

The recent decision to establish the Margaret River Centre for Wine Excellence on the grounds of the Margaret River High School is a beneficial move for further educational choices in the region. However, the minimal level of public consultation undertaken so far have resulted in widespread community concerns.

One of these concerns is the lack of public consultation that took place in this community. In this paper I will focus on the Sustainability of Viticulture in the region and the unrealised potential of the centre.

Viticulture is certainly a predominant economic activity in the region. However, in a region prized for its natural attributes, some industry practices fail to meet best practice standards.

- The expansion of the industry has been accompanied by the construction of many large dams which have reduced the natural water flows that are an essential component of the land and ocean ecosystems. For example, Wardandi consultant Wayne Webb recently expressed concern about the impact on the limestone caves that are part of his culture, and film-maker Robin Juniper has expressed similar concerns as a *result* of research for a documentary as part of the Clean Waters Project.
- The use of Agricultural chemicals is widespread and often irresponsible. For example:
 1. Accidental spillage of chemical at Rosa Glen is believed responsible for the death of many Marron.
 2. Routine chemical use is believed responsible for the deaths of frogs, again in Rosa Glen. It should be noted that the Chapman Brook that runs through Rosa Glen, is known as a relatively clean water source.
 3. Chemicals are often used without protective clothing, partly because of the discomfort in wearing masks, gloves, etc when chemicals are applied in hot summer months.
 4. Many labourers are forced to either use or be exposed to agricultural chemicals, although they are personally opposed to them, through the casual and seasonal nature of their employment.
 5. Plastic chemical containers, which are brittle when exposed to weather, are to be found lying in the open with chemical remnants inside.

Each of these instances can be independently verified, and together represent cause for concern about the sustainability and public reputation of the industry.

Due to the small town nature of the industry, locals in particular risk loss of employment from speaking out.

Verification of the inappropriate use of chemicals comes from Denis Horgan - I quote from Leeuwin Estate's pro-forma submission to the AMR Shire Council regarding Town Planning Scheme No.11 -Amendment No.95; "Spray drift, noise, odour and nuisance are a fact of rural life....."

Viticulturalists are quoting "The right to farm" as justification for their bad neighbour practices - in that regard I make the following observations:

- Some people effected by the examples above were resident before the relevant vineyards were established - surely there is also a "Right to live"
- Chemical use in the region has escalated as viticulture has displaced farming.
- Implicit in any "Right to farm" is the obligation to farm responsibly.

I believe it is possible for a sustainable and profitable viticulture industry to exist harmoniously within this Shire, and further that the probable future oversupply of grapes from this region, state and country make it imperative to enhance the existing perception of 'clean and green' produce.

These are not the only concerns about the sustainability of the industry - for example Recent falls in grape prices have raised concerns about the medium term viability of the ever expanding industry and for the regions' increasing reliance on what is fast becoming a rural monoculture. Many viticulturalists claim they have to use chemicals, despite the presence of established and successful organic vineyards in the region such as Settlers Ridge, Serventys and Foxcliffe (owned by Veuve Cliquot).

The point of this paper is not to start a campaign for the abolition of viticulture in the region - far from it; Viticulture has many significant social and economic benefits for the region, and will continue to be a cornerstone for the region's development. Besides, most of us present enjoy the odd glass of wine, or even a bottle or two!!

As you will have observed from the other presentations today, the focus of the MRREC is on positive projects that have beneficial outcomes for all who enjoy this region, and this presentation is no different.

I propose that the government establish a Sustainability Department either as part of the Centre or as a separate institution. If the latter were the case, I suggest it should be at least partly located in a S/W timber town as funds are already allocated in the budget for those communities.

This is a project I have had a long interest in, and I make the following points.

- It should be practically based - for example, a Viticultural Section could be established on an existing organic vineyard.
- It should use existing facilities as far as possible- better utilisation of existing resources is a component of sustainability. For example, school computers can be part of a networked database that could be the core of such an Institution or for media purposes (see 3. Below). This is allowable under existing Education Department regulations, and would have potential to complement the school curriculum. TAFE is also present in this community, and many community members are generally interested in sustainability issues.
- It should be economically viable through:
 1. Production eg Wine, fruit, vegetables.
 2. Intellectual property, consultancy eg Sustainability is a growth industry globally.
 3. Media eg Mission Australia are interested in a documentary on weed control in conjunction with the A Class Reserve Project, which could have commercial resale value. Media skills are also relevant to modern youth in the S/W because of their interest in music and activities such as surfing. Preliminary discussions with the Wardan Cultural Centre, the Margaret River Producers Association, the Margaret River Film Producers Group and the Margaret River Tourist Bureau have all resulted in interest in a media group, especially if associated with local youth.

I previously submitted a proposal to the Conservation Commission for a block of State Forest to be managed according to a plan derived from WAFA policy. Community opinion has led much of the changes in Forest Management, and such a proactive step would set new precedents for community resource management. There are also community, cultural and educational potential benefits, for example construction of nesting boxes to replace habitat lost in previous logging practices could be done as a cooperative venture between local schools, conservationists and displaced timber workers or their families. Such an initiative would aid in healing community division that has arisen over the life of the forest campaigns.

I have had some email discussion with Dr Peter Newman and believe there is potential to link such an institute with Murdoch's ISTP unit or the Governments Sustainability Unit.

I have done further investigation, on other aspects particularly regarding community synergies, areas of research and commercial potential which time does not allow me to expand upon in this forum. Most of this can be emailed for further consideration by your department.

Thankyou,

John Mcbain. B. Comm. UWA
Institute of Global Education
Haywood Farm