

Connecting Country Background

Reference Group Meeting March 3rd 2008

Present: Marie Jones, Doug Ralph, Christine Kilmartin, Bernard Slattery, Geoff Park, David Major, Tim Read, Jan Hall, Beth Mellick, Maurie Dynon, Nicole Bullen and **Project Officer:** Julie von Platen

Apologies: Chris Pollock, DebWorland; Virginia Adrian, Elvyne Hogan, Deirdre Slattery, Patrick Kavanagh, Mark Walker, Philip Schier, Zoe Amor, Julie Hurley.

Reports:

1. Doug reported on the Scene From the Air exhibition.
2. Bus tour: Tim reported that the trip was inspirational for the visitors and perhaps a morale boost to property owners wearied by the drought – TFN and other properties were visited.
3. Connecting Country Information Session Launch: This will be on Saturday April 12 from 10 am to 1 pm. The subcommittee will arrange details. They will meet on Tuesday at 10.30
4. Name and Logo: satisfaction was expressed at the name Connecting Country. A ‘draft’ orchid logo was viewed. A mountain may be added.
5. Nicole reported on Greening Australia’s River Recovery project, which involves the Yarra and the Coliban.
6. Julie presented a powerpoint summary report on the work so far: an overview of existing plans, players and programs, and next steps.

Responses to the report raised various questions:

- on the different meanings of sustainability [for example, to farmers and public land managers];
- on the matter of marginal agricultural land;
- on incentives to landowners to value sustainability.

Suggestions included the following:

- case studies as incentive models;
- relating the project to the upcoming Green Paper;
- clarifying the relevance of World Heritage proposals [Doug, David and Bernard will produce a report on this];
- the implications of changing weather patterns: how will species react to change? What corridors will they need to use? [Tim and Christine will look at this theme]
- the importance of ongoing research [this may form part of a possible stage 2 in the project]
- the importance of knowledge gained on the ground by people with local knowledge and commitment: people should be asked what they want, not informed from a distance.
- the relevance of urban areas to the biodiversity question.

- 7 Julie raised the matter of the website, and its use as a means of getting input.

Have a look at the paper ‘A Biodiversity Blueprint for the Mount Alexander Shire’ produced by Geoff and Beth if you are wanting to get more focus on the project.

Lively discussions on issues took place throughout the meeting and members felt that communication was good.

Next Meeting: after much discussion it was decided to meet on Thursday April 3rd at 1.30 pm in the Chewton Town Hall – Julie said she would keep Mark up to date.