

# ARTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL BEHAVIOUR

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Report to Land and Water Australia

UNE-44





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## 1 Introduction

The research that has been undertaken as part of the project ‘Creating Inspiration: How the visual and performing arts shape environmental behaviour’ has shown that the visual and performing arts can have an important role in shaping environmental behaviour (Curtis *et al.*, in press). This paper examines the policy implications of the project findings.

The paper commences with a summary of the project findings, and then turns to a brief review of environmental<sup>1</sup> policy in Australia. This review suggests that, while there are good reasons to believe that ecological sustainability is unlikely to be achieved without substantial changes in cultural values, public policy that seeks to encourage progress towards sustainability has paid remarkably little attention to culture and its artistic productions by elites, communities and mass media.

The paper also briefly examines current arts and cultural policy in Australia and concludes that, although it acknowledges the importance of the arts and creativity in the new post-industrial and global economy of which Australia is a part, and although it recognises the importance of the preservation of cultural heritage for community identity and well-being, it has scant regard for the role that arts and cultural policy might play in environmental repair and ecological sustainability.

The paper finishes with a set of recommendations for both environmental and arts and cultural policy that seek to address the deficiencies described above.

## 2 The visual and performing arts shape and environmental behaviour

### 2.1 How the visual and performing arts shape environmental behaviour

The project ‘Creating Inspiration: How the visual and performing arts shape environmental behaviour’ has found that there are three main pathways through which the arts can shape behaviours that are more environmentally sustainable, and which might be successfully utilised by extension practitioners and others wishing to build capacity in the community for environmental sustainability (Curtis *et al.*, in press). These pathways are:

- communicating information;
- connecting us to the natural environment; and
- catalysing environmentally sustainable economic development.

The first pathway, communicating information, may be used in the education or extension context, or in communicating information to the general public. The visual and the performing arts are able to synthesise complex ideas and present them to lay audiences in an engaging form. Well designed images can articulate a vision for an ecologically sustainable landscape that encapsulates best practice land management. Some art forms or works of art are particularly valuable in prompting new ways of looking at problems.

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<sup>1</sup> The term environmental policy is taken to include natural resource management policy.

The second pathway is to subtly connect us with the natural environment. Many artists are inspired by the natural environment, and their artworks or performances evoke a strong sense of connection through aesthetic language. Some works of art achieve this through evocative representations of the environment, others achieve it by being in the natural environment itself. Large art-environment events can have a celebratory role which motivate and involve communities. Such events can strongly move the emotions in a positive way, and stimulate people to reflect on their relationship with the environment.

A third pathway is where the arts catalyse actions to improve sustainability. In the rural context, this might be achieved through integrating art with farm forestry, rural regeneration, and land rehabilitation initiatives, or where farmers incorporate principles of landscape design into farm planning. In urban areas, public and community art have been incorporated into urban planning designs that reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing excellent public transport and facilities for walking and bicycling.

There has been an evolution in arts practice over the last few decades which has seen the development of an increasing amount of participatory art-forms. This is particularly being manifested in the community arts, but also in the practice of particular artists. It mirrors the evolution of a community development model for extension delivery, evidenced in Landcare and regional delivery mechanisms. Considerable opportunity exists for a convergence of the participatory art forms with community development models for environmentally sustainable development in rural areas.

## 2.2 Issues where the arts have applicability

The visual and performing arts can be applied to changing environmental behaviour for most, if not all, land, water, vegetation, and urban issues, including:

- climate change and greenhouse gas emissions;
- soil salinity;
- biodiversity loss;
- decline in water supplies and quality;
- urban sprawl; and
- waste management.

## 2.3 Art forms useful in affecting environmental behaviour

A wide variety of visual and performing arts techniques and types can affect environmental behaviour and are summarised by Curtis (in press). They can be included in a wide variety of combinations. They include (but are not confined to):

- individual fine-art works, including photographs, paintings, drawings, sculptures, video art, jewellery, ceramics; prints, etchings, etc.
- sculptures and other art forms in the natural environment;
- environmental and ecological art;

- murals, sculptures, and other public art works;
- Art exhibitions;
- field studies programs with visual arts students;
- art installations and special purpose events;
- one-off art competitions or exhibitions in schools;
- street or paddock theatre;
- play-building in schools;
- travelling theatre groups;
- specially commissioned theatre or performance works;
- performances (including orchestral, choral, dance, visual and theatrical spectacles);
- concerts;
- the full spectrum of musical styles and types of music groups;
- street parades;
- community arts events and festivals;
- participatory art forms, such as community arts and community theatre;
- writing workshops;
- story telling;
- film;
- happenings;
- landscape architecture;
- advertising; and
- concerts in the natural environment.

A wide variety of techniques can be employed to involve the arts community into activities which seek to promote changes in environmental behaviour (Curtis, in press; Curtis, *et al.* in press), including (but not confined to):

- commissioning special purpose art-works;
- using the status and fame of artists and performers to engage the community;
- generating schools-based activities, such as play-building pieces with Drama students, or circus activities;
- using visual or performing artists to facilitate planning processes;
- incorporating visual and performing artists into planning processes;
- inviting performing artists to perform at particular events.

From an extension point of view the visual and performing arts can be used in many contexts, such as (Curtis, in press):

- facilitated workshops;
- field days;
- special events;
- training days;
- social activities for Landcare groups;
- tree planting or Landcare days;
- conferences; and
- promotional purposes.

#### 2.4 The effects and benefits of using the arts to affect environmental behaviour

An individual arts-based event can have a wide range of effects and benefits. These effects and benefits are summarised in Table 1, with supporting evidence from interviews and case studies. The process of actually being involved in creating art (be it performance or visually based) is a valuable means for learning about an issue and shaping one's own behaviour, and is more powerful than being a passive receiver of the work (although that experience, too, can be powerful).

Table 1: Effects and benefits of arts-based activities or events with supporting evidence from Key Informant interviews and case studies. For case studies and interviews see Curtis *et al.* (in press).

EFFECT OR BENEFIT	CASE STUDY	INTERVIEW
<b>Communication</b>		
Increase and broaden the audience being exposed to environmental issues	Plague and the Moonflower Nova-anglica: Web of Our Endeavours	Tara Ryan Wes Sanders Downing Cless
Lead to people retaining information, or at least a heightened sensibility for the topics and even more importantly to associate the environment with positive thoughts and images	Plague & the Moonflower Nova-anglica Bungawalbin Wetlands Festival Arts in extension	Tara Ryan
Provide a vehicle for community education and transfer of scientific information.	Greenhouse in schools Arts in extension	Evergreen Theatre; Underground Railway Theatre (URT)
Elevate what could have been a normal (say) field day into a special event which can therefore increase the audience.	Bungawalbin Arts in extension	Platform Theatre
Expose people to ideas that they may not have thought much about before.	Plague & the Moonflower Greenhouse in schools Gunnedah	Platform Evergreen URT
Provide an enduring image of a particular event	ESA conference, Bungawalbin, Nova-anglica Plague & the Moonflower	Ralph Steadman Rolf Groven
Allow a voice of dissent to be articulated	Plague & the Moonflower	Rolf Groven Ralph Steadman Downing Cless Bread & Puppet Theatre Platform
Assist in building skills in extension staff in performance and delivery of information	Arts in extension	
Encapsulate a wide variety of issues	ESA conference Arts in extension	URT
Make the invisible visible	Grizedale Forest	Rolf Groven
Appeal to a range of people regardless of learning styles and abilities	Plague & the Moonflower Nova-anglica Gunnedah	Ian Hunter Rosi Lister
Synthesise and communicate complex issues & information	Greenhouse in schools	Evergreen Theatre URT
Create an atmosphere which enhances the experience of the natural environment	Bungawalbin Festival	Bread & Puppet, Welfare State International (WSI)
Create an atmosphere that is conducive for learning	ESA conference Nova-anglica	Rosi Lister
<b>Individual processes</b>		
Affirm people's beliefs in caring for the environment and celebrate the work they do to repair the environment.	Nova-anglica	Rosi Lister Ian Hunter

<b>EFFECT OR BENEFIT</b>	<b>CASE STUDY</b>	<b>INTERVIEW</b>
Move people emotionally	Plague & the Moonflower Gunnedah	Ralph Steadman URT
Make people reflect on their relationship with the natural environment	Plague & the Moonflower	Rosi Lister Evergreen
Make people feel strongly towards the natural environment	Plague & the Moonflower	URT WSI
Provide a vehicle for people to express their feelings for the natural environment	Plague & the Moonflower Nova-anglica Gunnedah	WSI Ian Hunter Rosi Lister
Provide a vehicle to strengthen people's beliefs about certain issues	Plague & the Moonflower Nova-anglica Gunnedah	Rosi Lister
Give an artistic voice to those working towards regeneration of the environment by affirming effort and achievement	Nova-anglica ESA conference	Rosi Lister Ian Hunter
Allow farmers, scientists, government workers new ways of expressing their feelings for, and knowledge about the land and the natural environment	Nova-anglica	Ian Hunter
<b>Group processes</b>		
Foster cooperation, collaboration and team-work.	Plague & the Moonflower, Nova-anglica Gunnedah Arts in extension	Rosi Lister Ian Hunter WSI Bread & Puppet
Improve processes in planning meetings with new ways of looking at a problem, stimulating creative thinking, motivating participants and helping improve the cohesiveness of the group.	Nova-anglica Arts in extension Gunnedah	Rosi Lister
Rekindle interest in the environment and revive the spirits of those working on environmental issues	ESA conference Nova-anglica Plague & the Moonflower Bungawalbin	URT Rolf Groven
<b>Community processes</b>		
Provide a vehicle for community mobilisation and empowerment.	Nova-anglica Gunnedah Plague & the Moonflower	Rosi Lister WSI Ian Hunter
Make people feel an appreciation and pride in community	Plague & the Moonflower Gunnedah Nova-anglica	Rosi Lister WSI Ian Hunter
Engage people in activities of altruism and show them that there are alternatives to consumerism and activities that cause environmental degradation	Plague & the Moonflower Nova-anglica Gunnedah	Rosi Lister WSI Ian Hunter John Somers
Provide a vehicle of networking and enable a broad participation by a cross-section of the community for people to work together	Plague & the Moonflower Nova-anglica Gunnedah	John Somers Rosi Lister Ian Hunter WSI
Provide a vehicle to involve Indigenous visual and performing artists and to build bridges between the black and white communities.	Plague & the Moonflower Bungawalbin	
Provide an opportunity for Indigenous people to reinforce cultural practice and to expand that to a non-aboriginal audience	Bungawalbin Plague & the Moonflower	

### **3 Environmental policy**

#### **3.1 Structural dependence and agrarianism**

The outcomes of environmental policy in Australia, as in most developed nations, generally comprise small successes in some areas, amid enduring failure in others. As State of the Environment reports show (Australian State of the Environment Committee, 2001), urban air quality has been maintained despite a huge increase in the number of vehicles, and the worst excesses of air and water pollution by manufacturing industries in the post-war period have been brought under control. On the other hand, such things as energy use, carbon dioxide emissions, the decline of the inland rivers, biodiversity loss, weed invasion and salinity continue to worsen (Australian State of the Environment Committee, 2001). There are many factors that a superficial analysis might suggest as responsible for this chronic policy failure – lack of political will, insufficient funding, fragmented responsibilities, bureaucratic inertia, scientific uncertainty, inadequate monitoring, shortages of skilled professionals and so on. However, at the core, the policy failure in addressing the environmental problems listed above has its ultimate cause in just two things: structural dependence and political susceptibility to agrarianist rhetoric.

Structural dependence occurs when a large part of society and the economy is dependent for its prosperity upon the forms of resource exploitation and emission of pollutants that cause environmental problems. It has been recognised by a number of authors that environmental policy failure is common where this type of structural dependence occurs (Lindblom, 1977, 1981; Walker, 1992; Jänicke and Weidner, 1997). The continuation of unsustainable exploitation or emissions may be rationalised through developmentist ideology, such as was the case in the Australia in the 1950s and 1960s (Papadakis, 1996).

Agrarian values are a range of non-economic values that assert that agriculture and farming are fundamentally different from other human endeavours and occupations – a distinction encapsulated in the term ‘agricultural exceptionalism’ (Botterill, 2003). The elements of agrarianism include: farming as the basic occupation upon which all others depend, farming life as morally virtuous and ennobling in comparison to the evils and debasement of city life, and small family farms as the foundation of democracy and the embodiment of liberty (Flinn and Johnson, 1974; Aitken, 1985; Montmarquet, 1989). In emigrant societies such as Australia, New Zealand and the USA, agrarianism is closely tied with the romanticism of European settlement and the formation of national identity (Botterill, 2003). Importantly for Australia, with the majority of its population in urban areas and significant postwar migration from non-Anglo-Saxon countries, the agrarian elements of national identity have their origins as much in the urban populace’s search for identity in the face of the McDonaldisation of their urban lifespaces, as in ancestral connection with European settlement.

In the domain of greenhouse gas abatement, environmental policy failure is failure by omission rather than by commission – what has been termed by Bachrach and Baratz (1962) and Crenson (1971) as ‘the unpolitics of non-decision making’. This failure has clear origins in the nation’s structural dependence upon coal and gas exports.

In the case of natural resource management policy, structural dependence and agrarianism have combined through the 19th and 20th century to deflect serious regulatory attention to the

environmental impacts of agriculture. In the late 20th century, as the contribution of agriculture to gross domestic product has declined below five per cent, the actual structural dependence has similarly declined. However, politically perceived structural dependence remains and politicians continue to be swayed by agricultural exceptionalist arguments, particularly where these are deployed against natural resource management policy. The examples below come from landholder reactions to the national park extensions that took place in the Blue Mountains in the 1980s.

*Many people have had the courage to pioneer "the bush"; and had the guts to make the personal effort of hard physical struggle; to feed their babes at the side of the road in the blazing sun or rain, during the days-long, torturous trip by horse and cart over virtually unmade "roads" 40, 50, 60 and 100 miles to the nearest outpost or town to get food, clothing, medical assistance etc., and sell their produce; and to do with out essential food, reticulated water, sewerage, electricity, roads and a thousand and one other services taken for granted – nay, demanded – by the very people who are now demanding that these pioneers' properties be made part of their parks and tramping grounds.*

(Jensen, 1984:254)

*And when the conser [sic - short for conservation] lobby (the pushers of national parks) decry "vested interests" as opposing national parks, landowners are the first to proudly admit that they do have "vested interests".*

*Yes! Our vested interests and particular concerns are in Liberty and Freedom – those tried and true values which have sustained our Society for centuries; in FAMILY, with all its warmth and needs; a man's home is his CASTLE; his family's BIRTHRIGHT to the piece of land they cherish or the ability to sell on the open market (if he wants to); the RIGHT TO WORK at the job he chooses and likes; and to live a useful and purposeful life WHERE HE CHOOSES; the right to live in balanced harmony WITH NATURE; to USE the land for his sustenance and recreation. [capitalisation in original]*

(Jensen, 1984:25)

### 3.2 Early policy deference

It should come as no surprise that the politicians' fear of provoking outpourings of politically damaging agrarian rhetoric that strikes a chord in both urban and rural constituencies has led legislatures to tread carefully in policy initiatives to deal with the impact of agriculture on the environment. The result has been that much of the soil conservation legislation in the second half of the 20th century has treated action by landholders to control land degradation as optional and voluntary (Bradsen, 1988). Legislative deference to agrarianism began with the State soil conservation Acts in the mid-20th century. The debate on the Soil Conservation Bill in the Queensland Legislative Assembly in 1951 is illustrative of this deference that led to an emphasis in these Acts upon education and public subsidy rather than regulation.

*The problem of soil erosion must be handled very carefully, and we must not get the farmers' back up by talk of compulsion. We can achieve much more by educating the farmers. I feel sure the Minister will get the wholehearted co-operation of the people in country areas, and that co-operation will be gained more easily by educating the farmers along the lines desired, than by compulsion.*

Hansard, Qld Legislative Assembly 5/9/1951, p.242

From the mid-20th century to the 1970s, there were a number of changes in the way that the newly formed soil conservation agencies perceived and responded to soil erosion problems (Reeve et al., 2002). First there was a transition from seeing soil erosion problems as problems on individual farms to be treated on an individual basis after they occurred, to the view that it was possible to plan land use on the farm to avoid soil erosion in the first place. From this, the next step was to expand planning to a number of contiguous properties and coordinate any soil conservation works across these properties. Finally, there was the realisation that planning of land use and soil conservation works should ideally take place across whole sub-catchments — the basis for the integrated catchment management (ICM) that was subsequently to become a central focus of natural resource management.

The voluntarist approach that had been born of legislative deference to agrarianism was maintained throughout the period, with farm planning, finance and plant hire being made available at concessionary rates, with the establishment of demonstration farms, and with minimal use of the few regulatory and punitive provisions that did exist in the legislation.

### 3.3 The rise of the land stewardship ethic

Around the mid-1970s the Commonwealth entered into resource management policy with the Collaborative Soil Conservation Study, the findings of which were published in 1978. The principal finding that one half of the land under agricultural use required treatment for land degradation cast doubt upon the effectiveness of the State soil conservation agencies and was the catalyst for the establishment of the National Soil Conservation Program in 1983. To the extent that can be ascertained from the carefully oblique language of the report of the Collaborative Study, the libertarian element of agrarianism was well recognised:

*Traditionally, primary producers have used and managed their land in whatever manner they choose. The concept of soil resources as communal property to be managed wisely and, as it were, held in trust for future generations has not been developed or accepted in Australia.*

(Department of Environment Housing and Community Development, 1978:75)

Significantly, the National Soil Conservation Program included as one of its goals that the whole community should adopt a land conservation ethic.

The call for a land conservation ethic, land stewardship ethic or land ethic also came from the writings of Dr Brian Roberts in the 1980s (Roberts, 1984). Roberts drew from the body of work which followed upon the publication of Lynn White's seminal work on the role of religion in the ecological crisis as it was perceived in the late 1960s (White, 1967). The view put by White was that Judaeo-Christianity had encouraged an anthropocentric view of humanity's place in nature and that this led to the devaluation and degradation of nature. This was rejected by others, however, who used an interpretation of Genesis to argue that Christian values were consistent with the stewardship of the natural world. Roberts argued for a land stewardship ethic, both from Christian values and from the ideas of Leopold (1948), that extended moral considerability to the natural world, including soils and ecosystems. The logic of the land stewardship ethic is that those who adhered to it would have a moral duty to cease the exploitation and degradation of the natural environment.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the idea of the land stewardship ethic was absorbed into the state-sponsored community participation programs known as Landcare. Here it shed most of its ecocentric, Leopoldian values to become a utilitarian ethic that required the land user to extend moral considerability to future generations and manage the land as a steward on their behalf (Cary and Webb, 2000). During the early 1990s, the logic of the land stewardship ethic spread beyond Landcare programs to serve as a policy rationale in a number of natural resource management programs and strategies (Curtis and De Lacey, 1998)

The period of the rise of Landcare also saw the rise of ICM, and for a time during the 1990s it was thought that Landcare would implement on the ground the regional plans arrived at through ICM (AACM and Centre for Water Policy Research, 1995). Deference to the libertarian elements of agrarianism also made its mark on integrated catchment management legislation with a reluctance to include regulatory measures for compliance in the legislation for fear that ‘a regulatory approach to ICM could focus farmers’ energies on resisting interference by bureaucrats rather than on improved land management’ (Hollick 1992:51, cited by Marshall, 2004). The emphasis in Landcare and ICM on community participation and government funding support, while perhaps exaggerated in the policy rhetoric, was nonetheless acceptable within the tenets of agricultural exceptionalism and allowed a degree of influence by the state on land management practices without unleashing the strident protests of heavy-handed government violation of the rights of the landowner (Reeve 2002a).

### 3.4 The neo-liberal transformation of NRM policy

During the 1990s, however, a number of forces combined to erode confidence in voluntarist ICM, Landcare and the promotion of a stewardship ethic as the pillars of natural resource management policy. First, the idea of the widespread adoption of a landcare ethic, as the solution to on-going problems of environmental degradation in rural Australia, had been criticised by a number of academics who had failed to find much empirical evidence that landholders who expressed attitudes consistent with a land stewardship ethic were more likely to have adopted a range of sustainable practices (Vanclay, 1992; Curtis and De Lacey, 1998). Vanclay (1992) also argued that most farmers embraced a land stewardship ethic, while Curtis and De Lacey (1998) suggested that the appeal and uptake of Landcare was due to it reflecting values already held among landholders.

Despite the empirical evidence of widespread belief among landholders in the land stewardship ethic, the 1996 State of the Environment report demonstrated that serious land and river degradation problems continued unabated (State of the Environment Advisory Council, 1996). Around the same time, the report by the Australian National Audit Office (1997) on the National Landcare Program revealed significant deficiencies in financial and performance accountabilities, while the National Landcare Facilitator’s report in 1995 revealed that ultimately only 15 per cent of Program funding was spent on works on the ground (Alexander, 1995), a part consequence of cost-shifting on the part of the States. The 1990s also saw the growing influence of neo-liberalist ‘new public management’ (Curtin, 2000) which, with the goal of improving accountability and the Commonwealth’s capacity to implement its natural resource management policies, was to transform the framework of cooperative federalism within which natural resource management policy was situated. National Competition Policy

and the COAG Water Reforms were followed by the transformation of the National Heritage Trust into the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

With the preference for market-based instruments that accompanied the neo-liberalist policy agenda, and the economic orthodoxy which requires well-defined property rights for markets to function for the good of all, the sharp issue of conflicting public and private property rights in land and water could no longer be by-passed with the soothing communitarian rhetoric of ICM and Landcare (Reeve, 2002a). Agrarianist ideology has always placed strong emphasis on the right of the individual to use their land as they see fit. However, some of the rhetorical strength of these libertarian arguments has been diminished, due to the advent of new concepts of ecosystem services, public rights to environmental quality and an environmental duty of care (Reeve, 2002b). With the concept of rights in environmental quality – rights which are likely to become increasingly important to citizens in the future - many natural resource management policy issues reduce to a sharp zero-sum question of whether governments should support the landowner's right to freedom of choice in land use, or the citizens' right to environmental quality (Bromley, 1982; Botterill, 2003).

Nevertheless, agricultural exceptionalism has won the sector substantial concessions in environmental policy, compared to the policy frameworks within which mining or manufacturing operate. For example, the pollutor-pays principle that allocates responsibility for remedial action in most areas of environmental policy has been largely suspended for agriculture in favour of the beneficiary-pays principle. Consequently, public rights to environmental quality that were degraded without compensation by agriculture, now have to be purchased back in the form of 'compensation' payments for such things as water for environmental flows.

In addition to exposing and igniting conflicts over public and private resource access rights, the neo-liberal transformation of natural resource management policy over the last decade has shifted much of the burden of resolving these conflicts onto local and regional communities. This has taken place with little consideration of the capacity at that level to negotiate solutions to the conflicts and devise institutions for resource allocation, management, monitoring and enforcement (Marshall, 2004). The support that has been provided by the state has often been less than helpful, due to the misconception by policy makers that natural resource management at local and regional levels was simply a planning exercise that could be conducted with good science and local participation (Prior, 2003).

### 3.5 Adrift in a contested policy space

One of the consequences of the way in which natural resource management has evolved in Australia, is that the certainties of national and rural identity, national destiny, agricultural purpose and scientific and technological benevolence that once provided a firm foundation for policy are now evaporating. The comfortable alignment between agricultural exceptionalism and national developmentism that made possible decades of subsidy and infrastructure support for agriculture has unravelled as the contribution of agriculture to the national economy has declined, and the value placed by the citizenry on environmental quality and security has increased. Whether out of convenience or ignorance, the mass media continue to place rural events like drought or flood within the time-honoured frame of Anglo-Saxon settlers struggling against a harsh nature to build a nation that will be imbued with the pioneering

values of stoicism, courage in the face of adversity and helping your mates. However, as the dark obverse of European settlement – the disastrous environmental impact and Aboriginal dispossession and marginalisation – comes to be more freely discussed, farmers and graziers can certainly be excused for any feelings of disorientation they may experience as a dominantly urban nation places the burden of trusteeship of the national identity upon their shoulders. To be simultaneously the honoured embodiment of the nation's nostalgia for its agrarian past, and the villain thwarting a growing national desire for environmental quality makes for neither comfortable self-image nor functional citizenship.

These contradictions are, according to the extensive sociological literature on the contours of modernity and the post-industrial society, quite normal (Giddens, 1990; Beck, 1992). The knowledge that the life space inhabited by those with a stake in natural resource management policy-making reflects the normality of modernity is, however, of little value to those who would seek to improve the effectiveness of policy.

It goes without saying that there is a pressing urgency in the need to protect the ecological integrity of rural Australia that underpins both a wide range of essential ecosystem services and the on-going productivity of agriculture. It can also go without saying, because it has been said so many times since the 1980s, that this can only be achieved by community-state partnership and local collective action. What has been notably absent, however, from the chorus of support for these, is any consideration of how those taking part are to feel that it is a meaningful activity in the context of their understanding of their place in society, their self-identity, their role in their local community, how they relate to the natural world around them, their contribution to the nation's destiny and their legacy to future generations. It is not until the stakeholders involved in regional and local resource management can feel secure in the meaning of their participation, that resource management will be anything more than an irritation imposed by government, to be resisted, ignored or given token effort.

### 3.6 The role of the arts in environmental policy

The findings from this project have implications for policy at two levels. Firstly, the use of the visual and performing arts can be regarded as simply additional tools in the repertoire of the extension agent. Just as innovations in computers and electronic audio-visual technology enabled extension staff to use new approaches to communicating information, so too can many of the visual and performing arts techniques described in the previous section. Consequently, one set of policy recommendations from this project are concerned with ensuring that extension staff are aware of, and able to use, the techniques described in the previous section. These recommendations are listed in section 4.3 below.

At a second level, the findings of the project are highly pertinent to the problems described in section 3.5, above. We would argue that only the arts is capable of opening up a cultural space in rural Australia and filling it with a diversity of ideas and values from which a new foundation can be built with the certainties of identity, purpose and destiny that are essential if natural resource management is to establish enduring and adaptive institutions to preserve the ecological integrity and agricultural prosperity of rural Australia. Only the arts can traverse the currently fragmented and dysfunctional cultural space within which social meaning is created by those trying to make sense of the changes in natural resource policy. Only the arts can provide a safe haven for self-reflection about one's relationship with the environment,

society and national identity. Only the arts can provide time out from the pressing needs of daily life for the negotiation and reconstruction of identity.

Participatory art forms could be particularly relevant to opening new cultural spaces in rural Australia. These art forms have emerged in the last few decades and appear to be a new direction within the arts where public engagement and community involvement is encouraged, rather than the art work being produced by an artist in relative isolation. Participatory art forms evolved in the 1970s (Popper, 1975), and are particularly evident in some types of public art (Jacob *et al.*, 1995), the community arts (Hawkins, 1993; Mills & Brown, 2004; O'Hara, 2002), and in the practices of some individual artists (Gablik, 1993).

Involvement in participatory art forms can foster an improved social climate from which community-based environmental work may more readily emerge. Networking and community building aspects were evident in several of the case studies examined, and was supported by researchers elsewhere, e.g. Somers (2002; Somers, 2004). Several of the case studies showed how the community arts can build social capital in a community. These findings support those of Jeannotte (2003) who also found that investments in cultural capital had significant contributions to social cohesion and the building of social capital, evidenced in the propensity to volunteer.

The ability of the arts in involving people in a spirit of altruism was shown in several case studies. Several authors point to the importance of encouraging this spirit of altruism is intrinsic in leading to sustainable development both nationally and globally (Haugestad, 2003; Haugestad & Norgaard, 2004; Haugestad & Wulforth, 2004a, 2004b). Altruism is another point of convergence between the arts and sustainable development since both community arts ventures and Landcare enjoy high levels of voluntary contribution.

### 3.7 Arts policy and cultural policy

Recent developments in arts policy and cultural policy are pertinent to the task of identifying policy initiatives to enable the arts to ameliorate the problems outlined in the previous section. A number of arts and cultural policy statements by Australian States (e.g. Queensland Government, 2002; Victorian Government, 2004) provide a rationale for investment in the arts and creative sector based on the view that success in the emerging knowledge economy is dependent upon fostering creativity in both work and leisure. Healy (2002) set out the argument thus:

*The new economy is a global system based on information technology, knowledge, and innovation. It has created a new corporate form that is flexible and network-like. Its labor markets are churning and uncertain. It produces well-designed, niche-marketed goods and services whose main value is the intellectual property they embody. It is staffed by hard-working and creative people who like to be challenged at work and at play. Those people choose to live in interesting, culturally rich, tolerant places.*

(Healy, 2002:96)

As Healy (2002), Tepper (2002) and other cultural policy analysts point out, there is still much work to be done to demonstrate a causal relationship, but nonetheless the association between prosperous knowledge-based economies and growing creative sectors is real (Florida, 2002).

The question for arts and natural resource management policy is whether this posited causal relationship might also occur for a ‘knowledge agriculture’ and creativity in rural communities. The argument presented in sections 3.5 and 3.6, above, suggests that if the relationship did occur, then it would bring about a great improvement in the dysfunctional arrangements for regional natural resource management that now exist. Certainly, new agricultural industries that are knowledge-based, innovative and directed to niche markets are appearing in some parts of Australia. Some of these industries are located in areas such as the Queensland Granite Belt and the Mudgee and North Coast regions of New South Wales – areas that have a relatively long history of in-migration and rural gentrification. This is consistent with the findings of this research project that the arts have an important role in environmentally sustainable regional and urban development. An important question for future research is whether or not the diversity of culture and identity in these areas has made natural resource management any less conflict-ridden.

More importantly for the present project, however, is the point that, if State Governments are prepared to justify investment in the arts on the grounds of supporting a prosperous knowledge economy, then it is a no greater leap of faith to invest in the arts in rural areas with a view to supporting a ‘knowledge agriculture’ that is not weighted down by the transaction costs and competitive disadvantage of dysfunctional natural resource management.

In addition to the justification for investment in the arts from a natural resource management perspective, there are other environmentally relevant justifications. As a sector, the arts have relatively low greenhouse gas emissions, water use and land disturbance, while having relatively high employment generation and income, and the high visibility of the sector gives it a large potential to encourage change in urban society (Foran *et al.*, 2005). Generally, consumer items that are made by artists tend to have lower embodied energy and higher levels of embodied labour than mass produced items, whether it is hand crafted furniture, finely crafted musical instruments or paintings. Furthermore because of their higher emotional and actual value, they are less likely to be discarded and replaced by further consumption. Another large source of consumption is in constructing buildings. Materials vary greatly in their embodied energy (Reardon *et al.*, 2001). The research found several contemporary examples of buildings with low embodied energy, low energy consumption, and where artists were involved in the construction and design.

## 4 Policy Implications

The research that has been undertaken as part of the project 'Creating Inspiration: How the visual and performing arts shape environmental behaviour' has implications in several areas of government policy. These have been divided into three general areas: improving natural resource management, fostering environmentally sustainable development and improving the effectiveness of extension.

### 4.1 Art in improving natural resource management

#### 4.1.1 *Funding for natural resources programs*

Funding programs pay little heed to the cultural elements that impede behavioural change. After more than a decade of Landcare the majority of land managers remain uninvolved and many environmental problems are worsening (Section 3.4). The research shows that the visual and performing arts have a powerful role in affecting attitudes and broadening the audience to environmental messages. Funding programs which seek to create shifts in environmental behaviour would obtain additional benefits if they included arts-based activities in the activities that they fund. To the extent that changes in environmental behaviour are as much a collective as an individual project, the capacity of the arts to foster cooperation is further reason for greater emphasis on the arts in natural resources programs.

**RECOMMENDATION 1:** Funding programs which seek to create shifts in environmental behaviour (including natural resources management programs) should broaden their funding guidelines to include arts-based projects, where such projects can demonstrate environmental outcomes, or outcomes in improved capacity building.

#### 4.1.2 *Arts funding*

The research has implications in the kind of funding that is offered to artists. Whilst we acknowledge the importance of funding arts projects based on aesthetic considerations, our research also shows that the arts have an important role in reversing environmental degradation and encouraging environmental renewal. Furthermore, there has been a shift in arts policy at the national level to encourage whole-of-government approaches, where arts funding is integrated with other areas of government policy, such as health. The Australian Public Service Commission's (APSC 2004) report on the whole-of-government approach has defined 'whole-of-government' in the Australian Public Service (APS) as:

*... public service agencies working across portfolio boundaries to achieve a shared goal and an integrated government response to particular issues. Approaches can be formal and informal. They can focus on policy development, program management and service delivery (APSC 2004:1).*

According to Shergold (2004: 10-15), the ‘whole-of-government’ mainstreaming approach should be marked by five characteristics: collaboration, regional need, flexibility, accountability and leadership. Information and knowledge sharing are seen to be key to the cultural change necessary to create whole-of-government as the public administration future of Australia.

RECOMMENDATION 2: Consistent with the whole-of-government approach, the findings of this project should be brought to the attention of policy makers in arts and cultural affairs in Commonwealth and State Governments. There should be a review of funding programs for the arts to ensure that there are no barriers to the participation of regional and community artists, and that the programs contain components specifically targeted at art and natural resource management issues.

#### *4.1.3 Participatory art forms*

The research found that participation in art-based events of this nature can have an ‘avalanche-like’ effect, where participation leads to learning, performance spreads the message, which leads to more participation, and so on. The actual process of being involved in creating art, and researching and reflecting in the process of its development, can help one develop or consolidate ideas and knowledge about a topic, and this process is not dissimilar to what goes on in many Landcare activities. The community arts emphasise the importance of the process, and many of the examples examined in our research demonstrate this. Considerable opportunity exists for a convergence between participatory art forms and community development models for environmentally sustainable development in both rural and urban areas.

RECOMMENDATION 3: Funding from both the private and public sectors in the arts and natural resources management should sympathetically consider community arts project and other forms of participatory art forms which have an environmental theme or outcomes.

## 4.2 Art to foster environmentally sustainable development

### *4.2.1 The arts as a structural component of a post-consumerist society*

Public art and community art are likely to have an important place in the emergence of non-materialist consumption and to be an essential part of a future ‘post-consumerist’ (or environmentally sustainable) Australia, where consumption might be more of ‘conspicuous leisure’ than of ‘conspicuous consumption of goods’ (Corrigan, 1997, p.25). Channelling surplus product into the arts is likely to have benefits in reducing some of Australia’s environmental impacts in key areas, such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

RECOMMENDATION 4: Research should be encouraged into the greenhouse emissions of the arts compared to other sectors in the economy, and the reductions in emissions that might be achieved by investment in the arts sector, compared to investment in other forms of emission reduction.

#### *4.2.2 Infrastructure investment*

The research has implications in the focus of infrastructure investment and the way that it skews investment towards activities that cause environmental harm. An environmentally sustainable society will incorporate the arts structurally (section 4.2.1). The arts are labour-intensive, promote creativity and problem solving, and build social capital (section 4.2.4). A shift in public investment from energy and resources-intensive areas towards the arts (in particular, the community arts) is likely to reduce Australia's environmental impacts.

RECOMMENDATION 5: A greater proportion of public investment in public infrastructure and public spaces should be directed to community and public art, particularly that which is linked to improving environmental sustainability. Incentives should be provided to encourage private investment in public and community art. Policy research should be undertaken into the means by which public and private investment can be shifted towards the community and public arts, particularly where such art can be shown to have environmentally favourable outcomes.

#### *4.2.3 Environmentally sustainable regional and urban development*

The research findings suggest that environmentally sustainable regional and urban development could be encouraged by integrating certain art forms with farm forestry, rural regeneration, and land rehabilitation initiatives, or where farmers incorporate principles of landscape design into farm planning. In urban areas, public and community art can be incorporated into urban planning designs which reduce greenhouse gas emissions through excellent public transport and facilities for walking and bicycling. This point is valid for both metropolitan urban areas or rural and regional towns and cities.

RECOMMENDATION 6: Urban and regional planning authorities and regional development agencies and organisations should integrate the arts and cultural development into their operations and strategic plans.

#### *4.2.4 Building cultural capacity in regional centres to promote a new land ethic*

In the last two decades, many rural towns and cities have had significant cultural renewal, with aesthetically pleasing town centres and environmental plans, and in some cases significant community and cultural development. Land managers experience the aesthetics of these new public spaces when they visit their local towns or villages. The current research points to a potential spin off for land management from these cultural efforts. However, it is uncertain what effects these urban renewal projects have on the attitudes and perceptions of land

managers for their own land, and whether cultural and aesthetic renewal through public and community art have spin-offs in increased landcare activity by land managers in the hinterland around those centres. To our knowledge this has not been studied to any extent in Australia.

**RECOMMENDATION 7:** Research funding should be directed towards investigating the link between cultural renewal in rural towns and centres and its effect on how land managers near those centres view and manage their own land, and whether cultural renewal of rural towns is a route to improving land management in the hinterlands around them.

### 4.3 Improving the effectiveness of extension

#### 4.3.1 *Extension and information transfer programs*

Currently extension programs in the natural resources sector and others that involve information transfer have little contact with the arts community, although many in the arts community are vitally interested in land and environment issues. The research shows that extension programs have much to gain by including arts and cultural elements.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** Extension and natural resource management agencies should work with the arts sector, and in particular community artists, on joint projects and programs. Artists should be included in planning processes.

#### 4.3.2 *The arts as a means of normalising good environmental behaviour*

The research has found that festivals and art events can normalise good environmental behaviour. They do this through the process of ‘suspension of normality’ (Measham, 2003; 2005), which opens a space for the inclusion of environmental considerations in community activities. This can occur in a number of ways. The first is where the festival has a theme based around celebrating some aspect of the natural environment or restorative endeavours. The second is where the process involved in the event incorporates some good practices, for example, using recycled materials in the construction of sets, or using public transport to move participants around. The third way is where good environmental practices are built into the event itself, such as excellent recycling facilities. Thus, through normalising best environmental practices, the event can lead to those behaviours becoming the cultural norm.

**RECOMMENDATION 9:** Further research should be funded into investigating the roles of festivals and events in normalising and promoting environmentally sustainable behaviour.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** Natural resources agencies and organisations seeking improvement in general environmental behaviour should work with festivals and large art events, to incorporate environmental themes and encourage them to adopt best environmental practice in the way that they are run.

#### *4.3.3 Funding is a problem for many artists*

A fundamental issue facing artists is their low income compared with other professions. Although there are significant numbers of artists who can and do earn a satisfactory living from their artistic work, most professional artists earn significantly less than other professionals (Throsby & Thompson, 1994, 1995). As a result a majority of artists have to work outside their creative practice to provide a reliable income source. Artists also have to contend with relatively high expenses from their professional work and irregularity of income. As a sector, the arts are vulnerable to the vagaries of the economy, and funding from the private sector can fluctuate greatly (Martin, 1993). This problem is recognised in some other countries and remedied with public stipends for artists (UNESCO and British Norway Council, 2000).

Community projects often expect artists to work for free or to provide substantial in-kind support. Where the arts are used in extension and education projects, provision needs to be made for paying artists adequately.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:** Where natural resources agencies and organisations seek to involve the arts community, adequate remuneration for artists should be built into budgets.

#### *4.3.4 Insurance*

Some of the case studies studied in this research have shown that current rules regarding insurance for public events are a major disincentive for many arts-based activities. Insurance issues can hold up, or even make some types of events untenable. Making insurance cover easier for community arts events would enable groups to do more.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** State and Federal Governments should provide a unified response to simplify insurance requirements and ensure that costs are not prohibitive for community events.

#### *4.3.5 Working with schools*

School teachers work under considerable pressure and often in sub-optimal working conditions. Consequently, it can be difficult for them to take on extra projects, particularly if they are not integrated with curriculum. Arts and environment events that involve schools are highly desirable in creating environmental behaviour change, but in many cases it may be difficult for teachers to support these events.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** If projects are developed with schools in mind, they should be integrated with the curriculum in collaboration with teachers, and provision for relief time may need to be built into budgets.

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