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## **Editorial**

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**Biographical notes:** Melanie Schwecke is a CRC for Irrigation Futures and a University of Western Sydney PhD candidate. She received a Bachelor's in Landscape Management and Conservation in 2005. In 2004, she was awarded a cooperative programme's research scholarship in conjunction with Penrith City Council to undertake a Stormwater Management Plan within the South Creek Catchment in the Western Sydney region. She was subsequently awarded a UWS postgraduate research stipend scholarship and a CRC Irrigation Futures operational support scholarship for her PhD candidature. Currently, she is researching the sustainability of irrigating urban playing fields with alternative water sources from a social and environmental stance. She is the current co-chair of the Environmental Research Event 2006–2007.

Deanne Bird commenced her BEnvSc in 2000 at James Cook University, Cairns. In 2002, she transferred to Macquarie University, Sydney. After participating in the exchange programme at the University of Iceland in 2003, Iceland's dynamic landscape furthered her interest in natural hazards. Upon returning to Australia, she enrolled as a postgraduate student at Macquarie University. Her research has included investigations into the significance of public perception as a component of emergency management planning and disaster mitigation in Australia and Iceland. Her work is currently supported by a research and travel scholarship awarded by Macquarie University.

Julie Carmody is a PhD candidate within the Tourism program at James Cook University, Cairns. Her research interests are nature-based tourism, protected area management, host communities and the planning, development and management of attractions. Her honours thesis examined the issue of overcrowding of a protected area rainforest site in North Queensland. Her PhD examines the specialist accommodation sector near protected areas in North Queensland, focusing on the owner-operators' environmental attitudes and the implementation of environmental management practices.

Phillippa Cordwell is currently a Teacher and a PhD candidate of the University of Western Sydney, Australia. She is developing a sociological

thesis on the topic of Reconciliation in Australia. This thesis investigates the potentialities for a reconciliation of indigenous and non-indigenous attachments to land. She has made intimate contact with an Aboriginal Yolngu clan in far north-east Arnhem Land at the Top End of the continent, and her work is strongly referenced by that continuing interaction. She has a BA (Hons) in Communications, majoring in Social Inquiry, from the University of Technology, Sydney.

S.N. Kartikasari's research focuses on an in-depth analysis of the human dimension of biodiversity conservation in Indonesia. Since 1995, she has worked as a consultant for various international development agencies (CIDA, World Bank, UNDP, CIFOR, Bird-Life International, and Wildlife Conservation Society, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation and Darwin Institute for the Survival of the Species), have through which she coauthored 11 books, edited and translated 80 books. These books span the areas of natural resources management and biodiversity conservation, which appeared in English and Indonesian languages.

Esther Landells Tombs is an Ex-horserider/Coach, a Primary Teacher (B Teaching, UWS), a Linguist (BA Hons Italian Studies, Bristol), a Businesswoman (MBA Equine Business Studies, Cirencester) and an Environmentalist (currently completing Masters in Environmental Studies, Adelaide). She is also a writer, an illustrator and enjoys playing the piano and violin. Her work allowed her to live in a variety of countries and gave her opportunities to gain real insights into cultural, educational and environmental systems. Her interest in the environment has become increasingly linked with education.

Ismar Lima is a PhD candidate in Tourism Resources at the University of Waikato, New Zealand, and he has been investigating 'competing discourses' and 'collaborative schemes' in ecotourism/sustainable tourism in Brazil and in New Zealand. His Masters (MA) was in International Relations in Japan, and his thesis dealt with Deforestation in Amazonia and Local Environmental Governance.

Priti Parikh studied Engineering in India, and has worked there as a Development Engineer, including slum improvement projects and as a Volunteer Engineer in the aftermath of the 2001 Gujarat earthquake. She is now a PhD research student focusing on water and environmental sanitation in slums in India and South Africa having an MPhil in Engineering for Sustainable Development at Cambridge University in 2005.

Cheng Xue Zhuo (George) is doing Master's in Landscape Architecture at the University of Melbourne, after graduating from Landscape Architecture in Tongji University, Shanghai, China. His research in this project focuses on modelling the ecological assessment and planning system in the landscape planning.

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Communities play a vital role in the development and understanding of both urban and rural resources and solutions. One must, nevertheless communicate with the local community and business, as well as look into the environmental interactions within the community to ensure that anything new to that local area will be accepted and cause no adverse reactions. The community and their opinions are a crucial part of environmental

policies as these opinions tend to sway the direction that the policy takes. This too applies to decision making where one must understand the fundamental framework of a local community before undertaking any practices within it. This Special Issue aims to provide a stage for research students to present their current findings in environmental policy and decision making. The areas of interest for this special journal issue include, but in no ways limited to the following topics, community level education programmes, environmental attitudes, indigenous social changes to non-indigenous appreciation, local perceptions of biodiversity conservation, environmental education programmes, environmental impacts of packaging products, community valuing their shelter and habitat, community acceptance of alternative water sources for irrigation and the impacts of urbanisation on the natural resources and the communities' responses.

This special edition of the *International Journal of Environmental Policy and Decision Making* draws together 11 papers that were presented at the 10th Environmental Research Event (ERE) in Sydney, Australia between 10 and 13 December 2006. The reviewing process for these manuscripts took two months. Each manuscript was blind peer reviewed by two external academic and/or professional reviewers.

The ERE is Australia's largest post-graduate environmental students' conference. The theme of the conference was *Environment – Working Together*, promoting collaborative research and a multidisciplinary approach to environmental management, recognising that we will all need to work together to solve our most pressing environmental problems.

The first paper in this Special Issue is 'Community awareness of the use of alternative water sources for irrigation of golf courses in urban landscapes: a case study of selected sites in the Sydney metropolitan area' by Melanie Schwecke, Bruce Simmons, Basant Maheshwari and Gavin Ramsay. This work, outlines the community awareness of the water issue. It also provides residents' reactions towards the use of alternative water sources for irrigating urban playing fields. A key finding from this work is that the community are in acceptance of alternative water sources (94%) for the irrigation of golf courses in urban landscapes.

The second paper in this Special Issue is 'Public perception of Jokulhlaup hazard and risk in Iceland: implications for community education' by Deanne Bird, Gudrun Gisladdottir and Dale Dominey-Howes. This work is based on the possible risk to local communities from Jokulhlaups. The work explores the communities' knowledge and perceptions of Jokulhlaup hazard and risk. Results from this work showed that only 50% of the residents perceived that their community could be at risk, and therefore to increase the community knowledge of the risks that Jokulhlaup pose, regular open forum meetings and an education programme are put in place.

The third paper in this Special Issue is 'Barriers to the implementation of environmental management practices by specialist accommodation operations in the far north Queensland' by Julie Carmody and Dr. Heather Zeppel. This work discusses the barriers to implementing environmental management practices by specialist accommodation operators situated in or near protected areas in far north Queensland. A series of interviews in order to better understand the factors affecting these operators from implementing environmental management practices was conducted. Findings indicate that there are psychological, demographic and situational factors affecting the implementation or improvement of the management practices.

The fourth paper in this Special Issue is 'Environmentalism and indigenous values' by Phillippa Cordwell. This work explores indigenous social change and non-indigenous

appreciation of indigenous history. This work combines the contribution of four commentators on these topics. Results all point to the need for a new epistemological approach to environmental science, both in order to appreciate and incorporate aboriginal knowledge.

The fifth paper in this Special Issue is 'Seeing the forest as more than its trees: local stakeholders' perceptions of natural forest benefits in Gorontalo, Indonesia' by Kartikasari, Rixecker, Espiner and Colfer. This work presents the problem in implementing forest conservation – defining the benefits for local people. This work explores the local perceptions of the concept of biodiversity conservation, and why it is necessary to explore these perceptions in order to have successful implementation of conservation's activities. Results from data collected in 2005 reveal that local stakeholders value the natural forest highly for its ecological services.

The sixth paper in this Special Issue is 'The effectiveness of environmental education as a tool for social inclusion: a case study' by Esther Landells Tombs. This work is a result of the assessment of the Environmental Education Programs run by Monarto Zoological Park in South Australia. This work looks at the effectiveness of these programmes in reconnecting students 'at risk' with pro-social and learning skills.

The seventh paper in this Special Issue is 'Utilitarian and abstract rhetorics in ecotourism and social constructionism: the power of language' by Ismar Lima. This work demonstrates the areas in which discourses in ecotourism collide. The paper explores an approach in which it is examining existing competing discourses within the ecotourism realm.

The eighth paper in this Special Issue is 'Engineering as a tool for improving human habitat' by Priti Parikh. This work examines the Slum Networking in Sanjaynagar, Ahmedabad in India and compares this network with similar settlement with no interventions. The work evaluates the knock-on-impact of physical infrastructure on the education, poverty and health of the area.

The ninth paper in this Special Issue is 'A sustainable approach oriented on eco-factors: saving urban natural resources from crisis' by Chengxue Zhou, Jieqiong Wang, Yi Wei and Ting Liu. This work is based around the purpose to develop a crucial idea of Strategic System, in order to examine a new approach oriented with eco-factors, including an assessment model and a conservation framework.

Finally, we would like to thank all the authors who have submitted their manuscripts to this Special Issue and the external reviewers for their invaluable contributions to the reviewing process. We would also like to thank the Editor-in-Chief of *Inderscience Publications*, Dr. Dorgham, for giving us the opportunity to be part of this Special Issue.