



SDN

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SDN Newsletter November 2019

Join us in January

The high point of the SDN calendar is the annual workshop and the 2020 event is shaping up to be memorable. We've found a venue that really suits SDN – leafy campus, on-site accommodation, large kitchen, dining and meeting spaces, and a pastoral location. It's called the Don Bosco Retreat Centre, nestled in the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges about an hour east of Melbourne. See <https://donboscoretreats.org.au/>

More information is on the flyer and SDN website where bookings are available online at <https://sdn.ned.org.au/>

CD-QLD conference

This was in Toowoomba in October. SDN was represented by Kath McLachlan and Harry Creamer. Other participants were from local councils, neighbourhood and community centres, co-operatives, youth programs, and NGOs like Multicultural Australia, Red Cross, and PCYC. Academics included Tina Lathouras (University of the Sunshine Coast), Peter Westoby (QUT), and Patrick Danaher, Deborah Mulligan and Janet Verbyla from USQ.

The venue was the impressive restored Empire Theatre and the conference was extremely well organised, '5 Star' quality - venue, catering, printed materials, conference dinner, etc. From learning about the early origins of CD from elder statesman Tony Kelly ("This immensely difficult but equally rewarding methodology we know as CD"), to 'Preparing and Supporting Children (in a disaster)', the sessions were varied and interesting. Kath and Harry presented a session called *NED's Story* about Ned Iceton and the SDN.

A matrix was given out at the welcome session. It lists 4 Core Values of CD:

- Embrace inclusion.
- Build relationships.
- Give voice (when there is silence).
- Unlock the power or truth (speak truth to power).

From 'I to we', we can all agree!



Tina Lathouras, Tony Kelly, Kath McLachlan and Harry Creamer at the conference.

What is community development?

CD-QLD has tackled this question and the results can be viewed at – <http://www.cdqld.org/principles.html>

They summarise key principles:

- Work *with* people rather than *for* them.
- Enhance participation in the community and in decision making.
- Focus on geographic communities as integrated wholes.
- Build on existing strengths, skills and capacities of communities.
- Provide opportunities for relationship-building within and between communities and people.

Peter Westoby has created a 10-minute video called *Exploring Community Development* - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cq1l81NT70&feature=youtu.be>

SDN in Canberra

A small group of SDN regulars in Canberra, led by Christine Larkin, organised a meeting for newcomers to SDN, hosted by Judy Angus. Judy's first SDN workshop was just this year, at Thredbo. Eight people attended, four of whom had not been to an SDN workshop. The gathering lasted an afternoon and an evening meal, and started with introductions, an outline of SDN, and a reading of the workshop contract.

Current concerns were shared - overcoming social isolation in a country town, building stronger neighbourhoods in the suburbs, engagement with Aboriginal people, and issues for grandparents

being carers for grandchildren. Notes were circulated to participants in the form of an *aide memoire* on a confidential basis. Although it ran for just an afternoon, people said they would have liked a whole day!

This is a great example of introducing new people to SDN and if you'd like to do something similar, and want advice, contact Chris - christine.ashdance@gmail.com or David Purnell - davidpurnell68@gmail.com

David's Hiroshima Day address in Canberra – 6 August
(organised by Rotary)

'As we recall the devastating impact of the atomic bombs that fell on Japan in 1945, it is hard to imagine that, of a population of 300,000 in Hiroshima, 80,000 died immediately and 60,000 more died by the end of that year. The years since have seen efforts to ensure that the 1945 tragedy does not recur, yet we remain unable to rid ourselves of the cancer of nuclear weapons.

We have just seen the ending of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty that restrained the two superpowers from expanding their stockpiles. The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) remains at risk and the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to limit Iran's nuclear capacity has been seriously compromised by the withdrawal of the USA.

Recent pressure to ban nuclear weapons, by the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and some non-nuclear nations, led to the UN passing the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017 by a majority of countries (122). However the Australian government has not been supportive. It has refused to sign or ratify so far, apparently convinced of the need to remain under the US nuclear umbrella for security. A survey by Ipsos showed that 79% of Australians want the government to sign. 200 Parliamentarians have signed the ICAN pledge. Faith-based groups, unions, lawyers, academics and many citizens have joined the movement. In addition, some 18 city councils (and the ACT) have endorsed the appeal to sign the Treaty. See - www.icanw.org.au

As the risk of a nuclear arms race rises, we must commit ourselves to the task of reversing the trend towards global disaster. Urge your MP and senator(s) to sign the Pledge. Talk to others about this issue. And challenge the investment of bank, super and pension funds in companies that are involved in the production of nuclear weapons.



David Purnell

Harry's blog

We are living in a period that's rich with intriguing public policy issues, any one of which would make a good topic at an SDN workshop! Consider the debate over religious freedom. Or the building industry crisis signifying a breakdown of trust on a massive scale (literally!) Or the mismanagement of Australia's water resources. The list goes on.

Right now, the *topic de jour* seems to be how to cope with living in a 'post truth, post shame' world. Boris Johnson won Brexit on a lie and gets rewarded for it and Donald Trump tells an average of 13 lies a day. (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2019/08/12/president-trump-has-made-false-or-misleading-claims-over-days/>)

Fortunately, help is at hand. The Sydney Initiative for Truth (SIFT) is concerned with the need for evidence, trust and reason in the infosphere. SIFT's researchers aim to understand the 'post truth' crisis through philosophy, linguistics, political science, public health, media, environmental and data science. They investigate issues around truth, public discourse, commercial influence in research, historical trends in 'truth decay', cognitive biases, political and media spin, fake news, the role of language, and the decline of trust in expertise. (<https://sydneyinitiativefortruth.org/>)

It reminds me of Orwell's *1984*. The hero Winston, works in the Ministry of Truth where his job is to change all news from the past to suit Big Brother's current agenda (which itself changes daily!) According to a new book, *This is Not Propaganda*, this goes on in Russia right now – fake reality is manufactured and fed to social media on a daily basis to destabilise opposition.

No doubt you've been miffed by fake news, the power of social media and the new normal. If you have, and would like to write about this or any other topic, send me your thoughts and ideas. And remember in this context, one of Ned Icteton's favourite words, signifying something he felt to be all-important in personal, social and community development, was *authenticity*.

Venues

Do you know any good venues for SDN small-group workshops? If so, please let us know. See lead article above for what is ideal; other places may also be possible if accommodation, catering and meeting rooms are close.



Website – www.sdn.ned.org.au