Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities

Vibrant, productive rural communities are integral to the long-term sustainability of Australia

Summit 2011: 21 - 23 September

Rural Futures Matter

A Sustainable Australia

Interview with Professor John Halsey

When did the idea of a Summit emerge, and what were the initial themes/topics you saw included?

The idea of a summit or a major conference focused exclusively on rural Australia, sustainability and education had been brewing for quite a while. As soon as I received formal confirmation of my appointment in August 2009, I made the decision to book out the School of Education for an event in September 2011. I thought 2 years would be enough time to develop some groundswell—along with many others—that might lead to something of real moment happening, about progressing Australia’s sustainability and possible roles of education in rural areas for this.

What is your vision for the Summit?

My vision for the Summit is that it will be somewhat of a watershed in terms of highlighting how important rural Australia, and those who live and work there, are to the sustainability of Australia. I am particularly thinking of small to medium sized rural communities which do not grab the headlines about the latest mining boom or gas deal. It seems to me that we have forgotten that for people to remain in these places and produce the food and fibre we all require, they need access to high quality human services like education and health without a sense of struggle.

What do you hope the outcomes of the Summit to be?

It is critical that policy makers deeply understand that Australia as part of the international community is on a high speed train ride towards a world with 40% more people than is currently on the planet. We arrive at the station in 2050! This has enormous consequences for the basics for living— it has been estimated that just to meet the food demands of our population growth, we will have to increase production by about 70%. Policies of governments at all levels and the private sector need to reflect this, especially in terms of education, health and other fundamentals for vibrant, productive rural communities.

In Partnership with SPERA

SPERA is delighted to be partnering with the Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities to present Summit 2011. It is quite a departure from SPERA’s usual conference format, and timely as it will enable a set of recommendations to be developed that aim to give decision makers a direction for rural, regional and remote policy development across a number of areas. SPERA brings extensive experience in providing national forums on regional and remote education.

While there is still much work to do in addressing the education differentials between urban and rural Australia, I am always excited by the amount of activity taking place on a number of fronts to improve regional and remote education.

The Summit, as previous national forums have, will be a wonderful opportunity to put forward a vision for the future as well as being a platform for sharing ideas and establishing networks. I look forward to seeing you there.

Emmy Terry, SPERA President

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Daniel Birch started teaching in 1989 working at a low docile school, managing behaviour problem students. Developing understandings of how children learn, what motivates them and how to help them succeed are central to the work that Daniel is involved in. He is the current principal of Discovery 1 School in Christchurch, New Zealand - a concept of children leading learning into a thriving reality. Daniel and his school have hosted over 6000 international visitors in that time. Discovery 1 encourages children to self manage every learning process, make appropriate decisions around their learning needs and challenge themselves to push their own learning boundaries. The special character dictates that learning will be centered around each child’s individual passions, interests and needs. Daniel has steered the journey of this school as principal since 2004 and it is still moving its learning forward and challenging the boundaries of teaching and learning.

Professor John Halsey commenced his career as a teacher, and was a principal of two schools in South Australia. He has been the Associate Director of the Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia, the Executive Director in the South Australian Department of Education and Children’s Services and a Chief of Staff to a State Minister for Education and Children’s Services. He has also worked as an Educational Facilities Project Officer and for the Australian School’s Commission Choice and Diversity in Education initiative. He is the former Executive Officer of the Rural Education Forum Australia, and currently the Sidney Myer Chair of Rural Education and Communities in the School of Education at Flinders University. His research interests focus on rural schools and community sustainability, framing rural and remote education in non-deficit ways and innovative/integrated policies and operations, determining the personal and institutional costs of pre-service rural and remote placements, comparing and contrasting these with allied human services like health and justice, and formulating appropriate resourcing policy and models.

Professor Graeme Hugo is ARC Australian Professorial Fellow, Professor of the Discipline of Geography, Environment and Population and Director of the National Centre for Social Applications of Geographic Information Systems at the University of Adelaide. His research interests are in population issues in Australia and South East Asia, especially migration. He is the author of over three hundred books, articles in scholarly journals and chapters in books, as well as a large number of conference papers and reports. In 2002 he secured an ARC Federation Fellowship over five years for his research project, "The new paradigm of international migration to and from Australia: dimensions, causes and implications". His recent research has focused on migration and development, environment and migration and migration policy. In 2009 he was awarded an ARC Australian Professorial Fellowship over five years for his research project “Circular migration in Asia, the Pacific and Australia: Empirical, theoretical and policy dimensions”.

Professor Jo-Anne Reid is Associate Dean, Teacher Education at Charles Sturt University and co-editor of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education. She is past president of AARE and Vice President of the World Association of Research in Education, she is committed to the place of research in teacher education more generally. She has worked as a literacy teacher educator in three rural universities and is committed to improving the preparation of teachers for schools in rural and remote locations. She has worked as a CI on the River Literacies ARC Linkage project focused on sustainability within the Murray-Darling Basin, and as a CI on the ARC Discovery Project TERRAnova (Renewing Rural Teacher Education: Sustaining Schooling for Sustainable Futures) from 2008-2010 she has studied schools and practices that appear to be successful in attracting and retaining teachers to rural communities. She is currently working on an ALTC project looking at the assessment of graduate teacher standards related accessing community resources for Indigenous and Non-Indigenous preservice teachers.
Professor Matthew Tonts was appointed the Director of the Institute for Regional Development in early 2005. Having grown up and lived for many years in rural Western Australia, he has an excellent knowledge of the issues facing regional communities. Matthew has a background in Geography, with considerable experience in the analysis of population change, economic development, environmental management, regional planning, service and infrastructure provision, and social issues. Recent research has focused on economic change in the agricultural sector, rural land use, planning conflict in the plantation timber industry, the impact of depopulation on social institutions in rural areas, labour market dynamics, and regional development policy and planning.

Trudy Vonhoff is the General Manager for Commercial and Agribusiness Banking accountable for providing services to Westpac’s commercial and agribusiness customers. In this role, Trudy is responsible for the investment in and performance of all Westpac’s local Commercial Business Banking Centres to ensure a long term view of creating strong communities and businesses for our commercial customers. Trudy also leads a dedicated agribusiness team that is focused on delivering experienced, professional advice and services to our agribusiness customers, with a specific focus on grains, dairy and beef. She is passionate about helping women become successful and effective leaders and has been a key influencer on Westpac’s strategy and initiatives to support women across the group. For our customers, Trudy is particularly supportive of Westpac’s Women’s Markets initiatives, and specifically the Westpac-sponsored RIRDC Rural Woman of the Year program which assists rural women build capacity and secure leadership roles, while helping build strong financial futures.

Paul Wand AM is the Chair of Ninti One and the CRC for Remote Economic Participation. He is the Principal and the Managing Director of Wand Associates, which was established in 2000. After a long and successful career in the mining and extractive industries in a number of very senior positions, Paul took early retirement in 2000. Because of the successful innovative work he had done while working with the major mining Group, Rio Tinto, and with Aboriginal communities, he has chosen to continue consulting working in that area. His work with Aboriginal communities was recognised by the University of Wollongong, his alma mater, when he was awarded the inaugural Chancellor’s Award for Community Service by Alumnus in October 2007. In June 2009 Paul was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia (AM) “For service to the Indigenous community through the development of cross cultural awareness between traditional owners and the resources sector.”

Professor Simone White is currently Director of Professional Experience in the School of Education at Monash University. Simone’s research involves both theoretical and practical investigations into the fields of teacher education, rural education and professional learning. Simone co-leads the Rural and Regional Education and Communities research group and is a member of the Centre for Research in Educational Futures and Innovation. She is currently a Chief Investigator of an Australian Research Council Grant with colleagues from across Australia, and leads an Australian Teaching and Learning Council initiative which aims to develop a curriculum that is both inclusive of rural education needs and forward thinking in meeting the growing needs of well prepared teachers for a rural workforce shortage.

New Program Details for Friday 23rd September

The Youth for the Future Keynote will be a snapshot of four young people from South Australia, Western Australia, Queensland and the USA, who live and work in rural areas. They’ll talk about how rural professions are alive and prospering, the levels of engagement that exist in their local communities, and will present solutions and recommendations for a strong rural future.

Critical Input 6 is called Rural Australia—Making it Work! Three representatives from rural and regional communities will speak about how innovation, hard work and community clout reinvigorated their local towns and areas.

Speakers and Presenters are to be confirmed and we will keep you posted via the Summit Program webpage.
In Partnership with REFA

Over the past decade the Rural Education Forum Australia has worked to advocate on behalf of Australian rural and remote learning communities. We understand the importance of a vital and sustainable rural sector to our nation’s future prosperity.

The Rural Futures Matter Summit is an exciting opportunity for individuals and organisations, concerned with the role that education plays in building sustainable communities, to meet and discuss issues central to that sustainability. The challenge for the participants is to produce practical and workable solutions to the issues raised at the summit for consideration by all levels of government and the private sector.

The fact that the nationally published educational outcomes for rural and remote students are declining, at a time when government resources into rural educational programs and initiatives are increasing, should start ringing alarm bells. Why is this happening? The possible answers to this question must be urgently canvassed. The Summit is an important opportunity to do this.

The recommendations arising from the Summit take on national significance and will hopefully influence policy development and program change. I look forward to the opportunity of making a contribution.

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about population growth and its impact on the planet. In my professional lifetime, the world’s population has doubled.

Following on from the above, we have 4 grandchildren- enough said.

Essentially I approach life with a hopeful orientation but I also believe you have to add liberal doses of realism and clever, hard work to optimise hope becoming reality.

Finally, one of my interests is how scale and spaces as well as people and places shape and influence human behaviour and our interactions with the built and natural environments. Rural contexts broadly defined, are rich with each of these. We need to remember that we are sojourners, that in the end, nature has the last word- I do not want my grandchildren or anyone else for that matter, to hear the words ‘extinction of…..’ as their last words.

Some additional words

People with a wide variety of experiences and perspectives joining with each other and a great range of speakers will make the Rural Futures Matter Summit a memorable and a worthwhile event.

Register now, tell friends and/or colleagues, ring or email for further information if you need it.

Registration

Registration for the Summit is via our website. Go to: www.flinders.edu.au/education/rural/summit-2011/ under which you’ll find the registration page.

The cost for the Summit is as follows:

- $420 (Early Bird until 21.07.2011)
- $140 per day Single Day booking (until 21.07.2011)
- $420 for SPERA members
- $480 (Full Registration after 21.07.2011)
- $160 per day Single Day booking (after 21.07.2011)
- $200 for Undergraduate students
- $80 per Single Day booking for Undergraduate students
- $140 per Single Day booking for SA Tertiary staff
- $110 p/p for the Dinner (held Thursday 22.09.2011)

You can pay with your credit card (online and paper-based) or with a cheque. Registration for the Summit closes 7 September 2011.

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