

**THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST**  
**CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP UNDERTAKEN IN**  
**MAY/JUNE 2003**

**To investigate structures, systems, programs and courses that  
produce or enhance Environmental Leadership**

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James Grant 12/9/2003

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## **Introduction and acknowledgements**

My Churchill Fellowship was designed to investigate structures, systems, programs and courses that produce or enhance Environmental Leadership. My experiences gave me far greater insights than I had imagined they would and gave me a much clearer context for my work. I experienced systems and programs that are directly applicable in Australia and I am very excited about implementing them here through a number of organizations and partnerships.

I am extremely grateful to the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust for giving me this tremendous opportunity. They have been supportive at all times and the reputation of the Fellowship has opened many doors. Over the course of my Fellowship I was inspired by many dedicated and brilliant individuals from a number of innovative and exciting organizations that are listed in the order that I visited them. I especially wish to thank:

### **Forum for the Future**

Heloise Buckland, Fiona Brookes and Dr. Andy Johnston, from the Higher Education Partnership for Sustainability, Blake Bower, from the Forum Business Program, and special thanks to Sara Parkin for a life-changing interview. Thanks also to Zoe Hassall, Strategic Advisor, Local and Regional Program.

### **The Natural Step**

Sandy Muirhead, Director of Business Networks

### **Council for Environmental Education**

Libby Grundy and Nick Jones for a very generous and inspiring meeting.

### **The Eden Project**

Tony Kendle for a delightful introduction to this superb example of Education for Sustainable Development and for his continuing interest.

### **Learning through Landscapes**

Mary Jackson, Ken Davies, Kath Humphries for their time, help, insights and continuing interest and input

### **The Coombes School**

The staff and students at this superb learning environment for a view of what might be the future of education.

### **Demos**

Matthew Horne for a new perspective on education

### **UNESCO**

Daphne de Rebello, Joan O'Sullivan and especially Orlando Hall Rose for their help under difficult circumstances.

### **IUCN**

Wendy Goldstein for her generosity with time from a very busy schedule and especially for invaluable advice in organizing the Fellowship. Also thanks to Frank Vorhies, from the Business and Biodiversity section for his very useful information about a ground-breaking program.

**In Australia** Dr Annette Gough, Dr. Daniella Tilbury, Syd Smith, Gaye Hamilton, Dr Rob Morrison, Graham Morris and the Board of the Gould League, Henri Gaughan, Alan Mayberry and Maria Simonelli all played important roles in helping me in one way or another to achieve my goals for the Fellowship.

## Executive summary and highlights

The Fellowship was the greatest professional experience of my working life and has profoundly affected the way that I view my role and the potential contribution in my field, Environmental Education for Sustainable Development. The highlights from many visits that made up an incredibly inspiring Fellowship are:

1. Three weeks at **Forum for the Future, UK**. I am already working with other organizations to help create a similar partnership-based organization here. I hope that this will be done in partnership with Forum for the Future. The Gould League Board is in the process of incorporating a new organization and building new relationships to take on roles similar to those of Forum for the Future.
2. The UK **Council for Environmental Education** represents over eighty nationally significant organizations involved in Environmental Education. Because its only purpose is the representation of its members, it has strong political credibility as a peak body. In my position as Vice-president of Australian Association for Environmental Education, I am working to help create a similar structure here based in AAEE, beginning with a presentation at the AGM in September.
3. My visit to the **Eden Project**, Cornwall, was stunning on two fronts, the sheer scale of the construction and also the scale of the thought behind it in terms of sustainable development of a community. Thanks to Tony Kendle for his delightful ability to communicate complex ideas in a way that I could understand and relate to. I am already working with the Eden Project on one very large Sustainability project here and have sent material to them from the Gould League that will assist their programs.
4. **Learning Through Landscapes (UK)** is another structure that brings together thousands of projects and probably hundreds of thousands of people. This organization is concerned with school playgrounds as learning environments at the heart of communities. Mary Jackson (who is coming to visit my organization on a Churchill Fellowship in October) is working with us to investigate how we might set up a similar organization here.
5. **Wageningen University** Dr. Arjen Wals's "action research" approach closely resembles techniques the Gould League has developed independently so we have much to gain from an extended professional relationship. This will be reinforced by exchanges of research papers evaluating the broader sustainability aspects of programs.
6. **UNESCO** and **IUCN** gave me my first real insight into the profound challenges that the UN and other NGOs are taking on in Education for Sustainable Development. The visit initiated what will, I am sure, develop into a very mutually fruitful relationship between UNESCO and the Gould League and some other Environmental Education Organisations in Australia. The Gould League will begin the process of joining the IUCN. These new relationships will help to ensure that the people of Australia and Oceania benefit from the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2015. I will also be encouraging the Federal Government to sign on to the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in as many ways as possible.

## **Program**

### **Forum for the Future 6/5/03 – 30/5/03**

In London I worked with Forum for the Future, an organization dedicated to building more sustainable organizations. This organization works with Government, Business, Community and Formal Education (not schools). I worked a few days per week over four weeks on their Higher Education Program, especially the creation of a course development guide for Sustainability in Higher Education. This course is designed to introduce Sustainability education to different courses.

### **The UK Council for Environmental Education 9/5/03**

This Council represents over eighty nationally significant organizations involved in Environmental Education.

### **The Eden Project 6/6/03**

The Eden Project, Cornwall, is stunning on two fronts, the sheer scale of the construction and the scale of the thought behind it in terms of the Sustainable development of a community.

### **Learning Through Landscapes (UK) 3/6/03**

This group is concerned with the school playground as a learning environment at the heart of communities.

### **The Coombes School 2/5/03**

The Coombes School is a school that has been designed to create the best possible learning environment for students and teachers through careful design of grounds and buildings.

### **Demos 30/5/03**

Demos is a very well respected expert think tank for many aspects of society including education.

### **UNESCO 12&13/5/03**

United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Paris

### **Wageningen University 16/06/03**

This University is largely dedicated to environmental and agricultural studies, Netherlands

### **IUCN 30/6/03**

International Union for the Conservation of Nature, Geneva

## **Outcomes of Churchill Fellowship**

My Churchill Fellowship has produced three major changes to my approach:

1. It has given me a very much clearer context to work within. Although, of course, I was aware of the rapidly changing environment around my organization, I was much less clear in my analysis of the drivers and opportunities that are being created to change Australian culture towards the environment.
2. Although I thought my organization and some other Australian environmental education organizations were entering very much unexplored territory, I have found that there are others working on similar problems in similar ways and in many cases with great success. This has given me a great source of confidence and collegiality going forward.
3. It has confirmed that the systems and structures for leadership and collaboration I saw and worked with will be very effective and applicable in Australia and would be of great benefit to environmental education and the environment.

### **Context**

The context in which Environmental Education takes place in Australia and the world has changed greatly over the past decade or so. The major changes can be analyzed as:

1. We are now working in a Post-Rio Post-Johannesburg world. At these International forums the world's Governments have recognized that we have global environmental problems that need to be addressed, and that one very important way of addressing these problems is education. The United Nations has declared 2005-2015 the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Australia has not yet signed on to the decade, but there is still time. The context has changed in that we now have Governments in all major Parties recognizing the need for policy and strategy in this area, including Australian State and Federal governments. It is important that Environmental Education peak bodies in Australia are organized to produce at least draft policies or green papers.
2. As I found at all organizations I visited, the Sustainability agenda has broadened and become more powerful in the process. Although the word Sustainability is used to cover almost everything in one way or another, the concept of "Sustainable Development" is now becoming clearer. It involves not just the sustainable use of natural resources, in an economically viable way, but maintaining the systems that absorb waste and more importantly the Social and Human capital around the removal, processing and use of these resources.

3. Our understanding of organizations has changed as we have seen organizations that are hierarchical and resource-based struggle against creative information-based companies. Some very large and traditional companies have disappeared and some very innovative companies have grown rapidly. The ability of a company to change its culture change is now recognized as important and flexibility and adaptability valued. Many companies are open to learning about Sustainable development.
4. Our understanding of learning has changed. Where once we saw learning as a linear process of filling an empty vessel that finished at adulthood, we now see learning as a complex learner-centred process that goes on throughout life.
5. Information has changed. We all know that the world is awash with all kinds of information. Information itself is no longer powerful, understanding how to sort and control and use information is now much more important.
6. Social disconnection has increased and people are extremely busy. Joining of clubs and societies has decreased but volunteerism in older people has increased. Those in mid-life and mid-career are involved more with close friends and family often in the context of home entertaining rather than broad social issues and voluntary groups. There is a general disconnection and frustration with the political processes that were once respected.

### **New Territory in Environmental Education**

My organization has been exploring new ways of approaching environmental education, especially going beyond formal education to community, business and government and semi-government authorities. My work at Forum for the Future showed that this is not only possible, but can be extremely effective. This organization has six major programs that work extremely well. They are:

- The Higher Education Partnerships for Sustainability program
- The Natural Step
- The Forum Business Program
- The Sustainable Economy program
- Green Futures (a magazine that compliments all programs)
- Local and regional program

They cover Local government, universities, and business and confirm that partnerships with these groups are vital in changing cultures within organizations. Changing whole organizations is vital because individuals will eventually revert to cultural norms in their environmental behaviours even if very well meaning and well informed. Project Eden is working in similar ways and is very much involved in building communities through their education for Sustainable development work. During the Fellowship I benefited enormously from seeing this broader approach in action, especially through partnerships and collaboration in action.

### **Leadership and collaboration**

It was exciting and energizing to see how environmental educators cooperate and collaborate in the UK. To me it highlighted the lack of collaboration in Australia and the generally disjointed approach here. It would be a fruitless task to thoroughly analyze why this is the case except to observe that lack of leadership is very widespread in Australian society. I can make a few now well-informed observations that might help us move forward.

- In many ways Environmental Education groups see themselves as competitors for funds and until recently it has suited governments to keep it that way.
- Environmental organizations attract passionate individuals who are often desperate to do something immediately, often without consultation or planning.
- Environmental groups attract very passionate and deep thinkers who understand the depth of the problems we face. These individuals are frustrated by the ignorance and carelessness of the majority, and do not understand that human behaviour is mostly unaffected by deep thought.
- Most traditional organizations are campaign based and therefore attract and promote individuals who have person-to-person political skills in changing the minds of decision makers. These people do not give ground easily. These skills are used on other organizations as a matter of course. It is extremely difficult for expert campaigners to work together.

This relatively narrow set of skills and the high-level of passion leads to a promotion of leaders within organizations that are highly intelligent, passionate, campaign or project based, territorial and competitive. Broad collaborative and effective collaborative decision making skills are not common in this area. The issue of leadership has been recognized as very important by many environmental groups in Australia over the past 12 months as we enter a period where collaboration is vital. We do not have the structures, systems or professional development processes to achieve this in Australia yet. The Churchill Fellowship has given me a great deal of experience to help create these much needed structures, systems and programs.

## **Conclusions**

My main conclusion is that most Environmental and Environmental Education groups in Australia are structured for a context that no longer exists, that is, they are set up for lobbying and independent strategy creation to raise awareness in the general public and decision-makers. They are often set up to transfer information on the basis that information will reach a critical mass that will change behaviour on a large scale. They are largely set up for advocacy and competition. Their leaders tend to be strategic experts in these fields.

In the UK and Europe, where the changes in context (described in the outcomes section of this report) are more pertinent, some organizations have adopted a solutions based approach, rather than a lobbying approach. This approach requires structures for cooperation and collaboration as these are the only methods to produce the solutions being sought by a better-informed public and governments. Because the Gould League has adopted such solutions-based approaches over the past few years we have become aware of the need for partnerships and the difficulties this involves in Australia. During my Fellowship and since my return I have become aware of several other Australian organizations that have also recognized this situation as they have begun solutions or action based approaches. These groups have all recognized that leadership and leadership style are critical elements and that new structures, systems approaches and programs are needed.

## **Structures**

For Environmental Education, the creation of an organization similar to the CEE would be a great advantage as this broadly representative group would be able to produce and discuss policy and recommendations to Government relatively quickly and easily and very broadly. I will be presenting a paper on the Churchill Fellowship at the Australian Association for Environmental Education (our peak professional body) Annual General Meeting in September, giving special attention to the Council for Environmental Education. On a broader scale structures for cooperation being developed by environment groups could be broadened as leadership skills are further developed. I am confident that these structures will be developed over the next few years.

## **Systems**

The systems that we have for collaboration tend to be for information sharing and general professional development, and so are in the form of websites, newsletters and conferences and presentations. These systems are very useful but we need to be able to create rolling solutions-based systems for rapid and effective broad consultation to produce drafts and policy positions much more quickly. A more forums based approach should be adopted for policy development. I am actively putting this forward to AAEE and the VAEE policy development group.

## **Approaches**

Three major changes in approach might be more rewarding for Environmental Education groups:

### 1. Sustainability

The broader sustainability agenda with its five capitals would engage a much wider audience than the simple resource based approaches largely used at present. It would save governments a great deal of money as integrated programs would be much more cost effective. The Gould League through its new entity, the Gould Group will use this approach and several other organizations are already beginning to use this approach.

### 2. Organizational

Our present emphasis on personal action or action in groups of like-minded individuals limits our success as it does not change on an organizational or cultural level. If we take a more “whole of organization” approach we will be more able to work across Business, Local Government, Tertiary and Schools education.

### 3. Iconic

Australia would benefit enormously from projects like Project Eden that galvanize and rebuild communities through environmental approaches. The Gould Group and Project Eden will cooperate with many others to work on a project with a similar approach here in Australia.

## **Programs & courses**

Several projects and courses are needed to develop skills and knowledge in Australian Environmental Educators.

### 1. Leadership

An environmental leadership course is needed. The Forum for the Future Masters course that brings together Environmental courses, business and a broad range of other organizations would be a good model. I have begun to gather partners to develop Australia’s first Masters course in Sustainability based on a similar program at Forum for the Future. It will be designed for people from a very wide range of disciplines.

### 2. Sustainability

A course that delivers a broad Sustainability approach is needed. A program of this type has been developed in NSW and could be developed for other States.

### 3. Culture change and communication

Several groups, including the Gould League, are supporting a tour by Doug McKenzie Mohr on Community Based Social Marketing and these groups may be able to develop a more long term approach to the development of a course that delivers state-of-the-art information about organizational and cultural approaches.

## **Recommendations**

The following recommendations are made at a broad Government level as the individual conclusions produced above will be taken up through appropriate channels and funding bodies. Provided governments continue to back up their stated commitments to the Environment they are all achievable. The following broad recommendations can be made.

1. That the actions associated with the conclusions above are supported by Governments:
2. At a Federal and State level money should be made available for broadly representative, well-led groups to develop policy for the Environmental Education.
3. Cross government approaches will be vital for delivery of the broader sustainability agenda. NGOs can be a great help in developing cross-departmental policy and programs and should be funded to do so, delivering both measurable outcomes and cutting edge information to government.
4. Some of the NHT expand NHT funding for the environment could be spent on regional environmental projects that are very substantial and iconic in concept and size, such as the Eden Project. These projects would be much more effective in long-term community development and culture change than the combination of many smaller programs that, while valuable, are limited in impact. These programs could focus employment programs and other community development funds. A system of several very large grants could be made where communities had to match funding, similar to the Blair government's Millennium fund.