

LETS National Conference 2009

Sydney, Australia Oct 24th & 25th, 2009

The Factory Community Centre, 67 Raglan Street, Waterloo

Saturday, 24th October 2009

9:30 Housekeeping & Introductions **Eve Lichtnauer**

Thank you everybody for coming. This is such a lovely opportunity for Sydney-Illawarra LETS to be able to host the National Conference.

So through this weekend our focus is... well actually let's start off with this: the location that we're working in is *The Factory* so this is a community centre for the local area. The current theme for this year is 'be a star' so we did want to try and pick up that a little bit through the Conference by talking about what's important and it's really about participation, sharing. The speakers will be here to hopefully share some information, some thoughts, some new ways to think so that you can take that back to your community, your groups and use that information and hopefully some new skills there.

So, welcome to the 2009 Conference. I'm going to kick off this morning just by giving you a little bit of an overview of the last couple of years with the Sydney-Illawarra LETS and hopefully kind of share some of the insight that we have and what we're trying to do and where we're going to focus.

First of all - our Mission. We kind of came up with what are we here for, this is what we're trying to do, and it's about providing an alternative currency system. So our philosophy, sometimes a bit different to some other LETS groups, every member's time is of equal value and 20 Operas per hour, contribution is essential.

Two years ago we were paper-based, offers and wants and trading was all done through the paper, most of the stuff would come into this office and be processed here, so admin would come. Jackie was looking after the team then and I think I can speak for Jackie when she said 'it was a little bit of a nightmare' around paper and trying to manage people's wants and offers through spreadsheets.

They would meet mainly on Sunday's, 8-10 people would show up and again, Jackie was the Chair, there was admin and some help occasionally. And I think from some of the stuff that I saw, Jackie was always looking for help and was finding it difficult for people to put their hands up. So trying to coordinate a group of people again through paper was probably quite difficult.

120 listed members with about 30 active members and the average trading back then was

one every three months. So averages, not everybody was doing it, there was obviously a group of active traders but predominantly it was one every three months. Now, it could've been more but again, paper-based, by the time I did my little thing and you switched papers and all that, you put it in the top drawer, it'd sit there for six months and forget about it, it's hard to know.

So two years ago we learnt some lessons from Jackie and said, we need two Chairs for a start, and we outlined a strategy. We started off what we thought was simply, which was simple but quite difficult, which was get clear on the language that we were actually using on our brochures, on our website. We started looking at all other LETS groups' information, overseas information, what makes sense, what doesn't.

So what we did know was that we needed to get clear on all the language we use, going forward. We need to improve our communication to the members and improve communication to our potential members. So how were we going to kind of reach those potential people, who might be interested?

One year ago, we completed the online system transition, our focus was to grow the membership, grow trading but this was also quality trading. And quality trading we define as trading that people want to do, not just because it's 'yeah, I'll just do that' or trying to be part of something, it's things that people are trying to look at and source for. Now, we can't be responsible for that, but as a Committee what we're trying to do is look at ways to get people with different skills into the group.

You know, encourage networking in smaller groups.

So the other areas, to grow the trades we actually needed to grow the structure and the roles, and really introduce succession planning because it's, as you guys would know, it's a lot of work and we just started to think, 'what roles do we need?'. And we just started going, okay in this scenario, more is better. So we started to say okay, we need Chairs, we need Secretary, we need member care groups, we need brokers, we need group leads. Group leads is what we would call when we're working with a whole new suite of people, for example a permaculture organisation and we get a nomination from their organisation and our organisation to keep working together once it had all started. I'll go into that a little bit more and how we did that.

Media, website and they're the kind of ones that we've got in place now, and probably have about 12 active people doing bits and pieces. So actually when someone goes on holiday or has got to have a break for a couple of months, you don't feel it as much. People can kind of step in and move around a bit. So that's certainly helping out. And of course we accepted to run the National Conference for this year.

Today, I'm so pleased to say that we are fully converted in our online system, could not live without it. It has just been fantastic for us, eliminating all the bits of paper, encourage or actually members now drive their own information up to the website so it's all with them to do. They can participate as much or as little as they want with putting up their offers and wants.

It has freed up people that would actually just be doing processing, you know typing some things in here and there, e-mailing, printing out newsletters, has freed those up to be able

to do other things around what we call member care. Calling up new members, checking in on people that haven't traded for awhile, trying to come up with ways of doing things differently.

Growing our membership, so we started off with this goal actually a year ago and about the beginning of this year we went, we really need to do something about this because it's on our list of things to do. So we started to hook up with other groups and started to speak at likeminded communities if you like.

The biggest one that we have worked with is the permaculture. We have three permaculture groups that make up the permaculture group in Sydney and there are probably about 600 members across all of those groups. Now LETS is part of their, I suppose philosophy, one of their dot points in their philosophy. So their members were putting a lot of pressure on their Committees to say 'hey, how do we get an alternative trading system going'. So they either had to make one up themselves or they had to speak to someone like us.

It took us a number of months to work through how we were going to do it, we are now working with our... we've done one group which is basically about 400 members and they'll be coming on as they register in their Financial Year which has probably given us about 200 members as at now. And they will continue to come on the rest of the year. The second group which is around 150 people, they are just coming on, they actually had a launch, just recently. They had 350 people turn up to their launch, that aren't members. And I kind of go 'ooh'. These are... they are doing great stuff with their media, their networking, and we've really got to start connecting in with those groups. They talk about LETS in their operational manual, it's a perfect opportunity.

So, I feel really confident that we can put the tick on 'grow membership' this year. And we've actually started to really bed in some practices that we can talk to any groups and then say how we can actually help you.

Actively pursuing alternative modes of media – we in Sydney have been very fortunate that we've had a lot of people chasing us about, 'can you come and talk on the radio', hence why we needed a media coordinator. Because we always went 'no, no, don't ask me, I don't want to do it'. We've now got a group of people that love doing all that kind of stuff so that's really helped us with our media.

Every time there's either something in the newspaper or in a magazine, whatever our normal membership is, and it's probably about three a week, triples overnight, instantly. And that's been a trend that we've seen over the last year and a half, for any type of magazine, or any type of media that happens.

However, we did want to also look at what we're doing and what our members can do and making some things simple. So very early on, we said we really need to get one piece of marketing material that we can use. So we did the normal flyer like everybody does, so here it is, our little flyer. It says LETS, etc. we print off 1000, deliver them wherever. So

that was working, and it still does work.

We've tried colour coding them to say when someone registers we say 'great to have you on board, what colour piece of paper did you have?' if they remember. So we can hopefully track a little bit how successful we are. We put this flyer up on our website so people can print remotely, and we also offered as part of membership for people who felt that they couldn't afford the membership that they could actually print off some flyers and distribute those as well as a alternative for payment. So that's been happening.

We then moved into, what we're currently trialling is our little version of the... so basically you've seen these little flyers where people rip the bits off. So what we did is we said we can have one flyer, we can laminate that, that's about \$3 and we can leave it in those locations that the pamphlets are always going from. So instead of us bringing a whole heap of pamphlets and leaving them there, we could actually do one of these. It can be laminated, and these sit down and obviously rip off like this. But it also allowed us to make extra so we could stick on the back.

Those little cafe's that really like having our stuff, we could say, 'hey if there's no more rippy bits on it could you just pull this off and stick it on the front'. So again, we were trying to kind of keep as much information there. Basically that is 50, so instead of, there was that and to produce that was about \$4 as compared to 50 flyers which is more. I know we're only talking little but when we're talking thousands of flyers and options and different ways of doing things, this has actually not been quite bad.

Some of the other things that we're working with, we went out a while ago and we're trying to, again, recycle where possible and we said 'does anyone have any old business cards'. We put it up as a want. Well I'm still getting business cards, and I think we would've had 3000 business cards so far.

So what do you do with 3000 business cards? We've been trialling just painting them, just getting some house paint or something and just painting a whole heap of them, it doesn't have to be perfect. Having a stamp that you can stamp straight on the top. Sometimes they're back and front. A sticker that says 'this is recycled' but with your little strap line for your LETS group and what your website is or how they get in contact with you. And we're trialling these to actually hang up and people rip off.

Now, I haven't quite got that right yet, however we're trying to go, well we want to do something a little bit different where people go 'what is that?' So, you know a Woollies board, people might actually tend to go up and go 'what can you do'. So we're really trying to, there's two particular members in our LETS group that we're saying 'c'mon guys go out there, find alternatives, start trialling them and see what we can do'. So Jim, who's from Illawarra keeps saying 'when are we going to get our new flyers' and I go 'hold on, we're trialling some new things' so now you know Jim.

I wondered where they were...

Okay, so our media we're trying to grow and do a bit differently. The other thing with the

media is, we're really happy to share that stuff. We put our media, if we're on the radio or in the newspaper, we put that on our website under media, and you guys can use it in your advertising material and your groups, if you can use it that's great. We're also looking at things like, you know, Annette's not here but things like YouTube or whatever they do. She talked about Twitter, I said 'look isn't that what the movie stars are using?' I don't know. All I'm saying is, think about what might work; trial it, see how it goes.

Okay, so growing our trade - 5-7 trades a day, that's how many come through our site. We don't know, I don't know what's going on, who's trading what. But that's what's actually going through our website a day. Trading opportunities, growing the structure, more people on the Committee, there's still things that we're working on, they don't have a tick yet but they're in progress.

What are our plans next? Well we're actually going to stop a little bit and we're going to start to define our community. For us it's been a bit of a struggle around the size and the community, obviously Sydney and Illawarra and when we talk about community, we're going to be community focused. The communities could be this street, this area, this mountain, you know, this town, for example. And they all have different needs and what works in one area, doesn't work in other areas.

We're really trying to focus on what are the pockets of our community, where do we have people that can coordinate those things and actually start supporting those people as being coordinators. So they might say, 'you know what for us we're only a small group but we're actually going to have a stall at the market', I think that's what you guys have, a stall at the market?

Yes, I think so.

Sorry, I wasn't quite sure, I thought you guys did.

Central Coast does.

I know Daylesford did, again they're only small so they would have a market stall and they tell all their LETS members that's what's happening. The LETS members would come but they would also trade with the local community as well, but they trade for dollars with them obviously, and with the LETS community they would trade with whatever their dollar value or their money value was.

Again, trying to look at how we can do things differently because we've got a massive area and space to cater for. And really confirm that we're the enabler I suppose, that we now have some great processes, some great infrastructure and that's the best thing that we can provide, that and make sure that's stable for other groups to be able to pick this stuff up.

Growing our membership where our community is, so again, what is the community? And even if it's just, if you just had one street that was all full of LETS members, you know

that'd be great. The rolling out of local trading days to other areas, so again, one of our downfalls here, while this is a brilliant space, our members are in a radius of 40-60kms from here. So it doesn't make sense for them to come to trading days. But what they are begging us for is, let's get some trading days where they are. So again the permaculture groups are going to allow us to be able to do that.

And the other thing is what's new out there? I don't think that we can be everything to everybody, but I think certainly we can keep our ears open, introduce our community to new words, they don't need to pick it up or be part of that, but I think it's nice to be able to share information. And you know we do have a wide group of people with amazing knowledge and maybe that we can start sharing that stuff a bit more, or connecting people or facilitate the connecting of people a bit better.

Okay, this is actually our trading, you can see from 2003. We actually, when we uploaded our information into the facility we put a whole lot of back information into the system as well to help us. What's cut off is down the bottom, so it only goes to March 2007. But it does show we're averaging about 150-200 trades a month. There was a month earlier this year that our trades were really low and that was the month that we had a problem with our system, where our e-mails weren't working. So I'd send an e-mail off saying 'I'm interested in your blah', that wasn't actually getting through. So you can see where that had a direct correlation to people being able to trade. So, I do have some information on that if anyone is interested.

Sorry I don't understand; can you explain what the...

So this is the years, this is the number of trade's, this is the amount of Opera's, our money, so the average. So you can see, you know this is basically what the average trade was, getting a bit higher. This here is with levies etcetera in it, but you can see here that if you look at this number that's 2007 - 59,000. Let me just have a look here, I'll just scroll down to the bottom, can you guys see that?

195,000 [that's a cumulative figure] since this has been going. So you know what, if we say that equation, now you think our group trades on 20 Opera's an hour, if you think about that's possibly 195,000 dollars that was not spent in our community but people still got goods and services that they were looking for. It's pretty amazing.

Things that we do differently – more jobs, more roles. Even if you're only a small group, give everybody a job. If you're just starting off and there are only 10 people, give everybody something to do. Improve the communication at the national level and international level. We'll talk about the national level because actually preparing for this Conference took us an amazing amount of effort just to get all of the contacts. There is e-mailing, we had e-mail lists, we had phone numbers, it was just huge and so we had to go out a number of times going 'have you registered' etcetera. So it was very very difficult to do and that's one of the things that we would like to actually fix up for whoever is going to

be doing the next one.

What was also interesting through the exercise was that New Zealand had contacted us and said 'we heard you're having a Conference, we didn't even know that you existed! What are you guys doing?'. So now we've started this little chit chat between us, we've already got some chit chat or LETS does a bit of chit chat with some of the other groups but really, what's everyone else doing, is there anything that we could learn from that? And we'll give you an opportunity later before the end of the Conference, for your group, your information so we can get you into the central place as well.

Any Questions?

1 - You say that you're a time-based group. So is Eastern Suburbs LETS, we're 60 tokens per hour that's the default. So it's understood no matter what job you're doing, it's 60 tokens/hour. Because we value everybody's time equally.

Eve - Yes, and we're the same, so we're 20 an hour. And people have said 'you know, don't you think we should put it up, it's been 20 for years'. Well give us 20 or 100 or 5, it doesn't matter, that's my argument. Plus it's easy to count twenties.

We do have a monetary default thing so that if someone was selling a pot plant for instance on our tokens, our points, we say 60 tokens = \$15 and so if you want to work out the monetary value, e.g. that pot plant is worth \$10 so therefore it's 40 tokens.

Yes, we say that, we say it's roughly one to one.

Right, a dollar to an Opera.

Anne - we actually look at it totally differently. An example I always use if I'm doing startup or anything like that, or explaining LETS, is that if I'm a hairdresser or I cut people's hair for LETS and some nice person comes along and says can you cut my hair sometime when it suits you, I might charge them 10 bunya's for that. Our units are call bunya's. And if a woman comes along with her kids kicking and screaming and says 'I want this child's hair cut right now' I might charge her 40 because it's a whole different energy. So that's just another way of looking at it.

2 - What information do you put on your tear-off slips?

Eve – Okay, I can leave that here and you can have a look, just basically what we think are the key messages to get people to go to our website which is really where we keep everything.

3 - When you had that list of turnover, someone said that's a time-based system. Is that really mainly labour being exchanged between members?

Eve - No, there's goods in there as well.

There are? What's the breakdown there?

I don't know, I'll ask Annette when she's not busy, she may be able to tell us. I'm not sure you can tell that in our system.

But it is interesting in designing the LETS equipment and how the mechanics or having some feel for these sorts of relationships because even finding out what you have to offer and what you are able to trade, it helps the matching regime that you really need to get a LETS group functioning well. You can often have a lot of people who want to offer exotic items and it won't flourish because you have to wait two years before the next exotic item wants to be purchased by someone, but if you have a mechanism that seems to match enough labour with enough goods I think you can get perhaps that type of turnover that maybe you've been able to talk about in your group. So that dynamic would be interesting to know.

Yeah, I also think it's going to be a lot dependent on your community. Like maybe if you tend out houses or a farm maybe you're looking for different things. I don't know, I mean I'm sure there's always... we get a lot of demand for plumbers but not that much for people to mow their lawn. You know what I mean? But in Jim's area there's a lot more of that, that's probably because more people have lawn there. So I think it's a lot to do with what's in your community, and the needs and probably the time as well.

The other important thing I think for Sydney is that from day one we pushed 100% opera's and you know we...

What do you mean by 100% operas?

Well, no money basically. You can't put something on the website and say well I want \$50 and 50 opera's for it. I think Central Coast LETS allowed that.

CCLETS - Yes, we do too.

With their online system they've actually got a lot of Ebayers and they got flooded with Ebayers that were then going 10% shells or coasters or whatever it is and \$90 and they were simply using the LETS list as a contact.

They're using it as a wheelbarrow to push their own stuff.

That's right, and it actually did a big dive and got so far away from the actual LETS philosophy.

One of the things that worried us is we actually do allow some money to come into it if it's your business, but what we say is no more than 50% and so you need to actually list that you're charging money and points but no more than 50%.

Yes, we do that but only for whatever I outlay, like if I'm a dressmaker I can add up and charge only for what I've spent, nothing more. Yes, but we don't charge any money for any service.

Yes, well I think you do that anyway, regardless of whether you're charging money. But I think that's a problem if you then allow people to say they can put as much money factor into it as points, it gets right out of kilter.

For someone who just has massage for a business and they've got an office in town or whatever, you don't let them do 50/50.

Eve – so you can hear the conversation, very diverse, groups do different things. And one of our lessons right up front is, when we needed to stop a couple of years ago we sat down and said we really need to get clear on our language and this is what we mean. What do we mean when I say this isn't going to happen, no money? Does that mean we do this? So if we as a committee can get clear, we can put it in our material to get clear, and if it's clear then when people come to sign up they can opt in or opt out, they can choose not to go forward.

So that would be a strong, something on your 'to do' list - if you're not clear, get clear. Because if you're not clear as a committee you will have all this type of, oh this one slips through etc. And you know you will have some, we've had to tackle a few situations. But it's easy to tackle because you contact the person and say hey, this is what you signed up for remember, let's just go through it, is this your understanding, my understanding, are we clear? No, well alright then it's probably not for you. So it does help you also down the track.

4 - How do we encourage the tradespeople?

How do you encourage trading - that is a fantastic question!

No, no, tradespeople.

Oh, tradespeople. Well, what we'll do is we'll put that on as a question. We've talked about that a lot. I don't have a silver bullet. But if I was a tradesperson, there's one thing I know: I'm damn busy. I'm doing my mothers, my sisters, my brothers plus this and plus that and you know what if someone could do something for me and then we talk about brokering. If someone was looking after me saying you need some meals, you need your shirts done whatever, okay I'm going to go and source that stuff for you, that might actually be a pretty damn good trade. If I'm not having to go out and do that. So I think the brokering solution is a great option for that. Not the only one, but we're going to put that up on our marketplace and we'll talk very soon about how that's going to work, so keep that one.

5 - How do you cope with people leaving in bad debt?

It's not debt!

I can answer that one. We did a survey a few years ago of all the people who left our system. And we looked at other systems as well and as many people left in credit as left in debit. So the whole thing balanced anyway.

Well we have a system where we take 20 gumnuts a year and we put it in a sinking fund. We take 20 gumnuts a year and we put it into our admin. And the admin is for if you're going out and doing, e.g. putting out flyers. There was an art festival on the weekend, we had a stall there so we paid people 20 gumnuts an hour to stand there and talk about LETS. So if anybody does leave with debit or credit it balances out from that.

Do you after two years reabsorb into the admin all of your accounts?

No, we just leave it as it is.

Ok, because that's one of the things that we were doing. If somebody had left in credit or in debit, after two years their balance got absorbed back into the admin.

We'd do that straight away if they've left.

But what if they come back?

That's right; we've had some members say 'Can we pick up where we left off 3 years ago!'

But the people that left in debit, they never ask, can I pick up where I left off. And then you can look them up and go okay well you left 6 months ago, you were 500 in debit, that's what you're going to get reinstated at.

And do you charge them for the years they were away?

Yes, admin fees and... yeah all of that gets absorbed.

I think that the mathematics doesn't reflect the real situation in the community because there are single mothers that make debit for a period when the kids are small and they are flat out with working and trying to keep the family going and we as a community can absorb that without getting broke like the banks. So I think that all this administrative work to try to save the currency. It's kind of, because of the end, we know that we are not going to suffer if some people are living with debt. If there is a system this is something different because there are opportunistic people and there are real in need people to look at it that way. And the people that are really in need, when they solve their temporary situation they try to make an effort to repay back to the society and we have to look at this point of view. It's a social thing because we are a community and that's why we set up the LETS system to help each other.

Yes, and I think again it goes back to the original point which is: *get clear*. Use your community, what do you need. What you are going to need in your community is going to be different for you guys and put some guidelines or rules around that. There will be opportunists but I have to say, I'm typically the person that would have that conversation with people like that, I've had one in 2.5 years. So, I think that's kind of okay. And again it's helped me because we got clear on what the rules are.

We do have people that have situations that need to go into debt, I mean commitment, there is a level that we set on the system, and that is also our trigger to go, that's important for us to connect in with that member, to have a conversation. What's happening for you, is there something we can do support you differently etc. We have one member that I just spoke to yesterday, we know what they're doing, we've got a plan.

So just based on that if you've got no other questions, who's heard of The House That LETS Built?

I only heard about it because it was on the list you sent out.

Ah okay, alright so I'm just going to briefly show you some information about that because I think it leads beautifully into this. I'm going to run through this quickly, this is actually from Bega Valley so it's a great story and I use this... there are a lot of great stories but this is one of my favourites.

So this is about Avril: she had a piece of land, three children, no job, no money and a dream. In the early 90's she needed to do something different, she just knew that if she didn't actually get a plan then this was not going to work for not just her but her three children also. So she approached the LETS group and asked for approval to borrow in their trading unit 20,000 sapphires.

She actually put a plan together and said 'this is what I'd like to do'. She was honest, she was upfront and it would take her many years to repay the debt, possibly 10 years or more. So this is the thing, we talk about opportunists, but there's also people that we want to encourage to come up with ways of doing things, or actually again, being the vehicle. LETS is the vehicle for her to be able to at least have this conversation, to think out of the box.

She was obviously worried about what was going to happen and obviously her options if she defaulted. There's no money involved here right, but she owes a commitment to her community – makes it hard to go down the shop and get a bit of milk. So it was very key for her. After much decision it was agreed that it didn't really matter that the 20,000 plus sapphires would be circulating and that other people would be using the system, only the integrity of the system could be affected. So there were checks and balances, to ensure that the system remained intact. So they came, big hands, small hands, hands that turned trees into stairs, and they made bricks. Cut the bricks, made the bricks, assembled the bricks, groups of hands. [laughter] There's worse! So you can see the stairs on the left of the tree

[Oh, wow].

How did they get that past Council?! [laughter]

This was in 2000, stuck in the Bega Valley somewhere. So there it is, little solar panel there on the side. So, she made cakes, wrote stories, told stories, hosted children's birthday parties, anything she could to actually reduce her commitment. And the great thing about this was that everybody was a winner. The people that participated in the project, the people that couldn't actually do physical things, but bought things. Apparently she is a brilliant cake maker and she says that she learnt that simply by having to make cakes all the time for this project. They had a home, gained a huge amount of experience and what I thought was also great was that the children were involved. So learning for the children would've been fantastic, the education. I think that's all actually about them, but let me just give you a bit of an update on that, because I did contact Avril and said 'Can I use that at the conference?' She was very happy for me to, and she also gave me a bit of an update. So this is directly from Avril:

"Well it all seems rather a long time ago now. My three children and I moved into the

house in 1994 and hopefully now there are quite a few other houses that are being constructed sustainably through the LETS system. At the time it was simply a matter of necessity. My assets were a small bush block, \$15,000 and a very strong community. Bega Valley LETS was very happy to participate and I have to thank the enthusiasm and encouragement of my neighbours at the Bemboka district as they played a big part in my decision to launch into the process.

A definite factor was that some of these people were experienced builders. I decided on mud brick to minimise the cost of materials. One memorable event was the workshop held on the day that the first bricks were laid. Brendan Dwyer, a local bricklayer was about to move away from the district, so all the willing workers – about 20 – were there to learn as much as they could before he left. I remember him saying in answer to a question about when it was time to put in a brick tie: ‘whenever a plane flies over’. Mind you, he has done his apprenticeship in Melbourne. Anyway, Brendan remained a constant mentor even in absence and he would redo a section if he thought it wasn’t up to standard or scratch.

Eve - I’ve also heard them talk about where they come in and they can say these were the first bricks and someone goes, oh this was my brick, look. So actually, it’s just such a nice experience for people to talk about, you know, this is the bit that I did.

“There was a regular crew of half a dozen or more that came over for the odd day here and there and the benefits were enormous. Camaraderie, support with decision making and so much experience, skill, care and imagination. Quite a few of the workers were people who were new to the area who were planning to build houses in the future and saw this project as an opportunity to learn as well as a chance to get to know the local community. We moved in after only three months once the main roof was on but building continued for another year or so.

Looking back at all my old accounts I see that 26,000 sapphires were paid to people who helped on the house. I began paying it off while building the house and now still have just under 2,000 sapphires left. Another year should do it. I’m extremely happy with my house. Every wall, every door, every window tells a story and is rich with the personalities of the people who became my friends.

LETS debt has challenged me to take on tasks that I may not have otherwise tried. In the process, among other things, I’ve gardened, cleaned, laboured, minded children, baked, tailored, organised a wedding and sold two cars. My extended family have helped by offering holiday accommodation and once my children got older, they helped by working for sapphires as well. Because I feel strong commitment to the area I was never worried about how long it would take me to repay. Local LETS members have told me that one person being willing to go heavily into debt gave a kick along to the system so that many

people then had sapphires to spend. Last year I was finally overtaken as the biggest spender in the Bega Valley LETS. Avril Fink.”

So, it's a lovely story and I'm sure there's so many of these kind of stories out there and as committee members I think it's really important that we start to document those and house those stories somewhere. So have a think about that and if you don't know who's going to do that in your community, put up an offer and say you're looking for someone to document your stories.

Okay, so I think we're ready for morning tea so if you'd like to head upstairs that would be great, thanks guys.

[END]

[transcribed by Anita Nieuwland]