



ABN: 41 587 420 126

Our vision is that action learning, action research & 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

Issue 1 April, 2009

Dear Members,

It has been a tragic beginning to the year for many of our Australian members with the devastating floods in Queensland and horrific fires in Victoria. Our thoughts and wishes are with all those who have been affected. If we can be of any assistance please contact our Administration Coordinator Donna Alleman.

This Newsletter is a bumper issue and contains many important articles for our readers. We hope you enjoy this update and remind you that details are always available on our website.

Margaret Fletcher
Email: m.fletcher@griffith.edu.au
admin@alara.net.au



President's welcome to the new ALARA year

Greetings everyone

It is already a third of the way into the New Year – a difficult year it would seem and one that is demanding even more determination, innovation and hard work.

It is times like these that our action research and action learning fields of activity experience growth. As sectors have to re-think priorities and adapt to change, action research, action learning and process design practices provide proven and efficient ways of supporting such changes.

As practitioners and academics in this field, now is a good time for us revisit the foundations with newcomers and new generations, and also explore the most contemporary of approaches with clients, students and peers. It is an exciting time and we are working to strengthen ALARA so our organisation may support this growth.

alara.net.au

In this newsletter we report on the 09 Australian National Conference, the 2010 World Congress, the International Development Studies centre – our new PAR partner for the World Congress, the new business planning group, constitutional changes, news of members' activities, a major PAR Request for Tender in NSW, and an exciting new course at Flinders University.

In a nutshell – we are in a modest and healthy position, and ready to grow if you are able to contribute. We need members to volunteer with assisting with the many activities we are doing: publications being perhaps the most in need. Contact Margaret O'Connell on alara@alara.net.au if you are interested to learn about becoming an Editor of a journal or have existing experience to contribute.

Enjoy the read and many thanks to everyone including our newsletter coordinator, Margaret Fletcher, for putting this issue together.

Susan Goff
President
president@alara.net.au



Special Meeting to make changes to our constitution

The Management Committee is proposing three changes in our constitution. To make constitutional changes we need to have a special meeting so members can vote. As we are spread across 26 countries we will be holding this meeting by way of an electronic "survey monkey" within the next couple of months, once we have received formal responses about the proposals from the Queensland Dept of Trading.

The changes are about:

- a) our name change (ALARA) which while agreed by the members is not yet formally recognized in the constitution,
- b) removing the necessity of having a general meeting to make changes to fees, and
- c) adding three new classes of membership: organizational, affiliate (for un-constituted networks of likeminded people) and ex-officio to offer complementary membership to volunteers who

contribute significantly to us but who do not identify with ALARA.

Please participate by voting when you see the email come into your in tray!



World Congress Update

Hi dear ALARA friends and other interested people,

We have had a first and really good meeting between myself (representing ALARA, the Borderlands Cooperative and the oases Graduate School), Rob Nabben (from the Deakin University Masters in International Community Development) and Russell Hocking (the representative of AVI - Australian Volunteers International) on the relevant Working Group of ACFID (Australian Council for International Development) with a sick Bruce Missingham (Monash University Masters in International Development) unable to come (but very supportive...). Peter Taylor from the Institute for Development Studies at the University of Sussex has already committed to partnership in both the Australian conference this year and the Congress next. And we remain very open to add more informal partners in organising derived from the other 'streams' in which AL, AR and PAR 'happen' in conjunction with processes already under way for the organisation of this year's Conference.

In the next few days we will move to formalising the Memorandum of Understanding between the six initial partners (see above) using the templates provided in the 'model rules'.

Some (still tentative) ideas about various aspects...

- ✓ **Place:** somewhere in Melbourne, avoiding the big ticket convention places to keep prices down, offering a variety of lodging options, from billeting to five stars... and we've already assembled some good ideas around this... We are slowly assembling a Borderlands/oases-based team of people to help 'do' all aspects of the practicalities
- ✓ **Time:** we thought that the best time would be when most Australian Universities have their mid-semester break in September 2010, most likely end-September. That would also allow Northern Hemispherians to use the last part of your summer break... We will let you all know as soon as we're decided.
- ✓ **Duration:** we were opting for *four days* not including pre- and post Congress workshops, excursions and whatever else people coming from far away may want to get involved in...
- ✓ **Thoughts about the program:** we had thoughts about 'sequencing' procedures from a *first day*, paying attention to history, ancestors, philosophical and more generic parts of AL, AR and PAR and associated/parallel/con- or diverging ways of being/doing/thinking/relating, to a more traditional *second day* during which

presentations of all manner would be offered (possibly 'streamed'), to a *third day*, where local 'sites' and 'groups' of people from the various 'streams' as they – hopefully – will have emerged before and during the Australian Conference this year, will invite Congress Delegates to 'their' place (buses provided) and will have 'stream specific' discussions, presentations, workshops, what have you... and returning for the evening to have the Congress Dinner; finally, the *fourth day*, a 'what have we learned and how to move the 'causes' forward...' thematic emphasis...

- ✓ **Strategic stuff:** we certainly would like to 'piggy-back' on the processes now being initiated for the Australian Conference as we would not like (to be seen) to limit the organising group to what must look like an overemphasis on 'international and community development'... That's just a more strategic thing, since those are the connections I happen to have, they are also useful for their own international network connections and there's the potential to have AusAID interested (via ACFID) to pay the way for speakers or offer other subventions (they have done so in quite a few other instances, especially as they are wanting to put more emphasis on research and developing links with universities).
- ✓ **Other items:** Yoland Wadsworth has already been making available her contacts which sit on top of a long international involvement and participation (very actively!) in several previous Congresses. And I have good links with North and South America and several into Europe and Asia... and so do several others here ... And please do give us more...

That's about it for the moment... things will speed up very soon now, to then go quiet and steady for a while again; we would hope to have initial advertising material with dates (especially for registration and submission of papers/workshops/whatever...) and initial information about particulars ready by August or so, so that the beginning of next year would be the start of the more 'pragmatic' stuff (refereeing, registrations, transport, what have you...)

Please call me on 03 9819 3239 if you'd like to talk about any of this; or emails via jacques.boulet@oases.edu.au There will be soon more names for you to make us 'contactable'...

Jacques Boulet
Vice-President International

We welcome our new partners to ALARA for World Congress in 2010.



proceedings, it has been assumed that we will also attract papers.

Are you interested in running a **skill development workshop** at the conference?

The Executive of ALARA and the conference organising committee are committed to offering workshops which focus on the development of action learning and action research skills. At the moment, September 17th has been nominated as that pre-conference date for a range of workshops.

Some workshops will be day-long but most will be half day in length which allows participants to attend two workshops addressing different skills and knowledge areas. The most likely audience for those workshops are people who want to explore the possibilities of our enquiry methodology for their lives and work: We've assumed therefore, that participants may have heard of action research but either they've never actually used it, or they've had very limited experience.

We'll be finalising the topics and facilitators by the end of March so that the workshops can be widely marketed to teachers, health workers, social workers, environmentalists and practitioners in many other fields. ALARA members are invited to contact me if they have a workshop they'd like to run.

Two definite skills development workshops:
To date, two of our Life Members have generously offered their time and considerable expertise to present in two areas.

Bob Dick will offer a day-long workshop entitled *Action learning for leadership development and resilience*.

All workshops will be described in more detail in our marketing material. Bob's workshop will introduce participants to the use of action learning for developing leadership and enhancing resilience. It will address one way to set up an action learning team, and will cover how to increase the impact of action learning by embedding it in a wider action learning program.

Yoland Wadsworth has agreed to present a half-day workshop on 'What Is Action Research?' Yoland's workshop will draw the link between AR and the various disciplines followed by participants.

Again, if you have contacts in areas to which we can market the conference and/or the workshops, please let us know – via e-mail jkavanagh@ains.net.au or through the ALARA website <http://www.alara.net.au/2009Conference> .

Dr Jeannette Kavanagh
National Vice President



alara.net.au

Have you visited our website recently?

(www.alara.net.au)

Here are some hints to help you:

Remembering your password

One difficulty for people who don't often use the site is forgetting your password. Fair enough, most of us now have many passwords, so what to do? The stop gap is to "Request a new password" by hitting that message just below the "Log in" button in the left hand column. You will then be emailed a new password generated by the site software,

Then Log-in (if the system seems to keep on asking you to repeat this process, please do so, exercising patience/perseverance - it will eventually respond with an entrance, and, if not, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we can do something more to fix the problem.)

Change your password to something more familiar once you are back on the site. To change your password, go to My Account under your name on the left hand menu. At the same time, update any other personal details as necessary (for example if you have changed your email since April 2006, and not informed ALARA, then this email will 'go astray' and we have lost contact with you.)

So that's the first way to deal with forgetting your password. The second is to have your browser software remember it, so that whenever you open the ALARA sit, you password is entered. Firefox does this for me and I thank them each time.

The third option is to set up a file and gradually add all your log-ins and passwords. A colleague give me this obvious idea while bragging about how many she had on her spreadsheet. Now I scrupulously add my user name and password to this master list whenever I sign up to a site.

Your profile

Keep tabs on is the web profile of your interests. Your profile is accessible whenever you comment on discussion at the site – the software just makes a link from you as author to your profile. So you can bet that members who don't know you will look at your details. Put a date in your diary to up-date, and another a year on to remind you again.

If you've got ideas on how we can make the profile more useful, get in touch. For example, we have a policy of not putting up members' email addresses, to protect their privacy, but this might need looking at. Any member can email another member from within the site, so you can get in touch with people, but perhaps members don't mind having their direct email addresses showing.

Ross Colliver

Website Coordinator

0411 226519 colliver@ttgdg.com.au



ALARA Special Interest Groups - SIGs

Are you exploring new approaches to Action Learning or Action Research? Are your new ideas at the cutting edge or do you want to share your initial explorations with others? Why not form or join a Special Interest Group (SIG)?

SIGs have been set up by ALARA to enable members to share new ideas, approaches and explorations with other members and non-members.

Each SIG is autonomous and is structured to provide an effective operating mode. However, each SIG will abide by the policies and procedures of ALARA. SIG events will normally be self-funding. Any Sponsorship arrangements will follow ALARA guidelines. Each SIG will be open to ALARA members and non-members. Non-members will be encouraged to join ALARA

Each SIG will normally be guided by a Steering Group [3-5 people] and one person will be named as the SIG Contact. A SIG may cooperate with another institution to present an event.

There are two existing SIGs:

- Action Research and Post Graduate Research
- Action Learning, Action Research Training

Further details under Activities on the ALARA website. Do you have an idea for a SIG or have you and a few colleagues already set up a group that could be an ALARA SIG? If you would like to facilitate such a SIG, please contact [Ted Sandercock](#) and discuss your proposal.

Ted Sandercock
SIG Coordinator



IDS - Our new Participatory Action Research Partner for the World Congress

In recent years there has been an explosion of new opportunities through which people can make their voices heard. From initiatives that enable citizens to claim and exercise their rights, to institutional changes that seek to make governance more responsive and accountable, there is a growing democratisation of everyday life. Yet making real the rights, policies and processes that can deliver the promise of a better world remains a challenge, hindered by entrenched power relations, persistent prejudices and inequalities. The Participation, Power and Social Change Team (PPSC) is based at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) <http://www.ids.ac.uk/> located at the University of Sussex in the UK. The purpose of this research institute, founded in 1966, is to understand and explain the world, and to try to change it – to influence as well as to inform. The PPSC team's work <http://www.ids.ac.uk/go/research->

[teams/participation-team](#) explores concepts and methods of 'participation' and how they can be used to improve the complex interactions between society and policy. Focusing on research, innovation and learning in rights-based and participatory approaches, the team works in partnerships with diverse collaborators from around the world to generate ideas and action for social change. The team emphasises internal learning and reflection, together with respect for voice and diversity and takes a citizen's perspective on development. Whilst the team's projects have their own distinct agendas, they are bound by our following common ways of working:

- **Knowledge as power** - How we understand and describe the world is dependent on the relations of power that shape our lives.
- **Linking theory and action** - Exploring and developing theory both for explaining change and for contributing to making change happen.
- **Learning and teaching for reflective practice** - We need to question the source and relevance of the questions we are asking and explore our own world views.
- **Communicating for change** - Sharing and understanding between people and networks of organisations about alternative methods of knowledge creation, learning and action.
- **Challenging orthodoxies** - Asking 'why should things be thought or done the way they usually are?'
- **Strengthening organisations and alliances** - Developing the global capacity to address the issues of power and knowledge in research, communications and learning.

Participatory action research has long been a core dimension of the team's work with partners around the world. Our engagement in the ALARA World Congress in 2010 provides us with a wonderful opportunity to interact with a diverse range of professionals and practitioners who are involved in processes of social change, and who have a strong commitment to social justice and a recognition of the importance of action, grounded in critical reflection on experience. **For more information about our work, please e-mail: ppsc@ids.ac.uk**

We welcome IDS to ALARA as our World Congress PAR partner for 2010.



Publications update

The April edition of *ALARj* is well underway. This will be a special edition by guest editor, Janet McIntyre, from Flinders University in South Australia. The special edition theme is *PARTICIPATION FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE, SUSTAINABILITY AND PEACE*. Submissions for the edition have been sourced from across the globe; from Africa to Indonesia, and

around Australia. The articles unpack the notion of participation and its role in conducting and disseminating research, particularly work done in relation to "global commons" and "social enterprise". The discussions are broad ranging, personal, and insightful. We hope you'll enjoy our special edition and we look forward to bringing you more special issues in the future.

Eileen Pigott-Irvine is heading up the ARCS Monograph series (see ALARA website at <http://www.alara.net.au/publications/monograph>) and has put out a call for submissions. Check the website for submission details. If you are working with postgraduate students who are keen to publish their work (or work in progress) or develop their writing, please contact Eileen (epiggotirvine@unitec.ac.nz) or Marg O'Connell, Publications Coordinator (alar@alara.net.au).

Finally, on publications, the Publications Working Group is developing a trial online journal to complement the printed journal. Stay tuned to the ALARA website for the release of the trial journal shortly, as we would greatly appreciate members' opinions, suggestions and reactions.

Margaret O'Connell
Publications Coordinator
alara@alara.net.au



Member news and Local events:

Full details available on ALARA website
<http://www.alara.net.au/event>

Cairns, QLD Meeting

The 1st Cairns AL/AR meeting for 2009 is scheduled for 4pm 26 March 2009.

The focus will be the similarities and differences between Action Research and Action Learning. Full details of the event are available on the ALARA calendar of events.

The local contacts are Robyn Lynn (robyn.lynn@jcu.edu.au) and Michelle MacLaren (michelle.maclaren@jcu.edu.au)

NSW 2009 schedule

The NSW regional network is having a planning meeting 6.30pm March 26th at UTS. If any members would like to join Shankar, Susan, Colin and Bel please let Shankar know: Shankar.Sankaran@uts.edu.au by March 25th. We will be advertising events on the website date claimer. Make sure you are registered on the website to stay informed.



Book release: User-Centric Policy Design to Address Complex Needs Retail Price: \$79.00

Janet McIntyre-Mills (Flinders Inst. of Public Policy and Management, Flinders Univ., South Australia)

This new book addresses the question: How can democracy and governance be made more accountable to diverse groups of people within nested regions? How can we address risks across spatial and conceptual boundaries? Emotions are central to policy making. Making connections is the basis for consciousness and mindfulness. The more connections we can make, the better our thinking, our policy processes and our governance outcomes will be. We need to think about our emotions and not to deny them. Emotions, values, and perceptions are central to our humanity. They underpin the so called 'enemies within', namely 'religion, morality, aesthetics and politics'. Enabling more decision making at the local level has both advantages and disadvantages. The research challenge is to find a democracy and governance process to maximize the advantages and minimize the disadvantages. This requires building organizational capacity to address accountability and the management of risk to enable people to work with diverse perceptions, interests, and issues.

https://www.novapublishers.com/catalog/product_info.php?products_id=7331



Congratulations to DR Janet Kelly- PAR thesis passed!

Janet is a key member of the SA team that organised the 2007 National Conference in Adelaide. Janet has just received notice that her PhD thesis has been passed. Janet has been studying at Flinders University, School of Nursing since February 2005. Congratulations Janet from the SA Team, and ALARA members. Janet has agreed to present a seminar on her research for SA members in mid 2009.

Title: Moving Forward Together in Aboriginal Women's Health: A Participatory Action Research Exploring Knowledge Sharing, Working Together and Addressing Issues Collaboratively in Urban Primary Health Care Settings

Summary: Janet's PHD thesis describes collaborative Participatory Action Research (PAR) that explored ways of improving Aboriginal women's health and well-being in an urban Adelaide primary health care setting around three central themes of respectful knowledge sharing, working effectively together and addressing issues related to colonisation, discrimination and exclusion.

The research started with the premise that while Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal professionals are committed to "Closing the Gap" in health disparities, many have questioned how best to do so within the current health system. Therefore, this research focused on filling gaps in knowledge about the spaces where Aboriginal community women, and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health professionals can work collaboratively, regardful and regardless of health system policies, programs and practices.

A strong commitment to local community preferences and national Aboriginal health research ethics enabled Aboriginal community women and Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health professional co-researchers to be actively and meaningfully involved in both the research processes and outcomes. A modified PAR, with repeated cycles of Look and Listen, Think and Discuss and Take Action emerged as an effective model of collaborative practice, suitable for health care and research.

Four unique yet interconnected Collaboration Areas developed, each highlighting particular aspects of culturally safe knowledge sharing and collaboration in health care:

- Working with Aboriginal community women, acknowledging and addressing their most health and well-being priorities related to high levels of stress in their lives.
- Insights into the practicalities and difficulties experienced by staff as they tried to provide health services for Aboriginal women in a newly developing Aboriginal health organisation.
- The challenges and benefits of collaboration between sectors, in particular a local high school and the Aboriginal health service.
- Wider collaboration and road testing our collaborative methodology in a broader environment.

This research has reinforced the need identified in Aboriginal health documents for policy, program and practice commitment to holistic and collaborative approaches such as comprehensive primary health care and participatory action research. While the *National Apology* and *Close the Gap* campaign have provided opportunities for change, these need to be followed by tangible action at all levels of health care.



Brisbane guest presenter: Dr Fran Finn

Fran Finn, Faculty of Business, School of Management, Queensland University of Technology presented a session on Leadership Development Through Executive Coaching: The Effects on Leaders' Psychological States and Transformational Leadership Behaviour" in Brisbane last year.

Here is a summary of her research.

There is much anecdotal feedback about the benefits of executive coaching which has helped establish it as a multibillion dollar enterprise, costing some organisations up to \$15,000 a day. Yet, despite these astounding figures, empirical executive coaching research is very limited. There is a fundamental need for high quality research to demonstrate the effects of executive coaching and provide justification for the level of commitment expended. Three studies, utilising quantitative and qualitative data, were presented to address some of these issues and provide evidence as to the psychological and behavioural effects of executive coaching.

The research demonstrated leadership development through executive coaching. The studies revealed that executive coaching positively enhanced the psychological states of self-efficacy, developmental support, positive affect, openness to new behaviours, and developmental planning. Impressively, the results also showed that executive coaching had sustained effects on these psychological states, and on team members' perceptions of their leader's transformational leadership behaviour. Practically, these findings justify the use of executive coaching in organisational settings. Theoretically, these outcomes augment the limited body of knowledge within the executive coaching field and provide insight into the processes associated with executive coaching that contribute to the development of transformational leadership behaviours.

You may contact Fran at f.finn@qut.edu.au



Available course: Interactive Design and Evaluation for Democracy and Sustainable Futures

Abbreviated title: Democracy and Sustainability
Convener: Assoc Prof Janet McIntyre
Subject lecturers include Dr Ken Bausch, Prof Dr Aleco Christakis with Dr Tom Flanagan
Units: 6
2009 Timetable: Fully on line subject
Duration: 13 modules covering 13 weeks Semester one and two
Flexible Learning: Available
Curriculum

Internationally we face the social, economic and environmental challenge to reduce the size of our carbon footprint. The action learning subject is intended as an elective for students who wish to work more effectively on complex problems across disciplines and organisations to address areas of concern. It is suited to students across the social and natural sciences and is transdisciplinary. The aim is to enable policy makers and managers to think critically and systemically by learning about interactive design and evaluation processes that

engage the stakeholders who are to be affected by policy and management decisions. The fully online subject will enhance theoretical and methodological literacy to address complex policy and governance challenges and to increase their critical understanding of the potential and pitfalls of decentralized decision making. At the end of the topic the students will be able to apply conceptual and analytical tools to facilitate discursive democracy. They will understand that 'data that is out of context has little meaning and that context that isn't explored isn't transferred. Dialogue is the means of exploring context and space must be created to support dialogue' (Bausch 2007). Students will be able to enhance social inclusion by learning about and applying the principles of requisite variety, salience, parsimony and engagement to enhance social inclusion.

Indicative Reading

Module notes will be provided and will be available on line to all students.

Key References

Ackoff, R.L. and Pourdehnad, J., 2001, "On misdirected systems", *Systems Research and Behavioural Science*, 18(3):199-205.
Christakis, A.N. and Bausch, K.B. (2006). *Harnessing Collective Wisdom and Power to Construct the Future*. Greenwich, Information Age.
Christakis, A. and Brahms, S., 2003, "Boundary spanning dialogue for the 21st century agoras", *Systems Research and Behavioural Science*. 20:371-382.
Florini, A., 2003. *The Coming Democracy: New Rules for Running a New World*, Island Press, Washington DC.
Fougere, G. 2007. 'Wellbeing, an idea whose time has come.' *New Opportunities for Health Impact Assessment in New Zealand public policy and planning*. The Public Health Advisory Committee. Wellington, New Zealand.
Gore, AI 2007. *Assault on Reason*. Bloomsbury. London.
Journals
Systems Research and Behavioural Science
Systemic Praxis and Action Research

These are full text electronic journals available in the Flinders Library

Assessment

The assessment will be based on participation in the action learning processes and the completion of the set tasks. The group work assessment includes: 25% for finding root causes and 25% for devising the action plan. The other 50% will be allocated to a writing an essay of 3000 words on one of six topics covering the challenges and processes to address complex policy and management decision making.



Significant PAR strategy calling for tenders NOW!

The NSW Government Department for the Aging, Disabilities and Home Care is calling for tenders for a three-year participatory action research strategy valued at \$450,000. Visit their website before the due date – 14-April, 2009.

<http://www.dadhc.nsw.gov.au/dadhc/Doing+business+with+us/tenders.htm>

Contact information for ALARA

Donna Alleman
Administration Coordinator

PO Box 1784, Toowong Qld 4066, Australia
Fax: (61-7) 3342 1669
Email admin@alara.net.au
Web <http://www.alara.net.au>

ALARA Management Committee, 2008-2009

Name	Position	Contact No	Email
ALARA Inc		PO Box 1748 TOOWONG QLD 4077 AUSTRALIA	www.alara.net.au
Donna Alleman	Administration Coordinator	+61 (0) 7 3342 1668 +61 (0) 412 153 548	admin@alara.net.au
Susan Goff	President	+61 (0) 2 4226 4040w +61 (0) 2 9555 7184 h + 61 (0) 409139634	president@alara.net.au
Pam Kruse	Constitutional Secretary	+61 (0) 7 3354 2878h	Pamela.kruse@bigpond.com
Tony Ip	Administrative Secretary	Tony Ip (02) 95915861 (04) 0442-4201	tonykc_ip@hotmail.com
John Molineux	Treasurer	+61 (0) 417 483 332	treasurer@alara.net.au
Jeannette Kavanagh	National Vice President	+61 (0) 3 9509 4227	jkavanagh@ains.net.au
Jacques Boulet	International Vice President	+61 (0) 3 9819 3239	jacques.boulet@oases.edu.au
Ross Colliver	Web Services Coordinator	+61 (0) 411 226 519 +61 (0) 3 9078 1108	colliver@ttdg.com.au
Margaret O'Connell Janet McIntyre	Publications Group Coordinator	Margaret home: +61 (0) 2 6247 8351 0402 672 889 Janet: +61 (0)8 8201 2075	alar@alara.net.au
Ted Sandercock	Special Interests Group Coordinator	+ 61 (0) 8 8556 4535	sanderwt@westnet.com.au
Vicki Vaartjes	Membership and Marketing Coordinator	+61 (0) 413 047 852 02 4226 4040	vicki@twyfords.com.au
Outgoing			
Dianne Allen	Minute Secretary	+61 (0) 2 4232 2623	diallen@internode.on.net
Margaret Fletcher	Constitutional Secretary	+61 (0) 412 147 484	m.fletcher@griffith.edu.au