
SOCIAL AND ETHICAL AUDITING INSTITUTE
NOTES FROM QUEENSLAND CONSULTATION

3 November 2003

Present:

Richard Parsons, Sustainable Solutions Australia
Marcelle Holdaway, Accounting for Life
Ruth Beach, Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, UQ
Ian Eskdale, Sustainable Industries Division, EPA
Bruce Rich, Centre for Social Change Research, QUT
Craig Trimble, Queensland Audit Office
Rene Batchelor, Sustainable Industries Division, EPA
Lynn Whitfield, Sustainable Industries Division, EPA
Marc Jackson, Social Equality Solutions

Apologies:

Naomi Sunderland, Community Service and Research Centre, UQ
Ziggy Kaperaz, Maroochy Shire Council
John Goddard, Bendigo Bank

PURPOSE

- Education and awareness (definition/examples/outcomes described). Target general population as well as organisations. Discussion papers – e.g. ‘What is ethical?’
- Accreditation may be 2-3 years down the track.
- Establish and support social and ethical auditing as integral part of Australian practice, part of CULTURE.
- Name change? Social and Ethical *Sustainability* Institute, of which auditing is a part?
- Promote good governance. Governance with appropriate level of social and ethical considerations.
- Problems with term ‘auditing’ - how else to define ‘independent review’?

Other questions raised:

Is Institute an advocate for organisations requiring support or a regulator?
Estimate size & structure of Institute, as this will dictate objectives.

OBJECTIVES

- Establishment of networks
- Lobby group
- Public forums/seminars/up-grading website/discussion papers
- Establish code of practice
- Identify partners for collaboration.
- Linkage with UK AccountAbility – partnership
- Identify and target external drivers of social and ethical auditing – e.g. ASIC product disclosure requirement
- Professional capacity to supply product and service – market research into supply and demand
- Self-sustaining Institute; as PEAK BODY. Incorporation – would cover ‘out of pocket expenses’ for directors.

ACTIVITIES

- Identify what ‘social’ and ‘ethical’ look like.
- Ensure that CSR is a bridge to practice on the ground e.g. from board level to community level

- Identify tertiary education resources - review what is already 'out there'. Identify a centre/course which could incorporate social and ethical auditing education.
- Articulate Institute's philosophical commitment
- List benefits for members.
- Find a high profile sponsor, e.g. Westpac
- **Pilot** professional accreditation e.g. review current standards

- EXAMINE LEARNINGS FROM OTHERS E.G. UK BODY/ENVIRONMENTAL AUDITING. GAUGE COMPARABILITY
- 'EVENT' TO ASSIST WITH KICKING OFF INSTITUTE E.G. VISIT BY SIMON ZADEK FUNDED BY A CORPORATION

VISION on SEAI after 3-5 years [with some (interesting!) plant/animal analogies]

- 'Moreton Bay Fig' – Institute belongs (native species), it has strong foundations, branching represents exploring and experimenting, and outcomes of the healthy organisation are represented by fruiting.
- 'Lantana'. PEAK body - maintaining standards of practitioners. Maintaining standards of reporting and disclosure.
- 'Lillypilly' – Institute belongs here (native species), it is green and red, it fruits and, being common, it cannot be ignored.
- 'Umbrella tree' – Institute has strong roots, it branches off in various directions whilst being the one organism, it has networks and is non-competitive.
- 'Mouse that roars'- A revolutionary figure. The Institute as a preferred PEAK body providing social auditors to multinational corporations
- Role model for other organisations
- A benchmark in the market
- Host international conference – Australia on map, demonstrating leadership
- Industries WANT to come to Institute, as preferred provider/source for services.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

There was a shared feeling that the Institute will be much better placed to make progress when it has clarified and articulated its **vision, purpose and values**, and when it has also articulated exactly **what** it offers to **whom**, and how this offering is **different** to what others offer currently.

NSW Consultation Workshop

27th October 2003, 2.00pm

Workshop outcomes as raised by participants for discussion by the SEAI board on 6th November 2003.

Workshop Participants:

Attracta Lagan
Eva Cox
Gianni Zappala
Joy Barrett
Marie Fox
Peter Caldwell
Tim Heesh

Apologies:

Barry Wood
Emma Heard
Julian Crawford
Michael Evans
Peter Gates
Peter Kaye
Richard Boele

Workshop Outcomes

Under the general heading of 'What is the Institute's purpose?'

- Encourage social, ethical, responsible organisational behaviour. Do this by advocating, promoting and encouraging social accounting and auditing.
- Be a voice in the ongoing social accountability debate
- Be an advocate for the growth and development of social accountability
- Provide a forum for education of social accountability
- Be cross-sectionally relevant. That is, be an over-arching organisation for all sectors and participants who have an interest in social accountability....sectors including Government, SME's, NGO, Corporate.
- Be a hub/connection/link for groups such as EIA, SEN, ACCA etc
- Be a forum to facilitate networking
- Establish a relationship with Accountability in UK. At the very least use their standards and material (modify where necessary) and indicate to them Australian practitioner support
- Build on existing networks/players/standards (eg accountability GRI)
- **Do not** be an organisation set up for 'Social Auditors' alone. The organisation should be focussed on Social Accountability!
- Change the name so that Auditing is removed
- Be a research centre for social accountability (develop it in a manner that it can form part of research linkage grants etc)

Other matters raised relevant to SEAI's strategies and loosely collated below under the questions of:

What are the measurable indicators that will deliver this purpose?

What are the two or three key activities in 2004 that will deliver the objectives?

- Consideration of New Zealand's position and development in the area and any room for collaboration
- Consideration of enrolling charismatic leader (a Sandy Holloway type)
- Get away from the sole focus of auditing
- Become the face of social accountability in Australia i.e. become visible and have a strategy to do so
- Develop a business plan
- Select a research topic, something topical and controversial (like the Mays paper) with a view to making a splash (i.e. visibility) and kick off the public launch of SEAI with the release of the research paper
- Get funding for the research paper. This funding could also help in seed funding the secretariat
- Find seed funding for a secretariat. Identify and look to foundations etc such as Myer Foundation, IAG etc
- Have a membership drive
- Clearly establish 'what's in it' for members. Eg how they can contribute, how effective the organisation will be, articulate what the group stands for, be visible
- Develop a pamphlet to detail all this material and to assist in membership drive
- Consider joining forces with a complementary group such as Ethical Investment Association to assist in secretariat etc

Social and Ethical Auditing Institute:

VIC Consultation Workshop 9 October 2003

Below are the dot points recorded on the whiteboard at Victorian planning meeting.

- Promote the development and use of social and ethical auditing
- Provide a mechanism to make the above process credible
- Protect the public interest in social and ethical auditing, reporting and outcomes
- Consult, and define and articulate the meaning of social and ethical auditing
- Define the demand for auditing standards for sustainability reports
- Explore the benefits of the process
- Different competencies required to assess the myriad of sustainability reports (team approach)
- First action = define the current status/terminology