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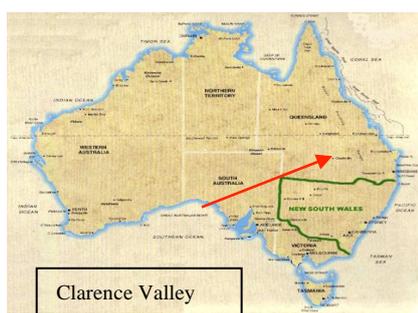
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# 1. Regional Infrastructure THINK-TANK FORUM on Managing the Impact of Infrastructure Capital Investments in the Clarence Valley Region

Jointly organised by EAROPH-Australia and Clarence Valley Council and held at Yamba on Thursday, 14 May 2015

## A. BACKGROUND

EAROPH-Australia worked with the Clarence Valley Council to establish a *Think Tank* event, a Regional Forum to identify and address the current opportunities and threats facing this magnificent region. Other regions around the world may have faced similar challenges, and have overcome these with varying levels of success. The Regional Forum can draw on this experience in developing a range of appropriate strategies for the Council to consider.



The Clarence Valley region, with a population of 52,000 residents, is located in the north of New South Wales, approximately 3 hours by car from Brisbane, in the neighbouring State of Queensland, Australia. The region includes the coastal plain and lower valleys of the Clarence and Nymboida Rivers. Most of the valley is agricultural. The seaside towns of Yamba and Iluka are popular holiday resorts.



The Clarence Valley Council was formed in February 2004 by the amalgamation of the City of Grafton and Maclean Shire, and parts of Copmanhurst, Pristine Waters and Richmond Valley local government areas. The Pacific Highway, the Gwydir Highway and the North Coast railway line, run through this region.

Over \$5 billion in public capital investment across a number of infrastructure projects will be dedicated to the Clarence Valley. This

expenditure will be implemented over the next five years. This is likely to generate employment for over 6,000 people and expand the local economy by approximately 40% over the construction period.

The challenges that these public investments pose include:

- maximising immediate employment and business benefits for the existing local community;
- mitigating potentially adverse impacts from incoming workers on access to, and pricing of, goods and services, including housing;
- mitigating potentially adverse social impacts from fly-in fly-out and other short term worker arrangements;
- strictly protecting the region's outstanding environmental quality, without adversely affecting its ecosystem;
- respecting the aspirations of the regional community, as articulated in the existing planning framework they have endorsed;
- establishing an effective framework for ongoing management of the region's infrastructure; and
- enabling short term economic investment is applied in a way that will strengthen longer term sustainable economic and social development, including enhanced services for the benefit of the region.

EAROPH-Australia through its network assembled a panel of overseas and local experts, including some key officers of the Clarence Valley government kicked off this Think-Tank Forum at the seaside town of Yamba.

## **B. EXPERTS ATTENDED THE THINK-TANK FORUM AS SPEAKERS, PANELLISTS, EITHER IN PERSON OR VIA SKYPE VIDEO**

The list of invited experts contributing at the Think-Tank Forum held in Yamba were as follows:



**Mr. Peter Cuming**, EAROPH-Australia 2015 Clarence Valley Think-Tank Forum Chairperson. Speaker and panellist at the Yamba Forum.

Peter Cuming, B.Urb.Reg.Plan (Hons), Dip Perm. CPP, is the Founder (1985) and Managing Director of Sustainable Futures Australia. He is a senior lecturer with the School for International Training (Boston), and Long Island University (NY).

A resident of Clarence Valley, Peter has 30 years' experience working from local to international levels as a strategic planner and facilitator of whole-of-government / stakeholder design and decision-making processes and advisor for large infrastructure projects, sustainable city, regional and resource management planning. This includes multi award-winning work with Clarence Valley Council.



**Ms. Kerry McGovern**, speaker and panellist at the Yamba Think-Tank Forum.

Kerry McGovern, M.Phil, M.Pub.Ad, B.Com, CPA, PMIIA, is involved in Public Sector Governance. She is an Asset Management Specialist, and the Principle of K McGovern & Associates. Kerry was EAROPH-Australia's Founder President from 2010-2011, and re-elected until 2014-2015. During the AGM held at Maclean, Clarence Valley, she was elected the Vice President for 2015-16, in order to give support to the newly elected President.

Kerry specialises in providing advice on public sector governance, financial and asset management to governments in developing countries. She works mainly with Treasuries, Supreme Audit Institutions and other central government agencies.



**Mr. Bob Higgins**, speaker and panellist at the Yamba Think-Tank Forum.

Bob Higgins is the General Manager of Pacific Highway Upgrade, Roads and Maritime Services. He is actively involved in the highway upgrade, meeting all sorts of challenges, while opening opportunities for the local business communities across the Clarence Valley.  
(Image Source: themorniungbulletin.com.au.)



**Mr. David Morrison**, speaker and panellist at the Yamba Think-Tank Forum.

David Morrison, BTP Hons (UNSW), Grad Dip LG Management (Deakin) has over 30 years' experience as a Local Government Planner on the Central Coast, Darwin and principally in the Clarence Valley. David's responsibilities include strategic and statutory planning instruments, infrastructure planning, economic development, tourism services and formulating policy responses to environmental hazards, in particular coastal recession and flooding. His key expertise lies in strategic land use planning and policy development and in connecting the dots across a range of professional disciplines and needs.



**Mr. John Byrne**, Master of Ceremonies, speaker and panellist at the Yamba Think-Tank Forum.

John Byrne, BArch, BA, MTP, LFPIA, FRAIA is a Member of EAROPH-Australia's Executive Committee. John is a senior member of urban design and planning professions in Australia. Across a broad range of urban contexts, many of his projects have won awards from a variety of stakeholder groups. He has been personally recognised as a National Exemplar by the Australian Year of the Built Environment, as a long-standing Adjunct Professor in Urban Design and Architecture, by invitations to speak internationally and recently by a national Australia Award for Urban Design.



**Dr. Jane Stanley**, speaker and panellist at the Yamba Think-Tank Forum.

Jane has been a member of EAROPH-Australia's Executive Committee since this National Chapter's formation on 31 October 2010. She was the Vice President of EAROPH-Australia in 2013-14 and 2014-15. On 16 May 2015 at Maclean, Clarence Valley at EAROPH-Australia's AGM, Jane was elected President for 2015-16.

Previously, Jane was an Adjunct Professor of Sustainable Heritage Development at ANU, Canberra, and former President of the International Division of the Planning Institute of Australia. Jane has previous experience of planning in the Clarence Valley, working for the NSW state government. Since then she has authored the award winning book "Gnarly Planning: some tools for local and global action" ([www.gnarlyplanning.com](http://www.gnarlyplanning.com)) based on her broader global experience.

She is qualified in architecture, planning, social science and economics. She is currently working as a business planner with the Victorian dairy industry, and as a director for a regional waste management authority.



**Mr Rod Duncan**, Think-Tank Forum speaker and panellist via Skype Video.

Rod Duncan, FPIA, Fellow and Committee Member of the PIA, and previous Associate Professor of Urban Planning at Deakin University 2010-2014.

Rod is principal of the Good City Consultancy, advising on the strengthening of city centres and the effective and integrated achievement of agreed objectives toward a 'preferred future'. His work draws on extensive practical experience (including the award-winning Bendigo City Centre Program, and Victoria's Priority Development Panel), which is informed by international research of best practice among mid-sized cities.



**Ms. Ngaire McCrindle**, speaker and panellist at the Yamba Think-Tank Forum.

Ngaire McCrindle, B.Bus (PubAd) QUT; Grad. Dip. Local Government Management, Deakin; MBA, Deakin; is currently the General Manager of Bombala Council, NSW.

Ngaire was General Manager of George Town Council, Tasmania, for 9 years, coping with significant state projects, including Gunns paper mill project. These fostered a number of speculative developments as well as an increase in housing developments, subdivision and smaller commercial/industrial developments.

She has spent her career working in local government; her first position of Shire Clerk and then CEO was at Waggamba Shire Council, Goondiwindi, Queensland, in 1990. This coincided with a period of considerable change and development locally and in Queensland as a whole.



**Ms Sandi Taylor**, Think-Tank Forum speaker and panellist via Skype Video.

Sandi is a Kalkadoon woman who is currently working within health services in the Cairns/Cape York region.

Sandi has worked with her Traditional Owner community in the Mount Isa region as well as with others across different States and Territories, particularly in managing the impacts of mining investment. This has included managing threats as well as seizing opportunities and developing a framework for creating a sustainable long term economy.

She has evaluated the relative success of different government programs, and has seen first hand some of the dysfunctional and unexpected results of poor planning. She has also been fully involved in local capacity building to establish greater community resilience.



**Dr Anthony Kent**, speaker and panellist at the Yamba Think-Tank Forum.

Anthony is a member of EAROPH-Australia. He is a Research Fellow at the School of Governance and Public Policy, Victoria University. Currently, he is carrying out research at Monash University, looking at the impacts of rural industry restructuring on various regional communities.

He has had recent experience in teaching planning in Indonesia, and is working with RMIT University on restructuring its outreach planning courses.



**Professor Cliff Hague**, Think-Tank Forum speaker and panellist via skype video.

Cliff Hague, an old friend of EAROPH, is Emeritus Professor of Planning and Spatial Development at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, and previously a President of the Commonwealth Association of Planners. He is also a previous President of the Royal Town Planning Institute in UK.

Cliff is a planner and published author based in Scotland. He has played a major part in revitalising the planning profession and its global networks. His various blogs include a World View on planning resources, and his publications include work on regional and local economic development.



**Ms Jo Negrini**, Think-Tank Forum speaker and panellist via skype video.

Jo is the Executive Director of the Croydon Council Place, London. She is an Australian planner who has accumulated 20 years' experience of regeneration in London.

Recent project work has included negotiating with major shopping centre investors for creation of local jobs. Previously, she led the London Borough of Newham through managing the impact of the London Olympics, ensuring sustainable benefits for the local community.

Jo is currently responsible for leading growth in London's largest borough, overseeing planning, regeneration, housing and environmental services.

## **C. THE THINK-TANK FORUM IN ACTION – THURSDAY 14 MAY 2015**

At 8.15am, Forum registration was opened and the Master of Ceremonies John Byrne of EAROPH-Australia announced that some 100 participants had been registered for this Think-Tank Forum. Many of the participants were local residents across the Clarence Valley region. Following that the MC and officials of the Clarence Valley Council gave a brief overview of the Forum.

Following local conventions, a Yaegl Tradition Welcome was conducted by the Yaegl community to greet all visitors, in particular any foreign members of EAROPH who were watching this Forum on Skype Video.



**Cr. Richie Williamson**, Honourable Mayor of Clarence Valley Council, gave a welcome address to all the participants gathered at this holiday seaside resort of Yamba. He was delighted to see so many experts contributing their ideas at this Forum. He also offered a warm welcome to those experts who would be contributing their expertise and experience through the Skype Video on the big screen. At the conclusion of his welcome address, he declared the Think-Tank Forum officially opened.



**Mdm. Khairiah Talha** Honorary President of EAROPH International, through the Skype Video, welcomed all officials, speakers and panellists including those participating via Skype, and all participants attending the Think-Tank Forum. She thanked the Clarence Valley Council for hosting this event and working closely with EAROPH-Australia. She also thanked EAROPH-Australia for making this Skype connection so that officials and members of EAROPH International as well as those in other National Chapters could enjoy this exciting event at Yamba in Clarence Valley.

Following that, Peter Cuming, EAROPH-Australia 2015 Regional Forum Chair, and Kerry McGovern, President of EAROPH-Australia for 2014-15 also welcomed the participants.

The MC introduced senior officials, the general manager, and senior project managers of Clarence Valley Council, who provided the scene setting presentations laying out the challenges and opportunities across the Region. They raised queries as to how the Council should engage the communities to strengthen the social, economic and environmental sustainability.

- 9.30 – 10.00am **Bob Higgins**, General Manager, Pacific Highway, NSW Roads & Maritime Services presented:  
“It’s a BIG project – Upgrading 155km of the Pacific Highway: *We’re doing it differently—the facts from the RMS.*”
- 10.00 – 10.30am **David Morrison**, Manager, Economic and Strategic Planning, Clarence Valley Council presented:  
“Our role – Clarence Valley Council perspective: *The challenges and opportunities.*”
- 11.00 – 11.05am **John Byrne**, the MC from EAROPH-Australia Executive Committee introduced the Case Studies:  
“Learning from those who have gone before us.”
- 11.05 – 11.25am **Dr Jane Stanley**, EAROPH-Australia Vice President for 2014-15 presented:  
“Building a sustainable local economy: *Using short-term investment to build the long term local economy.*”
- 11.25 – 11.45am **Rod Duncan**, Fellow and Committee Member of the Planning Institute of Australia, presented (via Skype):  
“Mackay and mining development: *Impact of a transient population with sudden wealth on Mackay, and the subsequent economic downturn.*”
- 11.45 – 12.15pm **Ngaire McCrindle**, General Manager, Bombala Council presented:  
“Tasmania and Gunn’s development: *The dilemma in managing the impact of the Gunn pulp mill and other major developments on a small Tasmanian community.*”
- 12.15 – 12.50pm **Panel: Lessons from the Case Studies for the Clarence Valley** –  
Panellists: David Morrison of CVC, Jane Stanley, Khairiah Talha (via Skype), Rod Duncan (via Skype), and Ngaire McCrindle.
- 2.00 – 2.20pm **Dr Anthony Kent**, Research Fellow, Victorian Institute of Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University presented:  
“Shepparton and SPC – the challenge of change for rural Australia: *SPC case study demonstrating the challenge of change for the manufacturing and farming industry in regional rural Australia.*”
- 2.20 – 2.40pm **Sendi Taylor**, Cairns/Cape York Indigenous Wellbeing Services, Kalkadoon Traditional Owner, from Mount Isa, presented (via Skype):  
“Indigenous communities taking advantage of opportunities from the boom-bust mining economy.”
- 3.00 – 3.30pm **Cliff Hague**, Emeritus Professor of Planning & Spatial Development, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh present on (via Skype):  
“The Scotland experience: *Lessons in managing investments around North Sea Oil with reference to local Council experience.*”

- 3.30 – 4.00pm **Jo Negrini**, Executive Director, Place, Croydon Council, London presented (via Skype):  
 “The London Olympics: *Lessons direct from London – how the local council ensured sustainable benefits for the local community.*”
- 4.00 – 4.40pm **Panel: Lessons from the Case Studies for the Clarence Valley –**  
 Panellists: Anthony Kent, Sandi Taylor (via Skype), Cliff Hague (via Skype), Jo Negrini (via Skype), and facilitated by Peter Cuming.
- 4.40 – 4.50pm **Closing Remarks:** Kerry McGovern, President (2014-15), EAROPH-Australia.

## D. FULL REPORT ON THE FORUM

By Soozi Imer

In May 2015, a "Think Tank" Forum on ‘The Infrastructure Boom: Managing the Impacts’ was held in partnership with Clarence Valley Council and Eastern Regional Organisation for Planning and Human Settlements Australia Inc (EAROPH) at Yamba, New South Wales.

The Clarence Valley is shortly to experience a \$5 billion infrastructure boom that will have a significant impact on the area over the next five years. Clarence Valley Council collaborated with EAROPH and community organisations to investigate the options to deal competently with the opportunities and challenges that the Pacific Highway duplication from Woolgoolga to Ballina offered.

Accommodating the expected influx of up to 4000 highway workers that will peak in numbers between 2017 and 2019 was the primary concern of the participants.

Many road workers have already settled within commuting distance of the various highway projects or will be accommodated in demountables on dedicated sites adjacent to the 155km stretch of new highway. However, combined with the added infrastructure projects in the pipeline for the Clarence Valley, including bridges, aged care housing, dams and associated works, there will certainly be demand for accommodation that current tourist accommodation and low, local housing availability cannot meet.

This new, mostly short term and partly FIFO (fly-in fly-out) population will bring with it a whole new raft of additional challenges including demand for food, entertainment, recreation, hospital and medical facilities, small service industries and more. The local community is already voicing concerns on the potential social impact of this increase in population and trying to pre-empt problems that may arise from so many additional ‘single workers’.

Local business owners have been discussing and gearing up for new business opportunities and citing the need for well-directed education and training to generate local self-employment and jobs. There is pressure on existing business to provide for additional demand, or face the likelihood that large service



**Susie Imer** writes in her pen name “Soozi Imer”. She is a Features Writer for Fairfax Press and lives in Cleveland. She is also an independent photography, props and locations provider.

Her extensive writing experience over the past 25 years has covered community growth issues, the property market and building industry, environment and wildlife issues and promotion of local business in South East Queensland.

She is a close friend of a member of the EAROPH-Australia Executive Committee and was brought to the Think-Tank Forum at Yamba. She offered her writing skills to create a full report on this Forum and sent it to EAROPH-Australia’s editors via newly elected President, Dr Jane Stanley.

As both the co-editors were on sick leave for more than three month, they were unable to attend this important event. They are most grateful for Susie’s kindness and professionalism in producing this report in order to add substance to the June 2015 issue of the eBulletin.

Susie knows the subject well and is conversant with the region’s human settlement issues. Her writing expertise makes this report easy to read. It offers much valuable information to our members and other readers in this vast EAROPH region covering the whole of Asia and the Pacific countries.

Thank you, Susie. *Eds.*

oriented corporate providers may deny local business and new self-employment opportunities. However, as accurate numbers and time frames are not available, pre-planning, at best, becomes best guesswork.

Should Council be encouraging small business and non-franchise & non-chain store independents with rates and application fees discounts or amnesty incentives? Clarence Valley Councillors are questioning their role in the more entrepreneurial needs that may arise and how much they should contribute or leave to the marketplace to provide. However, Council officers agree that small business diversity and innovation are required and agree for the need to streamline the application process for new or extended development.

The real estate industry is looking at the potential demand and how it may affect local house prices and affordability for locals. All community participants are looking to avoid a boom/bust economy triggered by the potential spike in population and how best to manage the almost inevitable winding down process.

Given the Clarence Valley's vulnerability to flooding, there appeared to be no discussion on how any extreme weather events may impact on a larger population – many in less sturdy temporary accommodation. Presumably Council already has plans to deal with these issues.

It was agreed that there was a need to look at other affected coastal towns to see how they had coped with the population spike, the changes in the demographic and what longer-term effects had been experienced. Case studies on the impact of large infrastructure developments in Australia and overseas were put forward by industry and academic researchers and Council speakers, providing an insight into problems that may arise and the ongoing benefits in creating a sustainable community.

Overall the message was of positive community benefit, but the discussions highlighted the limits of the current knowledge base, availability of resources in the local community, and the steps that needed to be taken to handle the challenge of change.

- How many houses were capable of, or prepared to provide boarding accommodation?
- How many households had spare capacity in granny flats, cabins and other self-contained accommodation?
- How could Council empower residents to provide this accommodation?
- Who would provide the training and education needed to ramp up the provision of skills for a wide range of services to this temporary population?
- What recreation and entertainment opportunities would single workers require?

Major highway development and the bypassing of smaller communities had a variety of impacts that had often been experienced elsewhere.

What opportunities did the highway provide?

Should these communities be looking for industries that are not always welcome in a densely populated or tourist oriented residential area?

- Vehicle maintenance – mechanics, cleaning, repairs, parts, leasing, selling.
- People – accommodation, food, spas, conference facilities, stress reduction
- Medical/Hospital – regional facilities
- Storage – greater space and ease of access allows for trucks, containers, goods handling, warehousing, clearance warehouses.
- Recreation, sport, Parks & Wildlife, walks, major & local events provision
- Animals – Vets, exercise, socialising, breeding, animal management.
- Relocation site for historic buildings and complementary retailing, museums and tourism.
- Immigrant communities with specialist industries or tourism potential.

- Religious communities, special events, training and education facilities.
- Communications IT, Call Centres, Technology Parks, Innovation Centres.
- Climate change – Emergency housing design and development, transitional housing provision, emergency providers, packaging, storage, distribution.
- Age care, retirees, support services.
- Gaols, detention centres, re-training, social justice providers.
- Fundraisers HQs, offices, communications, IT, harnessing a revolving asset of specialist environmental, social and community experts.
- Heavy manufacturing.
- Fly in tourism – small aircraft owners.
- Small business entrepreneurs and operators training.
- Education - Universities, Colleges, specialist training centres.
- Entertainment venue – large scale.

Who would look at potential new industries that would maintain the local population and encourage new residents by diversifying into new and growth service industries generated by the proximity to the highway?

As always, more questions than answers, but now that the shortcomings in knowledge have been identified, it should be within reach to identify the availability of accommodation, consider the jobs and businesses that will be required and consider future planning concepts that may take over when the infrastructure workers have gone home.

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## **E. EMBRACING THE BOOM, AVOIDING THE BUST**

By Dr Jane Stanley

*This case-study paper was originally written for the Think-Tank Forum at Yamba. However, when Jane realised the time allocated to her was only 20 minutes, she hastily produced a short version of “Building a sustainable local economy” to discuss “using short-term investment to build the long-term economy.”*

There are plenty of examples of boom-bust economies in regional Australia (and elsewhere). The boom-bust phenomenon arises when a surge of investment into one particular area distorts the economy, and then leaves it flat. I lived in Darwin for a while, and experienced the ongoing boom-bust cycles in that economy, with the most recent problems arising from investment in gas treatment plants. It was generally seen as the responsibility of the government there to moderate the peaks and troughs, stabilising the economy and the housing market, and establishing a sustainable framework for providing services and infrastructure.

More recently I was based in the Mackay region for a few years, experiencing the boom-bust cycle of the coal mining economy.

For now I want to draw on my experiences of these and other localities in suggesting some general principles that could be applied by the Clarence Valley Council. I also have some familiarity with this region, having lived and worked here for six years in the 1980s, and I hope this gives me some appreciation of the challenges ahead.

## 1. Making money work

To make best use of the influx of capital into the region that is about to occur, it is appropriate to understand how money works within the local community. I want to summarise a couple of features which are important to this understanding.

**The multiplier effect** is an economic concept that explains how an investment in a particular part of the economy can have multiple benefits. For example, an initiative to create five jobs in a new industry will result in more than just the creation of those five jobs. This is because the five new employees will spend their incomes on goods and services that create additional jobs in other businesses. This is the jobs multiplier effect.

It is also possible to look at the multiplier effect purely in money terms. Money flowing into a community by way of wages, contracts, welfare payments and government programs can be multiplied if it is spent on local suppliers-of-goods-and-services, whose employees then spend that additional money on other local goods and services. Each dollar coming into a community can be worth just one dollar if it is spent outside the community (ie with no multiplier effect) or it can be circulated around to produce many more dollars-worth of community wealth. Of course, eventually some of the money goes outside the community to pay taxes, buy petrol etc but the more it can be kept in local circulation the more the local economy can grow.

For many regional communities experiencing an economic boom, the multiplier effect applied to money that flows into the community is fairly close to 1:1, that is, not much expenditure on local goods and services. However in a community that does have opportunities for local expenditure, the multiplier effect could be 5:1 or more. The multiplier effect can therefore have a very substantial impact on local wealth, and resultant business activity.

A good way of illustrating the multiplier effect is the “leaky bucket” diagram<sup>1</sup>. This shows how money flows into the community as through a tap, and it can either fill up the “wealth bucket” or leak out again. The wealth bucket will fill up if the money is circulated around through spending on local goods and services, and it will leak out as expenditure flows out of the community. The filling up of the bucket is the result of the multiplier effect.



Some of the leaks may not be immediately obvious. Some recent work carried out in the United States<sup>2</sup> has illustrated how large supermarket chains can drain wealth out of the community when compared

<sup>1</sup> first developed by the Rocky Mountain Institute – see Cole et al, 1990

<sup>2</sup> Schuman, 2006

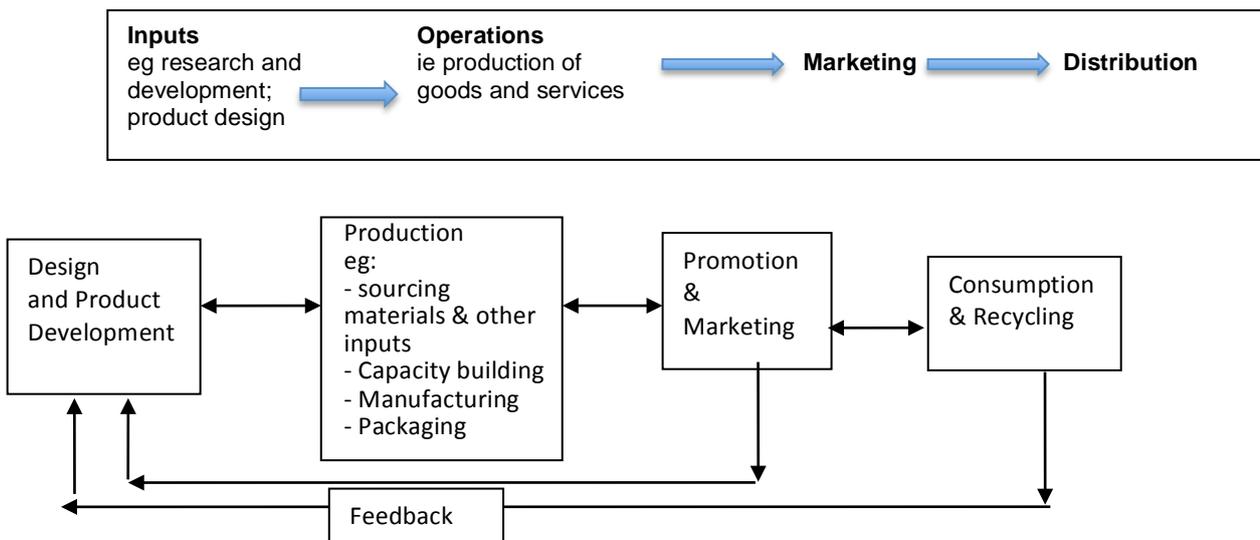
with local stores. Despite discounted prices of goods, the costs to the consumer may actually be higher because:

- travel distance compared with shopping local is a hidden cost for the consumer
- random overcharging is inbuilt into the system so consumers pay more than intended (they don't check their receipts)
- quality is often relatively poor
- consumers end up buying more than they had intended as a result of aggressive promotion
- staff are often poorly paid, so that their living costs are often subsidised through welfare payments, paid for by the rest of the community.

Supporting local commerce instead will strengthen local commerce. The surge of popularity in markets provides an alternative. This can be good for local consumers, good for the local economy, and good for energy savings and economic efficiency at the State and national level.

Once there is an understanding of the various leaks in the wealth bucket, there can be strategies for trapping money in local circulation and building local wealth. Obviously creating local jobs and securing local contracts is critical, as well as encouraging imported workers to spend their earnings on local goods and services.

**The value chain** is a framework for understanding how local businesses and industries can be strengthened. It is vitally important that strategies are developed for protecting and strengthening local business and industry so that they can maximise the opportunities from the boom, and achieve lasting benefits beyond the boom. It can be useful to depict the value chain simply as follows.

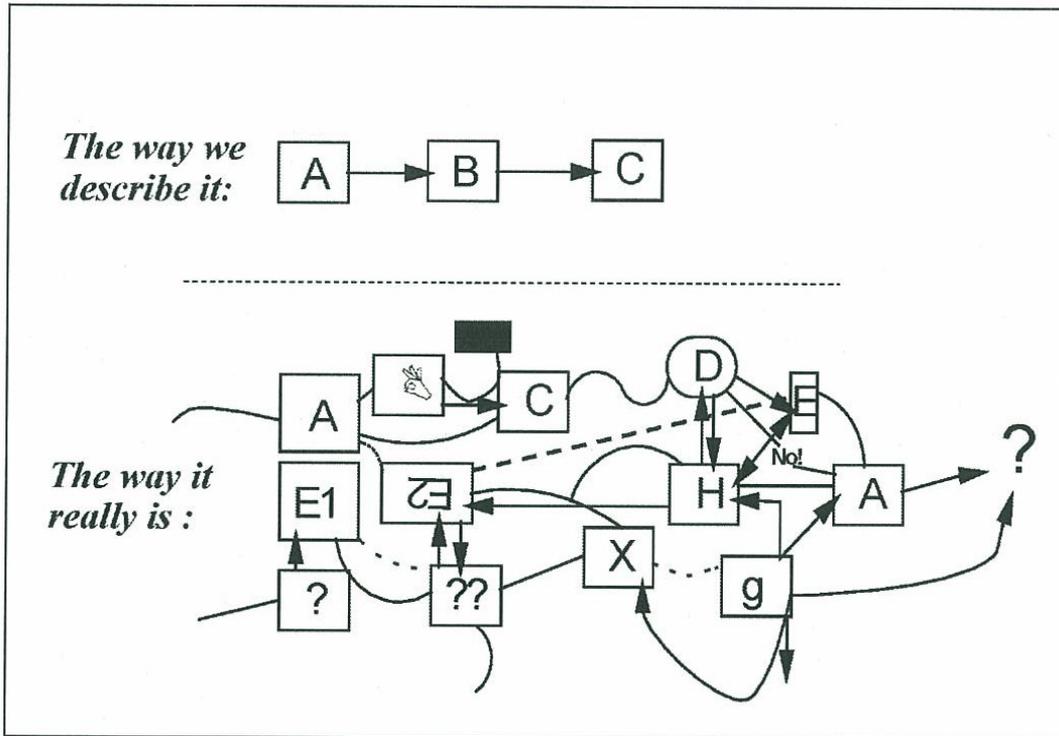


When looking at larger and more complex economies, the value chain gets more intricate and is best depicted as a loop.

This concept explains how a business adds value to resources through a process of research and design, product development, reproduction, marketing, distribution and consumption. Strengths and weaknesses of each link in the chain can be assessed, and opportunities for adding value through the chain become apparent. For some enterprise clusters there may be missing links in the chain, and filling these gaps is an obvious starting point for economic development. It is possible to look at much more complex value chains, sometimes involving several interlocking chains, to see how resources are being utilised.

The value chain is a useful concept for examining how effectively local skills and labour are being applied to adding value to a local resource, to generate a wide range of products. It can identify the flow of inputs and services required to achieve a final product, and how these work together in practice within a cluster of businesses.

It has been pointed out that value chain diagrams are a way of simplifying concepts, and that reality is always more unpredictable. I like the following diagram in this respect.



Source: Brown, Bessant and Lamming 2000

Value chain analysis is one area where I have found that SWOT analysis (looking at strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) can yield good results. Each step in the chain can be interrogated for its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This can result in a fairly robust set of strategies for strengthening existing businesses or business clusters.

**Strategic Questions :** *What are industry strengths and weaknesses? What are key opportunities?*

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Needs</b>
<b>Challenges</b>	

Then if there is a new need for goods or service arising from the boom, there will be a greater understanding of how local business and industry can respond to this need by adding value to their own production chain. There will also be a better understanding of how diversion of resources to meet new needs can otherwise threaten the resource base of local industry.

## 2. Promoting local employment

Clearly, the economy will benefit if local people are able to secure jobs and contracts. However this depends on whether their skills and capacity are a good match for what is needed. Also, it may not be advantageous for workers to be drawn out of existing employment into the new jobs if this results in the collapse of local businesses.

In relation to the contracting environment, it is apparent that increasingly complex tendering processes and a tendency to increase the size of contracts are encouraging concentration in the hands of a few large firms, who then subcontract the majority of the work on the ground to smaller contractors. The larger firms may tick all of the documentation boxes but sometimes they are much weaker in terms of practical delivery, and any risks are passed on to smaller contractors down the line. There are cases where the contractors at the bottom of the chain do all the work but don't get paid. Small contractors in regional centres are particularly vulnerable, so the tendering process needs to acknowledge the realities of their situation.

There are some good examples of how to maximise these opportunities from towns affected by mining. Key strategies might be:

- helping local contractors through the pre-qualification for securing contracts, including QA systems and other red tape hurdles
- encouraging contracts to be broken into components that are small enough to be within the scope of local contractors
- encouraging preferential treatment for local suppliers in any tendering process
- encouraging or requiring a certain proportion of recruitment from the local area
- assessing where there are possibilities for increasing the workforce participation rate (eg women, young people, older people)
- getting new workers job-ready
- providing opportunities for appropriate vocational training ahead of time, eg, short courses to obtain heavy machinery tickets (particularly for women not currently in the workforce, as women are often preferred as operators of heavy equipment).

These strategies can be applied not only to the direct employment opportunities being created, but also to the indirect opportunities created by the influx of new workers, and the associated increase in demand for goods and services. This might apply to expansion of a local supermarket, recruitment of staff by local banks, establishment of new entertainment venues, health services, etc, as well as industry innovations in waste recycling and food processing, as examples.

One trap to be avoided is pricing local businesses out of access to commercial or industrial land. This can easily happen if land is at a premium to support the boom activities. Local government in particular needs to keep a watchful eye on this, to make sure that small businesses are able to grow and prosper in boom times.

One of the new services that should be encouraged is financial planning and investment advice. Recently reported malpractice by some banks has given this service sector a dirty name. However it is critically important that if local people or imported workers have money in their pockets, and if this is a situation that is new to them, they can be guided into constructive use of these resources. Experience from other areas suggests that without responsible advice people may invest their funds in highly speculative property schemes which subsequently fail, or spend their money unwisely - for example within the liquor, gambling or prostitution sectors. It may also be important to identify positive ways for workers to invest their money locally, rather than buying rental units in Sydney or Brisbane for example.

It is also worth thinking about strategies for retaining local people in the workforce after the boom. The newly acquired skills and workforce experience are a local resource that can be retained for the benefit of the whole community. There may be incentives for the new workers to establish their own

businesses, or retrain to support other new businesses, for example. The influx of new workers may have resulted in exposure of the local community to new types of goods and services, and businesses that provide these may outlive the boom period. Planning well ahead with a good business case might provide access to State or Commonwealth seed funding for these new industries.

### **3. Housing the imported workers**

All communities are made up of a mix of short, medium and long-term residents and this contributes to their vibrancy. However the potentially positive impact of an influx of new ideas and skills will be lost if the new residents are kept separate. The potentially negative impacts of such segregation include many dimensions of social dysfunction: hostility between local residents and the “other” newcomers, alienation and social isolation affecting the mental health of the new workforce, stress from lack of activities other than work, family tensions if women and children are separated from male workers in camps, workers preyed on by people making money from illegal activity (illegal drugs, prostitution, illegal gambling) etc etc.

However the need for social integration needs to be carefully balanced against the possible adverse impacts on the local housing market. Putting imported workers into temporary work camps may be the lesser of two evils if the alternative is to price locals out of the housing market, leading to increased homelessness and household poverty. This is a real danger as demonstrated by local experience from other regional centres. So is it possible to have the best of both worlds (or avoid the worst of both)? It certainly demands thinking outside the box.

Let’s imagine a utopian housing market where temporary newcomers could be assimilated into the community and then move out again without pushing the locals onto the streets, and with long term improvements in housing investment. What would be the available strategies to achieve this?

One of the resources available to towns like Grafton and Maclean is that existing houses are often situated on relatively large lots. Maybe some locals would like to seize the economic advantage of putting a “granny flat” on their block. This might be a temporary donga or a more permanent structure – recognising that the ageing of the population is likely to create a long term demand for such smaller units. Does the local planning scheme facilitate this? How could such a scheme be facilitated?

Another feature of housing in regional centres is that much housing may be underoccupied, because families are smaller than they used to be, and as young people often leave their families to move into cities. This creates an opportunity for local people to take economic advantage of the temporary housing demand by taking in boarders. Are there any regulatory obstacles to this happening? Could this be promoted as a strategy, with support and advice to the host families?

Other opportunities may be created by identifying disused buildings that could be renovated for temporary accommodation, perhaps saving them from demolition. Once renovated, they may be recycled for other productive uses. Has any work been done to identify such local resources?

All of these strategies would put new workers *cheek by jowl* alongside local people, breaking down prejudice and facilitating new friendships. Providing integration in this way is much more likely to lead to some of the new workers settling in the local area on a long term basis, and investing their pay packets there.

There is also some useful experience to learn from the ACT Government, Albury Wodonga Corporation, and other “new town” centres in relation to integration of newcomers. Local governments here facilitate welcoming activities, and invest in social planning to help families adapt to their new surroundings. Creative use of social media and Internet mapping to encourage connections to people and place has proved helpful.

### **4. Safeguarding the tourism industry**

One of the strategies for mobilising temporary housing that has been used elsewhere is enabling tourist operators to accommodate workers, setting aside the usual operating rules which limit length of stay.

Tourism operators may in fact lobby for this, particularly if their businesses are operating close to the wire. However there are significant dangers in this strategy.

If tourism is seen as important to the local economy, with potentially growing importance in the post-boom era, the last thing you would want to do is to stifle it. If all the hotels, motels, caravan parks, B&B establishments and resorts are filled up with workers, then tourists will be turned away, and past efforts to build the industry will have been wasted. When the workers go, the accommodation establishments may find it difficult to refill the beds, and the experience of other centres suggests catastrophic outcomes.

A better planned strategy would see the new workers housed in non-tourist accommodation but so enthralled by their experience of the local area (being introduced to its tourism assets) that they become regular tourist visitors after they have gone back to their homes elsewhere.

## **5. Investing in services and civic infrastructure**

It is good that the Council is working to anticipate the stresses and strains that the new workforce will put on local services and social infrastructure. A case may need to be put to government well in advance about the need for supplementary funding for those services where funding is based on population figures, and to think broadly about social infrastructure – child care, health services, education, recreation. If Council does not have its own social planning resources it could seek assistance from government in conducting this strategic planning.

If the demands on services can be met, there are also opportunities in boom times to capture some of the cash flowing through the economy for investment in public infrastructure. However the boom times are not necessarily the best times to get things built cost effectively. Public capital works might be best saved for the post-boom period to soften the downturn for local builders. This can also ensure that local workers and contractors are available to carry out civic works, as they are often best placed to pursue locally appropriate construction techniques. There are some woeful project outcomes where imported contractors have constructed buildings and roads that were not appropriate for local conditions, so that the work has to be substantially remodelled.

If the boom is managed well, it could be expected that there will be visible civic improvements to the local area that have lasting value. This could be demonstrated through town beautification, safety initiatives including lighting, new civic buildings, public art, landscaping, creation of parks, and so on. It is important that planning for these improvements is not rushed, and processes need to be put in place to agree on priorities. This is just one way in which the whole community can be engaged in making the boom and its aftermath a positive experience.

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## **F. SHEPPARTON AND SPC – THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA**

By Dr Anthony Kent

*This case-study paper was originally written for the Think-Tank Forum at Yamba. However, when Anthony realised the time allocated to him was only 20 minutes, he too produced a PPT presentation with just 6 slides to briefly discuss the case of SPC.*

### **1. Introduction**

This paper will present the background, the campaign and implications of the recent survival of SPC Ardmona, a fruit processing company based in Shepparton, Victoria, a cause celebre which turned the accepted wisdom on regional manufacturing on its head. In essence, it reports on an emerging

counter-narrative to three ideas which have assumed normative proportions in policy and government circles: first, that manufacturing is in terminal decline; second, that rural economies are necessarily vulnerable and third, that economic factors alone, more generally known as economic rationalism, constitute an unassailable policy prerogative. The case study, therefore, provides insight not only into how local communities respond to crisis and change, but what is involved in preserving important employers in the face of that change. This is instructive for communities such as that of the Clarence Valley, where change is surely coming in the face of a number of large infrastructure projects.

## **2. Why manufacturing still matters**

Yes, the number of those employed in manufacturing has gradually declined but it still employs a large proportion of Australians. Manufacturing has been and will continue to be a major employer of newly arrived migrants, particularly those with low proficiency in English, and of native speakers lacking post-secondary qualifications. It is increasingly integrated into the broader economy through the services it requires and generates. It forms the basis of industry clusters where knowledge and innovation can be developed and exchanged at the local level – ‘local’ meaning potentially within Australia, or within the state or a rural region. And finally, a manufacturing job is, in comparative terms, a good job – these jobs are more likely to be permanent, better paid and unionised than many other sectors in the economy. My own interest in the issue combines two of the research areas I’m familiar with, a PhD on food manufacturing in Melbourne’s north, and the career trajectories of ex-farmers in Victoria. These former farmers often find themselves back on the land working for others – a positive at one level but the work tends to be itinerant. This points to the need for a range of local industries, not a contraction.

## **3. Shepparton**

Shepparton is located near the Murray River, 190 kilometres north of Melbourne. There are 30,000 residents and 25,000 jobs, making it a significant rural centre. The main jobs are in health care and social assistance (16%), retail trade (13%), manufacturing (13%), education (9%), and agriculture (7%). In the early 20th century, the federal and state governments provided the financial backing to establish a deciduous fruit growing industry. Part of this process was the development of extensive irrigation infrastructure in the Mildura and Shepparton regions and elsewhere, accompanied by the famous – or infamous – ‘closer’ settlement schemes, where the government granted small blocks to returning soldiers who often lacked farming experience.

## **4. SPC Ardmona**

Supported by Government grants, a number of grower-cooperatives in these regions established canneries to supply the British market. Two of these were the Shepparton Preserving Company and Ardmona. In 2002, the two merged to become SPC Ardmona (SPCA). Today it has two canning factories, in Shepparton and nearby Kyabram. These employ 700, but it is estimated a further 2,000 jobs are directly reliant on them. More broadly, supply chains, infrastructure, skills and knowledge all emanate from these operations. In 2005, SPC Ardmona was purchased by Coca Cola Amatil (CCA), part of the strategic drive of the later to broaden its ‘health and wellbeing categories’ after a period of stagnant growth and an image problem as producers of ‘lolly water’, that is, soft drinks.

SPCA is really a conglomerate, having acquired and now carrying the SPC, Goulburn Valley, Ardmona, IXL and Taylors brands. It has formed alliances with canneries in Thailand, Spain, China, and South Africa, locations which have offered consistency of supply, lower production costs, and strategic trade advantages into international markets. And finally the firm is exceptional at developing new technologies – for example, the sealing of fruits in small, single-serve plastic cups as opposed to cans and without added sugar. In short, SPCA is no back yard operation. For some time it has been a sophisticated innovative organisation with deep links into foreign operations and markets, a position enhanced by an injection of funds from CCA, itself one of the largest MNCs in the world.

## 5. Financial issues

In the early 1970s, the United Kingdom joined the European Community (EC). The EC's Common Agricultural Policy imposed high tariffs on imported canned fruits, heavily subsidised its own fruit production and established favourable trading conditions between EC member countries. With the effective loss of the British market, SPC Ardmona turned its focus to Asia. At first, the strategy worked. Sales figures from the company's annual reports show an increase in sales figures from \$352m in 2005 to \$429m in 2006. From then on the figures were not published, with results only being reported as 'disappointing'. Meanwhile, in 2012, Heinz, a similar operation, closed its tomato processing plant in near-by Girgarre, relocating to New Zealand, with the loss of 146 jobs. In the same year, SPCA was forced to dispose of \$100 million of fruit bought under contract from local farmers, due to declining sales. In May 2013, the company told more than half of its 150 peach and pear suppliers that none of their crop would be required the following year. Heinz and now SPCA were suffering from plummeting local and export orders and cheap imports from Italy and ironically, Thailand and South Africa.

## 6. The battle

In April 2013, a former Coca-Cola Asia executive, Peter Kelly, went to the company in order to turn fortunes around. Kelly was forthright in putting pressure on the Gillard Federal Labor Government to lift support for the struggling fruit and vegetable processing industry. In October 2013, the company sought financial assistance from state and federal governments, not as a bail out per se but to modernise its operations. SPCA requested AUS \$25m from each level of government. Four days before the 2013 federal election, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd pledged the Federal Government's half of the deal. In January 2014, the newly elected conservative government did not proceed with the offer. In what seemed to be an attempt to revive the rhetoric associated with the Work Choices anti-union legislation taken to the 2007 election – which the coalition lost – Prime Minister Abbott and other senior ministers linked SPCA's woes to workplace conditions "way in excess of the award" and "extraordinary". In February 2014, the 'narrative' of sink or swim for Australian manufacturing firms was strengthened by the announcement by Toyota it would cease its Australian operations, after the Federal Government declined to direct further funding as had been done in the past. At this point, things were looking very gloomy for SPC Ardmona.

## 7. The campaign

On examination, the campaign which was subsequently conducted, comprised a number of lines of attack. Interestingly enough, the rebuttal to almost every argument put forward by the Federal Government for SPCA's woes, which focused of course on worker entitlements, came not from the union, the Labor Party or the community but from the firm itself. In a media release 4 February 2014, it addressed 'claims...that are mistaken and need to be refuted by the facts'.

- In December 2013, the company had downsized by removing 73 maintenance employees.
- The total cost of allowances for all production staff at SPC Ardmona for 2013 was less than 0.1% of the business's cost.
- Staff were entitled to 20 days annual leave a year, not nine weeks as alleged in some media reports, and loading and shift work had a negligible impact on the bottom line.
- The real problem was the high Australian dollar, the flood of cheap imported canned fruit (often sold under the 'home brand' label of supermarkets) and "decimation" of the company's export markets.
- Employees could cash out sick leave in the past. This option was abolished in 2012, contrary to the claims of senior government figures. Caps had been put in place on redundancy payouts
- SPCA is the last fruit-processing firm in Australia, and so has its own workplace agreement. It is therefore misleading to refer to 'industry standards' as the government had done, as there was in effect, no comparable company.

Then in February 2014, SPCA workers agreed to the extraordinary step of a two-year wage freeze to assist with viability of the company.

SPCA's overall position was supported by the Productivity Commission whose role is to focus almost exclusively on the impact and potential for productivity in industry. It was also supported – crucially – by the conservative local federal member, Sharman Stone, who went so far as to describe her own leader (the Prime Minister) as a liar in attempting to shift the blame onto unions.

Concurrent with these events, the Prime Minister had pledged \$16 million to assist the Tasmanian based Cadbury, justified by an apparent tourism dimension because of a planned visitors centre (in March, 2015 this commitment was withdrawn). By this point the government's argument on worker entitlements and a sink or swim response to troubled industries was becoming untenable.

In February 2014, a resident from interstate, Linda Drummond of Newcastle, declared Sunday 9 February 'SPC Sunday' opening a Twitter account: #SPCSunday and urging shoppers to 'drop an (SPCA) can in the trolley.' The company was quick to push this bandwagon in a dramatic way. It had already imported boutique public relations firm Leo Burnett Melbourne to spruce up its image, resulting in the appearance of local farmers on can labels. Now it instructed Leo Burnett to deploy its 'social media response team' to contact prominent Australian celebrities and (non-conservative) politicians to join in the hash tag movement. A poster-sticker campaign also emerged. Stickers were displayed on many cars and shops. Posters appeared at the entrance of most towns in the region. The campaign was becoming very difficult to ignore. In April 2014, social media came to the fore again when Teena Knight, a local resident whose family had a fruit growing background, established the Save SPC Australian Made and Grown Facebook page, which had 50 000 'hits' in its first four days of operation and 3,000 'likes' in its first three. In May, 2013, the Save SPC Ardmona rally was held attracting 1000 people to the Shepparton Showgrounds for the one-hour event.

Meanwhile a convenient contra-narrative to the 'trouble local sector' line of reasoning emerged when in January 2014, high levels of lead were detected in imported tinned fruit from China. The story was prominently displayed on the Facebook page (as was a subsequent scandal when in February 2015, Nannas recalled its frozen berries imported from China over fears of contamination by Hepatitis A).

## **8. Turnaround**

The Labor Party won government at the state level in 2014. The new government took little time in confirming a \$22 m grant to the company. Coca-Cola Amatil agreed to a legally binding agreement to maintain a minimum of 500 full-time equivalent jobs for three years. It also committed to refund all state government funds if, within five years, it ceased operations in Shepparton, thus avoiding the 'good money after bad' issue associated with car manufacturing companies. In March (one week after the state government announcement) SPCA signed a five-year deal with Woolworths to supply an extra 24,000 tonnes of local product, worth \$70 million. Peter Kelly reported in the first two months of 2014 that sales were up by 60%. In February, the Anti-dumping Commission had found that Italian tomatoes were being 'dumped' in Australia, sold that is, at prices lower than in the home country. Under a little-known regulation dealing with dumping cases, it then placed a tariff of 6-8% on the imported product. In August, CCA announced an AUS \$78 m upgrade for the Shepparton plant and SPCA announced more contracts with local tomato growers.

## **9. Why it happened**

There are a number of reasons why this was a successful campaign, some contingent, some more to do with broader established structures. There was the confluence of a number of contingent factors, that is, circumstances that at first hand seem random and difficult to duplicate. Sharman Stone MP was a sincere campaigner and a key personality, but she had more than one reason to become involved. In the neighbouring federal electorate of Indi, her fellow-Liberal party colleague Sophie Mirabella had been defeated at the last election by a 'community candidate', Cathy McGowan. McGowan was not the first such candidate to be successful. Rob Oakshott and Tony Windsor had similarly held out against candidates from the mainstream parties and had during their terms of office become high profile

politicians. McGowan therefore, was not an exception, but the latest example of a successful independent candidate. The appointment of an ‘activist’ CEO in Peter Kelly was important, as was enlisting the services of Leo Burnett Melbourne. The state election fortuitously (for the company) delivered a new, more sympathetic government at just the right time.

In terms of the mode of delivery of the campaign itself, it worked for two reasons in particular. First was a combination of old-style campaigning – public meetings, door knocking, placards, bumper stickers – and social media. The latter, of course, has been given some prominence after it was famously used by the Obama campaign team for the 2008 presidential election. What should not be forgotten, however is that this ‘old-new’ style of ‘do it yourself’ politics was adopted with stunning results by the Labor Party in the 2015 Queensland election and in their less surprising victory at the 2014 Victoria state election.

However, there are very obvious structural and institutional reasons why the campaign was successful, implying that key lessons can be applied elsewhere. Central in this sense was the nature of SPCA itself. On the one hand, this was a company that had been locally embedded in the local area for decades, sourcing produce supplied by local farmers and labour supplied by local workers, resulting in a rare joining of forces between farmers and union (the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union). Thus producer - manufacturer – customer links were strong. On the other hand, it was a large and sophisticated operation, one that only became more so with its acquisition by, perhaps ironically, a major MNC. This not only provided it with additional capital, but with a savvy ‘activist’ CEO. Moreover, the location should not be underestimated. Shepparton is not an isolated villa but a major regional centre. Notwithstanding the reach of virtual contact through social media, it provided a venue where the campaign and campaign people could be disseminated quickly and widely as shown in the Save SPCA rally. Second was the (sympathetic) stance of heavy-hitting regulatory and advisory institutions, namely the Productivity Commission and ultimately the Anti-Dumping Commission. Third was the appalling manner in which the politics were handled by the Federal Government, in particular the ham-fisted attempt to revive the rhetoric of Work Choices and the very weak argument that the Cadbury’s case was different in substance to that of SPCA.

## **10. The fall out**

This campaign confirms the effectiveness of combining virtual and old-style campaigning techniques. The simplicity and clarity of the campaign message and the ease with which people could get involved was critical. Twitter and Facebook were central, as they facilitated direct action. After all, all supporters needed to do was put a (SPCA) can in the trolley. It also shows the strength which supplier-producer-consumer links based on a particular geography (the Shepparton region) can have, a salutary lesson for the protection and development of industries. In combination, we have a potent ‘do it yourself’ brand of politics. Informed by the digital age, consumers can exercise this power by choosing what they buy, from where, who they support politically and when they want to exercise that support. More generally, this case underlines the enduring importance and potential of non-economic considerations and ‘by-products’ (community solidarity, sentiment, local identity).

There is the danger that this case study is misinterpreted, in two ways. The first is the argument, which the federal government ultimately turned to, that here is an example of how economic rationalism can work in practice, as a local entity falls back on its own resources in order to survive. A number of things need to be kept in mind. There was in fact government support from the state government. In fact SPCA’s very existence, originally as a cooperative, and the entire infrastructure of small block irrigation, depended on state level support. Shepparton, the town, would not exist without the numerous ‘not for profit’ inputs the state has provided over many years – services, schools, urban planning. The clubs, societies, associations, where the campaign was developed and disseminated are dependent on government grants for their existence. The broad lesson then is that economic activity cannot be considered in isolation from the action or inaction of the state and of social activity.

Second, this is not an isolated case. There are other examples of where a combination of state support and community endeavour have rescued troubled regional manufacturing: two examples are Luv a

Duck poultry in Nhill, who drew on Karen refugees, first to supply its workforce, and in the end reviving the town itself, and the sacked Heinz workers, who established a ‘virtual factory’ online while they continue their battle to re-establish operations in the old site as a workers’ cooperative. There are undoubtedly other examples across Australia. These need to be documented and a compendium produced so that the commonalities can be found, not to inform how to produce isolated outcomes but how to construct a coherent industry policy.

(Note: References supplied on request.)

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## **2. Follow-up to the THINK-TANK FORUM, at Clarence Valley Council Chamber, Maclean on Friday, 15 May 2015**

At 9.00am, David Morrison, Manager of Clarence Valley Council gave an address to welcome the EAROPH-Australia officials, EAROPH members and Forum guests to the Council Chamber at Maclean for this one-day workshop.



Scene at the follow-up one-day workshop, held at the Clarence Valley Council Chamber in Maclean on Friday, 15 May 2015

Over the next hour-and-a-half, the group reviewed the Think-Tank Forum held on the previous day. As key matters arose, views were sought from all those present. This was exciting, as representatives from the Clarence Valley communities were also there to express new ideas.

After the break for morning tea, the group continued to discuss the next steps in bringing the Forum work forward to benefit the Council, the communities and EAROPH. EAROPH-Australia and the Council as well as community representatives will hold further meetings on realisation of suggestions.

Around 12.00pm, the session was closed, with a vote of thanks to the host.

After lunch, EAROPH-Australia officials, EAROPH members and guests met the Council staff to work on a range of topics. The mutual benefits were considerable, with each group from various organisations expressing their gratitude for this opportunity of getting practical experience in working smart strategies.

### 3. **EAROPH-Australia's Annual General Meeting held at Foresthaven, Maclean, on Saturday, 16 May 2015, in the home of Peter Cuming, at the generosity of the Cuming family**

Having reached a quorum, incumbent President Kerry McGovern called the AGM to order at 8.45am. While she was delivering her welcoming address, she took the opportunity in thanking Peter Cuming for his hospitality and kindness in offering his beautiful home to host the 2015 AGM of EAROPH-Australia.

The meeting had a long agenda to go through while Public Officer Dennis Ingemann waiting patiently to witness this meeting so that he could make submission to the authority.



Members of EAROPH-Australia enjoying the hospitality of Peter Cuming & Eshana in beautiful Foresthaven



Peter and some aboriginal residents in Foresthaven

#### **Foresthaven, Maclean**

**The Land.** Foresthaven is a 15 acre property on Maclean Hill, Northern New South Wales, Australia. It is situated in Yaegl Country, who are the local Aboriginal custodians of this special place, beside the mighty Clarence River. Foresthaven is nestled within a small ancient valley that was once rainforest, but then partially cleared in the late 19th and early 20th century for timber, grazing and market gardens. The land has overgrown with weeds since the 1950's, but bit by bit we are restoring the rainforest and its native creatures are returning.

**Friends of Foresthaven, Inc.** We are a community group who gather to care for Foresthaven; co-creating a beautiful venue for spiritual connection with nature; learning and sharing our knowledge about sustainability; regenerating the rainforest; growing a food forest; and celebrating resilient joyful community relationships.

**The Venue.** Workshop spaces are scattered through the regenerating rainforest, with grassy glades beside the waterhole, and fire circles for story-telling and sacred ritual. The indoor workshop space is a light-filled open plan room 'floating' amidst the forest trees, made from materials recycled from the old Yamba primary school. The house itself is a recycled Federation cottage from Grafton, powered by solar panels, with solar hot water, rainwater tanks, compost system, vegie gardens and fruit trees. We are currently building an extension with hemp-lime masonry.

**Co-Founders.** The Foresthaven project was initiated by Peter Cuming and Eshana Bragg, who live on the property and have been caring for the land and regenerating the rainforest since the mid-1990's. Peter is a visionary sustainability strategist and Eshana is an ecopsychologist, and they are both directors of Sustainable Futures Australia and experienced workshop facilitators.

[Friendsofforesthaven.wordpress.com](http://Friendsofforesthaven.wordpress.com)

As minutes of the AGM will be sent to all members by the Hon. Secretary, it will not be reported here except three items:

**A. Officials and Members of the Executive Committee elected for the year 2015-2016**

- President: Dr Jane Stanley
- Vice President: Kerry McGovern
- Honorary Secretary: Donnell Davis
- Honorary Treasurer: Ami Sudjiman
- Public Officer: Dennis Ingemann
- Member Director: KC Leong
- ExCo Member 1: John Byrne
- ExCo Member 2: Peter Cuming
- ExCo Member 3: Dr. Anthony Kent
- Co-Editor 1 of eBulletin: KC Leong
- Co-Editor 2 of eBulletin: Coralie Leong

**B. The 2016 AGM and Regional Forum**

They will be held at the City of Bendigo, western Victoria during early March 2016. They will be organised by Dennis Ingemann and Jane Stanley.

**C. Granting of two EAROPH-Australia Honorary Membership Awards**

Two experts / panellists invited to the 2015 Think-Tank Forum on Clarence Valley's Impact of Infrastructure Capital Investments in the Region have been chosen to receive EAROPH-Australia' Honorary Membership Awards.

The two Awardees are:

- **Ms Ngaire McCrindle**, CEO of the Shire Council of Bombala, NSW for her significant contribution to the promotion of better human settlements and improvement of the environment:



“Ngaire McCrindle has contributed to the Clarence Valley Think Tank by advising the Clarence Valley Council and community members on how to gain valuable insights into how small councils with limited resources can best manage periods of huge investment by government and the private sector. This is based on her experience as CEO of a Tasmanian local government, as well as her current work as CEO of a New South Wales local government.”

- **Ms Sandi Taylor**, Advisor to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, for her significant contribution to the promotion of better human settlements and improvement of the environment:



“Sandi Taylor has contributed to the Clarence Valley Think Tank by advising the Clarence Valley Council and community members on how to gain benefits from capital investment, and how to be aware of potential negative impacts. She has personal experience as a Kalkadoon Traditional Owner whose people and lands have been affected by mining around Mt Isa. She also contributed broad observations from working with many other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities around Australia.

Certificates of Honorary Membership Nos. HM-1 2015 and HM-2 2015 have been prepared and signed for President Jane Stanley to present them to the Awardees through the Post.

**End of Report**

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