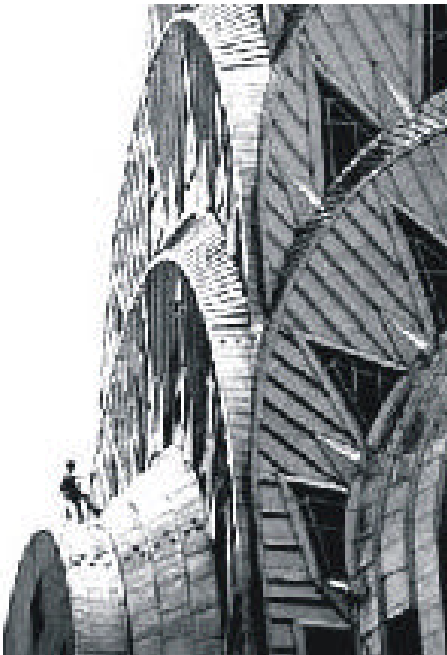


Issue 163, April 1, 2005



The Ultimate Asset Management Challenge

Those whose interests lie in asset management have beliefs, values, skills and knowledge much needed by society today

- **A belief** in acting now in the interests of the longer term, rather than for only immediate reward
- **Values** that put the wider community good above self-interest
- **Skills** that enable such beliefs and values to be put into practice by providing frameworks such as life cycle analysis and tools such as risk management
- **Knowledge** and understanding of the longer-term consequences of today's actions and of the range of options that are open to communities that truly desire to shape a future world full of hope and opportunity.

The challenge is to share these beliefs, values, skills and knowledge with community leaders; *to act as a bridge between Community Leaders and Technical Specialists.*

Are you ready for the challenge?

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The Challenge

- Do you want the community that your children will grow up in to be healthy, safe, and full of hope and opportunity?
 - Do we, as a community, need to know more about the future consequences of our past and present physical and financial decisions on the built environment, and future possibilities?
 - Should we now be thinking about how to create better community futures, and have plans for future emergencies that could affect our built environment (eg disasters or failures that affect clean air, water, energy, food, shelter and environment)?
 - Want to know more?

Imagine your town or city

- Without its roads, electricity, gas, water and telecommunications
- Without its public buildings, parks and gardens, recreation centres
- Without its shops and workplaces, its schools, its hospitals,
- Without its houses

Not much left is there?



Communities are shaped by their infrastructure, their physical assets

There is much, much more to communities than infrastructure, but it is this infrastructure—the 'built environment' — that underpins all of our communities. It determines what economic opportunities we have, the way we socialise, the kind of cultural and recreational possibilities open to us, and how we care for the natural environment — both now and in the future.

And the future of the infrastructure is in our hands.

Building better community futures requires:

- understanding how the needs of communities are changing,
 - the role of Community Leaders
- understanding the built environment, its current needs and the future options,
 - the role of Technical Specialists
- Community Leaders and Technical Specialists working with each other
 - for the future well being of their communities



(Asset Management Community Organisation Network)

ACORN Inc. has been created to bridge the gap between Community Leaders, who are the decision makers and shapers in the community, and the Technical Specialists who advise them and implement their decisions.

'THE ULTIMATE ASSET MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE'. This is part of an ongoing chain of development with which most of you will be familiar. In 1996, mindful of the needs of developing – and documenting – good *organisational* asset management practice, we introduced the International Asset Management Competitions. The Virtual Asset Management Community in 2003 built on this by encouraging *individual* good practice. Now we take the ultimate step—good *community* asset management practice—because 'ultimately' everything that we do in asset management is for the community and for community futures. Ultimate Asset Management is Community Asset Management .

WHAT is ACORN Inc.?

A non-profit, non-aligned, industry and public interest association.

A democratic association of individuals working together for the community good,

By sharing knowledge so that Community Leaders better understand the built environment options open to them and the future consequences and requirements of past and present decisions,

And so that Technical Specialists better understand the changing nature of future demands to be placed on the assets they build and maintain

And by thinking always beyond what is required TODAY, to what will be needed TOMORROW.

Vision:

Our action today create Community futures that nourish and support our children and all future generations: futures that expand hope and opportunities for all.

Mission:

We seek to better understand future community needs and options for the built environment and explore ways that decision makers can integrate this knowledge with the principles and processes of sound asset management so that we expand rather than contract future possibilities

Strategy:

ACORN Inc seeks to bridge the gap between Community Leaders and Technical Specialists, between those who are charged with understanding community objectives for the longer term and those who understand the options for delivering on them.

We do this in a number of ways, principally by helping both groups work together to develop a better understanding of future needs and possibilities and by raising the level of asset management capability and credibility in the community. We encourage and facilitate the integration of future needs within asset management plans and community budgets.

We engage the knowledge, experience and wisdom of all those who can contribute to the future world we want to create and we make that knowledge available so that we can learn from the past and build on the present.

We will know that we are succeeding when:

- We are able to document increasing numbers of good practice examples of analysis of future needs and their integration within sound asset management processes, resulting in reduction of environmental impact, improvements in services to consumers with greater social and cultural awareness.
- People and groups bring their ideas to us for dissemination to others
- Decision makers seek out the information and assistance we provide
- The terms 'Community futures', 'what if?' 'Thinking *forward*™', 'scenario development' and 'ultimate asset management™' become common terms in community speech and writing

ACORN Inc.'s values:

- We are inclusive, not divisive or elitist
- We are influencing, not controlling
- We are open to all ideas, not politically aligned
- We are respectful of different views and opinions and not dismissive
- We actively seek to give a voice to marginalised sections of the community

'Thinking Forward'TM

When it comes to infrastructure – assets that are going to last for anything from 20 to a hundred years or more – we need to think, not of what is needed *now*, but rather what *will be needed in the future*. That is, we need to think forward.

We can't foretell the future, but we can *imagine future scenarios and consider how we would deal with them to achieve the best possible outcomes*.

Consider the Royal Dutch Shell Petroleum Company. It used to be the least of the global oil companies but it rose to dominance because it foresaw the possibility of OPEC and a major oil price rise. When that happened in 1972, it was able to move quickly to adjust. It has never lost that dominance.

The company also considered many scenarios that did not come to pass – was that effort wasted? Not at all! Simply thinking of future possibilities increased the flexibility of managerial staff and their ability to respond to changes as they occurred.

Shell is the recognised leader in 'what if?' thinking—the art of Thinking *forward*. The techniques that it has developed are now being successfully applied to non-profit and community organisations. ACORN Inc. uses these techniques

to Create Community Futures

What these forward thinking community organisations have realised is that thinking forwards not only helps them respond quickly to external changes, it helps them to create the changes that they desire..



takes the 'what if?' thinking process and, by combining the technical knowledge of asset management professionals and the wisdom of Community Leaders, produces outcomes that are vital and viable for the Communities we serve.

ACORN Inc's overall aim is to develop communication processes that bridge the gap between the Community Leader and Technical Specialists, using the tools and frameworks developed in asset management. Its 'Thinking Forward'TM program of activities is part of this overall goal.

Programs and Activities

are developed by supporters of the ACORN Inc. concept. These are just our 'starting' activities. On Sunday evenings, join other supporters in suggesting and developing further ideas and activities. See **ACORN live!** (next page)

Community Leaders gain support from KNOWLEDGEABLE COMMUNITIES

Thus one of the tasks of ACORN Inc. is to raise the level of awareness of asset management issues, and especially asset management *options* in the community. Communities that 'think *forward*' will also be more supportive of their Leaders doing so.

Some of the activities currently being trialled by ACORN Inc. include

Conversation Cafés

Engaging small groups of people (3 – 6) in informal settings to discuss a specific 'thinking *forward*' issue. Recording and collating key ideas that arise in these group meetings can generate a community knowledge base thus helping others to start their 'thinking *forward*' activities. (Help sheets will be posted.)



Conversation Café Trial

Brainstorming Groups

These groups are more suitable for work environments and can cope with larger numbers; 10 – 15 is usually effective, but smaller/larger numbers can also work. While Brainstorming groups consider the same "what if?" questions covered in the conversation cafés, they tend to focus more sharply on the particular services and assets of the organisation. Again, recording and collating adds to a general knowledge base of community thought. (Help sheets will be posted.)

Mentoring Programs

The South Australian local government "Step by Step" program is focussed on helping Community Leaders achieve their community goals through the use of asset management techniques and knowledge. ACORN Inc supports such programs and will work with regions that seek to establish better asset management through improved understanding and co-operation between decision makers and asset management specialists.

Asset Management Training

ACORN Inc supports the development of asset management skills, and especially training that emphasises the importance of the achievement of community goals.



ACORN Live!

Starts Sunday, April 10, 2005 at www.acorninc.org

The focal point of ACORN Inc activity is discussion and group action and much of that is facilitated through virtual gatherings of ACORN supporters on Sunday evenings. Join in from 8-9 pm your local time (to talk with others in your time zone) or look up our “Whose on line when?” matrix for times to converse with others outside your time zone.

This is where local groups may set up arrangements for getting together or doing some collaborative work with others, making suggestions, raising ideas that need help from others, and providing that help when other ideas are raised.

What ideas do you have for bringing community leaders and technical specialists together to share their understanding and to ‘think forward’? For raising community awareness and interest? For increasing capability and credibility in asset management?

Two ideas are currently ‘on the table’. Both of these arose from an ACORN launch meeting in Perth. More launch meetings are planned and you are encouraged to attend if you can. See the Event Itinerary on the back page.

Idea 1: A national (international?) SIM CITY competition (suggested by Neville Binning)

Purpose: To promote the ideas of trade-off inherent in good asset management and to create an awareness of the complexity of city management.

Target Audience: High School and University Students (but doesn’t have to be limited to these)

Needed: Anyone with experience or knowledge of competitive Sim City games; those who would like to be involved in - or have any ideas about—the design, management, and determination of winners for such games; ideas on publicity, etc.

Idea 2: A “What if?” TV hypothetical (suggested by Ernst Krauss)

Purpose: To show that ‘Thinking *forward*’ is fun! Give it credibility.

Target Audience: Wider community

Needed: What ‘what if?’ question/s would best suit this format? Who would we get to write them, act in them, produce them—and market them to the TV stations?

Can you help to develop and/or implement these ideas?

Do you have other ideas? Why not join us Sunday April 10, 8-9pm
www.acorninc.org



ACORN MEETING SCHEDULE—APRIL 2005

Come and meet foundation ACORN Members

Chris Adam Penny Burns Mercedes Healy David Hope Ashay Prabhu Jeff Roorda

Support ACORN Inc

Because ACORN Inc is supporting you

by increasing the visibility and importance of asset management
And striving for better community futures for your children—and theirs!

Canberra

April 12th

Waldorf,
2 Akuna Street,
3-5 pm no charge

Brisbane

April 19th

Stamford Plaza
Edwards Street
3-5 pm no charge

Melbourne

April 14th

Vibe Savoy Hotel
630 Little Collins St
3-5 pm no charge

Sydney

April 21st

Marriott Hotel,
36 College Street
3-5 pm no charge

Also in Brisbane

April 19th 'Thinking *forward*' - What is the future for Asset Management? Dr Penny Burns
The Greek Club, Edmonstone Street, South Brisbane (off-street parking Besant and Edmonstone Street)

5:45 Drinks at the bar 6:15 Presentation 7:30 Dinner

Cost : Presentation only (AWA Members & students free, non-members \$10)

Presentation and meal: Members \$30; Non-members \$38

RSVP : Friday 15th April 2005 Kathy Bourbon, Office Manager, AWA (Qld)

Ph: (07) 3397 5644 Fax : (07) 339 5283 E-mail: awaq@bigpond.net.au

If you can't make any of these times, we will be in the locations listed for a few days, so please email us at nut@acorninc.org and we can meet for a coffee—or a beer!