

## Seminar Summary

Maurice Daly

We have had twelve speakers this morning and at the risk of putting everyone of them offside, I am going to just pull out a word here and there on what they said. The purpose of doing that is because I couldn't possibly try and summarise the richness of a lot of the information and understanding of what we have heard. I am going to try and develop a little theme that seemed to come through, even though there were quite diverse objectives in the different talks.

First off, Allen said "ecology is essentially easy, it's commonsense", and I guess it is in a way. And that's enormously helpful, that someone as expert as Allen, could view the world as not so difficult as everyone seems to imagine it might be, to work with.

Irene said, "she found the most complex stuff was understandable", and that is terrific, it doesn't have to be locked up with experts and so forth; that people at large can come to grips with quite complex problems.

Niall, in giving us a history of the remediation processes going right back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in a sense, suggested hope, because we have processes. Even though we have hiccups and problems, we have processes of fixing up some of the bad things we have done in the past and it is ongoing. He mentioned also Kooragang Island - I was up in Newcastle a couple of weeks back and the headlines in the *Newcastle Herald* one day was, "our Kakadu". I thought, this is good, where is it? I had a quick look but it didn't really remind me of Kakadu.

Jeff had one phrase that I thought was really good - "beyond compliance" because the effective development of environmental management systems is not going to be fixed up by some rules. People break rules all the time, it has got to be something else and that notion of "beyond compliance" is a powerful one.

Simon brought into play something that other people said, but it was very particular to what he was talking about. That is, the notion of "ownership and partnership" - that if we are ever going to get ahead, we have to have those sorts of things together. Simon also said he felt a bit lonely because he thought he was the only person concerned with development in the room - just pass on to Simon that I was part of the group that came second in trying to get the Olympic Village Development.

Libby and Genevieve: there was one phrase that I thought was really important and that was "putting people back into play". And if we really do that, it would be an enormous leap forward.

Paul came from the greenfields rather than brownfields, but one thing that stuck with me among the multitude of things he was saying: there is "\$1.4 billion funding pool out there that's not being used". That illustrates some of

the madness surrounding the structures that impede our progress in terms of getting proper decent environmental management.

Edwina talked a lot about monitoring and contained in that (this wasn't her phrase, but I applied this to it), "developing iterative processes". We tend to look on information and knowledge and so on, sometimes as a one off thing, but we are talking about dynamic systems and our knowledge is always partial. So we have got to build some sort of iterative process, where we build continually on the knowledge we have got and monitor what we are doing, so that the process of management becomes dynamic just as the systems we are trying to manage are dynamic.

David had one very felicitous phrase I thought, which summed up a lot of the themes that were going around this morning. He talked about "physical diversity and layered cultural systems". In a sense, that is what this is all about - the physical system, the layered cultural system, and how to manage those two things. In the past, we have been pretty hopeless, but there is light on the hill as it were and we might be getting to grips with that.

Martin also had a very pleasant phrase, talking about "constructed ecologies" and that's what we do, when we build cities, we construct ecologies. In a sense we don't recognise it often, we certainly don't understand it often, but there are nice examples of the application of that.

So out of all that, there are a few other phrases, which I thought might sum up some of the things we have been talking about.

"Dialogue and collaboration" permeate a lot of what were talking about, and of course if we are going to get better in the future that has to keep going. Demonstration effects, we are a long way behind having perfect environmental management systems as everyone knows. But when we do something with it, and we can then go and look at it and understand it, and build around it. That's great because people respond to it, so the demonstration effects were important.

Another thing that came through I thought, is that sometimes when we talk about the environment, we keep looking at the past like - "they took paradise and put in a parking lot" sort of notion, whereas we really have got to look to the future too. Sometimes we get a bit swamped by what's gone wrong in the past and trying to fix them up, and don't think through what is going to happen in the future. Particularly once we have ticked the boxes and said yes, that can happen now, have we some way of understanding what is happening four years, five, ten years down the track with that thing that we have ticked the box about.

Another theme, implicit in the whole thing is education. We are all on a learning trip and we have got to continually learn – lifelong learning is one of the phrases that Simon used, and that's a reality not only in environmental management, but getting our whole system now. We keep learning about it, we keep getting better and education is right in there.

Participation was another theme that ran through a lot of what we talked about. That's great because in the past, a lot of things have been locked away with the expert people or the people with the money, or the people with the regulations doing the tasks instead of pooling that all together in some participatory fashion. But I guess out of all that, what we are doing with this shared knowledge? We are a long way from knowing all the things we ought to know about how urban environmental systems could work, should work and what we can do about it. But if we can get better ways of sharing the knowledge that everyone accumulates and builds, we are going to get ahead in a lot better way. This leads to the notion of shared expectations. I think a lot of people, when they think about environmental management, don't know what the expectations are, or should or could be, and we have got to learn from that, not just shared knowledge that's great, just shared expectations, some vision about where we are heading into the future.

I will conclude by reverting back to my few words at the start. What I was trying to say behind all the things we are talking about there, are structures, which are set up by governments to try and get better outcomes. I talked a bit about the State, a bit about the Council and it's problems at both ends. My view is that the Council is never going to go away and it is the local thing in the system that can be fixed. I can tell you tomorrow how to fix it and maybe it will be fixed one day. My theory about the State, compartmentalising the environmental processes, is intractable and I don't see much hope.