



Welcome to the latest newsletter. SDN members live at places from Rockhampton to Melbourne and from Darwin to Adelaide. We are a loose network of like-minded people all doing our best to make a positive difference, and we need a way to keep in contact. Feel free to send us your contributions, and in the meantime - enjoy this edition!

Annual SDN workshop – Thredbo, January

Fifteen participants gathered at Brindabella Lodge, a new venue for SDN. It proved very suitable. To start, people introduced themselves with sharing about their background and interests. The timetable was then formed by offers from participants to run sessions (typically one and a half hours). The following sessions and topics resulted:

- Small group discussion of death, politics, sex and religion made for an interesting start and enabled early sharing of personal concerns and ideas.
- Two participants held a dialogue on common concerns shared over many years, especially in relation to Indigenous communities.
- Creative exercises to show ways in which movement, mind and spirit interact to enhance wellbeing and awareness.
- A session on Restorative Practice and how it is being extended in areas of justice, education, welfare and community.
- A cross-cultural program at Charles Darwin University with the Yolnu people, about mediation, conflict resolution and cultural sensitivity.
- Reflections on the SDN process and methods that enable going deeper than normal conversation based on mutual trust and respectful learning.
- A meditation exercise and a 'mapping' human sculpture to focus on mindfulness and the ways in which SDN might develop further.
- Bullying in schools and what might be done to change the conditions that cause it, in small groups to share stories.
- Looking to 2019 the group spoke about their hopes, fears, visions and challenges for themselves as individuals, for the wider society, and for the world.
- A session on the different functions and responses of the human brain, especially the right and left sides in responding to crises/accidents.
- The Murray-Darling Basin Plan - challenges caused from overuse of water, droughts, and the emergence of Indigenous people as significant contributors to decision-making.
- Integration of the feminine principle in human behaviour and potential for growth in wisdom and peacefulness.
- A theory of human history and nature, ways in which we have overreached our power through trading, money, ownership and authority.
- Reflections on the migrant experience, through the story of a migrant who has been in Australia for many years and experienced the good and the bad aspects of our culture.
- Report on the campaign to include non-religious (secular) pastoral counsellors in hospitals.

An SDN business meeting was also held to decide on future workshops (national and regional) and other SDN-related concerns. Overall the feedback was very positive about the workshop.

[Thanks to David Purnell for these notes.]



Participants at the 2019 SDN workshop at Thredbo – Standing: Michael, Harry, Lee, Mark, Rosaria, Ian, Julie, David, Christine, David. Sitting: Ken, John, Kath, Judy, Joan.



During our free time, four of us ventured up the chairlift to Mt Kosciuszko - others swam, walked or relaxed. Ken, Michael, Mark and Harry at the summit.

Harry's blog

In their book *Active Hope*, Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone define an activist as 'anyone who is active for a purpose bigger than personal gain' (2012:217). By that definition, I'm an activist. I'm making this the topic of my first newsletter blog because I know that many of you are too.

Active hope is about becoming active in bringing about what we hope for. Examples of activism backed by hope are the climate movement, campaigns for refugees and asylum seekers, indigenous rights, dying with dignity, advocates for disability services, and many more. Historically, bringing an end to slavery, the US civil rights movement, and votes for women are examples of activism that changed society.

When I retired from the national parks service in 2012, I knew I had to make meaningful sense of my new-found freedom, and that meant being an activist. When I'm not working as the SDN coordinator, I'm active in the climate movement. This involves a lot of networking, as does my SDN work of course, and this fulfils another requirement of a happy and healthy retirement – social contact.

Ned Icton started SDN back in the 1970s and always had a lot to say about activism although he didn't call it that. (I cannot find any use of this term in his writings, but he gets to the same end-point!) In his life story notes, he says a major shift is needed, to greater emotional intelligence through working on our own self-improvement, to build relationships for social development, and create supportive and resilient local communities.

These tasks complement one another, each reinforcing the other as our efforts progress. This is a positive circular growth spiral and I see it happening in my own activism and networking. I get involved in an issue, taking it on with my intellect and my emotions, work on it with other people who share my concerns and give me new ideas, which in turn deepens my involvement and makes me feel more effective, so I continue my own personal development, and my issues-based community development.

No doubt you've had similar experiences. If you have, and would like to write about them, please send me your thoughts and ideas. It's not just me who can blog in this newsletter!

Young people get active on climate

A new demographic is ascending in the struggle for real action on the climate – school students. And it's an inspiration to us, many of whom can be described as 'Grey Power' activists. Their inspiration is Greta Thunberg, the now -famous Swedish student activist, age 16. Greta has been striking off school for climate action every Friday for months. Hear her stunning Ted Talk (11 minutes, with no notes) at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=EAmUIEsN9A

The next Student's Strike for Climate on 15 March, where 'Grey Power' is most welcome to attend in support, see:

<https://www.schoolstrike4climate.com/support-us>

Also listen to an inspiring interview with several of these young activists from across Australia on ABC RN Sunday Extra, 10/3/19 - *The climate kids are coming for you*. Go to this link and 'Listen now':

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/the-roundtable/the-climate-kids-are-coming-for-you/10882394>



Young activists – Students Strike for Climate last year

Community Development Queensland (CD-QLD)



CD-QLD is a network of people and organisations who have a passion for community development. Their 2019 conference will be held in Toowoomba from 23-25 October. The theme is 'A Place for Everyone'. More information and a call for interactive workshops will be coming out soon. More about the history of these conferences, themes and key note speakers can be found at www.cdqld.org and please see this link to the recently adopted Conference Vision Statement: https://gallery.mailchimp.com/394293d7ee5320d6e1cacc740/files/ae115da9-22b6-4ef3-8a93-b23e9d218981/CD_Qld_Conference_Vision_Statement.pdf

Listen up – this is serious

Another story on ABC RN Sunday Extra on 10/3/19 is the kind of alarm bell that Ned Icton would have quickly responded to with one of his long and deep emails (how we miss them!) An alarming expose explains how billionaires of the world are plotting to take over democratic governments. (No, this is not a conspiracy theory).

The interview is with Nancy Maclean, a professor of history and public policy in the USA, and author of *Democracy in Chains*. She warns Australian voters about powerful lobby groups using the 'i360' analytics company to manipulate votes:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/sundayextra/7.30/10876034>

Landcare – an obvious way to make this a better world

Good for ABC Radio National. Recently there was a wonderful story about Ourimbah Landcare. Here is the link for your interest and more inspiration:

<https://www.abc.net.au/radionational/programs/lifematters/the-community-group-turning-farmland-back-into-rainforest/10771398>

ABC Friends

While SDN is a non-party-political organisation, anything we do to make this a better world for ourselves, our children and grand-children, is inevitably going to be political. Politics is about who wins and who loses, so if we want a fairer tax system or better health and education services, there will be winners (us) and losers (those who want more tax cuts and less government).

With that in mind, why not join ABC Friends, if you are not already a member? The ABC is the trusted voice of Australia yet is constantly under attack from the current government and needs us to speak up for a restoration of funding (nearly \$400 million cuts since 2013, 1000 jobs lost), and freedom from political interference. Go to:

<https://me.abcfriends.org.au/index.php/join-renew-abc-friends/>

Best regards,

Harry Creamer, SDN Coordinator
02 6582 6187; 0431 158 252