A competency tool for organisational leadership in sustainability learning, research and strategic management. Ragusa, A. & Crampton, A. (2015-2017) CSU Green Sustainability Large Grant, $50,000

Powering Down: an energy efficiency education project. Masterman-Smith, H., Rafferty, J., Sheahan, M. & Albury City Council (2017-2018) NSW Environmental Trust grant, $100,000


International engagement & linkages

Associate Professor Ian Gray's interest in regional rail had him spend four days in November 2015 studying the small, locally managed and provincially administered railways of Saskatchewan, Canada. The tour was organised with the help of provincial officials and the Saskatchewan Short Line Railway Association.

Overseas conference presentations made by members of this SRA included two presentations at the Sociological Association of Aotearoa New Zealand (SAANZ) conference at Massey University, New Zealand in 2015. They were:


OVERVIEW

The members of this SRA come from a variety of disciplines and include sociologists, educationalists, social researchers and environmental economists. The aim of the SRA is to advance policy, community and scholarly understandings about the social dimensions of environmental sustainability.

With that aim in mind, in 2015 and 2016 Dr Helen Masterman-Smith and Dr John Rafferty were able to build and extend on their first NSW OEH funded project Our Place - Riverina and Murray (targeting communities in Albury, Holbrook and Deniliquin) to deliver a second Our Place project, this time targeting Corowa, with new project members Dr Marie Sheahan and PhD student Jeanette Carroll.

The Our Place projects aim to help communities protect their natural environments and to live more sustainably, and are one of a suite of regional initiatives by NSW OEH which seek to work with regional partners to engage with their communities around environmental issues that matter to them locally.

The Our Place-Corowa project has involved community forums, surveys and funding for small practical projects identified by community members.

Building on the learnings and lessons of the two Our Place projects and another project that the researchers were involved in- the Learning Communities Higher Education Participation and Partnership (HEPP) project (2014-2015) funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, the researchers secured another $32,000 from NSW OEH for what was a, highly successful project in Albury to broker community engagement strategies and options on the theme of sustainable communities. This project then led to another community engagement project in 2017, this time funded by the NSW Environment Trust, called Powering Down which is aimed at the same neighbourhood/communities but with a focus on energy efficiency and security.

Work on a major project for this SRA, the ARC Discovery project Virtuous Practitioners: Empowering Social Workers, (2014-2017), led by Professor Manohar Pawar, is almost complete. Details in “In Focus” at the end of this report.

The on-going Reviving Regional Railways project has helped to promote an informed debate on the broad range of options for this issue. In August 2016, seven years after supporters of the revival of the Blayney-Demondrille line first met, the NSW State Government announced that $5 million would be invested to reinstate the Maimuru (north of Young) to Demondrille (near Harden) railway. Under the NSW Government’s Fixing Country Rail program, several million more dollars were allocated among smaller projects.

CURRENT PROJECTS


A Community Engagement Series: Regional Facilitator in the Albury LGA. Masterman-Smith, H., Rafferty, J. & Sheahan, M., (2016) NSW OEH, $32,000 Project details

A competency tool for organisational leadership in sustainability learning, research and strategic management. Ragusa, A. & Crampton, A. (2015-2017) CSU Green Sustainability Large Grant, $50,000


Dr Crampton and Dr Ragusa also attended the 12th International Conference on Environmental, Cultural, Economic & Social Sustainability, Portland State University, Oregon in January 2016 and gave the refereed presentation on Sustainability literacy: The missing starting point for critical conversations and effective actions.

Two UK social researchers, Dr Tim Wengraf, Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Birbeck Institute for Social Research, London University and Dr Prue Chamberlayne, Visiting Senior Research Fellow, Open University, UK, were in Australia in February 2015 to run a five day intensive workshop on a social research technique called Biographic Narrative Interpretive Method, as part of the Virtuous Practitioners project.

**REGIONAL & NATIONAL ENGAGEMENT**

The three projects funded by NSW OEH have all relied heavily on regional community engagement for their success. For the community engagement project in Albury, researchers partnered with the not-for-profit Goodlife Co-operative and hired a shopfront “The Commons” in Lavington, Albury as a need for a community-driven space had been identified.

Activities included:

- The Art of Sustainability Exhibition which culminated in an exhibition supported by Albury and Wodonga Councils as part of the Sustainable Living Festival
- Two public forums on people powered democracy, and economy
- A grant-writing workshop
- “Environmental Protection Unplugged” activities which have included talks to community groups, schools and NRM practitioners

Drs Helen Masterman-Smith, John Rafferty, Marie Sheahan and PhD candidate, Wes Ward, participated in an Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia workshop on the topic of Justice, Fairness and Equity in Natural Resource Management at ANU, in Canberra, 2015. Their presentations related to results from the first Our Place, and the Learning Communities projects. Dr John Rafferty and Dr Helen Masterman-Smith were founding members of a new Australian Environmental Justice Research Network.

Dr Rafferty and Dr Masterman-Smith also gave a presentation on “Creating sustainable communities” to the Albury Rotary Club in March, 2016. The two, together with Dr Marie Sheahan, Mr Wes Ward, and PhD candidate Jeanette Carroll, were kept busy with their involvement in the Learning Communities project which finished at the end of 2015. The project involved school partnerships, community engagement and research activities focussed on the theme of ‘creating sustainable communities through higher education.

Continuing his push for regional rail, Institute Adjunct Associate Professor lan Gray gave a presentation on “Rail freight for regional development” based on a paper he has co-authored with Philip Laird, Hon Principal Fellow, University of Woollongong, and Mr Nick Montague, Department of Transport and Main Roads, Queensland, at the SEGRA conference held at CSU’s Bathurst campus in 2015. Associate Professor Gray has produced a Youtube video, Rail Freight for Regional Development.

As part of their research for developing A competency tool for organisational leadership in sustainability learning, research and strategic management, Dr Ragusa and Dr Crampton organised and ran sustainability strategic management, Dr Ragusa and Dr Crampton organised and ran sustainability

They also gave a presentation at The Australian Sociological Association (TASA) Conference, University of Melbourne in 2016 on Risky food and water? Health and environmental knowledge and information-seeking in Australia.

In 2015 Associate Professor Jonathon Howard was called as an expert witness for the Commonwealth Senate Inquiry into the Social and Economic Impact of the Murray Darling Basin Plan, the final report of which was made in February 2016. Members of this SRA were involved in various media engagement activities during 2015/16 including:

- Associate Professor Ian Gray following the release of CSU’s media release Regional rail decline with unattended stations, but also following a media release relating to a paper he and Dr Merrilyn Crichton had published in the Journal of Social Inclusion on the negative social consequences of replacing regional train services with coaches;
- Dr John Rafferty who has had a regular fortnightly radio show “Science and Stuff” on ABC Goulburn Murray since the beginning of 2015 where he discusses the latest science news, particularly related to sustainability and its environmental and social impacts as well as interviews regarding the Flourish Festival in Albury;
- Dr Andrea Crampton who was interviewed by WinTV Wagga on water quality in rural areas;
- Dr Angela Ragusa who was interviewed about why people move to small towns on Prime TV Wagga;
- coverage Australia-wide of “The Commons” in Albury, a concept designed the benefit disadvantaged communities and the environment
- PhD student Jenny Woods who was featured in a story in the Daily Advertiser on the community spirit shown by North Wagga residents in the face of flooding

The Regional Centre of Expertise Murray-Darling (RCE-MD) is aligned with this SRA. The RCE-MD, which is acknowledged by the United Nations University, is a consortium of regional stakeholders within the Murray-Darling that supports and promotes sustainable development through integrated research. CSU is one of the partners in the consortium.

**PHD STUDENTS**

During 2015/16 there was one PhD student associated with this SRA who graduated, Dr Michelle Olivier: The advantages of localisation as a strategy for sustainability and global carbon reduction.

On-going students associated with this SRA are:

- **Mark Adler:** Understanding relationships between universities and Regional Centres of Expertise in Education for Sustainable Development
- **Jeanette Carroll:** Animal activism of the poor in Australia - Is anyone paying attention?
- **Philip Groves:** Irresponsible workers and the men on the Clapham Omnibus: A symbolic
interactionist approach to legal anomaly (submitted)

**Jenny Woods**: Experiences of community spirit in flood recovery: Exploring meaning and the opportunities for community development

**KEY PUBLICATIONS**


**In Focus**


**Funding**

ARC Discovery grant, $220,130

**Investigators/ Researchers**

Professor Manohar Pawar, Professor Richard Hugman (UNSW), Mr Andrew Alexandra (CSU) and Dr Bill Anscombe (CSU)

**Description**

The project aims to analyse and develop core virtues of social workers to strengthen the social fabric of individuals, families and communities. The increasing demand for sound judgement and appropriate decision making, often in the unpredictable and uncertain contexts, necessitates a focus on virtue-led social workers’ action.

By employing a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the research was conducted in three phases.

Phase 1: This phase involved in-depth narrative interviews of leading social workers across Australia, analysis of qualitative data, development of 10 biographies of social workers and a two day workshop (held in December 2014 at Wagga Wagga) which brought together eminent social work and philosophy academics from nine Australian universities. As planned, a book containing the 10 biographies, has been produced.

Phase 2: National level data collection to explore whether and how social workers develop and apply virtues in their practice with data collected from social work practitioners, social work supervisors, social work ethics educators, and social work ethics curriculum.

Phase 3: Data analysis, report writing, publication and dissemination.

Demonstrating engagement with end-users, the details of the research project were presented at five end-user professional forums: the Australian Council of the Heads of Schools of Social Work; monthly social work research seminar, CSU; PhD/DSW seminar, CSU; the 19th International Consortium for Social Development international symposium on Transforming Society: Trends and models in community leadership and social development, Singapore; and colloquium - 25 Years of Social Work at CSU.

**Outcomes**

The outcomes include:

- systematic and greater understanding of the role of virtues in social work practice, which has been largely neglected in the social work field;
- identification of core virtues in social work practice;
- methods of developing and using virtues in practice;
- publication in referred journals and presentation of papers in national and international conferences

These outcomes are likely to impact the ways of thinking and doing of social workers; raise the awareness of virtue-led practice and improvement in decisions and the quality of practice; and advance the knowledge base and orientation of the social work profession towards a new paradigm in social work education and practice.