

“Reinventing Our Small Towns-Stop Waiting for the Cavalry-the answers Come From Within”



Presenter: Peter Kenyon, Bank of I.D.E.A.S.







SA Premier 1967-68, 1970-79



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*Prosperity through connection,
collaboration & community*

22-25 September 2025
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Small Town Australia

1702 towns under 10,000 people
containing 9.7% of total
population

88 Towns 5000-10,000

526 towns 1000-5000

1088 towns <1000



**'The nice thing about
living in a small town is
that when you don't
know what you're doing,
someone else does'**

-Peter Kenyon



**OUR TOWN IS SO SMALL
WE DON'T HAVE A TOWN
DRUNK SO WE ALL
TAKE TURNS**



Richard Russo

**“People in small towns,
much more than in
cities, share a destiny”**

Marble Bar





“Marble Bar is best known as the stinking hot joint which is always seems to get a crack in the weather report!”

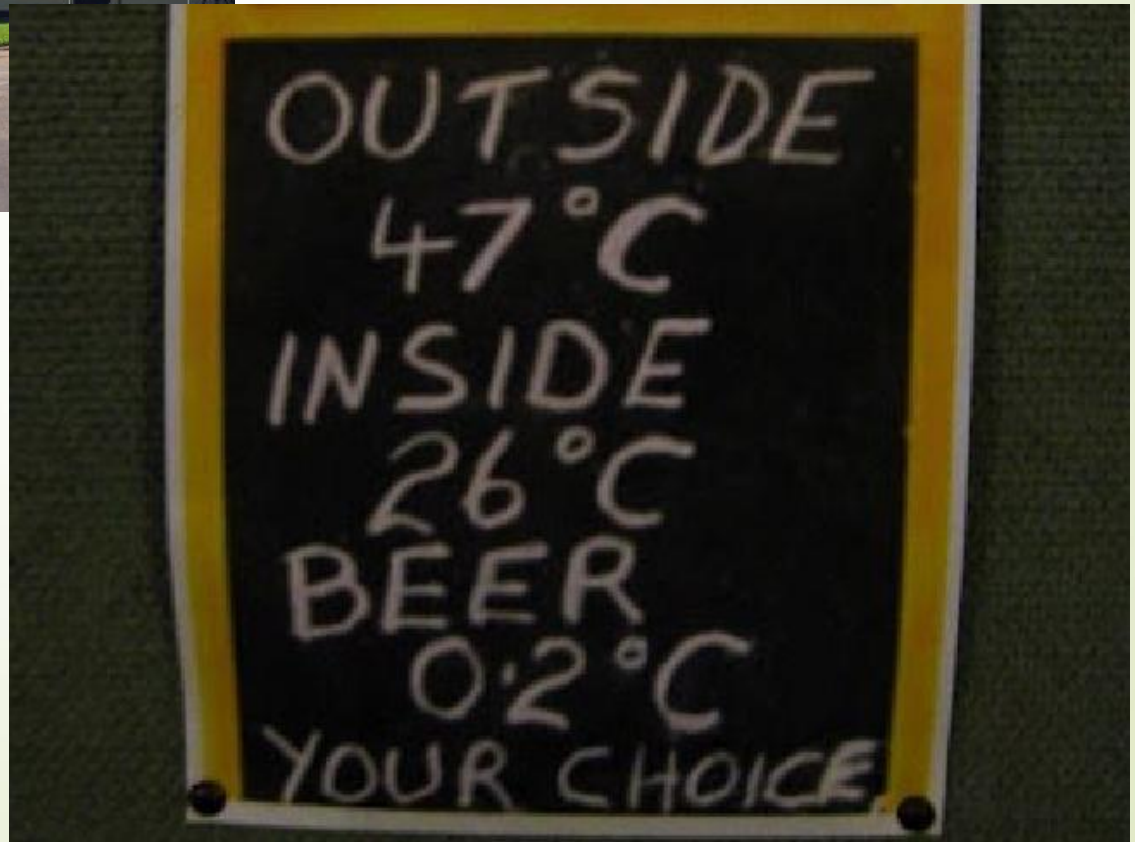
West Australian Newspaper 20/4/16







Iron Clad Pub



Phenxx founder and chief executive Kait Tregenza in Marble Bar



'Australia's Hottest Woman' Campaign



'Australia's Hottest Woman' Campaign



'Australia's Hottest Woman' Campaign



'Australia's Hottest Woman' Campaign



The future ain't
what it used to be!

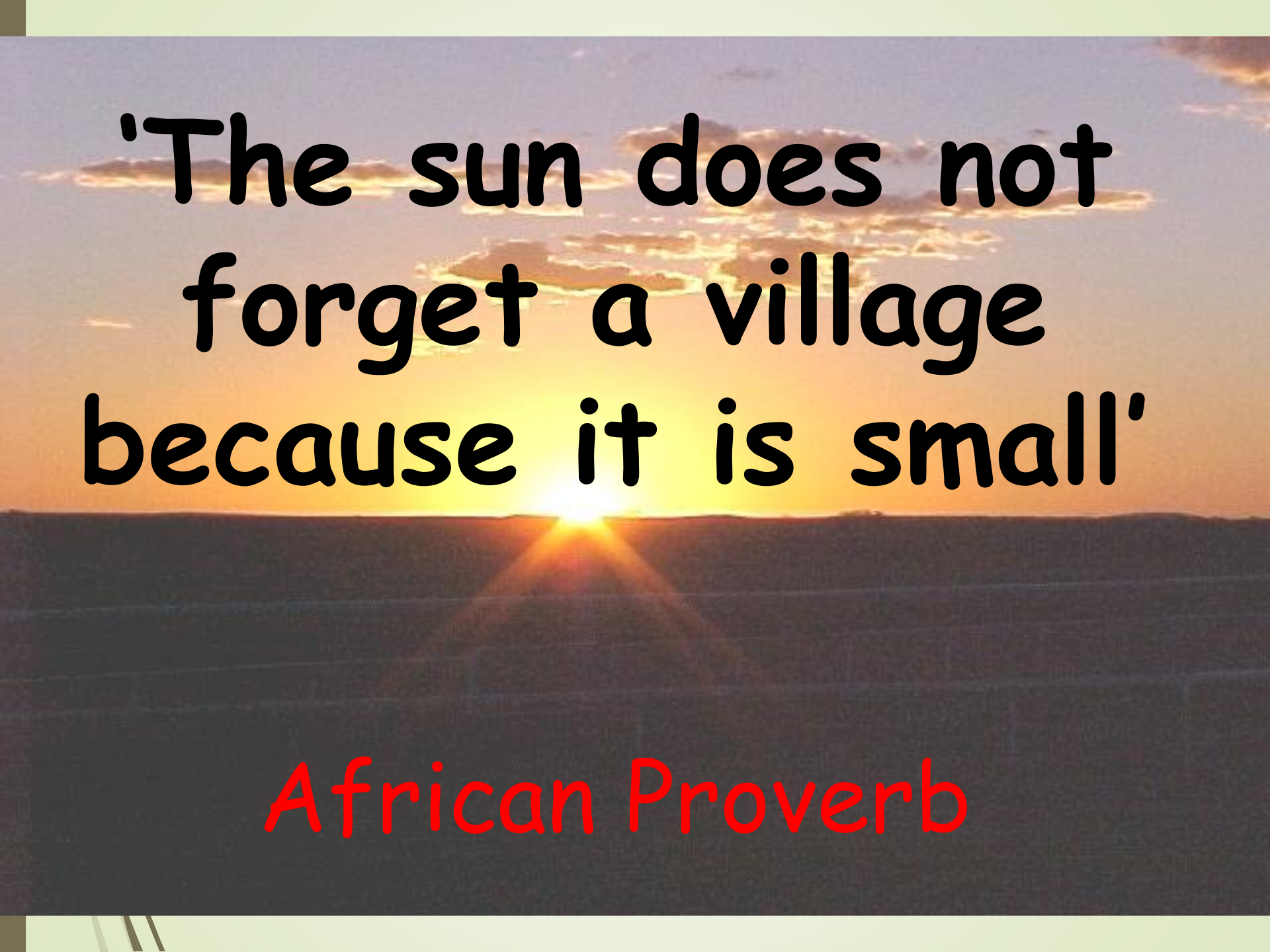


Major Challenges

- Population, Business and Service loss
- Climate change
- Farm Aggregation
- Population ageing
- Educational and Health limitations
- Poor connectivity
- Travel mobility
- Housing shortages
- Access to Child Care
- Loss of social capital and community engagement
- Regional centre focus

The Loss in WA's Wheatbelt (44 Shires)

- Overall population decline since 1974
- 2001-2021- population fall of 1% per year
- Farm aggregation- 3% per year- farms doubling in size every 25 years
- 1970- 20,000 farms in WA's grain belt with farms averaging 1500ha in size, today 4000 broadacre farmers with average farm 3000ha
- Nicoletti's operation in eastern Wheatbelt includes 30 former properties across 66,000ha plus 127,000 leaseholds
- Loss of 15% of the pastoral and farming estate since 1980



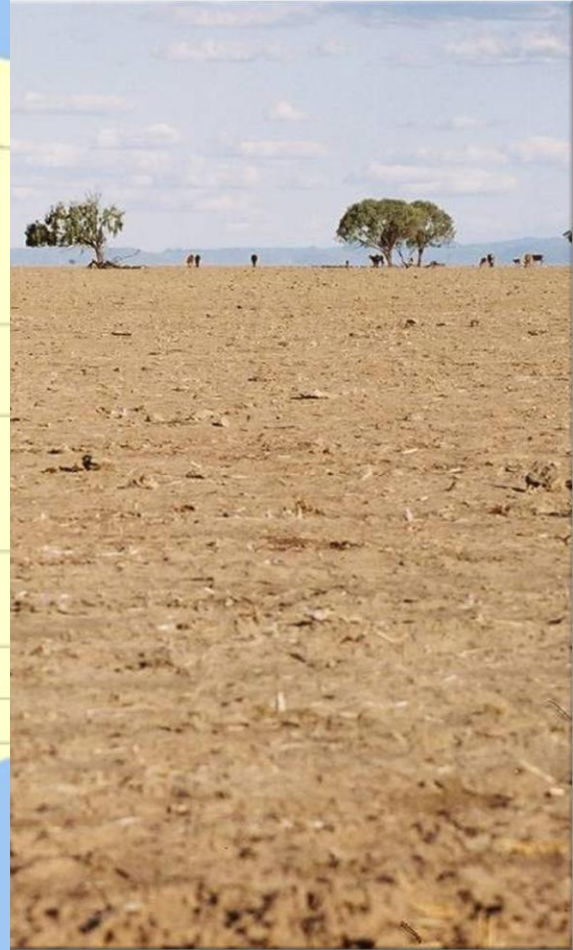
**'The sun does not
forget a village
because it is small'**

African Proverb

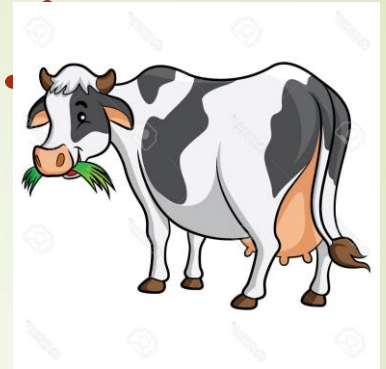
The Story of Kulin, WA





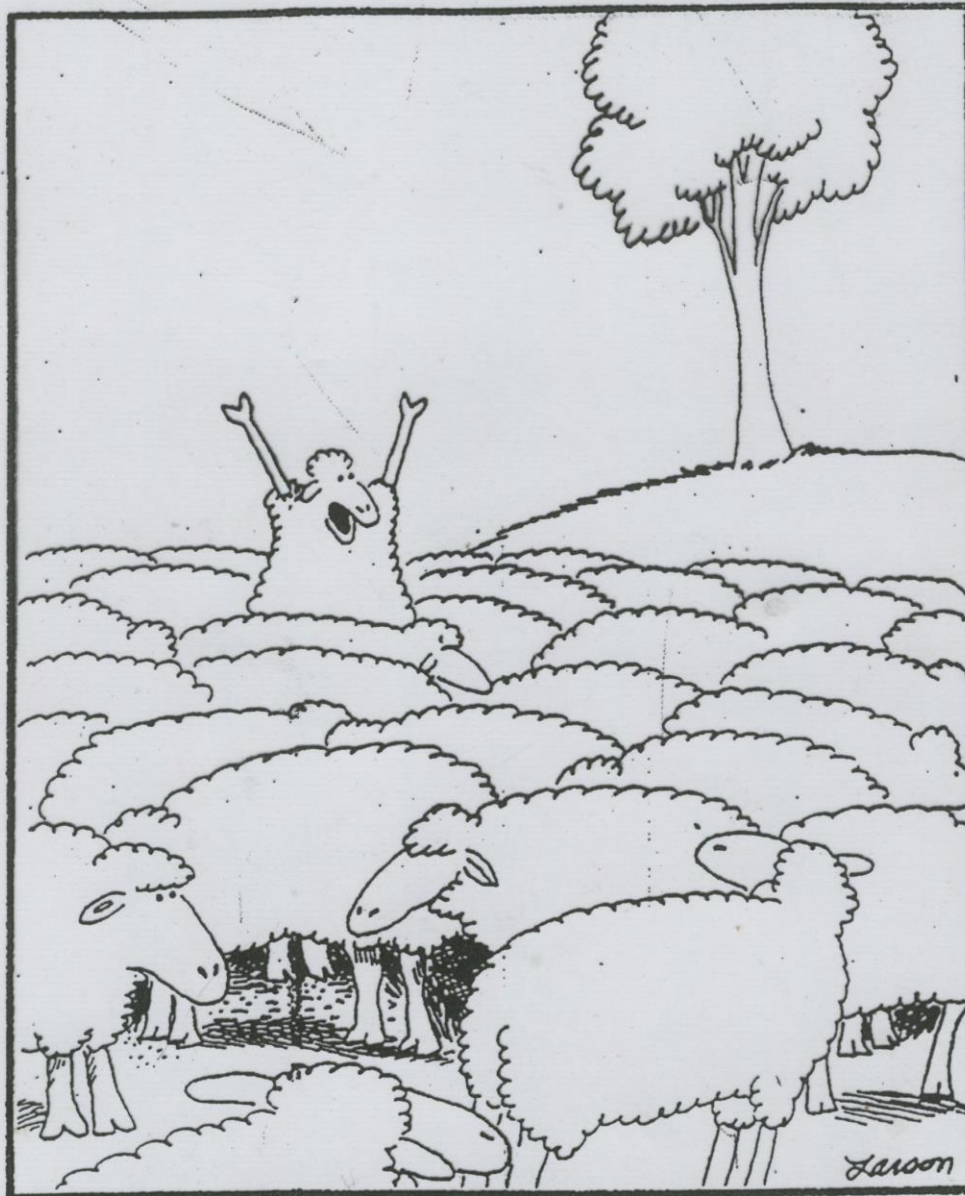


Community Opportunity Workshop (C.O.W.) - 1994-



Theme:

"Where is Kulin going? Don't put your future of the town in the hands of others - take control of your own destiny!"



"Wait! Wait! Listen to me! . . . We don't HAVE to be just sheep!"



Kulin's Initial Mission Statement

Stop depopulation and loss of town services through -

Becoming a more than a dot on the map.

And

Building local pride and commitment.



Kulin Initial Vision Statement-

'To sustain and improve the local community through positive opportunities for business and quality of life. The community must lead activities, which will develop and increase the profile of Kulin and attract people to the district. The community must embrace initiatives to preserve existing businesses and services in the district. The community must remain proactive and consider all new ideas and initiatives'



Volume 2 No.5 July 1995

KULIN BUSH RACES IT'S A GOER!

The Kulin Bush Races will be held adjacent to Jilakin Rock on October 7th 1995.

This will be advertised as Western Australia's answer to the Birdsville Races. A small country town holding bush races. This means we are the hosts. We as a town and district have entered the tourist industry! And we envisage this being an annual event. This is Kulin's Newdegate, Dowerin, Wagin Woolorama, all rolled into one.

We are working to hold an event to be proud of as a district and beneficial to our local organizations.....We have 3 months to make this a success. We need feedback, suggestions and some help. Please answer the survey attached and either post or leave at the Shire Office by Friday 7th July.

Graeme Robertson
President Cultivating Kulin Committee CKC

.....
**This is our chance to draw
a large crowd of people
into our town's event. The
committee can't do it
all on their own.**
.....







KULIN BUSH RACES



















Baby boom: Kulin mums Casey Williams with Amriah Spencer, Cindy Mullan with Parker, Steph Marh with Mae Bradford, Gen Whisson with Huxley and Elle Bowey with Will. Picture: Daniel Wilkins



DELIVERY RATES

Average number of babies in a woman's lifetime

Highest fertility rate

3.30 Brookton
3.29 Meekatharra
3.12 Kulin
3.04 Gnowangerup
2.96 Kununurra
2.75 Dowerin
2.70 Newman
2.63 Morawa
2.62 Moora
2.58 Northam, South Hedland

Lowest fertility rate

0.9 Perth City
1.10 North Coogee
1.26 Bull Creek
1.29 Mt Lawley-Inglewood
1.32 Murdoch-Kardinya
1.33 Bateman, Willetton
1.34 South Perth/Kensington
1.35 North Perth, Mosman Park/Peppermint Grove, Riverton/Shelley/Rossmoyne
1.40 Applecross/Ardross, Winthrop
1.41 Ocean Reef

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics

KULIN SHOWS US HOW TO DO IT

KULIN is fertile in more ways than one, with ideal growing conditions for wheat, sheep — and babies.

New Australian Bureau of Statistics data reveals the women in the small Wheatbelt town — best known for its Tin Horse Highway — are among WA's most fertile.

Kulin's fertility rate was 3.12 babies born to each woman over the course of her lifetime.

It's part of a baby boom in country WA, with the top 10 most fertile locations

dotted across our vast State. In 2016, more than 35,000 babies were born in WA, including 72 in Kulin, 280km east of Perth.

Another Wheatbelt town, Brookton, has WA's highest fertility rate at 3.3.

WA's average fertility rate is 1.89. The least fertile areas were Perth CBD (0.9) and North Coogee (1.1).

Kulin Shire president and local farmer Barry West, who raised four kids with wife Peta, said the town owed its mini population boom to a

strong community spirit.

"Kulin is very accepting of new people and everyone volunteers to help out for different things like our bush race," Mr West said.

"We've got a lot of young professionals who have moved here in recent years and built homes here.

"We've got some great facilities here for young families including a strong playgroup for young parents, day care and good medical services."

Gen Whisson moved to

Kulin eight years ago with husband Ben and the couple are parents to 19-month-old son Huxley.

The 33-year-old works as a private farming consultant and is about to open a florist business.

She said her previous job as a senior project officer for Kulin Shire to help promote local tourism attractions had given her plenty of scope to broaden her skills.

"I think a lot of people tend to misjudge small country towns but there's

always so much going on," she said.

She said getting involved in volunteering was a "big part of country life".

Cindy Mullan, 33, who lives on a pig and wheat farm with three kids and husband Brenton, said the town was family oriented and had great facilities for families.

"Everyone makes an effort to include you in sporting games and kids' groups and there's a great childcare centre," she said.

Regina Titilius

1. Local and diverse leadership

“Given the task of rejuvenating a region and the choice of \$50 million, or \$2 million and 20 committed local leaders, we would choose the smaller amount of money and the committed leaders”

(McKinsey and Company (1994) Lead Local Compete Global: Unlocking the Growth of Australia's Regions)

Shire Presidents- Graeme Robinson and John Bell



Graeme Robertson OAM



“Besides my family and farm, Kulin is the most important thing in my life, and there is a lot of Kulin people with the same feeling. Our aim is to get everyone feeling the that way, and then we will be unstoppable”

Margaret Wheatley



“Leadership is a series of behaviours rather than a role for heroes”



Making Things Happen

“Leadership is not necessarily a title or a powerful position; it is a process, it is relational, it is making something happen, it is leaving a mark”

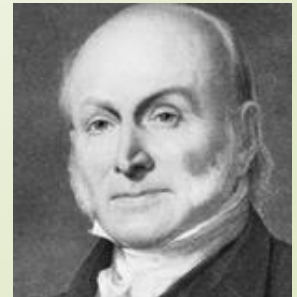
-Lorraine Matusak



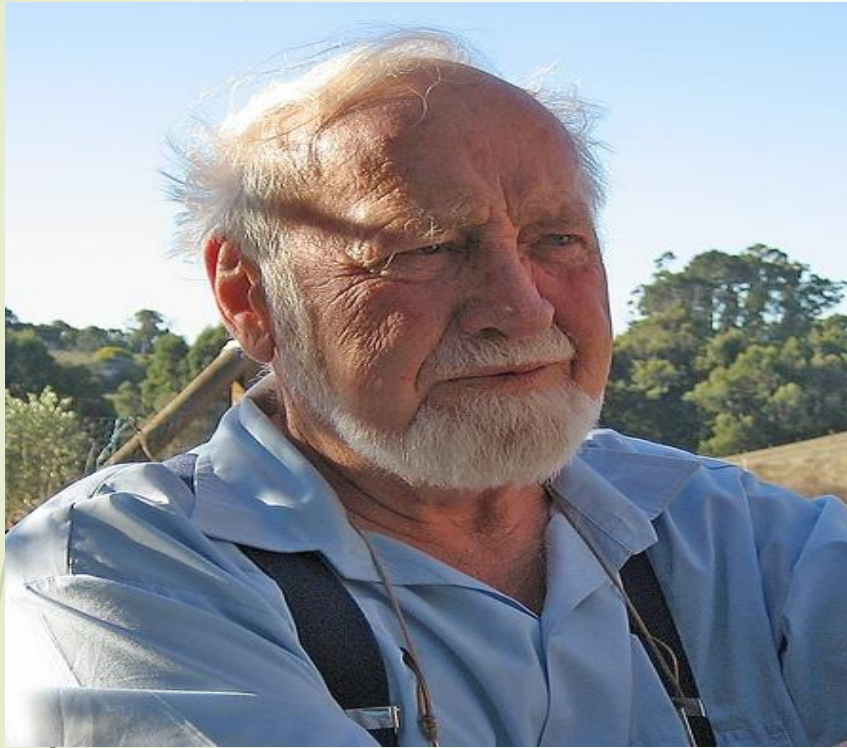
Inspiring and Influencing Others

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more and become more, you are a leader"

-John Quincy Adams



Facilitating Collaboration and Network Weaving



**Bill Mollison, a founder of
the Permaculture Movement**

**"I can't
save the
world on
my own...it
will take at
least three
of us."**



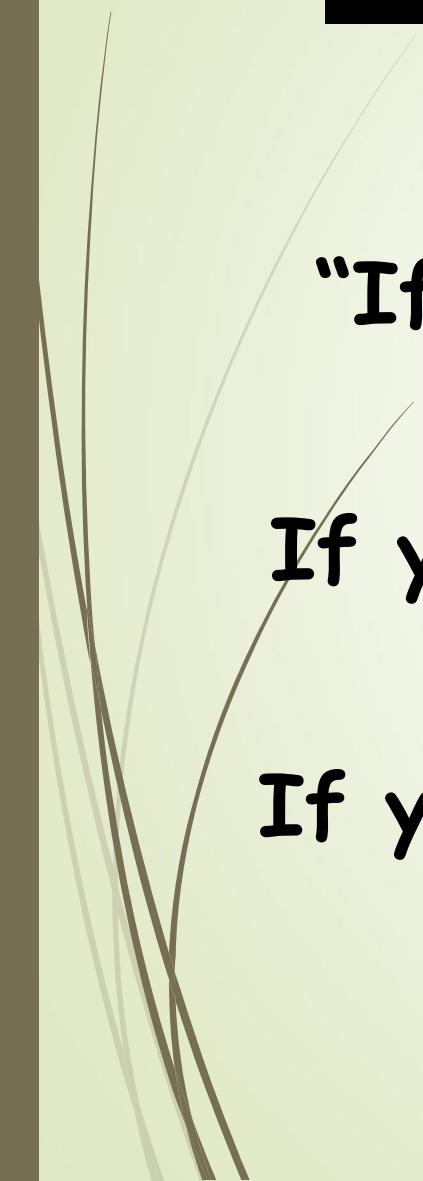
Growing leaders

**"If you want a year of prosperity,
grow grass.**

**If you want ten years of prosperity,
grow trees.**

**If you want 100 years of prosperity,
grow people"**

Scott's Bluff Leadership Motto



“Kulin to Cambodia - House Building and Humanitarian Leadership Initiative”





2. Active community engagement and connection

"Great communities don't just happen, they are created, nurtured and sustained by caring, connected and involved citizens"

-Peter Kenyon

Marcus Westbury



'The imagination, the sweat, the enthusiasm and the efforts of its people, are the greatest resource that any place has.'



Importance of -

- conversation
 - social connection
 - engagement
 - collaboration
- 

Importance of community conversation

'One of the things we need to learn is that every great change starts from very small conversations held among people who care.'

-Margaret Wheatley



KULIN BUSH RACES

FACEBOOK & EVENT GUIDE



30TH OF SEP. 1ST & 2ND OF OCT 2016



2024 Kulin Bush Races-

250 Volunteers



3. A positive and can-do community mindset

*You can't move your town
to a different location, you
can move your town's
attitude in a different
direction'*

-Heartland Center for Leadership Development (USA)



Graeme Robertson OAM



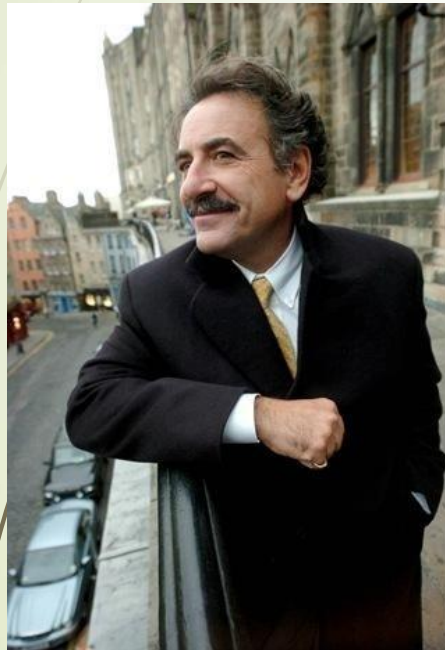
**"To not do anything
is to go backwards
and that is not an
option."**



'Conventional wisdom suggests that for a small town to survive it needs to be near a major highway, have significant natural resources in the region, be close to a larger city or have some other "characteristic or circumstance" working in its favour. Yet in reality, leadership is proving to be more important than location and attitude is more important than community size'

**-Heartland Center for Leadership
Development, USA**

4. Asset and Opportunity Obsession



'The future of every community lies in capturing the passion, imagination, and resources of its people'.

(Ernesto Sirolli)



Six Key Categories of Community Assets

1. People's passions, skills, connections and experiences and above all, what they care about
2. The physical world
3. Community associations
4. Institutional assets
5. Economic/business assets
6. Cultural assets-stories, traditions, heritage



The key asset
we need to
discover is
*"What people
care about"*



Discover what people care about

"Everyone cares about something, and that passion is his or her motivation to act."

-Jody Kretzmann





5. Engaging, empowering, retaining and attracting younger generations











6. Community WOW factor

**“You don’t get a
second chance at
a first impression!”**











Lamara Davis

Kulin- ABC Back Roads 2019



7. Lifestyle Appeal

"People in cities are seeking the values small town folks never lost. The wholesome small town is still there! The vision of "Main Street" brings back nostalgia, a sense of community, basic moral values, concern for others, friendly people, accessible city government and involvement in community life"

-Robert Schively



What so many young families are looking for-

The rural village community life which offers a safe and family-friendly lifestyle and a supportive environment to develop their entrepreneurial aspirations.



Regional Australia Institute

"Australians are increasingly subscribing to the mottos of *"Work where you want to live"* and *'Live where you love'*"

Critical Lifestyle Issues

- Good cake and coffee
- Community bumping spaces
- Childcare and early education education options
- Young Mum support and activities
- Housing
- Shopping
- Recreation options
- Child and youth facilities and activities
- Health services
- Ability to age well

Kulin Community Bank.





Ninja Warrior Course in Kulin



8. Support for entrepreneurial aspirations and initiatives

"Right now, in your community, at this very moment, there is someone who is dreaming about doing something to improve their lot. If we could learn how to help that person to transform the dream into meaningful work, we would be halfway to changing the economic fortunes of the entire community"

-Ernesto Sirolli







Little City
Coworking
Tanunda, SA





Framework for Action: Small Town Re-invention

- Continually growing and diversifying local leadership and capacity.
- Fostering positive and can-do community mindset.
- Actively encouraging healthy community behaviours related to inclusion, engagement and collaboration.
- Being asset and opportunity obsession



Framework for Action: Small Town Re-invention

- Engaging, empowering, retaining and attracting younger generations.
- Developing community wow-factor and appeal.
- Enhancing lifestyle options related to recreation, education, health, housing, childcare, retail services and staying local.
- Creating the environment that nurtures local-based employment, economic and business development.

Ingredients of a Strong Community

- Local leadership
- Active community engagement and connection
- Positive and can-do community mindset
- Asset and opportunity obsession
- Younger generation engagement
- Community WOW factor
- Livability appeal
- Support for entrepreneurial aspirations and initiatives

Marcel Proust



"The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having fresh eyes"

Robin Sharma



*'Dream big.
Start small.
Act now'*

Deni Ute Muster





Liz Richie, CEO, Regional Australia Institute



'Twenty years ago, I was 21 years old and had just returned home from university to take up the role as the very first Director of the Denilquin Ute Muster. What I learnt that year has stayed with me forever... Back then Denilquin was in the grips of a devastating drought. Our passionate community rallied to ask a simple question- how can we put Denilquin on the map?

Ultimately, it came down to three elements: a big vision; a bold idea and innumerable beating hearts full of passion'