

# Editorial

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Managing Editor



This is the first issue of the Journal produced by the new editorial collective of Annette Gough, Noel Gough, John Fien and Debbie Heck. Although we had all the best intentions of producing a timely issue in 1999, it was 2000 before we had the technical requirements of templates and cover art work sorted out and the rigorous international process for the refereeing of articles also took longer than we anticipated. We also encountered the familiar difficulty in voluntary organisations that busy people lead busy lives and sometimes volunteer activities (such as journal editing) become a lower priority than the tasks that pay the mortgages. However, we hope that readers will agree that this bumper issue has been worth the wait.

In preparing this issue we have been mindful of feedback on the content of previous issues of *AJEE* and we have tried to produce sections that will appeal to a variety of audiences interested in innovations in both research and practice. Although having an Australian refereed journal in environmental education that stands in high regard internationally is important for many of us, we agree that the journal should also provide a venue for stories from practice, for the dissemination of new developments, for viewpoints and for resource reviews. We hope we have accommodated these interests.

The articles in this double issue reflect the divergent nature of environmental education scholarship and activities. The articles and stories have been written by residents of all Australian states (but none from the territories), and there are also articles, visions or viewpoints from authors resident in Canada, China, England, New Zealand and the United States of America. *AJEE* is definitely an international journal in both content and intent. The new board of advisory editors also reflects a breadth of interest and experience as well as the international nature of environmental education. It putting the board together the editorial collective was mindful of the need for gender balance as well as having people who reflected a variety of interests and expertise in environmental education. The board for this issue included Brendan Barrett from the Institute of Advanced Studies at the United Nations University in Tokyo (Japan), Iris Bergmann from the School of Social and Workplace Development at Southern Cross University (NSW), Andrew Brookes from the Department of Outdoor Education and Nature Tourism at La Trobe University Bendigo (Victoria), Ju Chou from the Graduate Institute of Environmental Education at National Taiwan Normal

University (Taiwan), Justin Dillon from King's College, University of London (England), Pat O'Riley from the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education (Canada), Michael Singh from the Department of Language and International Studies, RMIT University (Victoria), Richard Smith (former editor of *AJEE*, SA), Irene Teh-Cheong Poh Ai from the University of Brunei Darussalam (Brunei), Philip Stimpson from the Department of Curriculum Studies at The University of Hong Kong (China) and Dilafroz Williams from Portland State University (USA).

It is interesting to read these articles in the issue in the context of the recent Environment Australia (2000) national action plan *Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future*. This document has many of its roots in the Association's recommendations and AAEE is now represented on the National Environmental Education Council that has been established as part of the national action plan. The Commonwealth Government wants to encourage a national approach to environmental education and to promote best practice and professional development in the field. *AJEE* is also concerned to promote best practice and professional development in the field. But the interpretations of these terms could well be quite different! This is not the place to debate the merits of the national action plan, although I intend to do so in the near future, just as I reviewed Environment Australia's (1999) previous discussion paper, *Today Shapes Tomorrow—Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future* (see Gough 1999). However, many of the articles in this issue are consistent with the principles of environmental education as outlined in the action plan, namely, that environmental education must involve everyone, be lifelong, be holistic and about connections, be practical, and be in harmony with (and accorded equal priority to) social and economic goals. Indeed, I feel on relatively solid ground in asserting that the first four of these principles underpin the majority of the articles. I am not so confident about the last principle as many environmental educators (and environmentalists) are still debating ecologically versus economically sustainable development as a focus for environmental education (or education for sustainability), as Julian Agyeman and several of the *Millennium Visions* authors note. I hope that *AJEE* can continue to be a forum in which such educational and philosophical as well as pedagogical issues can be debated.

As a first step in encouraging such debate this issue includes a special feature on *Millennium Visions*. We invited environmental educators from a range of areas of expertise and backgrounds (both in content and location) to write short pieces on how each of them saw environmental education at the end of the twentieth century and their visions for environmental education in the twenty first century. The wide variety of responses shows that environmental education is a vibrant field with a host of fascinating ideas being discussed. Andrew Brookes writes 'a rough guide to environmental outdoor education and tourism, 2000 edition' in which he discusses the tendency to underrate the ongoing role of the bush in shaping reality for urban-living Australians. Justin Dillon writes of environmental education in England and how

it has been sidelined in the curriculum. His vision for the future gives schools more control over their curriculum and emphasises the need for practitioners and researchers to work together and share rather than working independently and reinventing the wheel. John Fien's vision is of reorienting the curriculum towards sustainable development and education towards sustainability. Pat O'Riley argues that we need intercultural conversation in environmental education. Alan Reid reflects on a future visions (2007) article he wrote for *Habitat* in 1987 and gives his visions for the next decade in which environmental education is increasingly part of the background for every Australian child. Michael Singh writes of his concern that the education of environmentally conscious citizens is breaking down because of the shift from political to economic regulation and as the individual becomes the object of global consumerism. His challenge is to reconceive the work of environmental education for this new and uncertain world order. A final contribution to this section is by Noel Gough. Although located in the special section on the Allen Strom Eureka Prize for Environmental Education, his essay should also be read as part of the *Millennium Visions* section as he includes proposals for a future research agenda for environmental education. The invitations to contribute to this section were sent to all fellows of the Australian Association for Environmental Education and to the advisory editors. In future issues of *AJEE* we would be delighted to include other visions as a way of sustaining a debate on the nature and future of environmental education, and particularly a discussion of how these *Millennium Visions* relate to the vision of the national action plan, *Environmental Education for a Sustainable Future*.

The *Articles* are the refereed section of the journal and the contributions here reflect a wide range of innovation and research with contributions from both beginning researchers (such as recent M.Ed. graduates Kathy Jenkins and Josephine Lang) and experienced researchers and a wide range of special interest groups. The first article is Julian Agyeman's keynote address from the 1999 Australian Association for Environmental Education international conference held in Sydney. It shares several common foci with the national action plan, but not necessarily from the same philosophical base. Agyeman discusses the tension between environmental quality and human equality and what a sustainable community or society might look like. Some of the characteristics of a sustainable community or society that he identifies are discussed in other papers in this issue. For example, Andrew Brookes considers the relationship between education for sustainability and nature-based tourism. He concludes that there is a need for a more serious consideration of the notions of education in nature-based tourism discourses. Deirdre Slattery's article focuses on an adult environmental education program in her local area that was concerned with developing ecological knowledge of the Box and Ironbark forests but which also provided an opportunity for participants to develop a relationship with and commitment to the forests.

In another adult education study Iris Bergmann reports on the experiences of adult learners who worked individually on an

environmental photography project of their choice. She found that on completion of their project, the participants' conceptualisations of their topic became more differentiated, complex and defined; multiple perspectives were constructed and their own positions and feelings clarified.

Almut Beringer reflects on the appropriateness of the influx of indigenous spiritual practices in environmental education programs and responds to the objections this has raised from members of indigenous cultures. Given the growth in popularity of books such as Knudtson & Suzuki's (1992) *Wisdom of the Elders* and Joanna Macy's work this critical and constructive article is most timely. Beringer argues that ecospiritual education needs to eschew non-legitimised, particularly indigenous methods, instead researching western traditions and how their teachings can be adapted to immigrant cultures and multicultural student populations. Another article that explores the adaptation of different pedagogies to environmental education is by Jo-Anne Ferreira. She explores the ways in which environmental education may operate as a site for forming and maintaining particular ethical competencies which most environmental educators argue are necessary in order to live in an 'environmentally sustainable' manner.

There are also several articles that relate to teachers and classroom practices. Kathy Jenkins reports on her experiences with secondary pre-service teacher education students and their perceptions of the nature and scope of environmental education and their anticipations of constraints on their practice of environmental education. Josephine Lang reports on her research which documented and examined the changes in teacher understandings of environmental education during an inservice training program in environmental education. She found that the individual perceptions and understandings of environmental education were critical in understanding the teacher change process. She argues that inservice programs need to take serious consideration of, and work with, initial teacher perceptions and understandings to ensure positive teacher change.

Manfred Lenzen and Syd Smith review some NSW and Victorian education materials on climate change and argue that there are three issues neglected within education about climate change which should be included in future syllabuses. Tom Maxwell and Peter Metcalfe report on their analysis of the new syllabus document developed by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) for its diploma in the area of environmental studies. They focus on its inclusion of environmental concepts to support sustainability and express concern about its likely lack of congruence with the advertised philosophy of the Diploma and the fundamental technical interest of control expressed in the syllabus.

Another international perspective is provided by Zhu Huaixin and Justin Dillon who describe the genesis and development of environmental education in the People's Republic of China, summarise background information about the education system and about environmental issues, identify some key

factors which have proven to be obstacles to progress, in terms of environmental education, and outline some thoughts about future prospects.

Two articles are concerned with environmental education in tertiary institutions. Matthew Thomas examines the current ideologies that drive higher education, and proposes a different ideological framework which can be used to support a sustainable higher education. Ian Thomas, Louise Kyle and Amaya Alvarez describe a process and strategy to establish environmental literacy in tertiary courses. This strategy was developed from a project to introduce waste minimisation education into four disciplinary based courses.

This issue contains a special section on the Allen Strom Eureka Prize for Environmental Education. Geoff Young introduces this section and describes the history of the award as a deliberate strategy to stimulate discussion about what comprises excellence in environmental education research and programs and to focus on strategic directions for the field. This is followed by articles from the first two recipients: Noel Gough for environmental education research in 1997 and Jennie Anderton for environmental education programs (Airwatch) in 1999. In the next issue we will have an article on the recipient of the 2000 and 2001 Eureka Prize winners.

A new section for *AJEE* is *Viewpoint*. In this first contribution, Dilafruz Williams and Gregory Smith discuss the relationship between ecological education and environmental education. Their perspective is very much grounded in a US experience, but by publishing their perspective in *AJEE* we hope to provoke some discussion of similarities with Australia and the strategies we can adopt to avoid some of the pitfalls and problems that they identify. For example, you might like to consider whether it would be possible to substitute Australia for the United States in the following extract from their *Viewpoint*: 'environmental education in the United States has not yet challenged the *status quo* of Western notions of progress or monoculturalism, or recognized that moving through the environmental crisis may require significant shifts in generally unquestioned cultural attitudes and beliefs'

The *Stories from Practice* section includes two papers from the 1999 AAEE WA Chapter conference. These contributions, by Angus Morrison-Saunders and Gil Field and by Alan Pilgrim and Robert Atkins are both concerned with environment education and the community and should be of interest to a number of different audiences. David Hicks, Andy Bord and Richard Ward's contribution relates their experiences with students during a week at the Centre for Alternative Technology in Wales. While this is a long way from Australia their experiences in developing an understanding of sustainability are relevant here, especially with the growing number of camp sites with eco-cabins. Jonathon Howard has provided a story of his research in progress on how environmental interpretation relates to behaviour. This contribution in many ways continues the work Howard reported in the last issue of *AJEE*.

Finally there are a number of resource reviews ranging from academic texts to student workbooks to video. The editors are always looking for resource reviews and reviewers so please contact the editors if you would like to contribute in this way.

This is very likely to be the second last print issue of *AJEE*. The 2001 issue is in preparation and this will be in print form, but the editorial collective together with the AAEE Council are currently exploring the possibilities of making *AJEE* an electronic journal. This would be a huge cost saving for AAEE and for members, but we do not intend to disenfranchise members with limited access to online technology. A more detailed proposal on *AJEE* as an electronic journal will be in the next issue. Meanwhile, if you would like to see an example of the type of electronic publication we are considering, visit the *International Journal of Education & the Arts* at <http://ijea.asu.edu/>

I hope you enjoy this issue of *AJEE*. It has been a while in gestation but the editorial collective is pleased with the final content and production and we have our fingers crossed that you are too. We have certainly tried to demonstrate a wide range of innovations, contributions and special interests in the content. I would like to thank Angie Bloomer for her production assistance and expertise and all the advisory editors and my fellow editorial collective members for their diligent reviews of manuscripts and the authors for submitting the manuscripts in the first place. Without the authors we would not have a journal. Please keep sending me your manuscripts for future issues! 🍀

## References

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