

Transition Action Group

NORTH MT LOFTY RANGES

A Community Group of Sustainable Communities SA Inc.

N E W S L E T T E R

Issue 3 December 2011

IN THIS ISSUE

Welcome	1
Happenings	
Name change & Incorporation	1
OOOOBY	1
DVD's available	2
"The Food Forest"	2
"Permablitz"	2
Transition Moves	3
Environmental Sustainability, Plastics	3

Viewpoint	4
End Words	6

IMPORTANT DATES

OOOOBY at Sevenhill Market last Saturday monthly

WELCOME to our newsletter.

This is a regular 3-monthly update on happenings about community transitions in our region.

Please pass the newsletter on to anyone who you think may be interested in what's happening. Our purpose is to inform, to take action, and to encourage as many people as possible to transition to a low impact lifestyle.

If you have any articles or comments you would like to have included, please forward these in the 2 month period following this newsletter.

What's happening

Name Change & Incorporation

You'll notice from our banner that we've decided on a name change. Our former name was very long, and we thought that a much shorter version was needed. The acronym TAG also has some appeal. "TAG-ers"!

Another important reason for a name change is the necessity for incorporation, which is now nearing completion. During the year, TAG received a grant (which was gratefully administered by Sustainable Communities SA Inc.) and is continuing to accumulate income from the OOOOBY stall at the Sevenhill Market. There may be future receipts from other endeavours. The TAG Steering Committee decided that it would be best to open a bank account to lodge these funds, but for this to happen there is a process that needs to be followed. Briefly, this has meant that an ABN is needed, then an official name ... so, in order to have greater control over future funds, and to allow for succession planning, incorporation was considered the way to go.

OOOOBY - Out Of Our Own Backyard

See us at the Sevenhill Markets, last Saturday of the month, and especially spread the word to those home gardeners or farmers with excess produce to share. The OOOOBY stall promotes local food production & sharing.

OOOOBY contacts ...

Colin Endean, Joey Duncan, Jane Holland

DVD's Available

Colin Endean has a number of DVD's relating to community empowerment, local resilience, food production, Permaculture and farming systems, among a number of other themes.

It is conceivable that TAG could build its own library of DVD's in the future, and these could be made available to any individual, group (e.g. schools), or local Libraries.

Would you give us your feedback?

Let us know if you would be interested in borrowing a DVD for viewing.

Depending on the response, suitable arrangements will then be made.

Contact Colin Endean
kunmanara@internode.on.net

Permablitz

'Permablitz # One in Clare has been described in previous newsletters. But guess what? Produce from the garden of Deb and Tony has been taken to the OOOBY stall.

That's a fantastic result, and shows what can be achieved with a bit of dedication and toil.

This is "transition in action".

TAG will continue to complement its OOOBY strategy - Out Of Our Own Back Yards - by supporting the establishment of further community based food suppliers.

For more information ...

Contact ... Colin Ball 88430170
 Peter Whitham 88434106

"The Food Forest"

Most people would know of the permaculture farm The Food Forest at Gawler ... an incredible project by Annemarie and Graham Brookman.

A DVD "Design For Life" has been produced of the rise and rise of The Food Forest, and includes interviews with David Holmgren, the Brookmans, and other designers. It also provides a way of "prosperity without growth", something that the world desperately needs right now.

A virtual tour of The Food Forest is also on the 68 minutes documentary.

For more information, have a look at

<http://foodforest.com.au/Design%20for%20Life.html>

TAG is very interested in purchasing a copy of the DVD, and is also planning a trip to The Food Forest in 2012.



DO YOU STILL WANT TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER?

Please let us know.

Also, contact us if you have a question or would like to offer feedback. Your input is most welcome.

Details are at the end of the newsletter.

Useful Links

Transition Network ... www.TransitionNetwork.org

Sustainable Communities SA ... www.sustainablecommunitiessa.wordpress.com

OOOBY ... www.ooooby.ning.com

The Food Forest ... <http://foodforest.com.au/Design%20for%20Life.html>

Transition Moves

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Clare & Gilbert Valleys Council has a very commendable Environmental Sustainability Policy, and for anyone interested have a look at

<http://www.claregilbertvalleys.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm?u=118>

... and scroll down to the actual policy. Open the pdf document to read the contents.

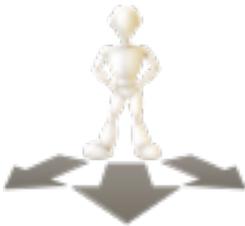
However, it seems that very little action has taken place to implement the policy. It would seem that Council needs a lot of assistance in implementation, including raising the profile of sustainability issues in the Council area. Although the policy is centred on Council's own operational performance, organisations such as TAG could play a role in helping to achieve some of the objectives.

HOW CAN T.A.G. BE INVOLVED?

TAG is evolving steadily as a community group, and a number of members are alert to the environmental needs at the household scale, at the urban scale, and at the catchment scale.

One of the key issues that keeps surfacing is that many people in the community would like information on particular systems that would allow them to attain their own sustainability. For example, during the Sustainable House Day event in September, the strong interest was on the "how-to", whether it was on house construction, materials, garden establishment, water-use efficiency and water-wise gardens, energy savings, and so on.

People do want to be involved!



Here's an idea ... What is needed is a place where people can go to obtain such information, to seek out examples of what others have done, to meet with informed sources about what-to-do and how-to-do, and also to be informed about what's happening about natural resources in the region.

TAG is suggesting that a place is needed that could be used as a resources centre, and it is this idea that could be developed in 2012. Action on Council's Environmental Sustainability policy could be a pivotal component of the resources centre.

Responses are welcome from any sector of the community.

PLASTICS RECYCLING

Plastics are polluting the planet! That's no exaggeration. Australia uses about 1.3 million tonnes of plastics annually, with about 46% being recycled (ref Cleanup.org.au). Whilst much of the recycled material is sent offshore (to Australia's shame), the remainder is sent to landfill. At the local scale, some plastics are allowed to be placed in the recycling bin for collection and eventual "management", but much ends up at a dump somewhere.

This is a very serious environmental concern, and it is avoidable. But change will not happen until the consumer makes decisions about packaging and products, or until local systems are developed to capture plastic wastes and convert them to useful products.

This is where local action plays a vital role.

For more information on plastics go to www.sustainablepace.info

VIEWPOINT

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT “CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE” PROGRAMS

In the last few weeks three programs have been released, calling for grant applications.

-  Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency (advertised 26 Nov 2011)
 Grants to “assist industry associations and non-profit organisations deliver information to small and medium businesses and community groups that that demonstrates how they can respond to the carbon price by being smart with their energy use.”
-  Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (advertised 3 Dec 2011)
 “Action On The Ground Program - Carbon farming Futures” ... \$99m program
 Program - “On-farm projects to trial and demonstrate practices.abatement technologies to reduce agricultural greenhouse gas emissions and/or to increase and maintain carbon stored in the soil.”
 Eligible applicants - individuals, groups of landholders, non-government, government and farmer “care” “grower” groups/organisations.
-  Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities
 (advertised 10 Dec 2011) “The Biodiversity Fund” Round 1
 Program - “Support for land managers to store carbon, enhance biodiversity and increase the resilience across the Australian landscape”

These three programs present a great opportunity for South Australia and the regions to commence the transformation of the rural agricultural landscapes. In Newsletter No. 1, I provided a brief viewpoint of the agricultural landscape. I have also added other writings on this topic at my website, www.sustainablespace.info

Rural communities are at significant risk in the future as a result of land clearance. Decline of regional rainfall is linked to removal of surface vegetation cover (see <http://eprints.usq.edu.au/18483/>).

Have a read of the latest (2008) [State of the Environment Report for South Australia](#).

Also, have a read of the recent [Draft Climate Change Adaptation Framework](#). There is some very serious stuff in this Framework.

Large-scale revegetation of the cleared agricultural landscape in South Australia will have long-term benefits. I have stated previously that if just 10% of cleared land (i.e. about 1.2 million hectares) was to be revegetated, a 20-year program at 60,000 ha annually would achieve this.

60,000 ha! That is 15 times the present revegetation rate. It is my assessment however that 20% of cleared land should be revegetated, just to arrest the continual decline in the natural resources base and to support the existing agri-economy into the future. So that means 120,000 ha per year for 20 years.

The employment effects of such a scale of work would be very substantial, and very long-term, and would conceivably underpin a resurgence in many rural communities in SA, including the Mid North. For example ... on-ground assessors, establishment of seed orchards, seed harvesting, direct seeding,

nurseries, TAFE training in all aspects of assessment-orchards-planting-management-measurement, carbon storage assessors, technical capabilities, labourers, off-site managers, carbon traders, biodiversity managers, teachers, program managers, site supervisors ... the list goes on.

The grant programs described above present a very significant entry opportunity to a new agri-economy, one that integrates existing cropping and grazing systems with the return of native vegetation systems. There is no doubt that carbon sequestration provides tremendous scope for additional on-farm income.

But the critical question is ... are we prepared? Aside from the farming sector, are our local Councils ready to access these grants? Is our regional NRM Board ready?

The Carbon Farming Initiative had been in gestation for a year and is now law. The Climate Change Adaptation Framework is still progressing, but what have we heard at the local and regional levels? Here's a quote from the state government ...

“The purpose of the framework is to start the discussion in communities about how to adapt to climate change and take action.” (Ref [Draft Climate Change Adaptation Framework](#) website)

Let's just take action, be a part of “action on the ground” and access as much external assistance as possible to provide the basis for sustainable rural regions.

What are the opportunities for local Councils?

Rural Councils are sitting on one of the largest idle land banks that exist - vacant road reserves! And old defunct water reserves and Crown land. The area is staggering. It is away from the community eye. This land bank was created in the 1800's, but in later years became redundant when the means of transport changed from horse-and-cart to rail to motor vehicle. Also, farm size increased substantially from those early years, thereby resulting in the redundancy of the small farm block (that had to be fronted by a road). Today, vacant road reserves sit like ghosts of the past in the landscape.

Obtaining rent at a pittance is not the best use of this land, nor is it the best use in terms of natural resources management and biodiversity support.

It's now time that this land was given the hand of care, to return its true vale, in addition to participating in carbon farming and biodiversity initiatives. What an income stream this would be for local Councils and communities in the future.

Vacant road reserves, water reserves, and Crown land could be aggregated amongst a group of neighbouring Councils, a single operating unit then created, and the means to revegetate these areas established. Perhaps a joint venture with the private sector would be the optimum model.

Councils could go it alone and include their other vacant and under-utilised land. Whichever way it is done, there are enormous opportunities to be had in the carbon market, and local Councils need to participate in this. And of course, farmers also.

So, where does this bring us to?

The federal government programs are basically urging regional communities, organisations, and farmers to get organised and get involved. What is needed is a big vision, and the systems that subscribe to this vision. On ground action in a big way is what is needed for the future resilience of rural communities.

THIS IS TRANSITION IN ACTION

If you want to be involved in any way in re-setting the compass for rural South Australia, then I urge you to communicate often with your local Council and NRM Board about the plans they have for participating in these programs.

Des Menz

December 2011

PS This viewpoint has stretched the newsletter way beyond its usual length, but as this is my last for a while, then I think I've got an excuse!

End Words

If you want to make a difference, or if you'd like more information about other Transition happenings in our region, contact one of us.

Colin Endean - kunmanara@optusnet.com.au, Des Menz - desmenz@aussiebb.com.au, David Spackman - hilltop@chariot.net.au ... along with all the other TAG contacts.

STAY ON OUR NEWSLETTER LIST - DO NOTHING.

OPT OUT BY SENDING AN EMAIL WITH "Remove from TAG newsletter" TO ...

kunmanara@optusnet.com.au

This newsletter was prepared by Des Menz.

Contributions about Transition topics are welcome.

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**To all readers of this newsletter and TAG'ers all, may you have a
great Christmas and a healthy, happy 2012!**