



## Institute for Sustainable Leadership

Building the future's leaders and creating sustainable organisations

### **REPORT ON 8<sup>TH</sup> INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP NICE JUNE 4-7, 2013**

[http://www.instituteforsustainableleadership.com/ISL\\_Symposium\\_2013.html](http://www.instituteforsustainableleadership.com/ISL_Symposium_2013.html)

About 45 delegates from 16 countries attended the 8<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Sustainable Leadership run by the Institute for Sustainable Leadership (ISL) in Nice, France.

Lynette Thorstensen, Chairperson of Sustainability Solutions and keynote speaker, set the tone based on her 30-year leadership experience in sustainability in the non-government, government and private sectors. These included: Chief Executive Officer of Greenpeace Australia; Director of Environment & Social Development in the NSW Premier's Department; Head of the Sustainable Business Unit of Insurance Australia Group; and Managing Director of Communications with the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) in Geneva, Switzerland. Lynette's key messages covered the power of support from top management for implementing a sustainability agenda, the important role evidence plays in managing change, and the value of exchanges between practitioners and academics.

25 papers were arranged into the following seven modules:

- New perspectives on sustainable leadership;
- Are educational institutions themselves sustainable?;
- Starting the change – embedding sustainability into education;
- Learning from specific organisations;
- Cases in sustainable leadership;
- Boundaries and limitations of sustainable leadership;
- Diverse perspectives.

ISL congratulates delegates on their stimulating presentations, and thanks the expert chairs who facilitated the sessions. In particular, ISL congratulates the authors of three award winning papers: Tayyab Amjed (MGSM, Best Student Paper, co-authored with Professor Norma Harrison); Lorne Butt (MGSM, Highly Commended Paper, co-authored with Professors Elizabeth More and Gayle Avery); and Dr Tomas Pernecky (School of Hospitality and Tourism, Auckland University of Technology, Best Paper overall).

Delegates were treated to a practical introduction to conversation mapping, thanks to Bruce McKenzie of Future Insight Maps Inc., and Systemic Development Associates, Australia. As Bruce explained to delegates, conversation mapping is a modeling technique that brings together multiple perspectives on complex problems. This enables reframing of the problem to identify new insights that can then be explored to determine how those insights might lead to solutions. Conversation maps facilitate ownership of problems, and can be used to illustrate emergent properties of situations that may not have previously been apparent. This technique lends itself particularly to 'messy' issues, such as sustainable practice.

Partnerships and case studies also featured during the sessions. A key example was that between Grand Valley State University and Cascade Engineering. This partnership focuses on ensuring curriculum development and delivery is aligned with required graduate capabilities in the marketplace.

Another highlight was the practitioner panel, an event in which delegates can quiz those who have successfully implemented changes towards sustainability in their organisations. First, we welcomed back Lorne Butt, Sustainability Coordinator from TAFE NSW Western Institute, who had first explained her strategy for embedding sustainability in this enormous educational institution at the 2012 practitioner panel. Lorne returned in 2013 with a presentation entitled “From laughing stock to respected leader in 18 months!” During the presentation Lorne demonstrated how the strategy first discussed in 2012 was then implemented in TAFE Western, and discussed the importance of creating an environment in which others felt free to put their ideas forward, and be part of designing projects to implement them.

In the second case, Inspector Dr Dan Bragg from the Queensland Police Service explained his journey in embedding leadership development into the service. Dan illustrated the cultural barriers in organisations that often pose the greatest challenge to reorienting leadership practice, particularly in police and other emergency services cultures.

Both examples highlighted the importance of top management support (as our keynote speaker had also emphasised); the need to create opportunities for ownership by all stakeholders; and sheer persistence, determination and courage from project champions.

A very special component of ISL conferences is the optional External Development Day. This year, 20 delegates visited Schneider Electric’s Horizon facility in nearby Carros, hosted by the Site Director, Christophe Bourge, and the HR Business Partner, Christine Clerc. Again, the emphasis was on delegates being able to discuss issues directly with these leaders. Schneider Electric is a global energy management company and leader in sustainability practices, as the tour of their own buildings demonstrated. Discussion during the visit focused on the future of smart grids and infrastructure, noting the challenges associated with making older networks and buildings ‘smarter’ due to the high workload needed to complete such ‘retrofits’. Other points of interest included:

- Schneider Electric’s view that solar and wind power are critical components of future-focused energy management strategies and technologies;
- 90% of the site’s waste is recycled;
- Real-time building management systems have been installed at the site, with Schneider now working to erase – rather than reduce – its energy footprint during peak consumption;
- Environmental initiatives are accompanied by social sustainability projects such as the ‘inter companies transit plan’ negotiated with local authorities for Schneider employees.

Afterwards, the group visited the artists’ village of St Paul de Vence and then finished the day in Monte Carlo, catching the scenic railway back to Nice. A big thank you to Hon. Professor Harry Bergsteiner for his splendid organisation of this event, aided by Professor Anne Witte from EDHEC, a leading French business school based in Nice and Lille.

Finally, successful conferences do not just happen, they require input from many people behind the scenes as well. ISL thanks the anonymous reviewers whose work ensured high quality papers; the editors of the e-proceedings (particularly Dr Bronwyn Hughes and Olga Mirkina); Cindy Chung for providing IT support during the conference sessions; Maricruz Ortiz, who came from Mexico to assist with running the conference; my fellow directors Lorne Butt and Harry Bergsteiner, and everyone else who contributed to making Nice such a success.

See you in Salzburg, June 3-6!

Dr Gayle Avery

**Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Sustainable Leadership Ltd**