

Connecting Country Background Reference Group Meeting February 7th 2008

Present: Marie Jones, Doug Ralph, Eve Banks, Virginia Adrian, Julie Hurley, Elvyne Hogan, Christine Kilmartin, Chris Morris, Bernard Slattery, Geoff Park, David Major, Deirdre Slattery, Patrick Kavanagh, Tami McVicar, Tim Read, Jan Hall, Zoe Amor, Beth Mellick and **Project**

Officer: Julie von Platen

Apologies: Maurie Dynon, Chris Pollock, DebWorland

1. Julie introduced herself after we had a round the table introduction of reference group members.
2. Bernard presented the *Scene from the Air* exhibition leaflet. We will try to mount this at the Market Building when it finishes at the Phee Broadway foyer and are open to putting it in other venues.
3. Julie outlined her proposed approach to the task in terms of assets, processes and responsibilities. Discussion raised the following points, suggestions and possibilities:
 - we are looking at a project for landscape change.
 - there is already a lot of information available – needs to be rationalized and made user friendly – use of website needs to be worked out.
 - the project is potentially a platform for further projects funded on the basis of the information it sets out
 - there are existing maps with biodiversity info in them, but local knowledge can make these more informative, and can help workers to approach the problems with a clearer sense of priorities.
 - the project should assist us in clarifying matters we aren't sure about (for example, levels of weed infestations, blank areas where research needs to be done).
 - the landscape has already changed under pressure of accepted uses (gold, farming); new pressures are at work (social, climatic). The government is already encouraging new ways to manage land; the project should show how and where these might work in practice.
 - the project should come from an awareness of what people are keen on. It should encourage people's passions and broaden them. It should capitalise on ideas under present discussion locally (for example, the idea of local food production, which could integrate the ideas of land for biodiversity and land for production). There is a PR dimension here: a broad approach caters for more people.
 - community priorities can be sensed partly (but not entirely) by working with landcare groups.
 - The National Heritage Park is central in any assessment of the Shire's biodiversity. At present the Park's priority is to cooperatively engage with its 3000 landholder neighbours. The blueprint should encourage positive interaction between public land managers and private landholders. At present many residents do not consider the bush as part of the Park at all, and there is a need to make Park values more widely acceptable. This is partly going to depend on Park managers' grip on the natural values of the Park. The project should assist in all this.
4. Beth raised the question of the project's name. A number of suggestions were raised, the most popular being Gold to Green – an email link up to be used for other suggestions to be examined eg Leanganook Landscape Links. Doug to check with Brien Nelson. This matter will be decided at the next meeting.

5. Julie raised the matter of the Community Information Session. The detailed format for this has not been finalized, but it was decided to make it a Launch, with speeches kept to a minimum, and people invited to bring photos of their favourite places. The date proposed is Saturday April 12, late morning, at the Market Building. A sub group to help prepare the launch was set up, consisting of Beth, Jan, Patrick, Julie and Tim.

6. The next reference group meeting will be on Thursday March 6, 1.30 pm Chewton Town Hall