

STAKEHOLDERS IN THE MENINDEE WETLANDS PROJECT AND THE FAR WEST NSW REGIONAL PLAN UNITE FOR GREENER DEVELOPMENT

To gain better support for the Menindee Wetlands Project and for healthier and greener development, also seek a Chinese chief for the International Monetary Fund

The Far West NSW Regional Plan (2010-2020) is very clear and informative. This submission discusses the desired regional outcomes which relate to improved community and economic development. According to the Regional Plan this may be partly achieved in pursuit of Ramsar classification for 'part' of the Menindee Lakes System and through investment in related eco-tourism, business and festival opportunities (p. 8). Good idea.

Later observations are made on the Far West NSW Regional Plan, primarily in regard to management of the Menindee Wetlands Project, health, water and other matters. One hopes this may be useful for clear identification of stakeholders and key stakeholders in the Wetlands and other projects. Distinctions between stakeholders and key stakeholders are crucial for good project management. Stakeholders are all those who have an interest of any kind in the project. The key stakeholders are those for whom the proposed project benefits are ideally designed on one hand and those who fund the project on the other. A stakeholder management model contrasts with a stockholder management model. The latter traditional market model addresses only the financial interests of investors in any project. It does not address whether social or environmental goals of the project are achieved. Getting investment clearly directed to achieving social and environmental goals sought by the key stakeholders is important for designing and thus comparing the outcomes of stakeholder services to meet goals better for current and future generations.

Associated health, water conservation, construction and other aspects of the Far West Regional Plan are ideally discussed in an international context in which the related need is recognized to channel Australian and global investment towards greener, more open, stable and democratic development, in cooperation with many communities. Otherwise we will again return to opaque and unstable markets which unexpectedly crash and which are driven by rich US and related financial interests. Such financial drivers have also increased inequality by designing science, technology and education primarily to meet the interests of richer groups. Many global communities now find it hard to emerge from the most recent financial crisis. It will also be hard to avoid repetition of old cycles where the next crash may be bigger and much rare life and beauty may have gone forever. People everywhere love water but are increasingly faced with desert and the need to purchase water in plastic which destroys marine life and clogs the earth. The Menindee Wetlands Project is ideally a laboratory with wider influences, like a sanctuary or zoo.

The Department of Environment states Australia has 64 Ramsar wetlands covering around 7.5 million hectares. Ramsar wetlands are those that are representative, rare or unique wetlands, or are important for conserving biological diversity. These are included on the List of Wetlands of International Importance held under the Ramsar convention. Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They protect our shores from wave action, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality.

They provide habitat for animals and plants and many contain a wide diversity of life, supporting plants and animals found nowhere else. Wetlands provide an important range of environmental, social and economic services. Many are areas of great natural beauty and many are important to Aboriginal people. Wetlands also provide many benefits for industry. For example, they form nurseries for fish and other freshwater and marine life and are critical to Australia's commercial and recreational fishing industries. Wetlands are the vital link between land and water. Many birds of all kinds also love them.

The UN Convention on Biological Diversity described the ecosystem approach as 'a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way'. The attached discussion shows that in spite of supposedly being a national framework 'to guide the ecologically sustainable management of Australia's native vegetation for ecosystem resilience', Australia's Native Vegetation Framework needs fixing. The Framework has a bad decision-making strategy which does not address equity concerns. It does not recognize the need for open and integrated approaches to environmental, social and economic decision making and investment. This contravenes the approach required by the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979. The Act was groundbreaking as it recognised the importance of a consultative and integrated understanding of relevant environmental, social and economic issues in making land use planning decisions.

Joseph Stiglitz, the US Nobel economist recently said on the News Hour on SBS TV that US regulators can do anything, but as long as courts keep reinforcing the legitimacy of past commercial practices, the economy will go back to business as usual. Rating agency fantasies also multiply all related business instability. The Australian Financial Review (AFR 23.5.2011, p. 54) noted the Chinese People's Daily editorial (20.5.2011) stated it would be a good remedy for the old, defective International Monetary Fund (IMF) operations if more Chinese elements are added to the IMF's senior management. The editorial claimed this would be conducive to enhancing the IMF's concern for emerging economies and for harmonizing the trade and economic relations between developing and developed countries. The Chinese editorial stated:

It will be a great sign of respect for a rising China and a symbolic step of optimising the international financial order if the 24 executive directors who hold voting shares of the IMF can elect a Chinese chief of the IMF.

This submission recommends that many Far West NSW stakeholders and others make their strong support for this obvious and sensible international change known to relevant development ministers such as Simon Crean, Martin Ferguson, Kevin Rudd and many others. The need for more Asian direction is clear from Peter Costello's article 'Why the IMF must look beyond Europe' (Sydney Morning Herald 25.5.2011, p.13). He points out that the IMF is behind the times in reflecting our ideal international governance interests, which ideally lie in recognizing our Asian and related future interests better. One assumes nobody is likely to understand the interests of Asians better than Asians.

Making the transition from feudal relations of production to those which serve the public interest in well-being as broadly and well as possible may be particularly hard in large

populations. The comparative Chinese success in this stands out. For example, Amartya Sen's recent article entitled 'Freedom and Prosperity', (AFR 27.5.2011, Review p.5) shows population health and education are far better in China than in India. Sen argues:

Those who are fearful that India's growth performance would suffer if it paid more attention to 'social objectives' such as education and health care should seriously consider that notwithstanding these 'social' activities and achievements, China's rate of GNP growth is still clearly higher than India's.

Those who seek to follow traditional US driven investment routes should also consider the fact that the US is trillions of dollars in debt to China. One could not accuse Chinese leaders, such as Mao and those who followed him of refusing to speak about the changing economic and political directions they were constantly trying to make clear to the masses of peasants to gain their support for such huge tasks. In market driven, commercial in confidence approaches to development, operational secrecy is expected. The US and some European democracies have been based on promotion of personal and government debt while multiplying and shifting risk onto others who are later comers to the market. It appears there was often a total lack of effective management or knowledge before the most recent unexpected crash. One wonders how valuable a democratic approach can be if it is based on championing secrecy and community ignorance of real economic drivers.

The comparative breadth as well as the strong economic and social success of the Chinese model and work effort now makes Chinese IMF leadership desirable for the necessary economic redirection of the global goals and performances necessary to achieve greener, more stable, development as well as more equitable IMF representation. Beside China, other Asian performance may appear comparatively narrow or lacking in openness or stability or else directed too much to reflect the traditionally ruling feudal and related commercial interests. All armies may also be frighteningly demanding. Chinese people have been raised to comparatively good health, education and well being in a short time and their future appears bright. All populations now have an interest in greener direction.

The key threat faced by those who seek greener management across all boards is that as Asia develops the world will be increasingly composed of concrete, desert, or plantations. On its top floor the Shanghai Urban Planning Exhibition Center outlines plans for 'Bluer sky, clearer water, greener land and better living'. In an article in the Shanghai Daily (7.2.2011, A7) entitled 'Soaring prices, crushed homes, roaring GDP', Wan Lixin claims that according to an Internet survey, zhang (surging prices) and chai (tearing down), best sum up people's feelings about 2010. He writes local government officials have grown so addicted to growth they have lost their capacity to be 'incentivized by any other targets' and argues holistic measures of community wellbeing are needed. He claims:

The enshrinement of the market has led to decade-long growth, and as the racket has died down a bit, we can spare some time for reflections. Some came to wonder if the miraculous growth in wealth is more distributive than creative. Equipped with this insight, some people have developed a healthy cynicism about 'public interests' so often cited by officials.

I had a strong impression our Chinese tour guide was concerned about official corruption, but not about air pollution or any related environmental problems, such as desertification. However, as Canadian Joni Mitchell saw about almost everywhere a very short time ago:

They cut down all the trees, put some in a tree museum
Then charge all the people a dollar and a quarter just to see them
Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you lost when it's gone?
They pave paradise, put up a parking lot.

This may soon be the fate of parks and wilderness around the world, so good luck to China Tourism Information with Paradise Sichuan and also to Singapore, with its wonderful, potentially expanding zoo around the reservoir. Unfortunately the recent Inter-Ministerial Committee on Sustainable Development report to the PM of Singapore entitled 'A Lively and Liveable Singapore: Strategies for Sustainable Growth' assumes this must be generated by increased population. Singapore is already one of the most crowded places on earth. Its policy apparently contrasts with the Chinese development position in which the one child policy had a vital economic rationale when ideally accompanied with a guaranteed 'iron rice bowl'. Effective, stable fund management for guaranteed support in old age and to protect future generations is now widely sought.

Australia has a good record in development of health care and superannuation funds and our experience of the recent international financial crisis was comparatively mild in global terms. Effective management of reproduction, communication, education, housing, illness, disability and death are now key considerations in related global, regional, urban and rural contexts, especially for the poor. On International Women's Day, according to the News Hour on SBS TV (10.3.11), Laura Bush, Melinda Gates and Helen Gayle, the president and CEO of CARE, met to discuss how to improve women's reproductive health and education in the US and beyond. Given the comparatively superior performance of health care services in Australia and elsewhere in terms of their population coverage, equitable distribution and lower cost, these women could also give some pointers to the US House Oversight Committee as a result of broader discussions. The House Oversight Committee is examining regulation interfering with job creation, including in health care, to reform it. Study of the Chinese direction may also offer them good tips related to the achievement of the superior health status of people in China, in comparison with other developing regions. There is always room for improvement.

The Far West NSW Regional Plan claims regional communities may instinctively see globalisation as a threat, fearing contraction or closure of small businesses and exodus of youth to more populous coastal centres. However, globalisation also brings access to information, international markets, innovation and cheaper communication (p. 24). Ideally, we can design what we want. The Far West locals should have plenty of jobs and others should be attracted to work and learn. Teachers, police, nurses and other key workers should be able to see a multitude of related career paths and not be narrowly channelled or cut off. However, this ideally depends upon protection of natural resources.

Those who developed and will implement the Far West NSW Regional Plan appear to be in a driving seat happily situated between many capital cities with information technologies, skills and knowledge from which they may draw, as well as depending upon those closest. The best way to identify skill needs in any Australian industry and to create a situation that allows for a good match between skills and job opportunities may be to create more opportunities for on-the-job learning and related curriculum and accreditation directed by instruments like regional plans and related community requirements for jobs.

The Far West NSW Regional Plan is ambitiously open to many new and greener production technologies and is also seeking to protect and show its natural and historic heritage better. Broken Hill might ideally be seen as an international laboratory trying to foster emerging greener economies and all related quality of life as broadly as possible. Give our history of expansion, we humans may otherwise best be seen as plagues of locusts living off the land and so causing more desertification and its problems, especially for future generations and for all those who are poorest. Why not reverse market trends?

Better direction appears best achieved by more open planning to gain environmental and social goals cost-effectively, rather than by return to opaque and unstable investments driven in markets where many who should be managing in our global interests appear to produce little or no reliable information or related ability to exercise control. More open and practical development and accreditation of skills pursued in real project work are also needed. The Menindee Wetlands Project and other developments for Far West NSW are ideally looked upon in this light to improve our common global heritage and to pass it on.

As Jac Nasser, BHP Billiton Chairman, stated in 'BHP demands staged carbon tax', (AFR, 10.4.2011, p. 4):

We happen to be the country with the most options around an energy mix....yet we have the most narrow sources of energy output.....So I think almost anything we do from where we are will be a positive and we should start to make these incremental steps.....
.....We don't want to get in the trap of really believing our policy is going to influence other countries. We've got to do what is right for us.

One sees many Australians are getting fatter and this appears particularly so in country areas, where transport is often also a problem for those who may benefit more from exercise than visits to doctors for more pills. According to the Far West Regional Plan, 17 out of every 20 people living in Far West NSW live in Broken Hill which also demonstrates much higher proportions of people in the age groups over 65 than the NSW norm. One in every five families is also a single parent family. How helpful can these groups be to each other? (If I were a grandma I would want to learn to play a ukulele).

One assumes personal and general development reliance in Broken Hill and related regional centres cannot be placed primarily on the expectation of personal cars, planes and taxis as most people cannot afford to use them regularly. Leaving aside the needs of tourists, a range of very small green hop on and hop off buses, self-drive cars or bicycles seem a good idea for public trial in Dubbo, Broken Hill and other Far West areas. One

must leave Broken Hill towards Sydney by Countrylink bus and train on Tuesday, unless one can get to the bus before 3.45 am. Superficially this situation seems a huge barrier to work and to a lot of related local development of all kinds. Is there much skateboarding, dancing or acrobatics for young people in Broken Hill or is there mainly traditional sport?

Towards identification of the key stakeholders, stakeholders, skills development needs and related employment directions for Menindee Wetlands and other projects

One thinks of Australia as a democracy, yet I have rarely read anything useful about the management of the scarce resource of water that I thought I understood. The Menindee Wetlands Project appears an important potential opportunity to learn more about water management to promote health and pleasure in an international laboratory situation ideally designed to benefit current and future generations as broadly as possible. This also requires more open management. If this occurred, one assumes the ideal key stakeholders in the Menindee Wetlands Project would be all Australians, the global community, future generations and those funding the project. The project stakeholders would be those paid to deliver services related to the achievement of the Menindee Wetlands project. However, a broader range of stakeholders in the water environment deliver services to those around the Menindee Lakes, in Far West NSW, and beyond.

In regard to water, the Far West NSW Plan states:

The 1570 kilometre Darling twists through the region from its southern Queensland catchment area to join the River Murray at Wentworth in south-western NSW.

At Menindee, the river flows through Lake Wetherell, one of the four main lakes in the Menindee Lakes Storage Scheme. The other significant lakes are Pamamaroo, Menindee and Cawndilla. This system was constructed from a series of natural depressions throughout the period 1949 to 1968, to capture water which could be used to augment the River Murray; meet stock, domestic and irrigation need along the lower Darling River; provide for urban and mining needs in Broken Hill; supply local communities; and provide a resource for flood mitigation. The sequence of lakes has become an important recreational area for the region.

Irrigation has allowed the region's agribusiness to diversify into various crops to supplement the more traditional activities surrounding wool production. (p.8)

According to the Far West NSW Plan the identified threats to the region include on-going drought which could impact not only on the horticultural and pastoral industries, but also on water supplies to the region's population centres. Significant investment in solutions to these on-going challenges apparently include improvements to the built water supply structure; adoption of drought-resilient crops; promotion and application of efficient water use practices in domestic households and process improvements to reduce water wastage in mining and industrial applications (p.24). Should one assume those involved in these

activities are stakeholders who may deserve related support, rather than key stakeholders in the Menindee Wetlands projects? Who are they and what are their aims?

The Plan discussion of the Broken Hill Water Supply states water is generally drawn from the Darling River and pumped over 120 kilometres of land considered among the most arid in NSW. There are two other water reservoirs within thirty kilometres of the city - Stephens Creek Reservoir and Umberumberka Reservoir. A third, Imperial Lake, was constructed on the outskirts of the city for mining use and is now held as an emergency water supply. The three reservoirs also act as a **'terminal storage for water from the Menindee Lakes Scheme'**, before it is pumped to a treatment plant in Broken Hill (p. 16). One wonders what the ideal regional production relationships are in regard to the Menindee Lakes Scheme, Broken Hill Water Supply and related commercial interests.

The Highlights of the Regional Plan (p. 2) state that the known mineral resources mean that mining is a key regional employer and the region is considered highly prospective. Traditional mining/pastoral dependence is moving through a diversification process. Alongside tourism, there are emerging industries in goat and sheep meat production. Horticulture is diversifying into cotton, malting grains, grapes and stone fruits. One wonders what kind of interest these stakeholders have in the Menindee Wetlands project.

In 2009 the Australian Government committed \$400 million to reduce evaporation in the Menindee Lakes Storage Scheme (p. 16). One wonders how this was done. A further \$2 million is being spent on storm water detention basins in Broken Hill. One wonders how these are decided. Although the current intention is flood mitigation there is potential to consider recycling initiatives in the future (p. 16). This appears vital. One wonders how all such interests are ideally related to achieve aims of the Menindee Lakes Scheme. Who are the key stakeholders and other stakeholders in this project? We should know. Articles in local and national newspapers, and discussion on radio and TV would be good.

The Productivity Commission report on the vocational education and training workforce (2011) does not address a central problem, which is that for best results much certification of competence is best based on the outcomes of practice in the field, not on multiple choice questions or theoretical tests which may do little for students other than take them away from regional workplaces and homes and cost huge amounts of money. Whether teachers or not, we increasingly require **'currency of industry knowledge, adult learning capabilities and integration of technology into learning'** also built on **'sound language and literacy skills and basic word processing'**. Test these skills and others on the job or risk major increases in social inequality and much greater difficulty in progressing towards greener futures which protect the heritage of future generations.

The Menindee Wetlands Project and Far West Regional Plan ideally assist much better directed education and research. In 2009, the total operating revenues of 39 Australian universities were \$20.5 billion and the Australian government provided 53% of these revenues, according to the Financial Analysis and Reporting Unit of the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. Domestic students comprised almost 75% of all enrolments. It appears to cost nearly \$20 billion to teach one million students!

To develop community skills and attract more students one must also know what university related research and community service project aims are and manage projects so better communication supports student growth and all related community aims better.

In the Sydney Ideas discussion ‘The authority of science: Is science just another voice in the policy debate?’ (8.4.2011) Professor Christian List of the London School of Economics List contrasted the concept of aggregative democracy with deliberative democracy and prefers the latter. Deliberative democracy assumes the combination of belief and the related desire to make rational decisions ideally drive development directions, rather than the aggregation of particular numbers being the main driver. List’s distinction between two democratic forms provides the capacity for belief and more scientific approaches to evidence to drive development regionally and universally. It also provides a framework for project development directed by regional stakeholders.

The article ‘Engineers demand to see a plan’ (AFR 8.12.2010, Business 8) states the National Engineering Taskforce seeks implementation of a student demand driven system to alleviate engineering skills shortages. Accordingly, it now appears most necessary to:

1. Make education managers manage rationally to grow the business to cheapen and improve the quality of education and research for development and jobs
2. Put subject content on-line, or on video, radio, or TV and administer subjects to maximize economies of teaching and administrative scale and/or to customize teaching better to support specified work projects and related training on the job
3. Maximize student and employer choice in regard to subjects undertaken

This work and education process may be led in major resources, infrastructure and service operations, by local councils, etc. There is also great scope for improving work, education and research practice through better related communication and record keeping.

The NSW Office of Fair Trading Home Building Contract seems a clear, informative and useful product for developing quality project management. Clause 11 is the **prime cost items schedule**. When filled in it should display the required inputs and amounts related to the step by step achievement of the key conditions which led to the contract agreement and which are expected for production outcomes. Clause 12 provides the **progress payments schedule** which is related to the staged and approved completion of work. This may also relate to the **schedule for inspections**, which ideally ensures work quality, resulting periodic payment and any related accreditation of skills development on the job.

This contract also presents an ideal research framework and program for assessing the competence of people who may one day be accredited in many related areas of maintenance, etc. The **prime cost items schedule** may be compared with a cake recipe. Ideally it provides a list of the key inputs (human and material) and steps on the way to satisfying all parties to a planned undertaking. Work approval, payment, mediation and related quality management concerns are ideally handled in related industry and

community contexts. This project management framework appears applicable in many environmental areas in regard to carriage of the Menindee Wetlands and related projects.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission which I hope you will support.
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