



Our vision is that action learning, action research and related processes and approaches are widely used and publicly shared by individuals and groups creating local and global change for the achievement of a more equitable, just, joyful, productive, peaceful and sustainable society.

ABN: 41 587 420 126

Issue 4, December 2011



### ***From the President***

The end of 2011 is upon us – a busy year with some notable highlights. Leading the field is the Brisbane Conference, as reported below. It was a wonderful event, and the Organising Committee co-ordinated by Pamela Kruse deserve a big thank you for a great effort.

The Management Committee has signed an agreement with EBSCO to include the *Action Learning, Action Research Journal* in their database, making it more accessible across the Internet. ALARA will soon sign a similar agreement with INFORMIT, the RMIT Publishing research database.

Ross Colliver has progressed the discussions about the website (see his article below), and, with Susan Goff, started planning for a new initiative to improve recognition of action research by policy makers and managers (see Growing Ideas from the Brisbane Conference).

Susan, ever active, has been creating a fabulous Special issue of the Journal, which you would have received recently. The electronic version is coming – it is taking considerably longer than expected to enable access for members. We will email when all is ready.

Next year will be even busier than this year. Susan is producing the World Congress Proceedings, while Richard McGrath is starting the process for the Conference Proceedings. Eileen Piggot-Irvine has more Monographs in the pipeline, and of course, there will be the Journal and Conference. Next year seems to be one for visits to Australia. The Naidoos are

coming (see below) and I hope to have news early in the year of another important visitor.

The Management Committee has agreed to increase support for local chapters, and has begun considering a set of Standards (or Charter). We also hope to create more affiliations with organisations with similar objectives as ALARA, similar to the one recently created with Research@EastZone.

So much happening, and we only have twelve months to fit it all in! Have a great, safe, Christmas and New Year. See you in '12.

Colin Bradley  
President  
[president@alara.net.au](mailto:president@alara.net.au)



### ***Welcome to new Affiliate Member Research@EastZone***

In the months leading up to the Brisbane Conference, ALARA's Management Committee and Brisbane member Dr Pam Swepson engaged in discussions with Dr Tay Boon Hou and other members of the Singapore Ministry of Education East Zone about a link with ALARA.

Each of the Ministry of Education's Zones in Singapore has created a Centre of Excellence. The East Zone, which includes nearly 200 schools, has specialised in Action Research, and already had close links with some long-time members of ALARA, including Professor Bob Dick and Dr Swepson. The specialisation has led to the creation of Research@EastZone, by Temasek Junior College. One can see the impact of the success of Research@EastZone in the decisions taken by the other three Zones

of Singapore to also adopt Action Research concepts.

The discussions with Dr Tay culminated at the Brisbane Conference in the signing of an agreement between ALARA and Research@EastZone that creates a mutual affiliation for both organisations. ALARA was very pleased to welcome members of Temasek College to the Conference, Mrs Kia Huan Tan, who is the Director of Research@EastZone and Vice Principal for Temasek Junior College, and her colleagues, Aileen Nam, Boon Wah Tearle Cheng and Kian Seh Low.



Kia Huan and her team presented the first Monograph at the Conference. Pam Swepson has reviewed the articles of this Monograph, and is continuing that work for the second edition of the Monograph.

ALARA Management Committee invites members to contact members of Research@EastZone via their website ([http://www.tjc.edu.sg/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=124&Itemid=172](http://www.tjc.edu.sg/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=124&Itemid=172)).

The Affiliation membership creates a direct link between the two organisations, and in the case of Research@EastZone, opportunities for joint research and publications.

The affiliation also allows members of the affiliate organisation to join ALARA for a reduced rate, while gaining most of the benefits of the normal individual membership. As members, the individuals from the affiliate organisation gain the discounts for ALARA events, access to ALARA website information and support when submitting articles for publication. ALARA hopes to create similar affiliate arrangements with other organisations.

If you know of an organisation that ALARA could approach to discuss affiliation, please contact:

Colin Bradley at [president@alara.net.au](mailto:president@alara.net.au)



### **Action Learning Action Research Association 2011 Australasian Conference - Brisbane**

The feedback from the Brisbane Conference reflects the success of the Conference, and the degree of engagement in the proceedings and enjoyment of the event by delegates. Comments include:

- ✓ I LOVED the open environment where everyone is willing to learn from each other
- ✓ Interesting, stimulating, sometimes challenging
- ✓ Very engaging and thought provoking
- ✓ I love the diversity of topics, impacts, and methodologies
- ✓ The honesty of presenters about what they do and how they'd like to do it better

Over eighty people attended the two days in late September. A sign of the success of the event was the noise of conversations each meal and break time, as delegates renewed, and created new, friendships.

Some of the highlights, in addition to the presentations and discussions, were the signing of the Affiliation Agreement with Research@EastZone (see separate article) and the presentation of their Monograph publication. In addition, it was a privilege to host the launch of the new book by Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt "Action Leadership - Towards a participatory paradigm". The other highlight was, of course, the constructions at the Conference Dinner (you had to be there!).

The Management Committee, and I am sure those who attended, thank the tremendous Brisbane Organising Committee:

- Pamela Kruse
- Bob Dick
- Cathryn Lloyd
- Geof Hill
- Jeni Bulcock

- Joan Bulcock
- Judith Kearney
- Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt
- Pam Swepson
- Wilma Schouten
- Zhanna Kremez

They have set a high bar for the next Conference.



**2012 Conference – In NSW!**

Speaking of the next Conference, ALARA has held an Australian / Australasian Conference or World Conference in a number of locations in recent years - Brisbane this year, Melbourne for the World Congress in 2010 and for the Conference in 2009, Canberra in 2008, Adelaide in 2007... It has been far too long since ALARA held a conference in Sydney!

ALARA therefore announces that its 2012 Australasian Conference will be in Sydney. Dates and all of the necessary details will be available in the New Year.

We are creating a small Organising Committee, and we welcome any volunteers to join us. We will also be calling for proposals for presentations at the Conference in February.

Colin Bradley  
President  
ALARA Inc



**Life Membership for Susan Goff**

Another important event occurred at the Brisbane Conference with the announcement of the awarding of Life Membership to Susan Goff.

Susan has been an active contributor to the AL / AR community for many years. She has also been a very active member of ALARA. She was President for four years, to which role she brought many qualities, not the least of which was a solid determination to do all she could to help ALARA to be strong presence in the world. Susan's advocacy of ALARA as a vehicle to support the growth of practice in AL and AR has been articulate and persistent. Her willingness

to confront the difficulties that come with being a volunteer organisation inspired other Management Committee members to optimise their contribution and Susan responded by warmly acknowledging Management Committee members contributions, which spurred them on. Susan led by example, demonstrating generosity of spirit and commitment to action.



Susan's strength as an action researcher is demonstrated through her work over many years through Cultureshift and her numerous published works. Her passion is clearly reflected in her desire to reach into many domains of community and organisational life and

to make a difference to the people within. She has fostered the application of PAR to health promotion, indigenous health, eco-sustainability, community development, homelessness and family violence to name a few.

Since ending her term as ALARA President at the World Congress last year, Susan has continued to contribute to ALARA as the Editor of the ALAR journal. Susan has also taken on the responsibilities of Managing Editor of the quarterly ALARA Newsletter and the 2010 ALARA World Congress Proceedings.

*(Excerpts from the speech by members of the Management Committee at the ceremony)*

Thank you Susan, and welcome, new ALARA Life Member!



## ***The Naidoos are Coming!***

Marian and Shaun have been working together for 30 years. As Naidoo and Associates, they apply an impressive mix of multi-disciplinary skills, experience and creative expertise to their commissions. They use a variety of innovative techniques derived from experience in the arts, education and health care sectors underpinned by complexity theory to facilitate the emergence of novel ways of acting, thinking and (self)-organising. They are now planning to visit Australia in 2012 and want to identify opportunities for joint working partnerships, workshops and classes that embrace inclusion and responsive practice, shared learning and the critical development of new approaches in research methodologies. They are both particularly interested in the connections that transcend social engagement research, community/organisational development and action learning/research. Marian and Shaun are creative practitioners, whose work uses traditional research methodologies together with the development of methodologies embodied in approaches such as appreciative inquiry, living theory and action research.



Marian and Shaun prefer a co-creative approach to the development and application of their projects. People, communities of practice, creativity and relationships have always been at the heart of what they do. Nearly all their work involves organisations as people who act as the primary co-producers. Although systems are vital, it is people that bring about change through better communication, clearer identities and effective relationships. Marian and Shaun believe that these are essential qualities that provide the potential for the emergence of creative interactive group dynamics.



## ***Membership***

If you have received this Newsletter, thank you for renewing your membership. If your colleagues would like to receive this and other benefits of membership of ALARA, please encourage them to join - <http://www.alara.net.au/contact/joinus>.



## ***From the Web Master***

ALARA has had a website for over five years now. Built in Drupal 5, it attempted to offer many facilities:

- Information for people looking for resources about action research and action learning
- Information about current activities within ALARA
- The opportunity, through the blogging facility, to share members' action and learning with other members of the community, and
- Discussion groups in which to discuss matters of interest and concern with other members of the community

We are now at a point of review, prior to redesign of ALARA's web presence. I have set up a number of topics in the ALARA website discussion group – please see <http://www.alara.net.au/>. I propose an action research approach to the task of designing ALARA's web presence, and open discussion on two matters:

- How the website looks and feels; and
- The information people using the site need about AR/AL, specifically how to deepen and broaden our current very limited holdings.

If you are not a member of the website discussion group, you can join immediately, without needing approval from the Web Services Coordinator. If we are to progress this beyond the opinions of myself as Coordinator and the ALARA Management Committee, your participation is essential.

I have applied to myself the discipline of reflection on my own Internet use, in my blog on the ALARA website at <http://www.alara.net.au/node/2821>. The first issue I am pursuing is how I can find colleagues I can talk to. I would value reflection on this, if this is a current area of interest of yours.



### **Growing Ideas from the Brisbane Conference**

At the end of the conference, John Wicks threw into the mix a wild idea: that the Australian Government needed to know more about AL and AR and ALARA was the organisation that needed to take on this responsibility.

Ross Colliver, Susan Goff and John have created an initiative that we continue to grow:

*Improving recognition of action research by policy makers and managers: The Policy Influence Project*

Action research practitioners need to speak more clearly to policy makers, so that what AR brings to pressing and contentious issues of public policy and service provision is better understood. It is difficult for those at senior management levels to trust an approach that gives the relational and the affective room to work alongside the instrumental organisation of expertise and action. Action research methods seem to embrace too much uncertainty and allow too much contention.

How can action researchers show that complexity also brings emergence, that contention can bring agreements, and that provisional and negotiated actions can find a pathway through intractable problems? Action researchers have a thousand creative responses underway, but no public face. We are all but invisible to policy makers and managers. The purpose of this project is to change that. We propose to find how to establish amongst

policy makers and senior managers an appreciation of what action research can bring to pressing social problems. The scope and a method are described at <http://www.alara.net.au/node/2823>. Please read this, comment on the approach proposed, and register your interest in participating. Or contact Ross directly 61 (0) 411 226 519.

Let's be audacious in 2012!



**Group Contacts... If you want to get together with other action researchers and action learners – contact someone and do lunch (or Skype)!**



**Melbourne ALARA Network contact details: Jill Sanguinetti,** [Jill.Sanguinetti@vu.edu.au](mailto:Jill.Sanguinetti@vu.edu.au); **Bill Genat,** [bgenat@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:bgenat@unimelb.edu.au)

**Sydney ALARA network contact details: Susan Goff,** [susan.g@cultureshift.com.au](mailto:susan.g@cultureshift.com.au)

**Cairns ALARA network contact details: Robyn Lynn,** [secretary@alara.com.au](mailto:secretary@alara.com.au); **Michelle Redman-MacClaren,** [michelle.maclaren@jcu.edu.au](mailto:michelle.maclaren@jcu.edu.au)

**Brisbane ALARA contact details: Pamela Kruse,** [pamela.kruse@bigpond.com](mailto:pamela.kruse@bigpond.com)

**Perth ALARA contact details: Margaret O'Connell,** [margoconnell@gmail.com](mailto:margoconnell@gmail.com)

**Adelaide ALARA contact details: Janet Kelly,** [janet.kelly@flinders.edu.au](mailto:janet.kelly@flinders.edu.au)



I have been providing and leading workshops for the public in the Wellington region of the North Island and Greater Wellington Regional Council. The workshops have captured peoples' stories and ideas for assisting with preparations for the next regional plan to manage natural resources. We have had over 450 people attend these. The results can be downloaded from: <http://www.gw.govt.nz/your-environment-6903/>

Regards,  
Terry Parminter  
PACT Consulting +64 21 902656



**Message from Ortrun Zuber-Skerritt**

My new book is in press and available in May 2012. Reference:

Zuber-Skerritt, O. (Ed.), (2012, in press), *Action Research for Sustainable Development in a Turbulent World*, Bingley, UK: Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

It originated at the 8th World Congress of ALARA in Melbourne in 2010 (20th Anniversary) with contributions from the elders: Bob Dick, Richard Bawden, Jack Whitehead, Eileen Piggot-Irvine, Robin McTaggart, Shankar Sankaran, Ernie Stringer, Ron Passfield and myself.

Thanks and best wishes,  
Ortrun



ALARA PO Box 1748, Toowong, Queensland,  
4066, Australia; Phone: +61 7 40582268; Email:  
[secretary@alara.net.au](mailto:secretary@alara.net.au)

*From all at  
ALARA,  
have a Happy  
and Safe  
Christmas and  
New Year*

### **ALARA Management Committee 2011-2012**

ALARA Inc  
PO Box 1748  
TOOWONG QLD 4077 AUSTRALIA

[www.alara.net.au](http://www.alara.net.au)

Name	Position	Contact No	Email
Donna Alleman	Bookkeeper	+61 (0)7 3342 1668 +61 (0) 412 153 548	<a href="mailto:finance@alara.net.au">finance@alara.net.au</a>
Robyn Lynn	Administration Secretary	+61 (0) 40582268	<a href="mailto:secretary@alara.net.au">secretary@alara.net.au</a>
Colin Bradley	President	+61 (0) 421 478 670	<a href="mailto:president@alara.net.au">president@alara.net.au</a>
Vicki Vaartjes	National Vice President	+61 (0) 413 047 852 +61 (0)2 4226 4040	<a href="mailto:vicki@leadingtolearn.com.au">vicki@leadingtolearn.com.au</a>
Deb Lange	International Vice President	+61 (0) 418 833 889	<a href="mailto:deborahlange@me.com">deborahlange@me.com</a>
John Molineux	Treasurer	+61 (0) 417 483 332	<a href="mailto:treasurer@alara.net.au">treasurer@alara.net.au</a>
Pamela Kruse	Constitutional Secretary	+61 (0)7 3354 2878	<a href="mailto:pamela.kruse@bigpond.com">pamela.kruse@bigpond.com</a>
Richard McGrath	Publications Group Coordinator	+61 (0)8 8302 2505	<a href="mailto:richard.mcgrath@unisa.edu.au">richard.mcgrath@unisa.edu.au</a>
<b>Volunteer required</b>	Membership		
<b>Volunteer required</b>	Marketing Coordinator		
Ross Colliver	Web Services Coordinator	+61 (0) 411 226 519 +61 (0)3 9078 1108	<a href="mailto:ross.colliver@bigpond.com">ross.colliver@bigpond.com</a>
<b>Volunteer required</b>	Streams Co-ordinator		
Susan Goff	Managing Editor	+61 (0)2 8012 8969 (W) +61 (0)2 9555 7184 (H) +61 (0) 409 139 634	<a href="mailto:susan.g@cultureshift.com.au">susan.g@cultureshift.com.au</a>