly Aboriginal, or, at the least, the users of both services are overwhelmingly Aboriginal. Is it reasonable that a hospital and an Aboriginal medical service - both staffed with white doctors - exist in parallel? Would it not be a better use of resources to focus the government service’s attention on where it should be doing its job, to make it more accountable for the dollars it receives?

For Aboriginal self determination to have real meaning we must take on the responsibility to renew our societies through economic power. Fundamentally, we must find a way to make sure that our cultural strength is maintained, and harnessed to invigorate Aboriginal communities.

But let’s look a little more closely at the administrative structure which governs the Kimberley. There are four local government authorities in the Kimberley, centred on Broome, Derby, Halls Creek and Wyndham. The role of these local authorities, or shire councils, primarily focuses on the provision of municipal functions such as rubbish collection, the maintenance of town roads and areas of common civic use. Funding for these authorities is largely drawn from the State Local Government Grants Commission. Allocation is made on the basis of need, determined by the socio-economic profile of a region.

Funding for the four Kimberley shires is therefore influenced by their vast sizes, and their high proportion of poor and remote Aboriginal populations. Yet there is no requirement on the Shires to spend their allocations in the remote areas. Expenditure tends to be concentrated in the towns. Similarly, at a State Government level, funds are allocated by a Commonwealth Grants Commission, again on the basis of need. And there is no requirement on the State to account for how it has spent money on education, health and housing for Indigenous people. Very little is spent in remote areas.

It is left to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) to fund infrastructure and services in the hundreds of Aboriginal communities within the Kimberley. As government allocations to ATSIC shrink, so does the organisation’s capacity to deliver funds to communities. Many Aboriginal people are left without functioning sewage works, without pumps to get clean drinking water, without adequate housing, and without the ability to get their children to school. These are matters of citizenship which every Australian has the right to enjoy. Yet many Aboriginal people do not.

Government planning for the Kimberley has been based on assumptions about the needs of a non-indigenous, town based population. It is not surprising that the planning does not, therefore, meet the needs either of the region or those who live in it. It saddens me to see the enormous potential of the Kimberley wasted because of the dysfunctional relationships we have both within the region and with national and state governments based thousand of kilometres away. I believe this issue must be addressed through reform of the region’s land management system, coupled with a change in the regional governance arrangements.

The current land tenure arrangements are outdated, and serve only to further entrench old power structures - excluding the possibility of Aboriginal people lifting themselves out of the poverty cycle. Current boundaries for pastoral leases allowing the grazing of cattle are still very similar to those drawn up in the first few decades of colonisation. There are 99 leases, more or less side by side, regardless of the type of country covered, or the ability of the land to carry stock. They cover about half of the Kimberley. This enormous amount of land carries only about 1% of Australia’s cattle herd. Previous overstocking has caused massive land degradation in the region.

National parks and conservation reserves today cover 4% of the Kimberley, with plans to convert another 6% to reserve status. Only last weekend (August 2000), the WA government reserved more than 500,000 hectares of land into the conservation estate, with no regard for the property interests of Aboriginal people in that land. It is almost an historical accident that 10% of the Kimberley is Aboriginal reserve, although it is still owned by the State Government.
This is land which, on colonisation, was not wanted by anyone else, and Aboriginal people were herded onto it from elsewhere in the Kimberley.

This system of land tenure no better reflects the needs of the region than does the current system of government administration. Aboriginal legal interests in almost all of the Kimberley land mass have been clearly stated. One quarter of the pastoral leases are held by Aboriginal people and native title rights are being asserted over almost all of the rest of the land mass.

Incorporating the legitimate legal interests of Aboriginal people into the land tenure system is the most significant land management issue in the Kimberley. Our culture can only be sustained by accommodating our traditional ownership within the land management system. Finding this accommodation lies at the heart of indigenous self determination. It requires a new relationship between the peoples of the Kimberley themselves, as well as between the region and the rest of the nation.

I advocate the establishment of a new form of regional governance in the Kimberley - a system founded on an inclusive relationship between all who live here and on respect for the core cultural and environmental values of the region. Australian governments have always reacted suspiciously to the idea of regional autonomy, particularly if it is underpinned by ideas of indigenous self determination, viewing it as somehow a separatist action. It is not separatist, but I do believe that regional autonomy is the only way that a region such as the Kimberley can ensure its cultural and economic survival.

I want to give two examples of the impact of a non-regional approach to decision making.

Decision makers in Perth have devised a legal regime to quarantine significant areas of the Fitzroy River to prevent the spread of the noxious weed, nugurra burr, to the southern parts of the state. This decision, without any local negotiation, is a significant interference to the cultural, social and economic rights of several hundred Traditional Owners. And at the local level, Traditional Owners, Agriculture Department officials and local government agree that the most effective solution to the problem is for Traditional Owners to access the river and be involved in the eradication of the weed under a contractual arrangement.

At a broader level, the response by governments to native title highlights the destructive undermining of efforts by local people to negotiate agreements where traditional rights are recognised and embedded into local planning arrangements. A couple of years ago Broome received national attention when Traditional Owners came together to negotiate an interim agreement with the local shire. The significance of the agreement was that it provided mechanisms to make sure that Broome’s Aboriginal people were included in the economic and social benefits of a rapidly expanding town. Aboriginal cultural and social values were protected and a true partnership between all residents seemed possible. The agreement has all but fallen apart because the State Government, ideologically opposed to recognising native title, has refused to sign a framework agreement which would give proper legal status to the partnership. Frustration and resentment has manifested in internal conflict between Traditional Owners, allowing the government to blame Aboriginal people for the failure to advance the agreement.

The current dysfunctional governance arrangements disempower people at the local level. A structural divide between Aboriginal people and non Aboriginal people is created. I do not believe that centralised government can provide stability in regional areas. As I have shown above, conflict and marginalisation will increase in the Kimberley if the current forms of governance and land management are maintained.

There is growing support in the Kimberley for a regional social and political partnership. Many non-Aboriginal people who have been afraid of Aboriginal rights in the past realise that we now have more in common with each other than with politicians and bureaucrats of the major cities. This became very clear at a conference held by the Kimberley Land Council Broome two years ago.
It was called ‘The Kimberley – Our Place Our Future”, and brought together representatives of local government, the pastoral and mining industries, Aboriginal people, and many other interest groups to discuss how we could find common ground for mutual benefit. We discovered that, while we would never be the same as each other, we had a great deal of common interest.

Those people who are committed to the Kimberley for the long term want orderly economic development which respects the environment, respects the cultures of the region, and results in equitable outcomes.

Regional governance in the Kimberley should begin with the negotiation of a binding agreement between governments, and indigenous and other residents of the Kimberley. It is a mechanism that will empower Aboriginal people to negotiate our inclusion and participation in the society and economies we share with our non-Aboriginal neighbours. The agreement would set out the rights of the settlers who came - and continue to come - to the Kimberley; it would confirm the rights of the resource developers in the region; and acknowledge and guarantee the ongoing legal and inherent rights of indigenous people.

In practical terms such an agreement in the Kimberley would address issues such as:

- local laws as far as possible, including indigenous customary law and community by-laws governing alcohol consumption and other matters;
- service delivery and the rationalisation of services;
- planning, zoning, heritage protection and sensible long term development in the interests of all residents. This includes economic planning for Aboriginal development in a social partnership with non-indigenous interests; and
- land management, resource extraction and environmental planning.

I argue that the structures for a regional agreement are basically in place. What is required is leadership and commitment to integrate the governance arrangements, and galvanise public and community resources so that they work for a common regional purpose.

The first part of the process to negotiate a regional social compact should be the establishment of an Indigenous Regional Authority. This need not require a major change in representation. The current elected arm of ATSIC in the region could form the Authority's representational base. The Authority would administer a regional budget negotiated with ATSIC. At the State Level, framework agreement legislation should establish a process for the settlement of native title claims throughout the state. The importance of native title is that it provides a legal and practical basis for economic and social development.

Practically the whole of the Kimberley is subject to native title claims. The State Government's refusal to recognise native title means that all claims are stalled and unless the government changes its position the only way claimants can protect their legal rights is by trial in court. That is a very expensive exercise and we do not have adequate funds to pursue litigation. Even if there were funds available, the Federal Court could only deal with about one Kimberley claim a year.

Under a regional authority planning process, supported through State legislation, there could be a co-ordinated effort with native title holders and community organisations preparing a negotiation document detailing their comprehensive claim. Native title claims could provide the planning vehicle, as they neatly establish the boundaries of culturally coherent groups. Just as importantly, these plans would provide the indigenous negotiation base for a regional partnership. The Kimberley's four shires could form a combined Executive to assume the role of the Kimberley Development Commission - this Executive could then conduct negotiations with the Indigenous Regional Authority.

Indigenous cultural values could be embedded into the mainstream services of education, training and health services.
Specialised Aboriginal services which duplicate government services would no longer be required and Aboriginal resources and expertise could be dedicated to policy development and monitoring of the benchmarks enshrined in the regional compact. Attention will need to be paid to resolving disputes within the Aboriginal community. Much of the conflict is the legacy of colonisation-forced removal and dispersion of people throughout the region. There needs to be a formalised role for our senior law people to mediate these disputes in a traditional and unimpeachable manner. Employment must be a central objective of the regional compact. In this regard the skilling of the Aboriginal community is an urgent priority.

It is only through a formalised partnership that a region like the Kimberley will realise its economic and social development potential. Where there is discord and non-agreement over the recognition of indigenous rights, there is economic uncertainty and diminishing potential for investment. It is only through a formalised partnership that the region as a whole can develop a comprehensive submission to the Commonwealth Grants Commission and negotiate a greater transfer of public funds to the region.

The scenario I paint is not pie in the sky. The infrastructure for much of this already exists.

Indigenous leaders in Australia have proposed principles that could form the foundation of a Treaty or some other constitutional instrument between indigenous peoples and the Australian Government. Those principles cover issues such as

- political representation;
- reparations and compensation for past wrongs;
- regional agreements;
- Indigenous self government;
- cultural and Intellectual property rights;
- recognition of customary law; and
- an economic base.

At a national level, these matters of self determination could be enshrined in law. But it will be the translation from principles at a national level to the reality on the ground that will be important. Symbolism is important for national self esteem but if people’s lives and their relationships don’t change for the better then we have all failed.

Uniform programs handed down by governments in capital cities cannot deliver practical results to those of us who live in the regions. It will only be when a true partnership develops between us all that we can say that the diversity and complexity of Australian society is respected, and that reconciliation is possible. But for real and substantial reconciliation to occur there must be true equality between the parties. Reconciliation cannot happen when one party is subordinate to, or subject to assimilation into, the other party. The legacy of our ongoing colonisation means there must be an investment in indigenous people before a partnership is possible.

But, for as long as our rights remain uncertain, as long as we are struggling against the diminution of our position because of political expediency, so long will it be difficult for Aboriginal people to take on the mantle of responsibility to change our circumstances. This is not said so as to avoid Aboriginal responsibility for fixing the problem - but that responsibility is a shared burden, and a shared challenge.

**Discussion**
Chair: Don Blesing

**Don Blesing:** Are there any questions?
**Paul Martin**: I know this is probably a very unfair question, Peter. I would like to know, given the current state of the things you have talked about, what would be the four or five things that you would expect people like ourselves to be really concentrating on to do something about the issues of Aboriginal interests.

**Peter Yu**: I think the first thing is, you probably have more in common with Aboriginal people, particularly if you live in the rural and remote areas, than a lot of other Australians who probably have never met an Aboriginal person. I think the difficulties confronting the rural and remote areas are not white or black although there are some peculiar matters of a cultural and legal nature that might be different. What native title has done is to throw up the demons and at least allowed us to try and confront them in some honest fashion. We may not have the perfect answer to satisfy them yet.

The right to negotiate was provided for the first time in the history of Australia. People's main concerns were initially cultural. It wasn't an economic concern. I know there were calls of economic blackmail and all that sort of stuff. The reality was- I can honestly say in all the time I have worked with the communities- there was not one demand that I had heard from any of the communities that I have worked with in relation to some economic outcome. It was a consequence of negotiations. But the first and primary consideration was one of cultural protection.

I think that is the first thing. I think it is important. When we brought people together in the Kimberleys a couple of years ago, called The Kimberley, Our Place of the Future, it was an attempt to get some cohesive and coherent view of what people thought in the region. Rick Farley, who was the co-ordinator/facilitator, raised two principles, and that was courage and trust. That was the key theme that arose out of it- basically it requires a bit of courage from people who consider themselves to be leaders to show a bit of trust.

I think that is the first thing. I think it is important. When we brought people together in the Kimberleys a couple of years ago, called The Kimberley, Our Place of the Future, it was an attempt to get some cohesive and coherent view of what people thought in the region. Rick Farley, who was the co-ordinator/facilitator, raised two principles, and that was courage and trust. That was the key theme that arose out of it- basically it requires a bit of courage from people who consider themselves to be leaders to show a bit of trust.

The fact is that we are all the same as Australians, but we are different. I don't think we will ever be the same in terms of our cultural understandings and interpretations of use of land. So I don't know if I have got far, but I think the first thing is that we have more in common, and it is to explore the nature of that commonality so that some trust can be developed, and the nature of our differences can be better dealt with.

**John Holmes**: I wonder, Peter, if you have comment about the apparent movement on the Cape York Peninsula?

**Peter Yu**: I think demographically they are perhaps different, culturally too. We have about 30 different language groups in the Kimberley, quite a diverse number of different people speaking different languages.

But I think the parallels are that there are a significant number of agreements that have been struck in the Kimberley area by exploration and mining companies that may not have been well publicised. There actually has been quite a positive outcome for native title holders. For instance, we have an MOU in the model agreement between the exploration and mining companies, which now 90 per cent of the serious explorers in the Kimberleys have signed up to. It actually, in some ways, tries to achieve a much more direct process than that offered under the operation for native title, and presents the company director face-to-face with the community so that there is some outcome without having to go through all this objection to process.

The Kimberleys has been advocating a position on regionalism in regard to redefining the role of ATSIC. I mean, ATSIC- poor old buggers getting kicked in the guts all the time- I think people have very little understanding of what ATSIC is. ATSIC really is a supplementary funding agency that has to subsidise normal mainstream services that are not provided by the State. I imagine something like 30 cents in every dollar that leaves Canberra probably ends up in the bush. I think one of the great difficulties is the continued subsidisation of State administration in terms of Aboriginal affairs. That is a microscopic example of one aspect of society. You have to ask what else is happening.
I am getting off your question. I don't know too much about Cape York myself. Indeed, I have never been there. I think what we are presenting is the dynamics of it. There is obviously a significant Aboriginal population. There are significant resource development opportunities in terms of tourism and in terms of fishing and in terms of mining, and petroleum exploration. We have a significant Aboriginal population that is not going away but is currently missing out. If there isn't some agreement, some way to embrace more constructively the involvement of Aboriginal participation in the mainstream economy, then fundamentally the success of those projects is limited in scope, I would suggest.

**Don Blesing:** Thank you, Peter. I think we need to draw this session to a close now.
The theme of the Symposium ‘Australian Values – Rural Policies’ addresses many disparate but related themes that fall generally within the rubric of ecologically sustainable development. Within this paradigm, participants have discussed values that infuse current rural policies and take issue with the interface between these policies and a diverse range of cultural interests. A focus of the Symposium is the way in which the Australian economy is oriented, including an analysis of market-based approaches to regulation. Given the context of the Symposium, this contribution addresses recent trends in the regulation of environmental problems relevant to rural areas. The analysis uncovers a deliberate strategy, driven by National Competition Policy principles, toward deregulation and market mechanisms.

Ecologically sustainable development

The principle of ecologically sustainable development is embedded in notions of environmental regulation at the international, national and local level. This is largely attributable to the 1992 Rio Conference which heralded a new era of environmental law. The purpose of the Conference was to formulate strategies to achieve ‘sustainable development’ worldwide, recognising the interconnectedness of all systems on earth, and the need to protect them. The resultant strategies include Agenda 21, the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Forest Principles.

The Convention on Biological Diversity recognises the need to protect the biodiversity of the planet, since all species and ecosystems are linked in the web of life. The Climate Change Convention provides the framework for ongoing negotiations, like those at Kyoto, to establish maximum permissible emissions of greenhouse gases. This Convention has at its heart the interconnectedness between the climate change phenomenon and the polluting activities of every country. Finally, the Forest Principles recognise the crucial link between the health of the forests and the health of the planet. Forests provide homes for diverse indigenous communities, they act as ‘sinks’ for greenhouse gases, and sustain megadiverse ecosystems. All systems in the forest depend on each other for survival, and humanity in turn depends on them.

The Rio Conference did not only produce a substantive vision for sustainability, however. All of the Rio instruments recognise that the sustainability of the earth depends on national responses that are crafted with the fullest possible extent of public participation. They recognise the need to ‘recover a sense of the interconnectedness between communities and the land.’

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1 ‘Sustainable development’ was defined in *Our Common Future* (1987 Report to the UN General Assembly by the World Commission on Environment and Development) as ‘development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.’

2 Forests have been described as ‘sinks’ for pollution because of their ability to absorb pollutants, like carbon, and then release oxygen.

3 Reed, above n8 at 10.
Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development states:

‘Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available.’

Rio and the development of environmental law

It is evident that since the Rio Conference every level of government in Australia has pursued strategies to achieve ecologically sustainable development. The pursuit of ESD has impacted on rural communities as governments have moved to regulate activities that pose a threat to ESD. Regulatory activity is evident in the areas of climate change, native vegetation clearance, the allocation of water resources, salinity and the protection of biological diversity. One of the striking features of this new wave of regulation is the extent to which governments are relying on the market, as well as government/community partnerships to overcome the ills of rural environmental degradation. The new regulatory mechanisms, in fact a feature of deregulation, continue the metamorphosis of environmental regulation which has endured over the last four decades.

Emond has organised the development of environmental law into three stages of consciousness, each influenced by the underlying science of environmental degradation. He has described these stages as symbolic regulation; preventive regulation and mutual or co-operative problem-solving. In the symbolic regulation stage, pollution is seen as a technological problem which can be solved by technical or scientific ‘fixes’, and regulators will focus on prescribing the right technology. This is often described as the best available or practicable technology. Law, regarded as a process for regulating conduct, will regulate discharges of pollutants to achieve an ‘acceptable’ level of pollution.

Environmental law in the stage of preventive regulation differs because the scientific understanding of environmental problems changes. Here, scientists note a new order of pollution. Substances, described as ‘exquisite toxics’, are odourless, colourless, and tasteless yet they are deadly and cause birth defects, allergies and mutations. Many are bioaccumulative. An understanding of the fact that environmental problems are highly complex, interdependent and polycentric begins to develop. The legislative response is increased regulation, including the liability of corporate officers and directors for pollution, new environmental impact assessment legislation, clean up and remediation provisions and environmental auditing.

In the phase of co-operative problem solving, regulators find that their approach has relied too heavily on technocratic solutions and an adjudicative model of dispute resolution. As Emond states, ‘[i]t has proceeded from an adversarial, competitive, rights-oriented model that was destined to siphon off creative energies in a contest of rights regulated only by the logic of justice and due process.’

It may now be necessary to add to Emond’s classification a new regulatory framework that has evolved in the last few years and which will progress in the next decade. The framework is at once a hybrid of the preceding stages of environmental law while embracing market instruments to supplement, if not supercede, state regulation. Governments have begun to design environmental regulatory tools that link financial self-interest with behaviour that is supposed also to be beneficial for the environment. Prevailing economic theory suggests that market forces will not only regulate prices but also prove a more efficient regulator than the state.

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5 Id at 753.
6 Id at 755.
7 Id at 759.
Within this paradigm, it is believed that market mechanisms have a number of advantages over traditional command-and-control strategies. With regard to allocation, market forces are likely to direct resources in a cost-effective manner at a lower overall cost while maintaining environmental quality. Also, the market provides incentives for operators to go beyond compliance to achieve improved standards of environmental performance. By investing in new technology to meet higher standards, it is believed that operators will lower their operational costs and gain a competitive advantage in the market. Finally market mechanisms relieve the state of much of its responsibility for decision-making. Rather, it is individual operators and investors who will regulate their activities to best position themselves in the market.

As well as trusting the market to regulate, another crucial trend in the prevailing move toward deregulation is the establishment of government/community partnerships to manage resources. These partnerships are at once the result of downsizing in the public sector which is now expected to operate as efficiently as the corporate sector, as well as a so-called ‘desire’ by government to regulate ‘in partnership with the community’ in the area of natural resource management. Management committees have been established under the auspices of numerous pieces of legislation including the Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997, the Catchment Management Act 1989, the Rural Fires Act 1997 and the proposed Water Management Act 2000.

These committees, which comprise a majority of community representatives, including landowners and other stakeholders, are vested with onerous statutory functions like the development of management plans for the particular resource. The performance of these functions requires participants to demonstrate a high level of scientific and technical expertise. While the shifting of regulatory responsibility onto the community is portrayed as an indication of government’s eagerness to enhance its participatory programs, it might just as easily be explained as the government expecting the community to undertake a responsibility it no longer has the technical expertise nor resources to execute.

To understand better this development in the regulation of natural resource issues, it is necessary to uncover its genesis within the context of globalisation and the National Competition Policy.

**The genesis of the new environmental regulatory framework**

The spread of economic rationalist policies across the globe has much to do with the process of globalisation - the ‘process through which finance, investment, production and marketing are increasingly dominated by firms (including banks) whose vision and actions are not confined by national borders or national interests’. This process has wrought fundamental changes in the world economy since the 1980s and has four essential characteristics: increased foreign investment in other economies; a reduction in national sovereignty and a shift of power from government to financial institutions owing to the globalisation of financial markets; technology transfers; and deregulation policies. It has been described as economic imperialism – the view that ‘economics [is] an aspect of all life’ where any activity, whose value cannot be adequately determined within the structure of the market, is undervalued. It is the impetus toward deregulation that has most relevance to the changing nature of environmental regulation in Australia.

The deregulation principle was enthusiastically endorsed by the Independent Committee of Inquiry into National Competition Policy chaired by Professor Hilmer.

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The reforms recommended by that Committee are called the National Competition Policy (NCP) which include the review and reform of all laws that restrict competition unless the benefits of the restriction to the community as a whole outweigh the costs and the restrictions are needed to attain the benefits.\textsuperscript{11} The Hilmer Report recommended specifically that legislation be reviewed to strategically surrender regulation in specific areas and to introduce innovative forms of regulation.

In 1995 the Council of Australian Governments agreed to implement the policy. The process of regulation review adopts a deregulatory approach, while using a public interest test\textsuperscript{12} to maintain regulation in spite of its anti-competitive nature. Land use and natural resource approvals systems are prime targets for deregulation under the review process. Indeed, in 1994 the Council of Australian Governments agreed to take action to arrest widespread natural resource degradation and to adopt a water reform process to achieve an efficient and sustainable water industry. The progress of all states and territories in meeting this goal has recently been review by the National Competition Council. Most jurisdictions now have water reform legislation in place with water trading a key feature of the legislation.\textsuperscript{13}

The ideology behind the NCP is the following:

‘A central feature of the National Competition Policy is its focus on competition reform ‘in the public interest’ In this respect, the guiding principle is that competition, in general, will promote community welfare by increasing national income through encouraging improvements in efficiency.’\textsuperscript{14}

Before adopting an ecofeminist critique of these developments, it is instructive to undertake a survey of the natural resource regulation under discussion.

Rural environmental regulation in New South Wales

The trend towards deregulation in the environmental context is in evidence in every jurisdiction in Australia. For present purposes, an analysis of resource management in New South Wales is offered.

- Climate change

As the Rio documents indicate, it is often difficult to quarantine various human environmental impacts within neat categories and provide discrete solutions for the ensuing degradation. While the climate change phenomenon is more often associated with the burning of fossil fuels by electricity generators for consumption by industry, it is clearly relevant in rural areas. Firstly the consequences of global climate change for the rural economy is significant, while agricultural practices themselves contribute to the climate change phenomenon. These processes include the emission of methane by livestock, the release of carbon into the atmosphere by disturbing the soil, as well as the clearing of native vegetation.

Under the Kytoto Protocol to the Framework Convention on Climate Change Australia has committed itself to increasing its carbon emissions to only 8% above 1990 levels between 2008 and 2012.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{11} Other elements of the NCP include: improving efficiency of the economy through competition by removing regulatory impediments to productivity and ensuring that public sector businesses operate along the same market and profit oriented lines as private sector.

\textsuperscript{12} Clause 1(3) of Competition Policy Agreement lists several issues that can be taken into account. These include: government legislation and policies that relate to ecologically sustainable development; social welfare and equity considerations including Community Service Obligations; and the efficient allocation of resources. The burden of proof is on the party claiming the exemption.


\textsuperscript{14} National Competition Council, Considering the Public Interest under the National Competition Policy, Commonwealth of Australia 1996.

\textsuperscript{15} Note that other Annex I parties (which include Australia) have committed themselves to reducing their emission in the commitment period by 5% below their 1990 levels.
The principal mechanism resorted to by State and the Commonwealth governments to achieve this goal is carbon trading. In 1998, the New South Wales government became the first to enact legislation to facilitate carbon trading. Under the Carbon Rights Legislation Amendment Act 1998 (NSW) a carbon sequestration rights is given legal status separately from traditional property rights to the land on which carbon-absorbing timber is grown, and separately from the timber itself. State Forests of New South Wales has been active in attempting to establish the world’s first carbon exchange. It has also entered into agreements with entities to plant forests for which carbon credits will be documented.16 The Commonwealth Australian Greenhouse Office, meanwhile, has released an Emissions Trading Discussion Paper Series.

- **The clearing of native vegetation**

The Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997 (NVCA) provides for the conservation and sustainable management of native vegetation, and prohibits the clearing of land without development consent where the clearing is on land that is not subject to a regional vegetation management plan or on State protected land.17 The Act provides a framework for the conservation and management of native vegetation at a regional level through the implementation of regional vegetation management plans (management plans).

As mentioned above, one of the key features of the Act is the extent to which the planning function is vested in Regional Vegetation Committees. Draft native vegetation management plans may be prepared either by a Regional Vegetation Committee or by the Director-General, who may be directed by the Minister to prepare the plan. The Regional Vegetation Committee is established under the NVCA to prepare and monitor management plans and is made up of: four representatives of rural interests including the NSW Farmers Association; two representatives nominated by the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales; a person who is a non-government member of a Catchment Management Committee; a person who is a member of a LandCare group in the region for which the Committee is established; a person nominated by the local government councils whose areas fall within the Committee’s region; two representatives nominated by the NSW Aboriginal Land Council; representatives of the department of Land and Water Conservation, Agriculture and the National Parks and Wildlife Service, and a person who has recognised scientific expertise relating to native vegetation conservation and management (NVCA s. 51).

- **Water management**

The Water Management Bill 2000 (NSW) establishes a water market and embraces the notion of a government/community partnership. Water Management Committees are expected to prepare water management plans. The Plans will be the primary frame of reference for decision-making regarding the use of water in New South Wales. The following interested and affected parties will be represented on the committees: water user groups, conservation groups, local government, catchment management boards, local Aboriginal communities, numerous government agencies and ‘other interests as required’. Water management plans will be supplemented by Implementation Plans prepared by the Department of Land and Water Conservation which will set out detailed rules for river flows and water access as well as transfer principles and rules supporting the trade of water entitlements.

The Bill also facilitates the establishment of a water market by providing for access entitlements to water which comprise both a share entitlement as well as an extraction entitlement. The share entitlement allocates the holder a share in the total amount of water available for extraction from the water management unit. The share is separate from and not linked to the extraction entitlement which allows water to be extracted at a specified location and at a specified rate. Share entitlements can be traded freely whereas trade in extraction entitlements may vary according to environmental conditions.

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16 See, for example, agreement signed in February 2000 with Tokyo Electric Power Company Inc. for the establishment of 10,000 to 40,000 hectares of greenhouse forests in NSW over the next ten years.

17 Natural Vegetation Conservation Act 1997 SS. 21, 22.
It is interesting to note that the National Competition Council’s (NCC), when undertaking the Second Tranche Assessments for payments under the NCP in 1999, stated that ‘it was not satisfied that New South Wales has in place a comprehensive system of water entitlements backed by the separation of water property rights from land title and a clear specification of entitlement in terms of volume, reliability or transferability.’ The Water Management Bill 2000 is the New South Wales government’s response to the findings of the NCC.

**Rural fires**

The *Rural Fires Act 1997* (RFA) and *Rural Fires Regulation 1997* (RFR) provides for all matters relating to bush fires and controlled burning in NSW. It is the responsibility of the Bush Fire Co-ordinating Committee (the Committee) to plan for bush fire prevention and for co-ordinated bush fire fighting. The Committee consists of 12 members and is chaired by the Commissioner of the NSW Rural Fire Service. Other members include an officer of State Forests of NSW, an officer of the National Parks and Wildlife Service, a person appointed on the recommendation of the Minister for the Environment and representatives of conservation and farming interests. The Committee is responsible for planning in relation to bush fire prevention and co-ordinated bush fire fighting, and for advising the Commissioner on bush fire prevention, mitigation and co-ordinated bush fire suppression.

- **Salinity**

Dry land salinity is one of the most serious environmental problems facing Australian natural resource managers. Although it might well be a natural phenomenon in Australia it has been exacerbated by a number of land use practices. These include the clearing of native vegetation, urban development, river regulation, and the irrigation of crops and pastures. In October 1999, the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council released a Salinity Audit of the Murray-Darling Basin entitled ‘Salt: Our Challenge for the 21st century. The study estimated that the total economic impact of salinity in the Murray-Darling Basin is $46 million per year.

The most important recent initiative to combat salinity is the New South Wales Salinity Summit which was held in March 2000. The Department of Land and Water Conservation has recently released the NSW Salinity Strategy which identifies market based approaches, including salinity trading as key sustainable long-term strategies to address the salinity problem. These mechanisms might include tradeable permits and credits, tax incentives, transferable development rights, land trading and the need for a central brokerage. A New South Wales Experts Group on Salinity has been established and is expected to report by the end of September 2000 on market-based approaches to salinity. This Group comprises leading financiers and economists in New South Wales.

A pilot salinity trade has already been undertaken between State Forests of New South Wales and the Macquarie River Food and Fibre irrigation group. Under the scheme 100 hectares of trees will be planted by State Forests in selected Macquarie sub-catchments on land leased from 600 local landowners. Macquarie will be required to pay a fee for the transpiration service provided by the newly planted trees. In this way it will have purchased salinity control credits.

- **Biodiversity**

Biological diversity includes genetic, species and ecosystem diversity. The conservation of biological diversity is a global environmental concern.

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18 *Rural Fires Act 1997* s. 47.
19 It is estimated that there will be a transpiration rate of 5.35 megalitres of water per hectare per year averaged over 10 years and subject to verification after 4 years.
Article 6 of the Convention on Biological Diversity Convention imposes an obligation on nations to adopt national strategies, plans or programs to conserve biological resources, especially by in situ conservation. It provides for the sustainable use of resources, and a fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from access to genetic resources.

In 1996, the Commonwealth government devised The National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia’s Biological Diversity. The Strategy recognised the need to strengthen activities and improve policies, practices and attitudes to achieve conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It accepted that biological diversity is best conserved in situ, with the cooperation of indigenous peoples and the community in general.

In New South Wales, laws which seek to protect various aspects of biological diversity were enacted even before the Rio Conference. The traditional focus of these laws has been to conserve nature in protected areas. These laws continue to play a vital role in the conservation of biological diversity. However, they have been supplemented by more recent laws like the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995 which reflect the principles of the Convention of Biological Diversity.

Despite these legislative instruments which are primarily command-and-control in nature there are plans afoot to establish a trade in biodiversity credits. These credits might be devised by the planting of new forests in New South Wales and obtaining credits for the establishment of biodiversity ‘reserves’.

**A critique of market-based instruments and government/community partnerships**

A critique of the deregulatory initiatives of the government in New South Wales proceeds from an ecofeminist analysis which assesses the theoretical underpinnings of the process of globalisation and the National Competition Policy. It will be argued that the impact of these processes and policies on natural resource management has been substantial. First, it now generally accepted that the decision-making processes of global capital are insular and lack political legitimacy. The effect of this is that the prevailing economic theory is not tested or contested but simply accepted as given. Feminist economists and ecofeminists would reject the philosophical underpinnings of global capital. Second, the adoption of markets as regulatory instruments removes decision-making from the political influence of interested and affected parties. Third, where vestiges of participation remain the construction of those sites is such that the voices of the ‘other’ may be silenced or marginalised.

**Neoclassical economics deconstructed.**

Many critics of the economic theory which supports globalisation and National Competition Policy principles point to their impacts on both vulnerable groups in society and the environment. As has been noted, the philosophy of economic rationalism, situated in neoclassical economics, claims that economic resources are better allocated through unfettered market forces than by government intervention. Coupled with this economic philosophy is a political philosophy that questions the nature and proper role of the State, favouring a minimal or residual State. There is a loss of faith in government intervention as an appropriate regulator of society.

Neoclassical economics is supported by liberal discourse which promotes ‘rationality, individuality, equality, liberty from interference from others or the State unless justified, the availability of legal rights, and the protection of the private sphere of life which is conventionally deemed to be “not the State’s interest”.’

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20 See, for example, National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW).
In common with neo-classical economics, liberalism prioritises the freedom of the individual, constraints on the powers of the State, and the demarcation of the ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres of life. To fully exercise their autonomy and rationality individuals must be allowed to pursue their own ‘rational life plan’ without undue interference or restriction. Under the neo-classical paradigm, it is expected that social needs will be met when the market is allowed to allocate public goods, without interference from the State, which is regarded as an impediment to the smooth allocation of resources.

Economic rationalism has been described as a theory which ‘is not endowed with reason. Rather, its theoretical basis is deeply flawed. It involves a foolishness which comes from ignoring the lessons of economic history. It is associated with extremism rather than moderation, because it has led to economic policies that have damaged the economic wellbeing of many people.’ Concerns about economic rationalism do not only rest on concern for the individual, however. There is also a great deal of circumspection about the future of community, or society, where neo-classical economics valorises the ‘male’ values of competition, autonomy and self-reliance. Peters argues that, by explaining all human behaviour as individualistic and self-centered, economic rationalism renders invisible the experience of social beings who act out of motives of kinship obligation, duty, or altruism. In addition, these ‘male’ values do not recognise ‘female’ communitarian values of connection, sociality, inclusion, and care and nurturance.

While these critiques do not emanate from ecofeminists, they mirror many ecofeminist concerns about ‘Western capitalist patriarchy’.

What insights does ecofeminist theory offer?

Ecofeminists identify and critique the dualisms in Western patriarchy which are also inherent in neoclassical economics. It is for this reason that ecofeminist theory is useful for, and makes a unique contribution to, the present discussion.

Ecofeminism, described as the Third Wave in feminist theorising, is neither well-understood nor well-represented in current feminist discourse. Ecofeminism describes a diverse range of women’s grassroots, political efforts to prevent environmental degradation, as well as a feminist theory which transforms ‘mainstream’ feminism by linking the exploitation of women to the exploitation of the environment, and Third World/Indigenous cultures. According to ecofeminists, such exploitations are perpetrated by ‘Western capitalist patriarchy’.

At a grassroots level, women in industrialised societies organise to protest against the spraying of chemicals, toxic waste disposal, radiation seepage from nuclear power plants and weapons testing, and the extinction of life on Earth. They do this in order to protect their own health, which is particularly vulnerable to toxic exposure, and because of their social experience of caretaking and nurturing children, the aged and the sick. In Third World economies, ecofeminists are more concerned about access to natural resources like water, fuel, forest products, and food, and the impact of (mal)development, inspired by ‘capitalist patriarchy’, on these resources.

Ecofeminist theory, meanwhile, rests on two principal epistemologies: affinity/spiritual ecofeminism (which is most common) and socialist ecofeminism.

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22 Ibid.
23 Peters, supra note 9 at 173.
24 Stillwell, supra note 9 at 28.
25 Peters, supra note 9 at 180.
26 Ibid.
Affinity ecofeminists emphasise the close interconnection between human biology and social relations. Women’s biology means that they ‘vividly experience their embeddedness in Nature, and can harbour few illusions concerning their freedom and separatedness from the cycles of birth and death.’ Essential to affinity feminism is the belief that women’s menstrual cycles, birth and lactation (their reproductive characteristics) keep them in touch with nature. This strand of ecofeminist thought also incorporates a unique ecofeminist spirituality based on eclectic female- and nature-based hypotheses/religions such as the Gaia hypothesis, paganism, and witchcraft.

Among North American ecofeminists there is a tendency to integrate various Native American spiritual traditions into ecofeminist spirituality. The Native American woman has been regarded as the ‘ultimate ecofeminist’ because of her embodiment of the special relation between women and nature, as well as her membership of a nonpatriarchal culture.

Many ecofeminists also hark back to a time where society was apparently ‘nonhierarchical, nonauthoritarian, and nondualistic.’ At this time, human worship was directed at the Goddess, not the new Father God, while humankind regarded the female divinity as the source of all life and bounty and goodness. Feminists have regarded the Father God as the projection of the male’s patriarchal, domineering and authoritarian attitudes.

Socialist ecofeminists differ from affinity ecofeminists in that they see all humankind as embodied beings, rooted in nature. However, for socialist ecofeminists, women are not naturally more embedded in nature than men. Rather, men have used their positions in the labour market to escape the consequences of their rootedness or embodiment. Socialist ecofeminists believe that environmental problems are attributable to the rise of capitalist patriarchy which promotes an ideology that the Earth and nature may be exploited, for the sake of human progress. Furthermore, capitalism eroded the economic partnerships that existed between men and women who engaged in pre-industrial activities like subsistence-based farming. With the rise of the capitalist economy, the dualisms between men’s paid work in the labour force and women’s unpaid domestic work emerged. While attempting to free themselves from the constraints imposed by nature, men exploit women and nature.

Socialist ecofeminists view both nature and human nature as historically and socially constructed. They integrate both biological reproduction (reproduction of human beings as well as daily life through food, clothing and shelter) and social reproduction (socialisation and legal/political reproduction of the social order).

29 The Gaia hypothesis is that the planet is one single living organism and that cooperation is a stronger force in evolution than competition.
30 Sturgeon, supra note 17 at 264. Although Native American women would agree that Native people suffer the brunt of environmental destruction, there is some resistance among them to being identified as ecofeminist. It is argued that many white ecofeminists fail to fully embrace an anticolonialist ideology and do not join with Indian communities to struggle against their genocide and to halt resource development projects that destroy their lands. Indeed, ecofeminists have been accused of spiritual imperialism when they appropriate Native culture for their own ends; see Sturgeon, Ibid. at 270; Andy Smith, ‘Ecofeminism Through an Anticolonial Framework’ in Warren, supra note 17 at 30.
31 Sturgeon, supra note 17 at 264. Although Native American women would agree that Native people suffer the brunt of environmental destruction, there is some resistance among them to being identified as ecofeminist. It is argued that many white ecofeminists fail to fully embrace an anticolonialist ideology and do not join with Indian communities to struggle against their genocide and to halt resource development projects that destroy their lands. Indeed, ecofeminists have been accused of spiritual imperialism when they appropriate Native culture for their own ends; see Sturgeon, Ibid. at 270; Andy Smith, ‘Ecofeminism Through an Anticolonial Framework’ in Warren, supra note 17 at 30.
32 Ibid. Mellor has argued that although ecofeminists claim that there is a strong affinity between women and nature, this recourse to human history, where patriarchal invasions of ancient matriarchal societies are accorded causal significance, points to social constructionism. Ultimately, however, as will be shown later in the piece, when ecofeminism’s relationship with postmodernism and poststructuralism is discussed, a radically social constructivist approach is rejected; see Mellor, supra note 17 at 57.
33 Ibid. at 60.
Unlike affinity ecofeminists who believe that spiritualism is the driver of social change, socialist ecofeminists regard materialism as the ultimate agent of change. Nature is transformed by human science and technology which should be used to develop a sustainable, equitable relationship with nature to ensure a high quality of life for all human. However, according to socialist ecofeminists, capitalism regards western science and technology as being inherently progressive, unmindful of the fact that such ‘progress’ often denigrates ancestral cultures and destroys diverse and complex ecosystems. The socialist ecofeminist project entails the achievement of an egalitarian socialist state in which men and women are resocialised into ‘nonsexist, nonracist, non-violent, anti-imperialist forms of life.’

• **Common themes**

The common theme that unites ecofeminists is their view that capitalist patriarchy, with its reliance on science and technology, has impacted harshly not only on women, but also on the environment and ‘others’, particularly Third World The dualisms inherent in Western patriarchy are twofold: societal dualism and dualistic patterns of knowledge. Ecofeminists claim that Western society bifurcates man/woman, public/private, society/nature, and mind/body, while Western patterns of knowledge bifurcate reason/emotion, abstract/concrete, and expert/vernacular and Indigenous people. While ecofeminists identify substantially with mainstream feminist theorising, the links that they draw between patriarchy’s impact on women, the environment and ‘others’ is distinct.

• **Dualisms in Western society**

The dualisms in Western society are traced to Plato, who contributed to a ‘hyperseparated conception of the human’ by separating the world of ideas from human embodiment. Women, who in Greek culture were associated with nature, or household production and carnal sexuality, and were divorced from the world of ideas. Rationality, freedom and transcendence over nature came to represent Western culture, where humans are apart from or ‘outside of’ nature. This backgrounding of nature, exacerbated by the culture of modernity, has allowed economic systems to develop which have externalised nature, women and ‘others’ from economic calculations and considerations.

• **Dualisms in Western patterns of knowledge**

Ecofeminists argue that Western scientific thought, supported by its inherent hierarchical dualisms, simplifies and rationalises human and nonhuman nature.

Shiva, who writes from the perspective of a Third World ecofeminist, shows how, in India, culturally sustainable woman-nature relationships have been undermined by imported scientific techniques. The science and technology, imported from the West in the name of development, has destroyed Indigenous women’s agricultural and resource management expertise developed over thousands of years.

By confronting the dualisms inherent in Western society and Western ways of knowing, both affinity and socialist ecofeminists seek to construct a society that is egalitarian and ecologically sustainable. Ecofeminists believe that women can play a key role in the transition from an unsustainable to a sustainable world.

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34 Carolyn Merchant, ‘Ecofeminism and Feminist Theory’ in Diamond and Orenstein, supra note 17 at 103.
35 Ibid. at 104.
36 Mohanty defines the Third World as ‘geographically, the nation-states of Latin America, the Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, South and Southeast Asia, China, South Africa, and Oceania.’ Included in her definition of Third World people are ‘black, Latino, Asian, and indigenous people in the US, Europe, and Australia, some of whom have historic links with the geographically defined third world and who also refer to themselves as Third World peoples.’; see Chandra Talpade Mohanty, ‘Introduction: Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism’ in Chandra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo and Lourdes Torres (eds), Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991) at 5.
37 Mellor, supra note 17 at 113.
38 Vandana Shiva, ‘Development as a New Project of Western Patriarchy’ in Diamond and Orenstein, supra note 17 at 189.
Feminist economists ‘deconstruct’ the notion of the ‘economic man’ who participates autonomously in ‘the market’ to which utilities are transferred.

It will be remembered that neo-classical economics claims that economic resources are better allocated through unfettered market forces than by government intervention. Coupled with this economic philosophy is a political philosophy that questions the nature and proper role of the State, favouring a minimal or residual State. There is a loss of faith in government intervention as an appropriate regulator of society.

Many feminist economists ‘find an ahistorical, disembodied account of economics bizarre. In the extreme it suggests that the ideals and definitions of economics have been given to humankind through divine intervention, or perhaps dropped from a Friedmansque helicopter.’ Rather, economics has been developed by human actors in a particular social, cultural, economic and political milieu.

Feminists reject the concept of ‘economic man’ as the metaphor for all economic behaviour. This metaphor is so named because neoclassical economics depends upon an autonomous, rational and separative self, making cost-benefit type analyses in order to maximise their utility, in accordance with preferences that are already given and do not change. Neo-classical economics assumes that economic decision-making can be separated from the rest of social life. The ‘economic man’ metaphor excludes those who are not autonomous, privileged and free to choose like women, the young, the old, people with disabilities, political refugees (and so on). Such people often live in a state of helplessness or unchosen dependency.

Feminist economists rely on the ‘economic man’ metaphor to argue that science (and economics) have been constructed according to masculine ideals. Harding, for example, writes:

‘Mind vs. nature and the body, reason vs. emotion and social commitment, subject vs. object and objectivity vs. subjectivity, the abstract and the general vs. the concrete and particular – in each case we are told that the former must dominate the latter lest human life be overwhelmed by irrational and alien forces, forces symbolized in science as the feminine. All these dichotomies play important roles in the intellectual structures of science, and all appear to be associated both historically and in contemporary psyches with distinctively masculine sexual and gender identity projects.’

Essentially, feminists claim that knowledge is socially constructed and that it is false to assume that science yields objective truths. Rather than assume that feminine, or other, knowledge be ‘added to’ science, scientists/experts should engage in a community-wide ‘transformative interrogation’ to ensure that the ultimate hypothesis does not reflect a single individual’s idiosyncratic assumptions about the natural world.

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40 Simon Duncan and Rosalind Edwards, ‘Lone mothers and paid work – rational economic man or gendered moral rationalities’ (1997) 3(2) Feminist Economics 29 at 32.
43 Ibid. at 25.
The claim that ecofeminists can depend upon feminist critiques of ‘the market’ becomes credible once the dualisms, identified by feminists in neo-classical economics, and those which ecofeminists identify as underpinning ‘Western patriarchy’, especially Western ways of knowing, are compared. The following table indicates their similarities:

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<td>economy, State/family</td>
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<tr>
<td>man/woman</td>
<td>patriarchy/woman, ‘others’</td>
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<td>rational/emotional</td>
<td>reason/emotion</td>
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<td>mind/body</td>
<td>ideas/human embodiment</td>
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<td>historical/natural</td>
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<td>objective/subjective</td>
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<td>science/humanities</td>
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<td>economics/sociology</td>
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<td>competitive/nurturant</td>
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<td>independent/dependent45</td>
<td>hyperseparated/community</td>
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The intersections between these dualistic constructions points to the fact that ecofeminists might well find that their critique of Western patriarchy is equally appropriate for a distinctive analysis of the processes of environmental management currently under discussion.

**Ecofeminist theory and the new wave of natural resource management**

- **Natural resource markets**

It will be remembered that the National Competition Council has claimed that ‘the guiding principle is that competition, in general, will promote community welfare by increasing national income through encouraging improvements in efficiency.’ It is clear, from the preceding discussion, that the claims of the NCC, grounded in neoclassical economics, may be subjected to the scrutiny of ecofeminist theory.

The National Competition Policy was formulated within a particular theoretical paradigm that does not take account of feminist and ecofeminist concerns about neo-classical economics and the market. Moreover it will be remembered that the Rio Declaration recognises that the sustainability of the earth depends on national responses that are crafted with the fullest possible extent of public participation. However, consistently with National Competition Principles, the economy, markets and money are increasingly differentiated as ‘coordinating structures’ of society46 rather than states, bureaucracies and the law.

A fundamental question for ecofeminists is who will participate in these markets which ostensibly regulate a public good – the environment? The preceding feminist analysis of the market foreshadows the ecofeminist concern that participation in the market will be unequal. Not only that, markets operating as erstwhile natural resource managers may impact on women, Indigenous people and the environment. Markets do not exercise caution or intervene to redress imbalances in the public interest, neither do they do it to protect discrete interests. As neoclassical economic theory insists, the market will allocate resources to the highest value use, not necessarily to those most in need of it.

In 1994 it was reported that within rural Aboriginal communities there were 21,000 Aboriginal people living in communities without a reticulated water supply.

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45 Ann L. Jennings, ‘Public or Private: Institutional Economics and Feminism’ in Ferber and Nelson, supra note 54 at 121.
In addition there are 19,000 Aboriginal people living in communities where water supply schemes are insufficient to meet reasonable water demands and up to 30,000 whose water supply fails to meet water quality guidelines. In 1999, the supply of water to 58 of 64 communities failed to meet adequate standards.

The consequences of allocation failure for the environment are evident. One of the essential features of water law reform has been the recognition that past practices of over-allocation have impacted heavily on species, river health, ecosystems and wetlands. Recent legislation attempts to address this by reserving from the amount of water that is allocatable an amount to protect the environment. While previous allocations did not prevent environmental degradation, there is no guarantee that market principles will redress this difficulty. While the market may move resources to their highest value use, this use might not be the most ecologically sustainable use over the long term.

• Markets and decision-making

The shift in power from bureaucratic decision-making to financial markets diminishes the opportunity to participate in decision-making over allocations and management. This is significant for there have been insistent and persistent calls for public participation in decision-making relating to natural resources. The only space for participation that is left open in the current milieu is participation in statutory committees like those enumerated above.

One might question at this juncture whether, under the guise of creating opportunities for participation in administrative decision-making, the state has not effectively divested itself of its regulatory responsibilities. These committees, which comprise a majority of community representatives, including landowners and other stakeholders, are vested with onerous statutory functions like the development of management plans for the particular resource. The performance of these functions requires participants to demonstrate a high level of scientific and technical expertise. Their capacity to respond varies. Importantly, the membership of these committees tends to overlap in which case individuals and organisations in the community experience participation fatigue. This model of government has become an unfortunate necessity as a result of the downsizing and deskilling of government departments. The shifting of regulatory responsibility onto the community is portrayed, cynically, as an indication of government’s eagerness to enhance its participatory programs.

What insights can ecofeminist theory offer here?

• Ecofeminism and participation

Even though there is a place for Aboriginal and environmental representation on these committees, ecofeminist theory would criticise the rational/technical scientific paradigms that are the mainstay of such committees. For there to be any real participation in these or any other resource decision-making a way has to be found to be inclusive of other ways of ‘knowing.’

Buege, distinguishes ‘responsible knowing’ from Western scientific thought. ‘Responsible knowing’ acknowledges knowers; emotions; understanding; normative realism; and community.

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48 Australian Bureau of Statistics, ‘Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Australia, 1999’, ABS Catalogue No 4710.0, Canberra, 27 April 2000, cited by Ball at n17.
Knowers - Buege claims that Western theories of knowledge have failed to recognise and validate individual knowers, whose knowledge is shaped by time, place, culture, and environment. Inuit knowers, for example, are influenced by their Arctic environment as well as by their social structures. Where knowers develop relationships with their environment, environmentally responsible knowing will emerge.50

Emotions – responsible knowing acknowledges that emotions are central to cognitive practice and that oppressed people’s knowledge of the world is inextricably linked with emotions.51

Understanding – understanding involves a complex and holistic way of knowing, and to understand one’s natural environment one has to know how activities will impact on that environment.52

Normative realism – responsible knowing requires that people understand how the world is. So the Inuit, for example, need to integrate their own traditions with First World colonialism in order to survive.53

Community – environmentally responsible knowers ought to share their knowledge with the community, although colonialism has impacted upon Indigenous people to the extent that their conveyance of traditional knowledge is affected.54

Moreover, the domination of women has an important bearing on their ability to participate in the negotiation of environmental plans and policies. Feminist writers have claimed that political theory, which advocates public participation as a means for advancing participatory democracy, has failed to address issues which impede the participation of women. Central to feminist scholarship is the rejection of a clear dichotomy between non-political/private and political/public spheres in society. For present purposes, the public/private dichotomy breaks down because the division of domestic labour raises psychological and practical barriers against women in all other spheres of their lives. In liberal democratic politics, for example, speech and argument are crucial components of full participation. However, women are often handicapped by being deprived of any ‘authority’ in their speech. Women have not learnt to be in positions of authority and are often represented in token numbers in influential positions both in the workplace and on political bodies.55

All of these issues lead to other concerns which cannot be easily overcome. These issues include:

Power imbalances

One of the primary concerns about the use of mediation to formulate environmental rules is that an imbalance of power amongst the parties may produce an undesirable environmental outcome.56 It might, of course, prevent parties from participating at all. A power imbalance is likely to occur where parties to the process have unequal access to resources. Resources include not only economic resources but the advantage of a sound education, an ability to speak the dominant language, an ability (geographically) to reach the site of the negotiations, and so on. Economic power is likely to have an important bearing in this context. It is often associated with high educational levels, and language skills, or an ability to employ specialists to interpret information. Those who lack economic power might find that their ability to participate equally in the process is diminished.

50 Ibid. at 104.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid. at 105.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid. at 106.
• **Data conflict**

Unequal economic power is acute in the environmental context where the scientific and technical nature of the problem is likely to be complex. Unequal access to scientific and technical expertise would be a significant disadvantage. As Bacow and Wheeler note, "[r]egulatory decisions more frequently than not turn on mathematical models that are based upon simplifying assumptions. This produces a situation ripe for conflict. Because modelling is expensive, there is a tradeoff between accuracy and cost."57 In any case, in the environmental sciences, where systems are often particularly complex by nature, it would be foolhardy to conceive of "science as a source of hard facts and objective truth."58 Ormerod states that:

“Science and law are systems of knowledge or inquiry which share a common fundamental goal: the seeking of the truth. However, data or “facts” that are relied upon to form conclusions and make decisions are only considered to be facts because we believe that they contain truth and because they serve the purpose to which they are put.”

He states further that both quantitative and qualitative uncertainty are inherent features of a scientific framework, concluding that “scientific truth is relative and not absolute ... most scientific truths are probably wrong.”

• **Cross cultural issues**

As mentioned above, a failure to appreciate cultural differences may be fundamentally disempowering to a negotiating party. Indigenous Australians, for example, are an important interest group in environmental rulemaking. Yet, as many writers59 have shown, they may be disadvantaged by race, geographical isolation and by a higher level of disability than that of the general population. Their language skills and level of education may be low. They are likely to have significantly different religious beliefs and behavioural patterns. 60 For example, Aboriginal peoples’ view of their cultural heritage as an intrinsic part of their self-identity is often at odds with Eurocentric definitions of heritage.

**Conclusions**

This paper has sought to bring together the themes of the conference and to use ecofeminism as a theoretical basis to analyse the move towards market instruments to regulate and manage natural resources. It has been argued that the foundational principles underpinning the concept of the market is inimical to ecofeminist thought. The paper has raised questions about what some of the impacts of market regulation might be, and has indicated how the trend to deregulation has also encouraged governments to shift important regulatory responsibility to communities. Ecofeminism is useful in understanding why it is that formal representation on statutory bodies does not necessarily mean that the views of those represented will be adequately taken account of, or even understood.

Finally, there is no guarantee that the new wave of natural resource regulation will achieve the goals of *Rio* – public participation in the achievement of ecologically sustainable development.

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59 Astor, H and Chinkin, C *Dispute Resolution in Australia* (1992); Monture-Okanee, P, “Alternative Dispute Resolution: A Bridge to Aboriginal Experience” in Morris, C and Pinie, A (eds) *Qualification for Dispute Resolution: Perspectives on the Debate*, University of Victoria Institute for Dispute Resolution; see, also, Blackford, C and Matunga, H, “Assuring Justice in Cross-Cultural Environmental Mediation” in Blackburn and Bruce, above n2 at 185-201.
Discussion
Chair: Don Blesing

Don Blesing: Any questions?

Snow Barlow: What we are really on about in this instance is to throw up some ideas that might develop another paradigm that could be more value-based rather than economically-based.

Rosemary Lyster: I agree with you absolutely. I did not say that I thought the market was the right way of allocating resources.

Snow Barlow: I think you said that was the reality, governments are going that way.

Rosemary Lyster: Oh, yes, actually I am fairly convinced of that. I am not saying at the same time that we shouldn't be trying to develop an alternative. In fact, I think that is what our responsibility is. I don't think it is something that we should give up on.

Actually, this brings me back to something else. We had a seminar at the Sydney Law School just last week on globalisation, and one of the questions about that was: how do we make these global systems of management more transparent like the IMF or the World Bank - or whatever it was. One of the suggestions from the audience was that you obviously need more participation. You need to have more interested and affected parties involved. But the response to that, I think it is a good one, is that we are not talking about adding procedures. We don't need more procedures. We actually need to fundamentally be asking the question. I think that is the point of this whole conference.

Snow Barlow: You get different answers.

Rosemary Lyster: Well, of course you will. Yes.

Tony Gleeson: Thanks, Rosemary. I enjoyed your presentation. I think too often we confuse the purpose and the mechanism. It seems to me that a properly purposed market is quite a good thing. It is not so much a question of whether or not we use the market but the context in which we use it. That seems to me to be the challenge.

Rosemary Lyster: Absolutely but I think it is not only that. I think if we realise that there are weaknesses in a market oriented system, whether you are using it to manage your natural resource or whatever, then we need to ask the question as to what we are you going to do about it? Are we going to expect government to intervene to correct those weaknesses? So I am not saying that markets are a bad thing.

Felicity Stewart: Just expanding on the same old argument-at the international law level we have had a most remarkable decision coming out from the Gabcikouo-Nagyamaros case, where the International Court, particularly Judge Weeramantry, called sustainable development ergo omnes which is very close to the highest principle of law you can get in international law. It also facilitated a process for the first time that we go beyond sovereignty. Sustainable development is one of the few principles that can do that. I think what I am reading into that case is that there is a definite move towards making governments responsible to each other for sustainable development in decision-making, not the actual process of development per se. It is saying that you must now make decisions, the outcome of which incorporate the objectives of sustainable development.

I would be interested to hear how you are see this is going to impact. From my perspective, I see it impacting directly in government decision-making and judicial decision-making, particularly with judicial review.
Rosemary Lyster: I think that certainly is something that came out of Rio, the idea that all governments are responsible now to achieve sustainable development by integrating all of their plans and programs and policies and so on; in other words, integrating environmental, economic and social considerations. Part and parcel of that was that the sustainable development policy issue should be developed with public participation.

You will see in my paper I Principle 10 of the Rio declaration. I suppose one of my points about the market is that it does remove, to a certain extent, those questions about resource allocation from a public participation framework.

To get back to your question about international law, I think that we can see international processes in a globalisation context as being very beneficial because that's what governments did say, that we all have to achieve sustainable development. We have so many international and environmental law conventions which are global in their nature and which require governments to do various things that are generally good for the environment.

At the same time we have the other aspect of globalisation which is deregulate your economies and so on, and that's a reason why we have Seattle and so on our hands, because it has negative impacts on the environment. So I think you have to see it from both perspectives. I am not sure to what extent national competition policy in Australia is linked to the more global phenomenon that is, if you want to participate in this global market, then you have to deregulate your own economies.

George Wilson: You were very hard on the markets, I thought, in the presentation. It is probably worth reflecting that the market is the foundation of one of the most highly held values in our society, and that is freedom. It is the place where people are able to operate to make their own choices, to express their individuality and to be free. We need to remember that as well.

Rosemary Lyster: Yes, but in the paper I go into a lot more detail about why people have such serious concerns about the market, and it is for that precise reason that it actually valorises those ideas of individualism and so on. There are other communities and societies and so on that don't construct themselves in that way. So you do have a conflict between other values and market values. So that is the whole question.

George Wilson: But the freedom itself is an extremely important value.

Rosemary Lyster: It is one way of receiving your freedom.

Bob Beeton: This notion of different ways of knowing, and things related to it, tends to hang off the sustainable argument as well as a whole lot of other national resource and environmental arguments-this creates a slight problem for me, that is if you reflect on, say, the science of Southern Australia, we really knew what was happening to the environment probably 50 or more years ago. But there were people in the decision-making processes who knew better and they prevailed. So institutionalised ignorance is the basis of what we are now confronted with. There is a risk in some of what you say, at least, that we could institutionalise another form of ignorance with hugely damaging consequences.

So I am putting an amber light up there, saying we need to be a bit more careful and reflective before we embrace the next best thing and go charging off that pathway and leave it to another generation to clean up that mess.

Rosemary Lyster: I remember going to a conference, a National Environmental Lawyers' Association Conference, in about 1996, which dealt specifically with the interface between science and law. There must have been four scientific papers that were presented at that conference where scientists said: look, we would say that our predictions and what we know have an error rate of anything between 5-50 percent. Even we know that science is something which can be negotiated".
I think that is the point that is being made, that maybe science isn't as hard and fast and quite as clear-cut as we would like to think it is. That is the reason for the precautionary principle.

**Bob Beeton:** The problem is that the alternative way is even less accurate in its confidence limits. Confidence limits are a particular construction that can be used in cross-examination to show doubt about certainty. But, nonetheless, they ought not to be used as a way of saying that using a ouija board is as good as good science practice.

**Rosemary Lyster:** Absolutely. Yes.

**Gordon Gregory:** One of the reasons that the current market system has got such bad press is because the prices are only partial. They don't measure the full cost, the full price. One of our options is to improve the market by costing our priced goods. To hear you say just now that the problem with certain markets is that they don’t reflect other values is tantamount to saying that the prices are not comprehensive. To hear someone in my working group say earlier that Sydney Water won bids for that allocation of water with lots of ecological consequences which weren't accounted for is tantamount to saying of course they should be accounted for.

Why is it that those people, who argue for a better national account system, that I call a genuine project indicator, are still regarded as lunatic fringe? One of the things, perhaps, we can do is to make this more mainstream and more sensible, because it clearly is more sensible.

Everybody knows that many of the costs of the big cities in Australia, are not priced and, therefore, the relative cost in the eyes of government of doing something in a rural area is so much higher because, you know, "we don't have a full picture". I don't know whether the market system in a general system is the best, but certainly we don't even have a good market system because, as I see it, it is not comprehensively measured and we can do much, much better.

**Rosemary Lyster:** I think the diversity of opinion is really good because that is exactly what conferences are all about- opening up these kinds of questions.

**Don Blesing:** On that note we will say thank you, Rosemary.
10 Cooperation and Tolerance: restoring our economic system
Onko Kingma and Ian Falk

Abstract

This paper argues that present institutional settings in rural Australia are inadequate for the task of bringing about a culture which is fair and inclusive. The solution is seen to lie in policies for rural Australia that support an infusion of new values into our institutions – values associated with the development of bridging ties and relationships through cooperation, goodwill, common-wealth and tolerance. Design and re-design of institutions with such qualities will require engagement of the community in new ways. In the first instance, informed debate is required on values and options, involving analysis of scenarios for and the implications of, change. Concepts of ‘community’ must be revived in the context of a lifelong learning culture supported by social capital. Revised approaches to work and learning, improved processes for community and stakeholder involvement, policies to more actively involve women, a central role for the arts, and re-assessment of property rights arrangements, are seen to be important tools for change.

The Short Paper

The basic premise of this paper is that a vision for rural Australia based dominantly on a market economy and attendant policies and institutions which reinforce market outcomes as the preferred outcome for society, may not lead to the type of society we might want in the 21st Century.

Such a vision allows the means (the market) to determine the ends, where the ends are, by default, the characteristics of society which emerge from economic actions within market.

The institution of ‘the market’ is itself a sound instrument for the transfer of information and for bringing buyers and sellers together. However, unless markets operate within an appropriate institutional framework which does not alienate people or erode social capital, then market outcomes may not express the preferences of society as a whole.

An institutional framework directed solely to market solutions can have the potential to contradict important social, cultural and spiritual values and lead to overemphasis on materialism and competition, and foster selfish individualism and greed. These characteristics can also have the potential to undermine ‘community’ and the very fundamentals which make markets work - trust and the security that transactions and other dealings will be reliable and honoured. Research shows a strong community precedes and is a precondition for strong and sustainable markets.

A preferred way is to re-establish sustainable communities in which people are empowered and participate fully and effectively. This requires the design of institutions which give expression to ‘community’, cooperation, goodwill, spiritual growth, caring, tolerance and (positive) social capital, and which lead to congruence between market outcomes and what people want.

This latter situation requires engagement of the community in a new way and better articulation of, and debate on, what it is we want and what sort of society we wish to live in - debate on values is required to clarify our goals (ends) and facilitate development of strategies to achieve these. This must be done in an holistic way to avoid piecemeal solutions.

Prior agreement on goals and strategies would then allow us to devise best ways (the means) to achieve these – the best means may still be the market but, rather than be left to generate their own outcomes, markets would likely be moulded through institutional change, to achieve the required goals.
The nature and quality of institutions and the processes to change these are therefore seen as crucial to bring about a learning culture and produce social capital. In this regard, areas where policy action can act as a catalyst for institutional change might be: encouragement of local processes and leadership; strengthening of communities; encouragement of participatory consultation and decision making; facilitation of local trading schemes; introduction of different concepts of work; support for minimum incomes; regulatory action to encourage tailoring of the scale of business and institutions to local conditions; expansion of community cultural development through the arts; and the fostering of diversity and the empowerment of women.

1. Introduction

Few areas in our society stand out as more in need of policy attention than rural Australia. In its Regional Australia Strategy, the Federal Government (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000) moved some way towards developing a partnership with regional communities and other stakeholders. Similarly, State and Territory Governments have, in various ways, implemented regional policy packages in recognition of the issues in regional areas. Despite these sound policy efforts, more should now be done to develop an inclusive, coherent and integrated policy approach to rural concerns across portfolios and between stakeholders. The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) – National Farmers’ Federation (NFF) (2000) paper states there are clear warnings that landscapes are not being used or managed sustainably, causing corrosion of rural and regional infrastructure and impacting negatively upon our industries and economic and social activity. The ACF-NFF paper argues we need to invest in a strategic vision for sustainable rural landscapes.

We believe the economic and social issues in rural areas cannot be resolved within the present institutional framework. A structural shift in institutions and policies is therefore required to create a more inclusive and fair society. The central issue is creation of social capital through appropriate institutional settings. Social capital is not only the means for bringing about the required change but the product of such change (e.g., Allen, 1998; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). Thus an upward spiral of positive change can be created which integrates economic, environmental and social issues and has the characteristics of cooperation, tolerance, equity and community.

We first outline the reasons for our views and then suggest a number of areas where reform or a shift in policy priorities might be of value. The intention is to provide sufficient discussion to make two related points: (a) biases possible in our mixed capitalist economy are potentially such that handing control of the distributional and allocative process to the market is not likely to 'bring in' the different culture discussed here - analysis and planning is required to ensure expression is given to the wishes of the community before (economic) instruments are set in place – and indeed as important preliminary local input into any external interventions; and (b) answers to our dilemmas do not lie simply in providing greater sanction to the institution of the market and its associated mechanisms - they lie in changing the underlying framework within which we conduct our economic and social activity. Markets will have an important role in such a different culture, but their present status as the only determinant must be broadly challenged as being demonstrably unsuccessful (Rifkin, 1999; Saul, 1997).

2. Key Arguments

2.1 Situation in rural Australia

Rural Australia is undergoing massive change driven by a range of factors, most of which are, but need not necessarily be, outside the control of rural people (Allen, 1999; CRLRA, 2000). Change may occur through such externally driven intervention but the outcome, in general, is unsatisfactory and unsustained (e.g., Hugonnier, 1999), resulting in soured, unhappy and disenfranchised people who mistrust politicians and policy processes. This is because the fundamental (institutional) framework within which people live and work alienates them and debases those values necessary for a sustainable balanced society. Rural statistics show escalation in crime, suicide and social dislocation, all signs of imbalance and unsustainable growth. Inequality has grown and democracy cannot function when inequality grows. The resulting mistrust, which underlies all these symptoms, results in a negative cycle of impoverished social cohesion (Guenther & Falk, 2000; Winter, 2000a).

2.2 Community preferences first – then market outcomes

The spectrum of possible action to change the above is extensive. At one end, it is possible to continue with microeconomic reform and implementation of competition policy in all sectors (including services) with minimum further policy input. Here, there is no major policy issue - the policy means are the market, the ends are the market outcomes. Because the market is thought to express individuals’ preferences, then, under this scenario, the outcomes are allegedly what society wants. No further argument is needed.

At the other end of the spectrum, there is the possibility of a fundamental re-think of values and an innovative policy development process to bring into play new institutions and ways to re-enfranchise rural Australia. Here we first want to know the ends or outcomes we want and only then should we turn attention to the means or best ways to achieve these ends. There are major new policy issues here. The means may in many cases still be the market but under this scenario, new institutional settings could well generate totally different market outcomes.

We argue that the latter end of the spectrum is in fact the only one that will produce trusted and sustainable outcomes for the economy and the improvement of social cohesion. That is, we argue for the re-establishment of sustainable communities in which people are empowered and participate through the development of coherent common community goals, in which there is vision that includes individual as well as institutional and organisational aspirations and values, broadly based (but not only business) leadership and where there is congruence between market outcomes and what people want.

As noted, markets will still play a vital role in this latter case but markets become tools for achieving a common purpose, rather than being regarded as ends in their own right. Importantly, an outward looking, global orientation and efficient business is still relevant to this scenario. We must stay with the world and be open to all challenges.

Some say that this is a debate we have already had and, indeed, forums like the Regional Australia Summit have successfully resulted in achieving a higher profile on the issues and tradeoffs (see Regional Australia Summit Steering Committee, 2000).8 However, the wider debate in this context, is still very much from the viewpoint of the established policy position.

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8 Regional Australia Summit Steering Committee (2000). ‘Interim Report to The Hon John Anderson, Deputy Prime Minister’, 14 April.
There are other ways. Solutions include changing the institutions within which people live and work - change institutions and you change behaviour and hence market outcomes. Examples of some changes in institutions are discussed in Section 3.3 in relation to developing 'learning communities' and in Section 3.9 in relation to the arts.

Institutions can be broadly defined as the set of acceptable behavioural rules that govern action and relationships – social norms, ways of doing things and ways in which individuals and groups interact to achieve ends. These norms are given expression through property rights, regulations and law. By giving access to income streams and power, institutions largely determine the distributional characteristics of society. Who benefits and loses from institutional arrangements? who seeks to acquire property rights? And, who does not have access to property rights? Are all important questions.

The term "social capital" is closely linked to the term "institutions". Social capital, discussed in more detail in Section 3, is the networks, norms, trust and bonding, bridging and linking ties involved in working together (Winter 2000a,b; Latham, 2000). Its hallmarks are reciprocal activities such as cooperation, sharing, giving to others and goodwill - the very opposite to self-ish competition. Social capital has no meaning outside of human relationships - it is the glue of relationships and facilitates economic and social activity. Social capital is embedded in the relationships between people and created by families, communities and regions and the nation as a whole for the benefit of all members. The capacity to motivate and activate our knowledge, physical and human resources is dependent upon the stock of positive social capital.

2.3 Values important

Our mixed capitalist society fosters 'self-ish' individualism (i.e. rational, self-maximising behaviour). There is a growing gulf between our preferred values (equity, egalitarianism, etc) and what we practice (self-ish competitiveness, aggressive individualism, materialism). Economic growth is increasingly at the expense of other equally important values of 'community', while social and cultural problems are reduced to the economic. This can be destructive of inclusive values and attempts to synthesise economic, social, environmental, cultural and spiritual goals (Bradberry et al, forthcoming; Cox, 1995; Latham, 2000; Winter, 2000b).10

We argue society, including the market, now needs to be re-infused with values of cooperation, goodwill, common-wealth and compassionate respect for each other (tolerance) and life. When more inclusive goals such as sharing, cooperation, goodwill, spiritual growth, caring and concern are increasingly valued and recognised in policy formation processes, then current values like greed, selfishness, competitiveness and materialism will no longer be the sole drivers of markets (for a discussion of these points see Winter, 2000a).11

Infusion of such new values into our institutions will give the key to a sustainable future. A debate about values is therefore important, and this debate must come prior to implementation of policy.

2.4 New institutions as the solution

The above really stakes out a claim that the fundamental economic model underlying (rural) reform is not of itself flawed but that it is the institutional characteristics and arrangements within which this model operates, which are wanting.

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11 Refer to footnote 7 for Winter (a)
It is the settings in which markets are asked to work which gives expression to economic and social behaviour. Where authority and detailed outworking for these settings is left to the market (i.e. to those with vested interests in ensuring personal outcomes and gain) then, by default, markets will reinforce current institutional settings and will also give biased outcomes favouring those with existing property rights. The result is reinforcement of the industrial system as it is, to the detriment of social capital, equity and balanced social development (Winter, 2000a,b; Latham, 2000; Stewart-Weeks, 2000).12

The solution to this problem (and the hard work) lies in collaboratively designing new institutions which give expression to the above values (see, for example, Cox, 1995, 2000; Latham, 2000; Winter, 2000a; Stewart-Weeks, 2000).13 Rifkin (1999)14 has argued the necessary changes will have to come about through regeneration of the ‘Civil Sector’ in our society (see Section 3.3). This is difficult as it requires engagement of the community in a new way. It requires answers to questions like: who are the beneficiaries and losers of economic change and what constitutes social democracy and a fair distribution of wealth? Also, and unfortunately, redesign of institutions, by definition, involves changing property rights - the rights and privileges of those in power. Such change is almost always opposed because of the potential for those with present rights and power to lose. Such change is also almost always lost, because those in power also have the resources – money and control of democratic processes - to either not take up or prevent change.

It has been argued in the above sections that, in a society founded largely on neoclassical economic principles, there is likely to be the potential to contradict important social, cultural and spiritual values. More importantly, these principles in action (such as self-ish individualism and competitiveness) have the potential to undermine the very fundamentals which make markets work - trust and the security that transactions and other dealings are reliable and will be honoured. Right economic relationships and concepts of trust, sharing, cooperation and stewardship are therefore more than superficially important (Stewart-Weeks, 2000).15

3. Cornerstones of New Policy

In the process of shifting to a different culture, we must be cautious not to reject important parts of present policies. We must continue to encourage expression of entrepreneurial drive, adoption of new technologies and striving to realise individual and group potential. Sound policies will always be required in areas such as: Commercial enterprise and forging of strong market driven linkages between sectors, regional communities and industries, consistent with policies for value adding, food and food safety, quarantine, health, and so on; Productivity growth to foster an efficient and technically advanced rural industry base which is commercial and market oriented and which encourages sound risk management, structural change and uptake of appropriate technologies; A strong capital base to facilitate development of natural and other resources consistent with ecologically sustainable development and social justice principles and using leading edge technologies and management processes, and encompassing financial/investment, human, knowledge, infrastructure and physical capital; and Information and knowledge to monitor and analyse the impact of change in farming communities and assess the effectiveness of policies across jurisdictions, including bringing about adequate decision support in areas ranging across provision of information markets, lifelong learning and education/training, telecommunications infrastructure, and so on.

The importance of these policies and the need for an outward looking, global orientation in policy and economic activity is not at issue here - we must stay with the world and be open to all challenges – be drivers of change rather than be driven by it.

14 Refer to footnote 4
15 Refer to footnote 12
In a similar context, policy and program elements of the Federal Government’s Regional Australia Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000)\(^\text{16}\) and the various regional initiatives of State and Territory Governments are a valuable part of a movement towards a more inclusive society. The Regional Australia Strategy embodies principles which recognise the need to involve and listen to stakeholders and is built upon the platforms of economic and business management, equity of services and community empowerment. As such, the Strategy will help in a shift towards the ‘different’ society noted above.

What is important at this time is how we deepen the impetus for a shift to a different culture. Preconditions are a debate on values and options, analysis to inform this debate, a stocktake of our resources and their potential and clarification of rights/responsibilities and obligations/privileges of individuals and groups. The role of ‘civil society’ will be important in this context (Rifkin 1999).\(^\text{17}\) Some requirements and topics for debate to change institutions are discussed below.

3.1 Return to Community

There are many ways in which the term community is used. Hamilton and Barton (1998, p.251)\(^\text{18}\) have discussed the amorphous nature of community while Wild (1981, p.14)\(^\text{19}\) identifies four broad characteristics of community as: common identity; a physical location with geographic boundaries; a social system; and an ideal structure for living. Kenny (1994)\(^\text{20}\) has outlined early conceptions of community from a sociological perspective, noting the importance of the work of Durkheim (1960)\(^\text{21}\) and Toennies (1987)\(^\text{22}\), where community types are organised into two broad clusters - communities of commonality and kinship on the one hand, and communities of difference and competition on the other. In addition, Lave and Wenger (1991)\(^\text{23}\) discuss ‘communities of practice’ as groups of people in workplaces who share some common purpose in their engagement over a task to be completed. These definitions capture the fact that communities are defined by their inevitably social practices. However, the definitions do not articulate or elaborate on qualities of those practices related to the interactions between people, places, ideas and things.

Bates and Harvey (1975, p.198)\(^\text{24}\) have recognised the need to include consideration of place or local environment in any conception of community, while stressing this is not the only dimension involved. They argue, “…the human community consists of the behaviour system that exists within a given locality, which acts upon that locality and responds to it in terms of action’. However, Bates and Harvey (1975, p.198)\(^\text{24}\) caution the two ideas of place and community must be thought of as separate entities, since ‘…two different communities can…occupy the same area at different times’ – social interactions spill over geographic boundaries and we can belong to different human systems within a single geographic area.

Taylor and Singleton (1993) have defined community in terms of the following characteristics: a) relations have a certain stability, i.e. participants in the community interact with some degree of regularity; b) members interact on several fronts; (c) relations are unmediated by the state; and d) members have shared beliefs and preferences which go beyond immediate collective action.

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\(^{16}\) Refer to footnote 1
\(^{17}\) Refer to footnote 4
The interactions inherent in Taylor and Singleton’s definition of community are also identified by Bookchin (1990) and Bates (1997) under the broad heading of ‘social ecology’ and by Engestrom and others by ‘distributed cognition’ as a modified form of the activity theory of Vygotsky (see, for example, Cole & Engestrom, 1993). In the final analysis, Wilkinson’s (1991, p. 13) definition of community is probably the most useful, since it clearly relates community to interaction: ‘Sociological definitions emphasize interpersonal bonds such as shared territory, a common life, collective actions, and mutual identity. The essential ingredient is social interaction. Social interaction delineates a territory as the community locale; it provides the associations that comprise the local society; it gives structure and direction to processes of collective action; and it is the source of community identity. …The substance of community is social interaction’.

‘Community’ is the field of social interactions between people and their identities as members of groups. These interactions are at the core of successful interpersonal or group transactions, and also therefore at the core of any consideration of social institutions. They lay the basis, in terms of their quality and quantity, for a community’s capacity to meet its present and future needs for change. This argument is supported by Boyle (1981) who sees interaction at the heart of the concept of community and the ‘viable social environment within which change takes place’. Fawcett (1995) has also placed emphasis on the importance of social interactions, linking these to a community’s capacity for change. He has defined community capacity as the community’s ‘ability to pursue its chosen purposes and course of action both now and in the future’ noting that, for positive change to occur, interactions need to take place over a wide range of individual and organisational contacts.

In summary, ‘a community’ will form where issues of shared visions/beliefs/goals, perceptions, access to resources and services, and common causes are evident. The effectiveness of such a community is related to its stock of social capital. ‘Community’ in this context, is the term used to reflect a set of principles believed to be important as a basis for ‘good work’ and 'striving' to realise shared goals and objectives within a community (Schumacher, 1980). Both concepts are central to the sort of society discussed in Section 2.2.

There is a growing belief our society has largely lost the concept of community and this is in part a function of the values that motivate our economic system. Re-establishment of a sense of community can lead to a new culture in which the principles of equity and equality are seen as matters of right and in which a new relation of wealth holding to the community is established (Stewart-Weeks, 2000). Community is inclusive. It requires creation and re-creation of local institutions which embody the principle that the community as a whole should own and benefit from wealth. Re-establishment of community requires cooperation at all levels and particularly where people actually live and work (Latham, 2000). It requires concepts of work which will allow true participation of all in decision making processes based on principles of involvement, participation, and the subsuming of economic to wider social goals. It requires consideration of how we wish to live and the quality of life, which then provides the basis from which to consider questions such as how this can be achieved. Questions about ends must come before we can apply the means (e.g. the market) to achieve desired ends. Debate on these issues and underlying values is an important part of a shift to a different culture and the building of both social capital and that elusive thing, ‘social cohesion’.

32 Refer to footnote12
33 Refer to footnote 9
3.2 Sharing, cooperation and responsibility

Sharing is an interpersonal relationship, communing together, a group activity, a uniting, using together, brotherhood. It is the first principle of goodwill and its expression is social justice. Sharing is also distribution and contribution, both giving and taking. Equitable distribution of the world's resources and products must be a key principle of a new economic system. Only by the appropriate distribution of energy, whether as money or otherwise, will the ills of humanity be addressed.

Cooperation means working together towards the same goal, a common unity of purpose and action. Group service or working together for the common good leads to goodwill and tolerance. Appropriate concepts of ‘work’ and ‘community’ are the expression of cooperation. If cooperation and tolerance are central concerns then this requires review of ways in which we ‘compete’ with each other and how we use and conserve the resources and consumer goods and services, at our disposal. This has implications for the way in which we interpret the laws of supply and demand.

Responsibility is a recognition of the need for stewardship and the fact that we are answerable for the end results of our actions. One of its expressions is ecologically sustainable development. Responsibility requires acknowledgement and then the will to act. Goodwill in action is required to build social capital. Taking responsibility is an acceptance, a ‘receiving’, related to ‘as we work so shall we receive’. Such an approach is different from a market model driven by self-ish motives.

These issues all have implications for our market models of economics, requiring debate and the support of this debate with sound analysis.

3.3 Social capital and learning communities

It would be interesting – but only interesting – if the arguments presented in this paper were solely in the realms of the rhetorical. There is, however, a body of research that converges on certain principles in support of our arguments. In other words, empirical research now exists to support our contentions that markets by themselves will not achieve rural policy aims - in fact, a strong community precedes and is a pre-condition for strong and sustainable markets (Gittell and Vidal, 1998; Rifkin, 1999).34

To achieve a ‘strong community’ we must now focus on community building processes through: (a) re-orienting policy strategies towards community capacity building (Guenther and Falk, 2000); (b) establishing how a new form of enabling leadership can be fostered (Falk and Mulford, 2000); and (c) facilitating the growth and development of learning communities (Falk and Harrison, 1998) that are flexible and responsive to changes in both community values, changing labour market requirements (Gittell and Vidal, 1998; CRLRA, 2000) and environmental stewardship.

Woolcock (1998, p.155) describes this social process as ‘encompassing the norms and networks facilitating collective action for mutual benefit’. Portes (1998, p.7) observes that, ‘Whereas economic capital is in people’s bank accounts and human capital is inside their heads, social capital inheres in the structure of their relationships’. Trust emerges in Putnam’s (1993) work as an important dimension of social capital.

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35 Refer to footnote 7
38 Refer to footnote 34 for Gittell & Videl; refer to footnote 5 for CRLRA
Trust is variously described as the critical component of any social cohesion (for a summary of this debate in the Australian context, see Winter, 2000a,b; Stewart-Weeks, 2000).41

There is a strand of literature which recognises that social capital has a role in contributing to the production of desired socio-economic outcomes (described in some detail in Woolcock, 1998, and, in the Australian context, in Winter, 2000a)42, yet it is not measured in traditional economic analysis. However, in order to make use of social capital in the production of desired socio-economic outcomes, we must account for the processes which produce social capital. These processes are conceived as learning when they are used positively by communities towards commonly valued purposes. Learning such as this, occurring as it does among communities of people, is called community learning. The communities of learners are therefore called learning communities. This is in line with existing research which variously makes connections between social cohesion, civic and economic wellbeing and the social processes which contribute to such beneficial outcomes (Falk & Harrison, 1998; Kilpatrick et al., 1999; Flora et al., 1996; Young, 1995).43

A central element of a shift to a new culture is therefore effective community processes of consultation, communication and decision making that are participatory and inclusive (see Winter (2000a,b)44 and in a regional context Kingma and Beynon (2000)).45 This emphasis on the importance of local and collaborative planning, or ‘endogenous planning’, is established as the most successful and sustainable (Hugonnier, 1999)46 form of developing community capacity and social capital (Allen, 1999).47 Endogenous planning means that the broad cross-section of the community must be engaged. Effective relationships – those that build trust reciprocally – must be forged and reinforced through communal and valued activities while resolving conflict situations in a way that builds rather than depletes social capital and trust (Allen, 1998; Guenther and Falk, 2000).48 These activities create a learning community that has agile responsiveness to changes, and can respond to the emerging need for, for example, new skills for new industries.

The importance of the ‘right kind’ of social capital has been discussed by Guenther and Falk (2000)49 and Winter (2000a)50 in relation to social capital’s mechanisms of bonding ties (those interpersonal links between like-minded people), bridging ties (those links to outside influences and information from communities and groups) and linking ties (links from communities and groups to public and private agencies and enterprises). Bonding ties are essential in the formation of strong communities, in that they create cohesion or solidarity between groups and community members with similar interests. However, bonding ties without the balance of bridging ties and linking ties becomes dangerous and self-defeating, because they are often used to exclude others, and to reinforce ill-informed views that relate to, for example, racial intolerance or gender biases. The implications of this point for the design and re-design of institutions, and for use of accountability measures around the development of all three kinds of ties, are significant.

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41 Refer to footnote 7 for Winter (a), footnote 9 for Winter (b) and footnote 12 for Stewart-Weeks
42 Refer to footnote 38 for Woolcock and footnote 7 for Winter (a)
44 Refer to footnote 7 for Winter (a) and footnote 9 for Winter (b)
45 Refer to footnote 3 for Allen and footnote 7 for Guenther & Falk
46 Refer to footnote 7
47 Refer to footnote 7
48 Refer to footnote 7
49 Refer to footnote 7
50 Refer to footnote 7
Enabling leadership at the community level (Falk and Mulford, 2000)\textsuperscript{51}, or ‘civic entrepreneurialism’ as it is also called (Melville and Walesh, 1997)\textsuperscript{52} becomes an essential ingredient in the building of community activity and capacity. Processes which involve all stakeholders in participatory decision making will be best – those that are actually and perceived as inclusive, and that build skills, capacity, community structures, governance and power relationships between stakeholders. The structure of relationships and factors which influence these and associated enabling policies are therefore crucial to good outcomes (Kingma and Beynon, 2000).\textsuperscript{53}

The above gives some insight into the institutional base necessary to bring about a ‘different’ society. To aid this process, enabling programs will be useful, involving activities such as information generation and use, facilitation of change, fostering of education, training and learning, capacity building and encouragement of leadership. Action research will be important to inform the above processes.

The re-design of public policy to achieve the above has been discussed by Rifkin (1999)\textsuperscript{54} in relation to regeneration of civil society, and in the Australian context by, for example, Cox and Caldwell (2000), Latham (2000) and Stewart-Weeks (2000).\textsuperscript{55} Latham, for example, has set out a number of strategies which involve: looking outside the conventional methods of government; re-inventing governance through institutional change; the transfer of power to communities of interest; devolution of responsibility and review of ‘scale’ of operations (see Section 3.6); and the striking of a new balance between competition at the point of market exchange and cooperation in the production of goods and services. Similarly, Stewart-Weeks has argued the logic of social capital requires: radical change in the methods, structures and values of public policy; change in resource allocation and accountability systems which tend towards uniformity and control at levels beyond ‘locality’; policy responses which are place and people specific and grounded in local needs and circumstances; re-discovery of the strength of ‘community without politics’ or motivation through ‘public purpose’; and a focus on strong relationships at all levels.

Rifkin (1999)\textsuperscript{56} has addressed these issues in the context of the role of civil society in bringing about sustainability. His argument is that, because the formal market economy is increasingly less able to create permanent employment and because governments are retreating from many of their traditional roles, then the civil or cultural sector will now be the best vehicle for employment, regeneration of community and sustainability. Aside from environmental issues, his frame of reference for policy analysis is the economic sector, which now includes both the market (private) and government sectors, and ‘the third sector’ – the civil sector. Rifkin (1999)\textsuperscript{57} argues the civil or cultural sector tends to be taken for granted but in fact, underpins economic activity and is the ‘keeper’ of social capital. Policy should therefore, be directed towards regeneration of this sector.

\textbf{3.4 Relevance of money}

True peace in our time rests on economic relationships which foster our stock of (good) social capital. Sharing, cooperation and responsibility are governed by right use of money. Money is really a convenient package of energy and, like all energy, it is of itself neutral. When we use money correctly we are working with the energy of giving and sharing. When we use money incorrectly we are using the energy of desire which leads to selfish possession and materialism. Application of the principles of goodwill leads to establishment of right human relationships. Money is a symbol or an expression of the energy of goodwill. Thus, right acquiring and use of money is a key to right human relationships.

\textsuperscript{51} Refer to footnote 36
\textsuperscript{53} Refer to footnote 45
\textsuperscript{54} Refer to footnote 4
\textsuperscript{55} Refer to footnote 13 for Cox & Caldwell, footnote 9 for Latham and footnote 12 for Stewart-Weeks
\textsuperscript{56} Refer to footnote 4
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid
This has implications for the view of money as a commodity, the structure of work and our disposition towards the economic activities we undertake.

Revision of the way we think about money and interest rates so that money is once again simply a means of facilitating exchange rather than a commodity in its own right, will be important in a culture based on the principles in Sections 2.3, 3.2 and 3.3. Use of money as a public service instead of a private good which can be hoarded and allowed to accumulate interest, would radically change our economic system. Instead of paying people a reward in order to bring surplus money back into circulation a small penalty would accrue on money not brought back. In these circumstances, money would be made to 'rust' or be subject to a 'use fee' with the result that speculative holding of money would decline while investment in 'real' structures would increase. The analysis of such changes should receive higher priority.

A mechanism which can help in encouraging the right use of money is use of modified barter systems such as the Local Exchange Trading System (LETS) which uses sophisticated information technology to facilitate production and exchange in localities (see for example, Skrandies, 1991). Units of barter are treated like credit points with no fixed value of themselves. Units are worth nothing unless used. No interest is accumulated. There is no inflation and no speculative activity. The goods or services are purchased. The individual accrues a debt to the community and vice versa if goods and services are sold. The focus is on 'real' activities at the local level. A computer system maintains an accounting system and details of goods and services on offer. Some 200 such systems already operate in Australia. Apart from overcoming problems of limited availability of money locally, such systems, by improving relationships with others, have positive effects in local communities. Such mechanisms should be more widely explored and debated.

3.5 Concepts of Competitiveness

Competition policy and microeconomic reform are policies designed to facilitate efficient operation of markets with minimum (government) influence, and where the institutional setting is steered towards giving expression to materialistic business activity in the belief participants (read business) know what is the best outcome for society. However, as noted, markets if left to themselves, may not evolve in sympathy with community values. In the absence of regulations the private sector will by default develop its own rules of business. These rules will invariably be oriented towards firms capturing and exploiting the resources which will facilitate their operation and profit making. Because outcomes of this process may be narrow and destructive of values, care must be taken to ensure markets operate within socially responsive institutions.

In this context, concepts like ‘competitiveness’ require analysis. The term ‘competitiveness’ generally means striving against other players to gain superior production and marketing position. But, as noted in Section 3.2, a different form of competitiveness is required to fit with the principles noted above. A better definition includes words like cooperation, sharing, and team work - systems of networked highly informed firms and industries working together within a framework which facilitates and encourages innovation and creative work. This system would not play people off against each other and would not leave a significant proportion of the workforce unemployed. It recognises the contribution of our most important resource, namely, people and is not directed towards individuals winning at all costs. Because this latter definition of competitiveness is not the same as that of neoclassical economic theory it raises issues about the appropriateness of this theory as a construct for making community wide economic and social decisions.

3.6 "Work" in the market model

Similar arguments apply to the definition of work in economic theory. Work is defined as a disutility to be minimised.

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Associated definitions of productivity define labour as any other inanimate factor of production. However, in general, activities of an integrated nature which foster work as enrichment are likely to be most conducive to highly productive social systems. As noted below, opportunities for this type of work are likely to be greater the more control the individual has over production processes and, within limits, the less the division of labour. Present concepts of economic efficiency and productivity may therefore be at odds with individuals' desires as both producers and consumers. Reinforcement of these concepts may therefore be preventing a shift towards the type of society discussed earlier (Gee et al, 1997; Harvey, 1982).

In future societies, development of alternative concepts of work may be an essential ingredient in maintaining healthy and growing communities (see, for example, Rifkin 1999). There are implications for economic theory here and questions about whether Australia's present industry and bureaucratic structures contradict the values we wish to affirm.

Further biases may arise from unquestioning endorsement of large scale business and associated trends in technology. Beyond a certain size of enterprise, benefits arising from scale and the division of labour may break down. With a change in the nature of work whereby decision making is separated from manual tasks, these tasks may become routinised and adversely affect the productivity of individuals. Without integration of work functions, creativity, innovation and effort may decline and individuals may become passive towards their work environment. Under these circumstances further labour-saving technology may reduce productivity. Alternative concepts of work may be required to ensure sustained productivity growth.

Through its potential to control the development of communities and to influence what are appropriate resources and acceptable production systems, large scale business may have further effects counter to the requirements of ‘community’. Once power to control development shifts beyond the locality to large-scale centralised organisations, community values, employment activities and production and consumption patterns become determined outside the locality. With this can come a loss of identity, self-determinacy, self-sufficiency and motivation within communities. The most appropriate scale of units of governance and business is, therefore, an area warranting investigation.

The same applies to the scale of institutions which, if set too broadly, may affect local autonomy. High costs can be imposed on particular groups such as smaller rural communities if the levers for change are embedded in distant policy. If institutions are designed for larger, regional areas, property arrangements are likely to favour groups outside the particular locale where problems may be addressed most effectively. Tailoring of institutions to local requirements is therefore also an important area for policy research and debate.

3.7 Property Rights

The economic model underpinning our society has the capacity to bring forth an infinite array of technically efficient sets of relative prices – only one set will be consistent with prevailing institutions. The nature of these prices and the social sanctions they possess derive from the institutional base. Different behaviour and relative prices will emerge with different institutional arrangements.

‘Free market’ prices generated by private enterprise are generally sanctioned as they are thought to reflect the preferences of individuals. They do, but only to the extent to which they are channelled and constrained by the existing institutional arrangements. Prices simply reflect the outcome of entrepreneurial decisions conditioned by present property arrangements. For example, property arrangements may not reflect the desires of some individuals who cannot influence ‘free market’ decisions because their bargaining position is not counted.

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60 Refer to footnote 4
Similarly, which costs will be counted by which decision makers and, hence, which outcomes are deemed to be efficient, is determined by property arrangements – not ‘free markets’ per se.

To the extent present property arrangements do not accurately reflect the wishes of society, then market outcomes may be biased in favour of those with present property rights and in favour of the status quo. Analysis of alternative institutional settings is, therefore, an important precondition and catalyst for a shift to a different culture.

3.8 The Role of Women

As noted, our organisations and communities have tended to be characterised by (masculine) values of competitiveness, independence, rationality, discipline, toughness, unyieldingness, hierarchical interaction, rules-oriented operation and so forth. If allowed to dominate, these are all values seen to be destructive of social capital. It is values of inclusiveness, cooperation, collaborative behaviour, networking, adaptability, compromise, relationship, open approaches to learning, exploratory decision making and so forth, generally identified as ‘feminine’ values in organisations and communities, that will now have to come to the fore in a yin-yang balance with masculine values, if organisations and communities are to perform effectively in the changing competitive environment in Australia (Belenky et al, 1997; Dempsey, 1992; Reinharz, 1992; SCARM, 1998; Kirby et al, 1996). These views are supported by Rifkin (1999) who argues women have long been the mainstay of the civil sector and will thus be at the forefront of a movement grounded in the politics of social capital and the restoration of civil society (see Section 3.3).

Strategic capabilities will become the basis for new concepts of competitiveness described earlier. This implies the advent of more integrated and holistic processes; networks and linkages; participative and inclusive leadership; collaboration, interdependence, sharing and cooperation at local and regional levels; and community processes which engage all stakeholders. Only relationships of a close and enduring nature will now be able to handle the complexity of communications in knowledge-based industries (Haas et al, 2000).

While not wishing to enter into the debate about differences between men and women, there is no doubt an expanded role for women in our present environment would engender increased cooperation and develop group spirit and place economic issues in a wider social and cultural context (SCARM, 1998; Kirby et al, 1996). Success will depend upon our ability to form inclusive communities and create organisations made up of individuals pledged to serve the group. This does not mean eliminating present values but complementing these with another set of values which will foster social capital. Policies in these areas are important.

3.9 The Arts

The performing and creative arts have the potential to assist in bringing in a new culture and overcoming the tyranny of the market. The arts provide not only a basis for creative activity but also for moving beyond economic efficiency to broader concepts of productivity and providing a vehicle for communication on change.


62 Refer to footnote 4


64 Refer to footnote 61
The arts also have further direct and indirect economic benefits - they are labour intensive, increase satisfying employment, are environmentally responsible and tend to have high multiplier effects.

The goal of freedom for individuals and groups includes the opportunity for people to determine their own destinies and to have satisfying lives through developing their potential, being creative and taking initiative. Freedom includes sufficient time and opportunity to allow everyone to enjoy a physically, emotionally, culturally and spiritually fulfilling life. The arts have the potential to provide the bridge from narrow profit-based activity under economic growth policies, to socially useful activities which fulfill the goal of freedom. Examples of such activities have been discussed by Kingma (2000)65 in the context of the community cultural development programs and projects of the Australia Council.

There is no doubt the present culture has the potential to degrade the arts with long term detrimental effects on our society. There is an extensive economic literature which argues a legitimate case for government funding of various art forms within a culture of economic growth, yet very little attention is paid to the role of the arts in regenerating our culture and contributing to well being and survival.

The analogy with our physical natural resources and ESD provides significant insight for the arts. Industry and government realise better use and management of our natural resources is vital for business survival, the economy and the planet. Accordingly, effort has been made to formulate policies to revitalise and sustain these resources. This has not happened for the arts but the case is strong.

If thought and creativity are our greatest natural resources and if these are in danger of degradation then similar policy efforts should be made to revitalise and sustain the arts.

3.10 Minimum incomes

A policy of minimum incomes can release people from the tyranny of the market. The idea is not new and was discussed by authors as early as the 1970s (Galbraith, 1973, Ch. 25; Manning, 1981).66 Freedom of individuals within a capitalist economy could ultimately be encouraged through provision of a guaranteed income to individuals as a matter of right. This is not aimed at alleviating poverty but rather at facilitating effective democracy. To achieve this, individuals must have reasonable economic security.

Minimum incomes could break the productivity treadmill and expose the myth of full employment. Room would be made for the development of economic activities not moulded by industrial processes. Individuals could be freed from undesirable labour processes but could still choose to provide labour should they wish to accumulate assets. Technology for highly profitable production processes could be developed more easily and without overwhelming local communities. This technology would no doubt become more capital intensive. Benefits from technological change could more easily become a source of wealth rather than a source of unemployment and social decay.

Similar arguments have been used by Rifkin (1999)67 as a basis for identifying the resources for regeneration of the civil sector. He argues a small proportion of the wealth in the ‘high tech’ economy could be taxed and redirected towards re-building communities, social structures, the arts, infrastructure and the civil sector generally. This would not only help to create a sense of common purpose and provide the basis for creation of social capital, but also ensure continuation of the institutions necessary for a sound market economy (see Sections 2.2, 2.4, 3.1 and 3.3).

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67 Refer to footnote 4
The issues here are not ones of equity but are a matter of attempting to ensure conditions for a true democracy are met in a society where industrial and bureaucratic structures may have grown beyond a size which ensures full participation of all members of the community. These and other such concepts require more research and debate.

4. Towards a ‘different’ society: institutions and social capital

We have argued the present policy philosophy which allows the means (that is, the market) to determine the ends (market outcomes) is no longer satisfactory as a basis for creating an economically, environmentally and socially sustainable society. This philosophy must be reversed so that the ends we wish to achieve are identified first, before the means to achieve these ends are decided. In this latter context, once our vision, goals and objectives, and the preferred ways to achieve these are identified, markets may still turn out to be the preferred and dominant policy instrument (or means) - but, more than likely, markets would be required to operate within a different institutional setting. In the same context, this shift in thinking does not mean abandoning many important current policies which position us in the global economy – an outward looking, global focus will always be important. In similar vein, policies like the Federal Government’s Regional Australia Strategy (Commonwealth of Australia, 2000)68, with its emphasis on equity of services and community empowerment, are also valuable in helping to create an environment to bring about the changes envisioned here.

Consideration of our preferred vision and societal structure for Australia (our ends) before deciding on how we should achieve this (the means to achieve our goals) implies prior knowledge about values, desired outcomes and futures for (rural) Australia. It does not imply large scale planning. It does mean that sufficient information and analysis is available for effective decision making on options – and this is not the case at present. Debate on values and how we want to live will likely highlight the need for change in the institutional base. This is so because the institutions which emerge from the present market policy philosophy are dominantly economic in nature and supportive of business. These institutions are reinforced by actions within markets, which, within the present economic framework, will reflect the characteristics of their main players - those with economic power and property rights. Underlying values of these players are supportive of competition, profit making and self-ish behaviour, seen here to work towards inequality, lack of cohesiveness in society and disenfranchisement of a significant proportion of the workforce.

New institutions are required before there will be a significant shift to a different culture. Some of the values and requirements for such a shift are discussed in this paper. Concepts of ‘community’ and social capital are central to such a shift. Enabling policies will be essential to restore the trust, capacity and incentive to generate the required innovative cycle and create social capital. Revision in the way in which money is perceived, as a public service rather than a speculative commodity, will enable change – local exchange trading systems will be valuable in the first instance. Similarly, revision in concepts of work, the role and scale of business and the scale of institutions, will be important. Minimum incomes policies can act to break the tyranny of a ‘free’ market based society. An informed debate on rights/obligations and responsibilities/privileges inclusive of those who either have no property rights or have no power to argue for rights, will aid a shift to a different culture. Finally, special policies should be implemented to enfranchise women and foster the creative arts. By embodying the values, ways of thinking and work patterns required at this time, women can help as a catalyst for change. Similarly, the arts can help to accelerate change because they foster those community social and cultural processes, relationships and broader concepts of work required to achieve a shift to a different society.

68 Refer to footnote 1
**Discussion**
Chair: Don Blesing

*Don Blesing*: Comments, feedback, questions?

*Richard Price*: I found that a wonderful presentation, Onko. In your talk you almost dealt with the market as if it is separate from institutions, as something that is affected by institutions. I am hoping that is not the case, because there are institutions of the market. I usually find when I try and address a number of issues that I try to address it from time to time in terms of how we think of institutions. There are institutions of the market. There are also institutions of the State and then there are institutions of civil society.

The issues are not whether one is working or not, whether the institutions of the market are working or whether the institutions of the civil society are working or government. It is actually, as you suggest asking is the balance appropriate? And, for example, one tends to be a watchdog for the other. Government institutions are there to make sure that the market institutions do work because the market institutions don't work once you get outside of that- once you get involved in the environment in particular. But we have got the institutions of civil society to make sure that the institutions and government are actually fairly doing their job.

We have also got the question of whether the institutions of the market are also satisfying and keeping a watchdog on the institutions of civil society. Are there freedoms there? Are we actually being rewarded? Are we not eroding such a habit?

I just wanted to make sure you weren't dealing with market as if there wasn't an institution of the market that is, actually a set of institutions kept in balance with a whole series of other institutions.

*Onko Kingma*: I fully agree. The market itself is the institution. As you say, it is not separate from that. The second thing is that I agree with George Wilson’s point about freedom. And on the surface of it, you see, our theory says, yes, by having markets and competition and so forth then you will end up with people having freedom. In fact, there is quite extensive economic literature that says that markets will eliminate options for change as well, though not always. So you end up without those freedoms. You end up with one solution for something that might have warranted a number of community-type solutions, and inevitably it will be the one that allows one to capture the economic rents associated with a particular activity.

So you find everything collapses. The matrix of possibilities collapses to the one strategy that embodies the ability to abstract your rent. I am not saying always but I am cautious about that. So for me, unfortunately, it is all about the exercise of economic power. I don't know whether you want to say anything, Rosemary, about that.

*Rosemary Lyster*: Agreed.

*Linda Botterill*: There is a lovely piece written by Charles Lindblom in 1979. He started out as an economist and then became a political scientist writing about the policy development process. He gave a number of speeches in 1979 that he entitled "The market as prison". His main thesis was that in a developed capitalist economy you get to a position where it becomes more and more difficult for the government sector to control the market sector. This is because there is almost a self-punishing recall built into the system such that if a government, for various non-economic objectives, tries to obtain particular outcomes and put particular mechanisms in place that business is not happy with, business responds with a threat to withdraw investment and, therefore, reduce employment opportunities and so on. Lindblom’s piece was arguing we need to look closely at those sorts of structures that are especially trapped within the market. It is not perhaps quite as free as George would suggest because one of the pillars that we were talking about, about the different types of institutions, has actually got, in a sense, a power of veto in a lot of areas over the sorts of policies that can be pursued.
**Paul Martin:** At the end of the day it is an appropriate time to introduce an opening overview. We seem to be ignoring the ferocity of self-interest in all this. We talk about the development of communities and the use of markets and so on. My experience has been that when the really hard issues come there is usually some person or group of people with a very strong interest that will pursue it by whatever means are appropriate or inappropriate.

What are the mechanisms in the sort of world we seem to be collectively speaking about for control of the problem. They are not aberrant. I think they are actually fairly normal, but they are powerful, aggressive, disinterested from anything to do with community apart from their self-interest.

**Onko Kingma:** I don't have a problem with self-interest, as long as everybody gets to have a say.

**Paul Martin:** I think I am talking about people who don't share that view.

**Onko Kingma:** Don’t share the view that everyone should have a say?

**Paul Martin:** That anyone else should have a say.

**Onko Kingma:** That is what I am talking about, who should exercise power and who has the right to exercise power over whom. The question was really - tell me if I am right - what if self-interest is very strong in people and communities all over the place? What happens is two things, I guess: one is that if you prevent that self-interest from expressing itself, you know, what happens; and the second thing really was, what happens if people operate in self-interest to the detriment of others? I am saying you shouldn't have that power over others. Am I right?

**Paul Martin:** You are putting it in a very gentle way. My experience has been that people who have those sort of interests don't bother attending community consultation. They don't bother with trying to be concerned about the nature of the community interest. They simply go after what they want. They exist in political parties. They exist in businesses. They exist in green groups.

**Onko Kingma:** My answer to that goes back to David's presentation this morning. I think you have very powerful forces developing in the community to ensure that those checks and balances are set in place in the future- is that right, David?

**David Sheppard:** In New Zealand at the moment exactly what Linda was describing is happening. The business community is saying, "We don't like this new employment relations act. We are not going to invest more". You couldn't have described it more succinctly.

**Snow Barlow:** Isn't that social capital?

**Onko Kingma:** Yes, including relationships.

**Don Blesing:** Peter, do you want to be involved in that?

**Peter Yu:** I think, in a lot of ways there is to be a balance that is normal, but there seems to be a pre-occupation with committee structures. I am only speaking from my own experience. There hasn't been enough of what seems to be an emerging view about the private and public, the balance between corporate responsibility and significant capacity to the community to be able to do that.

But also identifying particular social entrepreneurs - people who have a capacity to break the mould of the normal stereotypical view of the conflict of interest, with some attention again to recognition of skills of the individuals, to be able to deliver and to be able to find some level of trust too. It seems to me that the paradigm of Aboriginal rights is something that is confronting all of us in the nature of change.
There are growing tensions between rights of individuals and rights to be collective. I think the points have been made by a number of speakers already. It seems to me it is like looking at what is happening with global technological change. Here in Australia we have options of broadband spectrums that are going to have significant impact on my entire society. To a great extent, there has to be some intermediate capacity for players in that particular marketplace industry itself that provides a capacity to control or develop in relation to the matters that remain important to us.

**Onko Kingma:** Your idea of entrepreneurship is very important. In the work that I have been involved in the arts, it is very obvious that what is coming forward now is business corporations which actually have a very strong social conscience and which have, as one of their aims, the formation of partnerships in the community to make things work. One is called "Big Heart". It is an organisation that is making headway in a lot of communities with projects that are in very strong partnership, and through entrepreneurship, so that is a very important point.

**Selwyn Heilbron:** In answer to the question of what effective constraints are on abuse of power in an autonomous economic system, there really seem to be two. One is the mere process of competition. If somebody, if a company, sees it to its advantage, or an individual, to become socially engaged and behave in a manner that it believes reflects consumer values it will gain advantage over one. So the process of competition actually is one mechanism by which you exercise constraint and power over another party.

The second one is if we are talking specifically about competition, there is a very developed body of law which regulates competition and has for a very long time, and it is based quite explicitly on limitation of the abuse of power. In other words, it has been recognised by policy and social observers for a long period of time that markets can misbehave in this way. A system to prevent that happening has been incorporated into regulation of markets. It is possibly one of the factors that explain the longevity of this type of system. It ultimately reflects, in a democratic system, people's values, which suggests that if the values over time become archaic and outdated and need to be replaced this is a mechanism for changing. That mechanism is working through the political system that changes the rules that govern corporate activity.

**Onko Kingma:** I agree with that in principle. The closer you come to a large number of players and fields, the more competitive the structure. However the concept of competition that we embrace which pits individuals against each other may not be the right form of competition for a society of the twenty-first century.

I would argue that if you took the assumptions underlying the economic model, and put the issues of co-operation and trust and conclusiveness and all that in your definition of competition, then you effectively destroy the economic model that you are trying to emulate in society. I am willing to argue that point.

The second point is that we are talking about the ACCC. That mechanism helps to ensure that power is not abused in the market structures that we have in place, but it doesn't say anything about the subtle processes that are going on in a market economy. It is about the threshold effects that change communities from empowered and active groups to tacit groups that accept the scale and organisational structures that are decided outside their localities.

I am not arguing that you have to go down to a level of community where you have a myopic or parochial type of situation. I am just saying we need to be aware of that. For me, as I get older, those subtle parts of the analysis - I wish I could express it succinctly - hold the sway with me. I agree with the point you make.

**Sue George:** I was interested in the discussion on legislative authority. I think that to talk about Australia as having institutions of civil society is a bit of a mythology in itself.
I don't think that our legal system or the other systems that we have talked about today, the political systems or the bureaucratic systems are in fact civil. They are, in my experience, devoid of any spirit or soul in the mainstream. That is because of a culture that is competitive and based on hierarchy and status climbing. It is a linear sort of culture. Given that, I think the likelihood of those institutions ever delivering in terms of changed values and meaningful outcomes for the average Australian is pretty minimal.

I think that could change. I suppose if any of those institutions were more inclusive the institutional culture would change- but they are not inclusive. I don't think we are making any inroads in that area. I suspect maybe they have to collapse before something else rises from the ashes. Certainly my experience, not just as a woman but also somebody with different sorts of ideas and values, is that you would really need people within that culture to get to the point where they decided it wasn't delivering for them too. There is no point in people trying to move into that and change the culture. On a positive note, I think that is happening. The trend I am noticing is that many people within that culture are realising that economic gains aren't delivering in terms of contentedness, peace, and quality of life.

The other real positive I think is that Australia is heading towards an ageing population, which should mean that we would be becoming wiser. There is that potential, I think. In theory I think there should be a lot of older, wiser people making those decisions.

Jock Douglas: Great presentation, Onko. Absolutely crucial issue, and you touched on it extremely well. Many of us in Landcare have been concerned about the market, that it has failed to help in environmental management in that the marketplace does not differentiate between good environmental management and poor environmental management. You pay the same price for food whether it comes off the very well managed farm or a poorly managed farm or system. Competition policy and globalisation haven't helped as we have forced it on ourselves. In my view it simply puts more pressure on the systems. A number of us have agonised over how you reward the people who deliver good environmental management, because if you are going to differentiate you will be intervening in the marketplace. Intervention in the marketplace normally corrupts the marketplace. I guess you have given some thought to what sort of practical mechanisms we might use to deliver better environmental management and bring some rewards to those people who are managing environmentally in the way which society expects of them.

Onko Kingma: That is a really difficult one. In our group this morning we talked about that from the point of view of water. I conclude, after years of working with water, that fundamental decisions about environmental flow have to be made outside the market. But then you have a set of other activities relating to environment that we may or may not want that aren't done or die which have to be subject to a market-type mechanism. On the commercial side I reckon that the market is probably the best way to do that but we have to be very careful. I conclude that markets do have a very important role but I think the rewards lie much more in community-type activity than anything. It sounds pretty wishy-washy, but I don't think they solely lie- well, for me they don't anyway- in terms of monetary reward. So all those things I was talking about before are really mechanisms that help to broaden out the reward package. I was speaking to some people who are involved, for example, in one of these schemes, and they say the rewards to them of having a mechanism that simply accounts for work we do for each other without the issue of profit coming in per se through the monetary system has much greater rewards for them than does working in a business where they get a wage. So for me it is a very complex issue, and that is all I want to say.
11 Midway Synthesis

Ian Sinclair

Ian Sinclair: Tony gave me what I thought was an impossible task on the second morning, to try to summate where we are to date. So as he has indicated, we have had a little talk about how we are going to go. We are going to approach it a little differently. The first thing I wanted to do, though, was to start by going back to what we were talking about. Essentially we are looking at Australian values and rural policies and the way by which those two relates.

One thing that struck me when I first went over to the UK from Australia as Minister for Primary Industry was the different dimension of the administration of agricultural policy there. Most of you know they don't call their department the Department of Agriculture or Department of Primary Industry. They call it Fisheries, Food and Agriculture. The point is that we really haven't taken food into account, other than in passing, in our debate today, and yet the Australian value in agriculture is essentially the food of the final product rather than necessarily the input.

I say that because I think if you are having a look at the Australian values, the values are probably more openly debated at the moment in terms of genetically modified food, for example, than they are in any other field of rural policy. We didn't touch on it yesterday. I think it is important, therefore, that we have a look at what we are after.

The second thing that strikes me, as somebody who has been involved in the implementation of policy over the years, is that it is extraordinarily hard to translate concepts in the actual delivery of policy on the ground. The nature of what you do in a cabinet debate or in the consideration that leads to that in a department, or in the discussions between department and the ministry, between ministers and the input from people like Treasury and Prime Minister's, operate at quite a different level. I think it is important, if we are going to have a look at the policy side of things, that we perhaps apply a few of the realities of how those policies evolve, not to say that you shouldn't have your ideal of where you want to go but recognising that in the implementation of policy there are going to be a few hiccups between the concept and the delivery.

Again, I don't know that we have necessarily taken that into account yesterday. I think, David, you did to a degree when you started talking about the Constitution. We are talking about the parameters within which we work, and it is certainly true, those parameters, they mightn't necessarily be as we like, but they are there. If there is a degree to which you are going to change them you have to have them in mind so you can try and shift the boundaries or modify them.

The third thing came out of something David Sheppard said, which also interested me because most of us when we look at policies tend to think of them, at least in this place, more in their evolution than in their interpretation. The courts are at least as important, in fact in David's instance they might even be more important - than the policy that is laid down because you have a parameter within which people determine what they are going to do.

The court’s decision, in innumerable instances, is the basis from which precedent is established. And, in fact, the application of policy then becomes interpreted, not by what might have been the original concept but by the way in which the process at the actual court level is determined at that particular time.

So they are three of the parameters that I think we have to have in mind when we look today at where we go from here. The idea is that, at the end of today, what we want to try to do is draw together the strains that we have been considering. We ought to try to prepare a paper which will have a few hard recommendations.
What I propose to do now, rather than continue and give my own analysis, is to suggest, as Tony said, what we really want this afternoon are numbers of you thinking of your own perspective, perhaps some of those of you who gave papers, or some who have been in the audience and feel there is something that really can be encapsulated in the way in which you want those Australian values to be reflected in rural policy. If you can encapsulate that in a two or three minute burst this afternoon that would be a very good way to do it.

In part, I think the difficulty is that there are so many different issues that have been generated. It would be a pity if we just finished with a stereotype of what those values and policies should be. I think it is a very good idea to have you thinking now about what your summation might be to present this afternoon.

Before we get there, I thought perhaps some of you might like to just reflect on yesterday. Onko really did it last night, I thought, in the presentation of his paper. The point of it all is, there has been an evolution. We have had a few inputs. While Onko concluded yesterday, in a way he was also the genesis. So he was both the beginning and the end, which is an unusual way, I guess, for many people to be. But still, he was. What we want to do is try and fill the bit in the middle and see where people are in the middle, and if there is anyone who wants to say anything about what you learned out of yesterday to identify it. Was there something that really stood out in your mind from yesterday which we can put towards the application of our conclusions when we reach them this afternoon? I am putting the onus back on you.

I know you are all putting your hands up in a great burst of enthusiasm to tell me what your summation might be. If I could pick somebody out to start with. One of the interesting papers that wasn't really picked up, but it surprised me it wasn't picked up, was Tom O'Regan's. Tom, would you like to give your summation? Would you like to give us your perspective of the flowers on the banks of the Darling or Bourke, or wherever.

Tom O'Regan: I should have known that this was going to be my punishment. Thinking about yesterday, it is a conversation I had last night I want to bring to mind with those present here. Cathy McGowan came and sat next to me last night and said, "How can what you said be connected with women in agriculture?" And "How might we think about a project or something that would come out of it that might take up some of the things that were evoked by the series of photographs that I know spoke to a number of people here?"

I think what people remember from what I said is not what I said but those photographs. When we are thinking about and having discussions about economics and institutions and the institutional characteristics that we are wanting to put in place or we think should be put in place, I think it is important to bear in mind the cultural dimension and the ways in which that dimension is in forming how we think about the particular institutions I think, rather than economics, but particularly the institutions that have been created and the frameworks within which they are created.

Another thing that I would like to share with you is also something that Peter Yu talked about when he said that we regard water as living water; that concepts of the land and the environment as living, but also as people within it. David Sheppard's slides, I think, were telling us something as well. Here was someone talking about the environment but what we were actually getting were slides of people. I thought that was a particularly instructive standpoint to keep thinking about when we think about the environment because, of course, there are always people in that environment and they are always the figure in the landscape. It is, of course, an important part of any understanding of the ways in which we live in those environments.

Ian Sinclair: The next one I will put on the spot is Sue George. Sue, you chaired a session yesterday which introduced a session which, perhaps, has not been given sufficient emphasis over the years. Would you like to come and give your appraisal of what you might have thought were the highlights from yesterday?
Sue George: I don't know where to start. I thought yesterday was very intellectual. It was largely all here (points to brain), which I know for many people is where you like to be. It wasn't for me - it wasn't down here (points to heart). I couldn't feel it. I did feel the presentation of the photos, which I just adored, and I think visually sometimes things speak to us far more than the words or the research.

Very often yesterday I also heard that we needed more research. Sometimes I think the last thing we need is more research, but I know that that is really dear to you all, so I hesitate to say it.

I think we need more art practice. I think everybody would really enjoy and get so much joy, meaning and understanding from a daily art practice. I think communities would too, and that maybe art practice has a really powerful way or an answer for working with community and making things happen. That's what I felt.

Ian Sinclair: John Drinan, would you like to give us your appraisal? You were also chair of a session. You also sat, pontificated. Sorry to do it to you this way. At least it gives you a different spread of input.

John Drinan: I hope I didn't do too much pontificating! I guess there are so many things that came out of yesterday for me but when I say they have come out, they haven't really because I found yesterday to be very dense. In fact, because so much did come out I am still sorting it all.

If I could just connect up with a comment that Sue just made, we need more research or we don't need more research. One of the questions asked in our group yesterday afternoon was: who are "we"? Whose "values" are we really talking about? That is an issue that concerns me quite a bit. I am aware of the fact that I think all of us are studiously trying to avoid putting our own values into the discussions, yet it is pretty hard to avoid doing so anyway, because they are informing everything we say and do.

But when we talk about policies for rural Australia do we really know what it is that Australians actually want for rural Australia? Should the policies of rural Australia be formed by rural Australians or urban Australians or by all Australians? To my mind it is a very critical issue because I think that urban Australia probably, in many ways, could be argued to be the most important voice to be considered because they are numerically the largest, and ultimately rural Australia depends on its support.

So going back to Sue's point, I am left with a question still: do we know whose values we are actually talking about? And if we did know whose values we are talking about do we actually know what those values are? I suspect there may well be need for research on that particular score. I will leave it there.

Ian Sinclair: Thanks, John. I said before one of the problems in the application of policy is we always have an input from Treasury or one of the other financial departments to tell us what we can't do rather than what we can do. I thought it would be appropriate if we asked Al Watson, who is an economist of some distinction, to comment on how useful yesterday was.

Alistair Watson: I am too anxious thinking about what I am going to say in the next 10 minutes.

Ian Sinclair: I will leave you there. I know he will do that in another theme in a moment. Don Blesing, would you like to give us your view?

Don Blesing: Yesterday, particularly in the afternoon session, I felt there was passion. In the evening we were talking about that. People here are passionate about rural issues. They are passionate about more than that, and John's point about drawing the line between rural and urban and becoming perhaps "Australians" is quite important. I think Australian values are more important.
I am a global citizen. I live in Australia. I happen to reside in a State which I don't feel much about one way or the other, and I live in a rural area because I love living in a rural area. That hierarchy of values is important to me, not just rural values. I run a farm business and work in agriculture and the environment. Agricultural values are pretty well down the scale.

The images yesterday morning I still remember. The Lake Eyre Basin Group are doing a deal with Mandy Martin and Guy Fitzhardinge - a pretty one-sided deal at this stage. We can't give them anything! They are going to give us a collection of Mandy's works to display around Australia, Images of the Cooper. We think they are going to sell messages about a rural landscape that people will love. They will transmit values that we can't do in words. I hope it works. I know it will work. So when you talked about your Back of Bourke exhibition that was great.

My other passion, or the other thing I heard yesterday, I suppose, and reflected on, was education and skilling. That is what rural people miss. It came through in an indirect way. It came through from Onko and from Peter in their call for justice. I am passionate about justice. Thank you, Ian.

**Ian Sinclair:** Thank you very much Don and each of you. What I want you to do this afternoon, each of you who feels you would like to, to say something that will encapsulate your ideas in that way. If we are going to reach conclusions it is essential that we do get those different perspectives. That has been a good way to begin it.

Jock Douglas, over to you.

**Jock Douglas:** Thanks, Ian. I am chairing the next session. One of the advantages of being a chairman is you can actually command the microphone. I just wanted to recap very briefly on what I saw of yesterday.

What I think came out was that I think we established pretty well that Australian values are not well incorporated into rural policies. I don't think there is any doubt about that. I think the major point that struck me from yesterday basically came from Onko, in that the marketplace is not really going to deliver us the sort of society we want, particularly in areas of the social and environmental areas, unless there is some adjustments made to it. I think that is one of the most important things on our plate.

I would like to move on, and Alistair Watson is going to talk about his paper, getting right back into rural realities.
Australian Agriculture: Persistent Myths and Current Realities and/or Current Myths Persistent Realities

Alistair Watson

Introduction

The last few years have seen a re-appraisal of Australian agriculture by both rural and urban-dwellers. The re-appraisal has accompanied continuing changes in the urban, regional and agricultural economies and radically altered the political landscape – most obviously with the One Nation episode in Queensland, almost as spectacularly in Victoria and in other ways across the board. The political developments have resulted from off-farm as well as on-farm changes in non-metropolitan Australia. In particular, farmers and non-farmers alike have been affronted by the withdrawal of government services and the reduction of indirect assistance with the full or part-privatisation of public utilities, especially telecommunications. Privately provided goods and services like petrol and banking have also come under scrutiny. In some states, drastic changes to local government with amalgamation of shires and councils and contracting out of services formerly provided locally have been a source of dissatisfaction.

This paper is more concerned with agriculture – defined to include livestock production in pastoral areas – than social and economic conditions in regions where farming is conducted. Paradoxically, when by usual measures the economic significance of agriculture is diminished, the political influence continues to be substantial. The reasons for the changed political relationship between regional and urban Australia are not yet fully understood by participants let alone disinterested observers. The circumstances and consequences of the re-appraisal of agriculture in Australia are subtle with some inconsistent and inexplicable elements.

The principal purpose of this paper is to illuminate the economic and political background to contemporary Australian agriculture. A tentative conclusion from the conjectures and arguments assembled in the paper is that Australian agriculture is shifting away from its longstanding commercial focus towards the dependent status typical of agriculture in other high-income countries. This is creating unresolved tensions within and without the agricultural sector. In particular, overseas experience provides no guidance on how to construct and maintain a credible assistance regime for a predominantly export-dependent agriculture like Australia.

The success of the agricultural sector over the last few years in identifying its fortunes with regional Australia as a whole has been a considerable political achievement when for many non-metropolitan areas other activities – tourism, mining and retirement – are far more economically significant than agriculture per se. The share of agriculture has fallen to only three per cent of national income and twenty per cent of exports. Within that fall, there have major changes in the distribution of income among farmers, between regions and between commodities. There has been a significant shift away from livestock industries – wool and beef – in favour of cropping in broadacre farming areas. In part, the shift is related to unforeseen changes in relative prices and is reversible. Other aspects of the shift from livestock are permanent because there are no longer economically sustainable livestock systems that can generate reasonable incomes for farmers in some remote areas of Australia.

1 There are two obvious examples of the post-Hanson fright factor in Australian politics. Dairy farmers have been given extraordinarily generous compensation for accepting that federation of the Australian colonies occurred in 1901. Despite the $1.8 billion compensation package paid for by consumers, some dairy farmers are complaining that milk can be sold across state borders. Furthermore, concessions in calculating farmers’ assets to determine eligibility for welfare benefits given in the May 2000 Commonwealth budget make a mockery of fairness between low income city and country families – or rich city and country families, for that matter.
There are technical limits to labour productivity in grazing livestock industries in the pastoral zone and increasing reluctance to endure poor living conditions in remote areas by owners, employees and their families alike.

In other areas, the history of land settlement and the vicissitudes of farming under Australian conditions mean that there is a tail of unsuccessful farmers with no prospect of making satisfactory incomes from agriculture. In the last three years around a quarter of all broadacre (grazing/cropping) farms in Australia had a negative farm cash income (ABARE 2000, Table 2, p.5). Australia now has a fully-fledged small farm problem despite rural reconstruction schemes that have been around for thirty years. The process of agricultural adjustment has been made harder in recent years by protracted periods of unemployment in cities and provincial towns.

**Changing attitudes**

An example of the radical change in attitudes concerning rural Australia is the switch in public relations messages emanating from farm organisations like the National Farmers’ Federation (NFF) from the unbridled optimism typical of earlier years to unwarranted pessimism concerning prospects for agriculture. Previously, when farmers’ organisations sought support from government, part of the rhetoric was that the unfavourable climatic or market circumstances causing the financial problems of farmers were temporary.

Neither extreme optimism nor pessimism about prospects for agriculture was, or is, justified. Any careful investigation of the agricultural sector reveals extraordinary diversity between farmers – by farm size, in space, over time and by commodity. To some extent, Australian farming has started to polarise geographically – cropping farms in Western Australia and Queensland where settlement took place later are better placed to take advantage of modern technology than farms in other states because farms are larger. In many parts of Western Australia and Queensland, incomes should be higher however to compensate for greater remoteness. Large farms have a superior performance in increasing productivity (Knopke, O’Donnell and Shepherd, 2000). The relationship of productivity and income is one of cause and effect. Higher income farms and industries have higher productivity growth than low-income farms and industries because investment is higher.

Knopke, O’Donnell and Shepherd report that crop specialist farms in Australia had a productivity growth rate of 3.6 per cent per year over the last twenty years compared with 0.6 per cent for specialist sheep farms. This is a major turn-round in the respective fortunes of squatters and cockies. Within the cropping industry, farms in the western region have the best productivity performance.

Another source of difference between farmers and agricultural industries is the difference in political allegiances and attitudes to government created by the history of land settlement. Some industries have a history of government intervention and assistance; others have a tradition of independence from government. Inevitably, the pecking order of dependence of regions and industries on government has changed substantially in the last few years. For example, the traditional faith of the large woolgrowers in laissez-faire has gone out the window with the declining importance and mendicant situation of the wool industry.

The diversity of Australian agriculture and differences between commodities is still the source of organisational difficulties for the NFF as predicted at its creation (Campbell 1980, pp. 200-1). It is difficult keeping disparate industries under the same roof. These tensions have increased in recent years as Australia has espoused and practised liberal trade policies.

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2 Farm cash income = Total cash receipts – Total cash costs. That is, there is no allowance for depreciation or farmer’s labour. Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE), 2000. *Australian Farm Surveys Report 2000*, Canberra.

3 There is no such thing as typical regional Australia. Rather it is functionally and socially fractured” Sorensen, T. 2000. ‘Regional Development: Some Issues for Policy Makers.’ Research Paper 26, Parliament of Australia, Parliamentary Library.


Australia has an overall comparative advantage in agricultural production but not in all agricultural products at all times. Australian farmers facing import competition understandably react in the same way as overseas farmers and Australian manufacturers.

Popular discussion of the agricultural sector these days is characterised by gross over-simplification; exemplified by the repetition of meaningless phrases like ‘the bush’ as if there were some universally shared experience in the Australian countryside. This is to debase the complexity of the issues and also demeans people who live outside the cities. Unfortunately, it is easier for agropoliticians and journalists to recycle half-truths and prejudices than think through the issues or analyse the excellent data available on Australian agriculture from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics (ABARE) and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). This intellectual laziness and irresponsibility is even more galling given the trouble now taken by ABARE and ABS to present official data and reports in accessible and attractive forms.

Some exaggeration by the NFF is understandable given the need for lobby groups to keep the interests and aspirations of their diverse memberships in the forefront of public discussion. While a simple message is easier to sell to journalists, politicians and an unwitting public, the danger is that its proponents believe the message and neglect the serious analysis required to make a genuine contribution to the welfare of their membership. The Wool Council of Australia provided a classic case of the dangers of policymaking paralysis in its stubborn defence of the reserve price scheme in the late 1980s.

Moreover, the relationship between lobby groups like the NFF and governments has been subtly corrupted. Although not as commonly as ten years ago, many lobby groups and peak organisations are reliant in part on governments for financial assistance to present their message – mainly to government itself. This is pernicious because it undermines independence, on both sides. The prevailing view in most peak organisations however, just as it is in academic and research institutions, is that any grant is better than no grant.

**Pessimism and Australian agriculture**

The pessimism now pervading Australian agriculture is expressed in several ways:

- Dissatisfaction by farmers and other non-metropolitan Australians with the overall direction of government policy – what can be loosely described as the microeconomic reform agenda and the National Competition Policy.
- Doubts over the welfare and long-term financial prospects of farmers.
- Concern with the extent of environmental damage associated with current and past farming methods.
- Concern with the further internationalisation of Australian agriculture – usually described as ‘globalisation’. ⁶

Concern in some sections of the urban community about food safety – evident in its most excited form in the fuss over genetically modified organisms (GMOs). ⁷

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⁶ Geoffrey Dutton observed that it was odd for there to be snobs in a nation of migrants. Who else but the unsuccessful, the dissatisfied or victims of war, persecution or poverty finishes up living in another country? An Australian snob doesn’t know his/her place in the world. Much the same could be said about opponents of ‘globalisation’. Australian society and agriculture was globalised from the first fleet. There is a whiff of nationalism and xenophobia in recent opposition in Australia to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and Australia’s (recent) liberal trade policies. These policies deserve critical examination but it is hard to treat contrived distinctions between ‘fair trade’ and ‘free trade’ as anything other than an excuse for protection and a display of chauvinism that belongs on the sporting field but nowhere else.

⁷ It makes sense for consumers to be wary of genetically modified foods, whether the risk is real or imagined. Most of the initial advantages are for producers and consumers receive no immediate benefits. Over time, opposition to GMOs is certain to be dissipated. There is a curious difference in public and political attitudes to applications of biotechnology in agriculture and medicine. Politicians are queueing up to be associated with the latter but are running away from the former. Consumers in western countries can afford to be sanguine about further application of science to agriculture. Most of the time the policy problem is too much agricultural output. Not so, in developing countries.
Perhaps it is environmental issues that strike the most receptive chord with the non-farming community. Salinity – dryland and irrigation, other effects on water quality, land clearing, loss of biodiversity and feral pests are examples that spring to mind. Urban concern reflects the rise of environmentalism as a political force in Australia, similar to other rich countries. In Europe, concerns over the off-site effects of intensive land use in densely populated countries have led to controls on agriculture. The link between agricultural protection, intensification of production, environmental damage and loss of amenity is well recognised in Europe. This has led to much creativity in reconfiguring agricultural support. Catchphrases like ‘multifunctionality’ and ‘stewardship’ are now used in Europe to describe the multiplicity of benefits provided by agricultural land and the dual role of farmers as custodians of the land and environment as well as food producers.

Prima facie, loss of amenity associated with modern farming methods should be less of an issue in Australia given the distribution of the population and the nature of the farming system. This has not proved to be the case. The idea of retaining people on the land as caretakers has some currency in parts of the Australian environmental movement. How this would be financed and maintained into the future is not spelt out. The problem with concepts like multifunctionality and stewardship is that there are no obvious criteria by which specific proposals can be judged. In one sense, application of these concepts in Australia and other lands of recent European settlement would be to treat farmers and their families like museum artefacts (Paul Earl, Western Canadian Wheat Growers, personal communication). The cultural distance of the Australian countryside and the Canadian Prairies from European villages is far greater than the geographical distance.

Environmentalism has several dimensions. A distinction can be drawn between amenity and aesthetic aspects of the environment and aspects of environmental damage related to the productivity of the agricultural sector and those tangible effects incurred elsewhere in the economy from off-site effects of agricultural production. While farmers and non-farmers are interested in both aspects of the environment, the relative emphasis will be different. Increasing emphasis on the environmental benefits of agricultural land and costs associated with modern agricultural production is predictable in an affluent society. Demand for environmental services associated with agricultural land increases with increasing income. This contrasts with the demand for food that has only a weak association with increased income.

A recent outcome of environmental concern by farmers and non-farmers was the joint statement by the NFF and the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) calling for public and private expenditure of $6.5 billion a year for ten years to rectify environmental damage. Slightly more than half the expenditure was to come from all levels of government. This proposal and other aspects of the environmental debate are discussed below. This joint statement of the NFF and ACF is a far cry from traditional concerns with taxation, macroeconomic policies and marketing arrangements expressed in earlier documents from the NFF. If this ambit claim is successful, it will be a significant extension of earlier collaboration between the NFF and ACF in the genesis of landcare in the late 1980s.

Policy documents from peak organisations are more than shopping lists or wish lists. While most of the contents reflect ongoing concerns – in the case of farmers, trade liberalisation, tariff cuts, industrial relations, taxation, government support to research and so on – the changing priorities of lobby groups can be discerned from investigation of the differences that emerge over time. Thus, the recent document by the NFF illustrates their current emphasis on the environment.

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8 The two former chief executives of NFF and ACF involved in that earlier collaboration have recently proposed a one per cent tax levy to fund salinity control. To paraphrase the late Alan Lloyd, the Farley-Toyne plan is not so much a plan but an idea and a very poor idea at that. It is the height of fiscal folly to create a salinity fund of such magnitude when it is not clear what is the best strategy to deal with the problems of salinity, technically, economically or administratively.
Less than a decade ago, in *New Horizons: A Strategy for Australia’s Agrifood Industries*, (NFF 1993)\(^9\), the NFF allied itself with bipartisan political sentiment with unsubtle endorsement of even more unsubtle Commonwealth and state government policies in favour of ‘value adding’ and greater processing of agricultural products.\(^{10}\) Concern with environmental issues in *New Horizons* took equal billing with traditional issues like tariff reform (Malcolm 1994).\(^{11}\) This is not the place to point out the numerous and obvious faults of the value adding diagnosis and its implied remedies for farmers’ ills. Enough public money has been wasted and too many individuals and companies have been hurt by those policies. Suffice to say that it illustrates how much the leaders of the NFF are followers of fashion and willing to accommodate their arguments to the shibboleths of the day.

Ten years before *New Horizons*, the emphasis of NFF was on macroeconomic policy, farm costs and trade-related aspects of agriculture in *Farm Focus: The 80s* (NFF 1981).\(^{12}\) This report, published early in the life of the NFF, was influential in subsequent changes to government policy particularly floating of the exchange rate and deregulation of financial markets. ‘Conservation’ was the second last section in the document, placed just ahead of ‘Animal Welfare’ and rated less than three pages out seventy.

**Agriculture in the economy**

Like other countries of recent European settlement, land settlement in Australia occurred without the consent of the original inhabitants. Almost as controversial and far-reaching in its effects, much of the initial land settlement in Australia occurred without full agreement of Colonial administrations. Arguments over land and how and where farming should take place are central themes in Australian agricultural history. Following the gold rushes, various Selection Acts were invoked to broaden the ownership of land. Alongside the successful development of a pastoral industry based on large holdings, official policy reflected the widespread attraction in the early Australian community to a yeomanry of small landholders, based on a European farming model of restricted land and abundant labour. The development of irrigation settlements that largely imitated United States experience in the late nineteenth century is another example of the way Australian policymakers responded instinctively and intuitively to the political problems of land settlement and agricultural development rather than analysing the specifics of the local situation (Davidson 1969).\(^{13}\)

Access to land was an important instrument of income and wealth redistribution in Australia until a generation ago. Land settlement was motivated by social rather than economic purposes.\(^{14}\) Market prospects and economic and technical requirements for successful farming systems were insufficiently considered in official settlement policy. The predictable result of ignoring the realities of markets, climate and Australian farming conditions generally was that many settlements and agricultural industries suffered protracted periods of low incomes and social distress. Government responded with programs of relief and assistance, especially in the 1930s. Environmental damage was another consequence of settlement policy.

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\(^{10}\) One upshot of the NFF flirtation with value adding was the seriously flawed Farmers Investment Trust (FIT) promoted by the NFF to encourage farmers to participate in marketing and processing activities beyond the farm-gate. Farmers showed their good sense by almost completely ignoring FIT. FIT soon passed into history.


\(^{14}\) A few people manage to live out the dream of a self-sufficient rural lifestyle – usually choosing to farm on a small scale in pristine locations within suitable distance of the coast and city comforts – but such sentiments are now seldom advanced at an official level. Former Prime Minister Hawke had a brief flirtation with alternative rural living as a partial solution to unemployment in his Boyer Lectures of 1979. Apart from a well conducted but essentially token study by the former Bureau of Labour Market Research (Sommerlad, Dawson and Altman 1985), the ideas were not followed up with any vigour in his period of office. Perhaps Humphrey McQueen has had the last word on the possibilities of the rustic life in Australia: “Scores of thousands of people cannot live by growing dope, quilting and making candles out of yoghurt” (cited Sommerlad, E.A., Dawson, P.L. and Altman J.C. (1985). ‘Rural Land Sharing Communities: An Economic Model?’ Bureau of Labour Market Research, Monograph Series No. 7, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.1982, p.219).
Farmers often believed that the source of their problems was the marketing system and rapacious middlemen rather than the intrinsic problem of producing commodities for world markets on farms that were too small, poorly equipped and operated by farmers with insufficient technical knowledge of local conditions. Consequent intervention by Commonwealth and state governments in marketing and pricing established the framework for agricultural research, marketing and price policy that has persisted until recent times (Lloyd 1982). Unlike other countries, government intervention in agricultural marketing has not always conferred benefits on Australian farmers. Especially in the grains industries, governments have occasionally used marketing policies to keep down farmers’ prices.

Eventually, public investment in agricultural research and extension, innovation by farmers and off-farm migration mitigated the worst effects of the misplaced enthusiasm for closer settlement. Soldier settlement in the twentieth century was the most extreme manifestation of the sentimental attachment to small farms. More than just being a reward for patriotic services, the offer of land for returning veterans was actually part of the recruitment package (Lake 1985). This history has had pervasive effects on the structure and politics of Australian agriculture.

The rural community in Australia enjoys an uneasy relationship with urban people. Farmers consider themselves useful members of society because of the place of agriculture in Australian development. Beliefs in the virtues of the rural life have a long history in western societies and found formal expression in the ideas of the physiocrats who thought that only agriculture was capable of producing an economic surplus. The reality of the relationship between the urbanised Australian community and country people is more complex than the rhetoric would suggest. Links between Australia’s rural past and urban present are tenuous. As pointed out by Longworth and Riethmuller (1993), the percentage of the Australian population who are immigrants (and the children of immigrants) with no links at all in farming in Australia, now approaches 50 per cent. It challenges common sense that the current interest in the rural sector will continue, based as it is on interpretations of events that have more in common with Hollywood perceptions of the opening up of the American west than our own history. In any event, the short attention span of journalists will guarantee this.

The relative decline of agriculture

There are common patterns in Australian and overseas experience of agricultural development. The traditional economic explanation of the declining significance of the agricultural sector in wealthy countries based on the writings of Theodore Schultz (1953) and others has the following ingredients:

- Food has a low-income elasticity of demand. As income rises, demand for services associated with food increases but not demand for food per se.
- The supply of food increases with development and application of new techniques of production. The application of the techniques is encouraged by the competitive structure of farming. The importance of purchased off-farm inputs used in farming increases relative to on-farm inputs of land and labour.
- Both the demand for food and supply of agricultural products are price inelastic.


19 Longworth and Riethmuller also suggest ten myths of Australian agriculture with an accompanying explanation of each myth. The myths are listed as an attachment to this paper.

The combination of increasing supply and relatively stable demand leads to low prices and incomes in agriculture unless migration from agriculture is sufficient to remove the differential between agricultural and non-agricultural earnings.

These conditions are often described by the terms ‘cost-price squeeze’ or ‘declining terms-of-trade for agriculture’. The terms are unfortunate. First, falling real prices over time are not an exclusive feature of agriculture. The same phenomenon occurs with most manufactured goods – wherever there is a tendency for the rate of growth of production to outstrip the rate of growth of consumption. Anderson (1987) extended the standard analysis of Schultz that explains the development of a ‘farm problem’ in developed countries for the closed economy case. Anderson’s analysis demonstrated why the relative decline of agriculture is also true of countries like Australia with a comparative advantage in agriculture.

The key to understanding the relative decline of agriculture (and manufacturing) is the recognition that the demand for services is more income elastic than the demand for goods, including both agricultural and manufactured products. Moreover, it is easier to introduce cost-reducing technology into agricultural and manufacturing industries than labour intensive service industries.

Second, a large part of the cost-price squeeze or declining terms-of-trade for agriculture is a statistical artefact or measurement problem rather than a useful description of the economic process that is occurring. This is because standardised commodities – wheat, dairy products and so on – are measured in the numerator, whereas elaborately transformed commodities are measured in the denominator. A unit of wheat today is much the same as it was a century ago. This is not true for agricultural machines or specialised inputs where quality improves steadily over time. Adjusting the index of prices paid for quality changes would lead to a lower (measured) cost-price squeeze and a smaller decline in agriculture’s terms-of-trade. In any case, the ratio of costs and prices provides absolutely no guidance as to the sorts of policies that should be followed to mitigate the effects of the relative decline of agriculture on farmers and their communities. The decline in agriculture is relative not absolute. Aggregate output continues to increase.

**The Australian situation**

A generation ago, Australian agricultural economists sought explanations of the late arrival of a low-income problem in Australian agriculture compared with Europe and North America. Although the distributions were very different, average urban incomes and farm incomes were roughly equivalent in Australia until around 1970.

Among the explanations suggested were (Standen and Musgrave 1968):

- The higher proportion of livestock products produced in Australia with higher income elasticities. In particular, wool is an industrial raw material with few impediments to trade that reduce the demand for agricultural (food) products.
- The dependence of Australian agriculture on trade implying higher price elasticities of demand.
- The greater social homogeneity of Australia than Northern Hemisphere countries, especially more uniform standards of basic education between city and country making agricultural adjustment through off-farm migration easier.
- The lateness of European settlement. Despite the excesses of local settlement policy, farm size and farm ownership was never as fragmented as in Europe.

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22 Correspondingly, the alleged long-run rise in prices and in terms of trade for exports of manufactured goods has been biased upwards by failing to account for quality changes (Lipsey R.E. 1994 ‘Quality Changes and Other Influences on Measures of Export Prices of Manufactured Goods’, World Bank Policy Research Working Paper 1348). Almost by definition, the prices of ‘high-tech’ products fall rapidly following their introduction, adoption and adaptation to mass production.
• The extreme riskiness of Australian agriculture caused by price and climatic variability. Wildly fluctuating farm incomes make it impossible for small farmers to accumulate the assets necessary to survive in hard times.

• The absence of substantial non-pecuniary benefits of farming in Australia. Instead, there are significant dis-benefits – especially social isolation for farmers living in remote areas.

These prognostications were scarcely resolved before it was clear that the era of relative prosperity for Australian farmers was over with the wheat/wool/dairy slump of the late 1960s. Ever since, the essential problem for Australia has been how to handle an overriding truth for agriculture in rich countries. The number of farmers has to decline if those farmers remaining are to enjoy satisfactory standards of living, unless governments and taxpayers subsidise agricultural production. Fewer farmers or poorer farmers is the policy choice. From time to time, drought or slumps in prices have exacerbated the decline of agriculture and created acute problems in some regions or industries. For example, there was a slump in the beef industry in the 1970s with drastic effects in Queensland and northern Australia. The worst slump occurred in wool following collapse of the reserve price scheme in 1990. The protracted wool slump that is now showing signs of ending was as much self-inflicted injury as a downturn in commodity prices in the usual fashion. Future historians may regard official and public reaction to severe droughts in the early 90s as a turning point in the relationship between governments and farmers because they reflected the increasing urban perception that farmers are in a state of permanent disadvantage.

There have been basically four responses by the Commonwealth Government over the last thirty years to the situation of farmers and the agricultural sector:

• Although the policy has travelled under various names, the first response to incipient problems of rural decline was renewed Commonwealth-state programs of rural reconstruction although not on the scale of the programs of the 1930s. Under these programs, a variety of measures are used to encourage larger and more financially viable farms – debt reconstruction, concessional loans and grants to farmers leaving agriculture. This is to tackle the symptoms of the farm problem rather than its causes.

• Ad hoc programs to cope with emergencies – drought relief and commodity-based programs. Latterly, ad hoc assistance has also been delivered under ‘exceptional circumstances’ provisions of the rural adjustment scheme. By definition ad hoc assistance is subject to political whim. This is also the case for the exceptional services provision of rural adjustment schemes. Furthermore, ad hoc programs discourage private efforts to provide for poor seasons or low prices. Drought relief in Australia is replete with examples of inconsistent criteria being applied between regions, between states and between commodities.

• Financial transfers to farming districts and indirectly to farmers by programs ostensibly in the pursuit of environmental objectives.

• Various programs of industry development under the guise of improving export marketing, encouraging further processing and so on. Australian initiatives to improve market access for agricultural products are a special case of government action to assist industry development.

**Rural adjustment**

The contradictions of rural reconstruction policies are well recognised. Unless there are problems in the credit market, farmers with long-term prospects should be able to obtain commercial credit. The performance of the banks and the credit system in relation to agriculture is controversial. Government involvement in rural adjustment schemes rests on the assumptions that the commercial financial market is not performing well and that government rural adjustment agencies are able to separate farmers with short-term difficulties who are able to succeed in the long-term from those who are not. The latter is dubious.
Moreover, concessional loans are counter-productive, if the objective is to encourage larger and financially secure farms. Farmers seeking to expand are assisted by low prices for land. Concessional loans under rural adjustment schemes increase the price of agricultural land. In fact, protection of the wealth of existing farmers (and the security of loans made by financial institutions) is an important motivation for rural adjustment schemes.

Grants given under rural adjustment schemes to farmers leaving agriculture should be regarded as welfare measures. It is noteworthy that other small business people receive no favours from government in the event of financial failure. Making comparisons between poor farmers and other poor people is difficult. This is because the non-farm poor have usually exhausted their assets, if they ever had any. Income criteria can be easily developed to measure poverty for the non-farm poor and determine eligibility for welfare assistance. Poverty for farmers occurs when banks are no longer willing to lend against remaining farm assets. The level of assets held by poor farmers is nevertheless high by urban poverty standards.

In addition, farm income is notoriously variable from year to year. Farming in Australia is a risky business. Especially in cropping areas, individuals shift from affluence to poverty in a short period and vice versa. A streak of good prices and good yields has rescued the situation of Australian farmers since time immemorial. This is what makes ad hoc assistance for contingencies like drought so problematic. There is an enormous temptation to hang on and hope for the best. Renewed attempts by the Commonwealth Government to encourage an attitude of self-reliance and drought preparedness in the face of climatic uncertainty during the 1980s collapsed with a run of poor seasons in the 1990s. In that episode, state politicians especially from Queensland openly undermined Commonwealth policy.

Re-establishment grants available under rural adjustment schemes are sometimes justified as efficiency measures intended to overcome impediments in the farm labour market because farmers usually have to change their residence in order to change their job. Farmers as a group are commendably resistant to the idea of welfare, preferring to pay their own way (at least in theory). Farmers’ organisations are at pains to maintain the tradition of separate programs for farmers rather than concede that many within their ranks could fall within the normal welfare net. There is a fine line between playing to these sensibilities and out-and-out sophistry in inventing de facto welfare programs to assist farmers in times of stress.

There is no doubt that the welfare problems of agriculture could be handled within the social security system even though this is politically unacceptable. Far greater administrative costs are incurred when special assistance programs for farmers are instituted in lieu of direct welfare assistance as part of the social security system. Poor farmers – soon to be ex-farmers – represent only a small proportion of socially disadvantaged people in Australia. The problems of poor farmers are not an insurmountable financial burden for a needs-based social security system used to administering eligibility criteria combining income and assets. However, it is hard to take seriously the present government’s commitment to fairness and efficiency in the delivery of social security to farmers and non-farmers since it lifted earlier this year the maximum asset limit for farmers’ children to be eligible for the Youth Allowance from $829,000 to $1.7 million.

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24 The average payment to dairy farmers in New South Wales and Victoria under the adjustment package for dairy farmers is $142,500 and $72,000 respectively, with aggregate payments of $582m for Victoria and $259m for New South Wales (Edwards G. 2000 Paper prepared for the Seminar on Dairy Industry Reform organised by the Victorian Branch of the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society, Melbourne, 26 June.). By contrast, the Kennett Government liberalised shopping hours in Victoria in the mid-90s – ending years of reluctant Sabbath observance for most Victorians. There was no compensation for milk bars and convenience stores that lost business. Just as there will also be none if milk bars go out of business now because supermarkets use milk as a loss leader following deregulation of the milk industry.

25 Increasing prices of urban real estate in recent years and the widening of superannuation benefits have shifted the distribution of wealth in Australia significantly against non-metropolitan Australians. Furthermore, the casual and part-time employment opportunities created by the growth of the service economy in the cities are unavailable to rural people. While both factors make urban-rural comparisons of household incomes more difficult than before, a working hypothesis would be that changes in workforce participation and increasing urban wealth have tilted the balance against rural people.
Social security and rural reconstruction approaches to alleviating hardship have the advantage that they are based on individual circumstances. The difficulty with industry or regional approaches is that they cannot discriminate between poor people in rich regions or industries and the rich in poor regions or industries. Regional programs are vulnerable to abuse through political log rolling with an electoral system based on single member electorates. ‘Green’ or ‘bush’ whiteboards are reprehensible abuse of process as much as allocation of sporting facilities.

Regional and self-perpetuating poverty is more common in metropolitan areas than exclusively farming areas. In a comprehensive analysis of the incidence of poverty by postcode in Victoria and New South Wales, Vinson (1999) combined ten indicators of social deprivation (child abuse, court appearances, child injuries, emergency assistance, years of schooling, birthweight, income, psychiatric illness, unemployment and work skills) to determine areas of greatest social disadvantage. There are few, if any, ‘pure’ farming areas in the listings of the ‘top 30’ disadvantaged postcodes. Suburbs in the major cities – Melbourne, Sydney and Newcastle – and provincial towns are well represented. The disadvantaged rural postcodes identified in New South Wales were areas with substantial numbers of Aboriginal Australians. For Victoria, there are couple of irrigation areas in Vinson’s list where economic hardship has been around since their initial establishment.

Poverty and lack of success in farming have a financial dimension. There is no doubt the ability to manage risk and finance is a key to success in farming. However, this can only be judged after the event given the influence of pure chance in Australian farming. The current fashion to offer publicly funded training in financial and risk management to farmers is misplaced. Several programs under the general rubric ‘property management planning’ have been established by the Commonwealth and implemented by the states. Among other things, these programs fail to recognise that competition for resources occurs between farmers. Governments do not have any business in intervening in that process. Risk management programs suffer acutely from the ‘everyone can be a winner’ fallacy. How risk management is supposed to solve the problems of under-resourced farmers defies imagination. A similar confusion lies behind wasteful expenditure by several Research and Development Corporations (RDCs) in ‘benchmarking’ individual farm performance. This is indicative of the low standards of professionalism in some RDCs. No amount of calculation of averages across industries can assist individual farmers decide the best strategy for their own farms. This is not to say that skilled farm management and extension workers employed in state agencies do not make the best of a bad job and do useful things under the banner of risk management and benchmarking.

**Agriculture and the role of government**

Government provides numerous services to farmers including provision of physical infrastructure, social security, public education, quarantine, regulation of the banking system and other aspects of the economy and agricultural research. Some of these services are provided for the community as a whole and some are specific to the agricultural sector. The role of government is a vexed issue in all countries, especially in Australia. Not only is the appropriate boundary of public and private economic activity a contentious and moving target for reasons of values and ideology, Australia is a federation with separation of powers between the Commonwealth and the states.

Public administration in Australia is characterised by confusion as to which programs are implemented in the public domain and at which level of government. The Commonwealth has a dominant position in many areas of administration by default, not because of constitutional authority but because of financial strength.

Cost shifting and buck passing now typifies the relationship between the states and Commonwealth rather than cooperative federalism. Even when the constitutional situation appears clear, there is frequent confusion of roles.

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Thus, there is the anomalous situation of state governments being involved in industry policy and export promotion. In a shameless piece of extravagance, ignorance and adventurism, the Victorian Government established a stand alone ‘International Fibre Centre’ in Geelong in the mid-1990s. At the same time, CSIRO was cutting back on wool research in Geelong and elsewhere. The Victorian Government showed no regard for the burden of research overheads on the declining wool industry. What special expertise the State of Victoria could bring to bear on commercial decisions in a national and international industry was far from clear.

Similarly, the Commonwealth Government is deeply involved in local agricultural research and environmental policies with an array of small Commonwealth programs in addition to the activities of RDCs. State agencies are obliged to compete for small sums trickled out from time to time by the Commonwealth for poorly defined purposes.

Agricultural research is in many ways a paradigm case of the confusion of roles in the Australian federation. There is no doubt that the success of agricultural production in Australia has been assisted by the application of science. The wine industry is the best modern example of the way research can assist development. A decade ago, Australian researchers in oenology and viticulture contributed twenty per cent of the world scientific literature on these topics (Kym Anderson, personal communication). The research was largely undertaken in public research and academic institutions with industry financial support. The agricultural education system has responded to the needs of the wine industry for trained personnel.

Science and sunshine are only part of the story for the Australian wine industry. Favourable demand trends in Australia and overseas and the absence of statutory marketing arrangements have also assisted the growth of the wine industry. Australian firms in the wine industry have been able to develop international markets successfully without the shackles of compulsory generic promotion, single desks, political interference by farmers’ organisations and other trappings of agricultural marketing in Australia. By chance or design, the wine industry has demonstrated a logical separation of public and private roles in its recent expansion.

A distinguishing feature of agricultural research is that it is often location-specific because agricultural production is dependent on adaptation of biological processes to local conditions. The American historian Alan Olmstead, in his Alan Lloyd Fellowship Lecture (Olmstead 1999), elaborated the role of biological innovation in agricultural development. Olmstead challenged the traditional view amongst agricultural historians that agricultural progress in New World countries like the United States and Australia has depended mainly on productivity gains from labour saving following mechanisation. Mechanical (and chemical) innovations in agriculture arise in the private sector because the innovations can be embodied in products and sold to farmers. By contrast, biological innovations often require intricate changes to farming systems that cannot always be linked to sales of agricultural inputs. Some form of collective action is needed to develop new farming systems and adapt them to local use.

Government involvement and other forms of collective action occur in agricultural research because of the nature of R&D and the structure of farming industries. Research has attributes of a ‘public good’. Property rights in research are hard to establish because knowledge and information are non-rival in consumption. The use of knowledge and information by one person does not make it unavailable to others. The nature of farming makes it difficult to exclude non-contributors to the financing of research from the benefits of research. Farmers can easily copy their neighbours.

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Agricultural research in Australia has a long history. Departments of Agriculture were created in the Australian colonies before federation. Systematic research in agricultural and veterinary science was augmented in the twentieth century by research in universities and by the Commonwealth following creation of CSIRO in 1926. Private firms have not done much agricultural research in Australia, notwithstanding the substantial contribution of farmers to agricultural productivity through observation and informal experimentation.

Agricultural research is now caught up in the fashion for institutional reform. Reinforcing the financial constraints imposed by the substantial cost of the large agricultural research and education system developed in Australia over the last fifty years was disenchantment with management and performance of research agencies. The most important consequence was the strengthening of Commonwealth involvement in agricultural research from the mid-1980s with establishment of RDCs. RDCs are charged with encouraging application of science to improve growth and efficiency in agriculture and protect the environment. RDCs are an extension of earlier funding methods whereby levies on farmers are matched by Commonwealth contributions.

Because of the division of taxation powers in the Australian Constitution, the ability to fund RDCs from farmer contributions is the exclusive prerogative of the Commonwealth, even though responsibilities for land management lie with the states. State government agencies cannot tap farmer contributions directly. When the approach to funding agricultural research changed to cost recovery and beneficiary pays, this proved to be a powerful centralising influence on administration of agricultural research in Australia despite location-specific aspects of agriculture and agricultural research that suggest that it should be subject to local direction. In particular, the scientific expertise of state agricultural agencies is greater than that available to the Commonwealth.

Another feature of RDCs is direct representation of farmers in research management. Farmer participation is more than a quid pro quo for payment of compulsory levies. Underlying representation of farmers and directors with commercial experience in research management was the suspicion that agricultural science lacked relevance and direction and had been ‘captured’ by scientists. This generalisation was unfair to many scientists. Most scientists thought they had done a good job in the twenty-five years of expansion of agricultural research and education and have found it difficult to adjust to the constant cutbacks and reorganisation of the 1980s and 1990s. In any case, the ideal of a commercially oriented research system has not stopped the intervention of grower politics into the management of RDCs. Given the influence of RDCs in setting research priorities; this has increased short-term pressures on research. It is a matter of opinion whether science capture is worse than political capture.

RDCs have other administrative problems. In effect, each RDC is like a monopsony buyer of research services in its area of research – and can be tempted to behave accordingly. RDCs are criticised by researchers because their emphasis on accountability and formal priority setting is inimical to imaginative thinking and independence in the research community. Most people expect to be held accountable within their own institutions and professional discipline and resent interference from those they regard as inexperienced in research and its management. A problem with RDCs is their desire to ‘leverage’ contributions to agencies that are mainly funded by taxpayers. Taxpayers fund three-quarters of agricultural research in Australia. State governments pay half. Yet some RDCs have sought to control the research agenda by virtue of strategic contributions at the margin, taking advantage of the straitened circumstances of agricultural research agencies. The stronger research agencies like CSIRO and the older universities have hit back by instituting research costing and charging systems that have the trappings of economic logic but no real economic substance. A charade of accounting procedures is thus used by research agencies to try and drive the price of research up, while RDCs try and drive the price down. The result is frustration on both sides and substantial additional costs, all done in the name of accountability.
RDCs were established at a time of soul searching about prospects for commodity-based industries. It was claimed that resources should be diverted to ‘value adding’, ‘high-tech’ and ‘sunrise’ industries. Whether new industries would be successful on world markets was asserted rather than argued. That governments could select new opportunities was taken for granted. Government attempts to guide industrial development had already proved counter-productive in the era of tariff protection of manufacturing. For many reasons, notably problems of information, incentives and conflicts with regulatory responsibilities, governments have a poor record in encouraging commercialisation of research and industry development. Unhappily, some RDCs did not understand that adding value is also adding costs. R&D programs in agriculture were biased in favour of downstream processing. Boundaries between public and private responsibilities were blurred. Agricultural research within State Departments and CSIRO was subject to the same influences with bad effects on morale and research productivity. Private companies that went down the value adding track had their (shareholders’) fingers burnt. The value adding cargo cult in Australian agriculture is an example of what Paul Krugman calls ‘airport economics’ – the superficial language of best-sellers designed to attract the traveller with a supposed remedy for an imagined disaster (Krugman 1994).28

Research administration is now a major problem in Australian agricultural research with a multitude of external funding sources. Excessive bureaucracy reduces creativity in research. There is an economic limit to the effort that should be devoted to setting research priorities – and, on the other side, writing submissions for research grants. Most obviously, when research evaluation is not done properly. Pannell (1996, 1997)30 demonstrated convincingly that evaluation procedures by the Grains RDC were cosmetic, intended to impress the Department of Finance and unsuspecting politicians but not actually used in project selection. There is a disturbing flavour of central planning ideology in contemporary Australian attitudes to research and academic endeavour with damaging effects on the morale and productivity of working scientists. Many researchers are frustrated by what they see as authoritarian, time consuming and unnecessary procedures in research management. As the newest agricultural research funding bodies, RDCs are unpopular with scientists. In their defence, RDCs are a scapegoat for the cuts that have occurred in the direct funding of agricultural research by all governments. These cuts were especially severe in the 1980s.

The unhappy situation in agricultural research has been compounded by proliferation of grants-based funding for the environment where political appearances are more important than development of intellectually defensible solutions to environmental problems. The National Commission of Audit (1996, p.76)30 noted that “[I]t is difficult to determine how much funding is actually allocated to Landcare Programs due to the number of Commonwealth, State and local government related programs involved.” The Australian National Audit Office was also extremely critical of landcare in its 1997 report on Commonwealth Natural Resource Management and Environment Programs. Quality control is an even greater problem in environmental programs than in agricultural research.

Environmental problems of agriculture

The environmental argument in Australian agriculture is a confusing mixture of questions of scientific fact, differences in personal and political values and pragmatic concerns with the potential efficacy of the diverse administrative mechanisms available for the solution of environmental problems. To this point, the debate over land use in agriculture has thankfully not descended to the level of similar controversies over land use in forestry that are now completely dominated by entrenched and unproductive pro and contra positions over where and how forestry should be conducted. Unlike forestry that is largely conducted on public land, agriculture is conducted on private land.

However, the trend of the discussion over agricultural land use is in the same unfortunate direction as the ‘debate’ over forestry.

Economics does not offer any simple solutions that will appeal to zealots on either side of the environmental debate but it does suggest a few ideas that are worth considering in the pursuit of coherent environmental policies.

Sorenson (2000)\textsuperscript{31} has described the environmental dilemmas confronting Australian agriculture as follows:

- The possibility of having to take considerable tracts of marginal farmland out of production in order to prevent further soil erosion, salination, loss of native vegetation, or reduction of habitat for native wildlife.
- Changing irrigation, land clearance and land management practices to prevent such environmentally destructive outcomes as salination, the formation of toxic algae, excessive nutrient run-off into streams and oceans, the draining of wetlands, the removal of fish spawning grounds, loss of habitats for often endangered wildlife. And,

Managing scarce water supplies to achieve the simultaneous goals of increasing sustainable agricultural production and environmental protection. This might mean increasing the price of water towards full cost recovery including the cost of capital works. More expensive water would have the twin benefits of reducing consumption and encouraging a switch to higher value adding crops. The production of horticultural crops is also more labour intensive.

With the exception of qualifications concerning the meaning of ‘full cost recovery’ and prospects for value adding horticulture in the third point, Sorenson has defined Australia’s environmental problems in agriculture cogently. In particular, by focusing on the need for land retirement from farming to achieve environmental objectives, Sorenson has highlighted a central problem of contemporary Australian environmental policy. That is, the reluctance of governments, farm organisations and the official conservation movement to admit – at least publicly – that the logical consequence for agricultural land use if the proclaimed goal of ‘sustainability’ is not achievable is that agricultural production will have to cease altogether in some areas and situations. Quite the contrary. By concentrating on participatory approaches to solution of land management problems such as landcare and integrated catchment management, current policy has raised expectations amongst farmers and the community that the goals of economic and environmental sustainability can be achieved simultaneously. This may not be technically possible in many parts of Australia. Even if it were, the cost of maintaining marginal farming operations in environmentally damaged and sensitive regions would be prohibitive. In economic terms, there is absolutely no logic in the proposition that the current boundaries of agricultural and pastoral production in Australia are immutable. Changing prices and costs – especially the opportunity cost of labour – will lead to a contraction of the limits of agricultural production, irrespective of environmental concerns.

Economic policy formation for the environment has some things in common with the economics of agricultural research. Environmental policy requires consideration of the role of public agencies and the way they interact with private landholders.

\textsuperscript{31} Refer to footnote 2
Stoneham (2000)\textsuperscript{32} has enunciated four general characteristics of the environment that determine the choice of policy instruments to deal with environmental problems:

- **Incomplete and asymmetric information.** In some situations, policy makers simply do not know enough to make well-informed decisions concerning protection or repair of the environment. Greenhouse, salinity and loss of biodiversity are examples. ‘Safe minimum standards’, the ‘precautionary principle’ and application of ‘caps’ are logical responses to lack of knowledge especially when environmental damage is irreversible. Asymmetric information refers to situations where information is unequally divided between the parties to environmental decision-making. Thus, in the case of land clearing or dryland salinity, farmers are better informed than are officials on the costs of changing behaviour on particular pieces of land. Environmental agencies are better placed to judge the value of environmental assets being damaged. Decision-making can be improved by bringing these separate pieces of information together.

- **Non-standard environmental values.** Environmental damage is not the same in space or time with respect to the same phenomena. Pannell (2000)\textsuperscript{33} has pointed out that dryland salinity is different throughout Australia for scientific and economic reasons. Where environmental concerns have aesthetic dimensions – such as land clearing, old growth forests and so on – proximity to population centres is a valid consideration in planning. Similarly, what the community as a whole thinks now is different from what it thought twenty years ago. Some aspects of the environmental debate can only be settled in the political domain.

- **Multiple benefits.** Several environmental benefits could arise from one change in natural resource management. Sometimes, environmental objectives may be in conflict. For example, returning water to the Snowy River would improve the riparian environment and the general amenity of East Gippsland but would definitely exacerbate the environmental problems of the Murray-Darling Basin.

- **Non-market values.** Many things are highly valued but unpriced in the market. Without government action, these things will be neglected and under-supplied.

Environmental policy making should have an historical and geographical dimension to account for differences in community attitudes over time, between different groups in the community and between different regions. Frawley (1994, pp.60-1)\textsuperscript{34} has suggested that there are three broad eras in Australian environmental visions:

- Exploitative pioneering: nineteenth century onwards.
- National development and ‘wise use’ of resources: c. 1900-60s.
- Modern environmentalism: 1960s-present.

While this is an interesting classification, the description by Frawley of the third era as a time “during which the development ethos has been challenged and a wide range of environmental legislation passed by state and federal governments” is disconcerting. There is an implied critique of the institutions of the market economy and a suggestion that environmental problems can be ascribed to development and the market economy per se. Many environmental problems are not amenable to a legislative approach and the ‘command and control’ philosophy that political solutions imply. A moment’s reflection on the Gargantuan scale of the environmental problems of Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union and China will explain why this is so.


Regulation is one thing but observance and enforcement of regulations another. Revelation of the environmental problems of the former centrally planned economies has done more to revise attitudes to environmental policies in the Northern Hemisphere than it has in Australia. Not only are some modern environmentalists one-sided in their interpretation of the causes of environmental problems, their diagnosis is even less helpful because it is often allied with a “quasi-religious celebration of nature and preservationism” (Maley, 1994, p.42). Many ‘deep green’ conservationists are long on ideology and rhetoric but short on empirics and case-by-case analysis. Nor can the fundamentalist approach of the radical environmentalists rank problems in order of their significance other than by appeals to emotion or whim. The stodgy eclecticism and reductionism of the ‘wise use’ era will more fruitful in the long run than modern environmentalism.

The next three sections of the paper discuss problems associated with irrigation, land clearing and NFF/ACF proposals for increased expenditure on salinity and the environment.

**Irrigation and the Australian environmental debate**

Environmental problems associated with irrigation were recognised in the program of water reform put forward by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in the mid-90s. This represents a major turn-around since the heady days of dam construction and irrigation development when at every election Australian politicians felt a dam coming on. Environmental flows were recognised by COAG as of equivalent significance to consumptive uses. Irrigation has many effects on the environment. Few of the effects were considered when irrigation was established in Australia despite international experience of damage through salinisation since Biblical times. This is not being wise after the event. Australian engineers and scientists in the nineteenth century knew of these experiences (Barr and Cary 1992). Nevertheless, early irrigation schemes were installed with insufficient attention to drainage and soil types in irrigated areas. More understandably, technical knowledge of local conditions was limited and farmers were inexperienced. Furthermore, the closer settlement imperative encouraged creation of farms that were too small for farmers to take a long-term view. In effect, both environmental and economic caution was thrown to the wind.

The environmental controversies now surrounding irrigation in Australia are thus a product of its chequered history, not merely a reflection of concerns with the environment common amongst urban dwellers. Growing concern with the environmental consequences of irrigation can be regarded as a second stage in the retreat from an uncritical approach to the economics of irrigation that characterised public attitudes and dominated the policies of governments until the last twenty years. The first stage of this retreat began in the 1960s and 1970s when governments first took note of the growing criticism of economists and scientists concerning the way irrigation was established and conducted in Australia (Davidson 1969).

Government insistence that irrigation and land settlement projects be subjected to serious examination was part of a worldwide trend towards greater use of cost-benefit analysis and other formal techniques of project appraisal. In fact, the water and irrigation industry of the United States was the test bed in the development and application of these techniques. Rapidly emerging problems from the early 1970s of the Ord River scheme in Western Australia that slipped unscathed through the appraisal process only reinforced public scepticism concerning the economic merits of irrigation and its adverse environmental effects. Cabinet papers released under the thirty-year rule in 1996 confirm that technical and economic advice concerning the Ord Scheme from public servants was adverse (Smith 1998, p.171).

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37 Refer to footnote 13.
The main environmental problem associated with irrigation is salinity. Rising water tables from irrigation affect plant production on-site. There is further damage off-site to land and water from the downstream impact of saline drainage. Poor drainage is the major cause of salinity in irrigated areas. One-third of all irrigated land in Australia has a watertable within two and five metres of the surface. Damage from salinity is overwhelmingly concentrated in the Murray Valley (Williamson 1990 cited by Smith 1998, p.99). Dryland salinity associated with excessive land clearing in regions adjacent to irrigation areas compounds the problem of damage to water quality in rivers and streams from salinity induced by irrigation.

Water quality is now increasingly important as an environmental issue. Water from the Murray-Darling system provides some of Adelaide’s domestic water supplies. This has exacerbated longstanding arguments between states over allocation of water and management of the inland rivers and irrigation. Despite elaborate and costly mechanisms to encourage interstate cooperation in use of the Murray-Darling Basin, the record of public administration of these shared water resources is mixed.

There are other dimensions to water quality as well as salinity. These include the increase in suspended sediments in water (turbidity) and pollution from nutrients and agricultural chemicals. In the limit, the effects of these sources of pollution could render Adelaide’s water undrinkable. Various programs are in place to control salinity and other aspects of declining water quality. It is clear that short-term interests of irrigators will be compromised as these programs are brought to successful completion. The most spectacular manifestation of water quality problems in Australian waterways has been increased frequency of algal blooms (‘eutrophication’) associated with additional nutrients, mainly phosphorus. A protracted argument has ensued whether the major source of these nutrients is runoff from irrigated and other agricultural land or from sewage treatment on inland rivers. Either way, the frequency of algal blooms is increased by the reduction in flow brought about by diversion of water from regulated rivers for irrigation. In any case, the amount of pollution that occurs from towns along the rivers is a function of the size of towns. The pollution from towns is affected by economic activity associated with irrigation – an unfavourable variation on the (confused) theme of multiplier benefits asserted to follow investment in irrigation.

Changing the natural flow of rivers within and between years with regulation of rivers has further effects on the environment. Irrigation has changed the seasonality of flows in the Murray-Darling system from a winter-spring peak to a summer-autumn peak. Water temperature in rivers is also affected by irrigation because water is usually released from the bottom of reservoirs. Both these influences have brought about drastic reductions in native fish populations, compounding damage caused by invasion of European carp. Other ecosystem effects of irrigation include disruption of the normal pattern of immersion and drying of wetlands that are the habitats of birds and other animals. It is estimated that around one-third of the wetlands in the Murray-Darling Basin has been lost through irrigation. The figure is around 70 per cent for Victoria (Smith 1998, p.106). Managing wetlands for environmental purposes requires strategies of flooding and drying at different times. These management regimes are not always at the expense of irrigators.

Conflict between environmentalists and irrigators over the use of water for irrigation is expressed in several ways. There are complex political, philosophical, economic and technical dimensions to environmental problems and their resolution. The debates also involve consideration of the evidence and administrative procedures that are necessary to resolve conflicts, at reasonable cost. Unfortunately, the questions are sometimes not approached in good faith. Some irrigators and environmentalists find it easier to adopt rigid positions, for or against irrigation.

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40 Refer to footnote 38
This is the case with those environmentalists who ascribe almost mystical significance to maintaining the environment in its pristine state. Mankind comes a poor second to nature in some parts of the environment movement.

The political dimension of the environmental debate is a reflection of the rural-urban divide in an increasingly urbanised Australian community. Many urban dwellers know little of the history of the rural industries and their contribution to Australia, and care even less. There are differences of opinion amongst environmentalists concerning the style and content of environmental policy and political action in support of environmental causes. The economic dimension of the environmental critique of irrigation embodies elements of the traditional critique of the economic rationalists. Many aspects of the environmental debate are about aesthetics and matters of taste that are incapable of measurement. Other issues are mundane concerning how environmental policies will be researched, implemented and financed. Serious ecologists seek to define their objectives carefully and base their recommendations on scientific observation and measurement. In not dissimilar fashion, the debate over the environment has encouraged economists to be more creative in their approach.

A critical choice in environmental management is between command and control systems and market-based approaches (Stoneham and Chaudri 2000). The latter have considerable appeal but their acceptance by both the public and governments will require further research and subtle explanation.

Presumably, farmers have the same (or more) concern as environmentalists in ensuring their farming operations are sustainable. It is a false dichotomy to presume there is a conflict between economic growth and environmental sustainability. Sustainable development is a tautology. Economic growth cannot exist without sustainability and vice versa. In any case, the concept of the environment is so diverse and the range of environmental actions so numerous that generalised support for ‘sustainability’ is an inadequate guide to action. Often, the objectives of environmentalists are not well enough defined to be translated into policy.

The idea of sustainability is more emblematic than useful. Pannell and Schilizzi (1999) argue that the multi-faceted nature of sustainability can be reduced to three basic concepts: environmental stability, intergenerational equity and economic efficiency. In their view, the term ‘sustainability’ is worthwhile as an expedient but actual decision making should be based on measurable objectives. Sometimes the idea of sustainability is used loosely to include purely social objectives. Similarly, the idea of ‘integrated catchment management’ is vague. The ambiguity of the catchment management concept is creating similar problems to the illusory search for sustainable development. What does integrated catchment management really mean? It appears that catchment management is an administrative device or forum whereby groups within catchments can be brought together for interminable discussions in the belief that given time they can reach agreement on any topic. In wetter and hilly areas, there are serious engineering-type problems associated with management of waterways. These were handled satisfactorily under previous arrangements without all-purpose catchment authorities. Catchment management is a further symptom of the erosion of the influence of science-based professionals in environmental management over recent years. Catchment management is an odd basis of organising services to farmers in a large flat country.

The politics of irrigation and the environment is different in different parts of Australia. This is the product of cultural and historical differences that influence the emphasis of city-dwellers on environmental effects of irrigation.


It is also reflects the amount of damage from irrigation in the past. States like Western Australia and Queensland have vast amounts of land, large agricultural economies but not much irrigation. Put another way, these states have a lot of environment but not many people. The amenity provided by landscape is less important in these states than in closely settled areas.

Conflict between the Commonwealth and the states over environmental policies is not just a question of states rights but a reflection of differences between Australian states in several dimensions. Queensland can be described as still in a development phase of irrigation. To date, successive Queensland Governments have given lip service to the cap on diversions from the Murray-Darling Basin, on the most favourable interpretation of their behaviour. Understandably, Queenslanders recognise that they are the last cab off the irrigation rank in developing water resources in the northern part of the Murray-Darling Basin. There is frustration that the era of unchallenged dam construction is over and Queensland projects are now subject to stringent economic efficiency and environmental requirements unlike dams that were built in the south east of Australia in earlier years. Most of those dams were built when the Commonwealth Government did not exercise the same control over the environmental and expenditure preferences of the states.

Not that many more dams are likely to be constructed in Queensland, however. Despite posturing from the north, national politics and Commonwealth financial power will eventually prevail. This was demonstrated in the debate over the Franklin Dam in Tasmania almost two decades ago.

The politics of irrigation and the environment is different in the states where most irrigated production is conducted. There is congruence between the urban power base of environmentalists and the distribution of irrigation in Victoria, South Australia and southern New South Wales. While the irrigation industry once had political influence, this is small relative to the political leverage now exercised by the environmental lobby. Twenty years ago, politicians would not have taken seriously requests to return water to the Snowy River.

Furthermore, additional irrigation of cotton and other crops in the northern part of the Murray-Darling Basin competes with established industries like rice, dairying and horticulture in the south as well as environmental flows. It is therefore a mistake for irrigation farmers to be seduced into support for irrigation in all circumstances. It is in the interests of existing irrigators that the cap and any other restrictions on availability of water for irrigation be based on rational criteria and well managed. Outright opposition by irrigators to the cap would be as pointless in practice as it is foolish in principle.

The fact of the matter is that there are several extravagant uses of irrigation water in Australia contributing to environmental damage but not producing much economic benefit. Flood irrigation of perennial and especially annual pastures is a costly way of producing feed for livestock in a country with substantial dryland farming resources. This was the nub of Bruce Davidson’s criticisms of earlier government policies favouring irrigation development in Australia.

**Land clearing**

For urban dwellers, the issue of tree clearing came to prominence as a result of the increased attention being given to greenhouse gas emissions. Understanding the ins and outs of greenhouse would be a lifetime’s work even without the complication of land clearing in Australia. At another level, the debate over land clearing is an example of the changed attitudes of the Australian community to agriculture and land use. Public and political opinion has changed radically in recent years. The adjustment is particularly difficult for farmers brought up to believe that increasing agricultural output was in their own and the community’s interest.
Generous taxation incentives for tree clearing were ubiquitous until recent times. Without these concessions far less land would have been cleared from the 1950s to 1970s. In the same period, there was a Commonwealth-State softwood agreement that subsidised removal of native vegetation on Crown land and its replacement with pines. In Queensland, the state where tree clearing is most controversial, it was a condition of leases on Crown land that additional land be cleared and developed for agricultural use. Much the same situation applied in other states. It is little wonder that farmers are confused by the restrictions now being applied by State governments on tree clearing. Government restrictions on farmers use of their own land was bound to be a source of aggravation to independent minded farmers when the effects of their actions on others are unknown or controversial.

Attitudes to vegetation are cultural and aesthetic. The satisfaction of observing the bush or knowing it’s there is sufficient reason for many to oppose additional land clearing. Others regard any remaining scrub (these days ‘remnant vegetation’) as an affront to their industry and tidiness. Following introduction of refrigeration in the late nineteenth century, industries like dairying were established in high rainfall parts of Australia with wholesale clearing of spectacular eucalyptus forests in Gippsland, Tasmania and Western Australia and destruction of now highly-valued timbers on the North Coast of New South Wales. This was not thought out of the ordinary. Until recent times, trees were a challenge to right-thinking men.

Removal of trees has tangible physical and biological effects. There are complex links between land clearing and salinity with the extent of the effects dependent on hydrogeology and topography. Whether land clearing causes off-site salinity also depends on the size of holdings. Native vegetation provides habitat for birds and wildlife. Loss of habitat leads to reduction of biodiversity. However, eradication of foxes and cats in remaining bush would do far more for birds and wildlife than cessation of land clearing. The debate over land clearing raises measurement and strategic problems. How should we count removal of regrowth on land that has already been cleared? This is a problem in the brigalow zone of Queensland, the last substantial area of government-sponsored land clearing of the 1960s and 1970s. The threat of future restrictions on land clearing is a cause of land clearing as farmers try to beat the gun. Opponents of land clearing have accelerated the process.

The economics of land clearing raises interesting questions. The economics are different whether farmers use contractors or their own resources. Farming is seasonal. The opportunity cost of farmer’s labour is near zero for much of the year. For farmers with the required plant, the cash costs of land clearing are low. Earlier generations cleared land with axes and matches. The claim for ‘compensation’ for restricting land clearing by Queensland is brazen and bizarre. Compensation for what? Often, land clearing is unprofitable irrespective of environmental considerations, with or without greenhouse. Especially for those using contractors, restrictions on land clearing may save farmers money. To southern eyes, parts of Queensland being cleared are often in a state of drought declaration and in receipt of relief. Further land clearing in Queensland should be at farmer’s own risk.

NFF, ACF, money and the environment

The contemporary emphasis on environmental consequences of modern agricultural practice goes back to the mid-1980s. This was a time of substantial cuts to services to farmers by state governments, disruption to international markets for grain with intense trade rivalry between the United States and the European Community and widespread pessimism concerning long-term prospects of agriculture. Interest in the environment was not new. Specialised soil conservation services were established in New South Wales and Victoria following widespread community concern with soil erosion in the 1930s. In other states, similar initiatives were taken but within existing Departments of Agriculture.

43 Once they are ‘acclimatised’, Australians take pleasure in their local flora and fauna. Because Australian vegetation and landscape take getting used to, arguments over the ‘nuisance’ caused by trees are a constant tension of inner city living where there is a succession of cohorts of European arrivals to Australia. Our Polish-Australian neighbour is constantly complaining: “Why don’t you get rid of those trees and grow something useful?” And has sought legal aid to make us to do so.

44 “If it moves, shoot it. If it doesn’t, cut it down. If it votes, protect it. If it breathes, enrol it.”
Indeed, the creation of landcare in Victoria with its underlying premise that raising consciousness could solve land degradation problems on its own coincided with the destruction of the Soil Conservation Authority, and by the same people. So much for the Chairman Mao/Madison Avenue approach of modern environmentalism versus science and wise use.45

There is a wealth of evidence that adoption of conservation measures by farmers depends on the ease and profitability of innovations (Cary and Wilkinson 1997).46 Australian farmers are interested in sustainable farming systems but their adoption depends on their pocket books. Farmer’s self interest extends beyond cash income or profit in the narrow sense to include convenience, leisure, risk (security) and their natural concern for the environmental amenity of their own surroundings. The essential issue in adoption is not awareness but the technical and financial feasibility of an innovation as it applies in farmer’s own circumstances. Experienced extension workers like Barr and Cary (1992) realise that extension has “very limited potential to reduce the problems of lack of profitable options, externalities and long time scales. This is not a criticism of landcare, just a recognition that different tools have different uses” (Pannell 1998).48 Landcare does not reflect a significant break with the past. Cooperation with farmers and working with groups of farmers is part of a rich Australian tradition of agricultural research and extension practice.

After an impressive start, landcare is failing to deliver the goods as it becomes entwined in excessive bureaucracy and disputes over funding between different levels of government. What started out with slogans like ‘participation’ and ‘empowerment’ has turned out to be something else. Farmers and specialists working in local areas are gradually becoming disillusioned as effective control returns to officials in Canberra. Landcare and other environmental programs now deliver most to those skilled in their Byzantine funding and committee procedures.

Inevitable disillusionment with the slow progress of landcare has led to proposals for greater funding and for a higher proportion of that funding to be directed to on-ground works. The NFF and ACF recently made a substantial bid for additional expenditure on the environment (NFF/ACF Press Release, 15 May 2000). While this has the hallmarks of an ambit claim, one presumes it was meant to be taken seriously. The accompanying documentation (NFF/ACF 2000) reveals that estimates of public and private expenditure of $6.5 billion a year for ten years are based on consultants’ reports (Virtual Consulting Group & Griffin nrm Pty Ltd, 2000) funded by the Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation – a totally Commonwealth-funded RDC. Irrespective of the contents of the reports or legitimate objectives of NFF and ACF, many people would have qualms with funding of lobby groups seeking favours from government by government itself.

Three-quarters of the proposed investment for environmental remediation are for dealing with salinity mainly through re-afforestation. Around half of this investment is ascribed to public sources. Yet, recent research, typified by the writings of Pannell (2000) and his collaborators, has questioned the traditional association of dryland salinity with off-site – farmer to farmer and farm sector to non-farm sector – or externality effects rather than on-site damage to farmers’ own land that farmers should be responsible for.

45 The definitive environmental history of Victorian agriculture is Barr and Cary (1992) refer to footnote 36. Given the administrative and technical changes and cuts to on-ground services to farmers that have occurred in recent years, it is worth reminding ourselves of the scale of earlier efforts to redress various forms of environmental damage by a much poorer society. For example, Coman (1999 Tooth & Nail: The Story of the Rabbit in Australia, Text Publishing, Melbourne. p.156) reports that in 1959 the Vermin & Noxious Weeds Destruction Board of Victoria employed 137 inspectors and 642 workmen, equipped with 166 tractors and 194 vehicles in addition to its scientific staff. Coman’s enthralling story of the rabbit and rabbit control in Australia leaves the reader in no doubt that ferrets were a far greater threat to the rabbit than focus groups and facilitators.


47 Refer to footnote 36


51 Refer to footnote 33
Moreover, the hydrogeology of dryland salinity is so poorly understood that no one can really be sure where all these trees should be planted (and the commercial wood products sold). Tree planting on the scale envisaged in the NFF/ACF documents would have drastic effects on run-off and water supply in some areas. Perhaps this is another example of Barr and Cary’s identification of ‘Symbolic Trees and Salinity’ as one of the shibboleths of modern environmentalism (Barr and Cary 1992, chapter 3).52

There are a couple of points where the analysis of the NFF and ACF and their consultants does not hang together. The NFF and ACF have claimed that public and private expenditure of $6.5 billion per year is required to stop current environmental losses of $2 billion, around half the net annual value of farm production. On the face of it, this represents a very ordinary investment. Perhaps this is why former functionaries of the ACF and NFF – Rick Farley and Philip Toyne – have proposed a levy on taxation to fund the program.53 Why taxpayers should be expected to pay for a program apparently based on the assumption that all the adverse effects on the environment should (and can) be corrected is far from clear.

However, it seems likely that there is considerable double counting in the cost estimates provided by NFF and ACF. The cost estimates are based on separate pieces of work on various forms of land degradation – salinity, acid soils, soil erosion, water quality and so on. These different categories of land degradation could affect the same area of agricultural land. It would not make sense to eliminate one problem on its own. Some areas may be better off abandoned in the long run and left to their owners to decide the best form of land use in the interim.

Without examining all the reports and the separate cost estimates in detail, it would be impossible to tell whether the proposed program of investment in the environment is justified. But it is doubtful if the arguments presented and the information recently made available by NFF/ACF justifies investment on the scale suggested or the introduction of environmental taxes. There is no analysis presented in the NFF/ACF documents of possible interactions between output, price and revenue. Furthermore, ‘costs’ to tourism are included in the analysis without acknowledgment that domestic tourism is a zero sum game.

There are other risks for the NFF and its membership in embracing an approach to the environment that endorses environmental targets. Of course, targeting has already been proposed in a document produced by the Commonwealth Department responsible for agriculture (AFFA 1999).54 Some of the environmental targets put forward by AFFA are astounding. Having ‘a majority of farms using a whole farm plan which is consistent with regional strategies’ (Virtual Consulting Group & Griffin nrm Pty Ltd, 2000, p.12, table 1.2)55 would make a Soviet central planner blanch. Does Australia still have a market-based agricultural economy where farmers make the key decisions? As pointed out by Pannell (1998)56, “it is not in society’s power to directly select a sustainable integrated farming system, because it is not possible to simply order farmers to adopt the chosen system.”

‘Crying green wolf’ is a dangerous strategy for farmers if the national economy turns sour and/or urban taxpayers decide they have other priorities.

52 Refer to footnote 36
53 There are problems with a hypothecated environmental levy. In particular, the Commonwealth will be put firmly in the driver’s seat when many issues are not amenable to national solutions. The issue of cost sharing and user charges will be pushed to one side. Some public responsibilities with respect to the environment should be paid for directly by state governments or local government rates. A levy of the size suggested will make environmental agencies flush with funds when technical solutions to environmental problems have not been established. Inevitably, the same care will not be exercised designing the content and sequence of a program of environmental remediation than if it were paid for from general revenue and reliant on farmers’ contributions.
55 Refer to footnote 50
56 Refer to footnote 48
Moreover, continually emphasising the environmental problems of Australian agriculture gives comfort to our competitors in international agricultural trade – many of whom would cheerfully apply nebulous criteria of sustainability to maintain existing trade barriers. Sadly, there are a few locals who would regard that as no bad thing.

**Trade policy**

During the writing of this paper in July 2000, a motion to reverse longstanding support by farmers’ organisations for Australian efforts to achieve trade liberalisation was narrowly lost at the annual conference of the New South Wales Farmers Association. That reaction is a measure of the frustration felt by Australian farmers at the lack of progress in attempts to remove impediments to Australian access to world markets for agricultural products through international trade negotiations. Especially since the long-running Uruguay Round of trade negotiations began in the mid-1980s, farmers and Australian governments have collaborated closely in these efforts.

Recent evidence suggests that the Australian strategy has not been altogether successful. It was reported at the Outlook 2000 conference in March by an official of the OECD that “western countries have bumped up the level of protection of farm output to the highest levels in the past 100 years” (*The Age*, March 2, 2000, p.2).

The Australian strategy in the Uruguay Round was built round the ‘Cairns Group’, an alliance of agricultural exporting countries in whose formation, research and administrative support and leadership Australia played the major role. The objectives of the alliance were first, to put agricultural trade firmly on the agenda of international trade diplomacy and second, to make progress in reducing tariffs, quotas and other devices that distort international trade in agricultural products and cause losses to farmers and Australia as a whole. A group of nations acting together obviously has more chance of success than Australia acting on its own given the economic and political power of European nations, Japan and latterly the United States that choose to protect their own farmers at the expense of Australia. Forming the alliance has had some unforeseen consequences for Australian farmers.

Part of the reason for dissatisfaction of farmers with continued existence of trade barriers is that the chances of success of the Cairns Group strategy and the potential gains to Australian farmers from trade liberalisation were oversold. This is not to deny the damage to Australia and other agricultural exporting countries from distortion of the trading system for agriculture. Much of the damage from trade distortions is to consumers in countries that choose to protect their agricultural producers. Foreign countries that protect farmers do not do it with the deliberate aim of disrupting international agricultural trade in mind but for domestic political reasons. It was always unlikely that the Japanese, French or Italian Governments would be more interested in Australian farmers than their own consumers.

Trade disputes unleash displays of national sentiment. The arguments of the Cairns Group were always going to have problems. The Australian and Cairns Group strategy has elements of hectoring other countries. Consequently, it encountered similar resistance as would Japanese car workers or Chinese textile workers trying to convince Australians to liberalise trade in motor cars or clothing and textiles. Most Australians would regard that as Australia’s own business and react negatively to outside pressure, including many that support trade liberalisation.

There is not much point in nursing a sense of grievance that other countries do not play by the rules. The prices that obtain in international trade are the relevant prices for Australia irrespective of whether they follow wholesale intervention in trade or the untrammelled operations of market forces.
There is an excuse for some cynicism about the bona fides of Australian governments in the mid-1980s who at the same time were reducing services to farmers and rural areas. Focusing on the faults of others in the international trade arena was a useful diversion.

Moreover, although assistance to agriculture in other countries harms Australian farmers, the same damage occurs in other exporting countries. It is not altogether clear that Australia would be the major beneficiary of liberalisation of international agricultural trade. This would be especially so if countries that tax agriculture reversed existing policies (Lipton 1977).Australian markets for agricultural products are actually expanded by impediments to agriculture common in developing countries. Most trade modelling starts from the assumption of removing impediments caused by distortions imposed by wealthy countries, without considering costs to poor countries of taxes applied to their agricultural sectors.

Australia’s losses from intervention in agricultural trade are also not as great as has been painted. Wool is an industrial raw material with almost no tariff or other barriers. Beef has had a measure of protection because Australia is a part of the foot and mouth free zone. Once foot and mouth disease is eliminated in South American countries, the beef industry will face stiffer competition. Free agricultural trade would not solve Australia’s agricultural policy problems. There are always marginal farms. Second round effects of expanded agricultural trade on exchange rates should be taken into account.

The liberal trade policy and Cairns Group strategy followed by Australia have created difficulties for some producers. Reciprocity is expected of those who campaign for free trade, especially when alliances are created with smaller nations whose access to Australia has previously been restricted. The boot is now on the other trade foot with arguments over imports of pig meat and Atlantic salmon. Tensions amongst farmers and between the Commonwealth and states have been exacerbated over who has the last say in administration of quarantine protocols.

Concluding Comments

The economic situation of Australian farmers has been broadly the same since the era of agricultural expansion and settlement ended three to four decades ago – but the social and political situation is different. Agriculture is in relative decline even though output continues to grow in absolute terms. Commodity cycles, episodic difficulties associated with market access and output fluctuations associated with Australia’s churlish climate ensure that major perturbations continue around a gradual downward trend. The skewed distribution of farm size and production and marketing risks of Australian farming means that there are always farmers at the margin of financial failure.

Coping with adjustment is easier in periods of expansion than contraction. The stress most people experience with change depends on how much choice they have in the matter. The political consequences of adjustment are greatest in downturns when more farmers are forced to make adjustments. Political reactions are reinforced when it is believed government policy has been a major cause of adverse events. While it is true the effects of Australian agricultural policy are small relative to international and weather-determined influences, farmers see it differently. Nor are politicians modest in their claims to substantially influence events, except when things are going badly. In any case, it is non-agricultural policy that has had greatest effect on farmers and rural communities in recent years.

Years of direct and indirect transfers to non-metropolitan Australians in transport, telecommunications and other utilities and services have recently been challenged. The transfers were expressions of social policy rather than farmer-oriented aid. Negative effects on farmers of microeconomic reform are an unanticipated effect of changes in administration of public utilities and the way infrastructure is provided.

Partial cessation of cross-subsidisation by utilities to farming and regional areas has coincided with rapid technical change in telecommunications. Although it is silly to suggest access to the Internet is crucial to success in farming, farmers and residents in rural areas expect the accoutrements of modern living. This puts the Commonwealth in a difficult position because substantial investment is needed to supply infrastructure to rural areas. Private businesses in telecommunications will not undertake this investment left to their own devices. Similarly, state governments are unable to hide the costs of upgrading electricity infrastructure in rural areas, if electricity authorities are broken up and privatised.

Farming is now a special case in economic policy. This parallels the United States where agricultural protection has increased. The US has turned its back on liberal attitudes towards agricultural trade. The trigger for the change in US policy was the boom/bust cycle in commodity and land markets in the 1970s and 1980s. Australia has a way to go in the US direction but the signs are there. The smaller the agricultural sector the easier for agriculture to be protected. Unlike manufacturing, border protection is unsuitable for delivering assistance to Australian agriculture. When previous assistance to agriculture was required, home consumption price schemes were used. Statutory marketing authorities were required to control supply to the Australian market. This resulted in an uneven pattern of assistance, distorted the pattern of output and led to inefficiencies in marketing. Home consumption schemes do not work if the domestic and export markets cannot be separated (meat) or if the overwhelming proportion of output is exported (wool, grains and sugar).

It would be paradoxical to subsidise Australian farmers to produce for export markets, even if the policy were credible internationally. Spending on the environment is a vehicle for increasing transfers to farmers. If the objective is improvement in the welfare of farmers, environmental expenditure is a blunt tool. Moreover, if the objective is improvement in the environment, the money will be poorly spent if it is a proxy for a serious attack on welfare problems facing farmers.

**Discussion**

Chair: Jock Douglas

Noel Beynon: Alistair, I wonder if you could comment on what you might see in the change of funding arrangements arising from GST simply because there seems to be a shift, potentially a shift in the funds between the commonwealth and the states. The states are responsible for land management and all the natural resource issues. Whether in fact they'll use that reallocation of funds for those purposes rather than medical, health education, et cetera?

Alistair Watson: I think you should explain this to the audience and me. I get hopelessly confused about things to do with accounting and taxation. What is the exact nature of the problem? It sounds an interesting one.

Noel Beynon: With the change to the GST there will be a change in the allocation of the funds and the funding arrangements between the commonwealth and the states. For a number of the major program areas such as health and education it is clear that that shift in the allocation of funds will go hand-in-hand with the shift in the states having to find the resources out of the GST for a lot of the medical and health issues. Gordon Gregory might be able to comment on that more.
It seems also that the states have the constitutional responsibility for international resource issues, agriculture and so forth. If there is a change in the fundamental way that the taxation system is operating and the allocation of the collections, then in a sense the responsibility falls back on the states. I am not too sure what the outcome will be. I was wondering whether you or others have a view on that. It is early days, but there are opportunities there.

**Alistair Watson:** It is also a bit of a fiddle to say the money collected for the GST is going to the states, as if the GST that you and I pay has got a little sign on it that says so many cents to Mr so and so. What we really have got to think about is what real resources are available, and what is the best way of organising things. I happen to think there are a lot of environmental problems with bigger state input, and the local level instrumentalities would do a better job than commonwealth ones.

**Geoff Lawrence:** Alistair, this is really a question to you, but I will preface it with a few remarks. First of all, I think you were actually talking about values but you were talking about them not by exposing them and saying these are a certain set of values and look at them objectively, you were defending a very old paradigm of agricultural economics and what it stands for against a new paradigm we might call "greening".

What we are seeing is a greening of society, and people, being more conscious about the environment, being more conscious about the food they eat, being very conscious about the disposal of waste and so on. This new paradigm is very different from the agricultural paradigm of the past. We would have something worthwhile. Organic agriculture is the future. Anyway, people say: look, this old paradigm is wrong. It is muddleheaded. You can't quantify it. Forget all that. It is not an economic argument. It is a political argument, and it has got to do with values.

I think the future of agriculture is not one where the experts come back in again and somehow capture the ground and say: look, we can develop our economics even better. It is going to be an agenda. This is what I would like you to comment on, where the experts are actually serving the interests of the primary producers- sociologists, economists get together and put their heads together with the producers to serve the interests of producers. They stand back from society and everything else will work very well. Just trust the experts- that is gone. Big science -that is gone.

I want to say to you - this is what I would like you to comment on - do you think in fact there is a way that economics as a profession can move towards this new paradigm of green thinking, because that is the paradigm that we are into now?

**Alistair Watson:** Yes, I think economics has a lot of useful things to say in terms of the political and other choices that have to be made in solving environmental problems, and I think it is absolutely right. You know, rich people have a different approach to their environment and their surroundings than poor people in rich countries and poor countries. There are many dimensions. There is an aesthetic dimension of environmental issues.

I still am, I think, unashamedly a reductionist type person in the sense that I think if you really want to help people solve this particular class of problem, if you like, traditional scientific method and approaches has got a lot more to commend it than activists talking about it.

I made a little joke in the paper. I was working in China for a large part of last year. There is a good place to observe non-market ways of dealing with the physical and biological environment. Where I was, the air was scarcely breathable. I read lots of novels and various other pieces of work while I was there. I read this book about the rabbit in Australia by Brian Coman, which I recommend to everybody to read. I was so impressed by the book that I actually wrote to the publishers and they put me in touch with Brian Coman. Although he is around my age he is actually someone I haven't met previously. We had a long correspondence. He is a scientist who was driven out of environmental science, being a public servant in Victoria, by the politically correct, the sort of upwards and onwards school of environmentalism.
A paradigm that I see out there, but I see as a paradigm that is not going to get us anywhere, as I say in that footnote, I think the ferret was a far greater threat to the rabbit than focus groups and facilitators.

**Snow Barlow:** Alistair, I want you I guess, to comment with regard to the formulation of environmental policy and perhaps delivery of programs, and your push for less commonwealth and more state. While the example of Western Australia might fly, does that mean you would push for the disbanding of the Murray Darling Basin Commission where you have four states? Do you think it is sensible to cut across catchments where you have large catchments, in fact where you have state governments that are barriers to forming common policy?

**Alistair Watson:** Obviously that requires federal/state co-operation with pretty mixed results. It is a very mixed performance too. No, no, obviously you need it. You also need professional co-operation too. State public servants and commonwealth public servants all see themselves not just institutionally linked but disciplinary in a professional network sort of sense. The formation of the Soil Conservation Authority in Victoria and the Soil Conservation Service in New South Wales in the 1930s was a political response to community awareness of the shocking erosion problems that followed from excessive settlement and droughts and the Depression. I mean, people wanted to do something. I think Sir William McKell, the former Governor General and former Premier of New South Wales, was the key figure in the creation of the soil conservation service. Environmentalism, if you like is not - I don't think - is new. I mean, scientists, intellectuals, working people, all sorts of people have been interested in the Australian environment and landscape.

**Neil Inall:** So Al, near the end of your words you said in terms of economic prospects for Australian agriculture you see a continuing gradual decline. Can you explain that a bit more? Why?

**Alistair Watson:** I think for these classical Shultz-type reasons. I think the rate of growth of supply is going faster than the rate of growth of demand. And, I mean, through productivity improvements, agricultural output is increasing in other parts of the world as well. The demand for services is growing faster. The classic paper by Kim Anderson, allows us to explain why even countries that have an advantage in agriculture have a relative decline in their agricultural sector. It will be, if you like, a gradual decline. Deviations around that decline will be substantial. Some industries will contract and some will expand. But, you know, it will depend upon developments overseas and technology.

Wheat is a good case in Australia where the combination of good science and intelligent approach gives a marketing and commercial activity and a favourable demand trend. There will be cases like that.

But I pick up these farm survey reports and comparable documents and look at the numbers. For a couple of years I was doing some work on the wool industry. I was knocking out more money as a consultant than two-thirds of the woolgrowers of Victoria. I sit in the front of a Victorian house with a computer and a great bevy of books. No expenses at all. I just don't know how those people live. Can anyone explain to me- maybe they gradually spend their assets?

**John Holmes:** Alistair, I only had a chance to do a very quick scan over your paper. I think it is full of very interesting insights and interpretations from a very knowledgeable perspective. I am going to have a very good read of it. I think you have a very good perception on pinpointing some of the very fundamental problems on Australia agricultural policy. I wouldn't go so far as Geoff Lawrence in suggesting you are entrenched in an old paradigm.

**Alistair Watson:** In response to Geoff, I wish my academic colleagues thought I had a mainstream approach to the subject.
**John Holmes:** I think what I would like to see you do, particularly in a symposium like this which is dealing with values, is to get a little bit more insight into your own system of values and, indeed, for you to explicate - we all have our own personal assessment of values where it relates to agricultural policies - where you think Australian agriculture should go. I am sure what you have here is very value- laden, but exactly how it all fits together I haven't quite worked out.

**Alistair Watson:** I like to think that my approach to economics is a tactic in the sense that the nature of the problem should determine the nature of the tools that you find useful in approaching the problem. So I think market-based solutions are appropriate in lots of circumstances. I have no more complete faith in the market than I have in the wisdom of planners. It is unfortunately very, very messy.

**Jock Douglas:** Thank you very much for that, Alistair.
Introduction

Natural resource management in Australia is fragmented vertically between levels of government and laterally at each level of government. It further suffers from an inability to integrate across a range of scales (i.e. species or paddock to landscape or catchment systems). Institutions of government have failed to keep up with this change, and the problems of rural and regional Australia are as much a symptom of institutional failure as they are of any other factor. Put simply, Australia’s resource management institutions have not promoted adaptive cultures. The consequences are policies and systems which are, at best, rooted in the past and, at worst, based on false assumptions about fundamentals such as global trends, the assimilation capacity of natural systems or the nature of community needs.

Our inability to manage adaptively has led, in some regions, to economic, social and environmental systems failing. Many factors influence the pattern and intensity of these problems. Where problems are significant they lead to enraged communities who, in the absence of any obvious institutional solution, will turn to any alternative that suggests blame or simple solutions. In urban areas, this tends to be the simplistic nostrums of green groups. In the bush, it is the equally simplistic nostrums of reactionary politics. There is clearly a need for radical change in policy and action.

This paper argues that there are opportunities for changes of policy which can underwrite regional Australia’s efforts in remediating the problems of the past and building a better future. These are presented in the context of a brief overview of forces acting on Australian society, and some of their implications.

Some forces acting on rural Australian society

- Globalisation of economic systems. This is leading to increased mobility, interdependence and the restructuring of the Australian economy. Regions and industries will need to be capable of rapid adaptation to changing circumstances.

- Globalisation of selected elements (e.g. trade and environment) of the political decision making process. Leaders and organisations will need to have a wider and deeper understanding of international processes.

- Increasing importance of the tertiary and quaternary sectors of developed economies, and the increasing interdependence among components of the economic chain. Knowledge-based wealth creates opportunities for businesses which can develop and sell research and training in forms that meets industry needs. This will require an outward looking culture that values network building and is willing to accept advice.

- Demand for quality assurance in products and services.
• Opportunities for value adding to exports, developing internationally competitive import substitution products, and for receiving increased premiums for differentiated products worldwide. Businesses will need to shift their thinking away from commodities, build capacity to use the knowledge they generate in these new contexts, and also apply old knowledge in new ways. This requires structures that promote internal cultural change so that knowledge generation is coupled with application.

• Increasing demand for sustainable resource use. Leaders, communities and industries will have to be able to create links with others outside their particular worldviews and sectional interests. The opportunity lies in the building of interdisciplinary models that foster innovation in the application of sustainability principles. This applies to all landscape products: ecosystem services, food, fibre and amenity. It will place new demands on the integration of social and resource sciences.

• Climate change and its influence on agricultural systems, life styles and natural systems. This is an opportunity generator, particularly in fields such as carbon accounting and its links with landscape-based activities.

• Growth of information and information technology and its use for networking, problem solving, consumer information and education. This is reducing the tyranny of distance and allowing the development of regionally located service industries.

• Demand for a more responsive public sector operating in competitive national and international environments. Business and institutions will have to pay attention to network building beyond traditional boundaries.

• Wider market opportunities for intellectual products. These will lead to national and international links between institutions, and strategic alliances among public and private sector organisations and tertiary institutions.

• Growth of commercially driven research opportunities for institutions together with a static and increasingly competitive government research funding pool. Rural interest groups will have more power to influence knowledge generation. Research organizations will have to be better at seeking opportunities and delivering results.

• Development of high premiums for value adding to information. New opportunities in technology development will exist. Industry-based funding bodies and their research partners will need to pay particular attention to the way in which information that they currently hold can be made marketable through these technologies.

• Acceleration of the trend towards constant retraining of the workforce to meet social, technological and market place change. This will require an ability to develop and market courses in a context in which graduate learning networks, and course-work higher degrees using diverse sources, are the norm.

• Contraction of public funding for the public sector and increasing necessity for independent fund generation. This creates an opportunity for regional and community groups to reorientate R & D priorities.

• Evolution of national models of technology transfer to the workplace using a mix of in-house training, training partnerships and specialist providers. This favours the development of nationally networked capabilities.

• The national trend towards lifetime learning based on the principles of recognition of prior learning, competency based training and articulation.
• Development of an intensely competitive education market at all levels in Australia. *This will create new opportunities for public sector agencies and private enterprise. Universities and other providers will need strategic alliances with industry to remain competitive in teaching, research and extension.*

• The change from representative to participatory democracy characterised by community learning, community consultation and community participation. *This will increase regionalisation of government services and opportunities for widening linkages. The role of disciplinary specialists will change from expert advisor to a player who must engage in public debate. The capacity to integrate information and appreciate the contributions and perspectives of others will become paramount. This has implications for the training of knowledge specialists.*

• Change in the focus of management from command and control to adaptive management. *This creates an opportunity for development of interdisciplinary models of adaptive management in all areas of the economy. An integrative approach to landscape management is one such opportunity.*

• Emergence of the private sector as a service provider in areas traditionally serviced by government. *This is the outcome of ongoing redefinition of the role of government in policy-making and action.*

• Development of more sophisticated systems of problem solving. *These will lead to the abandonment of familiar management planning models and the adoption of co-operative management with community involvement.*

• The move from cadastral management to systems management based on catchment, landscape units or bio-regions defined both by landscape units and human communities.

• Growth of industries based on native products and mixes of traditional and new industries.

• Emergence of native title and demands for co-management of native title and other protected areas.

• Growth of the use of protected areas and rural landscapes for local, national and international tourism.
Policy Opportunities

Social and biophysical systems and quality of life issues

Natural Systems

Regional & Community Development

Rural Business Management

Value adding to food and fibre products

Sustainable production of food, fibre and ecosystem services

Processing Systems

Production Science

The Past

Figure 1: The Past
Figure 2: The Present

Figure 3: The Future
Figures 1, 2 and 3 offer systemic representations of rural Australia: past, present and future. A relatively simple past is shown as morphing into a more complex future requiring policy attention across a wider span of issues. Those issues are identified and numbered graphically in Figure 3 and are listed below.

1. Social and biophysical systems and quality of life issues;
2. New enterprise development;
3. Value-adding to food and fibre products;
4. Sustainable production of food, fibre and ecosystem services;
5. Community action for restoring natural and social capital in rural systems;
6. Sustainable futures based on value-added, clean and green products and services;
7. New industry development;
8. Clean and green food and fibre production; and
9. Management of complex systems (sustainable regions) made up of interacting business, biophysical and social sub-systems.

Some policy issues

Given this analysis what are the big issues for the next decade? There are a few that clearly will dominate the agenda.

Water issues
- What are the links between landscape processes and water issues, seen from a catchment output perspective?
- How do we set catchment exit standards as indicators of catchment health?
- What is the role of urban areas as sinks and potential sources?

Landscape-based issues
- Defining in a social sense what ecosystem services are required;
- Developing strategies for building national awareness of the role of ecosystem services in rural land use and the need for those services to be paid for by the consumers of those services;
- Defining how to pay for ecosystem services;
- Developing farm management models to deliver and quality assure food, fibre and ecosystem services;
- Developing at a catchment level models that can set levels of acceptable change in untransformed systems, and levels of desired change for systems under restoration;
- Building human and social capital and rebuilding natural capital in terms of understanding the problem of complexity at landscape scale i.e. the organising principle underlying social, biophysical and economic systems which drive landscape change.
Creating a better future

There is no one simple solution to the problems of rural and regional Australia. To grasp the opportunities outlined above and create a better future, better institutional arrangements are needed, leading to many small solutions in empowered communities. Clearly, investment in social and natural capital is essential, as is the creation of modern infrastructure to allow capital investment (of all types) to create genuine prosperity.

The Commonwealth has, over time, acquired many of the tools it needs to change the institutional frameworks within which natural resource management is conducted. However, their use demands that the environment, like economic management, foreign affairs, trade, and defence, becomes a senior policy area. The current conflict between landscape-based departments (both vertical and horizontal) demands rationalised land resource management bureaucracies. At the federal level, these should be policy and rule driven. The State bureaucracies should be planning and evaluation driven, with much closer links to local government and communities for product delivery. This strategy has a capacity to contribute to the rebuilding of economic activity in regional areas.

The delivery of ecosystem services such as biodiversity, clean water, carbon sequestration, quality leisure and the restoration of degraded landscapes should come from Commonwealth policies managed by a mix of State public sector agencies and delivered by local government, community groups and the private sector. Quality control should remain the preserve of the State agencies, but subject to both Commonwealth oversight and increasing community involvement. In some specialised areas of production, quality assurance may be in the hands of industry regulatory organisations.

Conclusion

Are these speculations revolutionary? No they are simply the way we need to respond to the world as it evolves. To be effective policy must anticipated the future and understand the consequences of inaction. It then must have objectives and interventions that are flexible and adaptive to the inevitable changes that occur. In doing this transactions costs must be minimized and positive evaluation maximized so that policy becomes both values and evidence based.

One of the greatest problems we face is that in the modern world, fallibility is seen as error and not as the basis of learning. Consequently, we fear fallibility rather than seeing it as something to be applauded as pointing to new ways. There is only one truth in science namely; it progresses through the failure of hypotheses and the process of proposing new ones. We need a similar policy value. We must be glad to be shown to be wrong, because those who prove us so give great service. That service is to advance all of our thinking and achieving better outcomes.

Discussion

Chair: Gordon Gregory

Don Blesing: Bob, I really liked your implications page. That is a new thing, isn't it? The second point is can you give us some examples of institutional favour? Notice those of us who live in the regions can't picture them in the way other people do.

Bob Beeton: I think one of the fundamental things that interests me, because of my own sort of arena where I play, is the way the environment has been rolled out in Australia. The reason is that the environmental bureaucracies grew up thinking they were a bit like the agriculture or mines department or whatever. They were a department that served the sector. Progressively that has continued, so they tend to serve what they see as the environmental sector, which tends to be a range of interest groups.
My argument would be that environment is entirely intersectoral, but they haven't yet built the tools to be entirely. I see them no differently to finance and treasury and all those sorts of agencies.

Secondly, because it is a new area, it has become a bolt-on to various departments at both the state and federal level. Then we wonder why there are so many different people doing things and arguing about it. The transaction costs of that are enormous, both in terms of the speed with which things are delivered and the efficiency with which money is spent.

I guess the second example I have picked up is the regional debate that started when the body politic of Australia got a prickle up its kilt called "Hanson" and reacted with an outburst of regional enthusiasm looked around and said, "Oh, wow, we don't really have any regional infrastructure or agencies any more". So every second government department is bolting something regional onto itself and then, when they all get together in the one room, find they are all doing the one thing or some variation on the point.

I again call that institutional failure, and I would hope that it is going to be followed by institutional correction. I could go on. I mean, there are all sorts of examples you can play with. In fact, somebody mentioned the GST this morning. That is another example where I guess some federal departments and federal ministers are running a particular game and trying to get the states to behave in a particular way that they don't want. This gets tied up in constitutional issues.

Astrida Upitis: I work in the area which is trying to do something about institutional correction, so thanks for that. I work for regional services in the Department of Transport and Regional Services. It is to both of you a question, but I think it has more of a natural resource management focus first. It is the other end of the question that Don asked. What are the new institutional structures and arrangements that you could see that would make a difference? I would like a bit more shape, with some of the minds around here, to see what some of those institutional structures could look like because there is a lot of thinking going on around government at the moment. That is my first question. I have another one in structural development. In saying that national resource management is going to be the driver in industry, what is the role of government in that?

Bob Beeton: In the one-pager I have, to some extent, pointed to what I think is the way it should go, which is, in a sense, and in fact again it was mentioned this morning, a regional renegotiation between the levels of government about who does what and how. That is probably asking a bit much, but I am forever an optimist.

I don't believe that the Canberra-based bureaucracies are much good at on the ground delivery, so I make the point there about getting policy settings right and getting some rules in place that ensure that the states play the game.

I think the states have potentially been quite competent in delivering things and ensuring the quality assurance is there. But, especially in regional Australia, if the money is not getting down into local communities, which are doing the work in a whole range of arenas, then it is unlikely that we will move towards the sort of future that I was talking about.

But the fact that we are having this meeting and talking about it suggests that we don't have a totally clear view. I do not get called in to give the government shape or the rewriting of the Constitution or anything like that. But what I am really trying to precipitate or contribute to is an informed debate about the nature of the problems and a recognition that what we have got is probably not good enough to get to where we want to be.

I have just put my version of it down, which sort of accepts the reality of commonwealth, state and local government, and says that local government has probably got an expanded role, although a lot of community groups have an expanded role. The states must have a role otherwise they will play politics basically. The commonwealth government has to recognise its limitations.
That's a good start.

**Gordon Gregory**: Linda, it is your turn.

**Linda Botterill**: I just want to pick up a point that Bob made about the need for us to have a capacity to deal with complexity in policy issues. I would also like to bring us back to a remark that Ian Sinclair made at the beginning of this morning. That was that if we are talking about the role of process we need to be a little bit realistic about what can actually be achieved. I suggest that we have a number of restrictions on policy development that perhaps mean we can't be quite as synoptic or quite as rational about developing policy capacity to deal with complexity issues. We have intellectual limitations as human beings that limit us to actually breaking policy issues down into manageable chunks. We have deadlines that we have to work to within the bureaucracy. There are cabinet timetables. The combination of limited resources, and the limits on our own intellectual capacity to actually conceptualise these really big issues means we end up with a system where policy is developed incrementally or on an ad hoc basis. I think to get to the position that you are talking about we need to think about some fairly major changes to the way that policy is made. I suppose I am getting towards a field of policy-making where we sit back from the policy process and look at how a policy is actually made. The sorts of questions I suppose we would ask in that context are: Who are the players in the policy community who are involved in the policy process? Who is routinely consulted in the development of policy? Who has easy access to ministerial offices and to government? And, is there sufficient diversity of values amongst those people in the policy community to ensure that when we develop the rural policy we will be getting to encompass some of the values we have been talking about over the last couple of days? As part of that I will put in another plea that our policy process needs to be drawing on some of the very valuable research done on rural Australia that has been done by non-economists.

**Bob Beeton**: My comment is yes, but I have another view as well. The four-minute mile produced an awful lot of fit people but only one person got there. I think we need to have the intellectual equivalent to that, which is the capacity to deal with intellectual capacity and pursue it. Along the way we will achieve a lot of other things, some of which we don't even know about but, yes, it is complex. No, you can't have a perfectly regulated conduct of ministerial offices because they are more political. Yes, we can try an get more people to play. Yes, we must represent a diversity of values. And yes, the process will be imperfect and always will be, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't have the goal.

**Jock Douglas**: A question to Bob. I am looking at your "horrorgram" here, or maybe "horoscope" under the sign of the Bull! I am really interested in that. It doesn't mention rural industries. In fact, regional and community development gets the big mention in the scheme of things where the future might be. I happen to think along those similar lines, and I guess some people here, including Shelagh, have brought up this issue of the focus being agricultural industries and leaving out communities. I noticed that you brought it in a large way. I would like you to maybe explain the differentiation you see and why regional community management is big and industries don't really figure there.

**Bob Beeton**: It is clearly a failure of mine to communicate something. The biggest original sector is what I call "productions in process in science". And really that is, to my way of thinking, the sector in which the industries have traditionally operated. Rural business is one of the mediators of that, and that was a sector that I had in that diagram. So I guess I was taking as a given that there was this large sector that was the rural industries.

What interested me in the construction of it was how this growing pre-occupation in natural resource management, rural community life and rural business management was intersecting with that and what opportunities did it create. If you look at the nine areas that emerge, that brings out things like value chains et cetera, all of which have a production base that you might recognise as an industry. But I make the point in talking about issues that the move from commodities to products is actually an important part of future policy.
That is, in other words, getting away from the intellectual equivalent of "Eat beef you bastards" to "Eat healthy beef which is appropriate to you, you sweet caring person". Obviously you are far on the hill on these things and the abstraction is lost. The industry is there to start with. All I have done is look at how all these other things intersect and come into it. Given you have asked the question, I will have to revisit the matter and make it clearer.

Tony Gleeson: I go back to what Al Watson said about ensuring the clarity of purpose of the policy or the institution. So don't mix up industry policy with welfare policy. That doesn't mean to say, though, we mightn't seek integration. Some of us prompted by Gordon attended a workshop at ANU which was looking at integration of health service and ecology. We can get integration there so long as we have clarity of purpose of what each little bit is about.

I think it would be a crying shame if in fact the Commonwealth moves to integrate its programs so we have a one ad one year sort of thing, "this is where you can get it all"- because it is the absolute stupidity of the current situation that gives us the stimulus to do something fundamental. If we have unilateral action by one of the parties i.e. the Commonwealth, we will not get the integration across all the different groups that we have been talking about. I think the disaster should stay until we get a better solution than seeing the solution being one ad rather than 20 ads. That’s incrementalism and it isn’t good enough.

Neil Inall: Bob, nobody could be stronger than me in support for what you are saying about complexity and how people are frustrated about the various natural resource strategies and policies that are around at the present time. New South Wales is a major manifestation of that. But in terms of what you have said this morning, what is continuing to worry me is: what values, Australian values, are you talking about? Are you talking about a value that we really like better management, that we like efficiency? What is it? What are the values that you are talking about?

Bob Beeton: I can only answer what values I think are important from a personal perspective. I put it very simply. It took Aboriginal people many tens of thousands of years to learn to live in this country. In the process they belong to it in a way which is almost impossible for a lot of us to comprehend, but if you have experienced it you know it is genuine.

I am very proud of Australia. I think we bring people from parts of the world, who in their own countries would cut each other's throats, and somehow or other they get on with each other here. That is important. What we haven't yet done is come to terms with the continent in which we live. My fundamental value is that we have to try to build a society which is at peace with its own habitation, its continent, its ecosystems- that we are not mining them, we are husbanding them.

So if you want to find what is underneath me, it is that set of values. I would like other people to embrace those values. But I am appalled to discover that we have made no real effort to communicate or suggest that as a reasonable set of values for the 40-odd per cent of people who live in this country who are not Anglo-Celts and have come from somewhere else. I see that failure across the board. I see it in primary industry departments. I certainly see it in the conservation agencies that I have intimate knowledge of.

If you look at the profile of their visitors, they are not that large number of new settlers who would have come into a peaceful pluralistic multi-cultural society. They learn to live in it. At the moment they learn to live in it and not engage. I think we have to create some sort of national consensus at least about living in the country and about the values that it means. It is not a bunch of Anglo-Celts ramming down each other's throats, it is about having a dialogue about it.

Alistair Watson: Two comments really. What is this about government telling people what to think and that sort of stuff?
**Bob Beeton:** We have something called the "education system" that does put all sorts of things into people's heads and clearly all sorts of values. I mean, to argue that education, the way we construct syllabi, is somehow or other free of values, I find impossible to understand. What worries the hell out of me is that what passes for environmental components of our education system frequently is lousy. It doesn't deal with these issues.

**Emma Robinson:** I guess for me one of the most interesting and key aspects of globalisation is to be able to articulate, share and update global values, so creating things like tribes based on shared values, global citizens, et cetera. Given that context, my question is: what are the pros and cons of boxing values and policies, specifically rural, and how does that assist in promoting inter-connectivity between rural and urban? I guess that is directed at both Bob and Selwyn.

**Bob Beeton:** I don't think we can escape the global village in that sense. In fact, in the future shaping forces thing, I talk about the nature of globalisation of selected elements at least. I use the trade environment as the ones where the political environment is in fact globalised already. There were some interesting values, some useful and some not so useful, that came across the border, as it were. Ultimately these things have to be worked out in a context. That's the other tension. You have globalised sets of values and other things, but they will probably work in a context so they can be applied. That, to some extent, is the link between what you said and what was said earlier, that the solution lies in many small high quality decisions which are locally contextually relevant, and at least consistent with wider values within Australia and beyond.

I guess the exciting thing for me is there may be an opportunity for us to get it right. There may be enough intellectual property in that to set up widely for the rest of the world. I can't say much more than that. I take what you are saying.

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**Sue George:** I loved the horrendogram. What I loved about it was that it was a picture. It didn't have to be perfect. We weren't all being anal about whether the words were precisely right or things were exactly in place. So I love the horrendogram.

I want to go back just quickly to talk about the way forward, I suppose because what we mentioned briefly about 10 minutes ago was the need to draw urban Australians, new Australians, into some understanding and love of landscape or appreciation of landscape which will generate a demand for the eco-services you were talking about.
I would like to make the point that I can't live in a society where all the institutions and cultures that I have to deal with are pretty much defined by middle-aged men with very narrow life experience, very often, and very narrow cultural understanding about my needs and who I am as a person. A large percentage of the population, probably 80 per cent, I would argue, live with that. So at the moment we have our culture and our institutions defined by Anglo-middle-aged men. That is a fairly robust truth, I believe. So if we need to change it I am not averse to that.

I think the fact that some of you stood here today and actually said you were a bit outlandish and a bit radical is such a powerful example of how you don't even see how narrow you are. Like, to stand there and think you are radical within your line, it might be "oh, wow, you probably are in the university", or "you might be in the Department of Primary Industry", but Jesus, it is a bit of a statement about how radical you are not.

**Gordon Gregory**: I don't think we will agree with that. Can I just point out though, in defence of late-middle-aged Anglo-centric males that I do have red socks on!

**Speaker**: And you had them on yesterday!
Structural Changes in Agribusiness

By far the most important change in agribusiness is that of globalisation. Globalisation is about a global market place. It has been brought about by two key developments. One is the liberalisation of international trade and the development of more open, market-oriented economies. Two is the development of information technology. The two are in fact closely interrelated – information technology has facilitated global markets and global market opportunities have been a spur to the development of new technologies. This has meant major improvements in productivity, which has in turn helped to keep inflationary pressures low at a time of strong growth in most major western economies. It has also caused enormous adjustment pressures for all economies and all sectors within those economies.

Australian agribusiness is not immune to these pressures. Let me give you some examples.

Agribusiness and the Global Environment

Agribusiness has not traditionally been a very globalised industry. By contrast with globalised industries such as electronics, motor vehicles and chemicals for example, agribusiness as generally has been a multi-domestic industry. There have been significant barriers to globalisation of agribusiness in the form of trade and investment barriers, cultural differences in food demand, instability in supply, and lack of integration along the value chain.

However, agribusiness is slowly becoming more globalised, although the pace of change varies sector by sector. As barriers to trade and investment come down, as global trading and sourcing systems get established, as technology becomes more universal, and as changes in corporate structure take place, notably as horizontal and vertical integration becomes more advanced, so are globalised sectors beginning to develop. For example, today consumers of beef in Japan can choose not only between imported and domestic product, but between different sources and types of imported product.

The chicken meat industry operates on a virtually identical structure globally –standard modules of technology, and standard systems, with variations in cost being determined largely by scale and institutional factors outside of the industry’s control. Whilst relatively little chickenmeat trades internationally relative to production, where markets have been allowed to work some significant exporters have developed on the basis of costs and quality, such as Brazil. Should global markets develop further, these cost drivers will have enormous impacts on the structure of markets not only for chicken meat, but also for all the other meats that compete with poultry.

To be sure, there are barriers to the flow of product and information in agribusiness, but these are generally far less that they were a decade ago and the general trend is for these to decline. In processed foods, the growth in trade in processed foods from the United States has been phenomenal - real growth from 1991-1996 was around 40%. The growth from Australia was similar.

A key phenomenon is the significant consolidation that is taking place in these industries as a result of heightened global competition. The top four soft drinks players now have nearly 80% of the world market, and the top four have 75% of the household goods market.
Consolidation globally is also likely to be increased if the preference of share market investors for high-growth “new economy” stocks as opposed to “old economy” stocks like agribusiness companies continues. There is talk right now of more mega-mergers in the US food industry. To be sure, there are questions over whether such mergers really do generate value for shareholders, and the globalisation pressure may be better dealt with through growing regionally or through building alliances. But the pressures will remain nevertheless.

**New Forms of Global Corporate Strategies**

New forms of global agribusiness strategy are beginning to take hold as the globalisation process intensifies. For example, as companies focus on competitiveness in one stage of the value chain they tend to outsource or exit the remaining functions.

What can evolve from this is a splitting up of the physical asset-intensive parts of the activity (e.g. processing plants) from the information-intensive parts (e.g. brands or other intangible assets) – with companies outsourcing the processing and retaining the brand.

This of course is the model pursued by Coca Cola around the world – but there are dangers in this too. Any slip in the positioning of the brand can leave the company exposed to commitments on processing volumes that it cannot market.

All companies in agribusiness are focusing in one way or another on maximising the value of their intangible assets and rationalizing their physical assets to maximise scale economies.

Simultaneously with globalisation, there is a profound structural change taking place within agribusiness. As Boehlje in a recent article points out, this new structure is characterized by two changes in the way business is done along the agribusiness chain:

One is the transition from independent economic stages co-ordinated by markets to much more tightly aligned food supply or value chains coordinated by various forms of negotiated linkages.

Two is the integration of biological manufacturing and process control technology (and I would add, information technology) along the entire chain, enabling these “supply chains” to operate as an assembly line producing biologically based specific attribute raw materials for intermediate and consumer use.

These developments are challenging some longstanding values and premises of industry participants, such an independence, open-access markets, the dominant role of the firm, open-access information and R&D. Many will gain, and many will lose out from these changes.

For the future, these forces will be compounded in their effects by developments in a number of areas, including:

- Precision agriculture
- Web-integrated agribusinesses
- Matching of prescribed food attributes with specific consumer needs of smaller and smaller groups and possibly individuals (the concept of mass-customisation).

There is no doubt that these trends would be dramatically facilitated by development of genetic technology, which can increase the ability to “tailor-make” foods and fibres. The marriage of human genomics and plant and animal genomics (as suggested by Rausser in a recent article) would represent the next logical step, with foods being genetically designed to complement genetically enhanced human healing processes.
These forces have already started to impact in turn on corporate strategies. The integration of biotechnology, agriculture, food and pharmaceuticals has been a feature of corporate strategies in recent years, and more alignments and realignments can be expected in future. Whilst there have been some high-profile failures and these have resulted in agro-biotech interests being spun off rather than integrated, it is early days yet in this process in my view.

**Implications for Australian Agribusiness**

In a globalised industry, competitiveness is everything. There are fewer and fewer opportunities to obtain economic rents from protected markets and through inefficiencies in information markets.

Essentially there are two main ways to compete – through price and through differentiation. Either way, cost of production is critical. Cost competitiveness may not be a sufficient, but it is almost always a necessary condition, of competitiveness.

Cost competitiveness imposes increasing pressure on those wishing to hold their own in domestic markets and succeed in exports. Indeed, one of the key features of globalisation is that the distinction between domestic and international markets becomes less and less relevant.

If Australian agribusiness is able to meet the requirements of globalised markets, the benefits are vast – the market is the world. If not, the threat is rapid loss of presence in the global market, which includes the domestic one.

The economic implications of this are quite profound. For one thing, in sectors where economies of scale are important, the pressure for rationalisation increases substantially. Fewer and fewer participants are required in these markets. I would suggest this is characteristic of most agribusiness processing industries.

If on the other hand niches can be established by more nimble, market-oriented players, markets can fragment. I would say this is a characteristic of many sectors supplying marketing services that are based on information assets – such as in wool marketing.

Overall, in my view Australian agribusiness has a way to go in coming to terms with the process of globalisation. Although we lead the way in pushing for global free trade, I don’t believe we have fully grasped the implications of what globalisation in agribusiness means.

For one thing, we haven’t yet appreciated that a partially globalised agribusiness system can also mean a process of decline in those areas where we are unprotected against globalisation forces and our costs are not globally competitive.

I believe one of the reasons why there is so much reaction to globalisation forces in many rural areas, is that people did not expect that the full benefits of globalised markets may come eventually, but in the interim they will certainly entail adjustment costs.

The impact of these costs and benefits is also uneven. Simplistic models based on unrealistic assumptions will not be helpful in identifying how the imbalanced impacts fall.

We need to become more sophisticated in analysing these differential effects without losing sight of the inexorable processes of globalisation and the potential long-term net benefits.

Many are questioning the inexorable nature of the globalisation process - witness the Seattle WTO debacle. The only way in which this process can regain legitimacy is if it is less secretive, more widely understood and explained and more transparent and participatory.
In particular, we need to know a lot more about what the lags are between costs and benefits being realised. Globalisation progresses at a frantic pace, and the costs are immediate but the benefits can lag. People can feel powerless, suspicious and resentful under these circumstances.

We need analyses that identify these lags so people are prepared for them – not rely on “boosterism” and simplistic “headline” analyses to support the case for progress.

Moreover it was always assumed that agriculture in Australia would be a major winner from globalisation because we are competitive producers – but benchmarking studies have indicated to the contrary in a number of cases.

We need to realistically assess our competitive position, not rely on “factoids” or unwarranted assumptions, and then act to continually improve our competitiveness, if we want to maximise the benefits of the future forces facing agribusiness, and make sure they are realised sooner rather than later.

We need to have policy environment that facilitates agribusiness corporate strategies – if we don’t Australia will simply not be the recipient of the investment required to remain competitive, and our agribusiness industries will decline even faster.

In particular, we have to face up to the fact that in assets will need to be rationalised to a far higher degree than is the case today, and ownership concentration may need to be at levels that are higher than historically accepted by the competition policy authorities.

Conclusions for Policymaking

I guess a key issue for the future is whether the forces I have described above are likely to apply with lesser or to a greater degree than they have in the past.

According to McKinsey, truly global markets now account for around 20 per cent of world output, worth about $US6 trillion of the planet’s $US28 trillion GDP. They predict that within 30 years as that GDP expands to about $US91 trillion, global markets could multiply 12-fold, reaching about $US73 trillion, or more than 80 percent of world output.

Economic integration, the driving force behind this expansion, will promote the formation of global markets in food, according to them. They view the future business scenario like this:

“Over the next 30 years, geographic and regulatory barriers will fall, electronic distribution will start to parallel and even to bypass physical distribution, installed capacity will become obsolete before it is depreciated, and focused competitors will attack like piranhas. Companies will have to restructure or die”

There are clearly forces acting against globalisation, however. These come from a number of sources. The political inertia of protectionism. The concerns of citizens about the increasing insecurity that results from continuous restructuring. The attacks of activists against the institutions and corporations of globalisation. In the food industry, the concerns of some about the healthiness and environmental sustainability of modern agriculture and food production, especially if it is genetically modified.

The subject of this Symposium is Australian Values – Rural Policies. Does globalisation have any values? Are they consistent with our perception of the values we hold to be important? Do we have much of a choice if the forces of globalisation are irresistible?

It seems to me that the forces of globalisation do reflect many of the values we have held as important. Independence, initiative, flexibility, innovation – these are all key values of both rural Australia and globalisation.
However equally the pace of change and the widespread insecurity that inevitably result (and will probably be accentuated in future), mean that we certainly will need to try and understand better how these forces work. And our adjustment initiatives will need to be better tuned to the pace of change and its impact too.

**Discussion**

**Chair:** Gordon Gregory

**Gordon Gregory:** I suggest we start with some fairly focused comments and questions. We can loosen up towards lunch and begin the process we are going to engage in after lunch, and make statements which are not particularly related to the speech we just heard.

**Astrida Upitis:** This is the same question I posed to Bob Beeton: What are the new institutional structures and arrangements that you could see that would make a difference? I would like a bit more shape, with some of the minds around here, to see what some of those institutional structures could look like because there is a lot of thinking going on around government at the moment. That is my first question. I have another one in structural development. In saying that national resource management is going to be the driver in industry, what is the role of government in that?

**Selwyn Heilbron:** That is a tough question and I agree with Bob, it is not the kind of thing you would really want to go into too far without having a context and some time to think about it carefully. But I think there are a couple of criteria or principles that will be important down the track, and they are not particularly new. Things like transparency, participation, consultation, real-time communication and flows of information, I think, are going to be good principles. There are models around. So that is not particularly new.

Some of them come from unexpected quarters. I quite like the old Productivity Commission inquiry process. I think it gives people a chance to have input. It is considered in an independent fashion and it is subject to more or less resource review. But, at the end of the day, the decision-making rests with government, and there are trade-offs here. Excessive consultation and deliberation can be hijacked, and hard decisions which need to be made may just be put off. There is always a delicate balance to be made in those areas.

**Gordon Gregory:** If I may, I am going to exercise a chairperson’s privilege and say a few things. I think this discussion, which I think is about how we spend our money, is critical because these days it is so fashionable to talk about community participation, which is great, and partnerships with the private sectors, which are great. But we sometimes, I feel, are at risk of throwing out the baby with the bath water, when I see the baby being government. There are some things that the government has to continue to do. I think small government has gone about far enough.

There are some important things happening in Astrida's department, in Transport and Regional Services, where they are trying to get, in three or four years, one commonwealth government ad in your local newspaper for all those programs that are going to provide some support for you.

Certainly in the health area, in which I now work, there are some very important things going on with funds pooling, which is the notion that to get the best health outcomes somehow you cash out the big picture thing- the MBS, medical benefits, PBS, the pharmaceutical benefits. You add that to the regions for hospitals, for HACC, Home and Community Care. You put it in a pool and you ask the local people to decide how they want to handle it in order to get what they think are the best responses to the problems that they think are most important.

Currently we have a situation where the Democrats have a proposal on the books for health, which is just that- for major regional funds pooling. The Labor Party indicated something similar in Hobart three weeks ago when they talked about Medicare alliances between the commonwealth and the states. And the current government is strongly supporting co-ordinated health trials.
The regional health services may have the task of bringing together money which was previously in a single silo or a single program, bulking it up and making it managed from the local level.

Now there are some major difficulties, some of them professional. Some of the professions don't like this, institutional and governmental. Let's face it we already recognise that Australia is over-governed with three levels of government. We are talking here about potentially setting up a regional system of governance that has access to money, to real power. So that would be a fourth. If we are over-governed by three we probably don't want a fourth. But clearly something important and exciting is happening about how we spend our money, moving it down the line closer to where the people and where the mere identification of the problems really are. So thank you for indulging the chairperson.

**Alistair Watson:** On a different point, I would like to ask Selwyn to elaborate a bit on the notion of competitiveness. We have had in the last few years a lot of emphasis on this notion of national competitiveness. The classic Australian paper by Dick Brian called "Australian Economic Nationalists Old and New" completely blows this notion of competitiveness on a nation/state basis right out of the water. Yet in the rhetoric, in the political rhetoric at the state and federal level politicians actually talk as if they do compete.

**Selwyn Heilbron:** The conception I have of it is not based on the national competitiveness process. It is equally not that I am suggesting that competitiveness is an end in itself any more so than efficiency, which is probably a more valid aim.

**Alistair Watson:** Australia has a competitive wheat industry but not all Australian wheat growers are competitive. I mean competition is a domestic concept.

**Selwyn Heilbron:** Correct. That is exactly right. You see, the difficulty with some of these notions is that the basic assumption like the existence of a firm is now starting to fray at the edges. It is becoming much more complex to do that. In the past we could say an efficient firm was going to be competitive and, therefore, you should try to make that as efficient as possible. But really what is a firm now when some of these boundaries are expanding and you don't have the orthodox market barriers determining the boundary between one firm and another and one industry and another? That is making life a lot more complex in that area.

**Snow Barlow:** First a comment to pick up something Bob said. In the sense that one value we might consider here in terms of this debate about multi-culturalism and the sort of acceptance of the landscape, it seems to me you have to take that a bit further. One value we could look at here is that, in a sense, we are a nation living with its landscape and, as yet, we are not in harmony with the landscape. We still talk about a harsh environment. We still talk about a harsh arid land. We haven't yet accepted the landscape for what it is and where we live. That is really bringing another value to that landscape that is a different value.

But really my question is to Selwyn. Selwyn, can I draw you out a bit more. You were painting a future of agri-business in a sense of, I guess in lay terms, a targeted value change approach to agri-business. Geographically how is that going to play out? Does it mean that, if you have that sort of future, regions and regional communities are excluded from it or, alternatively, are they dealt more strongly into it because it is targeted? How do you see the future there?

**Selwyn Heilbron:** Very good question. It is very hard to tell because the nature of technology and the technological choices that we make and the interplay of markets is really going to shape that. It is very difficult to tell how it will play out.

There are a number of different scenarios that you could see in theory. This is one extreme, for example. Intensification of production could mean that you could produce very much higher volumes of product just about anywhere. Now, does that mean that you could see production of what we currently see as agricultural products and food products actually shifted to the cities?
If we start seeing what we consume as purely protein and starch as opposed to a rump steak and cauliflower, they could be produced anywhere.

This may sound far-fetched, but the vast amounts of money invested in it could consider it. But depending on the way markets and technology are played out and the way consumers approach it, the traditional way of looking at agriculture being conducted in vast areas of land far from cities to produce food that is required by consumers here and overseas, that may not be the way things work in a relatively short space of time.

My personal view is that I think it will happen in fits and starts, but I think we are going to, much sooner than we think, to really have to reconsider a lot of the assumptions on which we base policies. I think you are starting to see the policy-making process creaking at the edges as we look around us at genetically modified products.

I think those types of pressures and demands will increase and the premium will be on, as I think Bob said, much more complex analysis of things we haven't really looked at or seen before. My real concern about the whole process is- are we able to adjust fast enough to deal with the intellectual technological and moral choices that are going to have to be made?

**Snow Barlow:** Your last comment, Selwyn, ‘are we intellectually up to the complexity of these systems?’ Are our education systems and indeed our adult education systems up to delivering the sort of education that is needed to meet that challenge?

**Selwyn Heilbron:** I think it was Richard Stayner who had a comment in his paper that the biggest meat processing works in Australia is actually now located in the metropolitan area, Brisbane, with hundreds of millions of dollars invested in meeting the various community criteria that are required to operate it. That has happened now.

The second thing, - Snow's point about the intellectual and political capacity to deal with the education. It is in a policy analysis process too. We were struggling with these things in the past, in making relatively straightforward decisions. You add these levels of complexity into the process- how is that going to come about?

**Gordon Gregory:** The future of food that Selwyn has reminded us of, means there will be new scripts for parents, "Finish up your carbohydrates. You haven't had your trace elements yet!"

**Emma Robinson:** I guess for me one of the most interesting and key aspects of globalisation is to be able to articulate, share and update global values, so creating things like tribes based on shared values, global citizens, et cetera. Given that context, my question is: what are the pros and cons of boxing values and policies, specifically rural, and how does that assist in promoting inter-connectivity between rural and urban?

**Selwyn Heilbron:** If I take the question correctly, I am interested in the idea that there is some kind of parallel between what is happening at the commercial and international economic level, which is this idea of mass customisation, and what could be happening at the political level whereby you want to maintain the advantages of having a mass co-ordinated decision-making system through the political process but at the same time you want to increasingly reflect what smaller and smaller groups of individuals think and want.

Now, how you reconcile that, is the $64,000 question. But I think it is encouraging that there are similar processes taking place in both spheres. I don't think you can reach the stage at this point where every individual or every group has sway over the common decision-making process. But the movement of direction is clearly towards that area. The political decision-making process is becoming fragmented. I think that is a welcome development.
But I think over time we are going to find new mechanisms for actually achieving that reconciliation between the need to have some decision-making which affects everybody and some decision-making which is at the level of those affected.

**John Chudleigh:** Selwyn, in your paper you mention matching prescribed food attributes with specific consumer needs. I heard a paper at Coffs Harbour just recently from a lady who had been to the States to look at farmers' markets and had come back all enthused that there was a huge growth area here for small farmers to cater for the desires of people. A lot of it was organically produced product. We have already heard a suggestion that there will be an increase in that consumption, but I guess what we are seeing here is an urban value starting to impinge on what rural producers might see as the value that they put into product they are producing. I wondered what was in the back of your mind when you wrote that part of the paper?

**Selwyn Heilbron:** I think it is this fragmentation of the market that is highlighted. The traditional form of food production has been very much driven by the interests of the producer and the ability to get economies of scale to produce it in a mass market, to produce it as cheaply as possible. A lot of that then gets offset by very expensive marketing by a variety of people. Essentially the same product is good for them all in different ways.

Now what I see happening is that that is starting to turn on its head, and the developments in technology, the understanding of how marketing works, information technology, process technology and some of the potential offered by these control technologies means you can increasingly tailor-make to consumers requirements.

Now, there is a lot of work, a lot of thinking that going into this, and if we had more time I would be happy to talk about it. The existence of the farmers' market and the organics is actually not that different from the concept. In fact, in many respects it is said to be needed. The problem with that is, obviously, there tends to be high costs of production. It is much more difficult to systematise and produce on a mass basis. There is a reaction to the premium, at some point, of costs for those items as well. But the actual principles behind that niche in the market I think are actually driving the rest of it.

**Cate Turner:** The symposium is raising a lot of issues. Hopefully those issues will continue to be discussed after the symposium is over. Maybe the upshot or the outcome of the symposium will be the generation of new ideas on future directions and also an on-going discussion with lines of communication in order to continue to discuss these ideas and bring out new direction. A way of doing this is often to create a forum through which people can continue to explore and discuss the ideas generated here.

For that reason we are developing a website which is created by Lorne Gerlach, which will contain an edited video of the symposium, a transcript of the proceedings and an on-line discussion forum in which you are all invited to participate.
15. Symposium Discussion

Snow Barlow

Snow Barlow: The underlying theme that we began the Symposium with was that we are currently operating with a policy framework that is essentially driven by industry and sectoral values. What we want to explore is whether we should move to a policy framework that can be influenced more strongly by community-based values rather than just individual sectoral values? We are really looking at is how values may inform policy rather than have a strong debate on what those values are. As we were told very succinctly by Don Blesing this morning, we all hold a hierarchy of values, some of which operate globally, some that operate at a number of different levels right down to your own family. We are not about a vociferous debate about what those values are. We are really more about how values might inform a community-based policy.

The first person that I would like to ask to speak is Peter Yu

Peter Yu: Thank you very much. The common question in the breaks to me has been: Have I found this useful and what has there been in it for me? My frank response is, basically, I am not an academic so I find it a little bit academic. It is very difficult - you need to have that capacity to be able to think about things in a broad way that enables you to have a starting base to deal with something. But when you experience something fairly negative and bad every day you wonder whether you actually need to do it rather than talk about it.

From my perspective Aboriginal affairs represents everything that is wrong in the nature of relationships in the country, at a personal, at a community, at a social and at a political level, because it is perhaps one of the easiest yet one of the most difficult issues to resolve. It is easy because we are only a very small population, because we are a very wealthy country, because we are Australians, because we have a capacity to change if we really want to change. It is difficult because there has been a denial of our history. There has been a denial and a feeling of guilt, which I think is a very negative emotion and something you shouldn't feel guilty about. It has perplexed me as to why we can't resolve significant matters dealing with what is generally perceived in the white community as being an Aboriginal problem but in the Aboriginal populace as being a white problem.

The fact is if you look at my area in the Kimberleys, where you have nearly 50 percent of the population, you probably have about a 25 per cent stake holding interest in pastoral lands, which is 52 percent of the Kimberley. Fourteen percent is Aboriginal reserve areas and 4-6 percent is current national parks conservation areas. You have potentially more areas claimable under the native title process. At the same time, against those statistics, you have a 95 percent unemployment rate, a 46 percent incarceration rate and significant - you have all heard the statistics- mortality and morbidity rates in the Kimberleys.

That is an equation that needs some contemplation in terms of logic and commonsense. Yet all of those decisions are made from Perth or Canberra. The fact that I have spent much of my last 25 years flying to this place to be able to get decisions that are made to seek investment for projects in the community is unimaginable in terms of wasted money, wasted time, wasted resources.

I leave you one thing, if I might, just finally. That is, look at the model of ATSIC in 1989, in 1991, where you amalgamated both the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and the Aboriginal Commission into ATSIC. The initial concept of ATSIC was to provide autonomous decision-making for program delivery on a regional basis. It was to have tri-annual block funding direct to the region. It was to have an elected arm that would make decisions on policy and directions, and the Commission level was only to deal with policy negotiation with the commonwealth and states.
A result of that has been the longest sitting in the history of Australian parliament, 300 amendments, a return to the centralised system of authority back in Canberra at the Commission level, a consultative mechanism at the regional level and the bureaucrats still maintaining final determinations. That is an example where there was a concept and a model of regionalism put forward which would have provided a sense of independence and autonomy for a group of community people but has been subjugated by the constitutional legal framework and the political processes. To me our constitution and the nature of the federal government and state government relationship is a major impediment to us redefining ourselves as a community of Australians who are different but, at the same time, remain the same. Thank you.

Jane Elix: I have been interested to participate in the last two days because it has given me a really good indication of how we might look at this values question in a different way and perhaps a better way than we have handled it over the last couple of days. One of the last speakers talked about complexity. I think we have seen an example of the complexity of talking about values in a room full of 60 people with very little facilitation.

We haven't had the opportunity to actually challenge each other, to challenge the values of people that we disagree with and to perhaps change our own values. We have had lots of opportunities to state our values and to state them without much debate around them. I guess I think that we are not going to move forward unless we can constructively challenge and debate values in a setting like this.

I don't believe that there are rural values. I don't think that there are urban values. I don't think there is a commonality of values, but I think that people have values in common. It is very difficult, as we have found over the last couple of days, to talk about our own values. I have been doing a Masters in dispute resolution, and it took me two years to actually be able to write down some of my own values about things. It is very difficult. It is very personal. The way we sometimes deal with that is by attacking other people's values. We have seen examples of that in some of the speeches that have been given over the last couple of days.

In some ways a divide has been constructed, a divide between tech-heads and wishy-washy communicationalists. I think there is a divide in rural cultural issues which is not unique to this forum; it is seen throughout the discussions and the debates and the issues that we engage in. There is also a male and female debate. Most of the tech-heads are male and most of the communications wishy-washy people are females. That is drawing stereotypes. That is what happens. That is the sort of stuff that I would like to see, if this process continues on, to be debated in much greater detail and with far greater expertise in the facilitation process.

So what I wanted to say was that if we are going to talk about values in the future we need to talk about the processes for reconciling values rather than about the values themselves. We have 60 people in the room. We each have our own values. It is not that important that we get to state them all. What is important is how we actually work together on achieving things in the future.

We need intelligent approaches to decision-making. We need sufficient time for dispute resolution. It is important that dispute resolution and reconciliation be issue specific. We are not going to agree on everything all the time. We are going to be able to agree on some things some of the time. When we have that agreement we have to move forward.

I was talking with one of the members of the group over the lunch break and saying that what my talk really should be about is a defence of the urban greenie female. That is the sort of minority group that has been kicked to death here today. I think what we really need to do is recognise that all of us are bringing different things to this process, to work on really developing our expertise in resolving those value differences and doing it in a constructive way.
If I were bringing this group of people back together again I would engage in proper facilitating processes. I would engage in challenging value discussions. I think that would be a very useful next step for this process to take. Thank you.

**George Wilson**: I just wanted to talk very briefly about a set of values that I see out there. That is, the way the tourist industry is a manifestation of the value that overseas people and Australians put on the rural landscape, on the rural way of life and, indeed, on Aboriginal lifestyles and such. This really is a major opportunity for resolving many of the problems that we have been seeing and talking about.

The tourist industry, of course, is one of the largest growth industries in the country. It is already, on some figures, the largest exporter in the country,- some $25 billion a year. We need, probably, to look at those figures in a little more detail, but certainly it is a very big industry. It is an industry that is growing in rural areas at quite a rapid rate, unlike many other activities that take place in the rural scene.

It is also one that, in many cases, is a price setter and not a price taker because it is one in which we are able to sell something which is unique- which the rest of the world doesn't have.

With this economic injection that is taking place in much of rural Australia the opportunities are there also to address many of the conservation issues and sustainability issues which are of concern to us. The steps that one takes to conserve trees, to initiate programs to arrest salinity and so on also have major benefits to the landscape, which is the thing, of course, which in many cases tourists are coming to look at. So there are lots of synergies there. It is a very positive future that I see for this interaction between tourism, employment in the bush, major opportunities for employment, and, also, just general economic well-being.

**Jock Douglas**: I would like to throw something new into the arena at this stage. I would contend there is an unrecognised factor shaping Australian values, and that is the ecological driver. Many of us and our ancestors came from Europe, northern climates which were new soils, great seasonality. Spring came. You had to, if you were any sort of an organism, compete, get your space and make your mark and reproduce. That was the ecological driver.

In Australia it was different. We quietly moved north over 30 million years. Nutrients ran out. Climate variability hit us, hit the species. The selection process then became small, ecological eco-systems which had great reliance, cooperative arrangements, symbiosis going on within those. Competition wasn't a great selection factor.

I would suggest that our social dynamics in Australia now are starting to mirror that. You can look at what is happening. We pull down the tall poppies. Why? Australian like it when people get ahead but we don't like it when they get too far ahead. Is that a social thing? Is that an Irish thing or a convict thing, or is it in fact the influence of our environment? We are biological. I suggest we are responding to our environment.

We are coming together now as groups. We used to dominate this environment. We are now seeing domination isn't the thing - co-operation is the thing. I am suggesting that the ecological factor is unrecognised and it should be brought out more. We need those good cooperative arrangements to effectively compete. It has happened here in our eco-systems, I suggest it will happen in regional Australia in the same sort of way. If, in fact, the social dynamics don't mirror the ecological dynamics, they will fail. They will continually have to be supported. But if, in fact, we get the cooperative arrangements right in our communities we will do much better in this harsh challenged environment we live in.

**Ian Perkins**: One of the questions that Tony was asking of a lot of his friends and colleagues when he was first bothering us with ideas about this workshop was: what do Australians want from rural Australia?
I think that in the last couple of days it has been a common theme that has run through this workshop. It is something that I am passionate about. That is probably why I picked it up. I think it is a common theme that has come from a number of other people as well. Fundamentally I think what Australians want is a relationship with land. I think we need to explore this relationship through a whole range of ways, some of the things that Jane is suggesting - a whole range of ways of exploring it. I think if we do we might even discover, as Peter Yu says, that we have a lot more in common with each other than we think. Why we don't explore it?

Throughout this workshop people have said we need a re-assessment of property rights. I think we need to look at how we relate to land on a whole range of levels. I think Peter Yu talked about the failure of the land tenure system to deliver an equitable result to his people. Obviously we all understand that. David Sheppard talked about curbing landowners' right, which is a new concept for people who live in the bush, but I think it is something we need to look at as well.

Bob was saying that disconnecting a nation from its heartland is dysfunctional. He said we need to come to terms with the continent in which we live. Snow said a nation living in harmony with its landscape is a value he is looking for. I think we need to ask ourselves a few questions about that. We need to ask that in any relationship we are involved in. What do we expect from it and what are we prepared to commit to it?

John Holmes: Two comments. First, I don't think we have given enough attention to recognising and celebrating the diversity of values that we have in Australia. It is very, very diverse. It is becoming more diverse and more divergent all the time. It is a fundamental problem of democracies as to how you address it.

I think we have failed in this meeting to properly articulate the values that are motivating us. If we had articulated them we would get further on in reaching an optimal solution. We will never get perfect solutions, but we will get optimal solutions if we encourage articulation of diverse values. I wrote about this in my Foreword in the special issue of the Range Land Journal 1994, which was called “Contemporary exploration-values, goals, needs and expectation of rangeland users”.

I do think that this approach really has to be pursued much more thoroughly down here, much more systematically. I suppose some people say it is a bit like conflict resolution. It goes further than that. You really have to find out what are the values. I think the Cape York Heads of Agreement was not a bad little exercise in getting people to get together to sorting out their values.

That is the first one. The second one is the institutional framework. We haven't really looked enough at property rights. Onko got onto it but I think we do need to look at this whole issue in rural management about what I call the over-extension or over-allocation or misallocation of property rights, which is now a very fundamental dilemma that we have to face. A very sensible way to start addressing that is to make people recognise that property is not just rights but also responsibilities or duties.

Of course some economists such as Daniel Bromley have written very effectively about this. I think we have to get a philosophy in place in which the rights side is parallel to the responsibilities side. A bit like the Productivity Commission report in which there was a lot of attention to the idea of the duty of care. We have already heard about misallocation of water, over-allocation of water. It is only by getting people to look at property rights that we are going to get anywhere towards an institutional framework in which the values and the interests of a variety of groups will be attended to.

Neil Inall: Trust may be an old fashioned value, somewhat of my generation, but it seems to me we are less trusting than when I was a child. Less trusting of almost all institutions which make policies and dispense them, and more distrustful of a whole range of people from economists to shire clerks, greens, priests, politicians, policemen, doctors and lawyers.
One of the reasons I think that has happened is, generally speaking, but especially applying to those in the policy-making business, we have developed a language which is not the people's language. Sure, things are more complex and so are many government programs. Just think about a biodiversity strategy, a green house strategy, a native vegetation management strategy, land care, property care, property management planning, farm business, river care. You can go on and on. As Al Watson said, it is very frustrating to those who actually do the work on the ground. As Bob said, wicked complexity!

I think that a lot of yours and my clients, - if you like, our friends out there trying to manage all this—have thrown their hands up in the air and said, "Go away. No more. I can't cope with all this". I am making a plea this afternoon for simplicity and calling a spade a spade again.

**David Sheppard:** I am just going to offer two observations-first some values that are incorporated in rural policies now, second, three Australian values, as I understand them, and some implications of one of them.

Some values that are incorporated in rural policies now, sustainable forest management plans to maintain forest ecologies, incorporate some values. Stating an aim of improving the quality of water to be fit for shellfish-gathering incorporates values. Providing for indigenous people's villages where they want them incorporates values. Policies of restraint in the use of natural resources.

From the point of view of a non-Australian, but one with a commitment to Australia, it seems to me that there are some distinctive Australian values that can readily be identified. I think "mateship" can be understood to be an Australian value. A "fair go" is an Australian value. The rule of law is an Australian value. "Mateship" implies a moderate extent of collective action. A "fair go" implies allowing individual pursuit of preferences, implicit implied equity of opportunities. Does it imply giving people a chance to have their say and listening to it? Does it imply dealing with people with sincerity and giving them human dignity? I think it implies compensating those who endure loss for collective benefit. These do relate to process but they can also inform the substance of policy.

So how do values of mateship and a fair go improve policies responding to degrading of soil, use of water, social consequences of rural depopulation? Then I thought it was worth reminding myself of the importance of identifying, evaluating, taking into account the social, cultural and environmental effects of policies. Not always done!

**Peter Carkeek:** It is really good to be part of this. I really appreciate it. I thought what I would do today, the first thing for me, is to write down some of the words and see what the words are. They are choice, balance, complexity, and transparency, informed, seek first to understand, agendas, egos, listen, appreciate, respect and merit. I know you will all be surprised by me writing down those words, and I was. I thought, jeez, it is interesting- I have sat here for a day and a half and that is what I have come up with!

I was thinking about me and where I live, a little bit like Cathy yesterday. I live in rural Victoria. That is where my heart is, I think. I was born in Corryong. I moved down to Numurkah. I ended up buying a farm at Wawirra, buying another farm at Invergordon. My parents moved to America, but I decided my heart was at Invergordon, because that is where I will go to at some stage or another.

I was thinking about what defines that community. There are dry land farmers, irrigated dairy farmers. There are professional people who work in the town and there are people who work on the farm. I was thinking: is that the right definition of that community, and who represents that community? Who speaks to them and how valid is the message that is heard from that community? I was thinking about how that is distorted before it gets to anyone. There is a lot of self-interest. There is a lot of lack of understanding of the system and there is a lot of confidence building needed to articulate what they are thinking.
I was thinking are all people's opinions equally valid? And no, they are not. That is a really hard thing to come to deal with. I always thought that free speech was free speech and everyone should have a right to say and be heard. But having the example of the other day where a farmer rang me up and said there was an opportunity for us to negotiate as a group to get a better deal from the dairy structural adjustment package and the banks. I said to him "Joe, we have already had the tender process. Do you really think there is an opportunity to get much difference? Because all the banks ultimately will borrow the money from roughly the same sources, roughly the same terms to be able to lend to the farmers. He said, "Pete, you don't understand, do you? The banks don't borrow any money."

It was a bit of a wake-up call for me. We talked about it for a while and he didn't understand anything about what was behind that. So I don't think people's opinions are equally valid. I think informed opinion is much more valid. I think we should take that into account at some stage.

I was thinking: we are talking about the role of values in rural policy-making. I was thinking about what we can do about it, what we need to do about it. I think that capacity building, another thing Cathy talked about yesterday, is really, really important. It doesn't matter whether it is for the people in the country, which you might say are much more in need, but I think it is also important for people in urban areas and in the cities. We need leadership training. We need education. We need experiences so we can have a better-balanced view. We need access to technology. I think those things are really important for all of us.

I think there is an opportunity for us to have a lot more appreciation of what women have to offer. I don't mean that from a sexist perspective. I look at my grandmother who is 97. I go to see her. She doesn't watch television. She reads. She says you can't learn anything watching television. She reads, does crosswords, plays scrabble.

My grandfather died when he was 75. He was quite a successful man. He was a councillor and he was a shire president. He was all the other things. All my life, as I was growing up, Nana was always "Mrs Shire Councillor's wife "the farmer's wife" or whatever. What a wasted resource! What a really wasted resource! My mother has been exactly the same. My mother is a fantastic woman who has so much to offer, keeps the family together and does all the other things. She has so much to offer yet it has always been the men in the family who go out there, get positions and do things. I think there is a lot of opportunity there.

I think: What can we all do? We can listen. We can seek to understand. We can appreciate and we can show respect. I think if we all do that, regardless of where we are and what position we are in; it will make a big difference.

**Margie Thomson:** The topic I would like to speak about relates to farm values and beliefs. They relate to good and bad succession planning. This topic is really close to my heart. I trained as an agricultural economist, and married a farmer about eight years ago. My farm structure is not something that should be promoted and not many people would talk about it. I chose a few years ago to do so. I am part of a structure in which there is a first and a second generation. My in-laws have 50 per cent control of our farm and then they have two sons who also work as partners within that farm. There are two daughter-in-laws, of which I am one. We do not have any decision-making ability within that farm business. The values and beliefs that revolve around those particular farm people are paramount in being able to be able to make change within farm organisational structures in the future. Their values and beliefs, in understanding them and defining them, are critical if we are going to make positive change.

The enormity of this problem cannot be under-estimated. There are so many programs relating to farm risk management and other things that relate to trying to increase profitability. If we were able to even make inroads to 20 per cent of these farms I believe we could maybe have more than a 50 percent increase in the profitability and management of our farms.
In ignoring the enormity of this issue I think that we are promoting poor farm profitability, poor farm management practices, inequality and oppression, to name a few.

In dealing with the issue I know that there has been a great amount of research that has been terrific in identifying the enormity of the problem, but still few are there to listen. I think it would be great to be able to have a look at the differences in values between farm members and look at good and bad values that are attached to those. I think that if everybody in this room at the end of the day just asked those who are part of a farm, they would be able to relay a story of either their own farm or of the farm next door that has poor farm succession processes within it.

**Ian Perkins:** There are two questions on my mind coming through all this. One is what should policy-makers do about values? The second one is, which values should policy-makers do something about? I make a quick suggestion with regard to the first one: that is, it would be interesting to see statements of values which are expressed and values which are not expressed at the top of every policy statement. Of course the number of values which are not expressed would be infinite. But I think it would not be difficult to sort the significant from the less significant and the more significant. Of course any statement to the effect that "this policy is value neutral" or "value free" would be sure to promote debate. I don't think it would be a bad thing at all.

The next issue: what values should policy-makers do something about? I will go back a little. Since hearing Richard Stayner’s story about Mungindi I have been thinking through a few things. A little story which I read - and this might contain some embellishments, please forgive me, but the principle is quite sound - of a submission to the Productivity Commission which shows the impact of competition policy in regional Australia. The story goes-a small town in western Victoria. The small town has a swimming pool. Local council decides to tender it out to contract for someone to operate the swimming pool. This involves operating the kiosk, maintenance and other things.

What happens? Well, sure enough, somebody wins the tender. The local employee who used to work there moves on. New employee under new employer takes over. Next summer, very few kids come to the swimming pool. Why very few kids to the swimming pool? Because the parents trusted the former operators of the kiosk to look after the kids. The swimming pool is at some risk. Certainly the kids are deprived of that service. Not a good thing.

I found this a little distressing in the way I think Richard found a school without an English teacher to be distressing. Why did I find this distressing? It doesn't affect me. I am not going to be swimming in the pool. I don't think I need to be looked after by the kiosk operator either. Why do I find this distressing? Because it hits a little nerve, and that little nerve is the value of equity. The first time I saw or heard the word "equity" in our two days of discussion was when David put it up on the screen there a few minutes ago. I think what is attached to equity is a particularly important one. Of course I am making a value statement there myself as, indeed, I was implicitly with my very first suggestion. I am quite relaxed about it.

Let us think about values in the context of that little story. A few things come to light. Firstly, we could say we would be quite happy to accept a market analysis of that situation. The first thing we might say here is that somebody misread the value which was attached to the role which that particular operator provided at the swimming pool. That indicates to me that there was a social capital kind of issue there and problem associated with it in some way. It does indicate to me the possibility of a kind of institutional failure which is a little different to what Bob was talking to us about this morning but, nevertheless, is of that kind. That I would see as a problem.

**Geoff Lawrence:** But values! Values! - I teach student sociology, and one of the things I teach them is that, looking over the course of history, values are not really all that important. They are significant but they are certainly not important on their own. What are important are people’s interests. What are even more important to people's interest are their perceptions of those interests.
The processes through which people come to perceive and act on their interests are all about the intersection of values and beliefs with interests and the things that are effective in their everyday lives.

That, to me, is the real importance of values. What kind of values should policy-makers be out there promoting? Well, I would put it to you that the values which we should be promoting are those which enable the maintenance of institutions which facilitate a pluralistic dialogue through which people can reconcile their interests, their values and their beliefs. Hence, I would steer the debate towards institutions and, in a sense, that institutional failure issue. I can nominate a few institutions, one in particular being local government which we could take a pretty close look at.

Shelagh Lowe: I want to comment on what Peter said. My mother-in-law was worse. She is the oldest daughter of a farmer with three sons. She was only ever given two years of education because her role was in the house on the farm.

I am not a farmer or an academic or an economist, and if Sue were still here I would tell her that I am not actually radical either. However, I do have a passion for my work and I have a passion for the rural community in which I live. It is a passion which I feel I share with a lot of people who are here. I have sensed very strongly that everybody is here because they are passionate about the work that they do, regardless of where it is or what it is they are doing. They do it because they care for what they do and they want to try and improve matters.

I believe Australians in general believe that they are a caring and compassionate society. You only have to look at the way we opened our doors to the refugees from Kosovo and Timor. Also we believe in justice and equity for all.

The one thing that I have gathered over the last couple of days, not being a farmer, is that the focus seems to have been on the rural side of things, being farm and land management. My concern is that when we are looking at policy making, what policies are we actually looking at trying to influence? Much of the discussion has concerned agriculture. There is no denying that agriculture is the backbone of rural society. Any policy that has been made affects life in general and people's health and well-being. I would like to run a very quick survey of people in attendance here to know how many people suffer from low back pain, neck pain, high blood pressure, cardiac disease, diabetes, know people who suicided, had accidents on the farm? We haven't really touched on health aspects of rural policy-making. We need to look at how values attach to policy-making across the board, not just those that directly relate to agriculture and to land management.

Those comments that I have received is that policies in relation to service delivery apply in general across the board to rural and metropolitan areas. Does that mean we should ignore them? Doesn't that mean that they need to be focused on even more because what might apply in metropolitan areas does not necessarily apply in the same way to rural areas? If we don't look at it then they will try to apply it across the board and that just won't work.

We are looking at things like telecommunications. I must admit I really liked Bob's horrorgram because for the first time he brought up community development and information technology. It is not the first time it has been mentioned. But who lives in an area where mobile phones don't actually have coverage? Who has access to e-mail? What is the nature of your telephone lines and how slow are your telephone lines?

Education: education might apply across the board but surely sometimes rural schools might actually need special attention. We are not only looking at children but we are looking at education of women on the farm and applying education. We want to have an informed society. Where do they get the information from? Transport: cost of petrol in rural areas has skyrocketed in the last few weeks. We don't have access to public transport. Then a matter that is dear to my heart: health services. We need to support everybody who works in health areas, not just GPs. GPs can't work on their own. They need the nurses. They need allied health professionals.
The drive towards community development, communities having a say in what they do won't necessarily apply. Gordon briefly mentioned health pooling and some professions not liking the idea of health pooling. As an allied health professional, how many people here know what an occupational therapist does? How many people know what a dietician can actually do for you? If you don't know, how do you know what you are missing? How are you going to request the services? Also, we need to look at support for the arts. We need to look at unemployment issues in rural areas, not just nationally. It might be 6 per cent nationally, but in Kempsey it is 22 per cent. What can be done about that?

Let us not just focus in on land management and agricultural practices and market development, but let us look at applying values across the board to all policies and how it affects rural communities, everyone who lives in rural communities, not just the farming community, but people in the towns as well.

Paul Martin: Yesterday I tried to introduce a character into the room that we didn't really want to talk about- it was an ogre, the person or entity that was powerful, unconcerned about the effect that their power had on other people, not particularly concerned about the consultative processes, all the niceties that we seemed to want to talk about, not particularly concerned about the common good. That was one of the characters walking around the room that we didn't want to talk about.

The other one was Don Quixote. If you look around and you think about the issues that we have discussed, there have been a lot of things where you think that it doesn't make sense. It really doesn't make sense to look at people like my brother, who lives in a very marginal farming town in a very marginal farming country, where our government keeps throwing money at keeping that town marginal, where the politicians who surround it keep telling stories that say "The marginality is an aberration in some ways. If we fight the greenies or we fight the international forces, or whatever, the good times will come back."

I don't think my brother particularly wants to be Don Quixote but we seem to have created a process where if we consult with him enough, if we lie to him enough, somehow or other he will feel happy about that. So when he rings me and says, "Paul, can you lend me a few more thousand dollars?", Of course I lend him the money. And I say to him, "Look, Chris, you should sell up and move". He says, "No, no, no. Times will be good. It's just an aberration. It is just temporary".

There are a few things I would like to highlight. Firstly, values are not processable like numbers. They are not fixed. What people express is often not what they mean in a given situation. There is no such thing, or there is a myriad of things that are rural values. We have discussed that. So we have been a bit Don Quixote here trying to pin down these rural values. We are never going to succeed. What we can do is be honest. We can, for example, accept that a process where you consult with people about what they want, and it can't possibly be delivered, is not a sensible process. We can stand and look at what is going on and say that sustainable traditional agriculture is largely a myth and that if we want to be fair to people we should tell them that and say "we value what you are doing and we want to do something with you".

The one point that I walk away with out of the last couple of days, apart from the ogre and Don Quixote, is Richard's comment, which struck me very strongly. That, in essence, the issue is about ethics rather than about science or about process. We could spend a lot of effort trying to process a dishonest system. We could spend a great deal of effort analysing because someone has paid us to analyse. In the end result if we are not honest we are not going to get anywhere.

Sheriden Morris: I come here both as a marine manager and regulator, one of the types of people everyone spoke in hushed tones about, being a regulator - and also a farmer. I found this to be an interesting and pretty exciting process over the last couple of days, except for the fact at certain times it tended to lack the hand of a practitioner.
Because I am at some of the forefront of policy development and implementation and new regulatory process I thought I would actually have a quick discussion about that, because in terms of the current or contemporary process for actually implementing policy and some of the values that Australians do have, the Great Barrier Reef is actually a very interesting case study. It came into being in 1975 principally because of the threat of drilling oil on the Great Barrier Reef. It was an Australian outrage. They made a statutory authority to protect the Great Barrier Reef, an authority that has to answer to the whole of parliament, not just to a minister. In addition, in the late eighties they also made it a world heritage area. For that reason it was said it had values that ran right around the world. It was important to people around the world, not just the people in Australia. What we frequently deal with is the management of pollution into the Great Barrier Reef, principally which comes off agricultural lands. Eighty per cent plus of pollution that enters into that marine pipe and does quite significant damage, comes off agricultural lands. The plenary rights for the management of that belong with the state, not with the commonwealth and not with the agencies that are actually obligated, whose charter it is to protect the value of that world heritage area.

It makes for interesting play, because often through the last two days I have heard of local ownership, communication and education to those local areas, and it is difficult in local areas. The externalities of farm products, the externalities of a lot of their views is going to impact out into an area where the stakeholders are the whole of Australia or, indeed, the whole of the world. I was going to give you a really quick case study of how we develop some policy, how we develop regulation and how we actually go to answer some of those processes. Again, for the last two days I have heard "regulation" used in hushed tones. Everyone doesn't like the term "regulation", but smart regulation has a place in actually achieving an outcome within a timeframe that often we need to work within, particularly for environmental outcomes.

The agricultural industry in Queensland is an expanding industry adjacent to the Great Barrier Reef. There was a process running for the regulation of that industry within Queensland that wasn't adequate. It didn't adequately protect the values of the world heritage area. There are lots of ways to deal with that. We could run education programs for the agriculture industries. We could do a whole series of things, but instead we elected for regulation.

I am in a very privileged position because I have the capacity to actually do the drafting instruction for that regulation, develop the policy, do the implementation and then see whether it works or not. So having followed that process right the way through I found the outcomes to be very interesting.

First, within nine months we achieved our outcome in terms of getting matters through standards to give due regard to the protection of the Great Barrier Reef. Secondly, it brought on innovation in the industry at a great rate. No matter how much education we did we wouldn't get the level of acceptance we are getting right now. Everyone is saying this is a really horrible way to do this. It did it, and it did it very quickly. When you are dealing with matters of environmental decline, or potential disease, or biological contamination, you don't have 10 years to play with. They are privileges and academic discussions, they are not reality.

The people who rely on those reserves don't have that time. There is a tourist industry. There is a fishing industry. There is a recreation industry. They don't have that period of time or the privilege of being able to sit back and wait to see it actually implemented. Sometimes those privileges don't exist in rural life.

In the end not only did we get rapid adoption, we also got a lot of other industries now coming to the table because they know what is possible. They don't want regulation but they are prepared to come to the table and talk.
Now that is a pretty harsh way of doing things but you do get outcomes. I know it is the hand of the regulator and I know everyone feels uncomfortable with that, but at the end of the day if you are going to get some of these outcomes, which means you are going to get deliverables on the ground, then you have to be real about these things.

**Emma Robinson**: While I really enjoyed the last two days, on reflection I think most of us have stayed fairly much in mental model 1. We have remained in today. We have shared multiple positions according to multiple world views but I guess I feel we are frustrated because ultimately we are struggling for some kind of way forward. My challenge and I guess a challenge for you is to place yourself in mental model 2. Stand in the future. Open up strategic conversations about a preferred policy scenario, and I challenge you that it is not until we do this, put ourselves in the future, take a clean slab approach to a preferred policy scenario, that we can actually start talking about some preferred criteria for guiding and ultimately shifting policy.

It is not until we have got that preferred criteria that we can then delve back into today, into the complexity of today, and see some clarity in some way forward.

I guess underwriting this whole approach is the notion that the future is uncertain, and for me that is pretty exciting because it says that I can play some kind of role in creating that future. But just to reinforce, the first step is having some framework in which we not just a talk and debate as we have over the last two days, but actually update our values, grow and ultimately take some action.

**Geoff Lawrence**: I would just like to talk about mechanisms for progress and try and link those to some values. When you say "progress" it is progress to what? Well, I think we actually have got some answers, and that is probably why we are here, why we were invited. That is, we need to move, this is fairly unambiguous, towards more sustainable production systems and to viable regions. Now if you look at basic values that underlie this, we can identify individual freedom. We can talk about private property. We can talk about community, if you like, as a basis for democracy. These are the sorts of ideas that are starting to be spoken about with terms like social capital, trust, relationships, depth of networks and so on. Community ownership, own the problem! When communities own the problem they will do something about it. Empowerment! If people don't feel they can own the problem, how, through education or other forms, can we empower people and capacity build something?

What are the mechanisms? Clearly there have to be new mechanisms of governance. If you go for the mechanisms of governance that we have at the moment we are coming up with the very point that has been made at this conference. That is, there is a failure. There is institutional failure. I think the institutional failure is about the three levels of government we have.

Now what we want is rural community self-determination. Just read the AFFA Paper of December 1999. These are the words, the ideas of social capital and so on. But the problem is this: if you are going to devolve responsibility to communities to be self-empowering, capacity build and so on, but you don't devolve power, there will be increasing cynicism. I have seen that happen throughout three, four, five regions.

In other words, if you devolve responsibility on rural communities, let them get on with the job. If you don't give them the power you are going to get an increasingly cynical group.

If you are going to rest your future on social capital, government policies are already undermining this in the regions, and you are not going to have a very strong basis to do anything. So how do you build social capital on the basis of the existing system? If you, therefore, are looking for a new form of governance I think you had better grasp the nettle. We are looking at regional governance. How do we move towards a more powerful region to actually have local governance? Do we go for amalgamations of local government?
I think if we look at structures - this is my point I guess - I think if we look at structures not just values, the values fall into place as soon as people, stakeholders, argue those things out. I think we have to move to a new structure. I think the structure will probably be a regional one.

Helen Klieve: I feel I am coming at the end because the last few of us are talking about where we are going, not just ideas and what we feel. I feel if we want to move forward one comment is to get a transparent process so we can actually get values into policy. The first step is to actually work out what operates now.

The last couple of days we have had people talking about the values of the rural community and markets, and we all know in developing policy there seems to be this sort of assumption that it is a black box, but it all works perfectly. We all really know it doesn't.

Onko yesterday talked very much about some of the values that are there. We need to recognise those things, like self-interest. People have agendas. There may be an assumption that competition is good. We assume we should have markets and market-based solutions. We tend to work in economic priorities. People are profit-maximising. To get values into policy is to really properly look at how policy works and what some of the assumptions are.

Rather than look at the means getting there, we should first look at where we want to be at the end and then look at how to get there. That might be markets, but we may need to re-assess how the markets operate rather than just saying "markets are good". We do need to think about what people want and what we are really trying to achieve so we can look at the communities we are trying to do policies for to get those outcomes.

Are we looking at maximising economic capital or at social capital and national capital, which are the things that tend to give that whole picture of where we are going? So one of the questions that we certainly can't answer now but maybe we have to start thinking about, it is not how do we get values into policy but how do we look at what values are there and how do we change some of the values that policy-makers make policy on so we can get policies that are lined up between what they are trying to do and the people who are working with them.

Linda Botterill: I am going to be very quick and just pose three questions that come to mind to me as a result of the last couple of days. The first one was raised yesterday in one of our discussion groups, and that is: whose values are we talking about? With the greatest respect to the collection of minds that are in this room, I don't really think we can come to conclusions about specific values at the end of today. I think, when we talk about Australian values, and rural policies, is how do we get the values of the broad community of our pluralist democracy into the policy development process. It is more than the people gathered here. It is more than the members of the policy community.

So how do we find them and how do we give them a voice? One of the things I would like to ask then, is how do we ensure diversity? A lot of you have a lot of contact in Canberra over the years and would be just as aware as I am about how the policy process works in this town. One of the things that has struck me very forcefully in the last couple of years is the incestuous nature of all the groups that are consulting each other. The main groups that talk to each other are the Public Service, the industry associations and the Ministerial offices. That is where the power lies. That is where the decisions are made. If you do a head count of the people who currently work in industry associations in Canberra I would bet you anything that over 70 per cent of those people employed by industry associations have previously either worked in a ministerial office or a government department or, as I myself have done, both. That does not lead to diversity of views. That raises for me a very important question about industry associations and also other interest groups. How representative are they of their members and their members' views? Do they tend to have philosophies of their own that don't necessarily reflect those of their members?
My final question is: once we have a system that actually allows policy to reflect the values of the community and not just the policy community, how do we ensure that those are the ones that are actually incorporated into policy outcomes? I would like to give you a very brief example. In the early 1990s, the Senate held an inquiry into rural adjustment, rural debt and rural reconstruction. I am sure a number of you remember it. I recently had the pleasure of going through and reading some of the submissions that were made to that inquiry, and the transcripts of the verbal evidence that was given.

Amongst them was a wonderful contribution by the Conference of Leaders of Religious Institutes of Australia. There were a couple of sisters, and I can’t remember which orders they were from, but they came to speak on behalf of the poor of Australia. They made very moving speeches about the impact of the drought and the rural adjustment process on farmers and on communities. They were received with nods and very serious and very sympathetic responses from the members of the Senate Committee. The Senate Inquiry report then came out and it was in the language of economic rationalism and it gave us the same line that the government was running on rural adjustment and rural policy. I was very disappointed to see that we have processes where people take the time and trouble to write submissions to submit them into Senate inquiries, and Representatives inquiries, they come to Canberra, speak to these inquiries and the only place you will find their views is actually in the transcripts of their evidence.

So my three questions are: whose values are they? How do we ensure that we are getting all those values represented through the process? Having heard them, how do we make sure they are reflected in the policy outcomes?

Snow Barlow: Thank you one and all for that. I think you have been a very obedient group of speakers—either in respect for my lameness or in fear of my crutches. I will now ask Onko to present his synthesis of the proceedings after which we will have a short discussion.

Onko Kingma: I have to preface this by saying I feel painfully aware of the inadequacy of the summary that I am going to give because of the diversity of the views—number one, but also because of the very strong messages that have come across in relation to certain things which I won’t mention. Forgive me for this. If all we can do is build on it, and if you can set me straight on some of the issues then I will be happy, because after this I will try to liaise with Tony so that we develop a few things. These are just themes, okay. I found it too hard to develop points where we agree go forward, so these are themes that can be developed in paragraph form or whatever, and they may or may not be what you think. But here we go. Bob has got an animation of these so we will just follow my notes.

Number 1: It seems to me there is a need to do something. It is for several reasons. One is because I and others that I talk to feel that there are a number of thresholds that are rapidly approaching and the outcomes of which are uncertain. These range from IT to biotech to the natural resource-base that we work within, through to social systems and the way people live and the structure of business. So, for me there is a need to do something and that in itself will pound us if we don't do something first.

Number 2: An economic view may be too narrow at this stage. At this point I am not suggesting we destroy economic values or the economic framework. I think the economic conceptual framework is a wonderful framework within which to operate. It is just when we try to incorrectly operationalise it that it loses a lot of its elegance and also relevance. That applies also to these words!

I found while ever I was working off this rough little sheet things were created within my head. As soon as I put them on paper in an ordered form they lost an awful lot. Anyway, the same thing applies.

The plea there is to work within what several people have mentioned as the triple bottom line, social, economic, ecological.
To a degree, that comes down to the sorts of things that Gordon was saying yesterday in relation to full pricing, because if you do price things in a full way conceptually then you will take into account the value systems that you want to take into account within the economic framework. So it is really our inadequacy to use that framework conceptually that gets us into trouble. I take Al's point that a lot of analysis at the present moment is rather shoddy. That is point number 2.

Number 3: Much of the change that is required is actually of an institutional nature. I come back again to review of property rights. Who actually seeks property rights and who fights to change these? In part when I say those things I refer to the sorts of things that Bob was talking about in land tenure and so forth. The trade-offs that are open to us are very important here and, more importantly, when we look at institutions, we should have an inclusive debate about what is wanted and how. It is the issue about looking at what we want, the ends, before we sort out the means. So the institutional debate is very important. And I say that again, the debate on institutions is important. That has got to be of an inclusive nature. How do we put things on the agenda for discussion on institutions? I don't think we handle that at all well. So there is a range of issues there.

Number 4: The control processes just do not work any more. We need to develop much more inclusive processes involving participation, ownership of the change that we are talking about and, generally, what I think of as deepening the democratic process. That is where we start to get into values here. I support strongly the point that was made that it is really the values which underpin policy and institutions that are important. It means that we don't necessarily need to analyse the values per se because - someone mentioned it earlier on - once we develop a vision and a scenario for a way forward you very quickly learn which values are embodied in those scenarios. I agree that we shouldn't spend too much time on values per se because that will only get us into a hierarchy of values, but we should move on and look at what is it we actually want. That is point number 4.

Number 5: Here is where I start to vacillate a bit. I thought when I wrote this last night development must be local, and here the issues were around the top-down versus bottom-up and so forth. I was painfully brought to attention with Selwyn's analysis and Al's points that say, well, there is an awful lot of good in the current system. Quite honestly, to imagine a food system without the market framework would be quite an horrendous exercise.

It was Emma yesterday who said to me that she was aware of a lot of firms who were now starting to embed values which related much more not so much to goodwill but the sorts of requirements or what we regard as good practice, and were then able to sell that, not as goodwill per se but as part of that way of running a business. I thought there was a tremendous amount in that.

While I say development must be local, I am also not sure - I am totally unsure about how the juggernaut of, for example, the food industry is going to develop. There we do have a hierarchy of values ranging from global through to national through to local. I think it is a matter of, as Selwyn said to me at lunchtime, consumers being able to change the attitudes or the ways in which firms operate. It is an issue around social awareness within organisations.

So I think that point number 5 needs to be looked at in a broader context and not only in terms of the community and community participation but also in terms of the efficient systems that we need to operate in a high density population.

Number 6: Also relates to values, and there I am trying to pick up some of the discussion yesterday. Mechanisms! The mechanisms for solution to a lot of the problems we have actually lie in the community. They lie there already. Someone was describing the enormous richness of human capital in their area and the way that was being harnessed now in the resources that were coming out of the woodwork to get empowerment. I was reminded of some old OECD work that shows that, in most cases, communities once they got beyond stage one, already had many of the resources that were required to kick off. They already had those in the community. So planning processes are important, somehow mobilising the resource-base that is already there.
Number 7: Mind set is important. That embodies all those issues around a learning culture, life-long learning, development of skills awareness and - people said it this afternoon - an understanding of the issues, the R&D base that accompanies that and how we use science and building capacity.

In relation to 5, 6 and 7, values underpin those points. Again, I am brought back to Selwyn's analysis which was saying that competition, to a degree, is an important issue. In my mind that is not at this point resolved because competitive itself will bring back a better awareness of consumer awareness. I think there is quite a bit in that statement that we need to pick up.

At this point I would say that we certainly shouldn't be moving away from globalisation. If we don't stick with the developments on this planet that are taking over at this point then we will be lost in the process. So we have got to embrace those and work with them while not losing ourselves in the process.

Number 8: Relates to ways in which we make decisions. We haven't explicitly said that at this point, but a whole heap of people have said that participation in the project, the way we get decisions on the table, the way we incorporate things into policy agendas and so forth is important. So, for me, that means ways in which we form our agendas, the ways in which we make our decisions. Linda was talking before about the policy process and the groups that get involved, - you know, is it exclusive or inclusive and so forth? So decision-making itself is important.

Number 9: Governments have a very clear role. It is not about minimising government, it is about government playing its role in not only the sort of things that Tony was talking about, which involves involvement in handling of money through to handling of programs, through to formation of partnerships and the processes of coordination. Coordination should be improved and duplication should be eliminated. A lot, I have to say, is going on there, as John Chudleigh would attest in his processes that he has been through recently. So for me and I am in agreement here with the Australian Institute which says we are not into a third way. There is a fourth way, and that involves us going back and looking at the role of government as partner in a lot of things.

Number 10: Relates to the sort of action I mentioned yesterday, the catalytic nature of that action. There are a variety of things I just briefly want to mention there. One is dialogue, the need for dialogue on a collective basis. The second one is communication and how we communicate with each other. As I have discussed in the past with Neil, the issue of communication in rural areas has got to be one of the big unsolved policy issues of our time at this stage for the sort of reasons that he was talking about in his three-minute address.

Just for a moment, referring back to Tom's points on the first part of Day one, last year I went to the Visions of Landscapes Conference here in Canberra. One lunch hour I was at a bit of a loose end and I decided to go to a presentation called "The Fishman Series" done by a bloke called John Reid who is at the School of Art here in Canberra. What they have developed is a mythological theme called Fishman.

It is a bit like a Loch Ness Monster except these guys go into the valley wilderness area. They take these photos. It is like you see those vague outlines of people in pools in the wilderness and, of course, it is a myth. But they surround that with a story which embodies all the principles that you ever want to have on the ecological side. You are left with this fantastic presentation of overheads and graphic images, each of which has embodied messages and dialogue that goes with it. You remember it all. You know it is just ways of presenting. So communication is very important.

The third issue here is understanding. We really need to look at those who are disenfranchised. Somebody mentioned before about people not being included in processes that are important. I call them disenfranchised, in economic jargon, - the optimally ignored group in the context of developing property right challenges. There is a bit of literature on that and it is fascinating.
The fourth issue here is skills and leadership and working groups. LWRRDC, for one, has embarked on the process of inquiry into what sort of relationships or what sort of issues are relevant to formation of better relationships and natural resources management, one thing that is terribly important. The key issues are skills and leadership.

Another area of action is enabling programs because the enabling programs, as I mentioned yesterday, are the cradle, if you like, from which the potential in communities and business enterprise comes out. There are a variety of things there.

Then, finally, the last one which I didn't put there is we should not - and again coming back to the papers this morning - we should not ignore or pretend that a lot of the present policies we have in place don't exist and that they are irrelevant, because they are not. They are not irrelevant. We have got to work from that base to improve a lot of those because a lot of them do work.

Let me summarise on three things: a dialogue, vision and analysis, someone said yesterday, of how as well as what. There is no one solution. We have got to tailor things and, therefore, it is horses for courses. And, finally, processes to ensure that we don't get institutional failure occurring are very important.

Snow Barlow: I would like to ask whether people feel that there are matters that Onko has not captured in that which could be captured with extra themes or extra things. Rather than a feverish discussion whether it is right or wrong, it is matters of omission we should deal with.

Bob Beeton: I have a bunch of things that we have captured over the last couple of days. There are three streams which I might flash through quickly. I will put them up on the screen for a minute, if anyone wants to challenge or comment, and then go on with other things.

Roslyn Prinsley: Bob raised an issue earlier on which I think a few people have raised which was about the complexity, particularly of natural resource management and policy stuff. I think that hasn't come across. I do believe that while there are resources available at the community level, there is a huge amount of stuff that we don't know that we need to know before we can do anything sensible about some issues, for instance salinity and other natural resource management issues which really didn't come across in your presentation.

I guess the other thing I thought might come out of today which hasn't, is that I thought someone might stand up and say, "We need to have a national referendum on these three major issues. We really want to know what everyone in Australia thinks about these three major issues to affect the rural sector." I don't know what they are. But something like, does the population of Australia think we need to have, for example, people living in the rangelands? Because they are not really making much money and they are not really doing much economically. Should they be there and what should they be doing there? There are some major questions out there that - it is too late now - I think didn't really come out of today.

Snow Barlow: Now I would ask John Drinan to close the Symposium by recapping where we think we have got to.

John Drinan: Thank you, chairman. I think I would be a brave man to suggest that I am going to recap what has happened during these couple of days. Perhaps I could bring up a few things that struck me as being particularly important before we talk about where we go from here.

I was reminded during these last couple of days of several years ago when the University of Western Sydney at Hawkesbury sponsored a conference on values in agriculture- agriculture and human values. Somehow or other I was asked whether I would speak about my experiences of being a farmer- no matter how half-baked I might be as a farmer!
It was a really terrific experience because it really made me think deeply about what it was that made me want to be a farmer and try to be a farmer. In the end, the essence of it all came down to a sense of connectedness with the land. With that being very much in my mind, I was impressed yesterday, Snow, when you started the ball rolling by acknowledging the land on which we have been working for the last two days and pointing out that this land was under the custodianship of the Ngunnawal people. Later on, Snow, you made another comment that you saw a driving element being the need to seek harmony with the land. I think you indicated that we haven't got there as evidenced by the fact that we keep on using terms like "harshness", no doubt about the environment in which we live. We have not come to terms with it yet.

I think I am convinced from what I have heard over the last couple of days, even though it has not been spoken greatly about, is the attitudes to the land and people are really at the bottom of all this - that what people are looking for is ultimately some sort of relationship with the land. I think that is reflected in the fact that ecological and landscape issues are now starting to drive a greater awareness of our values, or reconceptualisation of our values and the actions that we are trying to take.

I was also reminded, when I met John Holmes yesterday, of another event in my life several years ago when I went to an Outlook Conference and took away with me two papers which really made an impression on me. One of them was by John, where he talked about land tenure and some of the things that underpinned that. That made it very clear to me how important values are in determining things such as land tenure. I think that we have heard several things during the last couple of days from John, and for instance, from Peter Yu and others to show that our system of land tenure really is out-moded and needs to be re-assessed.

The same thing applies to things like farm business structure. Many times people have commented on the way in which farm structure holds back what we might do with the land and holds back the development of human capability. Margie Thomson, I think, gave a very good example of that in her presentation, because it has certainly been my experience that farm structures, in the very broad sense, tend to undervalue some of the important members of those farms, in particular women. Could I suggest, also, children, who are often seen as a source of easy labour? Again, I believe our approaches or our values that underpin the way in which we structure our farms is outmoded and needs to be re-assessed.

We have talked a lot about values underpinning policies. I think that is undeniable. But the question remains: Are those values right and whose values are they? In any case, what are those values? I am persuaded that if we knew the answers to some of those questions we may end up with very, very different policies. There were some good examples, I think, given of that when Tom presented his paper and showed the different ways in which people looked at those photographs that his students had taken. I think that was a really stunning example of the producer and the consumer, two very different creatures, seeing things differently. Until you bring them together to talk to one another, you are really not going to get very far. Curiously, I think we saw a couple of examples of how that sort of discussion or interaction is being forced by things such as the tremendous growth in tourism and by the development of the value chain approach in the production system.

I was also, in that particular discussion, impressed by Tony's little anecdote about asking his kids and their friends about what sort of things they saw as being important. They were quite unhesitating in their response that the Great Barrier Reef was rather more important than sugar cane production. We really do need to know what sorts of values people do hold if we are going to make sensible decisions about what we are going to do with our land. Which takes me back to the point I made before, that if we knew the answer to this we would end up with very different policies to the ones we have at the moment.

I think also the point has been made many times about the need for greater involvement of local communities in making the decisions that affect them, that they be made in association with the commonwealth government, with the state government and with local government.
But if we are going to do those sorts of things we have to have in mind very much the point that Jane Elix made— that we need processes, good processes, that allow us to reconcile values.

As much as we might need to know what those values might be we need to have simplicity of language and programs. I think, Neil, you made that remark, to develop greater honesty and trust. We need to be able to listen, to seek to understand what other people are saying and to appreciate their points of view and appreciate that diversity. We need, too, to have informed opinion.

I think that leads on to the question of education or the development of human resource capability. I was very taken yesterday by Richard Stayner's comment about the Mungindi English teacher. I thought that was a terrific example of what is wrong when a rural community cannot get an English teacher. “If they can't get an English teacher, well, a woodwork teacher will do instead!” They still have to teach English! That says so much about how little we really value education in terms of building human capability within our communities, but also in terms of opening up opportunities for our young people to be able to see a bigger world and act in that bigger world.

So that set me on to think about the paradox that we spend a lot of our time, when we are thinking about rural Australia, lamenting the loss of our young from our rural communities and our homes. It is almost unavoidable if we want them to get out there and carve their own way in the world. On the one hand, we mourn their loss, but on the other hand, we rejoice in the fact that they have other opportunities. Education has an absolutely critical role to play in all of this.

I do not think I will rabbit on any longer than that, Snow, but come back to Peter Yu's remark earlier on this afternoon which essentially came down to: “Stop talking. Do something!” We have done a lot of talking over the last two days but what are we going to do about it? I don't think we have really answered that question. I know from earlier this afternoon that we have a website and all this stuff will be up on the web for people to access. We are going to have a forum there for people to debate issues. Tony and I have been volunteered by Tony to write up the proceedings of these couple of days. In addition to those sorts of things, what else do we do with all of this? Can we have some thoughts on that?

**Roslyn Prinsley:** I don't think it is such a bad thing to have discussion. I believe by having discussion and making that discussion public, for instance on the web, is a very good start to getting something to happen. The ideas here are so early in their formation that I can't see that trying to do anything more at this stage, without thinking it through a great deal more than you can in two days, is going to lead to very much. So I think the idea of having further discussion and trying to shape those ideas through further discussions is the next step.

**Astrida Upitis:** I would like to respond to that. I think it is hard because of all of the diversity of interest and new ideas. I think we all have a few viewpoints that are personal in us. I think we should just try and do one thing that goes beyond this room to make a difference. You choose.

**Snow Barlow:** I would second that very much. I think the continual discussion that will go on through the chat room and the website is an ongoing process. I do think we all have a responsibility to inject the ideas that we have into whatever policy processes we may be part of.

**Jock Douglas:** The ammunition to go with that: we need a succinct two-pager, particularly of Onko's summing-up, something saying, "Look, we haven't got a really good process here in this decision-making". Just think about this and hand it on in our spheres of influence. So, some ammunition to do that as an outcome from this meeting would be useful.

**Snow Barlow:** I agree. I think that is a good idea.
**Onko Kingma**: I hope this is not out of order. Tony and I have discussed that maybe he and I, over the next two or three days, developing a two-pager which tries to encapsulate the business of the debate without crossing your path, John. Then, as Jock said, it embodies some of those themes together with the extra ones that Bob put up, so you end up with a two-and-a-half pager that then might be suitable. Is that reasonable?

**Tony Gleeson**: That is fine. I would like to add a rider there: as with this whole thing, it has been very difficult to speak on behalf of everyone. There is that problematical situation arising again. We don't want a consensus today. It is not possible to get one. You are going to have to roll with us a little bit because a little bit of executive power has to be exercised if this thing is going to hit the dirt on time.

**Roslyn Prinsley**: I think the media idea is a good one, because I think the way things change is often through people initiating these sort of discussion forums. Apart from anything else, I would like to thank Tony and the other people who did initiate this. Unless we start having these discussions nothing will happen.

**Snow Barlow**: I think Tony may want to respond to this. I think one of the concepts that we have is to begin a debate along the lines of how values can inform policy in the context of a community-based approach rather than a sectoral-based approach.

The second thing is that there is a need, as all evolution will be punctuated, to have landmarks along the way. What Tony and Onko might come up with after this would be the first landmark. But the website, that will be there and will be a continuing process. There will be other landmarks as we go forward. I think that was the general process we thought we might continue on with.

**Don Blesing**: I have a slight concern with that last statement where you said we should spread the message of: values influence policy-making or policies. Helen Klieve and others made the point that values are embedded in policies and decisions now. We just haven't teased them out. I think we are flying in the face of reality if we use that first statement too easy.

**Snow Barlow**: I stand corrected.

**Imogen Zethoven**: In terms of potential action, I would like to encourage everyone to read the draft Earth Charter. I am not sure how many people in this room have heard about it, even had access to it. I have been kicking myself over the last couple of days for not bringing it along with me because I think it is germane to everything we have been talking about in the last couple of days.

**Richard Price**: I can only talk really from an R&D perspective, and I know there were more than a couple of shots at the relevance of research and development. I think those shots were mainly cheap and actually ill-informed. We are not going to come up with solutions to how you identify, communicate and incorporate values overnight. It is nothing new. It is old, but it is still something that I think has legitimacy in terms of the research agenda.

In that regard the Land and Water Resources Research and Development Corporation has, over the last couple of years, boosted its investment in all of the areas that we are talking about at the moment. We are going to be increasing that investment exponentially over the next five years. Some of the things that we will be looking at will be, well, what are - not just the values - but what are the different values, the interests and the perspectives that we all have on a range of issues, and then we will be communicating those, but also doing it in a deliberative action orientated type research.

Now, we often will see action research as something where farmers get involved in the research. When we talk about action research, we are going to talk about the policy-makers being involved in research, the wider community being involved in research, including the different elements of urban communities. And, I will repeat what I said yesterday, I am sick to death of people generalising about the urban population in this country as well as the rural population.
We will be investing heavily and, in fact, if anyone read the paper on Saturday, in property rights, research and development. We will also be investing research in new forms of governance. We continue to be rapped over the knuckles by our minister for wanting to invest in that area, but we are not backing off.

We actually have an invitation before us from a rather large philanthropic group to invest, within a larger consortium, several millions of dollars in repeating - it is not really repeating - replicating the exercise that we went through in the referendum last year on the republic - but the issue this time will be environmental flows in rivers. What does Australia want to do with its environmental flows? And this will be followed by running in parliament a process that will be no smaller than the one we just went through with the republic. That won't be until 2003.

So some of those things about pulling out values and what have you, and then discussing them properly at levels that will have influence don't happen overnight. Believe me, there is still a research agenda worth following.

**Ros Muston:** Just a comment on your discussion of the process from here, and talk about the ideas being partly formed. I have a sense that there has been dialogue but we haven't actually nailed too much down. Maybe we never would.

The talk about the use of the press to begin to signal that there is a movement developing - I think you want to think very carefully about the signals that you send out, and choose carefully the way you might use the press or any other means of communication. If you are not very careful, you could signal more change, more uncertainty, more insecurity for the people who occupy rural communities, because in a brief grab in the press you are not necessarily going to get all of what has happened in this room in two days or its intent, or the genuine caring passion that is in this room.

Those signals would potentially go to people who are already bombarded by imposition of change. They wouldn't necessarily see this as an initiative that is welling up from those people themselves. I think you want to be very careful about how you broadcast what are half-formed ideas here and be aware that you might send some signals other than those that you might actually think you are sending.

**Snow Barlow:** Thank you very much, Ros. I want to ask Tony if he wants to make a couple of comments before we close.

**Tony Gleeson:** Thanks Snow. I will be as brief as I can be as we are a little over time.

I suppose for the Symposium, as for life, if I was to do it again, I would do a few things differently, but I do not want to do either again. Both have been good enough.

The second comment I want to make is that I wouldn't wish to prematurely reduce the level of ambiguity we have got, even right at this closing time. I am pretty comfortable with that. I would much rather have ambiguity than the wrong solution.

The third thing is to thank Liz, Cate and Lorne in particular and, of course, also the sponsors, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation, the Dairy Research and Development Corporation, and the Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation at the University of Queensland and, lastly, to thank you all.
For me it was a growth experience, partly through the reading that I had to do to keep up with some of you, to reconnect with old friends and, most importantly, to meet a number of very interesting and sensitive new people.

I see it as an exercise to help us with our lives, not to live them. So that we haven't given you all quick take home solutions doesn't worry me at all. That would be very dangerous.

Thank you all very much.
Symposium Essays
Where is the Political Will for Institutional Reform?
Noel Beynon

Rural Australia faces many challenges which seem to be insurmountable. Governments have been increasingly looking towards rural communities in Australia to accept increased responsibility for their own future. They have been doing this while many services (especially government) and associated employment have been reduced in all but the major regional centers.

Initiatives to address natural resource and environmental issues are increasingly based on regional approaches. Similarly, regional approaches increasingly have been seen as appropriate to address social/community or industry issues.

Most recently the December 1999 Policy Discussion Paper, Managing Natural Resources in Rural Australia for a Sustainable Future (AFFA 1999) argued "The way forward ... should involve close partnerships and cooperation between governments, regional communities and individuals. The partnership framework should reflect the respective roles and responsibilities of participants and the interrelationships between them (p.13)."

The paper goes on "... strategies for improving natural resource management at the regional level are most effective when generated by regional communities themselves. An important element of this is the devolution of greater authority to and empowerment of regional communities."

This suggests that for successful outcomes, regional communities must be involved in an inclusive participatory way and that unless there is ownership of the process at the local level there may be difficulty in translating regional resource planning objectives into action. However, to date local or regional communities have had only restricted capacity or authority to change institutional arrangements to best meet their needs.

Many regional planning and related activities funded by government, such as the Rural Partnership Program and the new Regional Solutions Programme, have not and will not be able to meet their full potential. Notwithstanding the attempts by government to facilitate regional planning processes invariably they have been constrained by institutional arrangements set outside the region. Governments have yet to give real power to enable rural and regional communities to address major institutional arrangements which are or have usually been established by State, Territory or Commonwealth Governments and which are a significant impediment to the local effort to improve sustainability of resource use or development of alternative industries.

The fundamental challenge facing rural Australia (and in fact the economy at large) is how to develop new approaches to empower not only regional communities, but also the nation’s leaders, especially politicians, to make the necessary decisions to change the institutional arrangements of our socio-economic system. To date these leaders have not been able to break through the barrier and accept that their role should be firstly that of leaders of change over those areas they have direct responsibility for and secondly if they are not prepared to do that then to not impede but empower local or regional leaders and their communities to establish new institutional systems.

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1 Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry - Australia (1999). Managing Natural Resources in Rural Australia for a Sustainable Future - a Discussion Paper for developing a national policy, Canberra, December, (draft paper).
Taking Charge of Our Future
Don Blesing

Rural policy is too often a consequence of responding to our past. Rural life too easily reacts to past mistakes and the initiatives of urban people or groups in other countries.

As rural people we respond to the economic agenda of globalisation by resisting changes to agricultural marketing arrangements and joining political parties that promise a return to the past. As Australians we allow the supremacy of economic values over fairness, justice and the environment, in spite of clear evidence of significant resource degradation, business decline and social distress in many urban and rural areas, and unacceptable living conditions for too many Aboriginal people.

As rural people we respond to environmental concerns about agricultural degradation and river health by dealing valiantly and energetically with the symptoms of past resource degradation rather than the causes. Landscape-scale change driven by informed and strong government are required to bring sustainability, not the piece-meal responses of land care to date. We strive to maintain our perceived rural history and culture, but too often thoughtlessly forget the richness and understanding of indigenous peoples and more recent multi-cultural immigrants, and the insights of Australian historians.

An alternative is to take charge of our future by building visions of desirable futures. Exploring what could be a great future for our and others’ children rather than waiting passively. Building stories of what the future could be. Telling those stories to our children and grand children. Telling those stories to people in the cities and people on the beaches. Telling stories until we believe them and they become part of our own future. Searching for ways of reaching that future, striving for common goals. Anticipating, energetically working together, excited about the future, striving for shared goals. Arguing over the pace of change, disagreeing over how people will be involved, but never forgetting those shared stories and community goals.

Changing focus from the past to the future is not easy. It involves being courageous about speaking about the need for change. It means seeking new leaders or encouraging existing community leaders to be brave and admit that many existing policies and strategies are divisive and failing. It will of necessity mean that young people and unemployed people, black people and women will have to become part of capturing that shared vision. Changing focus will also mean shifting our gaze from rigid state borders to a matrix of small communities planning together within larger regions often crossing state boundaries.

From my experience working in rural areas I see some driving forces that need to be captured and harnessed in taking charge of our future. These include:

- A passionate investment in new leaders, education, skilling and enterprise, aimed at achieving an agreed vision
- Embracing innovative technologies that will attract investment and people from other regions and countries
- Focusing on ecological sustainability as a goal in its own right and a strategy for gaining a competitive edge in the global economy
- Using local government as a leader in employment, innovation and caring social activities.
Values and policy development: The case of farm poverty
Linda Botterill

Poverty has been a feature of Australian farming for many years. In the past decade or so a series of schemes has been implemented to assist farmers in financial hardship, including the Farm Household Support Scheme and the newly rebadged Farm Help.

In 1970, Henry Schapper wrote:

At the one and the same time in Australia, there is need for efficient farming and there is concern for inadequate income farmers. But there is no political or economic mechanism which automatically ensures harmony between efficiency and welfare. This can be resolved only by government policy (emphasis in original).

In recent years this balance appears to have been resolved in favour of economic efficiency. The domination of policy-making by economic logic has tended to create an impression that the resulting policies are value free and therefore objective. However, this is not the case. The economic model is based on particular assumptions about human behaviour and these values are not often made explicit. Governments have been vague about the type of agriculture which will result from these policy approaches, continuing to employ the rhetoric of the family farm while pursuing economic policies which are more advantageous to corporate and larger-than-family farmers.

The Commonwealth agriculture department, currently known as Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry Australia (AFFA) has been involved in developing policy in response to low farm incomes since a separate Department of Primary Industry was first established in 1956. This role sat very comfortably within the portfolio during the Country Party years until 1972. Under Labor in the early 1970s, the human impact of structural adjustment was still regarded as a primary concern of the portfolio. The late 1970s onwards saw the rise of economic liberalism across the Commonwealth Government and by the mid 1980s this was as clear in the Primary Industry portfolio as elsewhere.

As the emphasis on structural adjustment and economic efficiency strengthened, the welfare of farmers moved from a central concern of primary industry policy makers to a side issue. Farm income support programs were carefully crafted to ensure that the assistance they provided did not undermine the objectives of structural adjustment policies for agriculture. The appropriateness of using structural adjustment policy to address income inadequacies has been questioned, but no real attempt to pursue alternative approaches has been made.

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Achieving harmony between welfare and economic efficiency requires value judgements by policy makers. At present those judgements are being made by default as the balance inherent in the prevailing economic model is rarely debated. New approaches to farm poverty policy are required: starting from the question of what sort of agriculture the community wants to see in Australia in the future and how much it is prepared to pay to achieve it. To make these decisions requires clear enunciation of community values and a means for incorporating these values into the policy development process.
The natural country
Andrew Campbell

It’s not easy being green...but the first country to manage it will have a head start in one of the biggest
development opportunities of the next century. Australia is uniquely placed to define a distinctive
development trajectory based on products, technologies and services that celebrate and sustain nature,
rather than consume and degrade it. Australia is different, and in an era of homogenising
globalisation this can be turned to our lasting advantage. The contrast between Australia and other
developed nations in terms of the richness, biological diversity and naturalness of its landscapes is
sufficiently stark that we still have options: we can continue on an essentially European/North
American development path; or we can establish a distinctively Australian route. We need to see
through the stale arguments that environmental integrity and economic viability are incompatible. We
can turn tension into synergy by achieving excellence in natural resource management, something
already in great demand that will become an urgent global priority (and an enormous global growth
industry) in this generation. Many of the ingredients are there already: a renewed focus on regional
development, an extraordinary platform of participation in the landcare movement, and programs for
improving skills and developing new enterprises. What is missing is the overarching vision to unify
diverse strands of activity and to inspire long term investment. Here are some broad brush strokes
outlining The Natural Country—a strategy built around celebrating and sustaining Australia’s unique
natural endowment as a basis for a more robust and autonomous economy. Along the way we will
redefine Australians’ relationship with the land, and consequently perceptions of that relationship here
and elsewhere, to the point where environmental quality and innovation is automatically associated
with — Australian ... naturally.

A point of departure

What images surface when people think of Australia? Vast blue skies, red earth, open landscapes and
white beaches, the scent of eucalyptus, the incomparable bounce of the kangaroo and the quizzical
stupor of the koala; perhaps laced with iconic visions of a tough outback, remorseless droughts, fires
and floods; further confused by quirky films, suburban soaps, sporting legends? What do people know
of Australian products? When they wear Armani do they think of Australian wool? Do they think of
Aboriginal art, environmental quality, energy efficiency, biological diversity sensitively managed,
livable cities, healthy lifestyles or community landcare? What Australian images come to the fore? A
creative, tolerant, multicultural society in tune with its natural heritage? An economy based on
smarter resource use, green technologies and institutional innovation? A country where you can get a
superb twenty-first century education, acquiring relevant skills and insights? Do they imagine a
country which bounds market forces with considerations of social equity and ecological integrity?

In short, The Natural Country, a country with its act together, with a clear sense of direction and its
place in the world.

We need a framework for tackling constructively the major challenge of our time—how to develop a
vibrant, self-reliant economy and sustain a reasonable quality of life, equitably shared, without
depleting or degrading the resources upon which we and future generations depend. This challenge is
universal, grappling with it is the one certain growth industry of the next century, and Australia is
uniquely placed to make an important contribution.
The complex and tenuous links between environmental attitudes and behaviour
John Cary

The tenuous nature of the link between attitudes and behaviour, or between saying and doing, has long been an intractable problem in social research. In a 1930s US study motel owners who stated over the telephone that they would not rent rooms to Chinese individuals, when a Chinese person showed up at the motel, were willing to give them a room.1 Here, there was an observed inconsistency between a weakly held attitude and a strong behavioural action – a ‘moderate’ attitude of observed racial prejudice may not be reflected in an overt ‘strong’ behaviour of exclusion. There are obvious equivalent examples in the environmental domain.

In many studies it has been observed that attitudes and behaviours are related to an extent that ranges from a small to a moderate degree. There is a general tendency for individuals, in the absence of constraints, to seek consistency between attitudes and behaviours. Another way for individuals to achieve psychological consistency is to publicly espouse ‘symbolic beliefs’ reflecting the relevant social norms but engage only in token behaviour, sufficient to provide apparent consistency.2 Instrumental beliefs, related to self-interest, are likely to be more powerful than (moderately held) symbolic beliefs in influencing substantive environmental behavior. The attitude–behaviour relation is further complicated by the fact that causation is not one-way: behaviour can also determine attitudes.

The link between behaviour and attitudes is complex because the relationship between attitudes and behaviour is commonly many-to-one; i.e., many different attitudes – of potentially differing strength and direction and including favorable attitudes to complying with social norms – may be associated with a particular desirable behaviour.

An attitude exists within a personal knowledge structure comprised of beliefs, linked in associative networks. Within such a framework an attitude can be defined as a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour. Values are more generalised aggregations of attitudes and beliefs which allow more generalised responses to a wider range of entities. While there is mixed research evidence in the literature, there is a body of evidence indicating positive relationships between ecological attitudes and values and environmentally protective actions. Ross (1999:29)3 has provided an assessment of the implications:

- Values are closely related to people’s priorities.
- They provide guidance – however loose – to people’s likely behaviour, including their adoption of new ‘technologies’.
- They offer approaches for assessing what policy options people will accept, or perhaps reject.

Over the longer term aggregate changes in personal value systems and more strongly held attitudes become community norms. The resultant formation, or reinforcement, of norms – such as the norms embracing a landcare ethic – can lead to the strengthening of social movements and reinforce feedback loops for socially desirable personal (pro-environmental) behaviour and for supporting social or legal regulation which prescribes or proscribes such behaviour.

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Agriculture’s Industrialisation – The End of the Agrarian Dream
John Chudleigh

Regional Australia is moving through one of its most profound challenges of the last half century as agriculture becomes more competitive, world markets demand higher quality and a more diverse range of products, productivity gains continue worldwide and the environmental effects of continuing intensive use of land mainly for agricultural purposes are being questioned. The ongoing result of these factors is the significant adjustment process that most agricultural industries are experiencing with the consequent challenges many rural and regional communities face as a result of the adjustment process.

Competition for markets, especially world markets that are so critical to Australian producers, has intensified as market knowledge and communication enables instant decisions about sourcing products. This competitiveness is pushing all production systems worldwide and making production structures, systems and scale of far greater importance to economic viability than traditionally based family centered farm units. Technology has significantly reduced the need for labour in most production systems and scale has become critical to the reduction in cost of production per unit of product. These characteristics of the efficient industrial system are gradually developing an agriculture which is no longer based on a family or work unit concept but on the size and scale needed to ensure competitiveness on a world scale. The gradual application of industrial principles to our agricultural industries will continue to reduce the number of truly commercial farms and farm operators while generating increasing export revenue for Australia.

Environmental concerns are destined to change land use over the next few decades and it is possible that a considerable area will be used for different purposes than at present. It appears that society in general is increasingly becoming concerned about the environment and potentially willing to pay to have land use balanced between an owner’s economic imperative and socially acceptable sustainable alternatives. This will require a widespread acceptance of the multifunctionality of land use by both land owners and the general public and the willingness of government to find systems to pay land owners for the public good associated with alternative, environmentally sustainable and socially acceptable, land uses.

We have a need to try and determine what the alternative land uses might be (wilderness, forestry, power generation, tourism uses, public parks, new agricultural or horticultural pursuits etc), especially where the current agricultural uses are marginal at best and thus more likely to be environmentally damaging. The concept of a family farm is gradually being put aside by the industrialisation of agriculture and the demands of society for sustainable land use. Guiding the developments that are resulting from these changes will present a considerable challenge in the decades ahead.
Rebuilding Australia’s Strengths through Community Development

Jock Douglas

Australia's rural communities are undergoing a general economic and social decline, which began at least three decades ago as a decline in ‘terms of trade’ (prices received relative to cost of production). People with businesses in rural towns and with primary production based businesses in surrounding districts are equally affected. Rural community decline is not unique to Australia but common to many developed countries. But the problem is exacerbated in Australia because of its production background of severe rainfall variability and comparatively low soil nutrient base.

However, this adversity brings with it opportunity as people are driven to search for and skill themselves in new and better ways to improve their products and services, to reposition from mainstream commodity production into high value added activities through developing competitive advantage.

Traditional economic strategies have emphasised comparative advantage based on the characteristics of regions. This provided limited scope for high value added, as all producers had similar advantages and found prices bid down to near costs. Creation of competitive advantages (through ongoing economic and enterprise strategies) provides producers with greater market power, as the basis for value added.

It is possible for rural communities to rebuild, albeit with lower populations, but on bases of stronger social and human capital. A change of emphasis is suggested in Government policy: moving on from reliance on narrow project based growth which promotes limited social benefit, to a direct emphasis on building human and social capital at community level as a basis for sustainable development. Social and economic development at community level is seen as a vital part of assisting rural adjustment necessary to accommodate global change and to benefit from it.

In this context the current implementation of "competition policy" is flawed. This is because it impacts negatively on natural resource use in agriculture, is at odds with the social arrangements and empowerment needed for vibrant, self reliant communities, and does not ensure that the capabilities required to succeed in a competitive environment are created. Cooperation is seen as the social arrangement needed for vibrant, self-reliant communities and industry clusters to be able to effectively compete. Also, economic policy currently dominates the policy arena. Economic policy, social policy and environmental policy will have to be better combined in formulation and delivery to achieve the aim of ecologically sustainable development.

Empowerment is emerging as a crucial issue in dealing with the problems which beset rural communities and industries. With empowerment people take responsibility for their own futures. True empowerment means that people who are affected by Government decision and policies will take part in the framing, deciding and implementing of them. This is a step forward from the consultation process of parliamentary democracy: moving to what is termed ‘participatory democracy’.

Participatory democracy can deliver better government because the most effective way of dealing with today’s complex problems is to rely on the people closest to them. Empowerment of communities delivers a vigorous setting for information exchange, the building of knowledge and development of skills.

When (and if) the process of government can be delivered within a framework of empowered communities then rural dissatisfaction and negativity should largely be overcome.
Rural Australia – Why should Urban Australia be concerned?
John Drinan

Well over 90% of Australians live in urban areas, largely on the eastern and southern coastal fringes, and well over half are concentrated in cities. Thus, very few live in Rural Australia – the vast landmass away from the coastal cities and large towns. As in Urban Australia, Rural Australia is confronted with economic, social and environmental problems on scales of small to huge. The costs of managing them, many urgent, far exceed Rural Australia’s capacity to pay. Consequently, the support of Urban Australia is needed if the problems are to be managed. But, why should Urban Australia bother?

Rural Australia’s small contribution to national GVP is partly offset by the earnings from related service and value-adding industries and proportionally large export earnings. Farming and mining are significant exporters but under relentlessly declining terms of trade. The trendline’s slope is reduced by increasing productivity and new agricultural industries and mines, but quantum gains and different industries are needed to arrest the trend. If the additional costs of building and maintaining infrastructure (and environmental costs) were considered, would rural Australia’s nett economic contribution be positive?

In the social domain, the picture seems more encouraging. Thriving areas of Rural Australia assist social stability by reducing population pressures in cities. Conversely, major political and social problems emerge when areas are adversely affected. The mythologies of the Great Outdoors and the Outback seem to be important in maintaining a sense of national identity and connectedness. Rural areas have a continuing appeal to many Australians who, at least, like to know that the opportunities are there for scenic enjoyment, bushwalking, 4-wheel driving, hobby farming, for example. Defence, too, appears as a reason for looking after Rural Australia. But, do we have reliable information about how many urbanites value rural Australia and why?

Environmental problems are mammoth and growing. Huge areas, such as the Western Australian wheatbelt and the Murray-Darling Basin which contribute massively to agricultural production, are affected by advancing salinity. Erosion continues to remove the continent’s thin layer of soil. Water quality is in decline. The biodiversity which houses unique genetic assets is shrinking. While the consequences for Rural Australia are obvious, to what extent and how are they connected to Urban Australia?

If it were possible to fence off Rural Australia from the coastal fringe, and leave it – metaphorically or physically - would that be an ethical action? The privilege of use implies the responsibility and wisdom of stewardship, so it seems wrong to walk away from the social and environmental problems of “the bush”. But, is there a national consensus on this?

Australia no longer “rides on the sheep’s back” but all Australians still have a stake in the well-being of the entire country. We are interdependent, but do we understand the nature of this? The things we value, our beliefs and understandings translate into electoral decisions and resource allocations which determine the future of rural Australia. Reliable information about these is essential to good policy.
How do we make the hard decisions?
Jane Elix

Australians do not have a set of common values, and we do not need common values to implement effective rural policies. What we do need is a better understanding of the differences in our values, and ways of resolving disputes which arise from conflicts between these values.

In earlier times, the way Australians managed the land suggests that more values were held in common. Indigenous people implemented a stable system of land management for thousands of years. With European occupation, common values dictated the approach taken to land use, landscape change and the valuation of non-renewable resources.

But after the last thirty years, with the introduction of new ideas and new cultures, we now see a range of values held by different groups of Australians about the environment and the way we should use our land – values defined by factors such as age, educational level, gender, cultural background, geographical location and political philosophy. These differing values have influenced the way different groups of people and individuals have responded to the increasing levels of understanding of the environmental crises we face.

We should not be surprised by such a diversity, or even wish for a greater degree of homogeneity. However, we do need to recognise that this diversity has led to higher levels of conflict and dispute and to uncertainty and anxiety. It has also led to a level of inertia and abdication of responsibility onto political and legal systems which are proving themselves to be incapable of addressing the tremendously difficult social and environmental decisions that must be made.

More than 10 years ago, the notion of sustainability was put forward as a unifying theme, to provide a focus for discussion of Australia’s development. But different groups of Australians interpreted sustainability in different ways, in large part because of their different values. A very good example is the different time frames within which different groups couch their discussions and decision making. Primary producers tend to work within annual cycles, politicians work within an electoral time frame, and yet scientists base their recommendations on ecological time frames extending well beyond either of these.

The introduction of multi-interest committees and management groups with a focus on achieving sustainability was a key response to this dilemma. The logic behind this approach was that by bringing people together round a table, differences in views (and values) could be discussed, and agreement reached. But can the many groups of people making valiant efforts to reach agreement on so many of our natural resource management issues hope to achieve this in time? Or will we continue to discuss and consult without reaching agreement on the hard decisions, as rural Australia lurches towards environmental and social disaster.

What we haven’t looked at is how to accept diversity in values, and still make decisions that achieve outcomes. Both governments and the legal system find difficulty in dealing with difference except within an adversarial framework. How can we move beyond a focus on “us” and “them” in the range of environmental and social policy areas, and onto a focus on “how”?
Using Our Bush Culture
Lesley Fitzpatrick

Australian social history and literature abound with evidence of the establishment of national identity and the development of cultural myths through the metaphors of the struggle with the land and activities such as exploration, bushranging and farming\(^1\)\(^2\)\(^3\)\(^4\). These experiences have caught the collective cultural imagination and elucidate the Australian experience in a way that differentiates it from other cultures\(^5\). Our cultural identity has grown out of the physical and social experience of settlement; the dominance of the environment; the power of nature; and the aspects of these elements that evoke community admiration and acceptance\(^6\). The emphasis is on what is unique about Australia (stereotypes about nature and the outback) as opposed to what is characteristic (urban way and suburban life)\(^7\). This dynamic is telling us how important the bush is to Australians.

This alone, should make us question our naiveté in developing policy for the bush without understanding and using cultural values to sustain and develop this important aspect of Australian life and identity. Cultural values usually figure strongly the development, collective acceptance and understanding of policy. For example, twentieth century concepts of ‘motherhood’ and ‘family’ underpin welfare and social policy and influence its acceptance by the wider community. Mature policy development is undertaken with an awareness that cultural values shape much of what we do, and that the omission of such influences can be as value laden as acknowledgment. Basing rural policies on cultural values is likely to optimise their acceptance by the community and their transit through the political process.

There has been little research on underlying cultural values in Australia that is not based on Marxist and positivist approaches that link values to class, politics and the economy. The focus needs to shift to the role of culture as a response to the essential dilemmas of life, subject to the collective meanings we give it\(^8\). There is evidence that the cultural values of Australians settlers have diverged from their parent nations and have been influenced by the experience of living in this land. Whether this divergence stems from the influence of Indigenous cultures or from the experience of the land itself, is unclear. For example, Australians understanding of death and mortality is different from European understandings\(^9\). Australia's secular society does not look to religion to give meaning to death but locates its understanding of mortality in the life-within-death cycle of nature which is expressed through nature-based concepts of growth, decay and re-growth. This is very reminiscent of and Indigenous understanding of death. Other cultural beliefs evident include the respect for the power of the land and of nature\(^10\). There are echoes of Aboriginal beliefs in these notions which are also present in the growing importance of ‘place’ in the minds of Australians. This emerging understanding, pushed by Western concepts of environmental and social sustainability and economic interdependence, emphasises the importance of both rural and urban life. This notion of ‘place’ represents the communities of Australia as a connected series of settlements. I would argue that we are not just interdependent for economic reasons, but also for the cultural life that evolves from this whole.

These emerging cultural values need to be captured and used if we are to effectively protect and promote the importance of the bush and the cultural diversity of Australian life.

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\(^6\) Fitzpatrick, ibid.
\(^9\) Fitzpatrick, ibid.
\(^10\) Fitzpatrick, ibid.
Australia’s culture and values have been influenced, historically, by romantic mythologies about life on the land. These mythologies have served to foster public sympathy and tolerance for rural policies which have supported rural industries, rural business and rural families differently to other Australian industries, businesses and families.

To continue in this vein is tempting but not sustainable. The romantic mythology of life on the land is powerful and useful but vulnerable as a basis for future rural policy development.

We need a new take on the mythology of the bush. Something which is still romantic and more courageously open about the economic realities of farm business. Something which is less elitist, less (city-bush) divisive and more nationally unifying. Not an entirely new mythology but a refined mythology. A mythology which draws from and builds on the powerful, unifying elements of bush mythology — land, place and story.

A mythology, perhaps, which celebrates and romanticises the importance of place, landscape and story for every Australian community.

A sustainable mythology which will work to promote the value of rural community in an urbanised future where agricultural commodities no longer underpin Australia’s economic prosperity.

An inclusive mythology which can nurture particular Australian values about land and place in an e-community future where shared geography is increasingly irrelevant to personal community.

We need to cut a new cloth for the emperor before everyone starts to point.

Current Australian rural policy — back-to-the-bush and rural-before-regional — owes a lot to the romantic mythology of life in the bush. The romantic mythology is pro-rural and pro-bush. It romanticises ‘life on the land’. It idealises the work of farming and glorifies the battler in the bush. The farmer is the salt of the earth. Farming is the sacred cow.

It is a charming mythology and persistent. It survives in contemporary Australia despite significant demographic and economic change which should, logically, have worked against it. More surprisingly, it is fundamentally an elitist mythology which survives in an Australian culture which more commonly rejects elitism. Though fewer and fewer Australians live on the land or make a living from farming, this work is still imbued with a peculiar, mythical glory. Work on the land is somehow more worthy more honourable than work in the office or work in the shop.

Romantic bush mythology has, in the past, helped to secure public tolerance for rural policies which supported, unilaterally, farming businesses and farm families. To some extent it continues to do so. There is something in the psyche of the collective Australian majority which values connection with the land and the bush. A connection, perhaps, with the Australian landscape — a powerful, unique and identifying visual icon for most Australians.

Given the tenacity of the current mythology it is tempting to keep cutting rural policy from the same cloth. But is this sustainable?

Romantic bush mythology might have been sustainable in times when the national economy rode on the sheep’s back and commodity exports contributed significantly to Australia’s standard of living. But times have changed.

And people are starting to point at the Emperor.
Industry leaders within key industry growth sectors — telecommunications and information technology — are pointing at Government funding for primary industry research. Regional community leaders are pointing at Government funding for rural community development.

How long will it be before the increasingly-squeezed urban poor — the city battlers — begin to point at Government support for farm families. How long before town and city businesses start to point at Government support for farm businesses?

I doubt that the bush mythology is sustainable in its current form and I suspect that Australia’s rural policy needs to be grounded in something more sustainable so that all Australians continue to value and support the rural — rural culture and rural communities.

Support for rural communities might be lost if, based on the old mythology, this support remains at the expense of urban and regional communities if the bush continues to garnish support through recourse to notions of some special entitlement which devalues other communities — urban, suburban, regional and coastal.

A more sustainable cultural platform for rural policy would, I argue, be a culture which honours the broader concept of place and its role in Australian community. A culture which honours more inclusive concepts of place … place relevant to all of Australia’s diverse communities and rural place (the bush) no more or less than urban place or suburban place.

For those who are involved in rural policy, for those who are interested in preserving the rural — rural communities and rural cultures — in Australia, I would argue that an effective starting point would be to work, proactively, on refining the old mythology. To support the move to a more inclusive mythology to sacrifice a little bush mythology and promote a broader mythology of place.

The answer for rural futures is not, necessarily, to preserve the old mythology. To parade around the same old emperor and argue for rural support based on some special status and need. The answer, I believe, is to reclothe the emperor. To parade around the emperor in a new cloth … a refined mythology. To engineer and promote a refined mythology of place which recognises powerful unifying values about place and story for all Australian communities.

A mythology which honours and celebrates a diversity of place — urban, rural, suburban — and the particular importance of place and story in Australian culture. A more sustainable mythology of place to underpin Australian values and to ensure on-going support for rural policies, cultures and communities.
Rural Values, Cultural Tradition and Social Development
Ian Gray

Values underpin development. In the context of rural Australia, it is easy to see how the values associated with family and community life as well as farming have 'driven' rural Australians in their development of agriculture. The system of agriculture which they built has fostered the maintenance of the values which helped to prompt its creation. A central question for those interested in the further development of agricultural systems is: to what extent can traditional values continue to drive social and hence economic development?

It is reasonable to ask if those traditional values can survive while the restructuring of Australian agriculture proceeds rapidly. Farm families have of necessity strived to participate successfully in markets, but they have also been driven by values associated with the moral virtues of rural living, community sociality and the stewardship of resources. Such values have always suffered tensions in relation economic imperatives. For example, the stewardship ethic might be challenged by occasional if not regular need to exploit the land. Community life is complicated and divided by social inequalities. It now seems that such tensions are worsening as it becomes increasingly difficult for rural people to continue to respect non-market values. And at the same time people hear competing if not contradictory demands from their leaders: we must become ever-more productive while conserving the natural environment; we must act as communities yet compete with one another in newly created markets.

Are we developing a rural society in which there is a coherent set of values which might 'drive' its future economic and environmental development? There would seem to be a danger of people either resorting to fundamentalism in which values become, in effect, unquestionable, or a lack of values other than those ascribed by the market. If the latter occurs, one might ask if those values would be sufficient to sustain a viable social system, in particular the 'social capital' which is now often said to underpin rural sustainability.
Cultural Discontinuity
Gordon Gregory

A large proportion of Australia’s population are first or second generation migrants. Many of them are from countries in which there seems to have been a seamless historical transition from the past to the present, despite wars, famines, migrations and the passage through the landscape of a range of dominant groups. It is therefore ironic that in Australia, which has not seen major wars or famine on its shores, there was - two hundred years ago - a massive fault-line in historical development. The apparent youth - actually naivety - of the current nation is explained in part by the fact that its long-term history has not been accommodated into its present.

Immigrants from Europe are not familiar with historical notions of Australian ‘mateship’ or the asserted place of ‘the bush’ in its formulation, and cannot be expected to understand the significance to the young nation’s nationhood of Gallipoli or Federation. To many of them the Australian inland has a grandeur from afar that is terrifyingly inhuman up close. They cannot comprehend its lack of human scale, its absence of built environment, or its alien landscapes. These immigrants are driven by values that are human in scale and in observation: by the emotional ties of family, friends, local community places, settled life and two thousand years of European or Asian arts and culture. Their motives in relation to the Australian landscape – most noticeable through their roles in local government - are therefore to tame it, train it, weed it, build small statues and fountains upon it, and live next to their neighbour in it. Lack of a neighbour is judged in this scheme as lack of development, lack of success.

One of the challenges for rural policy is therefore to make sound judgements about the extent to which parts of Australia can become ‘Little Europes’. (A planning system not dominated by engineers would help, so that the emphasis could be more on community places and less on automobiles.) Another challenge is to integrate 60,000 years of history with the aspirations of Europeans and Vietnamese, the immigrants who now provide the ruling class and the dominant mores.

Abdication of the ruling class in favour of the original settlers is neither likely nor desirable. Working with representatives of the original inhabitants who wish and are able to play the game by the new rules, those members of the ruling class who choose can use some of the same principles that underpin the notion of representative democracy to lead desirable change. These principles include the responsibility and sensitivity to work in the interests of those one is not, and to represent faithfully those who would otherwise be unrepresented.

In doing this, these members of the ruling class risk being thought of as traitors by their own, and as patronising by some of those they represent and by the politically correct. Those they represent have not, after all, selected them. But if they do not do this, members of the ruling class will contribute to Australia remaining two nations. “If you’re not part of the solution, you’re part of the challenge.”
Traditional Pastoral Values: Increasingly Maladaptive?
John Holmes

"How do we avoid creating a 'victim mentality' when some people feel overwhelmed by another's culture?" (Preamble to this symposium).

The ownership, management and use of Australia's rangelands are currently in a state of flux. Pastoral hegemony has been displaced, with a proliferation of multiple values and uses. There is a shift away from commodity outputs towards 'post-productivist' amenity values, with an emphasis on pursuing urban-inspired national aspirations concerning Aboriginal land rights, preservation of biodiversity and semi-natural landscapes, sustainable management, tourism and recreation.1

Policy decisions on resource allocation and use are increasingly shaped in response to a complex mix of value-orientations held by diverse interest-groups, rather than tied to commodity-related market values. A simplistic mode of resource-allocation has disintegrated, to be replaced by uncertain, complex and often contradictory modes of political decision-making, shaped and reshaped by the demands of these interest-groups. Value orientations are markedly differentiated and do not readily meld into the multiple-value, multiple-use (co-existence) goals now needed.

As elsewhere, resource-related conflicts are focussed more on values than on facts, with increasing difficulty in resolving value-focussed conflicts.2 However, a major problem is that the goals and preferences actually held by interest-groups are misperceived by other groups. More effort should be spent in developing mutual understanding. One small step was taken in the special issue of The Rangeland Journal, 1995, titled 'Contemporary explorations: values, goals, needs and expectations of rangeland users'.

There is an urgent need to understand the value-orientations of pastoralists, not only because they continue to be the primary decision-makers in managing the rangelands, but also because their value-orientations are distinctive and not readily appreciated by other groups. In a survey of South Australian pastoralists, Holmes and Day (1995) reported that they comprise a cohesive reference-group with a strong sense of identity and self-worth. They closely identify with their distinctive way-of-life and its equally distinctive (and challenging) environment. They are conscious of their role, not only as producers, but also as custodians of the rangelands, capable of making pivotal decisions towards sustainable management. Their strong orientation towards intrinsic, expressive and social values provides partial compensation for continuing economic hardships.

Above all, they place high value on their independence and they regard intervention by conservationists, governments and other interests as presenting a greater threat to their future than does prospective further economic decline. One typical response…'unrealistic demands by conservation and other interests have caused a lot of pastoralists to leave the area, leaving good pastoral land to be degraded by vermin and tourists.'

This distinctive value-orientation has long proved highly adaptive in ensuring survival in periods of economic and environmental stress, but is singularly maladaptive in meeting the emerging challenges in which pastoralists must adjust to a more complex decision context, involving markedly divergent values and interests.

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Freedom farming
Neil Inall

We value the farm lifestyle but find it hard to define what it is that attracts us. I think it is freedom. The Americans talk about freedom a lot but we don’t talk about it much at all. Freedom to do what though? First up the freedom to be our own Boss (so they tell me!) freedom to do what you want to do when you want to do it. Minimal time restraints. Time to yarn, reflect, ponder, wander, leave your junk anywhere around the place.

Freedom to turn up the music very loudly, to be loud yourself without worrying about others, not having to shave every day, wear what you like when you like, freedom to have an untidy house.

Freedom to experiment, park anywhere, shoot, plough, burn, enjoy nature and the seasons. Freedom to clear timber.

Is all this freedom real or is it just a perception in an age when there are more and more constraints on farmers are “allowed” to do?

We also value the reality and the spirit of volunteering in Australia... not just rural. However rural Australia would be battling without voluntary organisations like the bush fire brigade, landcare, the agricultural bureau, apex, rotary, lions, CWA, red cross, emergency services, shirecouncils, farmer’s political groups, church bodies, show society, field day organisations, parents and friends.

A lot of people don’t contribute to voluntary bodies at all... others only give money and still others give everything... time, physical energy, attend meetings and also give money.

Many also share all the experiences and findings of their business operations... are farmers peculiar in this sharing? Is this “value” going to change as everything in life becomes more competitive? Will we be the lesser for it?
Achieving Outcomes Through Policy?
Helen Klieve

While there are a diverse range of underlying values inputting to policy processes, our future will be driven by the success with which any group can incorporate their values into formal decision-making frameworks. Thus, it’s not how people feel about, for example, biodiversity, but how many people care, how much and over what other priorities and at what expense?

Policy processes offer the “working from within” approach for achieving change, and while this approach should reflect broad social values, there are numerous constraints behind how well this occurs - in achieving workable, but acceptable, outcomes to complex and significant issues, which balance competing values, and address both the short and long term implications.

For example, Australia’s greenhouse response offers a situation where policy is still in the process of finding successful solutions. But what would a good policy outcome look like? Simplistically, it may mean we comfortably reduce greenhouse gas emissions – but any real “solution” is likely to bring significant change, at some cost, to at least some Australians, raising the dilemma of which sectors or stakeholders should accept the greatest disadvantage.

One hot issue under current debate is reductions in tree clearing, with potential short term impacts on individual producer’s operating rights and potential profitability, but longer term impacts for greenhouse abatement, regional biodiversity, regional development, catchment management, and resulting levels of salinity, as well as changing the pressures placed on other sectors to act.

In addition to the inherent difficulties in finding reasonable solutions for such issues are the other constraints to achieving good outcomes.

Firstly good communications, or partnerships, contribute to the process. In greenhouse, while most accept the “motherhood” that it’s an issue, what acceptance (essential to achieve change) does the community have of any short and long term costs associated with likely changes? Partnerships with key players will assist in appreciating different values, identifying acceptable strategies, and pulling all stakeholders toward an agreed direction.

But even with good communication, there will always be an inherent difficulty in making a major shift requiring obvious change, and less tangible benefits which may only emerge clearly later.

From catchment water allocation processes to greenhouse abatement, future approaches are changing with many of the benefits relating more to sustainable production, social and environmental values than to immediate economic returns.

So perhaps the hardest part of this process is selling the change. And here again there is a major shift in approaches, for the easiest arguments may be to look at the quantitative impacts, rather than the harder to analyse qualitative or values issues. A comment, attributed to Einstein, highlights this - Many of the things you can count don’t count. Many of the things you can’t count really count.

In the greenhouse area, we can easily measure some major sources of emissions (eg. power stations), but the majority of emissions are from more diffuse sources – cars, cows, trees and the soil, often estimated with significant error. And in the case of trees, the associated impacts on salinity, biodiversity, erosion and farm management and profitability are in many cases the key attention focus. So while major abatement needs to focus on major emissions sources, successful abatement will depend on significant shifts in the community’s expectations and behaviours.

Thus the major opportunity for change will come through real partnerships, not in narrow short term solutions, working toward an agreed future vision, that recognises not only the future benefits but also the full implications of such change.
Rural Resentment
Geoffrey Lawrence

Rural Australia is undergoing significant restructuring, with neo-liberalist policies, and wider global processes, eroding the economic bases of broadacre agriculture and of many inland country towns. Farmers and farming communities are coming to view themselves as ‘victims’ of government policies – policies that reduce regional services while requiring them to continue to sell farm products in a corrupted international marketplace. It is unlikely that tariff walls will reappear, so what can be done? One option is to work harder – and to work the land harder. Other producers diversify – attempting to value add or to enter a niche market for more highly valued commodities. Some borrow to expand. Where they can, family members will take off farm work. Others simply ‘tighten their belts’. Many producers attempt all of these, significantly increasing their – and their family’s - levels of stress1. If stress is one outcome, then another is the continued exploitation of Australia’s natural resource base2. Overstocking and overgrazing are taking their toll3. While an entrenched agrarian fundamentalism leads many rural producers still to consider themselves as the ‘backbone’ of Australia, urban Australians are viewing them not only as remnants of some mythical past, but also (and importantly in terms of their general status in the community) as environmental vandals.

The ‘country/city’ divide is becoming an important issue. Indicators confirm that – in comparison with city-based Australians – rural people have lower levels of income, limited access to services, suffer greater levels of poverty, have poorer housing, experience higher levels of unemployment and have limited access to appropriate health care. Their educational achievements are below those of their urban counterparts and the level of social malaise which has accompanied a series of rural recessions, droughts – and more lately restructuring – is growing4. Rural-based Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders are chronically unemployed. On a per capita basis they are the sickest, poorest, worst educated, most arrested and most imprisoned people in Australia. Their health situation is atrocious and they die some 20 years earlier than other Australians5. Are we seeing, as a consequence of neo-liberalism and globalisation, the development of ‘two Australias’ – one urban and one rural?

An important social process which is connected to the downward economic spiral felt by many (especially inland) communities is what sociologist term ‘de-traditionalisation’6. This is the dis-embedding of patterns of communal authority and customary practices where the symbols, mores, forms of social engagement and commitment to local institutions are being eroded. One manifestation is anger; another is confusion about the future.

Yet, on top of this, governments are seeking to convince rural people that they must be more resourceful, more self-reliant, and must take responsibility for their own fate. Social capital (that is, a community’s productive networks, values, levels of trust, shared vision of purpose, and commitment to action) is being depleted at the same time as governments are exhorting rural citizens to build upon the community’s social capital!

The future of rural Australia rests upon commitment by government to regional development. The problem, however, is that regional development requires ‘intervention’ in an era when government is increasingly anti-interventionist. Do rural Australians have a future in a globalised economy?

The answer to this question rests less on what ‘values’ they embrace, and more on the economic policies that are put in place to assist them to move to a new trajectory – that is, to what has been termed ‘sustainable regional development’.

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Rural health matters
Shelagh Lowe

It is well accepted that the health of rural Australians is not as good as their metropolitan counterparts. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that decisions made about delivery of services and infrastructure both by government and the private sector, even if not directly related to health - transport, telecommunications, education, banking, government services to name a few - ultimately has an effect on the health and well being of rural communities, as well as cultural and social values.

1999 saw the launch of Healthy Horizons giving strategic direction for rural and remote health service development until 2003. Health budget focus recently has been on addressing the shortage of general medical practitioners in rural and remote areas. These initiatives are generally known. There is also recognition at Federal level of the need to provide funds to support rural pharmacy services – scholarships, rural placements and locum support.

Other rural health professionals, including nurses and allied health professionals are becoming increasingly vocal about workforce issues, difficulties of recruitment and retention. What is not generally recognised is the role of the allied health professional in the delivery of health services. Government policy increasing talks about ‘consumer driven development of services.’ How then is a community going to request a service if they are unaware of what the role of an allied health professional is? A physiotherapist is more then a masseur, speech therapists do more then listen to how you speak, podiatrists don’t only cut toenails and who can explain what an occupational therapist does.

However, if you are living in a small, isolated rural community, that is lucky enough to have a GP, and you are unlucky enough as to have a stroke (a cardiovascular accident) that leaves you paralysed down one side of your body, unable to walk, dress or feed yourself, once the acute medical stage is over, you will need readily available access to a variety of allied health professionals in order to have effective rehabilitation. There are national health priorities focusing on reduction or management of medical conditions such as mental health, heart disease, diabetes, asthma, and musculoskeletal injuries. Management for all these conditions requires input by allied health professionals - psychologists, social workers, dieticians, podiatrists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, to name a few. General Practitioners require a team of health professionals (nursing and allied health staff) to support them in their practice, in order to give optimal service to the rural community. The concern, when looking at the ideas which could be used to underpin policies that will shape the future of rural Australia, is to get widespread recognition of the need to support all health professionals working in rural and remote communities, by addressing issues of recruitment and retention that are not just applicable to general practitioner, and ultimately improve the health and wellbeing of rural Australians.
Just what are we trying to manage, anyway?
Paul Martin

We keep trying to manage environments.
We keep trying to manage people within environments.
We never seem to see that every time we push at one point, it causes unexpected change elsewhere.
Perhaps we ought to sit back and rethink what we are trying to manage.

Introduction

What we need is a behavioural model to make sense of the interactions and dynamics which we try to manage, so that we can learn from what we are so clumsily doing, so that eventually we can do it better.

In order to apply a continuous improvement approach to macro-level policy (rather than micro-level sub-tasks) it is essential to have a way or thinking – a model – of what is being managed. Without such conceptualisation it is not possible to discern where energy or resources are being wasted, or where redirection of resources might significantly alter outcomes.

In the case of natural resource management specifically, no heuristic model has been proposed, let alone accepted, as a basis for predicting behavioural outcomes from different interventions, and combinations of interventions. Institutions or individuals may have such a concept in their heads, or buried within working papers. Some natural resource management initiatives reflect awareness of a wide range of elements that have to be managed, but express this understanding only in a collection of loosely connected interventions. Conceptualisation behind interventions is not overt. It is not shared across agencies that are pursuing (in the broadest sense) the same agenda. The result of this is barriers to learning and refinement. This is akin to not having a shared language – individuals may know a lot, but unless there is a basis for narrative they cannot collectively pool and refine that knowledge.

The second feature of this lack of specification is that opportunities to accelerate understanding of what strategies work, and particularly why they might work, are being lost. For example, when one program deals with economic incentives, another deals with improving information flows, and a third is focused on regulatory enforcement, it is very easy to believe that they are focused on different aspects with tenuous links.

Navigation for travellers in times past – especially over the sea – was carried out predominantly with reference to stars and, later, compass bearings. Accurate maps (in the form of either mental pictures or drawings on parchment) of the night sky were fundamental to their capacity to move around the world. Star maps were a first layer of maps. How stars moved and their relationship to one another temporarily and spatially had a long and detailed research history and was taken as fact by cartographers and explorers. These star maps are an example of well-grounded theory. With a trust in such maps, explorers could venture forth to prescribed destinations – if that was their want – knowing they could return to their point of departure.

With a trust in such maps and integrated, supporting technologies for measurement, cartographers and explorers could estimate distances between landmasses, draw maps of coastlines and topography, and generally increase detailed knowledge of the Earth’s surface. It mattered little that subsequent scientific enquiries gave rise to numerous theories about the evolution and substance of stars, or even that through space and time, the position of stars is not stable, or that current technology enables different kinds of maps. Star maps for early explorers were functionally relevant and enabled consistent and reliable progress in building knowledge about Earth.
Maps of the Earth can be shown in layers of detail, from a world view of landmasses, to the minutiae of housing blocks in towns, and even more detailed mapping of soils or biota and the like. People, researchers, choose the level of map detail to suit their particular inquiry, trusting the integrity of the supporting framework and technology. Good theory is like good maps. It provides the foundation for enquiry, layering the detail to suit the enquiry, helping to stimulate and direct it, providing it with perspective and enabling interpretation¹.

Systems theory is often used for thinking through complex problems in physical and behavioural sciences. Biological sciences use systems modelling to explain the operation of living things. Ecology utilises systems concepts to explain the relationships between organisms and the environment. Business innovators use systems analysis techniques to make gains in the enterprise. For business, systems thinking has led to such innovations as franchising, Just in Time (JIT) systems, Total Quality Management (TQM), Computer Integrated Manufacturing (CIM), etc. Concepts of memetics (Blackmore, 1999) and social systems (Luhmann, 1984) are proving to be useful ways of conceptualising how societies work.

The system we are interested in is a social system. It describes the way natural resources are used by people. Our purpose in describing the system is to help clarify our understanding of natural resource management to help us determine best points of systems intervention². In particular, we are interested to identify the place law has in the system and the extent to which law can be used to effect natural resource management.

As illustrated in Figure 1, the system comprises three linked subsystems³: individuals, organisations and society, nested within the environment.

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¹ Of course these same strengths of theory are its weaknesses. When used unquestioningly, theory can constrict and restrict learning.
² This model is equally applicable to other management/strategy problems. We have applied this model to developing strategies for introducing organisational responsibility programs and considering incentives for waste minimisation.
³ In defining a unit within a system as a subsystem, we are extending our boundary for inquiry into the nature of that unit while not losing sight of the idea that the unit is part of a “super” system.
• **The "individual" subsystem.** Individuals are the actors that drive organisations and society to behave in the way they do. They are decision-makers in their own right, with a direct role in natural resource use and management.

• **The "organisation" subsystem.** Organisations are the mechanism people use to produce outcomes that individuals cannot produce. Organisations use structuring mechanisms to achieve goals. Structuring mechanisms adjust information and/or resource flows. They also have determine the behaviour of the organisation. The influence of structure is, of course, not one-way. People set up the structures that effect other people and modify them to effect people differently. Effects and counter-effects (the change process) have time lags. Often we can assume, for analysis purposes, that the effects of structures are stable.

**Figure 2 – The Social System**

![Environment: Current and future](image)

• **The "society" within which the organisation and individuals operate.** The concept of society is different from those of individuals and organisations, being more difficult to draw boundaries around. Arguably, society itself is a system of which individuals and organisations are subsets. However we are predominantly interested in identifying the elements that explain the structuring of relationships people have with one another, the norms that are expected of behaviour and the mechanisms that are used to regulate behaviour. Treating society as a subsystem interacting with both individuals and organisations facilitates this understanding.

• **The environment in which society, individuals and organisations operate.** The environment is all encompassing. Environment includes concrete elements such as air and water, raw materials, natural systems, even the space beyond our stratosphere. It also encompasses abstract elements, such as the universe of ideas, including the concept of "future". This final concept is important in considering natural resource management, for it is the expectation of future scarcities and future impacts that drives concern for resource preservation.

The hub of the three subsystems is the focus of our interest.

**Proposition 1:** To achieve sustainable natural resource management, interactions between the three subsystems: individual, organisation and society, must be appropriately integrated.

In linking the subsystems, we are, in effect, hypothesising that the inputs and outputs of the subsystems influence one another as well as the larger system, the environment.

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4 For the most part, we accept Giddens (1997) definition of society in this paper: Society is a group of people who live in a particular territory, are subject to a common system of political authority, and are aware of having a distinct identity from other groups around them. There may be times when we depart from the constriction of this definition. With such a world-embracing issue and natural resource management, there are times when we may wish to broaden our conceptualisation to a world community.
A second proposition we use in developing our framework is that we can order these inputs and outputs into three categories: resources, information and beliefs. These span and bind individuals, organisations and society, linking the three subsystems.

Proposition 2: Two flows: resource flows, information flows and belief systems (A “quasi-flow”), span and bind the individual, organisation and society subsystems.

- Resources: All open systems require input of energies (resources) to counter balance exports (outputs). The need to constantly access resources is a prime disciplining mechanism for the operation of subsystems. Each subsystem relies on other subsystems and on the environment for its resources. In an ideal state, the goals of each subsystem, and performance relative to those goals, therefore, must represent a gain for other subsystems for all to continue to receive resources.

In the case of organisations, for example, individuals who control input flows or resources to the organisation include those who use its outputs – e.g. customers, voters, stakeholders or members. The organisation uses its structure to access and manage resource and information flows. Its structure shapes its effectiveness in demonstrating to those who control resource flows that it is satisfying their wants and needs. Satisfaction increases chances that resources needed by the organisation in the control of others will continue to be provided. The pursuit of resources by organisations acts as a constant pressure on the organisation to fit within its context, at least to the extent of ensuring that it is able to continue to secure its required resources and information inputs.

The same analysis can be carried out for each of the subsystems: individuals, society and organisations.

The physical environment exerts apparently passive pressure on the subsystems to ensure fit. In Australia, resource acquisitions from the environment are most often controlled through social mechanisms. Society is the custodian of the environment through government laws and regulations – and, where society sees these failing, direct action (such as boycotts, strikes and demonstrations). Of course, the environment can exert its own limiting action by running out of a resource, or by changing circumstances to make the resource more precious – for example changing climate.

Proposition 3: The ongoing need of subsystems within the social system for resources from one another sets the limits of their exploitation of one another and of the environment, and is a determinant of behaviour within the system.

- Information is used by each of the subsystems to make decisions required to ensure fit with other subsystems and the environment. Without flows of information from outside the system – or subsystem – the system must rely on its own internal information (knowledge) to make decisions. Such a circumstance increases the risk that the subsystem will drift out of fit with its context. That is, its requirements for survival will not properly account for available inputs and outputs.

Information is of two types. First there is data – the signals that flow within the system. Second there are data structures – the ways in which data are structured to allow its interpretation. Learning comes in two forms – learning facts (data) or learning structures (analytic processes).

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5 We define energies here broadly to encompass raw materials, ideas, power, etc.
6 Reflecting the Gaia concept, but our definition of environment is broader still, including all those elements and interactions outside the boundary of the three subsystems: society, individuals, organisation.
Regardless, however, of whether the system seeks and is able to use information, it constantly receives signals from the outside world, and it is itself sending signals to other systems. These information flows might be unheeded or confusing, but they are nonetheless information. Well-functioning systems have social and physical structures built into them which capture relevant information and use that information to maximise chances of utilising resources to achieve their systems goals.

Proposition 4: Information is used by subsystems to make decisions required to ensure fit with the needs of other subsystems and the environment.

Information does not in itself have meaning. A process of perception or interpretation occurs between information and meaning, and this process is in substantial part attributable to pre-existing beliefs.

- Belief systems determine what individuals, organisations and societies find important, the sorts of resources they will pursue, the interpretation or meaning they will attribute to information received and used. Beliefs are embedded in the culture of society and organisations, and in the values held by individuals. Culture and beliefs are at the heart of how social subsystems7 behave. They are a melding of fundamental societal philosophies, formed from historical experiences, interpretations of experiences, technologies, and knowledge about likely behavioural consequences. Ultimately, they determine the likelihood people, organisations and society will react appropriately to information signals from other subsystems and the environment.

Beliefs are largely generated within the society which holds them. They may be triggered by information, and shaped by responses to the readiness with which resources flow, but they are internal in their very nature. Systems of meaning are, according to Luhmann (1984) “autopoietic” – self-referencing and self-generating.

This is important for our consideration of the three subsystems with which we are concerned. Whilst it might be possible to track a number of the ingredients that go to trigger the development of culture, the end processes is somewhat circular. Ideas breed new ideas, which breed new ideas on the back of the decline of the old idea. The development of artistic representation (dance, sculpture, painting, music) demonstrates this process.

Proposition 5: Beliefs provide meaning to information flows which are then used to determine resource use by subsystems.

**Strategic dimensions**

Summarised, the discussion on linking mechanisms indicates that it is the pursuit of resources which largely conditions choice. It is information about the results of that pursuit which signals to the decision making entity (individuals, organisations, or society) whether it is following useful strategies. It is through the process of optimising resource access that learning takes place and significant changes in culture and values are achieved.

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7 For shorthand, we classify systems that describe people in all aspects as social subsystems. The individual, organisation and society subsystems we describe in this paper are, therefore, social subsystems.
This suggests that the most powerful strategies will go to the heart of resource access, and will potentiate signals which show which social or environmental performance will allow for access to resources on improved terms.

Proposition 6: The most powerful strategies for encouraging sustainable natural resource management are those that condition access to resources.

Each subsystem utilises different mechanisms for maximising its access to resources. Within each subsystem there are many different interactions and many different options to optimise resource use. The headings below introduce discussion on the factors that should be taken into account when considering strategies for appropriate natural resource management.

Resource use by individuals

Individuals use capabilities they are born with and hone throughout their lives\(^8\), relying on social structures, such as families, peers, educational institutions and the like, to provide the necessary skills and belief systems to interpret information and utilise that information to access resources.

Individuals, for example, use information for decisions to invest, produce or secure resources, and interpret and use the information they receive in ways that will maximise personal goals and standards.

Interactions within the individual subsystem suggests a number of factors which should be considered in designing interventions designed to encourage appropriate resource management by individuals:

- Information access and how information is filtered/interpreted is a proper concern of strategists concerned with natural resource management. Studies by Terry Leahy on popular responses to Environmental Issues in Australia illustrates the powerful role interpretation and belief systems have on information about environment. In interviews with a wide range of Australians he identified factors such as: The skewing of information to reinforce beliefs that environmentalists are blind to the “needs” of people; the belief that politics is a cynical exercise by a controlling elite and therefore should not be trusted to deliver socially beneficial outcomes; and the belief that a significant cause of unemployment in Australia is committal of overseas aid funds.

- The cognitive capabilities\(^9\) and learning opportunities of individuals must be considered in designing strategies for natural resource management. A failure of decision competence in resource use can have devastating consequences for natural resources, but does not necessarily reflect lack of goodwill on the part of individuals, or a lack of commitment to sustainability.

|“Environmental regulation was frequently seen by my interviewees as a restriction in their control over their own private space and leisure options…Many interviewees were directly critical of environmentalist attempts to curtail consumption in any way. Petronella enveighed against recycled paper, claiming that it was of poor quality and had become so prevalent as a result of environmental pressure that it was difficult to buy anything else. She claimed she did not have time to recycle rubbish and opposed any government attempts to impose rubbish recycling.”||*Quote from: Leahy, 2000(b)*|

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\(^8\) Our model of human functioning is based on Social Cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986).

\(^9\) Capabilities, in the sense we are using the word, are ability of individuals to represent the world in terms of symbols (e.g. language, diagrams), anticipate consequences (apply forethought), learn vicariously, and learn through reflection (enabling self-regulation of behaviour) (see (Bandura, 1986)).
Alan Woodward from Twyford Consulting commented that community participation and consultation are key ingredients in fostering awareness and commitment to improved natural resource management, reflected in documents such as Agenda 21 and government efforts such as Landcare programs and Catchment Boards.

Participation, in terms of the theory on human behaviour advanced in this report, is one method of expose barriers to change – a fundamental in the research program we propose. In addition, participation in the formulation of change, helps those who need to make the change to make required value and action adjustment.

A systems view of individual decision making and action suggests that to change the decision making of an individual to better reflect resource management goals, a strategy should encompass management of information flows, analytical frameworks, knowledge creation through learning and experience, and incentives. It should also require attention to feedback on consequences and the way in which consequences are interpreted by individuals.

We have illustrated how such strategies can be determined in Figure 3. Box 1 describes the diagram.

Natural resource management requires simultaneous consideration of a number of factors. In order for these factors to be properly addressed, management must be accompanied by adequate data about:

- Information flows (education strategies) that take account of information filters. This requires in-depth knowledge of both recipient’s “working” information base on natural resource management and the barriers to acceptance of information to change current practices.

- Related to the provision of information and barriers to its acceptance is the need to consider the capabilities of people to understand and utilise the information. There needs to be an understanding of capabilities of people, that is, the way they currently interpret information and understand the consequences of actions. From such understanding it would be possible to design programs which alter the perceptions of people and their analysis of consequences.

- Neither acceptance of information, nor capability to understand and use information is sufficient for people to change behaviour. For the final step to take place, resources must be available. An individual may, for example, keenly understand the need for recycling, but when there is no infrastructure for them to do so, their ability is curtailed. Strategies for change, therefore must incorporate implementation of structures to enable change to be effected.

Taking these factors into account, we propose a research agenda as shown in Box 1 to provide the basis from which natural resource regulations and management strategies can be developed.
Box 1: The individual subsystem – commenting on Figure 3

Three flows – information, meaning and resources - structure the individual’s decisions. These are interlinked in many ways, with information (for example) being the nexus for decisions to invest, produce or secure resources, and goals and self standards being pervasive of the way in which information is filtered and adjusted leading to decisions. The system, in a highly stylised and simplified form, is represented in Figure 2.210.

The system representation highlights a number of important linkages between the individual(s) and the organisation. The individual is

- The mechanisms for collecting, filtering and providing information to and within the organisation;
- The source for decision making frameworks, systematised and adopted by the organisation;
- Influences of the goals and self standards of the organisation;
- Provides resources, produces outputs, and the takes us resources (including the outputs) of organisations.

These four systemic relationships point to where strategies to increase the probability of responsible choice by individuals can have significant impacts. It suggests that strategies to sensitise individuals within organisations to the systemic effects that their actions in these four areas can have may be a powerful approach to resource management strategies. The opportunity is to intervene in the mechanisms through which the patterns of operation of an organisation are created – information, decision making, goal setting and output provision.

The implications for natural resource management strategies are substantial. The linkages suggest that any one strategy (for example consumer education, or pricing of resources) is likely to be suboptimal. Systemic intervention would involve addressing the key input areas that are highlighted above. These are:

- Data about consequence of past actions/decisions (feedback);
- Information and training to structure decision making (improving capabilities);
- Opportunities to experience the application of desirable decision structuring approaches (improving capabilities);
- Peer and other influencing of attitudes (values development);
- Linkages to resource acquisition or resource deployment effects (information).

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10 A number of elements and linkages have been excluded to reduce complexity: A number of elements and linkages have been excluded to reduce complexity:
Figure 3: The individual subsystem
Box 2 – Research questions

Information

Information is fundamental to making decisions and taking action. To be effective, natural resource laws must take into account current information sources and status of understanding about natural resource use. The answers to the following questions should form the basis for the formulation of natural resource regulations and management strategies:

- What information is currently available to individuals about resource use management?
- What are the barriers to accepting and utilising that information?
- What form should the information be in to make it accessible and to people overcome barriers to its acceptance?

Capabilities

Even when people understand why they should engage in sustainable resource management, they may not know how. Having information on the changes people need to make and learning they need to undertake, provides a further information base for the formulations of natural resource regulations and management strategies:

- How do people currently use information about natural resources?
- What programs should be put in place to teach people new skills/ways of thinking to improve resource use?

Resources

At the heart of the effectiveness of any legal instrument is its resource impact. This is both in terms of allocation by the targeted communities, and by the authorities charged with its implementation. In natural resource law in particular, issues of feasibility are critical to the law being made meaningful. Therefore, it is important to know:

- What incentives exist for people not to change their natural resource use?
- What incentives/resources need to be put in place to encourage people to manage natural resources appropriately?

From answers to these questions, it is possible to determine if there is a basic understanding of the principles a particular law wishes to uphold, whether people know how to carry out the dictates of law and have the resources to do so. From answers to these questions, it is possible to identify how best the law should be framed, and the types of education and resourcing strategies that should be concurrently set in place. The objective of natural resource laws should be to help the shift in individual and community attitudes from one where they think the principles embodied in legislation is an imposition on their life style, to one where it is an accepted and integral part of their life style. In terms of our model, a measure of the effectiveness of natural resource regulation is its capacity to internalise sustainable natural resource use.

Resource use by organisations

The organisation subsystem carries out analogous processes of information processing, belief formation, and resource movement to the individual. But the collective nature of the organisation gives it unique characteristics, not least of which is a culture arguably independent of any individual within the organisation. Patterns of response to the signals from the outside world, and patterns of resource allocation, are a collective response by the system to its context and purposes. To ensure internal operations move them towards their goals, organisations allocate tasks to be performed and coordinate the performance of those tasks. The sum of the way that an organisation does this is its structure. Interactions within an organisation - the information flows to carry out the tasks – are carried out both formally and informally.

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11 Organisation behaviour theorists, such as Mintzberg (1996), detail the operation, advantages and limitations of organisational structures on the behaviour of organisations.
Formal interactions are incorporated in standardised processes for completing tasks (rules and regulations, job standards, etc.) and in hierarchical structures. Information interactions are incorporated in the culture within the organisation which are embodied in the informal power structures within the organisation (e.g. the most senior operator may have more actual power in how tasks are carried out or how information is interpreted within the organisation that might appear from a formal job description) and precipitated by stories and norms (“this is the way we do things around here!”). Organisations also use incentive to motivate individuals. Incentives come in both monetary form (wages, bonuses, awards and the like) and non-monetary from (praise, promotion, recognition).

As well as managing its internal operations, the organisation seeks to manage its environment\(^{12}\) - from where it derives its resources. As is the case with all open systems, the organisation both influences and is influenced by its environment. It obtains information and resources from the environment and it provides information and resources to the environment to make the environment.

Interactions within the organisational subsystem and its environment suggest factors which should underpin strategies to encourage responsible resource management use by organisations.

Figure 2.3 represents the organisation subsystem and identifies a number of elements and linkages central to strategy formulation. A circle is used to represent collective culture. A number of signals to the creation of culture, and effects of culture on the decisions of the organisation are highlighted but not represented as direct relations as the process of culture formation is non-linear and complex.

What does this system representation tell us about strategies that are likely to increase the likelihood of any organisation acting in a consistently responsible manner? It tells us to pay attention to mechanisms of data capture and data filtration by organisations. Outside governance through organisational goals, standards and compliance, how the organisation goes about processing information for decision making is an important concern in the operation of the system through which organisations make choices\(^ {13}\).

- Story making and dissemination within the organisation and outside the organisation is also important. The effectiveness of story telling is linked to the organisation’s capacity to secure access to community resources. How an organisation is perceived is vital to its capacity to secure resources. This in turn suggests that how the media are pre-disposed to deal with corporate stories may be significant in shaping corporate behaviour.

\(^{12}\) Here again we are using the word “environment” to mean those factors not within the boundary of the subsystem.

\(^{13}\) Extensive work has been carried out on the importance of informal mechanisms of information dissemination in the police force. See, for example, (Adlam, 1982) and (Verbeek, 1997)
Figure 2.3: The organisational subsystem
Organisational goals and standards represent a composite of imposed requirements, including law, and internalised standards. There is an interaction between these two – when organisational culture and imposed requirements line up, one can anticipate incorporation into organisational behaviour. When this is not the case, either culture or societal imposition may create the standards applied in organisational decision making but the effects of either will be less powerful. Organisations with a culture of social or environmental responsibility do not need to rely heavily on internal rules or processes to ensure compliance with community rules.

Strategies to most effectively influence resource management by organisations, therefore, require simultaneous consideration of a number of factors:

- The channels through which organisations obtain their information. Organisations obtain their information from market intelligence, market signals from purchasing patterns, media, informal feedback, letters from customers or regulators etc. These factors provide the basis for reviewing the effectiveness of past decisions (and their implementation) on achieving the organisation’s goals and meeting its standards. Knowing what these channels are and the barriers that may exist in accepting information from outside these channels is important baseline data. Every organisation will be slightly different in the method of capturing data, but generally, organisations within industries can be expected to have similar characteristics.

- People within the organisation and in society are the target for the organisation’s messages or “stories”, in the form of product marketing, political positions, representations, advocacy, public relations or a host of other communications mechanisms used to position the organisation favourably in the eyes of society (or parts of society), to stimulate the flow of resources to the organisation. In some cases these messages may not support sustainable resource use. For example convenience of plastic bags is broadcast to consumers, whereas the message that society carries the cost of plastic bag disposal (through taxes to fund public infrastructure, litter, public clean up programs) is not broadcast.

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14 This, in itself, is an statement/assumption worth examining in more detail.
- External standards, in the form of laws, technical standards, customer standards, or other mandated or strongly persuasive standards, form part of the organisations’ control and governance system. The strength of this incorporation depends on other variables (such as fit with culture, power of the enforcement mechanisms and the like). Linking compliance with these external standards to the capacity of the organisation to secure resource is a powerful mechanism to shape organisational decision making.

- Strategy making is fundamentally the pursuit of resources by the system, generally with a nexus to achieving some stated or desired goals (the achievement of which justifies the community investment of resources into the organisation). Adjusting resource flows from society to the organisation is for that reason a powerful manager of organisational behaviour. The flow of resources to the organisation is one of the primary dictates of its strategies, culture and behaviour.

James Franklin provides an eloquent argument regarding the distortions that occur in the use of current accounting standards. He notes that current accounting techniques “enable costs to be distributed to people against their will, and (the victims) have no legal or other recourse because of a combination of difficulty in measuring the loss and the lack of a legal regime to sheet home losses to those causing them more of less directly.

Quoted from: Franklin, 1999

Taking these factors about organisations into account, we propose a number of research questions, as shown in Box 3. Answers to these questions would provide a sound basis on which to design natural resource regulations and management strategies to influence the behaviour of organisations.
Box 2.3 – Questions underpinning effective natural resource laws targeted at changing organisational behaviour

Information

1. What channels do organisations currently use to obtain information about natural resource availability?
2. What are the barriers to accepting and utilising information about natural resources from other sources?
3. How can natural resource legislation tap established organisational information channels be tapped and in what form does information about natural resources need to be presented to make it presentable to organisations?

Culture

1. What informal methods of information access and dissemination exist within the organisation and barriers do these methods pose to implementation of the principles of natural resource laws?
2. How can these barriers be overcome?
3. Do informal norms within the organisation (“ways we do things around here”) regarding the use of natural resources align with principles promulgated by natural resource laws?
4. How can norms be more definitely aligned to external standards?

Resources

1. What messages (stories) does the organisation give to society which influence its capacity to secure natural resources and how do these messages align with sustainable natural resources use.

- What natural resources are fundamental to the organisation?
- What external regulations and standards currently effect access to those natural resources?
- How should these be changed to align access to natural resources with sustainable resource use?

Resource use by society

Society uses laws and attached regulatory systems, familial units, political systems, religions, and the like to maintain social cohesion and to manage resource access.\(^\text{15}\)

The operation of law as part of the regulatory system is the theme of Part 3. Law, unlike philosophy and religious beliefs is an extrinsic societal mechanism. For laws, or the intent of laws, to be maximally effective they must be coordinated with intrinsic systems, that is, beliefs and values held by organisations, individuals and society.\(^\text{16}\)

Because organisations are a social artefact, resources used by individuals and organisations never leave society. They are reprocessed and recycled within the society. The only point of true export is when they become removed from use (such as when waste returns to the ecosystem, including when a person dies). This fact is at the heart of the legal tension between private property and communal rights which is constantly evident in natural resource management – “ownership” is at the level of the social system, deceptive.

Similarly, ideas and beliefs circulate within society and do not leave it. They have no life outside the society. They may become redundant and replaced by others, but for as long as they exist they do so within a social framework. For these reasons the concept of import and export between society and organisations and between society and individuals is a convenient fiction.

By adopting that fiction we can identify a number of strategies to improve the likelihood of environmentally responsible behaviour. Figure 4 illustrates the elements and linkages of the society subsystem.

\(^{15}\) For a discussion of the operation of these structures, see the work of sociologists such as Giddens (1997)

\(^{16}\) For a discussion of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, see Attachment 1.
The Ethical Investment industry is one set of organisations which might influence other organisations to adopt sustainable resource use options. However, the Ethical Investment industry’s capacity to do so is currently hampered by a lack of accessible information about the natural resource use by organisations. Methods that might make such data more accessible are environmental impact reports (in the UK, these are being made mandatory).

Accessibility is not only influenced by lack of data per se, but also by lack of data standardisation to enable comparisons between the operations of organisations. Information obtained from interview with Duncan Patterson

- Of the available facts, only some receive wide dissemination to society. Mechanisms include not only the media, but also informal and word of mouth, political processes, technological access (www) and other mediated flows of information into the public consciousness.

- Public information and culture (which provide the mechanism for adding meaning to that information) are the keys to decision-making by society. The choices made by society impact on the allocation of resources to organisations (and individuals) through mechanisms such as purchasing preferences, political actions, pricing of resources, legislation, and direct action (such as consumer boycotts or consumer selection of preferred suppliers). These feedback loops between any one organisation’s practices and the reactions of society are generally indirect, except in those circumstances, when public media become involved in highlighting and communicating the issues17.

- The operation of laws and standards, as formal mechanisms for exercising control over organisations and individuals, is a special case of social control. The culture of a society is reflected in its laws and in the way judgements are made within the legal system18. The outcome of judgements is part of the flow of information into the general community, but more particularly is represented by the transfer of resources within society. This is characterised as “penalisation” of individual organisations (though in civil matters at least, this penalisation is generally accompanied by a corresponding benefit to the successful litigant).

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17 This is probably the reason why the many attempts to link ethical performance to economic performance are so tenuous – the linkages are systemic rather than direct.
18 Discussed in Part 2.
Natural resource use is carried out through the decisions and actions of individuals. It is society, however, which is the custodian of natural resources. It is in the interest of society to understand how to control the use of natural resources by individuals and organisations.

Implications for intervention
Many elements and processes shape natural resources use by individuals, organisations and society. In the social systems model we have described above, we have grouped these elements and processes into three categories: information, belief and resource flows. On the basis that the role of any intervention is to improve sustainable natural resource use, the operation of these flows needs to be more precisely understood. We have suggested a number of questions, in Boxes 2.2 and 2.3 that should be answered to enable the formulation of strategies that encourage responsible resource use. From information we have to date, a range of intervention strategies suggest themselves.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUBSYSTEMS AND PROCESSES</th>
<th>INDIVIDUAL ＜＝＞ ORGANISATION ＜＝＞ SOCIETY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **INTERVENTIONS IN INFORMATION** (the feedstock of decisions and reflection on consequences) | • Improve individuals’ information about:  
• Potential impacts of choices,  
• Issues relating to the individual’s self standards,  
• Potential resource impacts,  
• to reduce inadvertence to consequence.  
• Improve task decision competence so as to reduce adverse impacts of mistakes.  
| • Reduce inadvertence to consequences.  
• Improve information processing/decision making capability.  
• Manage information filtration.  
• Manage the outflow of information  
• Improve information about standards and required of the organisation.  
• Ensure effective communication of decisions.  
| • Increase awareness of societal “rules”, expectations, and sanctions.  
• Increased public reporting.  
• Strengthen legal regulation of unacceptable activities.  
• Tightly link legal decision making and community standards.  
| **INTERVENTIONS IN BELIEFS** (the shapers of choices) | • Strengthen ethical education.  
• Stimulate debate on the ethical dimensions of choice.  
• Articulate self-standards.  
• Encourage discussion of self-standards in organisational decision making.  
| • Formalise organisational standards.  
• Education on societal standards and expectations (including legal standards)  
• Design culture to embrace responsibility, through resource allocation and communications.  
• Debate organisation standards.  
| • Strengthen the link between social responsibility and access to resources.  
• Debate community values and standards.  
• Strengthen institutional frameworks for values development.  
| **INTERVENTIONS IN RESOURCE USE** (the subject of choices) | • Use rewards and sanctions to shape attitudes to responsibility.  
• Ensure that individuals have the resources to implement decisions.  
• Invest resources with conscious regard to the responsibility performance of the organisation.  
| • Select markets and sources of resources with concern for pressures on organisational standards.  
• Link rewards to demonstration of competence, self-standards and organisational standards and values.  
• Ensure that resources are adequate to implement decisions.  
| • Strong resource allocation signals about the acceptability of their performance.  
• Transfer the costs of irresponsibility to those with the power to ensure responsibility.  
• Make demonstrated responsibility criteria for debating resource allocation.  
• Withdraw resources/patronage/market from organisations, which do not demonstrate responsibility.  
| **LINKAGES** | Legitimate discussion about values, beliefs and organisational responsibility in all institutional settings.  
Shift attention from individual responsibility to organisational responsibility.  
Develop strategies to entrench responsible action and responsible processes.  |
Bugger the media’s perception
Sue McGinn

The future of rural Australia depends on building a more positive image generally. Australians need to build up and celebrate rural life and its diverse culture, creating positive images of what it means to live beyond the urban sprawl.

The media in general has a role to play. The stereotypical image of a farmer being male, mid fifties, wearing overalls, chewing straw and unable to articulate more than a single word sentence is insulting to today’s modern primary producer who may be female, mid thirties and computer literate. The recent “Bugger” advertising campaign on television aimed at primary producers is testament to this.

Agribusiness today needs to be promoted in a positive light as a technologically rich and vibrant sector of the economic community. The extensive research and development corporations need to be shown as playing an important part in everyday decision making on farms. Primary production industries must also reinvent themselves as being female friendly where women are encouraged to be involved in all levels of industry from the grass roots level up. It is essential that decision making and leadership roles in rural Australia be inclusive to all.

Positive media exposure that creates pride within the general community for the valuable, professional and environmentally responsible contribution farmers make to our nation is essential. In turn these farmers also need some positive feedback. Often referred to as slow, complaining and never happy, they should be upheld as having a committed work ethic and as the backbone of our country. After all, they work seven days a week, 365 days a year producing quality products for Australia and beyond. These men and women on the land should be made aware of their special contribution to the economic viability of our country. Negative media images only serve to belittle primary producers and their families.

Our city cousins need to develop relationships with country families. Developing a link between city and country would create a mutual respect and empathy for one another’s lifestyles. Too many city folk never get to see cows milked, feed calves, drive tractors and comprehend the strong ties rural people have with the land. It would be great to rekindle a genuine inter-relationship between urban and country children through sister schools or sporting club programs. Such a program could be encouraged to continue throughout school age with the strategic outcome being an ongoing and inter-generational relationship between families. It would certainly make for a more united, inter-related, functional and understanding Australian community with a strong sense of social capital.
The outgoing tide
Sheriden Morris

Can the issues associated with the overall management of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area be separated from the legitimate desire of local communities along the coast to forge an economic future?

Ownership by local communities has been the ‘catch cry’ of land management strategies for the last two decades. Historically, Queensland industry has developed around extractive and primary industries, (mining, agriculture and fishing) and has struggled to deliver tangible outcomes for environmental management through industry education and voluntary codes of practice. Experience has shown that remnant attitudes within local coastal communities generally fail to acknowledge or account for the impact of production externalities on the Great Barrier Reef (the Reef).

If Commonwealth policies for the Reef are to reflect the contemporary values of Australians, surely they must embrace the concept of ‘preserve, protect and present’. The Reef as an ecological entity is an integral component of the Australian psyche and is a recognised World Heritage Area. The symbolic value of the Reef is manifested through international and national icon status. The market value is being realised through the rapid expansion of ‘eco’ and marine tourism. The use value has expanded from recreational and commercial use to an exhaustive hunt for new biotechnologies. It is the intrinsic value of the Reef that policy development has ignored. Most Australians would be aghast to learn how little of the Reef is actually protected within the multi-use framework under which the Reef is managed. The desires of local communities can not supercede the obligations to uphold the intrinsic value of the Reef.

This fundamental dichotomy has consistently rendered policy inappropriate and outdated and has been a feature of policy-making for too long. Whilst local ownership is desirable for environmental management of the Reef, the effect is devalued if local ownership is inconsistent with the desires of the broader silent National and International community.

Communities along the coast are facing significant decline in agriculture revenues and crave economic stimulus, yet ethical investments need to be predicated on mutual obligation by users that can impact on the Reef. For this reason, the role of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority is increasingly as an umpire or referee rather than a facilitator for sustainable use. Consistent with the need for Nationally based policies is the development of a comprehensive regulatory and enforcement framework aimed at reducing the risks to the intrinsic value of the Reef.
Integrating ESD values into regional planning systems?
Tiffany Morrison

Rural revitalisation is back on the Australian political agenda. Ecologically sustainable development (ESD) is fundamental to this revitalisation, however practical methods of operationalising such an holistic, and often intangible, concept are poorly developed. Continuing conflicts over resource allocation and degradation are evidence of this.

Whilst ESD values do exist in most policy principles, the regional planning systems of many rural Australian regions are still characterised by:

- Highly fragmented decision-making across jurisdictions
- Poor development of local institutions
- Limited consideration of the social and economic consequences of decision-making

This indicates that local and regional interpretations of ESD values are not being operationalised by the current system of institutional arrangements.

Promisingly, current trends in policy indicate that rural revitalisation on a sustainable basis may be effectively achieved at the regional level. Indeed, regional ‘planning’ (in its multiple manifestations) is now being promoted within all levels of government, industry and community. Within academia, trends in the sociology, planning and ecology disciplines have also advocated that the region is the most feasible unit for embracing community, biophysical and economic sustainability.

Not only is regional planning operationally practical in a socio-economic sense; it is ecologically appropriate. It gives local communities the opportunity to collaborate and it devolves power from remote hierarchies to governance at a relatively grounded level; one where both social and ecological linkages are strongest. Such top-down devolution, and bottom up regionalism, can empower and sustain communities economically, socially and biophysically.

The formulation of a comprehensive and generally accepted regional planning approach, however, is difficult in that regions have been varyingly identified according to economic, biophysical, socio-cultural and/or institutional factors since the beginning of this century. Furthermore, those different factors have then been used to construct a complex of ‘regionalisations’ used by agencies for different purposes (e.g. administrative, natural resource management, economic development etc).

Such institutionally complex situations, whereby regional planning responsibilities are dispersed through numerous agencies, have led to a significant amount of poorly coordinated planning activity. Centralised funding processes, driven and administered by only a few key agencies, have devolved limited resources to build stakeholder capacity and provide effective guidance to the vast array of agencies operating within a regional system. This has meant that regional stakeholders have had limited influence on the allocation of resources and the administration of regulations arising from regional planning activities.

So how can ESD values be operationalised through complex institutional and socio-cultural arrangements at the regional scale? One solution is not to return to centralised regional planning, but to consider the existing “planning system” and assess those features that do and do not work within that system (the regional planning systems approach).

The ‘regional planning systems’ approach thus identifies the region in question from its contextual behaviour, and seeks to enhance that behaviour, rather than developing a blueprint for the design of an arbitrarily defined region. It is not a static/singular approach, as the formal and informal arrangements that comprise a particular regional planning system constantly evolve in response to spatial, temporal and locational dynamics.
The notion of planning hereby moves beyond a technical land-use focus to embrace the political/strategic practice of differentially organizing attention according to regional core values and desired outcomes. It focuses on such issues as:

- how the local/regional value-base can contribute to the functionality of existing resource use planning and assessment mechanisms
- how policy reform (at all levels) can involve industry, community and government, research/academia and consultants/practitioners in any given region
- how policy reform can be linked to existing processes within the regional planning system and
- how communication and stakeholder participation can be embedded in the design and conduct of existing mechanisms for policy reform.

Most importantly, the *regional planning systems* approach has the overarching concern of how all of existing mechanisms may be integrated within a system of regional planning for ESD.
Water Reforms Implementation: Misalignment between one community’s values and its misinterpretation of another community’s identity
Roslyn Muston

Translation of the COAG water reform agenda into individual State policies and new State legislation triggered energetic and destructive debate between and amongst State government agencies and various sectors of the community. This exchange of views does not appear to be accompanied by increased levels of trust and understanding between the coastal city dwellers and their rural counterparts. Instead, in the early days preceding reform of water legislation in all jurisdictions the tug of war between the values and identity of the two groups moved destructively back and forth as one group attempted to impose its contemporary interpretation of its values upon the other.

In 1999 the second tranche of National Competition payments focussed on water reforms and the audit demonstrated fundamental variance in the way that jurisdictions had interpreted the COAG agreement. A common element across all jurisdictions however was adoption of various participatory planning models that were somewhat naively implemented to demonstrate that change was not being imposed but rather achieved through consultation with the broad community. All had an institutionalised preoccupation with water allocation, almost to the exclusion of other drivers for the water reform agenda. This meant that policy development commenced at what should have been the finishing point and in a way that guaranteed polarisation and deepening conflict.

The COAG Water Agreements sent a clear signal for future change in the way that rivers and river dependent communities would be managed in Australia. This was clearly going to require radical change that affected the destiny of communities, families and individuals across wide tracts of the Australian inland. In the early days of the reforms little effort was made to address protection of rural social capital or maintenance of the dignity of the river dependent communities. Instead, the process of change disempowered and humiliated rural people. There was little evidence of local leadership and no ‘up front’ support structure established to which rural communities could turn to give them any indication that their needs would be acknowledged during the massive transition that they were being told to make. In contrast, much referred power, credibility and overt support was being given to the movers and shakers, largely city-based, who were lobbying for the changes.

As an independent facilitator of many rural participatory planning processes, my most enduring memories will be those acquired looking out across a sea of bewildered and highly distressed faces in rural CWA halls, club dining rooms and schoolrooms. These were the faces from family lineages that knew that they had answered the Australian community’s call, and accepted Government incentives, to ‘develop’ the inland and generate national wealth through rural export. They held a legitimate pride in the degree to which they had succeeded in supporting the economic growth of Australia. Until the COAG Water agreement arrived, they also trusted their self worth and enjoyed a national identity as valued citizens of Australia. What they ‘hosted’ in their hastily transformed meeting rooms was an aggressive invasion of ‘city slickers’ and rural-based government officers who were challenging that rural identity and the fundamental self value of these rural people. In many instances the accusations were quite personal and implied a wilful destruction of inland rivers. Although the voice was not clear at the time, the rural cry was as much one for reclamation of dignity and acknowledgment of past community value as it was for protection of what had been assumed to be ‘rights’ to the use of the water.

A focus on water re-allocation was the initial and primary focus of participatory planning groups. Discussion immediately became disjointed and conflict ridden. Not surprising really when little was know of the quantum of water being allocated and there was no policy or infrastructure framework to support the proposed reallocations. This came years later in the debate after hydrographic models were finally developed and meters and gauges placed in rivers. At the farm and community level allocation was always going to need to be the consequence of individuals having shared knowledge in order to come to terms with the concept of landscape scale (not property scale) sustainable management of the rivers and their dependent communities.
Using water allocation as the pivot for policy development tended to conceal from rural communities vital new information about the river in its human and landscape totality. The debate that ensued concealed from city folk rural wisdom about the rivers and the river landscape. Sharing or even collective gathering of this information would have been fundamental to all stakeholders having an equal capacity to engage in planning for essential change. Evidence for this view is that when city based bureaucrats delivered the ultimatum about water allocations to members of the rural community, the angry reaction always rang out with claims of neglect of the 'social and economic impacts' of change.

In the conflict ridden dialogue, assumptions and generalisations led to a stereotyping of most of the major groups involved in the debate, i.e. rural water user, environmentalist, bureaucratic policy maker, indigenous person. Stereotyping was rampant on all sides of the water policy development debate and within the bureaucracy it had an undue influence on policy development. Stereotyping amongst participants in debate tends to shift the focus onto peripheral issues and away from the compelling drivers for change; those related to the sustainability of rural communities and continued supply of the environmental services that rivers provide. Stereotyping largely blocked the contribution of generational rural wisdom from entering the participatory planning debate.

Rural leaders spoke with pride about their achievements and their community’s adherence to their social conventions. Theirs was wisdom transferred from generation to generation and communicated through the appropriateness, or otherwise, of behaviours and practices. This wisdom is not readily translated into scientific language. When this wisdom is not reflected in the dialogue related to the water reforms a sense of betrayal caused a deepening of the conflict over water policy development. I consider that it is possible that it has also weakening the capacity of rural Australians to gain and apply new knowledge for a steady development of sustainable social, economic and environmental outcomes.
A Statistical View of Rural Australia
Allan Nicholls and Robin Slater

The ABS has decided to extend its Agriculture Statistics Program from a focus on commodity and financial information to a broader “rural” focus. This paper provides a brief overview of the reasons behind this decision and the broad strategic directions we propose to follow. We invite comment from users and other stakeholders on these directions.

Background

New statistical needs are emerging as the agricultural sector grapples with issues such as globalisation, rapidly changing technology, sustainable agriculture, the changing role of government and reports of declining living standards in rural communities. In particular, the focus of government policy has been moving away from simply analysing specific issues and towards integrated analysis of rural communities and rural Australia as a whole. In addressing issues such as dryland salinity, governments need to understand the possible implications, not only on commodity production in the area, but on the economic and social impact of families and communities in the affected areas.

The scope of the budgetary response to rural and regional needs and the demand for integrated data from public and private institutions clearly show the need for an integrated and, where possible, holistic approach to data collection and dissemination. Unfortunately there is currently no one major source for such integrated data, yet there will certainly be an increasing audience requiring information.

While there is widespread need for small area statistics, the geographic areas for which data are needed vary considerably between users, with no one classification system meeting all needs. It is therefore desirable that rural statistics be compiled in a way that enables the output to have the flexibility to meet multiple perspectives (i.e. water catchments, local government areas, remote regions, etc).

ABS Vision for Rural Statistics

Ultimately, the ABS wants to provide users with detailed integrated rural economic, social and environmental statistics. We aim wherever possible to provide geographic detail that is sufficiently fine to enable analysts to define the area that data are extracted for. It is our objective to make maximum use of statistics collected by the ABS and other organisations to reduce the burden on data providers. New technologies will be used to full advantage. These objectives will not be achieved quickly, given the degree of change required and the need to build collaboration between key Federal and State/Territory agencies. However, rapid progress can be made in some areas.

ABS Plan for Rural Statistics

In order to achieve this vision, we intend to work towards the collection of the geographic location of rural economic, social and environment units as accurately as possible. Recording physical location would provide a means by which a range of datasets may be drawn together into whatever flexible geographic areas are required.

In order to draw together these three data streams, we intend to align more closely the timing of the five-yearly Agriculture Census with the five-yearly Population Census and incorporate a higher level of agriculture-based environment questions in the Agriculture Census. This will allow, for example, the linking at local government area level of commodity production details with environmental protection measures and various social characteristics of farm households.

In the short term, the ABS needs to establish exactly what rural statistics users require and assemble an integrated framework of output data items that we will aim to provide.
While much of the data will already be available from within the ABS, some may need to be obtained from other organisations, and some may not yet exist.

A practical definition for “Rural Statistics” is needed that can be used to define the scope and boundaries of new work. Conceptually, we would like to define “rural” areas as those where the economic base is heavily dependent on agricultural production. However, the concept of “rural” is difficult to define statistically and will require a detailed review of user needs and collaboration with other organisations also grappling with this issue.

We welcome comment on this proposed approach and in particular on:

- the appropriateness of the broad strategy outlined
- above defining the scope of “Rural Statistics”
- providing details of issues that need to be addressed.
Land ownership
Ian Perkins

All Australians are now, or should be, well aware of the damage that has been caused to our unique and fragile environment by 200 years of inappropriate development. However, in western or central Queensland you can still see thousands of acres of trees being cleared and throughout Australia you can still see flood irrigation in use - practices that are now obviously irresponsible are in widespread use and showing very slow signs of changing. Most of the problems that the Decade of Landcare set out to address are increasing in severity not decreasing.¹

At the same time sustainable farming techniques are being developed and useful information is available to those who want to access it. I believe, however that the issue is neither technical nor knowledge based, but rather a much more fundamental issue of how we relate to the land.

Australian agricultural land is overwhelmingly owned by the people who farm it.² Does the belief that we own the land lay the framework of a relationship that allows us to thoughtlessly exploit the resources contained on and within the land?

Obviously the question of how we relate to land has been considered by many people for a long time.

Gerard Manly Hopkins regretted that,

"The soil is now bare
And now can foot feel being shod."

He felt, as many now do, that we are out of touch with the land and that this alienation from the natural environment is the source of our problems with sustainability.

David Tacey in his book ReEnchantment³ says, "The environmental crisis is not just a moral problem or an economic issue relating to how we manage our natural resources; fundamentally it is a spiritual problem about how we experience ourselves in the world."

Indigenous Australians, and many other indigenous people across the globe, have a concept of relationship to land that is different to the European concept of land ownership. For these people land is generally related to identity and to culture. "For indigenous peoples, their land and waters underpin who they are and are the foundation of their very survival as peoples".⁴ Bruce Rose, working in central Australia, found that, "Aboriginal people see caring for country as an integral part of living on their land. Caring for country forms part of the relationship individuals have with each other and with the land. "⁵

"Custodianship" is a term that is becoming popular to describe relationship with rather than ownership of land. In reality a human lifespan or generation is short compared with a geological time line. Custodianship for our families, for our society, for the planet may therefore be an appropriate notion. If this is the case, does the practical application of individual, exclusive land ownership stand in the way of the development of a notion of custodianship?

² Martin (1997), 'Alternatives to ownership', Farm Surveys Report 997, ABARE, Canberra.
A recent CSIRO paper, "Philanthropy - sustaining the land"\(^6\), provided recommendations aimed at encouraging private investment and philanthropic involvement in conservation. This in some ways is laying the basis for a transfer of ownership of land from private hands to non-government organisations or public trusts.

Would it be possible to change attitudes to the land by changing the ownership of the land and of the resources and opportunities associated with that land? By making custodianship a reality rather than a concept?

Over thousands of years Cape York Aboriginal groups have developed a system of resource management based on resource availability and the need of different people for those resources. Ownership or custodianship of land was conducted on a different level to management or utilisation of resources on that land. Separation of the ownership, or custodianship, of the land from the management of the resources or enterprises on that land, combined with a shift of ownership of land, may achieve a change in fundamental relationship to land.

This will however require a major shift in thinking. It is not possible to continue as we are, “eating our future”, as Tim Flannery\(^7\) asserts. Continuing prosperity and a sustainable landscape are possible but will require fundamental changes to the way we think and the way we relate to the land.

\(^6\) CSIRO (2000), 'Philanthropy - sustaining the land', briefing paper developed drawing on the research of Carl Binning and Mike Young, CSIRO Wildlife and Ecology under the National Research and Development Program on Rehabilitation, Management and Conservation of Remnant Vegetation.

Redesigning agricultural landscapes – Social, economic and ecological imperatives

Richard Price

Agriculture will always exist in Australian landscapes, but the imperative of sustainability demands a rethink and new discourse on the nature and value of our current agricultural systems:

**Economic sustainability**

There are today around 115,000 farm enterprises in Australia, using about 466 million hectares of land (~60 per cent of total land) and 16,000 gigalitres of water (~72 per cent of total water consumed). The gross value of (farm-gate) production in 1998-99 was $28.0 billion, representing around 4.5 per cent of the nation’s total GDP. To derive this value, agricultural input costs amounted to $24.1 billion, providing a net worth of agriculture of $3.9 billion. The average income per farm in 1998-99 was $25,000, well below the $45,000 estimated as being the minimum requirement for farm-household economic sustainability (McGuckian 1996). Not taken into account in the $3.9 net value of agriculture are the continental-scale costs of subsidies ($??) and land degradation ($2.0 billion per annum) that further erode agriculture’s profitability.

Based on economic circumstances alone, it could be concluded that agriculture (farm-gate) in Australia does not pay its way. However, such a conclusion should only be considered as a basis for a more constructive discourse on the nature and meaning of farming to rural people and to all Australians. Many people would argue that the economics of agriculture has been distorted by unlevel world playing fields. Indeed, Australia has adopted a hard line at multilateral trade forums on the principles of economic efficiency and fair play. Unfortunately, however, there has been little attempt to face inwards and encourage recognition on the values that agriculture might offer over and above economic returns to Australians.

**Ecological Sustainability**

In recent years, work of the CSIRO has suggested that most of Australia’s introduced farming methods have a profound impact on Australian landscapes. Indeed, most fundamentally alter the hydrological patterns of the landscapes. Agricultural practices under many circumstances either either leak water, or nutrients, or both. This leakage factor is the basis of most of forms of land, water and vegetation degradation.

The biophysical data presented by CSIRO essentially concludes that agriculture is unsustainable in many forms across Australia, and that radical rather than incremental changes in our farming systems and wider resource management systems are required. That land-uses covering over 60 per cent of the continent’s surface may be deemed fundamentally incompatible with ecological integrity implies an imperative to broaden the discourse on the aspirations of land-use beyond the current agricultural paradigm.

**Social Sustainability**

Less than 5 per cent of the Australian population resides in rural Australia, and fewer than one third of its farm enterprises earn an income from agriculture in excess of a sustainably required $45,000. Between 1986-1996, farm establishments fell by 16 per cent, while total numbers of farmers declined by 24 per cent. The cost-price squeeze has meant that more farmers have left agriculture than have entered, and that some farm aggregation is taking place. Low commodity prices, particularly for wool, have resulted in lower land values. This has been compounded by reduced productivity resulting from land degradation in many areas.

In the Murray-Darling Basin, the average age of farmers has reached 59 and continues to increase. Can it be expected that farmers will invest in agroforestry when the benefits may not accrue until they are over 75 years of age, and when they have no offspring willing to inherit the farm?
The ability of farmers to derive off-farm income varies enormously across the Basin, and where it is derived, it is not necessarily invested in practices compatible with good natural resource management. Off-farm and hobby-farm ownership is increasing in many regions of Australia, but the benefits of this new ownership has yet to manifest.

Many rural Australians feel that they are excluded from wider institutional processes that affect their futures, and that their rights have become subservient to those of urban dwellers. Environmental issues are seen by many as urban agendas, while others that have participated in regionally-based environmental planning processes, such as catchment (watershed) management, have become sceptical about the lack of opportunity and resources they are provided to progress towards implementation and to realise their aspirations. Disenchantment is reflected on the one hand in the growth of non-mainstream political parties and more active participation in local and regional planning processes that offer some hope of influencing government resource allocation, and on the other hand by increased rural depression and rural suicides.

**Redesigning Agricultural Landscapes**

Agriculture is important to Australians from the perspectives of economics, social identity and cohesion, and culture. Good agricultural practice is also important from an environmental perspective. However, our current agricultural systems are creating tensions at the economic, social environmental levels. Acknowledgement of the need for fundamental change in our landscape interactions is reflected in the post Decade-of-Landcare debate, and across the wider research fraternity. There is a maturing in the way we perceive and value our landscapes, and this shift is also emerging in our policy and managerial responses. The Commonwealth Government’s discussion paper, *Managing Natural Resources in Rural Australia for a Sustainable Future*, and MDBC’s emerging response to the MDB salinity audit, both express concern about the adequacy of marginal changes to current resource use to achieve desired sustainability outcomes. Likewise, the research sector is also recognising that the challenge of sustainability within Australian contexts requires radically new modes of participatory and interdisciplinary research methods. To this end, we are witnessing a burgeoning interest among social scientists in matters that have long been dominated by the traditional agricultural sciences.

Reflecting these trends, the Land and Water Resources R&D Corporation, with CSIRO Land and Water, has implemented a national program to design agricultural systems which ensure economic production and ecosystem and landscape function by matching these systems to the unique biophysical characteristics of the Australian environment. The major challenge of the program will be to design such systems so that they acknowledge and respect the cultural and social values intertwined into the fabric of Australian agriculture.
Restoring spirit to the land
Kate Rigby

In her recent book *Uncommon Ground. Cultural Landscapes and Environmental Values* (Berg, 1999), Veronica Strang points to a certain tension in the understandings of land expressed by pastoralists in the Cape York Peninsula.

On the one hand, the land on which they struggle to make a living from cattle is a means of livelihood, an economic resource. On the other hand, it is also a place for enjoyment, a locus of recreation. Moreover, although they are the inheritors of a cultural tradition which positions them as ‘lone heroes’ in their conquest or taming of the land, some also evince an almost reverential attitude to the land, precisely to the extent that it is not entirely in their control.

Perhaps this kind of ambivalence is not uncommon among pastoralists and farmers elsewhere in Australia as well. The current orgy of land-clearing that is presently taking place in Queensland suggests that when the crunch comes, economic and instrumental values will win out. But must this always be so? Certainly, in many parts of the world today, including Australia, attitudes towards land are changing. In particular, the view of land as commodity and resource, whose sole value is to increase human wealth and comfort – the view of land which gained predominance in the Western imagination precisely at the time that Australia was being claimed for Britain – is currently being challenged. This challenge has arisen from the dawning realisation that the exploitative practices hitherto legitimatated by a purely instrumental view of the natural world is tearing apart the web of life into which human existence is itself interwoven. The challenge is being articulated by many different voices in a variety of ways. Deep ecologists, for example, argue for the ‘inherent value’ of the natural world, while Jewish and Christian theologians of various hues remind us that this is not ours, but ‘God’s Earth’: a sacred trust, rather than raw material to satisfy merely human needs and desires. In settler societies such as our own, indigenous voices too are finally being heard reaffirming not only their prior ownership of the land, but also traditional understandings of the land as a locus of profound spiritual value.

How can this restoration of inherent value or spirit to the land be reconciled with the needs of rural communities to make a living from the produce of the land? Certainly, not easily. In my own view, rural policies are needed which recognise indigenous understandings and uses of land, wherever possible, as well as allowing non-indigenous farmers and pastoralists to more openly acknowledge and explore their own intuitions of spirit in the land. In practice, that will mean also restoring the ecological health of the land, allowing for the well-being of the whole land community, human and otherwise. However, the economic burden of this process of restoration must not fall solely on the shoulders of already embattled rural communities. If this is to be avoided we might need something like the ‘Solidarity tax’ paid by west Germans after the reunification of Germany to help rebuilding in the east. Perhaps urban Australians could be asked to make a similar kind of means-based contribution - a payment or offering embodying their solidarity with the whole land community, human and otherwise, and their growing respect for the spiritual value of the natural world?
Rural Futures - Whose destiny is it?
Emma Robinson

Just suppose its 2010…. your nose is pressed against the window of a QANTAS jet, flying high over in-land Australia. From the air, rural Australia looks much the same. Shiny galvanised roofs, patches of green and clusters of pastoral out-stations dot the landscape much as they have done for generations. From the ground however it’s a different story. Rural communities have reconceived their purpose from service centres for agricultural enterprises to networked knowledge communities. Rural ‘returnees’ are enjoying a safer, saner, cleaner and more relaxed lifestyle while staying very much connected to learning, working and growing. Within these communities industry is working together with ecology, companies are virtual and people are empowered by an environment of trust and potential. Top down development policies have been replaced by polices organised at the regional level. This applies for both urban and rural regions, assisting in facilitating a greater appreciation of community diversity and broad opportunity for community collaboration. Advances in telecommunications and innovative alliances have played an essential role in redefining the benefits of being rural. Adding value to this technological capacity is the willingness to invest in tools and processes that expose broader perspectives, develop deeper perceptions and unite ideals through shared community vision.

This is one vision for rural Australia; no doubt your own vision is quite different. Debating the detail is an all too comfortable distraction…it’s the creating, the inspiring, the sharing the owning of a vision that is critical. Yet vision seems to be the one element missing from the recipe for rural revival. Sure there are outback recovery festivals, rural futures forums and leadership programs each doing their bit for bolstering skills, motivation and community capacity. But what is the next step, how does a rural community point its future in the right direction, or at least start the conversation about what that ‘right’ direction might look like.

Conversations about rural futures need to challenge our current assumptions about the world we are heading into. In short we need to rethink the future. But since the future is so all encompassing, how do we actually go about rethinking it? The first step has got to be negotiating some groundrules. Firstly we have to stop trying to figure out what to do by looking at what we have done. Secondly we need to acknowledge the future is not a continuation but rather a series of discontinuities. Both groundrules spell opportunity. They say nobody owns the future, it is uncertain and that means you as well as me, urban as well as rural have a stake in shaping it.

Making the jump from rhetoric to action requires individuals and communities to have a point of view about the future, their future. This requires imagination and means giving a disproportionate share of voice to people with new and potentially challenging ideas. Next comes the opportunity to share that view, shape it, develop it and most importantly own it. Scenario planning is a useful tool in achieving this. Scenarios allow us to simulate the future, mentally test its possibilities, and use hindsight and insight to develop a shared view of the future. This shared view of the future is an important reference point in guiding the strategies, policies and activities needed to be put in place to create the desired future. A little naive, I hear your shout! Sure it won’t be as linear as this there’ll be some turbulence as one view of the future collides with another, but at the very least rural Australia will be a co-pilot in shaping their destiny and creating their future.
The role of farm organisations and the policy development process
Margie Thomson

The government bureaucratic structure representing Australian agriculture has altered significantly over the last 20 years as the relevance of commodity based issues has declined due to deregulatory change and other divisions have been created to address regional, sectoral and social based issues.¹

At the same time, the policy decision-making process has changed at a national level, with greater relevance being placed on consultative practices based on systematic frameworks and specific terms of references being determined for interested parties to address in many instances.²

A national farm organisation, representing a ‘united voice’ of Australian farmers was not formed until just over 20 years ago, through the unification of the major commodity and state farming organisations. This organisation has been highly successful in influencing federal decision-making through the provision of papers representing members’ views and the development of close relationships with those involved in policy formulation process at a national level.

Although in conflict with many historic commodity organisation ideals of subsidisation and regulation, the National Farmers’ Federation (NFF) has gained significant influence on agricultural issues based on corporatist ideals.³ Using the ‘farm business’ as the important object for rationalist reform, the NFF has actively pursued change to national issues, including financial, taxation and labour reform.

The challenge for this national farm organisation is to continue to widen its neo-liberalist focus to changes in the broadening social agenda and to remain representative of farmer interests.⁴ Agrarian values, such as lifestyle and environment, relate to both the ‘farm business’ and the ‘farm family’ and are likely to be difficult to address within the rationalist framework.⁵ It is therefore important that the structural and human arrangements of the organisation allow alternative issues relating to social, cultural, regional and sectoral policy to be actively pursued to ensure it constituents’ views continue to be represented.

Integrated policy – working beyond one’s community of interest
Astrida Upitis

Decision makers in all spheres of public life; business, government, academia and communities; need to look more holistically at the way they make policies and interact with others. They all need to think about, examine and assess their impacts beyond their community of immediate interest.

In business, for example, it’s about putting into practice the triple bottom line. How will business decisions benefit shareholders and their profits, maintain or improve the environment and benefit the people that work in the business or are physically connected or located near it? As economic adjustments occur within rural industries in Australia, how can decision makers associated with these industries take more account of the social and environmental consequences of their actions? What role do they see for themselves in contributing to the long-term sustainability of communities within which they live or their business is located?

In government it’s about better integrating economic, environmental and social aspects of policy decisions within a framework of better understanding the culture and values of the individuals and communities they are dealing with. In practice this is challenging because people naturally view the world, and hence their contribution and participation within it, from their particular, usually one dimensional perspective.

For example, consider the issues of water quality and access to water in Australia. An economist’s approach to these complex issues may relate to the cost benefits of market scenarios and the true pricing of water to ensure its quality and availability while a scientist’s perspective may highlight the long-term human and biological consequences of poor water quality. The organic beef producer may worry about residual pesticides and water quality while people living on farms, in small rural towns or at the downstream end of the Murray River just worry about getting enough quality water to drink. Lawmakers may debate rights of access while politicians ponder how to make a difference on such a big, costly issue in the short and long term given the competing demands on the limited government $$$ pie. Because the biological, economic and social aspects of water issues are complex and interrelated, there need to be a range of integrated and innovative government and community (which includes industry) responses to addressing these issues otherwise one suspects there will be little or slow long-term change.

Another practical challenge in effectively integrating economic, environmental, social and cultural aspects in policy making is that people tend to work in ‘silos’: that is, in separate organisations which have their own cultures, status, histories, agendas, funding, strengths and weaknesses. Within government institutions this can result in a less than integrated approach to meeting the needs of rural communities where ‘one size’ does not necessarily fit all. From a rural perspective, it can also result in confusion about the range and diversity of government activities which are on offer yet at times do not seem to directly meet peoples’ needs. People in different spheres of government are slowly becoming aware of the benefits of a ‘whole of government’ approach in promoting and delivering better programs and services but there is still a way to go in how to practically achieve this.

From a simplistic point of view, collaborating across sectors in an integrated, holistic way makes sense yet the realities of joined up policy making and program delivery needs work, however (ever optimistically) where there is a will there is a way!!!
Sustainable use of wild animals on the rangelands

George Wilson

The Australian landscape in its unaltered natural state, is for the most part, better suited to production of indigenous species than exotic species. In addition most native species are not found elsewhere in the world and so they confer a comparative advantage to Australia if there is demand for their products.

Current agricultural practices using species exotic to Australia have in many places lead to land degradation, reduced productivity and increased fluctuations in profitability. If management regimes can be developed that both conserve native species while permitting their commercial use, wildlife enterprises could enable natural habitats to recover while providing an income to landowners. In June 1998 the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee reported on the commercial utilisation of Australian native wildlife. The Committee recommended that the Federal Government investigate ways to support private sector investment in biodiversity conservation. In particular, the Committee drew attention to the model of sustainable use of wildlife as applied in southern Africa, whereby in some areas ownership and responsibility for wildlife is transferred to local landowners but within broad management parameters. The committee recommended that the Government examine the appropriateness of such a model to biodiversity conservation in Australia. It also recommended that the Federal Government investigate the possibility of an experimental management trial, preferably in the rangelands region of Australia to examine this potential. The imperative for the trial comes from the urgent need to improve Natural Resource Management and to do so in a way that does not put an impossible demand on the public purse. The Senate Committee noted that the future of biodiversity conservation in Australia now depends very much on finding mechanisms, and particularly financial incentives, for natural habitat to be restored and conserved on private lands. If appropriately managed, commercial utilisation of wildlife and nature based tourism are two such mechanisms for doing so.

A trial is needed that would test the impact which higher numbers of wildlife, commercial utilisation and tourism had in the study area. It would assess the economic viability of the commercial activities undertaken in the trial, the adequacy of regulations and controls to ensure biodiversity, and the existence of incentives which would flow to encourage habitat conservation. My expectation is that the trial would focus on kangaroos in the rangelands. However it would also scope the potential of other species including native birds and reptiles. It would review the capacity for breeding endangered species and making them commercially available to potential buyers including tourism enterprises. If successful, the trial would stimulate the increasing interest in alternative agricultural enterprises in Australia and enhance opportunities for many struggling rural businesses. It would enable a range of wildlife industries to broaden their income-base. The proposed trial could also has considerable significance for Aboriginal communities both generally and because a successful outcome could stimulate economic independence. Aboriginal people have a particular interest and cultural association with native animals.
There is deep irony in the love that Australians have for the bush and the fact that we are collectively destroying it at a phenomenal rate, far beyond its capacity to recover. There is now overwhelming evidence that this great continent cannot sustain the new uses to which it has been subjected over the last 200 years. As Mary White said, the land is crying.

Landcare and NHT were important steps but far from adequate. We need to be asking whether the traditional products (meat, wool) can be produced in this country without ruining the resource base (almost 60% of the country) over time.

I understand that a recent Commonwealth report has found that the Queensland grazing industry is a net cost to the Queensland economy. The report has not been published and was even refused under FOI. Clearly this is a sensitive social and political issue.

The people who manage those lands tend to be highly resistant to change. Many do not believe there is a problem. They believe environmentalists are out to gain maximum publicity for the sake of it and they dispute the credibility of the science that says there is a problem.

Some farmers may accept the idea of payment for protection of ecosystem services. Others will need to be convinced that they are making a productive contribution to the economy. This is an idea whose time has come, particularly in catchments where water is stored for high value uses such as drinking water.

The net value of agricultural production continues to decline even though agricultural production is expanding. This is totally incompatible with ESD, which is encapsulated in the phrase “doing more with less”. Other sectors are generating more wealth for Australia, arguably with less environmental cost.

I believe we should close down the wool and beef cattle industries, end broadscale land clearing, cap the overflowing bores and remove the artificial and illegal water storages that are doing so much to disrupt rangelands biodiversity. We also need a comprehensive plan for ecosystem restoration, plantation development, tourism and limited commercial use of native species.

We need a social movement that promotes the equivalent of reconciliation between the land and non-indigenous Australians. We need to “work together” with the land, not against it with bulldozer and chain.
Symposium Participants

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Snow Barlow was Chief of the Division of Agriculture, Forestry and Quarantine Sciences in the Bureau of Resource Sciences, Canberra, and before that, Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Horticulture at the University of Western Sydney. He is a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Sciences.

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Bob Beeton is Associate Professor of Natural and Rural Systems Management, University of Queensland as well as holding numerous external appointments. Bob has worked in the field of environmental management for over 30 years. He works regularly with local government and community groups in regional Australia. His current interests are environmental problem solving, sustainable tourism, and sustainability issues associated with both natural and rural systems and rural and regional communities. Bob has supervised numerous postgraduates and publishes widely in his areas of interest.

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Noel Beynon has many years experience in domestic and international agricultural research and policy analysis and has worked in statutory marketing authorities, research institutions and government. He is interested in the development of more sustainable agriculture and natural resource systems, and rural communities.

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Don Blesing is an agribusiness adviser and farmer. He is experienced in research policy and management, environmental strategies and strategic planning and futuring. Don has recently been Chair of the Lake Eyre Basin Group (community development), Rangelands Australia (education coordination and strategy) and of the Coolmark Foundation (environmental strategy).

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Linda Botterill is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the National Europe Centre and lectures in political science at the ANU. She has extensive experience in public policy having worked in the Department of Primary Industries and Energy, as a ministerial adviser and as a policy officer in two industry associations. She is co-editor of *Beyond Drought: People, Policy and Perspectives* (CSIRO Publishing, 2003). Dr Botterill's research interests include the role of values in the rural policy development process, the relationship between policy communities and policy change, structural adjustment in the rural sector and drought policy.
Jane Brockington is a Director, National Competition Council, with responsibility for agriculture, fisheries, forestry and pharmacy legislation review processes. Previously Jane has worked in communications and aviation policy and research with Government.

Peter is a dairy farmer who has taken the opportunity to build a career off farm at a senior management level in the corporate sector of the dairy industry, as well as having extensive experience as an elected representative of the farming related organisations. Most recently Peter has commenced consulting.

John Cary is Acting Director of the Institute for Sustainability and Innovation at Victoria University. His research has focused on human factors influencing resource management, and on sustainable food chains. He is co-author of the book *Greening a Brown Land: The Australian Search for Sustainable Land Use*, and author of many publications on influencing improved natural resource management on farms.

John Chudleigh, recently retired Principal of Orange Agricultural College, University of Sydney and is now a consultant. Chair of National Regional Summit Steering Committee. Author of newsletter “Analysing Agriculture” reflecting a lifetime interest in agriculture and world trends. Chair of Australian Rural Finance Investment Company Ltd.

Wendy Craik is the Executive Director of the National Farmers’ Federation. Prior to joining NFF Wendy worked for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority for 17 years, the last three as Executive Officer. She has extensive experience in environmental planning, management and research policy development, strategic and corporate planning and financial and human resource management. Dr Craik was awarded Executive Woman of the Year for the Rural Sector in 1998 and Telstra Ansett Australia Private Sector Business Woman of the Year for the ACT in 1999. Dr Craik is author of an extensive list of publications.

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Jock Douglas is a cattle producer and horticulturalist and was one of the early initiators of Landcare. He later proposed a national Property Management Planning program. His current public interests are in Rural Community Development and in the combining of social, economic and environmental policies in their formulation and application.

John Drinan is experienced in agricultural research, education and governance of rural research and development corporations. He has a growing concern for the wellbeing of the social, environmental and economic fabric of rural Australia.

Jane Elix is a co-director in the consultancy business, Community Solutions, which provides a range of services to government, community and industry bodies. Community Solutions specialises in natural resource management, social planning, mediation, advocacy, organisational diagnosis and policy advice. Jane has a particular interest in large scale social and environmental dispute resolution and is completing a PhD in conflict management.

Lesley Fitzpatrick is Director of the Cunningham Centre which provides vocational training, professional development, and support services for rural and remote health professionals in Southern Inland Queensland. Lesley is Convenor of the National Association of Rural Health Education and Research Organisations. Her background is in sociology and her research interests include community development and culture.

John will relocate to the Department of English, the University of Melbourne, Parkville VIC 3010.

Sue George is a visual artist with a passion for documenting place, journey and story. She regularly exhibits mixed media works and has produced a number of series with these themes. She has worked previously in regional development and in agricultural industry development and maintains an interest in rural community development issues.

Tony Gleeson is a scientist, policy & research consultant and farmer. He has been a research director, political adviser and director of statutory corporations. His current interests include rural policy and fostering creativity in rural research and development. Tony convened the Symposium.
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Gordon Gregory is Director of National Rural Health Alliance and Board member of ACOSS. He has lived in England, New South Wales and Canberra. Gordon has worked for the Rural Development Centre and on the staff of a Federal Minister as an adviser on rural affairs. He is a lapsed economist interested in policies and services for rural/remote communities.

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Stuart Gunning is the Acting General Manager of the Kimberley Land Council. He has recently completed work with Aboriginal owned pastoral properties in the Kimberley on the development of a regional beef industry strategy and is Chair of the Kimberley Regional Fire Management Project.

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John Holmes is Emeritus Professor of Geography, University of Queensland. His research focus is on the historical, contemporary and future role of pastoral lease tenures as policy instruments with a focus on current trends towards multifunctionality, involving recognition of the emergence of consumption and protection values, challenging the former dominance of production values. Recently he has been examining how the ‘multifunctional transition’ is leading to greater diversity and complexity in resource use throughout rural Australia. He also studies regional variability in Australia’s rangeland resource value and is interested in the value orientations of pastoralists.

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Neil Inall, long time rural media junkie, has spent 6 years as Chairman of the Rural Adjustment Scheme Advisory Council. Current interests include a pot pourri of grains, forests, native vegetation and some media.
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Onko Kingma, visiting fellow at the Centre for Research and Learning in Regional Australia (CRLRA) and a Director of CapitalAg, has for many years worked in economic policy areas of the Federal Government. He is interested in the building of social capital, cooperation and tolerance, and learning organisations and communities.

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Helen Klieve has a background in fisheries research (CSIRO), University teaching (econometrics and survey analysis) and bioeconomic modelling (MEd and PhD). Since leaving the University sector in 1992 Helen has worked as a policy analyst with the Queensland Government, currently focusing on the reform of the statutory valuation system within the Department of Natural Resources Mines and Energy.

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Geoffrey Lawrence is Professor of Sociology and Head, School of Social Science at The University of Queensland. He has written widely on the social and environmental issues affecting rural regions of Australia. Recent co-authored and co-edited books include: Recoding Nature (UNSW Press, 2004); Globalization, Localization and Sustainable Livelihoods (Ashgate, 2003); Environment, Society and Natural Resource Management (Edward Elgar, 2001); and, A Future for Regional Australia (Cambridge, 2001).

Lowe Ms Shelagh Convenor - Australian Rural & Remote Allied Health Taskforce of the Health Professions Council of Australia. 2 Russell Street, Fingal TAS 7214; (03) 6372 2111; selowe@bigpond.com

Shelagh Lowe, a physiotherapist, has a major interest in improving the health and well-being of rural communities, promoting the role of all health professionals within the healthcare system, by active participation in state and national committees aiming to identify and address the issues surrounding rural health service delivery.

Lyster Ms Rosemary Director of the Australian Centre of Environmental Law, Faculty of Law. University of Sydney, 173-175 Phillip Street, Sydney NSW 2000; (02) 9351 0292; rosemaryl@law.usyd.edu.au

Rosemary Lyster specialises in environmental law, administrative law and dispute resolution and has published widely in these fields. She is the co-editor of the Asia Pacific Journal of Environmental Law and the principal author of the third edition of The Environmental Law Handbook, Redfern Legal Centre Publishing, 1999.
Rosemary’s research interests include privatisation and corporatisation, market mechanisms, energy law, water law reform, constitutional rights and the environment, ecofeminist theory and environmental dispute resolution. In 2002 she was appointed to the IUCN – The World Conservation Union Commission on Environmental Law where she serves on the Special Working Group on Energy and Climate Change, and the Special Working Group on Water and Wetlands. Rosemary is currently a consultant to the Environment and Planning Group at PricewaterhouseCoopers Legal.

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Martin Paul The Profit Foundation. PO Box 744, Sutherland NSW 1499; 0416 015 161; paul_m@profitfoundation.com.au

Paul Martin is a business and policy strategist with a specialised interest in sustainability. At the time of the symposium he was Chair of the NSW Southern Catchment Board, Infomaster Ltd and Asset Intelligence Ltd. He was formerly Senior Visiting Fellow at the Australian Graduate School of Management.

McGinn Ms Sue Dairy Farmer, Kempsey. 365 Right Bank Road, Belmore River NSW 2440; (02) 6567 4658; mcginns@dairyfarmer.com.au

Sue McGinn is currently a dairy farmer at Kempsey. She was a Nuffield Scholar in 1999 as well as a finalist in the current Rural Women’s Award, 2000. Sue is the first woman to be elected to the Dairy Farmers Cooperative Board, a position she has held for the past four years. Sue is also a member of the Holiday Coast Credit Union Board and the Kempsey Rural Lands Protection Board. She is an MBA student.

McGowan Ms Cathy Director, Catherine McGowan Consulting. RMB 2035D, Wodonga VIC 3691; (02) 6024 6834; cathy@cathymcgowan.com

Cathy McGowan is a consultant who has most recently been involved in the delivery of leadership programs for the Australian Horticulture Industries and dairy Industry. She is actively involved in public policy development in rural communities. Cathy has been the President, Australian Women in Agriculture and has been Chair, National, Regional Women’s Advisory Council.

McKenzie Mr Bruce Managing Director, Systemic Development Institute. 135 Elizabeth Drive, Vincentia NSW 2540; (02) 4441 5333; bruce@shoalhaven.net.au

Bruce McKenzie is an academic and community development facilitator, who has worked with many rural communities facing renewal challenges. His facilitation approach is based on systems principles and practices and it is initiated by a community identifying and articulating the set of values that shape their cultural life and motivation to manage change.

Morris Ms Sheriden Manager, ‘Water for a Healthy Country’ Flagship CSIRO- GBR node. P O Box 1379, Townsville QLD 4810; (07) 4750 0700; sheriden.morris@csiro.au

Sheriden Morris is the Manager for the ‘Water for a Healthy Country’ Flagship CSIRO- GBR node. Prior to working with CSIRO, she was the Director for Water Quality for the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority and was the primary author of the Queensland and Commonwealth Governments joint initiative ‘the Reef Water Quality Protection Plan’ which addresses water quality impacts on the GBR from adjacent agricultural industries. Prior to working with the Authority, she was an agricultural consultant specialising in sustainable farming techniques. She owns and operates a commercial banana farm in addition to representing the Authority on many State and Federal natural resource planning and management committees.
Morrison Ms Tiffany Lecturer, Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management. School of Political and International Studies, Flinders University, Adelaide SA 5001; tiffany.morrison@flinders.edu.au

Tiffany Morrison, a lecturer at the Flinders Institute of Public Policy and Management, recently completed her PhD on “Institutional Integration in Complex Environments: Pursuing Rural Sustainability at the Regional Level in Australia and the USA” (with the support of the University of Queensland, Land and Water Australia and the Rainforest CRC). She has worked and studied at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems and Griffith University.

Muston Dr Ros Senior Consultant, Meyrick and Associates currently seconded to the NSW RTA in the role of Community Relations Manager for the Lawrence Hargrave Drive project – a long term road closure and now major bridge construction project. PO Box 113, Fairy Meadow NSW 2519; 0419 994 261; ros@meyrick.com.au

Roslyn Muston, ecologist, environmental/sustainability consultant and professional facilitator - has developed methodologies to change the way governments work with their communities. Her current activities involve national consensus building for high conservation value river management, sustainability governance in the ACT, community resilience to major perturbation in NSW.

Nicholls Mr Allan Australian Bureau of Statistics. Locked Bag 10, Belconnen ACT 2616; (02) 6252 5339; allan.nicholls@abs.gov.au

Allan Nicholls is responsible for statistics on agriculture, mining and manufacturing in the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A key area of work currently is the development of statistics to enable an understanding of rural communities and the impacts of various policy developments. Sustainable agriculture is another major area of work.

Nile Professor Richard* Professor Australian Studies, Director Australian Research Institute. Curtain University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA 6845; (08) 9266 4797; R.Nile@curtain.edu.au

O’Regan Professor Tom Director, Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy. Griffith University, Nathan QLD 4111; (07) 3875 7323; T.Oregan@mailbox.gu.edu.au

Tom O’Regan is Director of the Australian Key Centre for Cultural and Media Policy at Griffith University. He has written widely on cultural policy and Australian cinema and television. He has a particular interest in the relationship between culture and government. His most recent book is Australian National Cinema (1996). Tom’s career and writings oscillate between film criticism and cultural policy analysis.

Perkins Mr Ian Director, Livestock and Property Management. PO Box 371, Stanthorpe QLD 4380; (07) 4681 3668; lpmian@halenet.com.au

Ian Perkins is a farmer and resource management consultant with a particular interest in the interaction between people and resources. He works with indigenous and non-indigenous resource managers throughout Australia and is committed to the development of sustainable resource use systems.

Pini Ms Barbara* Postdoctoral Fellow School of Management. QUT, GPO Box 2434, Brisbane QLD 4001; (07) 3864 9262; b.pini@qut.edu.au

Price Dr Richard Managing Director, Kiri-ganai Research Pty Ltd. Kiri-ganai Research, GPO Box 103, Canberra ACT 2601; (02) 6295 6300; richard.price@kiri-ganai.com.au
Richard Price runs an environmental research company focussing on the development of new research institutions, consortia and programs. At the time of the workshop, he was Program Manager for Land & Water Australia and had responsibility for integrating all aspects of the corporation’s activities, including synthesising the social, economic and biophysical research agendas.

Prinsley Dr Roslyn General Manager, Research. RIRDC, PO Box 4776, Kingston ACT 2604; (02) 6272 4033; roslynp@rirdc.gov.au

Roslyn Prinsley manages the Future Agricultural Systems Program, the Joint Venture Agroforestry Program, the Human Capital, Communications and Information Systems Sub-Program and the Tea Tree Oil Sub-Program with the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

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Kate Rigby is a Senior Lecturer in German Studies and Comparative Literature, and Director of the Centre for Comp. Lit. and Cultural Studies, at Monash University. She has published widely in the area of the ecological humanities and is frequently invited to speak on ecology, religion and the arts. She is co-editor of the journal Philosophy Activism Nature (PAN) and President of the Australia-New Zealand Association for Study of Literature and the Environment.

Robinson Ms Emma Principal Consultant, Performance Management Unit. Department of Primary Industries, GPO Box 46, Brisbane QLD 4001; (07) 3239 6923; RobinsEM@prose.dpi.qld.gov.au

Emma Robinson works on a strategic foresight project for Queensland's Department of Primary Industries and has recently developed a number of scenarios relating to rural industries. She is a passionate promoter of rural communities and keen to promote a pro-active community response to economic and social trends.

Russell Assoc Professor Graeme* Associate Professor of Psychology. Psychology Department, Macquarie University, 126 Evans Street, Roselle NSW 2039; (02) 9850 8053; grasue@mpx.com.au

Graeme Russell is an Associate Professor in Psychology at Macquarie University where he specialises in the study of work/family, diversity, gender equity and organisational change. He is also actively involved in consulting in industry on issues of change, especially on the links between attitudes, values and behaviour policy and practice.

Sheppard Judge David Principal Environment Judge, New Zealand Environment Court. P O Box 7147, Auckland, New Zealand; 64 9 916 9091; SHEPPAD@courts.govt.nz

David Sheppard has been a judge of the New Zealand Environment Court (formerly the Planning Tribunal) for 20 years, and the Principal Judge of the court for 13 years. As an Environment Judge he has taken part in many cases involving policies for rural land and marine areas, and the values by which the policies are informed, including Maori cultural values. He has taken part in national and international conferences and seminars, and articles by him have been published in environment and resource management journals.

Slater Mr Robin Assistant Statistician, Production Statistics Branch. Australian Bureau of Statistics, PO Box 10, Belconnen ACT 2616; (02) 6252 5166; robin.slater@abs.gov.au

Robin Slater is responsible for statistics on production industries in the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A key area of work currently is the development of ‘rural’ statistics. The aim is to bring together information on all aspects of rural life - economic, environmental and social.
Stanley Ms Jane* Focus Pty Ltd, Lot 15 Miran Khan Drive, Freshwater Point QLD 4737; (07) 4943 0549; jstanley49@bigpond.com; www.focus-planning.com

Stayner Mr Richard Principal Project Director Institute for Rural Futures. The University of New England, Armidale NSW 2351; (02) 6773 2220; rstayner@metz.une.edu.au

Richard Stayner is Principal Project Director at the Institute for Rural Futures. The Institute is an applied research institute at the University of New England, Armidale NSW (www.ruralfutures.une.edu.au). Richard has undertaken a range of research and development studies relating to the adjustments made by rural industries and communities.

Stewart Ms Felicity Lawyer. PO Box 1226, Armidale NSW 2350; (02) 6772 9844; moin@turboweb.net.au

Felicity Stewart is a lawyer with Sharpe Partners Legal in Armidale, and was Australia’s first graduate with a combined Natural Resources and Law degree. She has written extensively for Halsbury’s Laws of Australia in the area of primary industry law. Her interests include natural resources law, primary industries law and environmental law. Felicity is also currently undertaking her LLM/PhD through the University of Edinburgh in the field of international public (environmental) law.

Thomson Ms Margie Farmer and PhD Student. ‘Tringa’, PO Box 77, Ungarie NSW 2669; (02) 6975 9051; mthomson@westserv.net.au

Margie Thomson is a farmer and PhD student focussing on the role of farm organisations and the policy development process. She is a member of the National Rural Advisory Council and a Board member of the NSW Rural Assistance Authority. She has previously worked for the Wool Council of Australia, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and the Australian Meat and Livestock Corporation.

Turner Ms Cate Researcher, Synapase Consulting. PO Box 3746, South Brisbane QLD 4101; 0414 883 718; cateturner@hotmail.com

Cate Turner is undertaking a Bachelor of Laws (Environmental Law) post-graduate degree at QUT. She is experienced in the analysis of environmental and natural resource policy and land management issues. Cate was working as a researcher for Synapase Research and Consulting at the time of the Symposium.

Upitis Ms Astrida Regional Communities Policy. Regional Policies Branch, Department of Transport and Regional Services, GPO Box 594, Canberra ACT 2601; (02) 6274 6294; Astrida.Upitis@dotars.gov.au

Astrida Upitis is a policy maker who works across all spheres of government to help influence better policy outcomes for people living in regional, rural and remote Australia. She currently is the team leader of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Indigenous trial in the east Kimberley in Western Australia, and provides support to the Deputy Prime Minister’s Regional Women’s Advisory Council. She has particular interests in lifelong learning, rural and remote communities and how people can effectively engage in government decision making. She lives in Canberra with her family.

Watson Dr Alistair Economist (Freelance). 403/147 Beach Street, Port Melbourne VIC 3207; (03) 9646 1719; aswatson@bigpond.net.au

Alistair Watson is a freelance economist based in Melbourne. He has previously worked for the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics, the University of Melbourne and the International Wool Secretariat.
In his period of self-employment since 1989 he has undertaken a diverse range of projects in agricultural marketing, agricultural adjustment, the economics of research and environmental economics in Australia and overseas.

**Wilson Dr George** 51 Stonehaven Crescent, Deakin ACT 2600; (02) 6281 2160; gwilson@awt.com.au

George Wilson, research scientist and veterinarian, has worked on wildlife management and nature conservation programs and strategies. Through FOCUS Pty Ltd he provides support for Aboriginal communities. Other current interests include commercial use of wildlife, outback tourism using aircraft through his company Australian Wildlife Tours and managing the RIRDC Resilient Agricultural Systems Program.

**Woods Professor Elizabeth*** Professor of Agribusines. University of Queensland, Gatton Campus, Lawes QLD 4345; (07) 5460 1028; bwoods@uqg.uq.edu.au

**Yu Mr Peter** Kimberley Land Council. PO Box 2145, Broome WA 6725; (08) 9193 6199; media@bme.klc.org.au

Peter Yu is Executive Director of the Kimberley Land Council, and was Deputy Chairperson of the inaugural Board of the Indigenous Land Corporation. He has had a long standing interest in issues surrounding the relationship between the Indigenous and broader Australian communities, including regionalism, indigenous governance and constitutional change.

**Zethoven Ms Imogen** World Wide Fund for Nature, Australia. PO Box 710, Spring Hill QLD 4004; (07) 3839 2849; izethoven@wwf.org.au

Imogen Zethoven, an environmentalist working with the World Wide Fund for Nature, has been engaged in many environmental and development issues, particularly relating to rural and remote lands. Her major interests are native vegetation management, catchment management and marine protected areas.

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