

## Stream Management & Education for Sustained Communities

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It is now late in the 20th century and one must ask where is community education? Has the community been meaningful included in our plans upon plans to rehabilitate watercourses. People can help sustain if they know how.

People re-vegetate the riparian zone and clear out the noxious weeds but will that repair hold together if the "Catchment Community" is basically illiterate and forgetful when it comes to catchment care?

Why catchment care? We all live in a water catchment area not in the water don't we? There is no visual relationship to water unless you live next to a watercourse or there are extreme circumstances. We live in a geographic location on land.

How is community education approached? Realistic amounts of available funding in the pursuit of innovative Catchment education/marketing needs to be allocated. It needs to be ongoing and not perfunctory.

What has marketing/education got to do with stream management? Start rehabilitating 30 kilometre lengths of streams and spend insufficient time on sustained innovative community education/marketing in the human catchment community. It is possible that your endeavours may fail through avoidable ignorance in the water catchment community.

In the challenge of rehabilitating Australia's streams, the systematic educational/marketing of Water Catchment Care for communities must inevitably be included. Why? People need to know how to care for this land. Water catchment care education/marketing creates a sense of belonging. People can sustain. How? Read on.

### THE MAIN POINTS OF THIS PAPER

- Sustainable stream management requires a water catchment literate community.
- The message of care for the water catchment must have some local familiarity.
- The message must be ongoing and not perfunctory people forget.
- Celebration is an integral component of belonging for any community
- Obligatory facilitation of local catchment care for continued existence

### 1. EDUCATION

Are Catchment management plans supposed to integrate society with their environment?

People are truly the heart. The heart of the problem and the heart of the solution.

Local conditions, knowledge and narratives need to be taken into account for effective water catchment literacy within a human community (water catchment literacy is knowledge of how the natural drainage system functions).

Education is a lifelong process. Any education strategy needs to be systematic in method (to cover the entire human catchment community) and very clear in message.

Reading and writing (ie. Literacy) has been practised for many years. Reading the landscape (water catchment literacy) requires similar educative effort.

The message being promoted through any **Community education/marketing strategy** (Processes whereby best practice in caring for local environs by communities are elicited through clear and meaningful messages) in an integral component for success.

If people living in a water catchment area (i.e a geographic location) are unaware of how to care for their land and water, do not know how the drainage system works, then the job of stream management in a sustainable sense is made extremely more difficult if not impossible.

People see what they want to see. What people see is based on familiarity, on previous experience or on a preconditioned set. The sender of a message must know their target audience, especially their education, needs, interests and realms of experience. The message must be phrased (and presented) so that the receiver of that message has some familiarity and, thus, an understanding. (Schiffman/Kanuk 1983)

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Educating communities in water catchment care (best practice in land and water management by people) extends the communal understanding about the natural processes of that land and, thus, their ability to care for that land and water.

“Water Catchment Care,” as an educational concept has evolved from a logical progression of events and understandings through the interaction of sagacious people.

## 2. FACILITATION

So how is local catchment care facilitated in the human community?

How do people become **water catchment literate**? (Communities living in conscious positive relationship with their environment).

**Sustaining education/marketing:** The education/marketing concept that forms the overview and ongoing base of water catchment literacy.

**Meaningful consultation:** The moral requirement for planners and managers to consult and interact with the community when planning local and physical on-ground works.

**Effective Participation:** The need for both government and community to participate in meaningful local decision-making.

**Local Celebration:** The act of people coming together to celebrate and initiate the process of a sustainable relationship with their local environment. These local celebrations are the vehicle for the dissemination of basic water catchment literacy and local information and knowledge. These events also provide a key for linking community effort.

### 2.1 Facilitation method 1.

The water catchment area must be defined for people to view, through the use of maps, 3D models and simulations. Then naming and highlighting major traffic networks, schools and shopping centres as well as the stream order or drainage lines will enhance and expand people’s perception of where they live.

As individuals or as a society, people gain the sense of place of where they “fit in”, where they have a sense of place or belonging and they are informed as to which stream, creek or waterway is in their locality.

The familiarity of their local surroundings, of where they live becomes a template for the message of catchment care.

Specific messages for local conditions further reinforces both a sense of belonging and the message of care for our environment.

### 2.2 Facilitation method 2.

The same transport corridors can be used to define the catchment with signs strategically placed on the side of the road or in local people gathering areas.

The signs used in Christie Creek (my) catchment area (a coastal catchment south of Adelaide, 55% urban and 45% rural) read quite simply

CHRISTIE CREEK CATCHMENT  
do your share for catchment care

There were 24 signs placed throughout the catchment in 1995. The only problem is they have become collector’s items for the community and are never defaced only stolen.

The only problem with any sign or billboard is that they lose their educational value and impact through quickly merging into the familiar landscape. They become the background.

## 3. OBLIGATORY FACILITATION

Facilitation of local catchment care is obligatory for the human catchment community’s survival, as well as the water catchment area’s survival.

The methods of defining the water catchment area to the human community described earlier are cheap and effective as well as being short term and temporary.

The message must be ongoing, otherwise people start to forget and assume that the task has been completed. People are fickle and forgetful, they need to be reminded. Plus have the desire to reconnect and respect the water catchment.

We as a people live in a consumer society that abounds with messages about what constitutes an agreeable way of life, so the community’s appetite to reconnect their local catchment needs profound encouragement because the message is profound.

If people are the first priority, then it is imperative that the desire for good water catchment care is created through effective and positive community education, marketing, consultation, participation and celebration of their local environment.

Maslow’s theory of human motivation consists of five levels. They start with physiological needs of food, water, air, shelter and sex. They move onto safety and security, needs of protection, order, stability. Then needs of affection, friendship and belonging.

FO(L)CC feels that the higher the higher levels described by Manslow (egoistic need and the need for self actualisation) can be fulfilled by the celebration aspect of our community education program.

The need to belong is a human motivation which can be tapped into through water catchment care education.

Once a person knows that a sense of place which can be developed through water catchment care, they become aware that they are part of a greater whole.

People can be drawn into the process of water catchment care to assist. A marketing/education program will help. Human networks within a community represent the only true hope that Australia has of being sustained for the future.

#### **4.CELEBRATION.**

Human catchment community networks value add to each other's experiences and this only happens when people come together.

In our experience as pioneers in education and facilitation of local catchment care, we have found that people need a very good reason as well as a few fun incentives to participate in their water catchment community's activities and ethos.

Rewards and courtesy (such as sustenance for the worker) enhance the community's perception of belonging to the whole process of water catchment care.

Anyone who attempts to reach the heart of this problem (of sustainable stream management) without adequately consulting, educating and involving their human communities is bound to suffer major and avoidable setbacks.

##### **4.1 Celebration example**

By actually participating in a process that creatively explores issues, the participant becomes better informed about the issue itself, and have fun along the way (Williams, 1993).

A "Catchment Fair" held at Morphett Vale west primary school is an example of people coming together to celebrate their local environment.

The naming of the fair a "Catchment Fair" was a deliberate move. It was designed to reinforce that the familiarity of the community's local surroundings was indeed in geographic location. A water catchment.

The fair was attended by 1,800 children and 300 adults over 2 days. The neighbouring schools within the catchment were asked to send a number of classes and these were brought in by bus at no cost to the school or students.

Upon arrival the participants received a "Catchment carry bag". This was an A4 size bag with the map of catchment on one side and the schools location highlighted. This carry bag further reinforced the message that we all live in a catchment.

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There were class room displays which contained a range of art work, 3d models and information generated by the children about the current state of their creek.

A huge blue marquee housed all the interactive displays and information about catchment care.

To strengthen the message of care, there was a deliberate mix of entertainment based around balance. The balance theme was supplied by an acrobatic troupe called "Cirkidz".

#### **5. OUTCOMES**

The outcome of the facilitation program which has been described can be divided into a number of components.

##### **Social**

When preparing the catchment plan for Christie Creek in 1995, B.C. Tonkin and associates acknowledged the level of awareness in the community of integrated catchment management which had come from the preceding education campaign run by FO(L)CC.

##### **Community**

Anecdotal evidence gathered through word of mouth (no market research was carried out due to the whole process being severely under-funded) suggested that the signs were effective in increasing peoples awareness of their responsibility in water catchment care. Community reaction to the signage spread throughout the catchment on the roadside has been positive. When speaking at a Rotary Club some of the members indicated that the street signs had given them a profound sense and place and belonging.

### **School Link**

Our School link has been active since 1992. The many activities and clean ups, revegetation, street parades (Australia Day, Christmas pageants) with school children taking part have all promoted the message of water catchment care.

Many students have appreciated FO(L)CC's innovative message of care and knowledge for their local environment. This has ranged from an early play which featured the "Catchment Cat" (a polluting cat) who chooses to be belted (ie. Change behaviour) in order to care and acknowledge his water catchment area.

The catchment fair in 1996 also created a sense of belonging and greater awareness, which left many students wanting more knowledge and contact. Despite lack of funds and the amount of work involved, schoolchildren desire the excitement and sense of belonging by these celebrations.

### **Environmental Outcomes**

These are available from Onkaparinga City Council, in their works program of the Christie Creek Catchment Management Plan. This Plan was completed in 1995 and we are led to believe, the first in South Australia.

### **6. CONCLUSIONS**

Stream management requires that a sense of balance be returned to waterways.

The on ground works need the support of the human community.

**There is a need in this country for a national strategy of catchment care marketing/education.**

Education is a life-long process. The marketing/education of catchment care is imperative.

Sustainability flows when the heart of the people have been tapped.

People must have the desire to acknowledge their local surroundings then behaviour can start to change.

People who learn to celebrate (with each other) their local environment are bound for a greater understanding of sustainability and the quality of their place in their community.

The question is, how to empower a community to manage their water catchment area?

The answer is to consistently tell people they live in a water catchment area and that care of that area has to be shared by all of us.

### **7. REFERENCES.**

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