

Dr Gary Lewis Symposium

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BCCM and Dr Gary Lewis
Melina Morrison



BUSINESS COUNCIL
OF CO-OPERATIVES AND MUTUALS

BCCM and Dr Gary Lewis

- Personal reflections
- Gary's contribution to BCCM and the sector
- What we can learn from Gary

Personal reflections

- Arresting presence and a fierce spirit
- Didn't suffer dullards and insisted on being authentic
- Sceptical but not cynical
- Generous of heart and mind
- Provocateur— wanted to prove him wrong about the Achilles heel of the sector
- But he saw we had traditionally snatched defeat from the jaws of victory

Contribution to BCCM

- Advisor
- Researcher
- Advocate
- Champion

Our bookshelf and our submissions are full of Gary's work – we are indebted to his 'opus'

Gary's contribution during BCCM

- Made important submissions to both Federal Government inquiries, based on historical data and analysis
- The potential of CMEs is unfulfilled
- The need to solve the capital conundrum (balancing investment capital and democratic ownership and control)
- Lack of uniform laws and Commonwealth jurisdiction
- Lack of education for co-operative entrepreneurs
- CNL – work in progress or failed experiment?



What do we learn from Gary?

- A Middle Way identifies the key priorities for a sustainable and successful co-operative movement that still largely apply today
- Need for a national apex body representing all forms of co-operation, which can push for:
 - National regulation
 - Supportive tax/competition policy settings
 - Development of other secondary co-operative institutions such as a co-op bank, education institutes etc

What do we learn from Gary?

- **Whoever doesn't learn from history is doomed to repeat it**
- Observed behavior
- Vested interests and preserving status quo (States and sector)
- Failure of apex body
- Infighting and insularity

What do we learn from Gary?

- *“Adequate co-operative secondary institutions and supportive policy environment are necessary to retain democracy and financial sustainability. Achieving this is underpinned by Co-operation among Co-operatives in an apex body.”*
- *“Government handouts are not a shortcut, can hamper long-term sustainability of a true self-help movement. Need good development policies, not simple bags of money.”*

Would Gary approve?

- New capital and definition in the Corporations Act
- CNL nearly completed
- Apex body
- Unified sector?
- BCCM recognises there is not just strength in numbers, but strength in association.
- Combining the strength of both co-ops and mutuals the sector is better able to deal with problems that arise in a competitive national market and particularly where that market is regulated not just by one corporate regulator – but 10 different regulators.

BCCM – strength in association

- The co-op and mutual sector in Australia comprises over 2000 organisations – of these there are about 1700 co-operatives.
- The total asset value or turnover from mutuals is much greater than for general co-ops because of the nature of the various mutual businesses
- Strength in numbers
- Strength in resolve and commitment to co-op principles and values



For more information:

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