

2009 AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL LETS CONFERENCE

Session notes and comments

During the 2 days of Conference there were sessions where we used white paper to brainstorm, notes, thoughts and actions. We have documented the contents for your information. These summaries are in no particular order, and do not represent the whole group that worked on the topic.

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Topic: “Recycling – one mans waste is another persons treasure”

Response:

Op shop tours in Melbourne suburbs use public transport and tour helps you find what you want opshoptours.com.au

Collect kitchen scraps from organic café

The mentality of passing things on to other you don't want is great – freecycle allow you to do this – www.freecycle.com.au

Close landfills – if you cant recycle it don't allow it

Almost everything is recyclable

Think about ops shops (think outside the square)

Response:

Let person who suggests it organises it – outcome will decide if it has value to continue

Run systems in parrallel eg CES and current system

Flat rate for units verses paying/receiving whatever

Put something that is new to everyon via newsletter like the way another lets organistation does something different and ask them what they think about it.

Show how the idea would work an example – seeing rather than hearing a vague concept

Make meetings “members meetings” not committee meetings – all welcom

Mini trade days not members houses

Communicate with members better

Topic: Violence against elderly. How to decrease?

Responses:

Night time economy to be separate from residential area (late night clubs and venues not in residential areas)

A lot of violence especially against the elderly are from their family members, perhaps pay attention, listen seriously to any concerns they have.

Neighbourhood watch group to be reactivated. The police to be more active to assist.

Mentors younger people for the elderly to assist them with issues of security, friendship and transport etc

Buddies/mentors can affect youth, single parents, people with health issues

Can LETS play a role in social problems – help people feel valued, give everyone a job, know what is happening in your community by using your LETS voice

Hope Street... is the answer (www.ntw.110mb.com)

Topic: How to involve all LETS members in LETS

Responses:

Create advocates by involving everyone in a job – give everyone a job

Think virtual ie teleconferences, web meetings for people that are spreadout (no cost phone calls via www.skype.com)

Don't forget your fact to face interactions

Skill sharing workshops

Define roles ie admin, committee, media, website, newsletter, memberships, new members meeting ie how to get started

Network afternoon tea – 1 speaker, 1 afternoon team, bring trading if you want, where are you needs what are you office have a 10min massage while there

Social events

Market LETS with like minded people – permaculture, steiner schools, alternative organisations

Stress alternative to money – ie saves you money – give example so what services and what could be saved ie catering for parties, computer work, working bees, massage

Effective communication – ring and welcome, wring who hasn't been active, buddy system, finding jobs for new members, questioning new members, new members on committee, members to assist committee position so they learn, yearly planner

Topic: How do you inspire people to trade if there not in credit

Responses:

Start in Credit ie 50 operas or start at 2500 credit and go up to 5000 and down to zero

Send out specialist listings/directories via email i.e. here are all our healers, here are all our cooks ie send out 1 per quarter. (you can also add people to groups in CES ie Healers groups that can discuss issues / ideas with just the healers ie how to generate more activity in the healing space.

Give time limited operas ie vouchers to use for Christmas etc

Offer gifts of point when new members join

Give hours of credit as like Warrawood

Use positive language ie credit is commitment

You are you own bank

Ask your members!

Tell them it is like a credit card

Offer more things people want

Put up offer to types of things people/skills that is being sort by the LETs group and recruit these ie plumber. Give a spotter fee

Get the 1st trade done asap

Encourage self printing of contact directories

Use LETS as a “vehicle or platform” to support other community groups. Can keep track of volunteer work via CES by tracking the hours.

Topic: How to work with CentreLink

Response:

Centrelink recognises work experience officially it does depend on the local interpretation. Work with your local centrelink to understand what is recognised and encourage out of work people to brush up on skills. Ie a plumber could be paid by the committee to run basic workshops and could assist in jobs under work experience

Topic: Intertrade

Response:

Intergrade representative promoting intertrade through newsletters

Don't have it in your LETS system, get it from another LETS group

Discrepancy in Value – Agree to philosophy

CES! Debit if not singe interlets account

CES will handle intertrade if the 2 groups are on the system

Cross boundaries

Topic: What is stopping our LETS group from success

Response:

Members don't really understand it. That it is good to go into commitment as long as your prepared to pay back. Not like money

Not enough transactions (suggestion- get the committee to create a project ie a herb garden on a verge in the town so that all can pick at it when they go by - this can be funded by LETS committee who seeks all the items required ie ring around to get plants/herbs/compost/labour/morning tea/coordinating time/hand paint sign to spread the work about LETS and everyone involved has earned units) A small garden could easily involve 12 people earning an 1hrs work. What if you planted a garden on every street.

Not sufficient knowledge of LETS systems

May need broakers to link a need to a supply so set up a brokerage system, knows who is capable and who neds etc

Members who ask what can I get from LETS without listing realistic wants ie we will never have a lot of trade people (I disagree you have to be creative about getting tradies in setup individual brokers for them – they will always need food/frozen meals/ house cleaning)

Personal contact at trade/picnics/get togethers/pamperdays when people know each other they trade

To many single aging women requiring home maintenance tasks and not enough trades people with the time to provide needed services (people always need home cooking) (and what about getting these women trained in some basics)

Alternative travelling can be a choice for people earning a lot of points. LETS update our accommodation directory that are too old and useless. Make a proper one on the internet with photos as well. This can be valid for international members as well.

Some don't like to offer accommodation- Have an accommodation broker who can handle all the initial conversations on what they are looking for or a screening service for all people who are offering accommodation.

Tell people not to ask for cash (if it is a business not more than 50/50) This will depend on the philospy of the LETS group.

Simple networking afternoons with LETS speak, head and neck masseur, afternoon team and conversation, gardening roup meets once a month.

No job is to small – it is all important

Contact with new members to ask for services as soon as they join, review with them their wants etc

Buddy system creates a role for a buddy who would be paid to look after a small group and support new members.

Rich people can always elect to donate to other, admin or CEW admin in South Africa

Make a big list of jobs, even things that only need doing yearly and allocate someone to do them (ask first and pay for their time)

Acknowledge and listen to any concerns – acknowledge volunteers

Topic: Sustainable Living

Responses:

Sustainabilitystreet.com

Sustainablelivingfestival.com

Look for experts and use the internet to find – get 2nd options

Link of other organizations – locally and via internet

Word of mouth (experience)

Topic: Sustainable self motivating trades etc

Responses:

Sliding scale of interest to encourage motivation

Brokers

Commitment

Relationships and the need to foster them

Social connection

Moral requirement

“The Need”

Topic: Linking with other like-minded individuals

Responses:

Mens shed (they come together, learn new skills, socialise, repair furniture and give back to the community)

Charities come to LETS for motivate/giving people – open to helping communities in other areas (maybe having pools of people who will do anything in a group gardening, cooking, craft etc to earn operas)

LETS members with business join and draw on members skills for events etc.

Wearing LETS tshirts when you're doing LETS public events

School p&c – where there is an obligation to input time/energy – LETS offers a way to account for peoples input

Tapping into existing facilities ie WA free meeting space in exchange for members time.

Topic: Insurance – How can we get it? Do we need it?

Responses:

Check being Auspiced by other organizations and gain coverage at their markets meetings etc.

People many not join if not insurance is available

Liability laws need review

Should look into common law style “waiver forms” which basically indicate that certain transactions are done in “good faith” such as building a pergola. If it breaks, the builder could offer to repair rather than litigate.

What kind of insurance? Physical / protection for fault/damage

If you hurt yourself ding LETS job and have insurance this doesn't cover time off your day job (depends on your policy and coverage)

Should LETS become incorporated? No. Some groups are. It does add legal status to your group. Does you group need it. How will it benefit members.

Topic: How can we grow membership

Responses:

Word of mouth – give a target for each member to talk to 3 people – for the people who are signed up a credit of units to both

Advertise in local papers, venues, pamphlets, reusable pamphlets, stalls at community events, libraries

Be visible – Be real – more face to face contacts – create the environment

Make your own money, eliminate banks

Talk it up

Develop affiliations with another group

More trading days – expand the concept like the organic growers market model

Find something you need then find the supplier who can see benefits of joining - its effort and reward

By exemplifying the good work done through LETS eg BEGA House, buying a second hand care with point, having a holiday that otherwise a person with low income could not afford

Ask your members what community groups they belong to and ask them to talk to the group or invite the committee to speak to their group about LETS – remember to find out what is in it for them and how their members could benefit from LETS

Document your positive experiences, about the money you have saved, all the fun you have had and all the great people you have met – let us gather these together and add them to our LETS library.

BE Enthusiastic – it is contagious

Topic: How can we raise awareness in the broader community

Responses:

Articles in the local paper

(note:- any media release you have on your LETS group on radio or paper please send to Sydney for archiving and use by any group at any time)

Radio / TV / talkback / community radio 89.7fm / local media /

Community group newsletters – preschoolers, schools

Markets/community stalls see LETS in action

LETS based enterprises

Bumper stickers – flyers and bicycle spoke cards

Tshirts

Explain to people how we are different from banks – no money start spending immediately, and earning

Be the change you want to be

Sponsor a sporting event

Local projects

Attend events for like minded people / permaculture / eco / sustainable events

Go to schools / community groups and give a talk / make up a game to teach how LETS can work

Educate the masses

Ask if they want to save money and get a great service or product

Topic: What do you think are the Barriers stopping members from participating more fully.

Responses:

Some people accumulate a lot of points and they don't know how to spend them due to lack of variety of offers (use brokers)

People don't understand what they can offer and what would be valuable.

Perception of lack of time ie why spend an afternoon in someone else's garden when I could spend it in my own.

No contact by a person encouraging them.

They don't get what they want immediately

Not enough wants listed. It seems a universal issue

Need brokers to get things to happen

Apathy

Not knowing other personalities

Disconnections – transport/couriers

Topic: What are your approaches to Tax implications of LETS

Responses:

We don't care

Should be able to pay in LETS units

Puts members off – to much fear around this

Are we big enough for the ATO to care

If LETS trade is for business then I think you are supposed to include equivalent \$ value in your books as you will access through LETS not \$. If the enterprise is 100% maybe you have to account for it in unit value.

There is no connection between LETS money and real money

Current ATO ruling is your aren't trading the same things as your regular income its tax exempt? And you get about \$300 worth of trading on your regular income before you have to declare it?

Sydney LETs – On writing this up I thought it was interesting on the committees approach to this. This question would be among our top 5 question we get when speaking to an audience. I think we need some clear response to this to put our members at ease on us understanding the situation. If you feel you have a good handle on this, Sydney LETS would like to sponsor a white paper on this. Please contact Eve Lichtnauer at elichtnauer@hotmail.com. Thanks