



# CREATING CHANGE IN AUSTRALIA

IDENTIFYING THE TRAINING NEEDS OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS & CAMPAIGNERS



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Photos courtesy of Damian Kelly, Nicola Paris, Julia Rau, Chloe Aldenhoven, Nick Carson.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, and that sovereignty was never ceded. We seek to work constructively with, and in support of Aboriginal peoples.

# SUMMARY

On an unprecedented global scale we are seeing people taking to the streets and asserting their rights to contribute to their communities and participate in decisions that impact them in a meaningful way. In Australia both major political parties are supporting legislation with serious implications for environmental, social and economic justice, all the while seeking to discourage dissent through surveillance, use of force and reframing genuine community concern as radical extremism.

There is a growing disquiet amongst communities not known for their willingness to directly confront power holders. In April 2013 we saw an exceptional community victory in Broome which challenged the biggest multinationals in the world over a massive proposed gas plant; and are seeing farmers across the country organising with environmentalists in unprecedented alliances on community building and civil disobedience campaigns to ‘lock the gate’ to coal seam gas projects.

There are many campaigns in Australia that have tried “standard mechanisms” for change and are seeing the political process repeatedly fail them. From climate action groups to rural communities facing down the coal seam gas industry, to blue collar workers challenging huge companies, there is now an opportunity and a growing willingness from people to take the next step and confront power directly. The challenge then becomes equipping these people who come from all walks of life with the skills and support they need to take a stand. We have an opportunity to increase our leverage in a challenging political environment by skilling up communities to create change. Applying direct pressure to corporations through a focus on markets, divestment, and highlighting their lack of social license through powerful civil disobedience is proving increasingly effective.

In a number of cases, campaigns that have had good intentions for change, have fallen short because of a lack of strategy, experience, community resources, and networks. As we will show in this report, in cases where communities and campaigns have had the right mix of different strategies and capabilities, they can be successful.

The increasing ‘professionalisation’ of environment and social justice organisations can result in situations where a few skilled professionals formulate and run a campaign without the full buy in and participation from affected local communities. Whilst this approach can deliver results, the knowledge and skills required to plan and run campaigns are concentrated within a few individuals. This approach fails to capitalise on the opportunity to create capacity in communities so they can formulate and develop their own campaigns. Investing time and resources in training, mentoring and support to impacted communities not only leverages the power of the communities, but provides the possibility that communities will continue to assert their rights and utilise their skills to assist other campaigns or to teach others within their area.

The question that then remains is ‘What training will be of most benefit to communities, campaigners and activists; and how is that training best delivered?’ This research report sets out to find answers to these questions. The answer can be informed by analysing where existing community strengths lie and where the greatest needs are whilst considering what strategically are the important knowledge and skills found to be effective in successful campaigns.

The research was informed by both an online survey and face-to-face interviews with activists. This was complemented by background desktop research and the synthesis of several case studies of recent environmental and social justice campaigns to extract key success factors and lessons for future improvement. Additionally, the extensive personal experience of the primary author was drawn upon to inform the recommendations.

The research forms the first component of a broader ‘Training for Change’ project that seeks to build capacity for grassroots activists to take the power to create change into their own hands. Increased capacity will lead to the design of better campaign strategies and the implementation of more effective campaigns that will have an increased chance of success. A summary of key research findings and recommendations are presented below.



## KEY FINDINGS

There were large numbers (36%) of volunteer activists and campaigners dedicating between 10 and 40 hours of time per week to support their cause or project. This indicates a shortage of funding available to pay activists to take on paid work and also highlights a potential risk in sustaining campaign workloads by relying on non-paid volunteers. It also provides evidence of a high level of personal commitment from volunteers to their cause. The case studies in the appendix highlight the great personal commitment community members show when faced by real threats to their livelihoods and values.

Enthusiastic support has been demonstrated around Australia to the prospect of more organised training and capacity building for campaigners and community organisers. A need exists to build capacity in three key areas:

## MOVEMENT BUILDING

- Capacity building, community organising, volunteer retention, functional group dynamics and effective facilitation.
- Engaging the broader community to grow campaigns beyond the population of people already knowledgeable, concerned or active on the issue.

## COMMUNICATIONS

- Developing cohesive narratives and telling our stories effectively.
- Practical skills for communication: social media, graphic design, video.
- Building skills to counter public relations campaigns or spin directed against a campaign.

## PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR DIRECT ACTION

- A major need was practical direct action planning – the mechanics of organising and successfully capitalising on safe and effective civil disobedience actions that provide leverage for change.
- Practical support for actions and increased understanding of the legal system, both in relation to rights during civil disobedience actions but also broader legal strategies for intervening in projects.

Underlying these three key areas is the need to build capacity in developing campaigning approaches that draw upon best practice traditional campaign strategies whilst introducing new tactics required to respond to the changing context that campaigns operate within. There is a need, particularly for environmental campaigners to understand varying mechanisms by which change can be achieved and broaden skills in corporate campaigning, in addition to traditional politically focused approaches to change.



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The research team make the following recommendations for consideration and future action:

- Review existing training resources to identify opportunities for reuse and customisation to meet the identified training needs as prioritised by campaigners in Australia.
- Identify gaps in existing training resources, and develop or adapt written resources to fill these gaps.
- Make training resources available online to support the extended reach of the training program and materials.
- Resource, develop and deploy a series of face to face training workshops around the following themes, all incorporating a strategic approach:
  - Movement building
  - Communications
  - Practical skills for action
- Further develop 'rapid response' practical training programs that support community building and direct action training for emerging areas of high need, such as Gippsland, where communities are preparing for action in the case of the coal seam gas moratorium being lifted in Victoria.
- Additional funding should be sought to support the above recommended resource development and pilot training delivery.

A number of indicative options for progressing the delivery of training are provided:

- Building capacity in a new or existing collective or organisation to provide ongoing training and support
- Networking with other organisations that currently provide ongoing training and support
- Collaborative project with large non-government organisations (NGOs) on a series of trainings
- A series of discrete projects:
  - Weekend skillshares
  - Workshop series
  - Resource development
  - A networking/crowd sourced resource project



*Standing in support of peaceful action, Powershift Photo courtesy Australian Youth Climate Coalition*

## METHODOLOGY

The activist training needs research was informed through background desktop research, surveys and interviews with activists and trainers, case studies and the insights from twelve years of campaign and advocacy experience from the key author.

An online survey was developed and distributed through networks of environmental and social justice activists in Australia. The definition and scope of the survey aimed to draw from the experience of a range of people, including long-term committed activists and those not already self-identified as activists. The survey questions were informed by the original project proposal which was to scope the training needs of grassroots campaigners, with a focus on supporting skills relating to nonviolent direct action (NVDA). The survey attracted 106 responses from people who identify themselves as activists for social or environmental change. Survey data was collected from March 2013-June 2013. A copy of the online survey used to inform the research can be found in Appendix 1.

Additional information was obtained through twenty face to face interviews and informal meetings with environmental and social justice activists in Australia. Interviews were conducted from July 2012 to June 2013. Several participants identified as being involved with more than one organisation. The main organisations that interviewees associated with are documented in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Organisations represented

- Flemington Kensington Legal
- Lawyers for Forests
- Conservation Council WA
- Ban Uranium Mining Permanently
- Friends of the Earth (FOE)
- Wikileaks
- Quit Coal (FOE)
- Anti-Nuclear and Clean Energy (FOE)
- Animal Amnesty
- Forest Rescue
- Uniting Voice
- Sea Shepherd
- 350.org
- ACT Training
- Refugee Rights Action Network
- Friends of Palestine
- Occupy Melbourne
- D'Vize
- Collabatory
- Fitzroy Legal Service
- Plan to Win
- Melbourne Street Medics

The primary researcher and author also attended and delivered training at some key events where a broader understanding of the needs of the movement was identified. A summary of the events attended include:

- On the ground work and reflection with Broome No Gas Community (including a specific survey on how to support civil disobedience).
- Attendance at the Australasian Facilitators Network Conference.
- Attendance and facilitation of nonviolence workshop in preparation for, and at Lizards Revenge, a large gathering opposing uranium mining in South Australia.
- Training for Quit Coal, The Wilderness Society, No McDonalds in Tecoma & Save Bastion Point, the East West tunnel campaign, and Lock the Gate Gippsland.
- Campaigning master class with Chris Rose, Greenpeace International.
- Attendance and facilitation of workshop at Refugee Rights National convergence – Northam WA.
- Co-Convening the Melbourne Campaigners Network.
- Participation in the inaugural Centre for Australian Progress fellowship program for 2013.
- Attendance at ‘Beyond Coal and Gas’, a large gathering of climate and coal seam gas campaigners.

The key author produced three case studies to help distil lessons from successful campaigns whilst learning lessons from projects that either failed to gain traction or sustain themselves. The three case studies presented were for:

- James Price Point/ Walmadan (planned gas hub)
- Occupy Melbourne
- Coal Seam Gas – Lock the Gate

The case studies are presented in Appendix 3, with a summary of key success factors and lessons presented in the main body of the report.

## **LIMITATIONS**

The distribution of the survey was limited to the current networks of the key author and supporting team. The reach of the survey and interviews realistically references the areas which are currently experiencing higher levels of direct action participation – forests, climate and coal seam gas and other environmental issues, however, there are likely many smaller issues supported by committed individuals that were not canvassed by the research. For example, there are small pockets of activity in Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory as evidenced by interviews and other anecdotal evidence that are not represented by the survey. They are generally focussed around environmental issues.

There may be opportunities for further collaborative work that might be identified in future, however the scope of this needs analysis was kept within certain parameters due to time and travel constraints, and thus represents a snapshot of participants only, even while reflecting many common themes as evidenced by other interviews. This does not discount future opportunities or collaborative projects from arising given new information.



*Police escorting equipment for Woodside's proposed gas hub near Broome Photo Damian Kelly*

## WHY TAKE ACTION IN AUSTRALIA?

### **The context for activism in Australia and why we need increased development of activist training**

The need for renewed support for activist training in Australia arises from a number of factors. Australia today is facing a number of challenges which threaten the health and well-being of its citizens, communities and the environment.

There is a distinct urgency resting upon a number of social movements in Australia today. The timeframe within which we have to mitigate the worst impacts of climate change is narrow and requires urgent action. The movement to address climate change, represented by many groups and coalitions, requires resurgent energy and support. In addition to this, the window of opportunity to transition to post-peak oil energy systems and strategies is also limited.

Alongside the urgency of climate change and peak oil are continual threats posed by resource and mineral extraction industries which have also intensified their assault on Australia. These include incursions for gassified fossil fuels, coal, uranium and precious metals. In the process, mining extraction has produced a cascade of conflicts with indigenous peoples, farmers and other communities.

Underpinning the urgency of these challenges are problems with the democratic process in Australia. The massive influence which mineral extraction industries had during the Howard government has continued, if not increased. The threat of corporate sponsored media blitzes, like the one which crippled the Rudd government in 2010, has made a mockery of the political process. Corporate influence on the political process has, arguably, never been bigger than it is today.

As corporate influence continues to grow, marginalised communities continue to suffer, and in this conservative political climate we will find ourselves needing to defend hard fought gains in the area of human rights and social justice.

In this context, activists need support and training to build social pressure for change that can be exerted against power holders, to navigate a highly fraught political environment with success, and ultimately to campaign for and achieve outcomes.

The power dynamics between governments, business and citizens are quickly changing. Governments are using new technologies and capabilities in surveillance, and citizens are using new network-based forms of mobilisation. In many countries around the world, an elite few have accumulated vast wealth backed by legal sanction, leaving a trail of inequality and disenfranchisement. Australia is no exception.

Building capacity in our social movements will be critical to challenging the current paradigm and working towards equal enfranchisement of all people in the political, economic, environmental and cultural life of this country.





*Climate camp 2010 Photo Nicola Paris*

## EXISTING CAMPAIGNS

Some of the key areas where people are doing frontline organising and community actions include:

- Coal Seam Gas                      NSW and QLD
- Forests                                Grassroots groups in NSW, WA, TAS, VIC
- Climate                                Greenpeace, Quit Coal, growing movement in NSW, QLD, VIC
- Peace                                    Mainly faith based activists across the country in small pockets
- Animal Rights                        WA, Victoria seem to be the strongest areas

In addition various other groups are organising around social justice issues such as the Northern Territory Intervention in Aboriginal communities, the Palestine / Israel conflict, refugees and asylum seekers, and some gender issues in varying capacities around the country. There are also active campaigns around food sovereignty, various international solidarity issues, LGBTIQ, marriage equality, gender issues and aboriginal sovereignty and land rights.

# RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section of the report documents the findings from the various components of the research and draws out recommendations for consideration.

## SURVEY FINDINGS

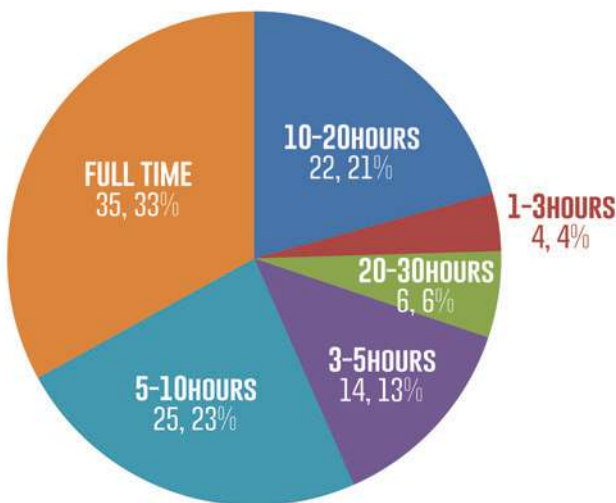
The online survey attracted 106 responses from people who identify themselves as activists for social or environmental change.

The survey received feedback from a good diversity of age groups, with the largest group being the 25-34 age range, though also significant representation from the wider age range between 18-44 was also obtained. In terms of geographic area, 40% of respondents were from Victoria, approximately 25% from NSW, 15% from Queensland and a few responses from Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

The survey asked about their employment status and time spent working or volunteering in campaigns and movements. Extraordinary levels of volunteerism were identified from respondents from mainly grassroots groups with a volunteer focus. This contrasts with the higher likelihood of part-time or full-time work of those working for more established Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).

Figure 1 below shows that a third of respondents indicated that they considered themselves to work full time on campaigns, with another 44% indicating between 5-20 hours per week, yet as figure 2 shows, 64% of respondents indicated that these contributions were completely volunteer unpaid work. Only 10% indicated that their contribution was paid full-time work.

**NUMBER OF PAID AND UNPAID HOURS PER WEEK  
RESPONDENTS WORKED AS ACTIVISTS**



**EMPLOYMENT STATUS**

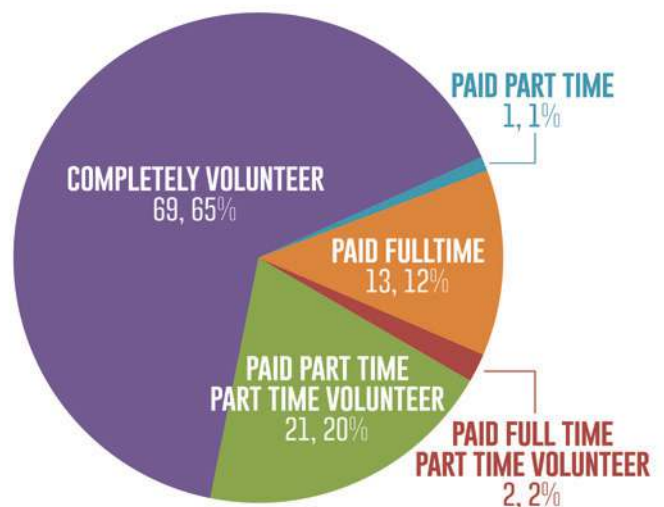


Figure 1. Number of paid and unpaid hours worked per week by activists.

Figure 2. Activist employment status

The two charts below reveal that volunteers (full-time volunteers or part-time paid) are extremely committed to working as activists. Seven (10%) full-time volunteers are actually working full time as activists, with 18 (26%) working ten to twenty hours per week and 23 (33%) working 5 to 10 hours per week. Also of interest is that 14 (67%) of respondents who identified as working paid part-time and volunteering part-time were actually contributing a full week of work as activists.

**These findings reflect the shortage of funding available to pay activists to take on paid work and also highlight a potential risk to sustaining campaign workloads by relying on non-paid volunteers.**

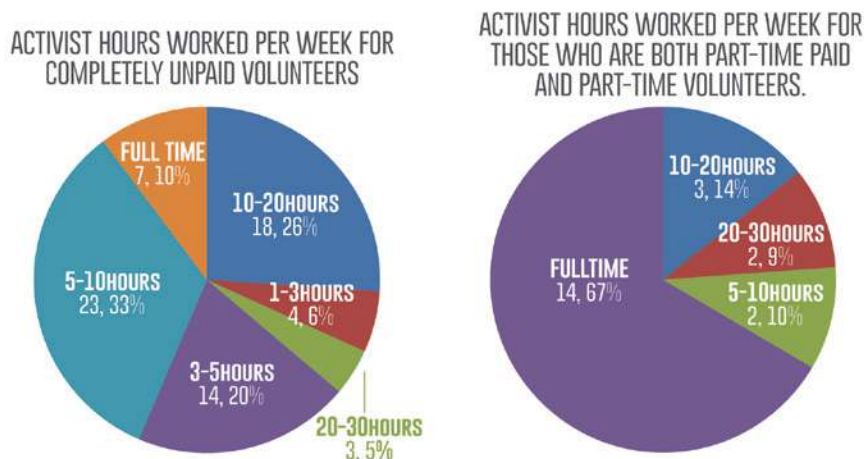


Figure 3. Hours worked and volunteered

## REPRESENTATION OF ORGANISATIONS AND CAMPAIGN THEMES

Survey responses were received from people who identified with working across a wide range of issues, although most were more environmentally focused than social justice focused. A wide range of organisations were represented. A sample of organisations are presented below with a full list provided in Appendix 2:

- Lock the Gate
- Friends of the Earth
- Australian Youth Climate Coalition
- Quit Coal
- Socialist Alliance
- Pace E Bene
- Sea Shepherd
- Goongerah Environment Centre
- Greenpeace
- Oaktree
- Huon Valley Environment Centre

## WHAT IS ONE THING YOU NEED TO CREATE CHANGE?

When activists were asked what they thought was the one key thing they needed to create change, quite a number of people responded with 'patience'. This may demonstrate a commitment to long term campaigning, and realising that groundwork must be laid to achieve good outcomes. This connects with the need for better overall campaign or movement strategies that link discrete actions with more coordinated approach (see Appendix 4 example linking strategic with tactical).

There were many comments concerning skills that could be learnt, including fundraising, communication, NVDA, facilitation, social media and movement building.

**“Retaining people, making it easier and more comfortable for people to join in”**

**“Working with communities to raise awareness and direct action techniques”**

**“Identifying and acting on opportunities strategically”**

## IDENTIFIED WEAKNESSES

The key weaknesses that activists identified in their organisations revolved around a lack of resources, both financial (31%) and lack of people (21%). This was a consistent theme identified across nearly all respondents. Whilst this needs to be taken seriously in terms of sustainability, many well-resourced organisations would also similarly note these constraints.

A lack of time, focus and direction were also identified as weaknesses within organisations. There was a wide spread of other less frequent responses with each attracting approximately 5% of responses for the areas of:

- poor group dynamics (non-democratic, gender issues, interpersonal conflict)
- issues with dysfunctional behaviour (ego, bullying and dealing with mental instability)
- burn-out and fatigue
- limited capacity to undertake alliance building to unite movements
- limited capacity to develop campaign strategy
- shortage of capacity to engage the broader community outside of the green left movement (engaging only ‘the usual suspects’)

## AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Reflecting many of the minor weaknesses identified by groups, the key areas identified for improvement were in the ability to engage the broader community outside of the green left movement (25 responses or 24%). This response echoes the need to grow campaigns beyond people already knowledgeable, concerned or active on the issue, emphasising the importance of finding ways of incorporating ‘un-usual suspects’ that are not connected to the environmental or social justice movement but who may feel passionate about contributing to an issue.

The need to improve communication and the use of the media (traditional media / social media) was the second most common area identified for improvement (23 responses or 22%). The responses indicated the need to improve the use of both traditional media and social media to raise the profile of the target issue and to be able to counter public relations campaign or spin directed against their campaign. (The important dimension of internal campaign communications was not captured by this response and is addressed in other areas presented later in this report).

The third most important response indicating an area for improvement was campaign strategy (16 responses or 15%). This included the need to increase knowledge in traditional campaign strategies as well as introduce new approaches. (Appendix 4 provides a diagrammatic overview of campaign and movement dynamics, as an example of a strategic understanding).

Alliance building to unite movements also ranked highly with 12 responses (11%). It was acknowledged that there was a lot more potential for groups to work together both geographically across state borders and internally, across campaigns, especially those addressing cross-cutting issues (e.g climate change). Working more closely with other campaigns is achievable, however there was an expressed need for different groups to accept that they can agree to disagree and still work together on common issues.

The need to create cohesion and strong bonds between people within a campaign team was also identified as an issue (7 responses, 7%) where improvements could be made. This may entail the need to create a supportive environment where trust can be developed between people within a campaign team, an important element if a campaign or movement is to retain people and bring out the best in each individual. This area also referred to the need to ‘look after ourselves’ as activists, to make our work fun and meaningful, and to engage in sustainable work practice to limit ‘burnout’. Finally, this also included the need to celebrate the successes achieved by campaign teams.

Another area that attracted responses from participants was the need to focus on positive outcomes. This reflects the need to not only oppose the existing system or status quo, but to envisage the world we want to live in and to the greatest extent possible, live and act in a way in cohesion with this vision and values. Creating positive solutions is another way to engage the general community and get them on board before turning attention to opposing the status quo.

## SELF-IDENTIFIED TRAINING PRIORITIES

Participants were asked to identify the top three areas they would like training in to increase their capacity. The most popular areas are represented as those with the highest score in the table below. As anticipated the results closely reflect the training areas that participants expressed a high degree of interest in.

Table 2. Training priorities

Training	Top 3 score
Capacity building & mobilising supporters	125
Campaign strategy & development	123
Social media & online organising	67
Action planning (scouting, preparation for direct actions)	60
Facilitation & group dynamics	55
Messaging & communications	54
Legal rights & police liaison for actions	52
Parliamentary process & lobbying	45
Traditional media (media releases, liaison, spokesperson)	32
Event organisation	20

## TRAINING PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED IN SURVEY DATA

Survey participants were asked to rate their level of experience in a number of campaign and advocacy skills areas. They were then asked to rate their level of interest in undertaking training in these same areas. Participant responses were collated and plotted on a matrix below to provide an indication of possible knowledge and skills gaps.

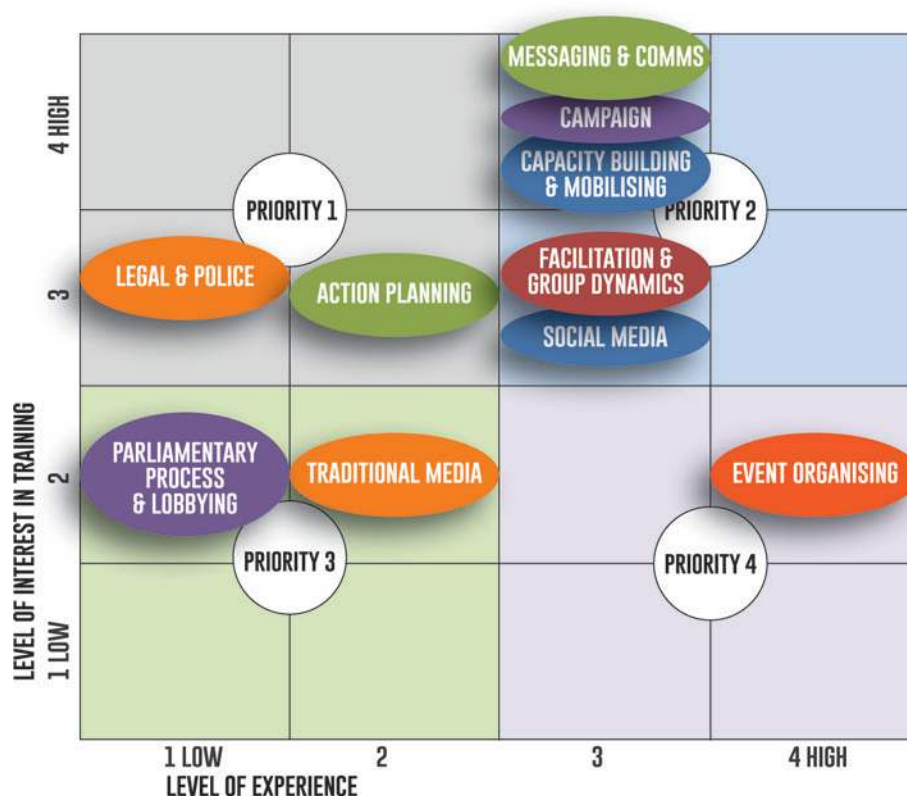


Figure 4. Training needs matrix

Note: Size of ellipse shape does not represent a meaning or weighting.

A review of the training needs matrix reveals that although many respondents indicated a reasonable or high level of experience in a range of the ten activities, most still expressed a desire to learn more in many of the areas. Future capacity building projects should focus on areas that are present in priority areas 1 and 2 (top left and top right quadrants). These areas reflect a high degree of interest and a medium to low level of experience in that area. Conversely the Priority 4 quadrant contains the skill areas where participants have the least amount of interest and the highest level of experience.

Priority 1 areas for future training include:

- Legal rights & police liaison for actions
- Action planning (scouting, preparation for direct actions)

Priority 2 areas for future training include:

- Messaging & communications
- Campaign strategy & development
- Capacity building & mobilising supporters
- Facilitation & group dynamics
- Social media & online organising

## LEVEL OF INTEREST IN SAMPLE WORKSHOP TOPICS

Survey respondents were asked to express a degree of interest in a range of sample training workshops. Most respondents were interested in all of them to some extent with the highest level of interest being indicated for ‘communications’ with a focus on social media and online tools.

Table 3. Expression of interest in workshop topics

	Helping your group work better: facilitation, conflict resolution & group dynamics. Recruiting & retaining volunteers	Nonviolent direct action: inspiring case studies of effective action from around the world, how to plan and run successful actions.	Communications: Looking good & getting your campaigns out there: video & graphics tips, using online tools & effective social media sharing.	Where are the levers for change: understanding the political process, lobbying and corporate campaigning.
Highly interested	28	34	45	43
Reasonably interested	45	41	37	33
Minimal interest	25	25	18	25
Not at all	8	6	6	5

## PREVIOUS EXPERIENCES OF EFFECTIVE TRAINING

‘On the job’ training was the most common and effective form of training identified by participants. This included or was complimented by attendance at ‘direct action’ camps and training that involved the use of practical tools, frameworks and role plays. Transformative training that touches the individual to explore their values, worldviews and cultural assumptions was also noted as recurring themes of effective training.

Some common themes linked to positive training experiences were linked to clear facilitation and group work that incorporates practical skills and creative approaches.

**“In general, workshops or trainings that introduce new tools, ways or thinking or open up new awareness.”**

**“It was an interesting blend of groups work and support work and entailed excellent facilitation. The facilitator used a great balance of verbal info, exercises and role plays, together with some outside reading/ homework...I note that this, and another great nonviolence trainers network training that I attended, both had much higher focus on contribution and camaraderie in the group.”**

**“I think having a fixed date and opportunity to put into practice some of the skills we learnt - both in facilitating NVDA workshops and carrying out some awesome actions / affinity group work - helped solidify and deepen my learning.”**

## INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Information gathered during face to face interviews and informal meetings with activists generally reflected the findings of the online survey. Some of the additional points to come from the meetings are outlined below.

Focusing on the priority areas for training topics and themes, interviewees noted:

- there is a priority need to further build capacity around managing group dynamics, improving facilitation, de-escalation and conflict resolution skills
- there is a need to build capacity in security culture for activists and a guide to tech security and counter surveillance
- there is an increased need for strategic understanding of political and corporate leverage and tools (see Appendix 4, Overview of Campaign and Movement Dynamics)
- the importance of skills in social media, graphics, video, photography and effective distribution of campaign materials
- storytelling and building positive narratives and developing better communications approaches are needed to extend campaign reach and relate to a broad target audience.
- CSG affected communities may need a 'triage' approach including:
  - rapid response trainers that can quickly skill them up in NVDA,
  - training in facilitation and group dynamics
  - campaign strategy

In relation to training and delivery the interviewees noted that:

- there is a need for ongoing capacity building and not just one-off training sessions.
- new, interesting and creative approaches that focus around interactive and engaging training are required - not just 'chalk n talk'
- practical DIY guide to actions – physical tactics explained would be of great use
- there is a need all across Australia for more training and in particular activist trainers who are able to travel to regional 'need areas'. We note that 'fly in fly out' activist training is not the best model for community building and it is acknowledged that embedding trainers in the community for at least a short time is desirable.

Finally, some general findings and challenges were identified that need addressing. Where possible proposed training should attempt to consider these issues:

- a challenge exists to sustain and build movements post the win/lose/draw outcomes of a specific campaign.
- the issue of activist burnout need to be addressed to sustain the movement and ensure there are sufficient experienced activists in the movement to train up and mobilise those starting their journey.
- barriers to participation in campaigns need to be worked with, such as financial concerns, physical isolation, or the challenges of combining parenting with activism.

These broad ideas, challenges and recommendations were considered when composing the findings and recommendations of the research report.



*Rally against proposed gas hub in Broome Photo Nicola Paris*

## LESSONS FROM THE CASE STUDIES

Three case studies were produced by the key author to document some of the facilitating factors in successful campaigns and also draw out lessons for improvement in future campaigns (see Appendix 3 for the detailed case studies). Brief introductory summaries of the case studies are presented below to provide some context to the findings and recommendations that were derived.

### CASE STUDY 1. JAMES PRICE POINT / WALMADAN

James Price Point / Walmadan was the location in the Kimberley where a large gas refinery development was planned that threatened to destroy many square kilometres of culturally significant, and environmentally sensitive sites with large ramifications for the local community. In April 2013, against the odds and fighting a large multinational backed by both State and Federal Government, the local community stopped the on shore development of the proposed gas plant.

### CASE STUDY 2. OCCUPY MELBOURNE

Occupy Melbourne was one of the many uprisings to occur across 951 cities in 82 countries. Occupy Melbourne saw hundreds of citizens engage in nonviolent civil disobedience by setting up encampments that reclaimed public space in the parks of Melbourne and created a semi-cooperative community. The movement mobilised a new generation of first time activists. Occupy Melbourne as a concept was unsustainable – this has been borne out in the dismantling of virtually all Occupy encampments within months of their early rise. Faced with coordinated police repression and environmental challenges, it was a great experiment that failed.

### CASE STUDY 3. COAL SEAM GAS – LOCK THE GATE

The Lock the Gate movement describes the broad of land owners, typically conservative farming communities and climate change activists opposing unconventional gas extraction. The effectiveness of Lock the Gate movement is demonstrated by the willingness of effected communities to ‘Lock their gates’ and blockade the powerful extractive industries seeking to mine gas on their land. Collectively the movement has raised the profile of CSG mining issues into the mainstream community and put a dent in the extractive industry’s social license to operate.





*Northam Refugee Rights Convergence Photo Nicola Paris*

The following key points summarise the research findings and recommendations from the case studies.

## **A SENSE OF COMMUNITY, A SHARED VISION**

A sense of community is one key factor that helped people win in Broome. This is also being demonstrated in the campaigns against Coal Seam Gas and was the factor that kept people attached to the concept of Occupy long after it had become unsustainable.

## **SUPPORT, TRAINING AND CAPACITY BUILDING**

Giving people good foundations through training empowers people to take ownership and control of their campaign. Effective capacity building allows people to play to their strengths, and do things their way. This can be a facilitating factor to building a sense of community and shared vision.

## **GRASSROOTS SUPPORT**

Grassroots support and genuine capacity building is more effective in terms of achieving long-term campaign outcomes. This approach is contrasted with the bureaucratic NGO approach of an 'expert campaigner' lobbying government to achieve change.

## **USING NEW WAYS (AND OLD WAYS) TO COMMUNICATE**

Innovate social media certainly has its place, and the DIY effectiveness of small scale wins using platforms such as Change.org has provided another tool in the toolkit – but also increasingly, going back to basics and using face to face meetings is also necessary. Face to face interaction is required to build coalitions between diverse groups as demonstrated by the 'Lock the Gate' alliance between environmentalists and farmers, or in other campaigns, environmentalists and Aboriginal groups.

## **REACHING OUTSIDE STANDARD POLITICAL PROCESSES**

The commonly held perspective that there is a substantive difference in the corporate/government relations between the major political parties in Australia can no longer be accepted. Governments of all persuasions are increasingly making decisions for big business, rather than community whilst marginalising voices of dissent as much as possible. Corporate and market pressure is increasingly becoming an important tool that must be utilised to remove a corporations social license to operate and hurt them where it counts – the balance sheet.

## EXISTING ACTIVIST TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

This section of the report will draw upon the findings from the survey, interviews, and broad experience of the key author through their involvement in attending and delivering activist training. A range of opportunities for activist training are discussed.

In Australia, the following examples of existing training were identified:

- Social change consultancy (user pays model) The Change Agency & Plan to Win.
- Lock the Gate and Northern Rivers CSG Free are running regular workshops for grassroots communities opposing CSG. This seems to be mainly confined to New South Wales and Queensland.
- Annual skill shares and workshops in Brisbane, Adelaide and occasionally elsewhere, organised by environmentalists or autonomous groups.
- In-house training for campaigners with Greenpeace, The Wilderness Society. Greenpeace are the only NGO in Australia who specifically do in-house training for activists on NVDA, although there is also philosophical nonviolence trainings of faith-based groups such as Pace E Bene.

In Australia, Socialist groups tend to do their own in-house training, as they are focused on disseminating their key priorities. They have articulated a recent movement towards 'left unity' though this seems to be focused towards socialist groups that they call the revolutionary left, as opposed to a broader picture which might include anarchist, autonomous and other grassroots groups, particularly environmental ones.

Unions similarly organise their own training with specialist trainers through the ACTU. Collaborative work and further discussion with contacts in the unions would be worthwhile.

A longer term goal might be to seek to find common ground within a variety of groups and focus on tactical, skills-based trainings, as opposed to the competing philosophies involved in organising styles.

Other organised trainings on broad movement capacity building and other specific related skills occur through other organisations such as the Australian Youth Climate Coalition (AYCC) and the Australian Student Environment Network (ASEN) as well as yearly trainings in Queensland, and Adelaide for example, organised either by grassroots activists or in collaboration with NGOs.

Other professional training is on occasion offered (in media skills for example) or through peak bodies such as the Australian Council for Social Services though this is often not accessible to grassroots activists. Many of these trainings are often niche-focused, and accessible only to the demographic involved (eg; environmental NGOs). Other progressive sector training opportunities are available with the Sydney Alliance and the Centre for Australian Progress. It is important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of training opportunities in Australia, but a snapshot of some of the more prominent offerings.

Internationally there are great examples of activist training to aspire to. These organisations also provide useful training resources that can be customised or collated, and made freely available to activists in Australia. Whilst there are a huge range of organisations, some international training networks and programs are listed below for reference:

- Rhizome is a co-operative which brings together the skills and experience of a network of facilitators for community benefit. <http://rhizomenetwork.wordpress.com>
- Training for Change provides activist training for groups standing up for justice, peace and the environment through strategic nonviolence <http://www.trainingforchange.org>
- The Ruckus Society provides environmental, human rights, and social justice organizers with the tools, training, and support needed to achieve their goals. <http://ruckus.org>
- Seeds for Change Network is a non-profit training and support co-op helping people organise for action and positive social change. <http://www.seedsforchange.org.uk>
- New Organizing Institute are a community of organizers, committed to solving the biggest challenges that stand in the way of change. <http://neworganizing.com>



*Nonviolent direct action training in Broome Photo Nicola Paris*

## **FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES FOR COLLABORATION**

Throughout conducting this research, many organisations and individuals expressed an interest in supporting resource development or resource sharing, shared training delivery and the hosting of training. These expressions of support and established networks may lead to potential future collaborations to further the broad goals of this project. The following organisations are acknowledged as having expressed both support for the development and delivery of activist training in Australia:

- Legal activists in Melbourne – Legal support and training
- D’Vize – IT and social media training
- The Australia Institute - Economics
- Plan to Win – mobilisation, communications, broad social movement capacity building
- Grassroots activist trainers in NSW
- Friends of the Earth
- A range of individuals, and trainers from various areas, including peace and faith based activism
- Various IT experts for activist security
- Street Medic collective – activist first aid and care
- International groups such as Peaceful Uprising and Rhizome

# CONCLUSION

The activist training needs research was informed through a survey, interviews with activists, case studies and the direct on-ground experience of the key author in conducting activist training and their involvement in environmental and social justice campaigns. The research demonstrated the need to empower communities in Australia with the knowledge and skills required to directly confront power. This needs to be achieved through the use of both a range of traditional campaign strategies and alternative innovative approaches focusing on the targeting of corporations through market pressure, divestment, and highlighting their lack of social license. A number of key training areas to focus future training efforts on were identified along with some suggested mechanisms for delivering the training based on the success of other activist training programs both in Australia and internationally. The research makes the following key findings and recommendations for consideration. It is hoped that additional resources can be found and allocated to advance the recommendations made in this report.

## KEY FINDINGS

A need exists to build capacity in three key areas:

### MOVEMENT BUILDING

- Capacity building, community organising, volunteer retention, functional group dynamics and effective facilitation.
- Engaging the broader community to grow campaigns beyond the population of people already knowledgeable, concerned or active on the issue.

### COMMUNICATIONS

- Developing narratives and telling our stories effectively.
- Practical skills for communication: social media, graphic design, video.
- Building skills to counter public relations campaigns or spin directed against a campaign.

### PRACTICAL SKILLS FOR DIRECT ACTION

- A major need was practical direct action planning – the mechanics of organising and successfully capitalising on safe and effective civil disobedience actions that provides leverage for change.
- Practical support for actions and increased understanding of the legal system, both in relation to rights during civil disobedience actions but also broader legal strategies for intervening in projects.

Underlying these three key areas is the need to build capacity in developing campaigning approaches that draw upon best practice traditional campaign strategies whilst introducing new tactics required to respond to the changing context that campaigns operate within. There is a need, particularly for environmental campaigners to understand varying mechanisms by which change can be achieved and broaden skills in corporate campaigning, in addition to traditional politically focused approaches to change.



*Survival Day march, Canberra Photo Nicola Paris*

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- The research team make the following recommendations for consideration and future action:
- Review existing training resources to identify opportunities for reuse and customisation to meet the identified training needs as prioritised by campaigners in Australia.
- Identify gaps in existing training resources, and develop or adapt written resources to fill these gaps.
- Make training resources available online to support the extended reach of the training program and materials.
- Resource, develop and deploy a series of face to face training workshops around the following themes, all incorporating a strategic approach:
  - Movement building
  - Communications
  - Practical skills for action
- Further develop ‘rapid response’ practical training programs that support community building and direct action training for emerging areas of high need, such as Gippsland, where communities are preparing for action in the case of the coal seam gas moratorium being lifted in Victoria.
- Additional funding should be sought to support the above recommended resource development and pilot training delivery.

# APPENDICES

1. Survey
2. Survey respondent organisation or campaign(s)
3. Case Studies
4. Overview of Campaign and Movement Dynamics

## APPENDIX 1 – SURVEY

Community training needs - for people working for environmental and social justice

This 10 minute survey is intended to inform the training needs for people campaigning on issues relating to environmental and social justice in Australia. We welcome input from a wide range of people - from those who may not self describe as activists, through to highly experienced or professional campaigners. Your privacy will be protected and your email will not be shared; though it will be used to update you of the results of this survey. Along with these results, and some face to face meetings, we hope to gather enough feedback to inform current training needs, then organise, and seek funding resources for supporting community campaigners, and capacity building for nonviolent direct action. We will be drawing a great book prize, 'Re-Imagining Change' from Smart Meme for one lucky person. Any queries, or if you would like to give more detailed feedback, please contact: [peacefulcommunityaction@gmail.com](mailto:peacefulcommunityaction@gmail.com) This project is being organised by CounterAct, an affiliate member of Friends of the Earth, and supported by Melbourne Social Forum.

*\*Required*

First Name\*

Surname\*

*We need your name to ensure the data we are collecting is accurate. We will not share it or publish without permission.*

Age

Under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65+

Email\*

*Your email will be used to update you of the findings of this survey and will not be shared with anyone.*

Mobile

Postcode\*

Occupation\*

*We want to use this to get a sense of how diverse the types of people are who are campaigning on various issues. If you are a full time volunteer, just indicate as such.*

How many hours per week do you spend working on environmental/social justice issues? \*

1-3 hours

3-5 hours

5-10 hours

10-20 hours

20-30 hours

Full time

Is this work paid or volunteer?\*

- Completely volunteer
- Paid part time, part time volunteer
- Paid part time
- Paid full time, part time volunteer
- Paid full time

Organisation (Primary)\*

*Some of these questions may refer to an organisation or group you work with. If you are involved with more than one group, please detail below. If you work alone, just indicate that.*

Organisation (Additional)

*Please add any other organisations or groups you work with.*

What is the objective of your organisation or group?\*

What are your groups strengths?\*

What are your groups weaknesses?\*

What areas do you work in?\*

*We have used quite broad content areas. There will be an additional section for you to specify more detail.*

- Aboriginal/Indigenous
- Animal Rights
- Economics
- Education
- Energy, Climate & Extractive industries
- Environment
- Food, Agriculture & Fisheries
- Forests
- Human Rights
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans & Intersex
- Nuclear
- Social
- Peace/Anti militarism
- Political
- Refugees & Asylum Seekers
- Transport
- Union/Workers rights
- Water
- Other

What areas do you work in? (more detail)

If the broad category doesn't adequately explain, please add a specific area you work in.

*Whilst ticking Climate/Energy, your focus may be specifically Coal Seam Gas. Or, there are many issues that might fit under the broad umbrella of Human Rights.*

What is one thing you need to learn to effectively create change?\*

Please rate your level of experience in these areas\*

	Not at all	Minimal experience	Reasonably experienced	Highly experienced
1) Action planning (scouting, preparation for direct actions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) Campaign strategy & development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Capacity building & mobilising supporters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) Event organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) Facilitation & group dynamics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) Legal rights & police liaison for actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) Messaging & communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) Parliamentary process & lobbying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) Social media & online organising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) Traditional media (media releases, liaison, spokesperson)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please rate your level of interest in learning more in these areas\*

	Not at all	Minimal interest	Reasonably interested	Highly interested
1) Action planning (scouting, preparation for direct actions)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2) Campaign strategy & development	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3) Capacity building & mobilising supporters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4) Event organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5) Facilitation & group dynamics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6) Legal rights & police liaison for actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7) Messaging & communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8) Parliamentary process & lobbying	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9) Social media & online organising	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10) Traditional media (media releases, liaison, spokesperson)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What would be the top three you would prioritise?\* *Just indicate which numbers eg 1 4 8*



Here are some example workshops - please indicate your interest \*

	Not at all	Minimal interest	Reasonably interested	Highly interested
Helping your group work better: facilitation, conflict resolution & group dynamics. Recruiting & retaining volunteers.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nonviolent direct action: inspiring case studies of effective action from around the world, how to plan and run successful actions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Looking good & getting your campaigns out there: video & graphics tips, using online tools & effective social media sharing.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Where are the levers for change: understanding the political process, lobbying and corporate campaigning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Great media & messaging skills: how to do media savvy actions, get your message out there, and speak confidently to camera.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Got any other great ideas for workshops?

What model of training would work for you?\*

*Choose as many options as are relevant for you*

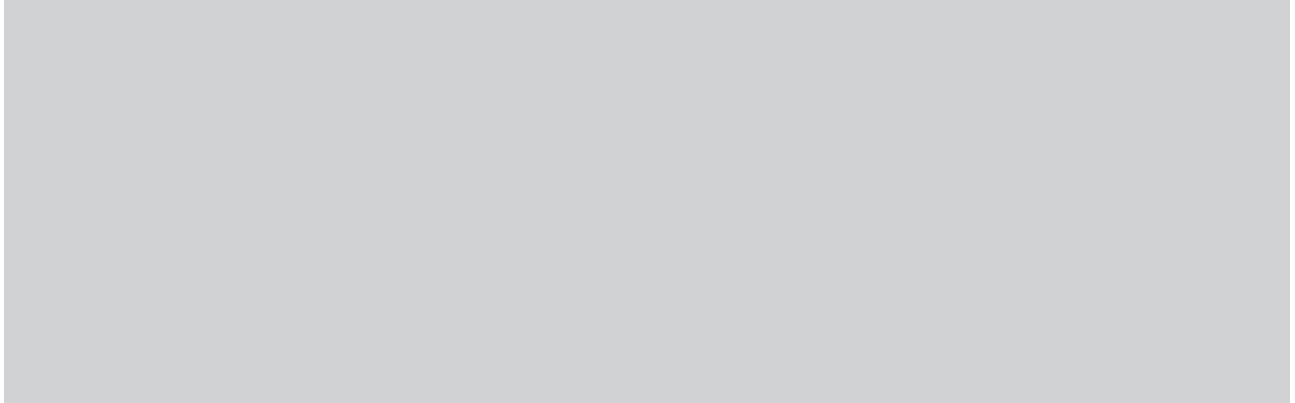
- Regular evening workshops (2-3 hours)
- Half day workshops (Weekend hours)
- Full day (Weekend)
- Full day (Weekday)
- 3-5 days - variety of workshops
- Full Weekend - variety of workshops
- Online training - webinars etc
- Training with people from other campaigns
- Training with people just from the campaign I work on

Is there anything else you would like add? Wishlist for trainings or workshops, or any other insights?

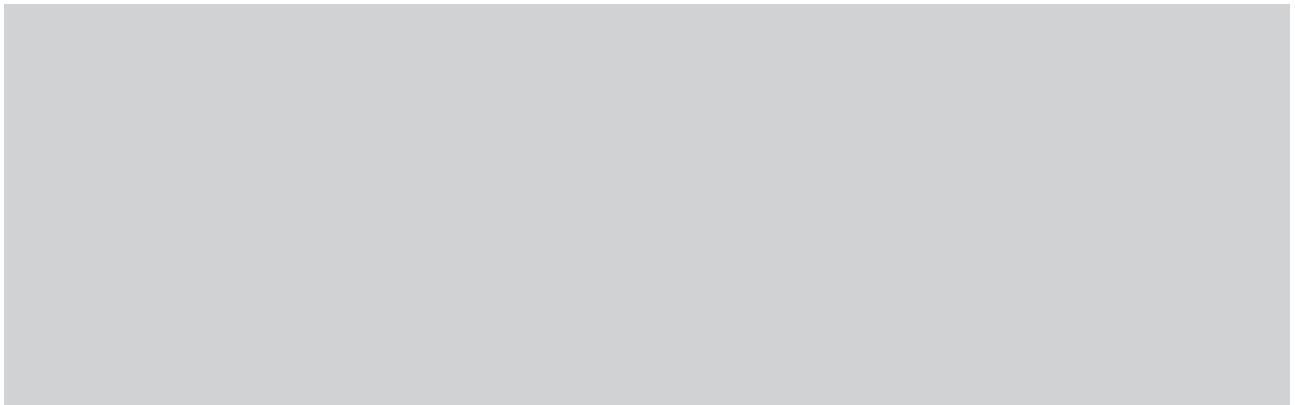
What, if any barriers do you have to participating in training/capacity building in your campaign?

- Current training opportunities don't suit my learning style
- No training opportunities offered
- Remote/regional location
- Training opportunities not child friendly
- Training opportunities out of reach financially
- Training/capacity building is not prioritised in my organisation
- Other

What is the best training you have ever done, and what made it so great?



What do you think we need to do better to advocate for social and environmental justice, and win campaigns?



**Thanks so much** for taking the time!

- If you are interested in collaborating, hosting, or co-facilitating workshops in the future please tick.  
*We will be skill sharing so all levels of experience welcome.*

## APPENDIX 2. SURVEY RESPONDENT ORGANISATION OR CAMPAIGN(S)

The key organisations and campaigns that survey respondents associated themselves with:

- 3CR
- Lock The Gate Alliance
- Australian Association for Environmental Education
- Mas Kagin Tapani (PNG)
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- May Day Group
- Australian Nuclear Free Alliance
- Mineral Policy Institute (Australia)
- Australian Youth Climate Coalition
- Mines & Communities (International)
- Barrington Gloucester stroud preservation alliance
- mines, minerals & PEOPLE (India)
- Be The Change Australia
- Mining Injustice Solidarity Network (Canada)
- Beyond Nuclear Initiative
- Mining Watch Canada
- Beyond Zero Emissions
- Moana Nui Action Alliance (Hawaii)
- BHP Billiton Watch (International)
- Mothers Home Nepal
- Bimblebox Campaign
- MPD-Oz
- Bismarck Ramu Group (PNG)
- Nambucca Valley Conservation Assoc. Inc.
- Bonhoeffer Peace Collectives
- NCEC
- Broome No Gas Campaign
- NewUnionism
- Casino Environment Centre
- Northey Street City Farm
- Chulalongkorn Universty, Thailand
- NPA
- Civil Liberties Defense Center
- Observertree
- Confest
- Operation Not-Rolling-Thunder
- CSG free northern rivers
- Oxfam Australia
- Darwin Asylum Seeker Support and Advocacy Network
- Pacific Network on Globalisation (Fiji)
- Drake Against Gas
- Porgera Alliance (PNG)
- Environics (New Delhi, India)
- Prosper Australia
- First Home Project
- ProtestBarrick.net (International)
- Food not Bombs
- Quit Coal
- Forbesdale resident action group
- Richmond valley group against gas
- Friends of Gippsland Bush
- Rising Tide
- Friends of the Earth
- Samata (Andhra Pradesh, India)
- Friends of the Earth Adelaide
- Still Wild Still Threatened
- Friends of the Earth Asia Pacific
- Stop CSG Brisbane
- Friends of the Earth Australia
- StopLynas.org
- Friends of the Earth International
- Surf Coast Air Action
- GAG Kyogle
- Swan Island Peace Collective
- Gamechangers
- Swan Island Peace Convergence
- Gamechangers: A Global Climate Change Intitiative
- Sydney Alliance
- Goolarabooloo
- The OakTree Foundation
- Greens
- The Ocean Foundation
- Hunter Central Rivers Alliance
- Transition Adelaide West
- Hunter Community Environment Centre
- Victoria University, Melbourne
- Huon Valley environment centre
- WACA
- Justice for Palestine
- Brisbane Sovereign Tent Embassy
- West of the range Gas Information Group (WORGIG)
- Kalara/Mooka United Families (Wiradjuri) - Save Lake Cowal
- Wikileaks
- LabourStart
- Wilderness society
- Liberation Tea-House
- Zero Inc. (PNG)
- Living Smart



*Broome community members, their arms linked in tubes, block road Photo Julia Rau*

## APPENDIX 3. CASE STUDIES

### CASE STUDY 1: JAMES PRICE POINT/WALMADAN – A HUGE WIN

The people of Broome have just won a significant campaign against a proposed \$45 billion project – in April 2013 they stopped the development of a gas plant and port at iconic James Price Point (Walmadan). They had substantial political and corporate interests arrayed against them – the world’s largest multinational oil and gas companies, a determined state government as proponent who deployed police, and changed laws to suit, and a federal government unwilling to intervene.

In extensive interviews and discussions with community members the strengths of the campaign were repeatedly stated as:

- The sense of community which encouraged broad participation, an ethic of a mutual support and created a strong commitment to achieving the campaign outcome
- The diversity of the campaign – both in the range of people who participated, and in the tactics used
  - including a variety of stakeholders (national, local and international NGOs, traditional owners, local residents, community members across Australia)
  - using a variety of different tactics and strategies such as nonviolent direct action to delay the development, media leverage and community building, political and corporate lobbying, targeting the project’s investors and legal interventions.

Traditional owners stood with local nurses and tradies. Environmentalists from around the country, and across the world came to stand with local business owners.

The campaign was supported across the country by the Australian Conservation Foundation, Sea Shepherd, The Wilderness Society and Save the Kimberley, to name a few. However, it was strongly led by local people – both in town in the Broome Community’s No Gas campaign, with Environs Kimberley and out ‘on country’ from the base camp Walmadan.

**“This was a multi-faceted, organic campaign, fuelled by creativity, ingenuity and a fierce sense of independence and justice. It was driven locally, with national and international support. The significance of what has happened has yet to resonate across the nation, but you can be sure it’s resonating in boardrooms across Australia and overseas. When a community stands up to protect itself against a bad proposal, it can win.”** *Martin Pritchard, Director, Environs Kimberley*



*Big mob celebrate win at Camp Walmadan Photo Damian Kelly*

The campaign operated in an extremely hostile political environment – certainly the State Government was the subject of several court cases – still ongoing. The campaign was not won by political pressure, but through corporate pressure relating to direct actions, legal tactics and investor lobbying that cost the company money, time and social license.

Whilst Woodside is on record as stating that they pulled out for ‘economic reasons’ they also admitted that the delays and obstructions of the campaign cost them significant time and money. Whilst we may never know the extent of the impact of the campaign, it would be fair to say it was substantial in pressuring investors to exit, delayed approval for years – bringing us into the changed economic climate for LNG cited as the reason for exit, but it also threatened ongoing issues of ‘social license’ and threats of continual costs and delays.

Some of the features of the campaign:

- A consistent direct action component which ‘blockaded’ and delayed works over many months, involving high profile local community members.
- Citizen science projects that highlighted the flaws in Woodside and state government surveys in relation to whales, bilbies, turtles and dinosaur tracks – that was subsequently reported in mainstream media.
- Coordinated legal support to both challenge various internal state processes (breaches under the Aboriginal heritage act for example) but also extensive pro bono assistance in challenging the government’s compulsory acquisition of the project in the Supreme Court, amongst other things.
- High profile support of musicians, and large scale concerts and rallies organised by the Wilderness Society to galvanise city supporters, and raise awareness and media.
- A committed, widespread and locally driven campaign of petitions, letter writing, social media shares and active physical presence at protests and blockades.
- A strong ‘David And Goliath’ narrative of community resistance from everyday people versus the corporate bullying, government corruption and over policing of a small town.

Images of local community members putting their bodies on the line – although picked up slowly at first, were ultimately shared extensively throughout the country, and internationally – gaining widespread coverage through beautiful photography, video, clever social media, and mainstream media.

**“Before my arrest, I had never even had so much as a parking fine, yet I would certainly do this again for the Kimberley, she is worth the fight and deserves the attention.”**

*Longtime Broome resident & business owner*

This had the impact of both pressuring the company, and bringing new supporters to the campaign, and reached out to those already connected; who had been touched by visits to Broome, or walking on country – people all over the world, became the champions for the campaign – sharing social media and building public momentum.

And later in the campaign, as the West Australian published a photo of over one hundred taxpayer funded police jogging as armed corporate guards through the red dirt, to ease passage for drilling equipment, for many this demonstrated the extent to which state government was prioritising the wealth of big business, over the wishes of the majority of residents.

**“I now feel the government only cares for development and pretends to care about community and culture. I am more cynical in my attitude towards government.”** *Local tradesperson, Broome*

And after the win, even conservative mainstream media summed up the sentiments that seemed to be shared by many in the public.

**“It has shown the success of hardball environmentalism that is prepared to leverage community outrage, target potential financiers and fight in court. It has once again exposed the desperate lengths which politicians are prepared to go to in the name of development.”** *The Australian*

There were many aspects to this campaign – significant legal support in a range of areas, and in the last year or two a growing level of support from major non-government organisations in large awareness raising events and lobbying investors.

There was a cheeky Kimberley DIY ethic that saw actions take on a life of their own, a commitment to nonviolence and inspiring civil resistance, leadership from traditional owners and a genuine community solidarity from a long history of multiculturalism in Broome.

**“Direct Action has empowered some people in the campaign, it has brought more media attention and has brought more people out on country.”** *Broome resident, and film-maker*

Keys to success:

- Strong leadership from traditional owners and locals, and a well networked community able to rapidly respond to campaign situations.
- A sense of fun and creativity, and community.
- Strategic planning, a culture of training and skill sharing.
- A strong belief that the campaign is winnable and ‘we can do it’.
- Diversity
  - Of supporters and stakeholders, both locally and nationally, individually and organisations.
  - Of campaign tactics E.g targeting the project’s financial partners, legal action, nonviolent direct action, citizen science and political lobbying.
- Effective use of campaign tactics to generate social and mainstream media.

Most importantly, the community genuinely believed that they could win. And they did.



*Occupy Melbourne General Assembly Photo Nick Carson*

## **CASE STUDY 2: OCCUPY MELBOURNE – A MISSED OPPORTUNITY**

In September 2011 the Occupy movement, inspired in part from the Spanish Indignados movement, and kicked off by Occupy Wall Street, exploded worldwide, with uprisings in 951 cities in 82 countries. In Australia, the most high profile Occupy presence was in Melbourne.

**“Occupy Melbourne became the largest occupation in Australia, and indeed, the southern hemisphere. Like most truly novel historical events, the Occupy movement caught most people off guard.”**

*James Muldoon, Occupy Reflects*

Whilst the range of political views and experiences across the world were as diverse as the participants, a simmering sense of injustice, and the feeling that something was ‘not quite right’ on a range of fronts – across economic, social justice and environmental concerns; seemed to drive the involvement of some of the Melbourne participants.

Other occupations in the United States established by people with a clearer initial focus on economic justice – neatly summarised by the ‘We are the 99%’ slogan – which contrasted the experience of the majority of Americans with the wealthiest 1% who exploit them for economic gain.

Some of the encampments elsewhere seemed to be initiated by people with more experience and clearer anti-authoritarian/anarchist organising principles, however, there was a much more varied and diverse group that made up Occupy Melbourne.

**“Occupy was my first real taste of activism, I don’t know why, I’ve always been an activist at heart, outraged by the injustice of the status quo...I guess I just have not been terribly active.”** *Kate Phillips, Occupy Reflects*

A general sense of inequity, and disaffection with government were broad underlying themes that motivated Occupy Melbourne supporters. Their concerns covered a range of issues across the economic, environmental and social justice spheres.

Features of Occupy Melbourne:

- Participants from diverse backgrounds, and political ideologies
- Substantial proportion of people with limited exposure or experience to other campaigns or activist related skill sets

- Minimal involvement from established progressive groups initially meant a lack of experienced activists to draw on for support and sharing skills
- Differing political perspectives and experience meant that clarity of messages and priorities was hard to agree on, and subsequently communicate to broader audiences
- Rapid expansion and growth combined with a violent eviction resulted in limited capacity for training, developing new skills or debriefing

With a very broad scope, and very little initial involvement from experienced activists, came extraordinary challenges. It was trial by fire, in the most brutal sense. Young people who had never written a media release were flayed publicly on talkback radio. People that had previously never ran more than a small student collective meeting were suddenly trying to seek consensus decisions from 500 people with little understanding or experience themselves of large scale democratic decision-making.

General themes of social and economic justice, highlighting unsustainable and environmentally unethical ways of living were concepts that were too broad for mainstream media. With the added challenges of a 'leaderless' movement without charismatic spokespeople, they found it challenging to report given their need for limited sound bytes.

Political differences based in differing ideologies and exacerbated by unclear communication and challenging open facilitation 'general assemblies' meant too much time was spent on minutiae and not enough time spent on building resilience, developing common ground and sharing skills.

It was chaotic, and extraordinary and it was some people's first experience of living with a sense of community. In part this became part of the problem – for those that had experienced the sense of community that was palpable in the first week held stubbornly to the tactic of overnight occupation, which became increasingly unsustainable due to ongoing police harassment, surveillance and the physical and emotional challenges of living in a public space.

Despite all this, the Occupy movement worldwide, with all of the baggage and media tarnish was important in putting issues of economic and social justice on the map.

Key Republican strategist Frank Lutz noted that Occupy had totally shifted the debate on capitalism:

**“I’m so scared of this anti-Wall Street effort. I’m frightened to death,” Lutz said. “They’re having an impact on what the American people think of capitalism... “I’m trying to get that word removed and we’re replacing it with either ‘economic freedom’ or ‘free market’... The public . . . still prefers capitalism to socialism, but they think capitalism is immoral. And if we’re seen as defenders of quote, Wall Street, end quote, we’ve got a problem.”**

In Australia, with a significantly different economic and political climate the occupy movement failed to gain traction – the growing inequity between rich and poor was buffered by Australia's avoidance of the worst of the Global Financial Crisis.

Nonetheless, that growing sense of unease brought people to the streets in huge numbers – as social media exploded with the brutal eviction of Occupy Melbourne, and many more hundreds, then thousands of people headed into the city – the issue was that there was no clarity, poor communications and under skilled and under-resourced newcomers who did not have the capacity to direct the anger and unrest into constructive activity.

Occupy as a concept was unsustainable – this has been borne out in the dismantling of virtually all Occupy encampments within months of their early rise. Faced with coordinated police repression and environmental challenges, it was a great experiment that failed.\*

However seeds have been planted all over the world, in readiness for the next spark, and in Melbourne there are several groups that have arisen out of working collaboratively at Occupy – given time and space to build group process and clear campaign objectives or focus, the experience of Occupy has kicked off many activist projects worldwide.

**“Melbourne First Aid and Care retain the key Occupy philosophies of horizontalism, adherence to nonviolence and consensus whilst lending our first aid skills to support social justice causes as varied as refugees in detention, environmental destruction and labour rights. Caring is a political act. It can only strengthen our activist community.” Jason Coggins, Melbourne FACT (now Melbourne Street Medics)**



Key lessons:

- Whilst Occupy Melbourne, and the broader movement has been referred to by some commentators as a 'failure' it radicalised a new group of activists, who are now contributing on a range of progressive issues.
- We can continue to expect force to be deployed to crush a movement that challenges the legitimacy of the system. This knowledge can help us plan accordingly for future struggles.
- Priority should be given to develop a better habit of skill sharing and training into all environmental and social justice campaigning.
- We need to continue to engage movement leaders and elders, so that knowledge can be passed down, and retained. Lessons learnt through previous anti-globalisation protests could have been much better shared for the benefit of newcomers.
- There is a need for greater collaboration on issues of common ground, and an ability to compromise that progressive campaigners could heed from conservatives – we may need to adapt our own priorities to focus on clear and achievable outcomes we can coalesce around.
- We need to learn from failure and develop improved capacity for reflection, and ensure that debriefs are embedded in our organising culture.

\*Footnotes reference for the police crackdown

Wolf, N., 2012, 'Revealed: how the FBI coordinated the crackdown on Occupy', The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2012/dec/29/fbi-coordinated-crackdown-occupy>

Vakalis, D., McCulloch, J., 2011, 'Something old, something new, something borrowed, something blue', Overland literary journal <http://overland.org.au/previous-issues/issue-occupy/feature-jude-mcculloch-and-david-vakalis/>



*Gippsland community action training Photo Chloe Aldenhoven*

### CASE STUDY 3: COAL SEAM GAS – LOCK THE GATE – THE ONGOING BATTLE

The struggle between the developers of unconventional gas (coal seam, shale and tight gas), farmers and communities has struck a chord with people all over the country and has rightly been referred to by Lock the Gate as ‘the fastest growing social movement in the country’.

The issue of coal seam gas, and concerns over health impacts and the destruction of healthy farmlands for the benefit of developers has been quite prominent in the east coast mainstream media. This has been highlighted by growing civil disobedience actions from unlikely quarters. Communities at Tara, Glenugie, Doubtful Creek and Fullerton Cove are just a few that have had significant community protests – successfully blockading equipment in many cases, which has given rise to a growing profile for this issue and a growing headache for the companies involved.

Coal and gas licenses cover more than half of Australia\*. Yet the growth of the coal seam gas industry has been hampered by a strong community groundswell of resistance. Companies such as Metgasco and Arrow energy have pulled out of their respective projects in New South Wales and Queensland in the face of direct action blockades, corporate campaigning and increased regulation borne from community pressure.

**“...along with massive and intrusive resource development has come determined community resistance and, while, of course, much of this involves people who do not want this development in their back yard, when you put together over 100 backyard campaigns around the country, you have a very large slice of the continent affected and the campaign is transformed from a NIMBY (“Not in My Back Yard”) action to one that involves asking fundamental questions about environmental protection, the nature of sustainable economic development and the future of Australian culture itself.” *Drew Hutton – Lock the Gate***

With the CSG moratorium likely to be lifted in Victoria in 2013/14 we will see a new battleground open up – groundwork is already being done by these communities in getting critical mass to survey their communities in order to declare themselves ‘coal and gasfield free’. Direct action training and preparations have commenced. There are also areas of Western Australia, Northern Territory and others where campaigns can build.

Often noted is the unusual allies borne out of this campaign - whether this demonstrates a maturity in the environmental sector in assessing the need to develop alliances with a broad cross section of people, or is simply pragmatic opportunism – the point remains that a distinguishing feature has been the work done to build functional working relationships between farmers, conservative communities who would not traditionally identify as activists, and long term environmentalists.

**“Lock the Gate is not, self-consciously, an environmental organisation. In fact, some farmers would object strenuously to its being called that. However, with its capacity to mobilise large numbers, its militancy and its preparedness to take on some of the biggest corporate players, it reminds one of some of our biggest activist campaigns of the past, especially the forest and wilderness campaigns.”**

The successful strategy of the ‘Lock the Gate’ campaign is key to the success. This is based on building community power, and demonstrating broad and widespread commitment on the issue via face to face surveys and contact with people in the local area likely to be affected – in combination with bold civil disobedience led by local people. The tactics of this campaign are now being adapted in similar campaigns around the world.

Keys to success:

- Unusual alliances between farmers and environmentalists from all sides of politics, including new/non-traditional activists, and a pragmatic approach to working in coalitions
- Face to face community building and surveying done to engage and encourage a sense of ownership from the local community, and having them ‘lock the gate’
- Experienced activists and trainers willing to travel, and work in collaboration with affected communities as well as put on regular trainings
- Strategic nonviolent direct action (small scale arrests to ensure longevity of a ‘blockade’) combined with strong corporate campaigning and political pressure on rural MP’s
- A strong story of the aussie farmer, and small towns standing up for their local community, deftly illustrated through professional, and easily shareable videography

<http://www.lockthegate.org.au/calltocountry#calltocountrymaps> (half of Australia reference)

## APPENDIX 4. DIAGRAM OVERVIEW OF CAMPAIGN AND MOVEMENT DYNAMICS

This overview of campaign and movement dynamics emerged from the research process, as a way to understand the “big picture” process of social change.

The box in blue represents the internal organisation of a campaign or movement. This campaign or movement will tap into “people power” as it develops research and is able to communicate this to a wider public through story telling framing and using psychology (bottom left). The campaign or movement must engage various communication channels and social media to create a public buzz (top left).

The campaign or movement creates a campaign strategy (centre) and plans and executes non-violent direct actions (top right) that challenge institutional power (corporate or governmental) and which makes the conflict public and garners media coverage (top middle). This media coverage will attract new supporters and volunteers to the campaign or movement, helping it to grow (upper left quadrant). The media coverage also sways public opinion and builds public opposition to existing institutional policies.

The loss of public consent and loss of legitimacy, by either government or a corporation, is a critical leverage point in driving either a government policy shift or a corporate divestment (centre and bottom right quadrant).

Finally, campaign and movement actions need to be evaluated by both the organising groups and strategists, to improve and refine campaign and movement effectiveness.

This overview of campaign and movement dynamics is not a “cast in stone” view of power dynamics. It is a depiction that can help campaign and movement organisers to develop strategies in the context of their specific struggles and aims. It necessarily should be modified and adapted depending on the circumstances.



Notes