



Women's Vision

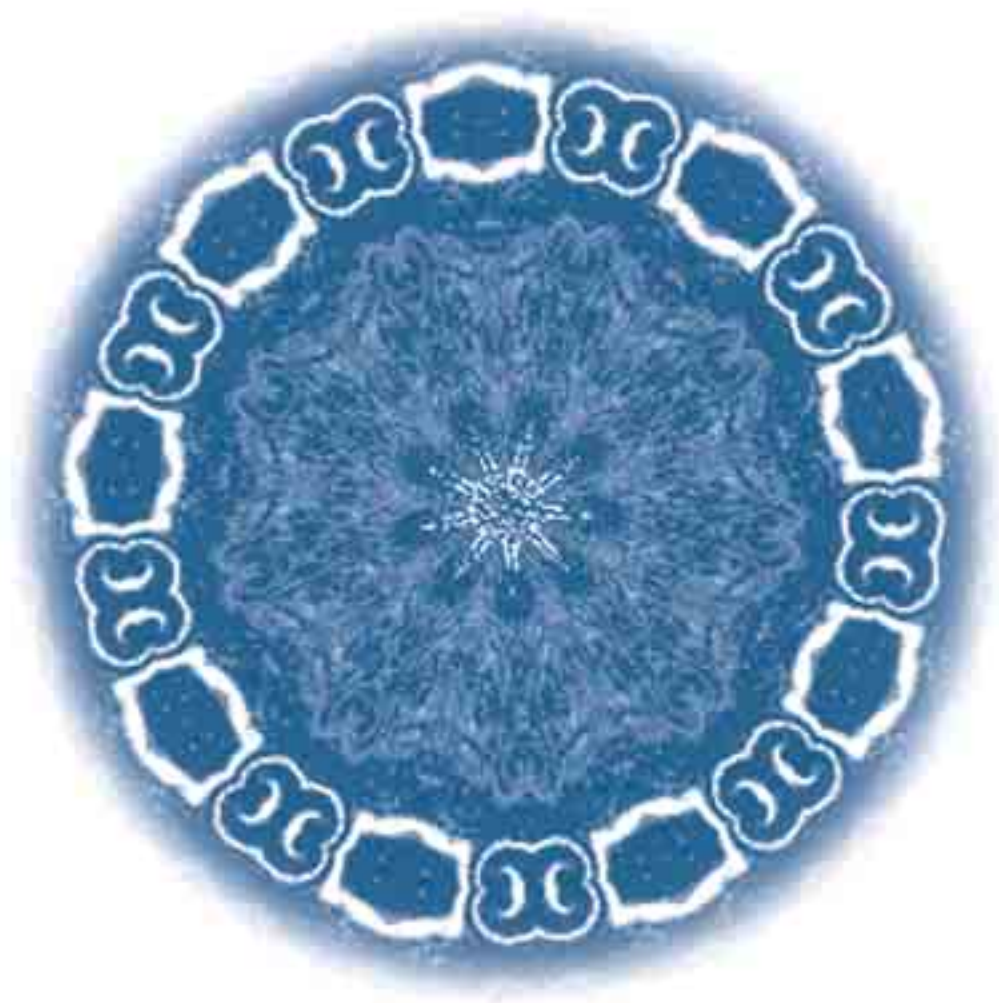
Economic and Cultural
Development for Ulladulla

BOOK ONE

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contents

Background	4
Regional context	5
International context	6
Profile of Ulladulla	7
Ulladulla women's vision for economic and cultural development	9
An integrated approach	10
Cultural and economic solutions	10
Focus on women in business	12
How the report is presented	12
Achieving our vision	13
Bibliography	14
Notes	15
Methodology	16
Rationale for the methodology	16
Participation and social change	16
Summary of the methodology	17
7-stage methodology	17
Learnings for success	20
Process challenges	21
Bibliography	22
Notes	22

background

hope is a choice and a vision. Opening the imagination creates avenues for participation: to see beyond our immediate reality to a place we might go, and to muster together the will to get there. We need vision to inspire us, to aid us in moving through difficult challenges, and to help us face the inevitable tensions and conflicts that occur as we begin to make changes. Visions, like people, are complex, multi-dimensional, and full of potential. A vision is a community looking forward together saying, 'Yes, this is where we will go, what we will be'. Choosing to hope is believing we can make our visions real.

(Sustainable Seattle, 1997: p. 280)

Throughout 2000, UTS Shopfront (University of Technology, Sydney) worked with women in Ulladulla to identify those factors that would contribute to sustainable development for women in the area. The discussions were part of a Partnership Project funded through the NSW Department for Women's annual Women's Grants Program (Martin, et al, 2001). The Partnership Project worked with women in three remote and regional communities on sustainable economic, social, cultural and environmental development.

The discussions in Ulladulla identified a strong commitment from local women to building a dynamic future for the town and its community. Women in small business and from community organisations identified a range of opportunities that included extending the economic and cultural base for development in Ulladulla, and building on the skill and capacity of women, including those in small business. They also identified the need to enhance the participation of women in strategic planning for the future of Ulladulla, integrating environmental, cultural and economic planning with gender analysis and women's leadership.

The resulting project aimed to take a creative and innovative approach to:

- ◆ Addressing rural change;
- ◆ Integrating women's perceptions, experiences and leadership by envisioning a viable and sustainable future for Ulladulla;

- ◆ Enhancing the participation of women in strategic planning for the future of Ulladulla; and
- ◆ Reflecting the interests of women in the economic, environmental and cultural environments of Ulladulla.

This project was funded by the Regional Coordination Program of the New South Wales Premier's Department and supported through the Illawarra-South East Regional Coordination Management Group. The program aims to achieve sustainable social, economic and environmental benefits for regional and metropolitan NSW. The program achieves this through collaboration between government agencies and communities, facilitating a greater level of integrated service delivery, improving equity and access and using the resources the Government has in the regions to strengthen communities.

Key supporting departments for the project were the NSW Department for Women and the NSW Department of State and Regional Development (DSRD). The Department for Women's vision is to achieve justice and equity for women in NSW in all aspects of life, including equal access to economic and social opportunities. The Department aims to achieve safe, inclusive, participatory and economically developed communities in which women are full and equal participants, where women participate in and lead sustainable communities, social justice is

embedded in planning and development at local, regional and state levels, and gender equity and equity between communities is evident. The Department sets about achieving those aims, in part, through innovative and inclusive programs and community and cross-agency partnerships and strategies, such as economic, social, cultural and environmental development, community strengthening, leadership development, and research, debate and skills development.

The Department of State and Regional Development works with business to save time and money in the creation of good quality sustainable jobs across the State. DSRD achieves its aim within the NSW Government and the wider community by securing and sustaining investment. It works to increase the participation and success of NSW in the international and domestic economy and it accomplishes this by delivering programs that enhance the competitiveness of NSW. DSRD drives policy change and infrastructure development to improve the State's business climate.

DSRD offers businesses a comprehensive portfolio of programs that help increase competitiveness, prepare for export and adopt new technology. Programs include trade missions, group forums and seminars, as well as one-on-one briefings where specially trained DSRD officers work with a company to help maximise business performance and potential.

Regional context

Both the initial Partnership Project on sustainable development and the Ulladulla women's vision for economic and cultural development, aimed to address specific issues surrounding the regeneration and renewal of regional communities. The projects identified the pivotal role women play in developing local solutions to local issues. In particular, they reflect a new emphasis on community leadership and

leadership training as a central aspect of capacity building.

Rural and regional Australia has been hard hit by large scale economic restructuring and changes in public management dating from the 1950s, but crystallising over the last two decades.¹ The greatest impact on rural communities has been the development of the technologies and management of farming and primary industries; global factors that include things such as trade liberalisation, the demise of protectionism, world commodity prices and increased market dependency on trans-national corporations; new approaches in public management; and the decline in the national and increasingly the local, economic centrality of the farming sector (Pritchard and McManus, 2000).

Rural and regional Australia is disproportionately disadvantaged relative to major urban centres (Pritchard and McManus, 2000; Walmsley and Weinard, 1997). Unemployment rates, though difficult to assess, seem very high in some areas. According to Tony Vinson (1999), regional and rural Australia has 'higher than capital city' levels of disadvantage across a spectrum of social indicators, such as the provision of medical services, youth suicide rates, commercial and financial facilities, tele-communications, transport, education and employment opportunities (see also Black et al, 2000; Tonts, 2000).

As a corollary of these issues, out-migration is most marked among 15–35 year olds who leave for educational and employment opportunities (Tonts, 2000). The loss of this age group puts at risk the long-term economic and cultural sustainability of the local rural village or township.

Some areas of regional Australia are experiencing regional revival. New growth industries, such as tourism and service industries, especially in scenic and regional coastal areas, are providing employment and

income. In fact, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) believes globalisation, through new communication technologies and improved transport, offers some opportunities for innovative revitalisation. Many local councils and industries are now operating across regional and national borders and new information technologies have the potential to link remote areas with new markets.

In some regional areas there has also been a significant in-migration of 'life-style' settlers who are either retirees or professionals who bring additional money and create employment through service needs.

In comparison with metropolitan areas, residents in regional and rural areas, particularly women, have lower employment to population ratios, lower labour force participation rates, higher part-time employment rates and lower average personal incomes (HREOC, 2000). Young people in regional and rural areas also have higher unemployment rates.

At the same time, women in regional centres have considerable knowledge about local conditions, can readily identify solutions to local issues, and show ingenuity in imagining alternative and possible futures for themselves, their families and communities. Local organisations, the levels of participation in community activities and the networks between women provide one of the greatest assets for community renewal and regional revitalisation.

International context

Women's contribution to development is seriously underestimated. (The Beijing Platform for Action for Women, 1995).

A number of international frameworks serve to inform the approach to sustainability taken by women in Ulladulla.

The Global Framework set out in the Beijing

Platform for Action for Women (1995) emphasises the social dimension of development, noting *(that) it is indispensable to search for new alternatives that ensure that all members of society benefit from economic growth based on a holistic approach to all aspects of development. This includes: growth, equality between women and men, social justice, conservation and protection of the environment, sustainability, solidarity, participation, peace and respect for human rights (Article 14). Sustainable development and economic growth that is both sustained and sustainable are possible only through improving the economic, social, political, legal and cultural status of women (Article 56).*

Human beings are at the centre of concern for sustainable development. Women have an essential role to play in the development of sustainable and ecologically sound consumption and production patterns and approaches to natural resource management, as recognised at the 1993 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the International Conference on Population and Development and reflected throughout Agenda 21.

As consumers and producers, caretakers of their families and educators, women play an important role in promoting sustainable development through their concern for the quality and sustainability of life for present and future generations. Governments have expressed their commitment to creating a new development paradigm that integrates environmental sustainability with gender equality and justice within and between generations as contained in Agenda 21.

In recognising the particular problems faced by regional and rural women and the significant roles which they play in the economic survival of their families, the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) sets out the imperative to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas in order to ensure *'that they participate in*

and benefit from rural development and, in particular that (women) have the right to participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels' (United Nations Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, 1980).

The World Commission on Culture and Development identified a range of approaches to development that recognise the centrality of culture and cultural practices to building equitable and sustainable communities. In the President's foreword to the report of the deliberations of the World Commission – *Our Creative Diversity* – Javier Perez de Cuellar noted that (the Commissioners were) *'all convinced that culture is a central variable in explaining different patterns of change and an essential variant, if not the essence itself, of sustainable development, since attitudes and life-styles govern the ways we manage all our non-renewable resources'*. (WCC&D, 1996; p.12).

Our Creative Diversity (WCC&D, 1996) makes the connection to the *Beijing Platform for Action* in a number of priority areas, including *for gender aware planning, integrating from the beginning women's concerns, needs and interests into the design, resource allocation, execution and evaluation of all projects and programs, and for the enhancement of the civic and cultural participation of women.*

The Commission emphasises that *culture is integral to the ways in which economies and systems are established and called for the establishment of an Action Plan that would 'involve the elaboration of tools for gender-aware development planning that is inclusive of cultural issues...'* (1996: p.53). It also recognised the role of women as *definers and producers of culture in the context of economic and global change, and called for strategies to mobilise women, particularly in the collection and transmission of women's knowledge in all fields; their cultural*

contributions to the arts, crafts, poetry and the oral tradition and initiatives in the media and the arts; the encouragement and facilitation for women's groups working at the interface of culture and development and their involvement in decision making in all fields and at all levels; and for women and entrepreneurial cultures (p.53).

Profile of Ulladulla

Ulladulla is the main centre for a number of small coastal and rural villages in the southern end of the Shoalhaven city council area.² With a population of 17,409, including 51.1% women,³ it is the second largest urban area in the Shoalhaven, after Nowra in the northern end of the local government area. Like the rest of the Shoalhaven, the Ulladulla area is characterised by a multitude of scattered towns and villages with distinct identities, presenting a range of planning opportunities and challenges.

Ulladulla has a small local service and commercial sector and the key industries in the past have been fishing, timber and dairy. The declining fishing and dairy industries have had an adverse impact on the area's towns and villages, and 'new' tourism (for example cultural and experiential tourism) (Valerio, and Simpson, 1996) along with education and service delivery are the emerging industries (BBC Consulting Planners, 2000). Like most regional and rural areas, unemployment and low income levels are significant issues



Photographic collage by Carly Hearn of Mollymook.

in Ulladulla, and indeed the rest of the Shoalhaven.

All rural regions have a higher women's unemployment rate than the State average of 5.7%. The unemployment rate for women in NSW overall is 5.2%. Women's unemployment rate in the Illawarra and Southeast region is 7.1%.⁴ Ulladulla's total unemployment rate is 12.8%, with 10.9% of women being unemployed and 14.4% of men being unemployed.

In Ulladulla, there is a high percentage of people⁵ not in the labour force (52.31% total, 58% women and 46.5% men). This compares with 28.7% of men and 46.3% of women not in the labour force for NSW in 2000.⁶ Of those in the workforce, women are twice as likely to be employed on a part-time basis, compared with men. Of the total number employed, 53% are employed on a full time basis (36.8% women, 66.6% men) and 43.1% on a part time basis (59.5% women, 29.5% men).⁷

Average income levels are significantly lower than those for NSW, with 64% of individuals earning \$399 or less per week. Women in Ulladulla earn significantly less than men, with 71% of women earning less than \$399 per week compared with 56.3% of men. In terms of the ABS top income category, just 0.5% of women in Ulladulla earn more than \$1,500 per week, compared with 1.63% of men.

In August 2002, the average annual earnings of all women in the NSW workforce (including part-time and casual workers) were \$568.29 per week, approximately 65.6% of the average of men only (\$866.19).⁸ Average earnings for both men and women in NSW are significantly higher than those in Ulladulla.

Like most regional and rural areas, Ulladulla has

considerable out-migration (especially from young adults seeking employment and educational opportunities) and an increasing in-migration of professional ex-city 'lifestyle' workers, retirees and casualties of the restructuring of Sydney manufacturing in the 1980s. The total population of Ulladulla has grown by 12.6% since 1996 (BBC Consulting Planners, 2000).

Areas outside Sydney have a higher proportion of older people aged over 65 years (14%) than in Sydney (12%) and the NSW average (13%). In the case of older people the proportion of women is greater than that of men generally with 56 per cent of this population being female.⁹

In 2001, the most dominant age groups in Ulladulla were people aged between 60–74 years (20.3% total population, 19.8% women, 20.7% men), followed by 0–14 year olds (20.2% total population, 19.8% girls, 20.6% boys). Ulladulla's least dominant age groups are 15–29 year olds (12.1% total population, 11.4% women and 12.9% men), and of course the 75-plus age group (9% total population, 9.8% women and 8.1% men).

Ulladulla has a high percentage of early school leavers. Of the total population aged over 15 years, 59.4% (59.9% women and 59% men) left school at Year 10 (or equivalent) or below. Women have a higher participation

in post-secondary school education. Of the total population, 0.81% attends university or another tertiary institution (1% women, 0.6% men) and 2.2% of the total population attends a technical or further education institution (2.7% women, 1.6% men).

There are slightly more women in Ulladulla who have achieved university



Fabric collage by Dorothy Swoope of Milton.

level qualifications. However, almost twice the number of men hold certificate level qualifications. Of the total Ulladulla population, 5.8% have achieved University level qualifications (5.9% women, 5.7% men) and 20.6% have achieved TAFE level qualifications (13.4% women, 28% men).

Access to tertiary, technical and further education has been a significant issue identified through the project. Given the distance from university campuses and the limited range of courses offered at local technical and further education campuses, it is significant to consider Internet usage in Ulladulla. Just one in four people have access to the Internet at work, home or elsewhere (25.0% women, 25.2% men).

Ulladulla women's vision for economic and cultural development

The project set out to identify ways of building a better and more sustainable community by integrating economic, cultural and environmental perspectives. In particular the project intended to find meaningful ways for women to participate and contribute within the community, and to create opportunities for women and the community to generate income in an effort to address some of our greatest needs.

An important goal was to simply identify what we value about living in Ulladulla: what do we want to change and what do we want to keep for the future, for ourselves, our families, and for future generations in our community? What strengths can we identify to create sustainable opportunities for the future? By identifying this, the participants consciously chose not to resort to the tendency to privilege short term economic solutions over long term socially, environmentally and culturally sustainable solutions and long term economic goals. Sustainability is about improving our quality

of life without the abuse or overuse of our natural resources beyond capacity, not just on a global level, but also on an intimate local level. Just as important as sustainability is the concept of transformation. Inayatullah (1995) argues 'we need to go beyond the language of sustainability to the language of fundamental transformation...there is clearly much that should not be sustained for future generations' (p.3). Transformation was the challenge as women sought to come up with ideas and strategies that reflected a 'how can we do it?' attitude, rather than being limited by existing constraints and an 'it can't be done' attitude.

The term 'culture' involves not only artistic and creative expression and production, but also the diverse range of facilities, assets and resources within communities, their beliefs, values, histories, experiences and identities, as well as the mechanisms of access and participation.

Cultural development and planning are increasingly being taken up by communities and governments to take advantage of and contribute to our resources for addressing a diversity of economic, social and environmental issues, challenges and needs. There are well documented opportunities for incorporating cultural development into broader strategies for sustainable development and transformation objectives for local and regional communities.

(See, for example, Bianchini, 1993; BBC Planners, 2000; Commonwealth of Australia, 1994; Donovan, 1993; Engwicht, 1993; Hull, 1992; ICPS, n.d.1; Mercer, 1994, 1992, 1991; Mercer & Taylor, 1991; Morgan, 1991; Ohlin, 1992; Onyx, 1992; RPAG, 1993a, 1993b; Sansom, 1994; Winikoff, 1995).

Cultural development strategies can

- ◆ Contribute to industry and economic development
- ◆ Diversify and develop the local and regional economic base
- ◆ Create training and professional and employment opportunities

- ◆ Provide awareness and encourage custodianship of natural, built and cultural heritage and resources
- ◆ Provide further recreation and leisure opportunities and facilities
- ◆ Enhance quality of life, including the revitalisation and liveability of localities, towns and regions
- ◆ Contribute to a sense of place and identity
- ◆ Achieve greater social cohesion and contribute to social development
- ◆ Contribute to community development
- ◆ Encourage self reliance and self determination in communities
- ◆ Reduce street crime and create safer communities
- ◆ Provide opportunities for participation in public life, and
- ◆ Encourage diversity and creativity.

This range of possibilities and opportunities has significant planning implications for communities. The breadth of this list also illustrates the difficult nature of isolating the economic, cultural, environmental and social spheres of our community lives. Women participating in the project seemed very comfortable in recognising and discussing the linkages between these spheres of activity and planning.

An integrated approach

This approach matches the planning management concept of Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP) developed by the Australian Local Government Association. ILAP supports participatory approaches to planning which involve not just multidisciplinary government teams within and between the three levels of government, but collaboration with a diverse range of community, business and professional interests to help shape and reshape communities to reflect distinctive environments, opportunities, cultures and vision.

ILAP deals with integration and coordination

of resources, policies and ideas, as well as collaboration and partnerships to construct individually designed programs for change and management at the local level. The concept is based on eight core strategies:

- ◆ Local governance
- ◆ Intergovernmental cooperation
- ◆ Community partnership
- ◆ Integrated social, cultural, economic and environmental planning
- ◆ Optimal use of resources
- ◆ Shared vision
- ◆ Local ownership, and
- ◆ Sustainable change.

The objectives and findings of the Ulladulla project fit well with the ILAP philosophy particularly with regard to recognising the opportunities available for transformation and sustainable development through integrating economic, environmental, social and cultural spheres of activity and planning.

Cultural and economic solutions

The project focused on culture and economy, as it is these spheres that represent one of the greatest strengths as well as one of the greatest challenges in the Ulladulla community. Women were asked to identify what they currently value most about living in Ulladulla. The responses invariably centred around the area's 'pristine' environment—our beaches, bush and clean air and ocean. Other key values were the sense of space offered by the surrounding National Parks, bushland and rural properties, the sense of community and relative public safety, and the relaxed pace of life. These became the values that women agreed must be revitalised and sustained for the future.

When women considered what needs improving, the resounding response was for better employment and income generating opportunities for all, but especially for young people. Improvement in education and training



Collage by Jodi Stewart of Fisherman's Paradise.

also featured strongly in these discussions. Training included not just professional or work related skills, but also the development of skills for community capacity building—for participating in decision-making at a community planning level and for environmental awareness. Women participating in the project identified the enormous potential of addressing the area's current weaknesses through what is considered to be our greatest asset—our environment.

By matching our strengths to our needs, women in Ulladulla came up with a range of environment-led solutions, such as the sustainable development of eco-industries, including energy, tourism, eco-education and new integrated and sustainable farming techniques, together with changes in building codes and other regulations to support these industries. The development of eco-industries, in turn, would enhance and create business opportunities for local suppliers, and create employment opportunities while regenerating and sustaining natural resources.

A concerted effort to support the development of our arts and cultural industries through training, marketing and the development of a cultural tourism industry was another major recommendation for the area's economic and cultural future. The findings support the recommendations found in Shoalhaven City Council's *Tourism Master Plan*.

Many of the recommendations emerging from this work have reflected the values, principles

and strategies documented in the *Women, Partnerships and Sustainable Development* report. The principles that guide sustainable development include flexible participation, plurality, recognising diversity, building on strengths, supporting dialogue and integration. In facilitating effective practices for sustainability, the Ulladulla project has reiterated the importance of:

- ◆ Facilitating practices that build activities from the ground up;
- ◆ Developing government support practices that are *flexible* in terms of time, criteria of success, shifts in focus, goals and outcomes, cultural appropriateness, impediments and changes at the local level;
- ◆ Putting in place vertical and horizontal support structures which are attuned to the locality and to women, which might require assisted seeding periods, the assistance of community sector workers (especially community development officers), mentors or 'agents of entitlement' and of government agencies;
- ◆ Putting in place structures that support community sector workers, especially for professional development or further training;
- ◆ Facilitating listening and dialogue among local interface workers and government bodies;
- ◆ Developing new practices to substitute for or supplement the consultation process;
- ◆ Enhancing access to information, especially funding and policy information;
- ◆ Developing education and training as a key aspect of sustainability—in leadership, strategic planning, use of information technology, and provided through both outreach and formal education;
- ◆ Providing audits of community based activities among women to enhance linkages, exchange of knowledge and mutual support;
- ◆ Creating a register of women mentors as a key aspect of ensuring the sustainability of collective activities among women (Martin, et al 2002).

Focus on women in business

An important part of the research for this report was a focus on micro business owners in Ulladulla. As with virtually all developed nations, Australia's micro businesses are the backbone of our economy.¹⁰ There are an estimated 670,000 micro businesses in Australia, making up 85 per cent of all private non-agricultural small businesses. They make a vital contribution to industry growth and are a key component of regional Australia.

Micro businesses also act as the seedbed for entrepreneurial talent. In recent years, they have made a major contribution to employment growth. They are becoming the main source of employment for women, young Australians and employees affected by downsizing. A vibrant and dynamic micro business sector is indispensable to the future growth of the Australian economy (Micro Business Consultative Group, 1998).

With unemployment and the lack of availability of suitable jobs remaining a key issue in Ulladulla, many people resort to the option of creating a job for themselves by launching their own micro business. The project aimed to identify the needs and challenges faced by women in business in achieving profitability or sustainability of their business. The potential of women to generate income through personal skills and expertise, especially in creative fields, was also a key area identified.

There is a need to assist the development of a dynamic environment to foster micro business growth. The Micro Business Consultative Group (1998) identified a number of impediments or constraints encountered by micro businesses that are created or exacerbated by poor managerial practices adopted by some micro business owners. Often, poor management is a result of lack of access to training, information and resources.

Recommendations from the Consultative Group include action in the areas of:

- ◆ Improving the quality of government

information, programs and service delivery to micro business;

- ◆ Continuing the process of taxation and regulatory reform to reduce red tape on small and micro businesses;
- ◆ Fostering the quality of management through targeted and relevant training for micro business owners/managers, as well as increasing their awareness of the benefits of training to performance; and
- ◆ Improving the capacity of micro businesses to obtain access to information technology and increasing their knowledge of the opportunities and problems offered by this technology.

These issues were mirrored in the discussion of the focus groups held for women in business in Ulladulla. Women's goals and ideas for addressing the current challenges are reflected through the Economic Plan.

How the report is presented

The next part of this report presents a discussion of the methodology used to gather the ideas and information and to develop strategies for our economic and cultural development. Following the methodology is a Vision Summary of how women in Ulladulla see the future, for themselves, their families and friends, and for future generations, provided the right steps are taken and the right support structures exist. It is a summary of the vision and ideas shared by women participating in the project, for creating an economically and culturally sustainable future for our area. The summary, which condenses both immediate and longer-term goals, is designed to take readers into the possibilities offered by our area and the women who live there. With a goal of achieving this vision by 2027, the women who contributed to this vision recognised that 25 years is in fact not that far away, but is an important benchmark for deciding what effort and actions need to take place today to achieve our goal of sustainability.

Following the Vision summary are four plans. They are:

- ◆ First Steps plan
- ◆ Economic plan
- ◆ Cultural plan, and
- ◆ Environmental plan.

Each plan is introduced with a more detailed description of our vision, focusing on *how* we get to where we want to be. The plans are written from a future perspective as if we already have achieved our vision—they are written as if by someone experiencing life in Ulladulla in 2027. It is a way of describing our shared vision and taking readers to the creative future as imagined by women in Ulladulla.

The introduction to each plan is drawn from ideas that emerged from the discussions held with women in Ulladulla for achieving our vision, along with actions and partners to help us get there. Like most documents that deal with a visioning process, these plans are not a prescriptive end result for achieving our vision. They are part of a living document that needs to change over the years as ideas become clearer, ongoing possibilities emerge as a result of early work and partnerships develop.

The First Steps plan identifies core discussions and strategies that lay the groundwork for achieving longer term goals. The plan also reflects some immediate outcomes with partnerships and strategies that are already underway as a result of the visioning process. There are strong links and crossovers between the economic, cultural and environmental plans and these are reflected throughout the report.

Of course a fifth essential plan might have been a social plan. While many social issues were discussed during the consultation, the scope of the project was to focus on our economic and cultural future and to consider social issues from another angle. In this way the visioning project makes a creative contribution to social and community planning. Issues raised through the project that are not



Sculpture by Amanda Findley of Milton.

reflected in the plans have been referred to other community and government agencies.

Achieving our vision

The sustainability and liveability of our community relies on having people with foresight who can reflect a sustainable vision in today's decisionmaking.

Our local committees need to be a team of creative thinkers from a diversity of backgrounds, acknowledging our intellectual resources, in order to arrive at and implement innovative, creative and sustainable strategies to achieve our vision. Our goal is to develop the skills of our local people, particularly women, to open the way to accept the new challenge of reflecting diverse attitudes and values in our planning and community development.

The success of this vision does not rely on these plans alone. It also relies on leaders—those women and members of the community with a sense of creative vision. It relies on leaders who understand the fundamental importance of sustainable development and the interconnectedness between our economic, environmental, cultural and social spheres, who can easily identify connections between various individuals, groups and subcultures, and can help forge partnerships and synergies.

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Notes

- 1 This section is an extract from the report on the Partnership Project on sustainable development - Martin, et al (2001).
- 2 For the purpose of the project, villages using the postcode 2538 and 2539 were included in the Ulladulla area.
- 3 Ulladulla statistics in this section are taken from Australian Bureau of Statistics (2002), Basic Community Profile and Snapshot: 2538, 2539, Cat. No. 2001.0, ABS Canberra.
- 4 Australian Bureau of Statistics 2002, Labour Force Selected Summary Tables Australia, August 2002, Cat. No. 6291.0.40.001.
- 5 Aged 15 years and over.
- 6 Australian Bureau of Statistics, , Work State Summary, Cat. No. 4102.0 ABS, Canberra, 2002
- 7 Remaining balance is 'not stated' category.
- 8 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, August 2002, Cat. No. 6302.0 ABS, Canberra, 2002.
- 9 Australian Bureau of Statistics, Older people, New South Wales, Cat. No. 4108.1, ABS Canberra, 2000.
- 10 A micro business is defined as a business owned or operated independently with fewer than five employees.

methodology

Rationale for the methodology

The methodology developed for the Ulladulla Women's Vision for Economic and Cultural Development was designed to specifically encourage a greater level of participation by women who, for a range of reasons, would not normally be involved in community consultation. Barriers to women's participation can include the timing and structure of public meetings, the levels of confidence women have for speaking in public, their knowledge of the protocols of traditional forms of community consultation, as well as their desire to participate in such formal structures. Some women have also expressed that they 'don't know enough to contribute or wouldn't have anything to say'¹ (Lennie, 1996; Peel, 1993; Mosse, 1993; Kidd, 1994).

Bell (1992) argues that most community research is about enabling and disabling certain community interests from informing policies and strategy development by seeking out organised interests. In this way, policy communities are created where certain opinions consistently are given privileged access to decision-making structures (see also Craik, 1992).

In response to these issues, the methodology was designed to include women who were not necessarily involved in existing community groups or committees, but whose ideas and contributions would be equally valuable. Empowering women to participate in this way enhances their skills and knowledge. It builds their confidence to participate in community decision-making as well as their desire and motivation to participate in future planning activities.²

Active community engagement that moves beyond passive consultation is critical for canvassing issues and opportunities within communities, for exploring linkages between actors, issues and opportunities, for assembling skills and resources, and for establishing a knowledge and support base for future initiatives. The methodology used during the project was successful in securing the participation of women and the Aboriginal community.³

Participation and social change

Structures of power and access within a community both affect research outcomes and inform a sense of place and identity. Access to policy and strategy development is fundamental for a community to participate in wider social change.

Lennie (1996) argues that most community consultation practices are based on liberal humanist assumptions which obscure gender power relations and ignore differences. 'Planning and consultation processes have tended to exclude women because they often lack the technical skills, and "legitimate" knowledge and experience required to contribute equitably' (p.3). Barriers to the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women include the use of meeting procedures and forums with which they are unfamiliar or uncomfortable, unrealistic research timeframes and a level of mistrust that can mean under-representation in broader community research and consultation (Layton, 1994). Finding more empowering ways of involving women (including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women) in planning, consultation and community development processes is essential for sustainable development.



Detail of metal sculpture by Heidi McGeok.

Summary of the methodology

The principles of action research and co-learning partnerships informed the methodology designed for the project. Action research methodologies are renowned for their success as a basis of partnership building to determine issues, needs and opportunities and to develop, implement and review community driven strategies. Action research involves four main steps: plan, act, observe, reflect, which eventually leads to the next cycle of plan, act, observe, reflect. The process is inherently responsive and open to change to the demands of various situations.

The key underpinnings of the project's methodology were to access mostly informal, and some formal, networks of women and to privilege small, informal group meetings in intimate locations over traditional forums such as public meetings. Many small visioning sessions were held which produced qualitatively rich data and ample opportunity for women to contribute in a relaxed and non-threatening environment. Attention was given to detail such as the consultation environment and the timing of meetings. In almost all cases, except the final 'Getting it Happening' day, meetings took place in women's own spaces (for example, private homes), or spaces commonly shared by women, such as coffee shops. Meeting times were set, as much as possible, to meet the needs of each

group of participants as negotiated by their 'network leaders'. This included night, day and weekend meetings.

In order to ensure the contribution of women who do not normally participate in wider community planning, a number of community 'network leaders' were identified. Network leaders included women who are involved in P&C committees, sporting groups, environmental groups, performance networks, youth groups, community education groups and other networks existing in the community. The leaders are often, although not exclusively, women who volunteer their time for a particular community interest. Once network leaders 'bought in' to the project, they were able to personally recommend participation to other women in their network, achieving success with high attendance at the group sessions.

Flexibility and combining both a methodological approach with a capacity to follow the rhythm of community process was the strength of the methodology. This approach allowed for the creative engagement of a highly regarded member of the Aboriginal community to consult with Aboriginal women on a one-to-one basis. This approach produced both qualitatively and quantitatively rich results.

To address the range of issues discussed above, a 7-stage process was designed as a way of understanding and implementing women's goals and ideas for a locally sustainable future.

7-stage methodology

The methodology delivered a rich and creative response, providing local solutions to local issues. The seven stages involved:

1 In-depth interviews with identified community 'leaders' and actors, either at an organisational or individual level.

A map of community leaders and actors was drawn up. The interviews ran for one and a half to two and a half hours and were held

with thirty identified community leaders, focussing on the goals of the project. The interviews included discussions of individual visions, resources, networks, initiatives and referrals for other women to meet with.

Community leaders included business owners, council officers, community workers, education and training representatives, artists and event organisers, and women involved in decision-making through a range of community groups or who actively participated in community issues.

A key to constructing the map was to ask each interviewee 'who else do you think I should be talking to?' Names occurring particularly more than once, were scheduled for contact and interview until it appeared that the key contacts had been covered. Of course, it is acknowledged that there may be other leaders who could have been accessed, however the methodology is part of an ongoing process of moving from the vision to reality by forming partnerships and implementing ideas.

2 Establishing partnerships to implement the vision.

This process began during Stage One and continued throughout each stage of the project. As this is a continually evolving process, and partnerships have a way of naturally evolving, this process is ongoing. The partners identified in each of the Action Plans are a first step, with the scope for new partnerships to form.

3 A Community Network Survey was used as the basis for Ideas Sessions (see below) and individual participation.

The questions were formulated after the first round of interviews and reflected the range of issues, challenges and ideas commonly raised. The survey was designed and trialed on a sample group and refined before being adopted as a project tool to gather women's ideas on a community vision for economic and cultural sustainability. It was made

available on a project website, as well as in a paper version, and was sent to women who responded to media releases and distributed via local networks including through:

- ◆ Craft and cultural groups
- ◆ Sporting facilities and centres
- ◆ Local Chamber of Commerce
- ◆ Playgroups
- ◆ Family Day Carers
- ◆ Hospital, retirement village and community health centre
- ◆ Schools
- ◆ Youth centre.

The project coordinator encouraged women to get together with a friend or group of friends 'over coffee' as a way of sharing ideas and developing responses. Women who called up in response to the newspaper article often became ambassadors for the survey and accessed their own networks for group ideas and input.

The survey began with a question to identify what women currently valued about the area and community. Answers to this question served to define what needs to be protected, regenerated and preserved for future generations. From this focus on value the next important step was to move directly to a 25-year vision. Finally the longer-term vision was brought back into some short term steps that would build towards the vision for a sustainable future.

A SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis followed and provided a stocktake of the current environment. The SWOT was left until after the questions on vision in order to avoid a focus on weaknesses and current problems, and 'exhausted comment' by the time the visioning questions were asked.

4 Ideas Sessions (held by network leaders and project coordinator)

A number of community 'network leaders' were identified representing a diverse group

of opinions. The network leaders attended a day long training session (held within school hours) where they experienced the method first hand before organising and facilitating their own Ideas Session among their network. In this way, the leaders were able to contribute their ideas and comments leaving them free to facilitate their own session in a more impartial way. Once all network leaders' ideas sessions were completed, a 'distilling' meeting was held to share the findings with other leaders, to identify a common vision through all of the groups, and to create action plans that identified specific activities required to achieve the vision.

The method was also used for sessions with youth (through the Ulladulla Youth Centre) and older women (through the University of the Third Age).

Two focus groups were also held with women in business, including:

- ◆ Retail, home-based, trades and general businesses
- ◆ Tourism operators, including accommodation and restaurant owners.

5 Aboriginal consultancy

A community leader was identified through the local Aboriginal Land Council to conduct this part of the consultancy. After an initial meeting, a specific Network Survey was written for the Aboriginal community by the contractor and project coordinator and ratified by a local Aboriginal woman elder. It was agreed that any requested changes



Photo by Michelle Hillyer of Tabourie Lake.

would be checked by the Elder before the survey was used. The research was conducted on a one-to-one basis with Aboriginal women.

After recording the responses, the surveys were handed back to the Aboriginal consultant. The project has attempted to be sensitive to the ownership and outcomes from the consultancy and the most appropriate and representative way to include the findings, and to ensure a true reflection within the vision and action plans of the project. This process is still underway and the discussions will involve identifying the next steps to take to begin implementing some of the strategies.

6 'My Place' competition

A competition was held to creatively capture women's responses to our sense of place. It built on an original invitation to send in a snapshot that instantly captured the feeling of living in Ulladulla. The competition raised great interest and a substantial number of entries in different art forms were received. The entries were displayed during a public exhibition and form part of the images used in this report. Five prizes were awarded during the one-day gathering, including those judged by public vote and a judging panel

7 A 'Getting it Happening day'

After the first draft of the report was put together, the findings were presented at a one-day gathering to women who had been involved to date, as well as to offer a final opportunity for women to become involved if they hadn't already done so. The day provided an opportunity for evaluation and final written comments, and more importantly, was about the next step of the process of moving from the vision to implementation. The day aimed to:

- ◆ Check that the vision reflected women's ideas
- ◆ Share the findings and comments from the range of groups and women who had participated throughout the project

- ◆ Facilitate a discussion about some immediate actions that would begin to implement the long term vision
- ◆ Form partnerships and gather commitments to both the vision and projects contained within the action plans.

Learnings for success

The following factors contributed to the success of the project:

- ◆ An established project office (through an existing local business with office infrastructure, technology, meeting room and administrative assistance providing support and receiving information) has been critical for the project and for providing a higher profile to the work;
- ◆ Recognising the effort and skill women have brought to the project and paying facilitators and Ideas Session leaders for their time;
- ◆ Local knowledge was significant in identifying Network Leaders, key contacts for one-to-one interviews and to understanding existing structures and processes;
- ◆ Ongoing knowledge and support from the Department for Women and Department of State and Regional Development to help guide the project;
- ◆ The design of the methodology to proactively involve a wide range of women in the project;
- ◆ The contribution of women no longer in business who offered valuable insights during the women in business meetings, as did those starting up a business;
- ◆ Involvement of the local Area Consultative Committee, Chamber of Commerce and Tourist Information Centre during the business meetings;
- ◆ Flexibility in delivering the consultation method, including hours of availability



Photo by Victoria Ricketts of Narrawallee.

(some Ideas Sessions were held on weekends and evenings), design of guiding questions (for example, for consultancy with the Aboriginal community, business and youth forums), location of Ideas Sessions and other meetings, and the ability to 'go to people' rather than expect them to come to us;

- ◆ Using a combination of methods to gather information, for example, Ideas Sessions through network leaders, presentations at community groups, surveys made available to individuals, and one-to-one interviews;
- ◆ Identifying the 'right' Ideas Session leaders. These should be not just key public figures in the community, but women who are active at the grass roots level of community. Ideas Session leaders need facilitation skills, or to be able to learn these skills during the Training Session;
- ◆ The ability of project coordinators to identify potential partnerships and discuss specific outcomes and next steps with project participants;
- ◆ In this community's case, giving a shorter lead time (one week to ten days' notice) to invite people to events resulted in higher participation rates.
- ◆ Putting the visioning questions first—before people get locked into thinking about current strengths and weaknesses.

Process challenges

A range of challenges have been identified or experienced through this project. While some were actively addressed others will form part of the methodological learnings and be reflected in the recommendations contained in the Action Plans. These include:

- ◆ Women's confidence, knowledge or ability to participate in traditional forms of community consultation (while this was consciously addressed through design of the methodology, it is important to ask how else information might have been gathered);
- ◆ Cynicism about consultation and visioning, for example, 'will anything ever happen along the lines of what we want', 'they won't listen anyway'. To overcome this, early actions or outcomes have been included in a First Steps Plan to allow small steps to be implemented or achieved that will both set the platform for the vision and help break down the culture of non-involvement in community planning;
- ◆ The ability of women in business to participate—as owner/operators of micro businesses, it is often difficult or 'impossible' for women to participate in Business Forums. While alternative methods can be designed, the forums present a much richer exchange of information;
- ◆ Scheduling the women in business meetings—while we chose to schedule the meetings during school holidays, this enabled the participation of some business owners while prevented the participation of others. Successful timing is a result of experimentation;
- ◆ Facilitation skills for network leaders. These sessions are more productive if the leader can successfully keep participants on track. The project helped to deliver some of these skills;
- ◆ Confidence is needed for moving people away from present problems to future opportunities;
- ◆ Lack of availability of appropriate childcare, preventing women from participating in meetings.

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Notes

- 1 Personal communication by women invited to participate in this project to the project research and facilitation team.
- 2 Feedback given by project participants to the research and facilitation team.
- 3 Personal communication given as feedback on the project.

project resources

Project resources: Ulladulla women's vision for economic and cultural development

- ◆ 2-page info sheet on the project (used for website, mailed out to people inquiring after media release, included in Ideas Session Leader packs, general promotion, etc)
- ◆ Flyer to promote Community Network Survey
- ◆ Community Network Survey (email and print versions)
- ◆ Initial media release 'Women's ideas needed to plan a better future'
- ◆ Young women's survey/focus questions
- ◆ Aboriginal community network survey
- ◆ Feedback/evaluation forms for group meetings

Ideas sessions

- ◆ Proposal for Ideas Session Leaders
- ◆ Training session facilitator's notes
- ◆ Ideas Session Leader Training Pack
- ◆ Answer sheet for scribe to use during Ideas Sessions

Action planning workshop with Ideas Session Leaders

- ◆ Agenda for action planning workshop to consolidate plans for achieving the vision
- ◆ Guided Imagery script used in action planning workshop (from Brown, 19xx)

Women in business/women in tourism focus groups

- ◆ Flyer/info sheet for Women in Business focus group
- ◆ Flyer/info sheet for Women in Tourism focus group
- ◆ Media release
- ◆ Women in Business focus group questions
- ◆ Women in Tourism focus group questions

- ◆ Sub-contract proposal to high profile business person for one-to-one marketing of WIB event to other business people
- ◆ Survey for Women in Tourism/Business for those who couldn't attend session
- ◆ Checklist for materials needed for WIB/ WIT ideas forum

'My Place' competition

- ◆ My Place competition
- ◆ Newspaper advertisement
- ◆ Media release
- ◆ Flier/entry form
- ◆ Letters to entrants and businesses who participated in 'My Place' competition

Getting it happening day

- ◆ Summary report
- ◆ Summary vision (1-page)
- ◆ Flyer
- ◆ Media release
- ◆ Program
- ◆ Feedback / evaluation form
- ◆ Report on the day

