

emerge from present educational experiences completely enterprising and entrepreneurial, willing and able to cut through 'environmental red tape' and to get on with 'wealth creation'. Educators need support materials which will help students become citizens who look for more than easy answers. In this respect *Resources* make a contribution—but one which itself needs balancing with educational materials raising the kinds of questions to which I have referred. Perhaps *Resources: Working for the Right Balance* is, like South Australia's Olympic Dam mine, replete with gold, silver and copper—but users need to be aware that it has other, less visible, components. 🌱

After an upbringing in several parts of country South Australia where he saw many examples, in his words, of "the land losing ground", Peter Dunn now teaches science at Hendon Primary School in suburban Adelaide. He is secretary of the South Australian Earth Science Teachers' Association and of the primary wing of the South Australian Technology Teachers' Association, as well as being a long term member of the Wilderness Society and the Australian Conservation Foundation.

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Communities and Environmental Education

Geoff Peel, Ian Robottom & Rob Walker 1997, *Environmental Education and Self-interest: The Educative Role of Community, Government and Private Environmental Agencies and Groups*, Deakin University, Geelong, Victoria.

Graeme Gibson & Meg Bishop (eds) 1996, *For a Common Cause: Case studies in Communities and Environmental Change*, AGPS Publishing Service, Canberra.

The kinds of connections between environmental organisations and schools, the benefits of them and motives for them are explored in *Environmental Education and Self Interest*. The authors raise the following issues: limitations imposed on environmental studies by 'formal' curricula and key learning areas, lack of support

from education systems for environmental educators and the exploitation of education by groups and organisations interested in profit and profile rather than educational outcomes.

They argue that due to funding restrictions on education and the importance placed on established learning areas such as Mathematics, English and Technology, schools are lowering the priority of those key learning areas, such as the Studies of Society and Environment, which encompass environmental education. In addition to this, resource materials supporting environmental education are not being produced by commercial education publishers because they are not finding it profitable. The combination of these restrictions is having a significant impact on environmental education with committed environmental educators being forced to look outside education systems to satisfy their environmental educational needs.

Five case studies are presented in which educators established working links with community groups and agencies including Landcare, small business and environmental groups so that the environmental education occurring in those situations could be supported.

'each organisation has recognised the value of investing in long term education'

The report examines each case study from the perspective of the organisation asking "What is their motive or self interest?" In each case the primary interest of the group is something other than education, be it land, water or animal management; education is a secondary concern. However, each organisation has recognised the value of investing in long term education through educational resources and support.

All the organisations made use of the media to convey environmental information, while promoting their own self interest. In a typically pragmatic view of this arrangement internationally known native habitats supporter and principal in Earth Sanctuaries, John Wamsley, states, "publicity infinitely expands the potential community exposure at minimal cost" (p.40).

Peel, Robottom and Walker explain the dangers of schools and community members having access only to industry distributed resources. If this is so the breadth of information available and the likelihood of receiving a balanced and informed view of environmental issues are severely limited. Similar warnings have been sounded by Beder (1997) in relation to the fact that: in schools corporate based 'environmental education' materials is replacing independently researched materials; in shops 'green marketing' is being used to persuade consumers that serious environmental problems are being addressed; in the media corporate advertising and sponsorship is influencing news content; and industry funded scientists are often treated as independent experts.

The book concludes with some useful suggestions for environmental educators and discussion on the responsibility of governments in the provision of quality environmental education.

I believe this book is a useful resource for encouraging healthy scepticism about who appears to be 'in the game' of environmental education, especially among teachers, educational researchers and community environmental educators.

'case studies focus on the processes of change, as much as the projects' outcomes'

For a Common Cause is a compilation of community environmental projects, containing accounts of 22 case studies which describe the role community groups play in effecting positive environmental change. The projects described are not intended to be representative of Australia's best environmental projects, but to provide a picture of what some Australians have been doing to improve their local environments. Issues discussed include: environmental restoration; increasing community awareness; improving urban planning processes; and promoting better understanding between community and government. The case studies focus on the processes of change, as much as on the projects' outcomes.

The case studies, each been written by a representative of the relevant community group, address the headings: The setting; The process; and The future or Conclusion. They describe how groups overcame obstacles and setbacks, and the commitment required of members to maintain momentum. Also included are contact details indicating from where further information is available.

The case studies are inspiring, diverse and widely sourced. However, as someone closely involved with community based environmental projects in the Northern Territory, I was disappointed to find that no Territory projects were included.

A number of the projects had particular appeal. A teacher at Aranda Primary School initiated an environmental program in response to students' global environmental concerns. They developed a wide ranging collaborative project which involved the school and the broader community. Students were encouraged to identify local environmental problems and participate in community action. The project's success was marked by broader recognition through awards for environmental achievement, and the students developed a sense of empowerment and hope for their future.

Another inspiring story came from a community in country Victoria. Their valley was once a weedy wasteland threatened by the development of a major freeway. The community became united in transforming this area into a sanctuary for all who live and visit there. The author writes

about the return of birds, butterflies and other native animals attracted by the flowers of the native trees, grasses and sedges, and the joy this area now brings to young and old alike.

Environmental projects like these illustrate the growing value people are placing on the environments around them. Individual and collective concern over the loss of environmental quality has stimulated significant community action. Many people are rediscovering the power of community action and are pushing aside political and bureaucratic apathy and inaction. Positive environmental change is increasingly becoming a domain in which 'the people' are leading 'the leaders'. Groups described in this book are participating locally in response to global environmental challenges.

For a Common Cause will be of value to anyone embarking on, or already participating in, an environmental project; it provides a collection of positive examples of how people with shared values are making significant contributions to improving the quality of their—and our—environments. 🌱

References

Beder, S. 1997, *Global Spin: The Corporate Assault on Environmentalism*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne.

Kerry Hudson is the Environmental Education Officer for the Northern Territory Department of Education and Secretary and State delegate for the Northern Territory chapter of the Australian Association for Environmental Education. She is a founding member of the Leanyer Landcare Group and has been actively involved in the group's monsoon rainforest rehabilitation project. Kerry has demonstrated a commitment to environmental education over the past 12 years and has authored a number of environmental resource packages for primary and secondary teachers.
