

**A Hard Road to Learn: dissecting a ‘failed’ community campaign to discover
and value activist learning through social action.**

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Abstract

On 9 June 1999, Brisbane City Council voted to approve construction of a six-lane inner city freeway through an inner city park. Community groups in suburbs effected by this new road had campaigned vigorously against the decision for several years, developing networks and acquiring political acumen and advocacy skills. While the immediate objective in this campaign, stopping the road, was not achieved, important long-term objectives were realised and valued. Anti-freeway activists learned advocacy skills through both incidental and intentional learning. Inner city resident and environment groups arguably increased their capacity to effect change. Campaign participants demonstrated a strong commitment to training and evolved as a learning community. This case study by a participant researcher explores the potential for and limitations to learning through social action.

Environmental activists: a neglected species

Non-government organisations (NGOs) oriented toward advocacy play an important role in contemporary politics. Despite activists' remarkable contributions to social and environmental health, there is minimal Australian research exploring how these individuals learn to effect change. While environmental literature generally describes and decries contemporary environmental problems¹, there is relatively less critical analysis of the role played by activists in influencing significant environmental outcomes such as the declaration of national parks or increased funding of public transport. In fact, Foley (1999: 134) laments there has been "almost no extended analysis of social movements or examples of social action." In particular, he observes the lack of analysis from participants' perspectives. This case study is a response to Foley's observations as it explores a sustained and innovative community campaign to identify the means and ends of learning for advocacy from the perspective of a participant researcher.

The romantic popular image of environmental crusaders effectively conceals the learning associated with effective advocacy and mitigates against deliberate educational efforts that might enhance environmentalists' efforts. Effective advocates do need to learn to work with volunteers and the media, raise and manage campaign funds, communicate and educate, research, develop policy and utilise democratic processes to bring about positive social and environmental change. This learning is often unplanned, incidental and incremental and almost always acquired through struggle. Interviews with participants in the 1974-1979 Terania Creek rainforest conservation campaign, for instance, enabled Foley (1999: 29) to identify a range of new skills and understandings acquired by rainforest activists. Campaigners "learned a lot about the dynamics of campaigning, about the need for accurate knowledge and persistence, about the importance of identifying the real decision-makers (and became) clearer about their own and their opponents' values and strategies."

Campaigns also present opportunities for intentional learning. For example, the Highlander Center in Tennessee facilitates change-oriented popular education practices while the Mid West Academy and the Doris Marshall Institute have trained North American community and campus organisers for decades.

Intentional activist training was a significant element of the Franklin River campaign during the late 1970s and early 1980s, arguably Australia's best known environmental dispute. Environmentalists participated in nonviolence training in Strahan before travelling up-river to participate in direct action. Activists attempted to block road construction and the

subsequent damming of the wild river. This training was influenced by Gandhian and Quaker nonviolence philosophy and Cover et al's (1978) *Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*. More recently, activists preparing to participate in direct action against the proposed uranium mine and processing plant at Jabiluka in northern Australia were trained in nonviolence and environmental campaign strategy.

However encouraging, these examples are the exception rather than the rule in environmental campaigning. The author's research suggests activists are likely to speak of being "thrown in the deep end" when joining activist organisations and campaigns and receiving minimal training or support. Engaging in political campaigns provides excellent opportunities to learn social change skills and knowledge. By recognising and harnessing these learning opportunities, activist organisations can enhance this learning. This case study aims to illustrate both the potent learning opportunities presented in a community campaign and strategies through which these opportunities might be harnessed.

A city in decline: a community ready for change

Brisbane, the state capital of Queensland, Australia, is a city of approximately one million people and, like many Australian cities, is increasingly car-dependent. In recent years, the city has experienced sharply increasing population, car ownership levels and per capita vehicle use. The city tram service closed in 1969 and state subsidies deliver the nation's cheapest petrol. Public transport represented approximately 10% of all trips by the mid 1990s, a decline from 40% since the 1960s². Bus, train and ferry services are poorly integrated and fares have risen sharply in recent years. A 1960s transport plan strongly oriented toward engineering solutions and new roads has been gradually implemented. New and widened freeways dominate the city landscape.

Brisbane City Council (BCC) is Australia's largest municipal government. All twenty-six BCC councillors are aligned with either the (socialist) Australian Labor Party or the (conservative) Liberal Party. The city's preferential electoral system effectively mitigates against the election of independents or minor parties that may be more responsive to community concerns. At the time of this campaign, the Labor council was in its third term and had a strong environmental policy, especially in the area of nature conservation and waste management. Despite the Council having a pro-public transport policy, road building programs still enjoyed unprecedented funding.

LULUs mobilise NIMBYs

Local community activists in Brisbane have mobilised around sustainable transport issues on a number of occasions. The 'Route 20' proposal in the 1980s entailing widening and connecting several arterial roads to create concentric ring roads, for instance, triggered widespread community opposition. This resulted in major concessions to the initial plan. The influence of community activists was also evident when three members of State Parliament were voted from office in 1995 following their support for a proposal to construct a second motorway between Brisbane and the Gold Coast. The motorway would have transected significant koala habitat and was effectively opposed.

In the early 1990s community campaigners targeted another unpopular transport infrastructure project. The plans involved widening a major arterial and the consequent removal of several stately trees. Despite cordial communication between residents groups and BCC, on this issue, little progress was made and by the time bulldozers arrived, activists had resorted to more confrontational tactics. Veteran activists, Lou Gugenberger and Willy Bach, occupied a giant fig tree destined for removal. Other activists drove spikes into tree trunks to prevent BCC workers from removing the trees with chainsaws. Despite these actions, Council's plans were carried out with little apparent regard for residential or environmental concerns. This campaign was demoralising and exhausting for many of Brisbane's transport activists. Debates over campaign strategies and political orientations also created tensions within and between community groups.

In 1997, the Council BCC announced plans for a six-lane freeway, to be called the City Valley Bypass. This was promoted as the solution to inner city congestion. However, local residents and environmentalists were concerned by the proposal and began meeting at the home of a prominent community organiser, and an informal network was born.

People had a variety of motivations for participating in this campaign. Many fitted the NIMBY stereotype and were reacting to the road proposal by saying, "Not In My Back Yard". NIMBYism hinges on the local and immediate, organising around Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs). However, members of NIMBY groups generally have broader concerns. Thus, local residents also anticipated impacts such as the loss of parkland and cultural heritage, increased traffic, noise and air pollution and related impacts on urban amenity. Of particular concern was the fact that the proposed freeway would dissect Victoria Park, Brisbane's oldest reserve, which provided sweeping lawns, attractive trees and gardens and habitat for water birds.

Victoria Park also has significant value as a site of cultural value. The park follows the course of an ancient string of lagoons, where the region's original inhabitants were camped at the time of Brisbane's early European settlement. Indeed, the Turrbal people had maintained relationships with the Victoria Park area for thousands of years. Only one small pond remained, York's Hollow, which was named after the Duke of York, a prominent Aboriginal elder at the time of settlement.

These potential impacts galvanised and mobilised groups from suburbs across inner north Brisbane, many of whom had been involved in successful campaigns against the same road proposal during the preceding decade.

Members of the network developed a collaborative approach to help each other learn more about the proposal. Representatives met with Council engineers, transport planners and local representatives. Delegates debriefed after these meetings to share their emerging understandings. Discussions focused on emerging opportunities to infiltrate the tight power arrangements of the Council and led to debates over how best to articulate the anti-bypass position in order to mobilise the community.

One of the key areas of informal learning concerned campaign tactics. Anti-freeway alliance activists held diverse attitudes toward diplomacy. The two 'natural leaders' in the alliance represented extremes of this continuum. While the network operated as a collective, without designated office bearers, Richard and Anne emerged as leaders, perhaps due to their high level of commitment. Both were spokespeople for residents' groups opposed to the freeway. Richard's group expected him to represent their organisation with a high degree of diplomacy, graciously accepting situations in which BCC might exhibit a lack of willingness to modify their plans. Accordingly, Richard enjoyed a close working relationship with City Councillors proposing the freeway.

Anne, by contrast, had a long history of community leadership and influence often entailing confrontational tactics. As a result, she had become a key target of Council's active public relations strategies, labelled as a radical extremist. Her group gave her a free reign regarding public statements and endorsed her 'head-kicking' approach.

Novices joining the campaign were exposed to both extremes. Meeting time was allocated to exploring and assessing the relative merits of ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ approaches to communication with Council. Network meetings often closed with an evaluation session (see Ritchie 1999) during which participants briefly shared how they felt the campaign was proceeding and suggested how meetings might be improved. This evaluation process also helped define and value participant learning, identifying activist skills and knowledge transferred (or transferable) to other campaigns such as an enhanced understanding of alternative campaign models and social change processes.

It’s not easy being green: overcoming ignorance and structurelessness

The draft road proposal contained thousands of pages of technical information. Activists familiar with such documents facilitated the others to interpret the proposal, identify potential impacts and analyse Council’s justification for the road. The group recruited academics in transport and land-use planning. Outside experts assisted campaigners in interpreting these documents and identifying weaknesses susceptible to criticism or legal challenge. Flaws in reasoning, data gaps and under-exaggerated impacts were identified and simplified into fact sheets and *sound bites* for media spokespeople.

Campaigners learned about different options for funding transport infrastructure. A strategic leak to Opposition Councillors and the media on this point contributed to the Council dismissing “build-own-operate-transfer” option that would have been much more costly than alternative arrangements. In addition to gaining specific knowledge about transport infrastructure funding, novice campaigners were exposed to an apparently effective strategy. The exposé unfolded exactly as planned by the campaign network and was highly embarrassing to Council. Activists who had previously doubting the network’s capacity to exert influence reported renewed confidence.

Several concurrent transport infrastructure projects were under way in the inner northern suburbs, but they were being assessed in isolation. Anti-bypass campaigners obtained expert advice in order to propose an integrated impact assessment that addressed cumulative impacts. As there was no legal or political obligation for Council to undertake such a study, this lobbying was ineffective. The matter was considered too complex to generate broader community pressure and was not incorporated into the campaign’s media strategy. While novice campaigners may, until this point, have considered the network’s

opportunism reflected desperation learnt not all possible paths of action would be pursued. Network members generated a shared yet informal set of criteria to assess tactics. These criteria, including the “keep it simple, stupid” (KISS) principle, would be of value in other campaigns.

Campaigners needed an inside view of Brisbane City Council’s decision-making processes. Legal advice on this point gave campaigners confidence to utilise Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation. Novice activists were encouraged to help secure and interpret the voluminous documentation of Council’s deliberations. Documents obtained through this FOI search included a risk management strategy that identified the legal and political obstacles Council believed it faced in proposing, assessing and constructing the freeway. Discovery of this strategy was a significant milestone in the group’s evolution. Most campaigners espoused a strong commitment to open and accountable democratic procedures and uncritically believed that majority opposition to the road would naturally lead to a Council decision to revise their transport plans. The Council’s apparent willingness to refute, attack, marginalise and divide anti-freeway elements of the community forced members to reconsider their naive political analysis.

Ironically, campaigners had utilised a legal instrument associated with openness and had learned the importance of being cunning. It was evident a similarly mature and coherent strategy was essential. Effective engagement in the democratic process demanded a high level of acumen and creativity.

Discovery of the risk management strategy provided an important affirmation for group's members as many political risks identified as high impact had already been realised through sustained community opposition. The sense of achievement that followed this and similar discoveries helped build a belief that change was possible. This resonated with Alinsky’s (1970) advice that organisers should steer groups toward initial campaign tactics likely to meet with success. Novice activists whose initial tactics are successful in achieving intended objectives are likely to develop confidence in their ability to effect change and to learn required activist skills, particularly if progressively more challenging campaign tactics are similarly successful, building a pattern of success.

Activist learning opportunities were also enhanced through the conscious resolution of obstacles such as ad hoc organisational structure and process. During initial stages of the anti-bypass campaign, the community groups aligned in opposition to the freeway was referred to as the Northern Brisbane Residents and Owners Coalition. Ten to twenty community activists met on an ad hoc basis in members' homes and offices. The focus of energy shifted rapidly from fact-finding to strategic opposition to the freeway proposal. The lack of structure and routine was an obstacle to active recruitment to the campaign. It appeared newcomers were also overwhelmed by the apparent expertise of seasoned campaigners and reluctant to take on responsibility. Despite positive media coverage and evident community support, the campaign did not appear to gain momentum. Council showed no signs of prevarication.

An opportunity to learn, an opportunity to teach

At the time of the campaign, I was coordinating a community education program with the state's peak non-government environmental organisation, the Queensland Conservation Council (QCC). The program promoted non-polluting transport through a combination of education and advocacy. For several years, I had been researching "teaching and learning for environmental activism". As a QCC advocate, I was actively engaged in activist teaching and learning.

QCC fitted Bill Moyer's (1990) stereotype of a "Professional Opposition Organisation" (or POO). Most staff held degrees in environmental science and received funding and support for professional development. Anti-bypass campaigners, by contrast, participated voluntarily and came from a wide variety of backgrounds including business, professions, trades, students and unemployed people. Their participation in the campaign was oriented primarily toward achieving the single short-term outcome of stopping the road. Members often commented that they had no interest in activism as an ongoing pursuit and would much prefer to be home watering the garden than attending endless meetings.

QCC was slow to join the campaign. As an 'umbrella' organisation, supporting and leading conservation groups across the state, QCC generally prioritised long-term and regional concerns. QCC did not believe the transition to more sustainable transport patterns would be achieved by campaigning against specific road proposals. The organisation's strategies were generally consistent with Dryzek's notion (1997: 92) of *democratic pragmatism*: advocating environmentally oriented policies through research, government committees, lobbying and submissions. Transport campaigners at QCC also developed and trialed systematic behaviour change programs engaging specific neighbourhoods, schools, universities and workplaces to promote cycling, walking and public transport. QCC worked on social, cultural and institutional change rather than short-term battles with politicians and

planning decisions. By participating in this campaign, QCC hoped to assist activist learning in three ways: (a) by promoting a broader view of sustainable transport, (b) by imparting specific campaign planning tools such as power mapping and media strategy and (c) by fostering organisational learning within the coalition of community groups.

As an established campaigning organisation, QCC offered potential benefits and disbenefits to the nascent anti-freeway network. On the one hand, QCC's organisational capacity offered smaller community group the resources to adopt routine. Seasoned QCC staff and volunteers were generally willing to share their experience and skills. On the other hand, QCC was, to some extent, inflexible in its dominant campaign approach and politics.

QCC's decision to actively support the anti-bypass campaign did not reflect a shift in the organisation's social change theory. By working with this community network, QCC hoped to influence the culture of anti-road campaigning in the region. Brisbane's transport campaigns had historically opposed specific road proposals. However, there was minimal evidence these campaigns addressed the social and cultural factors perpetuating car-dependency. Anti-road campaigns in the region were generally short-term, localised and unsuccessful. QCC aimed to build the skills base and level of coordination in regional transport campaign networks. Stopping the road would be an added bonus.

QCC offered to contribute to the campaign by providing administrative support. Network meetings were subsequently held on a fortnightly basis at QCC's office. Minutes were taken and distributed. Meetings became more purposeful. Tasks were carefully tracked from one meeting to the next. Agendas were negotiated and followed.

Exposure to this professional face of community organising was a new and significant learning opportunity for many alliance members. Participants were encouraged to facilitate meetings, take minutes, propose tactics for consideration, observe and evaluate campaign activities. More experienced activists encouraged and affirmed novices' tentative contributions, thus providing mentorship and modelling. A learning culture was developed. A number of seasoned activists participated as mentors. Several budding activists participated with the express objective of enhancing their advocacy abilities. The campaign was no longer primarily reactive. The campaign focus was reoriented to encompass a longer term view.

Activists began to speak of the anti-freeway battle in terms of just one chapter in a gradual social change away from car-dependency. Campaign outcomes that did not necessarily entail Council abandoning this specific freeway proposal began to be valued.

Getting angry, getting even

While early campaign activities emerged spontaneously during the irregular meetings, QCC encouraged the alliance to plan more strategically. One useful planning tool was 'power mapping', a structured and participatory process I had developed by facilitating activist workshops. Campaigners brainstormed lists of individuals and organisations who could potentially influence the freeway decision and those who would be effected. Cards bearing these people's names were organised and re-organised on a desk or the floor, graphically exploring power relations, affiliations and networks. A consensus configuration emerged depicting individual and organisational disposition. Stakeholders were categorised as championing the road's construction, passive supporters, neutral, potential opponents and active opponents. The motivations of each party were also analysed. What factors explained these disposition and how might stakeholders be influenced?

This dynamic power map became a useful reference when contemplating potential strategies and appeared to lead constructively to the broadening of the alliance and helped identify campaign opportunities. The map suggested gaining support in conservative suburbs would add considerably to the campaign's political leverage, prompting conservative local and state government representatives to take up the issue. Although most participating groups had left-wing tendencies, there was no reason why the alliance should exclude conservatives. This led alliance members to help build two new residents' groups and stage the campaign's most successful public meetings.

Angry residents packed public halls, exerting pressure on Council and achieving saturation media coverage. Seasoned alliance spokespeople resisted the temptation to dominate these media opportunities. Instead, emerging groups were encouraged to learn and practice advocacy skills and increase their autonomy. Core alliance members provided political advice, helped to draft media releases, contributed to newsletters and leaflets and

mentored emergent local leaders. As a result, local media coverage and resultant community awareness and anti-freeway political pressure in these suburbs increased dramatically

Local groups planning media releases regularly liaised with QCC's professional advocates to draft statements and practice interview responses.

The network became increasingly formalised, taking on attributes of established non-government advocacy groups. With a name change, website³ and logo, the Inner Northern Coalition (INC) regularly dominated local media. INC meetings were held regularly and frequently. A regular newsletter was distributed to households in target suburbs, building a sense of campaign momentum and success. Electronic communication effectively broadened the circle. Designated spokespeople communicated agreed media statements. Member groups were encouraged to maintain parallel media and community strategies so long as these were consistent with INC's statements. The agreed campaign strategy was regularly reviewed.

Group members' expectations concerning coordination, consensus and the campaign's prospects of success increased dramatically. Nonetheless, group cohesion was regularly tested. Times of conflict involving difficult decisions often presented potent learning opportunities. The group's second attempt to gain access to Council documentation under Freedom of Information legislation turned up potentially explosive material. Leaders of alliance groups met to peruse the material and agree upon strategy. Despite consensus at this meeting, one activist leaked material to the media within hours. While the resultant media coverage generated sought-after controversy, the impact was much less spectacular than anticipated. While this outcome was unfortunate in terms of desired immediate outcomes, campaigners discussed how the incident had served to highlight the importance of careful and strategic planning when using the media.

Community education was considered crucial to the campaign. INC tactics were based on the assumptions that (a) City Council's plans would be shelved in the face of sufficient vocal dissent and (b) the most certain trigger for such dissent was awareness raising. BCC inundated the community with pro-bypass messages through leaflets, media campaigns and other public relations strategies. With minimal funding, the INC sought to balance the scales. Leaflets were designed and printed en masse. Campaigners were engaged in the process of drafting, editing and distributing these materials, gaining skills in community education.

Fortuitously, an international circus troupe set up their tents right in the path of the intended bypass route. INC volunteers were on site each evening for a month, distributing leaflets. Patrons were shocked to hear about the freeway, but the anticipated response failed to materialise. Dissent remained at levels readily managed by BCC's media strategists. INC spokespeople were stereotyped by Councillors as unrepresentative and as 'greenies up trees', a reference to tactics emerging from the earlier Kelvin Grove Road campaign. Anti-bypass sentiment and activity reported in suburban newspapers could generally be traced directly to the core group.

In an attempt to popularise anti-Bypass sentiment, the alliance orchestrated a series of demonstrations, media stunts and other public events. Community arts strategies were employed. Fundraising events helped create a sense of identity for the campaign and attract new supporters as well as funding production of attractive banners and placards. During rallies in the park, the intended route was marked with lime and appeared on the evening news. Bands and other performers drew a small crowd to a rally followed by an all-night vigil. INC organisers liaised closely with the region's Aboriginal groups. Turbal spokesperson, Maroochy Barramba, and her family joined campaigners in the park, recounting ancestral stories to the group during the fireside vigil. Legal advice obtained by alliance members confirmed BCC's extensive powers to prosecute protestors sleeping in the park, but the demonstration proceeded.

Your City, Our Say

The INC developed innovative communication strategies. Seasoned environmental communicators in the group seized on the idea of subverting City Council's expensive "Your City Your Say" public relations strategy, a well-orchestrated program entailing glossy materials distributed city-wide and targeted mail-outs soliciting citizen comment. INC strategists seized on BCC's "Have Your Say" feedback forms. Activists with clipboards, circulated at community events soliciting anti-bypass comments on forms which were faxed to the Mayor's office requesting a personal response.

A community education grant was secured to publish and print a tabloid for distribution to 80 000 households in effected suburbs. "Our City Our Say" contained contributions from community leaders, business

people, local historians and others opposed to the road. Graphics were simple and appealing and powerfully captured the road's potential impacts. Colours and fonts from BCC's public relations literature were imitated. Sample letters to politicians and media outlets were provided. Resident groups across inner northern suburbs coordinated volunteer distribution teams.

The coalition of community groups had been meeting for eighteen months. Participating activists had given about as much time and money as they could afford. Council was due to make a decision.

One last-ditch strategy the INC considered was a legal challenge. With expert advice, the groups had successfully broadened the terms of reference for the road's impact management plan. The resultant study had not fulfilled these demanding requirements. INC members speculated whether a judicial review could be mounted on this procedural neglect. Lack of expertise, lack of funds and, perhaps, a failure to recognise the value of legal action and outside expertise meant this strategy was not adopted.

The people, united, will sometimes win and sometimes lose⁴

The day of judgement arrived. Council papers leaked to the group indicated a vote on the road's funding was proposed. In a desperate attempt to stop the vote, INC members rallied to Council chambers. Placards were smuggled into the gallery. The media were told to expect a rowdy mob. Anger toward Council was palpable. Coat-and-tie-wearing activists joined the jeering and placard waving. Several were evicted.

Political strategists in the group, observing the Lord Mayor would be absent for the vote, contacted the leader of the Opposition who flew back to Brisbane from a conference she was attending with the Mayor. This was both symbolic of her support for the anti-bypass campaigners and instrumental in partially compensating for the Mayor's majority in Council. Despite impassioned speeches and vigorous interjection by Councillors and protestors the vote was carried. Council's single biggest investment decision was made. The road would be built. Yellow billboards heralding the freeway's promised benefits reminded campaigners daily of their defeat. Public relations material declared the road would actually improve air quality!

Community campaigns often come too late, commencing after key political decisions have been made. Activists outside the alliance reacted spontaneously to the commencement of construction. Trees were spiked along the freeway route. New groups sprang up, protesting against the destruction of heritage buildings and trees.

Alliance meetings were not convened for several months. Several campaigners contested the local government election as independent candidates, successfully making the bypass a lead issue during the election campaign. Others considered this strategy futile or counter-productive. The core group finally gathered at a café to reflect on the campaign. While acknowledging defeat, activists valued the campaign's learning opportunities and the networks they had built. Rather than focusing on shortcomings of the campaign, the group concluded their local communities would resist LULUs with increased vigour and effectiveness in the future.

Learning about learning

Several observations concerning learning for environmental activism might be drawn from this campaign:

1. Environmental campaigns offer excellent opportunities for activists to learn social change skills and acquire confidence.
2. By recognising the learning opportunities inherent in campaigns, activists and activist educators can maximise and harness this potential.
3. While much activist learning is incidental, it need not be unconscious. Specific opportunities for overtly valuing learning include group discussions to identify learning opportunities and to reflect on and evaluate learning outcomes. A *learning strategy* can be built into *campaign strategy*.
4. Mentorship in the context of environmental campaigns offers a potent and appropriate learning opportunity for novice activists.
5. Immediate campaign goals such as blocking development or influencing regulatory decisions often obscure equally significant outcomes including activist training and movement building. Reactive NIMBY campaigns are especially likely to focus on immediate objectives at the expense of longer term movement building.

6. The 'siege mentality' arising from rapid environmental degradation and the alienation of community members from decision-making, coupled with acute resource restraints, may result in environmentalists prioritising immediate over long-term objectives. Learning and movement building are infrequently factored into campaigns to an extent commensurate with their potential.
7. Reorienting campaigns to identify, value and harness activist learning opportunities has the potential to contribute to a more inclusive, skilled and effective environment movement.

Activist organisations can readily enhance activist learning opportunities. Campaign planning, analysis and evaluation processes that are inclusive and continuous provide excellent opportunities for novice activists to develop political acumen and advocacy skills. Novices benefit from opportunities to observe and participate in increasingly complex and challenging campaign activities. Recent recruits might be asked to assist with meeting minutes or distribution of publications before progressing to drafting correspondence and accompanying lobbyists to political briefings. This progression towards increasing responsibility should provide opportunities for leadership such as coordinating working groups and facilitating meetings. Accomplished activists can offer encouragement and mentorship to novices, making learning an explicit, conscious component of each campaign.

In this community campaign, active citizenry was modelled and practiced, leading to experiential and participatory learning. Activists 'cutting their teeth' in this campaign went on to occupy leadership roles in other social change campaigns, sharing their knowledge and experience to build the capacity of grassroots community activism in the region. Learning through social action, as reflected in this community campaign, is a potent strategy to build knowledge, commitment and motivation.

Notes

1. Eg. Porritt (1990, 1991), Brown (1998)
2. Queensland Government (1995)
3. On-line at www.powerup.com.au/~qccqld/INC/
4. Fran Peavey's humorous call to arms at Heart Politics Conference 1998: a wry re-interpretation on the well-known union chant "The people, united, will never be defeated."

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