

## LEARNING AND ACTION FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

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The Centre for Popular Education also sells publications about learning and action for the environment. We refer you, in particular, to issue no. 7 of the Bulletin of Popular Education. This issue is devoted to learning and action for the environment. Please refer to the relevant web page sections.

### **Research and Development Projects**

- Capacity Building and Training for the advocacy-oriented Australian environment movement
- Education and Action for Clean Air
- Education for Environmental Action

## **CAPACITY BUILDING AND TRAINING FOR THE ADVOCACY-ORIENTED AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT MOVEMENT**

A set of proposed capacity building, training and learning strategies to assist small, medium and large conservation and environment groups.

Prepared for the Mittagong Forum of Environment and Conservation Groups

*By Linda Parlane and Rick Flowers, March 2000*

### *Acknowledgements*

It should be noted that many of the strategies and ideas in this set of proposed capacity building and training strategies come directly from the people we consulted with. Much of the consultation is documented on a web site - <http://www.ala.asn.au/environment>. Bob Burton and James Whelan deserve special mention. This is because they were particularly generous with their time and sharing their considerable research and development work. Project 2 - Learning Fundraising through Action - largely represents the conceptual work of Bob Burton who, over many years, has consulted extensively and trialed various fundraising capacity building strategies. James Whelan developed project 7 - Internships - over the last five years during the course of his activist work and doctoral research.

The consultants were ably assisted by John Rule, Mike Newman and Griff Foley of the Centre for Popular Education, UTS.

Special thanks should also be given to Adult Learning Australia (ALA). They set up a web discussion forum largely at their cost. The remaining cost was met by the Centre for Popular Education, UTS.

The project steering committee members names are mentioned in the introduction below. Their time, ideas and commitment drove the project.

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed capacity building and training strategies in this document arise directly from consultations and research with a wide range of stakeholders across the Australian environment movement. The learning and training activities proposed are intended to address two broad capacity building needs: (a) building strong and sustainable organisations and (b) building campaign effectiveness.

Five projects are outlined for building strong and sustainable organisations. Three projects are suggested that can help build campaign effectiveness.

Each project includes a number of action and learning strategies or activities. The projects may stand alone and so, therefore, each has been costed separately. Taken together the projects will, however, create a synergy that clearly is directed at strengthening a 'movement culture' where value is placed on exchange, collaborative action, reflection and shared learning.

Many of the projects are proposed as pilots to test the effectiveness of the strategic approach - learning through action projects built around the movement's priority capacity building needs. The pilot nature of these projects will enable the environment movement to fully assess this approach before it perhaps seeks further funding for the implementation of such a strategy for capacity building, learning and training over the long term.

### *Building strong and sustainable organisations*

#### Project (1): *Assessing and strengthening the sustainability and effectiveness of community environment organisations*

The project will use *organisational learning consultants*. Their task is to help groups learn as they assess their organisation, its sustainability and effectiveness; and decide what might be done to strengthen it. The 'consultants' not only help people learn from their experience. They will help them decide on what might be done to strengthen their organisation and how they might go about it.

#### Project (2): *Learning fundraising through action*

This project proposes to increase fundraising capacity by a combination of:

1. Improving output from EarthShare.
2. Supporting Environmental Fundraisers around Australia.
3. Enhancing fundraising and membership development in smaller groups.
4. Developing a new national fundraising initiative to benefit a wide range of groups: a national World Environment Day appeal

#### Project (3): *Learning for leadership*

Two strategies are proposed to develop the effectiveness of both staff and volunteers to undertake leadership roles and responsibilities

1. Developing the role of 'leaders' in creating and maintaining positive and supportive conditions for staff and volunteers.

## 2. Building the effectiveness of Committees and Boards of Management

### Project (4): *Welcoming new staff and volunteers to the environment movement*

It is proposed to run introductory programs for new staff and volunteers, open to all comers from any environmental advocacy group, large and small. The program might take the form of a regular cycle of workshops and seminars, run cooperatively by the organisations whose staff and volunteers are participants.

### Project (5): *Building the capacity of the movement to share and exchange skills and knowledge*

There is a huge reservoir of knowledge, skills and insights in the Australian environment movement. This project will tap into this reservoir by creating opportunities for people and groups in the movement to exchange experiences, and plan and learn together. Conferences and forums (be they face-to-face or virtual) are an effective way to facilitate this exchange and sharing.

## ***Building campaign effectiveness***

### Project (6): *Activist learning and training*

It is proposed to establish and 'train' a cohort of environmental action learning consultants who will:

- a) Devise and facilitate processes whereby campaigners take time out to reflect on their planning and action.
- b) Plan and facilitate activities to help campaigners learn from their experiences.
- c) Focus on working at a local level, but help local groups campaigning on related issues to network with each other.
- d) Deliver, or arrange, workshops on topics agreed by the campaigners.
- e) Devise and use 'triggers' (be they short written pieces, a theatre vignette, song, etc) to help document, and provoke further, thought and analysis.
- f) Help facilitate decision-making.
- g) Facilitate the documentation of campaign history and reporting on developments.

### Project (7): *Internships*

This project supports a proposal to establish structured opportunities for committed environmentalists to learn from more experienced advocates and for seasoned campaigners to impart knowledge and skills - building the movement's capacity. Creating and managing internships can do this.

### Project (8): *Researching and documenting campaigns*

Two strategies are proposed. The first is to create Environmental Advocacy Fellowships. The aim of these proposed fellowships would be to enable 'leading' campaigners to have sufficient time, support and money to enable them to research and document campaigning politics and practice. The second strategy is to strengthen clearinghouse functions that currently exist in disparate organisations for the collection and provision of environmental action resources - newsletter, books, videos etc.

## **EDUCATION AND ACTION FOR AIR**

The following research proposal was developed in 1999. It has not received funding to date.

This proposal was initiated by the Smogbusters Program at the Nature Conservation Council, NSW. Smogbusters forms the community education component of the Federal Government's 'Air Pollution in Major Cities Program.' NSW Smogbusters is spending an increasing amount of time responding to requests for advice about how to undertake community education and advocacy work for air quality and transport development (Milne 2000). The requests are coming mostly from people engaged in work at a local community level, whether it be in health promotion, community development, environmental advocacy etc. Smogbusters proposed a partnership with the Centre for Popular Education and Institute for Sustainable Futures at UTS to help build capacity to be able to better respond to these requests for help. Consultation meetings were then convened with staff in the Community Education Branch of the Environment Protection Authority (EPA), community and transport development workers. The consultations indicated that, to date, there has been very little research about the theory and practice of community environmental education for air quality. Those consulted argued there is a need for less description and more analysis of education and advocacy practices to increase the capacity of groups to facilitate local solutions. A further reason to develop this project is the need to address the dearth of research and development in the wider field of Australian environmental community education. A review of the first ten years of the Australian Journal of Environmental Education records only one of ninety articles was concerned with environmental adult and community education (Andrew, 1995).

The aim of the proposed research is to develop more knowledge and understanding of how to build the capacity of community groups, industry and government agencies to engage in environmental community education and advocacy about air quality. Eight specific education strategies to help achieve the NSW Government's 25-year Air Quality Management Plan are described on page 22 of the NSW Government's Green Paper 'A New Approach to Environmental Education in NSW' (1996). This project has the following specific research objectives:

- (1) to survey the existing range of environmental education and advocacy practice for air quality.
- (2) to study and describe forms of environmental community education and advocacy for air quality.
- (3) to identify who does environmental community education and advocacy for air quality.
- (4) to study and describe the various and contesting traditions and philosophies shaping different forms of environmental community education and advocacy for air quality.
- (5) to define and analyse what people learn, and what they do not learn, about air quality monitoring, planning and management in environmental community education and advocacy initiatives.
- (6) to study and make more explicit the environmental educational dimension of community capacity building.
- (7) to identify features of effective educational practice that help people change their behaviour to promote cleaner air.
- (8) to identify features of effective educational practice that help people engage in environmental advocacy and development practice for clean air promotion.

We propose to undertake a participatory action research project. The project will, therefore, not only gather and analyse information, it will also provide opportunities for practitioners (who, on one hand, are objects of the research but, on another hand, will become co-researchers) to gain new knowledge about, and trial new strategies to do, education and action for clean air. Research activities will include: (a) case studies of environmental community education and advocacy for clean air, (b) review of literature and policy documents, (c) planning and supporting implementation of pilot projects, (d) professional development and action research workshops, (e) forums and a conference, (f) supporting practitioners to write essays that will be published in the existing UTS journal 'Bulletin of Good Practice in Adult & Community Education', (g) preparation of reports, papers, and (h) preparation of educational resources (the nature of the resources will be determined by the research). See section 3.1 of this proposal for more details about research methodology.

The consultations and investigations we conducted to prepare this research proposal indicated that, while there is limited knowledge about the nature and scope of environmental community education and advocacy for air quality, there is a depth of interest and a wealth of related activity. Therefore, our research intends to survey and build on existing activity. We are making an assumption that much environmental community education takes place but is not named as such. One goal of our research will be to make the educational dimension of such activity explicit. This is not to say we will not generate knowledge about new forms of practice. Here are some examples to indicate the type of activities and people the research will analyse. Some questions that might guide analysis include: what are people learning and how can this be determined, what forms of education are effective and not effective, what theoretical perspectives are shaping education, and what type of learning and action leads to cleaner air.

- \* Fairfield Council staff identified air quality was a significant issue for residents. A Council 'environmental working group' called a meeting of residents to work out what they could do.
- \* Reclaim the Streets is a new social 'movement' that has been expressed in Sydney with street festivals and techno-music. A considerable number of participants who were interviewed claim they are intent on reducing air pollution and promoting more sustainable transport (Nicholson, 1999).
- \* Wollie Creek Preservation Society have organised community art projects, walks and festivals to promote what they see as transport options that will promote cleaner air.
- \* The Environmental Manager at Marickville Council organised two festivals called 'Movement without Motors.'

These examples are mentioned to convey that our research will extend common understandings of what environmental community education is. Forms of environmental community education most commonly practiced are: talking to meetings and the media, preparing materials and running courses. But (as EPA staff emphasised and C. Ford's EPA publication 'What We Need is a Community Education Project', 1997 conveys) there is extensive education that is part of local environmental development and advocacy projects. There is some literature on how to plan and facilitate environmental community education (for example, Ford op. cit.) but there is little empirically grounded research that describes and analyses the nature of the learning that happens in actual projects. Our research will help fill this gap.

In this research there will be a particular focus on ways to develop and facilitate environmental education at a 'local' level. Agenda 21, the 'Earth Action Plan' that resulted from the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, asserted that any pretence at sustainability practice that failed to embrace local people was unlikely to succeed (Fagan, 1996). The Rio Declaration stressed the need to devolve decision making and power to local community levels. Environmental education and advocacy would seek the help of local people and recognise their particular and peculiar commitment to the

locality and its role in their future. These are fine words, but how do local people engage? This and the following questions are at the heart of our proposed research. What sort of education places them at the core of their learning and engages them in the decision making? How should community groups, local businesses and local government authorities manage and improve their environmental performance; integrate sustainable development aims into their own policies and activities; develop awareness raising and educational activities; consult and involve local people; develop local partnerships for environmental action; and measure, monitor and report on progress towards sustainability? Our research will study and draw on the experience of the EPA's Earth Works Program - a waste minimisation education program that aims to establish collaborative action within local communities. The description of our research methodology conveys how we propose to do this.

We propose to undertake eight research methods and activities. Each are described and discussed below. There are three main assumptions that shape our research design. The first is that the most useful and valid knowledge we can generate is to help practitioners reflect upon, analyse and extend their practice. This participatory and action oriented approach is an alternative to relying on 'experts' generating the knowledge only through their analysis and interpretation. The second methodological assumption we make is that research for sustainable education should model it. Therefore, our research methods are designed so that research participants will not just be passive recipients but are people and groups who feel a sense of ownership and responsibility not only for the air pollution problems at hand, but also the solutions. Thirdly we are assuming that in order for the research to be useful it should produce more than reports and papers, but also educational resources.

#### CASE STUDIES

We plan to study a sample of educational and advocacy initiatives undertaken at local level that are addressing air quality issues. The sample will include initiatives implemented by local government authorities, state and federal government agencies, community organisations and social action groups. Primary data will be gathered by interviews with practitioners, learners, management, and other stakeholders. Secondary data will be gathered from program and policy documents. The case studies will not only analyse the theory and practice of education and action for clean air but also the nature of intended and actual learning outcomes.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of the review will be to locate and review, from across the world, (a) previously developed resources to support education and action for clean air, (b) other relevant research about air pollution education initiatives and (c) more generally about environmental education in community settings.

#### WORKSHOPS

Drawing on the research knowledge generated by the case studies and literature review we propose to convene a series of workshops to help people learn more about engaging in education and action for clean air. The workshops are intended for staff in local government authorities, state and federal government agencies, workers in community organisations, environmental activists, and teachers across the lifelong education spectrum. The content of the workshops will include (a) the causes and nature of air pollution, (b) strategies to promote cleaner air, and (c) theories and practices of environmental education in community settings. There is an obvious parallel to be drawn here with the course in the EPA's Earthworks program about waste minimisation. But it should be stressed that our workshops are part of a research project where we will be trialing materials and ideas. We will emphasise to workshop participants that they should be willing to critique their own knowledge and practices and that of others.

#### PILOT PROJECTS

Drawing on resources being produced, and knowledge being generated, the research team will actively support a small number of organisations to develop and implement a small number of

pilot projects. The time and cost of the pilot projects will be borne by the groups or agencies who facilitate them. The research team will act as participant observers; doing and researching environmental education concurrently.

#### **FORUMS AND SEMINARS (face-to-face and web-based)**

The purpose of the forums and seminars will be to provide an opportunity for policy makers, academics, practitioners, activists and others to engage with and discuss the preliminary research findings. We will, of course, seek guest speakers who can help extend our research knowledge. Opportunities for on-line discussion and reporting will also be provided on a project web page.

#### **BULLETIN OF GOOD PRACTICE IN EDUCATION AND ACTION FOR CLEAN AIR**

Rather than relying on the researchers accounts of practice, practitioners will be supported to produce their own accounts of education and action for clean air. The Centre for Popular Education publishes the Bulletin of Good Practice in Adult & Community Education and has extensive experience in this process. As community education practitioners are often very busy and not have time to write, the researcher may need to prepare draft accounts for the practitioner to further develop.

#### **CONFERENCE**

The conference will be titled 'Education & Action for Clean Air.' The purpose of the conference will be threefold. Firstly, it will encourage exchange and discussion with people and groups engaged in education and action for clean air in other states and countries. Secondly, the conference will provide opportunity for further analysis of the research findings. Thirdly, the conference can be organised as a high profile event to encourage wider and more intense community interest in education and action for clean air.

#### **PROJECT PAPERS AND MATERIALS**

See section B.4 for details about the papers and materials that will be produced.

## EDUCATING FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION

The following proposal was submitted in 1996 to various foundations and to the federal Department of the Environment, Sport and Territories. We did not obtain any funding.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

We propose to develop an environmental education package which we propose to name *Educating for Environmental Action*, -that will enhance the efforts of volunteers and community workers in community environment groups across Australia. The package will consist of two open learning courses and a supporting monograph with a series of case studies of non formal environmental education in practice, essays and a review of relevant policy documents.

A broad aim of the project is to increase the knowledge, awareness and commitment of leaders and workers in community environment groups. In particular, the project will help the massive volunteer effort of members in over 2,000 community environment groups across Australia. Groups include rotary clubs, neighbourhood centres and national organisations such as Clean Up Australia. These groups can contribute in a significant way to public education by advancing the understanding of the public about how to improve the natural environment. This might include helping farmers plant trees to minimise erosion or preserving a heritage building.

The market that *Educating for Environmental Action* is specifically targeted at is those community workers, whether they be in government departments, non government organisations, environmental monitoring programs, local government or local environmental action groups who want to expand their knowledge of community education and learning, organising and planning community action, the history and politics of community environmental activism within the concrete context of addressing local environmental issues.

It is timely and the opportunity exists to develop and advance the field of non formal environmental education in Australia. What is unique about the project *Educating for Environmental Action* is that it brings together for the first time active researchers and educators in environmental education and adult education to work collaboratively in defining and addressing the emergent field of Adult Non Formal Environmental Education in Australia with the view of developing flexible delivery short courses that are accessible and relevant to a broad sector of the community.

## 2 OUTLINE OF PROPOSED PROJECT

### ***Project description***

*Educating for Environmental Action* is an adult environmental education package aimed at meeting the needs of community workers who are involved in environmental actions in local communities. The package will consist of two flexible delivery short courses, a supporting monograph of current working papers from Australia and overseas, a series of case studies of non formal environmental education in practice and a review of current policy documents in adult education and environmental education that support adult non formal environmental education. The short courses will also be developed as subjects in degree courses at the University of Technology, Sydney. *Educating for Environmental Action* will be targeted at educators in government and non-government organisations, youth and community workers and coordinators and participants of local environment groups. The *Educating for Environmental Action* short courses will be developed so they can be delivered via distance education. The project and the courses will be based on a problem solving participatory research approach with participants engaged in planning and participating in actions on environmental issues in their local community. The assessment task of the course will involve participants constructing a case study of a community involved in a local environmental issue. These case studies will then be distributed to all participants and become the basis for reflective comment.

### ***Aims and Objectives***

The project aims to assist in the advancement of Non Formal Environmental Education as a field of study that will address the needs of community workers whose role is to maintain and improve the environment by involving communities in local environmental action.

The project objectives are to:

- ◆ develop two short courses on Non Formal Environmental Education, namely
  - ◇ *Policy and Practice in Non Formal Environmental Education*
  - ◇ *Planning and Participation in Environmental Action*;
- ◆ review current policy documents that support non formal education for environmental action;
- ◆ conduct a symposium to bring together active researchers and educators in the fields of adult education and environmental education to discuss and define the emerging field of non formal environmental education;
- ◆ produce a monograph of current working papers in Non Formal Environmental Education from the symposium and other national and international sources;
- ◆ compile the case studies of Non Formal Environmental Education in action in Australia developed by participants in the course and distribute to all participants for reflective comment;
- ◆ evaluate and review the courses.

### 3 WHY THE PROJECT IS IMPORTANT

In the 1960s, in response to a growing awareness of the extent of the environmental crisis, a number of national and international conferences on the state of the environment were held. Increasingly it had become apparent that environmental problems could no longer be seen as scientific problems but that all sections of the community had a valuable role to play in environmental issues. It was at this time there was a call for 'new forms of international co-operation' and a need 'for education to focus its resources on the situation'. It was from these beginnings that the field of environmental education emerged as having a vital role in both the formal and non formal education sector to:

... develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about, the environment and its associated problems and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitment to work individually and collectively toward solutions of current problems and the prevention of new ones (UNESCO 1977).

In Australia the formal education community has responded to the environmental challenge and over the past twenty years developed a comprehensive program in research, policy development, teacher education, professional development and school based practice. In Australia we have invested a lot of time and resources into the view that if children participate in environmental education during their schooling life they will become responsible and active environmental citizens. This emphasis on formal environmental education has been supported by a recent review of the first ten years of the *Australian Journal of Environmental Education* (Andrew and Malone 1995). The review records only one of ninety articles published between 1984 and 1994 as being concerned directly with non formal environmental education even though community involvement has been explicitly stated as one of the essential aims of environmental education. What has been largely unaddressed due to this focus on formal education is the valuable contribution non formal environmental education can make in supporting adults in environmental actions in their local communities now. Unlike formal environmental education non formal environmental education is through definition specifically community based and therefore has the potential to address and improve the natural environment by responding directly to local environmental issues. For, as the UNESCO (1986:20) guidelines on Non Formal Environmental Education aptly state:

The strength of non formal environmental education lies in the fact it does not operate within a give set of rules with strict structure, curriculum and examination procedures. Non formal environmental education is more capable of responding to the local environmental issues, which have more social meaning and usefulness to the

community and is less dominated by academic requirements.

To date the role of 'educating' the community about environmental issues has largely been opportunistic and based on an 'information' transfer model where the consumers of the information (the community) have limited opportunities to respond or participate in the educative or decision making process. In contrast the philosophy of environmental education informing the course *Educating for Environmental Action* aims at creating, informing and sustaining public debate about environmental issues by encouraging all sectors of the community to participate collaboratively in actions to resolve environmental issues.

A number of examples of environmental programs with a participatory problem solving approach to environmental issues have emerged in recent times. Landcare, Waterwatch, Coastcare, Frogwatch, Saltwatch, Airwatch, Streamwatch, are all examples of environmental monitoring and community based programs aimed at supporting a participatory problem solving approach to local environmental issues. Waterwatch alone has over 1500 groups and approximately 30 000 participants monitoring Australian waterways. What these programs often lack is an understanding of the educative role they play in communities and as a consequence the educative potential of these programs is often not realised (Malone 1996). For example, at the first Australian Landcare conference held in Hobart in 1994 of the sixty-four paper presentations only eight were presented in the strand education and training. This is not to say coordinators of these programs, activists in local community groups or environmental and community development officers in local government could not become adult non formal environmental educators and educate for environmental action. The problem essentially lies not in the potential of the educators or the educational context (these unequivocally exist) but the lack of flexible environmental education courses that specifically focus on adult education in the non formal sector.

It is timely and the opportunity exists to develop and advance the field of non formal environmental education in Australia. What is unique about the project *Educating for Environmental Action* is that it brings together for the first time active researchers and educators in environmental education and adult education to work collaboratively in defining and addressing the emergent field of Adult Non Formal Environmental Education in Australia with the view of developing flexible delivery short courses that are accessible and relevant to a broad sector of the community.

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