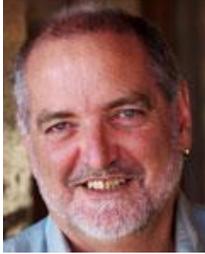


Spotlight Snapshots for Wednesday 21 October 2015

Regional Production and Conservation Landscapes



Facilitator: Prof. Max Finlayson,
Director, Institute for Land, Water &
Society, Charles Sturt University

Regional production and conservation landscapes will initially be explored from three perspectives. First, by examining the determinants for adoption of current natural resources management processes. Second, by reflecting this review onto the issue of agricultural restructuring and disadvantaged farmers. Education and sustainability as conflicted missions provide a third and linking point of focus. These perspectives will be framed in the context of the need to understand the interconnected roles of natural and modified ecosystems and human ecology in understanding the socio-economic dynamics of production and conservation landscapes.

The proposition: Don't demonise carbon! It is essential to regional landscapes, rural and remote communities and you provides a fourth perspective. For example, by reflecting on the value of retaining and putting carbon into the soil to maintain and enhance production and conservation landscapes.

Included will be a critical consideration of the inherent value of coal as a source of new 21st Century products, rather than simple burning a valuable non-renewable resource to generate electric power. For example, producing and using carbon-in-water' fuel from either brown or black coal to reduce the vulnerability of primary producers and the transport sector across rural and remote Australia.

Building Capacity: key policy trends including regions and their towns and cities



Facilitator: Paul Rosair, Principal,
NAJA Business Consulting Services

There has been much activity in the regional space with White Papers on Reform of the Federation, Agricultural Competitiveness, Energy, Tax and Developing Northern Australia as well as a range of Royalty for Regions Programs, and a Senate Enquiry into Regional Cities. All these policy foci have identified challenges for in areas of governance, capability, land tenure, native title, government approvals, fiscal policy and planning alignment across all four layers of government; Federal, State, Regional and Local. This session will look at what sort of capacities regional Australia needs to have and how regions might build this capacity.

Factors Influencing the Success of Regional Businesses



Facilitator: Prof. Mark Morrison,
Sub-Dean (Research), Professor in
Economics, Charles Sturt University

Entrepreneurship researchers from the Faculty of Business at CSU will present results on three Australian Research Council funded projects that focus on developing regional businesses, the factors that influence the performance of regional businesses, and the contributions that they make to their regional economies. They focus on key interest groups such as Indigenous businesses and humanitarian immigrants, as well as mainstream regional businesses. Issues examined include innovative ways to develop businesses, such as the model of village entrepreneurship which harnesses unique local resources, as well as identifying a range of practices and resources that improve firm competitiveness and success.

Delivering Productivity Outcomes from Technological and Digital Disruption



Facilitator: Andrew Crowley, Director
VET Delivery, TAFE NSW Western
Institute

Access to education across the school, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and tertiary sectors is a particular challenge in many rural and regional areas of Australia. Linked to this challenge is the need for education at the various levels to prepare people for a pathway into further study or entry into the workplace and employment of their choice. In addition employees need ongoing access to relevant and current education and skills development opportunities across their working lives. A challenge for educational providers is to meet the training and workforce needs of local industry and communities despite the challenges presented by vast distances, low student/staff numbers and diverse industry needs. This challenge is best met by close working relationships between educational providers and employers which see the development of local initiatives with real outcomes.

Working with Small to Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)



Facilitator: Dr. Kim Houghton,
General Manager, Policy and Research,
Regional Australia Institute and Adjunct
Associate Professor, University of Canberra

SMEs are often characterised as the 'engine room' of an economy – even more so in many regional economies where they make up the vast majority of businesses. How can regional leaders and economic development practitioners work most effectively to harness and extend the capacity and potential of these businesses? The first part of the workshop will have participants sharing their experiences in working with SMEs, discovering the success factors and pitfalls. The second part will step through practical application of five tools and resources for supporting SME growth. The strengths and weaknesses of each tool and resource will be covered, and discussed to highlight the filtering needed to select the right approach for the target group of SMEs. Some programs work best for groups of compatible growth-oriented businesses, while others work best for independently-minded individuals either starting out or expanding. The third part of the workshop will involve participants designing an SME growth program matched to the needs of their region.