

Thursday 18 August 2005

Brisbane Declaration charts new action for UN delegates

The need to engage communities directly in decision-making was enshrined in the UN-backed Brisbane Declaration announced on the final day of the International Conference on Engaging Communities in Brisbane.

Conference co-chair Michael Hogan, Assistant Director-General of Queensland's Department of Communities read the Brisbane Declaration to delegates at the close of the four-day conference.

In paragraph seven the Brisbane Declaration: "affirms that community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors."

The conference was attended by more than 2300 delegates. This was the first time

the United Nations had been involved in a conference of this scale in Queensland.

The final day's highlights included passionate speeches from Harvard University Professor Robert Putnam and Oxford University e-Democracy specialist Professor Stephen Coleman.

Robert Putnam's address chartered the course of changing social "connectedness" in the United States and the negative impact of suburban sprawl.

In his response Stephen Coleman reminded delegates that improving democracy required more than helping people who already understood each other and liked each other.

"Democracy requires space for civilised misunderstandings to take place," he said.

However, it was the young students of Brisbane's Zillmere State School choir who captured the optimism of the international conference proceedings.

They performed two songs. "Aim High" set out their school aspirations. Then "From Little Things, Big Things Grow", the lyrics of the Kev Carmody/Paul Kelly composition – best describe how the song project came to be. "Do you have a school song to showcase the talents and to engage the spirit of the school community?" "Not yet" was the reply and so the idea was born. ■

The Brisbane Declaration is the formal statement of intent developed during the International Conference on Engaging Communities.

It outlines, in 22 points, the importance of community engagement and the next steps required by governments, private and education sectors to develop practical ways to promote community engagement.

You can read the full text of the Brisbane Declaration on pages 2 and 3.



ICEC co-chairman Neil Doyle said the events of the past four days demonstrated the versatility of the conference delegates.

"It's clear that this conference has put Queensland's community engagement agenda on the world stage," he said.

"However, as I look around this room, I see people who have given freely of their time, and their talent, to make this conference a success."

For more information, visit the Get Involved website at www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au or the website of the International Conference on Engaging Communities at www.engagingcommunities2005.org. ■



UN representative Mr Guido Bertucci (centre) with conference chairs Michael Hogan (left) and Neil Doyle

Brisbane Declaration

We, representatives of countries and communities, including indigenous peoples, international institutions, national, state and local governments, academic institutions, and business and civil society organisations from across the world, participating in the International Conference on Engaging Communities, held at Brisbane, Australia, from 15 to 17 August 2005,

1. Acknowledge the universal interest and importance of community engagement, founded in the inherent dignity of people and the values, rights and responsibilities of all people expressed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
2. Welcome the Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance¹ in its call for all actors² in societies to work together to expand and promote participatory, transparent governance for the benefit of their people.
3. Underscore that community engagement is essential to the achievement of the Millennium Declaration including the Millennium Goals for Development.
4. Express appreciation for the efforts of the United Nations and its specialised agencies in helping to advance the practice of community engagement and support of greater participatory and transparent governance.
5. Express appreciation to the Government of the State of Queensland, to the indigenous peoples for their welcome to country, and to all the people of Queensland, Australia for hosting the inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.
6. Express appreciation to the other Australian governments, tertiary institutions and organisations that have sponsored and partnered in the organisation of this gathering, to the

1. The Seoul Declaration on Participatory and Transparent Governance made at the Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government at Seoul, Republic of Korea, 24–27 May 2005.
2. The 'community' or all 'actors in society' are all those who are potentially affected by or have an interest in an issue, decision, service delivery or evaluation, and include government, businesses, trade unions, civil society organisations, non-Government organisations and individual citizens.

staff and volunteers, and to all those who have through participation shared their expertise and experience to build greater understanding, capability and commitment to the practice of community engagement.

Community Engagement

7. Affirm that community engagement is critical to effective, transparent and accountable governance in the public, community and private sectors.
8. Recognise that community engagement is a two way process:
 - by which the aspirations, concerns, needs and values of citizens and communities are incorporated at all levels and in all sectors in policy development, planning, decision-making, service delivery and assessment; and
 - by which governments and other business and civil society organisations involve citizens, clients, communities and other stakeholders in these processes.
9. Affirm that effective engagement generates better decisions, delivering sustainable economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits.
10. Also recognise that effective community engagement enables the free and full development of human potential, fosters relationships based on mutual understanding, trust and respect, facilitates the sharing of responsibilities, and creates more inclusive and sustainable communities.
11. Further recognise that meaningful community engagement seeks to address barriers and build the capacity and confidence of people to participate in, and negotiate and partner with, institutions that affect their lives, in particular those previously excluded or disenfranchised.
12. Further recognise that inclusive engagement requires that the poor and marginalised, and indigenous peoples, are adequately resourced and mainstreamed to participate meaningfully and that they have a stake in the outcome and benefit equitably as a result of being involved.
13. Endorse the core principles of integrity, inclusion, deliberation and influence in community engagement:
 - Integrity – when there is openness and honesty about the scope and purpose of engagement;
 - Inclusion – when there is an opportunity for a diverse range of values and perspectives to be freely and fairly expressed and heard;
 - Deliberation – when there is sufficient and credible information for dialogue, choice and decisions, and when there is space to weigh options, develop common understandings and to appreciate respective roles and responsibilities;
 - Influence – when people have input in designing how they participate, when policies and services reflect their involvement and when their impact is apparent.
14. Recognise the availability of a wide range of methods and technologies, including new and emerging tools associated with the internet, to facilitate appropriate and effective community engagement.
15. Affirm the value of education, ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and knowledge sharing about active citizenship and community engagement processes and outcomes.



Michael Hogan, Assistant Director-General, Queensland Department of Communities, delivers the Brisbane Declaration at the final session



16. Draw attention to the materials and recommendations of the specialised panels and workshops which supplement this Declaration

Next steps

The participants from all over the world at this conference:

17. Request the Host Country to bring to the attention of the General Assembly of the United Nations the Declaration of this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities so that it may provide leadership globally for its promotion and implementation.
18. Further call on international institutions as well as national, provincial and local governments to give effect to the values and principles of this Declaration.
19. Express support for more dialogue between international institutions and others with the people of the world
20. Encourage the tertiary sector and other public and professional organisations to facilitate research and teaching, policy and practice development, organisational development, evaluation and networking to sustain the learnings and connections created at this inaugural International Conference on Engaging Communities.
21. Further encourage the private sector and civil society organisations to implement practical and meaningful ways to be responsive to, representative of, and enabling of the participation of citizens, clients, communities.
22. Note with appreciation the willingness of the Queensland Government to support knowledge-sharing and capacity-building for community engagement and

about issues of global interest, and the availability of digital and other means to support such interaction.

to be involved in the follow-up to this Conference.

23. Request the United Nations, building on the success and legacies of this Conference, to assist countries and communities to foster effective community engagement practices by supporting research and training, and documenting successful outcomes and disseminating these widely. ■

New Caledonian bid

“It is a call to the United Nations to help indigenous people build a better society with non-indigenous people in our countries.

We request that, in accord with the UN Mandate, to recognise and support the position and needs of all the world’s indigenous peoples. This subsequently makes available to indigenous peoples the full services and support of the UN and its agencies, ensuring it is able to provide that support and services to all indigenous people notwithstanding they live in developed or developing countries.

The current UN position does not provide support and services to indigenous people in developed countries such as New Caledonia and neighbouring countries.

This is not a matter of interfering in state internal affairs. It will prove that world’s indigenous people are a true part of the peoples of United Nations, therefore not excluded from UN Charters.” ■



Sarimin Boenhkih calls on the United Nations to help all indigenous people, from first world to third world

Responses set challenges for UN

UN Member States will use the principles of the Brisbane Declaration to reinforce good governance as a critical part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) when they meet in New York in September.

Guido Bertucci, Director of Public Administration and Development Management, UNDESA, said the Brisbane conference highlighted that good governance mattered.

“In less than a month, the UN General Assembly will meet to review our progress towards the Millennium Development Goals since the 2000 Millennium Declaration,” he said.

Mr Bertucci said the Millennium Declaration stressed that good governance is a goal in itself.

“And as such it is seen as an important goal to achieving other MDGs.”

He said the Brisbane ICEC conference and the Brisbane Declaration spelt out some



Guido Bertucci Director of the Division for Public Economics and Public Administration, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, responds to the Brisbane Declaration on behalf of the United Nations

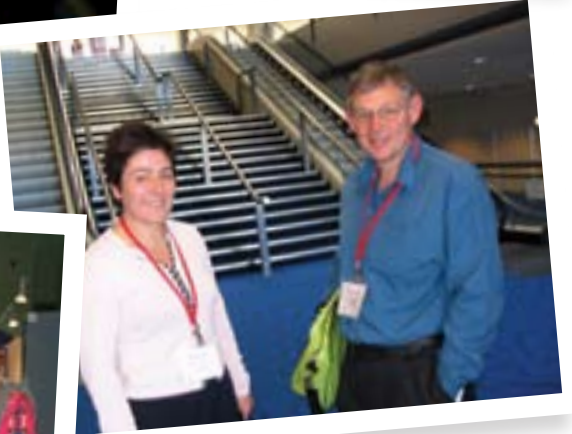
principles that would inspire people to engage communities.

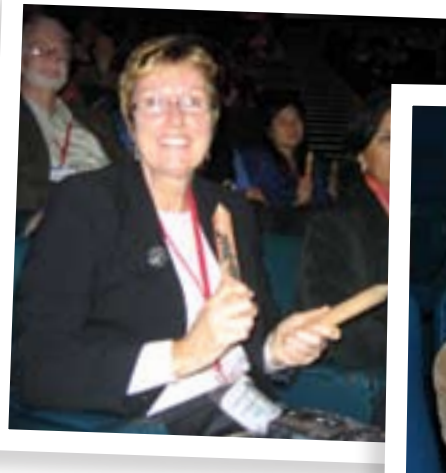
Queensland Attorney-General and Minister for Justice Linda Lavarch received the Brisbane Declaration on behalf of the government.

“This Brisbane Declaration will as promised be forwarded to world leaders,” she said.

“We will be asking our federal colleagues to officially transmit this on your behalf to the Secretary General and through to the General Assembly and the relevant parts of the United Nations.” ■

The united faces of the ICEC 2005





New 'Deal' helps people to help themselves

The UK Government is working hard to instil engagement into national policy in order to set strategic platforms for all authorities working with communities.

Dame Mavis McDonald, Permanent Secretary, Office of Deputy Prime Minister, said government needed to prove to citizens that their commitment can make a difference in their neighbourhoods.

"In a geographically compact nation of 60 million people, it was not hard for people to feel remote or isolated," Dame Mavis told conference delegates.

"Neighbourhoods matter because of civic disengagement and lack of trust on government, its services and its people."

"We are working to bring about sustainable improvements in public services by re-engage citizens with the institutions of government," she said.

Chief among residents' concerns are safety, health, education, public transport, affordable housing, parks and open space – things that make neighbourhoods a good place to live.

"The United Kingdom's New Deal Communities initiative is a bottom-up approach devolving responsibility – and budgets – to community-elected boards,

as well as local authority wards," she said.'

While local boards identify and address local issues, they are expected to work in strategic-agenda partnerships with regional agencies, the private sector and volunteer bodies.

"This way they can get public service budgets and programs working in tandem to support their activities," Dame Mavis said. ■



Dame Mavis MacDonald

Queensland shares concerns with UK

Queensland shared two key drivers with the UK's push to embed engagement into government ethos, Linda Apelt, Director-General Department of Communities, told delegates yesterday.

"We have a high priority in endeavouring to attain sustainable improvements in public service," Ms Apelt said.

"And we have the desire to engage citizens in the processes of government.

"Premier Beattie has noted the government's significant investment in taking government to neighbourhoods and communities right across Queensland. He has put in place a range of consultative and meeting opportunities right up into Cape York and the Torres Strait and into rural and remote areas."

She said that demographic change also impacts, noting south-east Queensland



Premier Peter Beattie

had the fastest growing population area in Australia.

"There's huge pressure on the government to provide infrastructure," Ms Apelt said.

"But how does it explain multi-million dollars targeting the south-east corner of Queensland to those neighbourhoods in rural and remote communities not experiencing the pressure of growth."

The Queensland approach is to address issues of place and neighbourhood through a commitment to early intervention and prevention. ■

Conference sponsors key development in their communities

Sponsors for the International Conference on Engaging Communities showcased the ways they are helping development within the community.

They all agreed that workers and customers were communities, and for this reason it was their duty to engage their staff to reducing risks.

Ian Wood, Vice President Sustainable Development and Community Relations, BHP Billiton said that they have enhanced the company's reputation by looking at social and environmental risks and developing strategies to help the community.

"We are really big on safety and community engagement. We achieve this by engaging in occupational health and safety and creating a sustainable community development," he said. ■



Engaging with young people

A snapshot of comments raised at Wednesday's Major Panel on Engaging With Young People.

Louise Redmond, Positive Outcomes, Petersham, Australia

"Many young people have the view that corporations are the 'evil empire' or just a potential source of funds.

"However, most corporations are keen to engage young people, whom they regard as the future of the nation. They offer training and employment opportunities and other support.

"Can I suggest that young people's service organisations ask what the business does, who are its people, what are its services, skills and products that might benefit them and how that might benefit the company in a partnership arrangement."

www.positiveoutcomes.com.au

Adam Smith, International Youth Foundation

By having concepts of community defined by governments, authorities, non-government organisations, young people have trouble trying to navigate through what community is for them.

"Also they are often not as involved in the previously traditional group structures such as scouts, churches or sporting clubs. This stirs feeling of not being connected, which brings with it social and economic consequences.

"Young people are not exposed to enough role models who can demonstrate that they can be equal partners in creating change.

"They need to be challenged, they need know that it's OK to ask questions, to ask why things happen they way they do."

www.iyfn.org



Phillipa Collin, of Inspire Foundation, talks youth development with Tom Dawkins, of Vibewire

Rachel Uhr, Local Government Association of Queensland

"Thirty per cent of Queenslanders are aged under 25. Most aren't old enough to vote. All have a significant role in our cultural future.

"They need to be engaged in relationships that help build different strategies for different communities with differing circumstances.

"We need to work on providing them with opportunities to be engaged as citizens and as valued members of the community."

www.lgaq.asn.au

Yasahavantha Dongre, University of Mysore, India

"Young people are quite capable of doing great things.

"Working with them you come to realise their judgments and capabilities are much stronger than you think.

"Indian and Asian university students are keen to join their university cooperatives, which they help run to provide a range of services to meet a variety of needs.

"This gives them opportunities to interact with their peers not only at their own university, but through regional networks, with others throughout the region.

"They learn the skills to move forward, to teach others and to do things better."

www.universityofmysore.com

Tom Dawkins, Vibewire, Sydney

"Young people don't appreciate being treated as active consumers; they want to be treated as active citizens.

"Young people need to be given options to express their opinions and ideas, especially in peer-led areas.

"They can be active cultural agents who can help create charters from the ground up."

Vibewire is an online community created by young people for young people.

www.vibewire.net

Warren Pitt, Queensland Minister for Communities, Disability Services and Seniors

Young Queenslanders have a range of avenues to help inform the development of policies, programs and services that impact on the lives of young people, including:

- *The Queensland Youth Council provides a forum for the exchange of information and views between young people and the state government*
- *The Young Indigenous Leaders' Forum brings together 20 young indigenous people for an annual two-day forum*
- *Ministerial Regional Community Forums provide regional youth with a mechanism to identify priority issues, needs and strategies and present them directly to State Government ministers*
- *GENERATE is an online site for providing information to young people and encouraging consultation between the government and young people through online surveys and Ministers Online.*

www.generate.qld.gov.au



Dealing with disaster

Disaster management was not often understood in communities, even though disaster events occurred often.

Pauline Peel, who worked for six months with villagers and organisations in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province, said that communities dealt with crisis situations for this to change.

"I was impressed with people's willingness to participate and their openness to learning."

"African villagers have a rich history of participation," she said.

"Disaster management authorities need to build on this when equipping communities

with the skill and knowledge needed to reduce the risk of disasters, and recover from those that occur."

While critical, capacity building needs to start where stakeholders are and not by judging what they should know.

"Communities must be integrated into the process, into the thinking, as a matter of principle," Pauline said.

"Authorities need to deliver communication, education and training so people understand disaster management and recovery processes and their importance to community wellbeing.

"Local government must be empowered to establish clear and agreed roles and

responsibilities for organisations dealing with disaster events," she said.

Other learnings included:

- Taking measures to alleviate poverty
- Advising advisers that their role is to listen, learn and facilitate and to be flexible, not be an expert
- Sharing knowledge
- Establishing effective inter-government relations
- Having disaster management covered in a variety of legislation
- Transforming all public services
- Integrating disaster management with integrated planning and service delivery. ■

Social trends reveal evolving social capital

Declining church attendance, union membership and participation in political parties all reveal changes in Australia's social capital, Australian researchers told the final day of the ICEC conference.

A major panel on the scholarship of social capital in Australia in 2005 was chaired by Geoff Woolcock, research manager of the University of Queensland Boilerhouse Community Service and Research Centre at Ipswich.

Economist Andrew Leigh, Australian National University, revealed that while there was a considerable amount of research on social capital and economics, there was relatively little research on indigenous communities or on case studies from regional Australia.



Michael Woolcock, World Bank, charts social capital

He said changes in union membership, church attendance and declining membership of political parties were observable trends in Australia.

Michael Woolcock, from the John F Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the World Bank's Research Group in Washington, charted changes in social capital in a wider perspective.

He told delegates that in order to sustain a policy agenda there had to be a story with intuitive appeal that resonated with the community, but one that could be backed by empirical data.

"But at the end of the day, you need an action plan." ■

2005 World Summit

Some 180 heads of state and government are expected in New York in less than a month for the United Nations 2005 World Summit. World leaders, gathered to mark the organisation's 60th anniversary, are expected to take advantage of what Secretary-General Kofi Annan has called a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to forge a global consensus on development, security, human rights and UN renewal.

The Brisbane Declaration will be forwarded to this meeting.

To find out more about the High-Level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly 14-16 September 2005, visit www.un.org/summit2005 ■



Millennium Development Goals (MDG) resolved

All 191 United Nations Member States have pledged to meet the following eight goals by the year 2015.

1. **Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.**
A target is to reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day.
2. **Achieve universal primary education.**
A target is to ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary education.
3. **Promote gender equality and empower women.** A target is to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary

education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015.

4. **Reduce child mortality.** A target is to reduce by two-thirds the mortality rate among children under five.
5. **Improve maternal health** by reducing by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio.
6. **Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases.** The target is to halt and begin the reverse of the spread of HIV/AIDS, the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.
7. **Ensure environmental sustainability.** The key targets are to integrate the principles of sustainable development

into country policies and programs and reverse the loss of environmental resources. Reduce by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water. Achieve significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.

8. **Develop a global partnership for development.** This includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction, nationally and internationally. It calls for member states to address the least developed countries' special needs. This includes tariff and quota free access for their exports and enhanced debt relief for heavily-indebted, poor countries. ■

Post Tsunami crisis

Delegates from Indonesia and Sri Lanka had a chance to discuss how their countries were moving forward after the Tsunami disaster

Mr Wijesinghe, representing the Sri Lankan Government, said that during the Tsunami disaster there was a lot of engagement from local to international communities with pledges of billions of dollars.

“It’s sad to say that out of all that money that was pledged, we have only received one tenth of it. The people most affected are still experiencing difficulties that could have been alleviated if these donations were received.

“We now feel that the engagement no longer exists and instead we feel estranged,” Mr Wijesinghe said.

He also said that the Sri Lankan people affected by this disaster felt that some people are living in luxury at their expense and corruption creeps in at various levels.



Indonesia's Banda Aceh – before and after the Tsunami

“The housing issues have not been addressed and yet we see some people building mansions for themselves and forgetting our plight,” he said.

Ms Nani Zulminarni talked about how she had been trying to empower women to head their household and become visible within society.

“The Tsunami disaster destroyed everything that we had built on since the early eighties.

“Because of this disaster it means we now have more people needing help and it is going to take us longer to provide shelter for each one of them,” she said. ■

ICEC put people first and the world on notice

The International Conference on Engaging Communities (ICEC) showcased hundreds of examples from around the world where people were placed at the centre of the decision-making process.

To be able to stage an event such as this in Brisbane, with the full support and backing of the United Nations and the Queensland Government, was an inspiring opportunity for many people.

This inaugural conference attracted 2330 delegates from 44 countries and a range of local, national and international speakers, never before assembled at one event anywhere in the world. Over 60 national and provincial governments, 95 local governments and over 50 universities were represented.

An important result was the Brisbane Declaration, a document outlining 22 points forging a commitment to community engagement principles to make democracy more inclusive and participatory for communities around the world. More information on the Brisbane Declaration is available at www.getinvolved.qld.gov.au, along with opportunities to discuss key learnings. Audio casts of key



Megan Sandford and Debra Langton from New Zealand's Tauranga City Council ready to use their clap sticks

sessions are accessible via this site or www.engagingcommunities2005.org.

The Declaration will be forwarded to the General Assembly of the United Nations and be part of the ongoing effort to progress achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG).

The ICEC organising committee is proud to be part of the process where this significant international step has taken place.

The conference heard of many examples where community engagement policies were making a difference.

This included projects from Vietnam, Rockhampton, London, Iran, New Delhi, Brazil, Thailand, South Africa and Wellington, as examples.

Some were projects on the world stage, others at the local community level, but all were important in improving the quality of life for people involved in the process. 163 Queensland-based presenters participated.

This community engagement approach is something that all Queensland Government

departments and agencies are building into our decision-making processes.

We look forward to building on the achievements of the International Conference on Engaging Communities.

ICEC Organising Committee

Michael Hogan, Assistant Director-General, Department of Communities, Chair

Neil Doyle, General Manager, Strategic Policy and Development, Department of Main Roads, Co-Chair. ■



Keynote presenter Robert Putnam regaled the audience with tales of community engagement in a changing America



Brisbane's Zillmere State School choir lead delegates in songs and clap sticks in the closing ceremony