

More time, less money: Downshifting as a progressive transition solution for rural Australia and the future

Daniel Donahoo
OzProspect

Refereed paper presented to the
Transitions and Risk: New Directions in Social Policy Conference
Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne
23 - 25 February 2005

Introduction

One of the tasks of Transitional Labour Markets (TLMs) is to support society and individuals to assess and react to critical events. In terms of the labour market obvious transitions are between employment and unemployment, employment and retirement or under-employment and full employment. (Schmid: 1998) Transitions and the way society and individuals deal with them matters significantly. Good transitional management makes for a better functioning society (Clark et al: 1999).

Transitions are often forced and consequently dramatic. The move from employment to unemployment often happens in an instant – sudden retrenchment is common. TLMs are a way of developing suitable policy approaches that help individuals, businesses and communities better deal with the impact of transition. It is the impact of, and not the transition itself that needs addressing, if society is going to produce more confident and capable citizens (Pocock: 2003).

This paper is interested in how to lessen the blow of labour market transitions brought about by short-term or long-term social shock in rural Australia.

Social shock is a term I apply to the social reaction that occurs as a result of impact occurring as a result of societal disruption. A short-term social shock is a blackout that forces businesses to close town or the gas-crisis Victoria experienced in the 1990s. Longer-term shock occurs over a longer and less noticeable period, but brings about similar needs to change the social structure. (Toffler: 1970) Computers have created a form of social shock for many older workers who have had to adapt to the new systems that computers have afforded. The decline of oil over the coming decades will be a significant social shock that a sparse country like Australia must come to grips with. (Holmgren: 2002)

Rural Australia with its smaller populations, greater geographic isolation and deepening dependence on unsustainable levels of natural resources is highly susceptible to a variety of social shocks. This is noticeable from the re-occurring impact of drought. This has broader reaching social and economic impacts on the country as a whole as it impacts on trade deficits, or the price of vegetables in the local supermarket. (Garnett & Lewis: 1999)

There are many possible threats facing rural Australian communities: workforce supply due to shrinking population, the rise in petrol price, drought, bushfires, reduction of basic community and welfare services.

All of the above will force labour markets and the systems that surround them to change. This paper proposes that the seachange mentality and growing number of downshifter have a lot to offer in terms of developing suitable models for rural Australia. Models that support a broader understanding of labour markets and a

transition to social models where people spread their labour across the spectrum of work that families and communities require, rather than focussing solely on a paid work structure.

Through an initial scoping study of downshiffters in Central Victoria we get a picture of how local rural communities may look as they brace themselves to deal with the impact of short-term social shock and prepare for the longer-term transitions facing them.

Societal shock

Transitional Labour Markets are currently viewed within a context of contemporary understandings of transition and rely on the stability of current social and economic systems. In our policy world where industrialised society is the context, and strongly influenced by evidenced-based practice, this makes sense. It means we can determine how our population is aging. We can accurately predict when there will be shortages in staff or resources for particular employment sectors. Statistics can identify how many women stay at home and have children, and for how long. We can then anticipate generalised patterns about paid and unpaid work and how it fits within our population maps. (Marston & Watts: 2003)

But, our post-modern world is in a dynamic state of change. Our anticipation of retirement has almost evaporated in the space of one generation. Our unreasoned belief that we will always have access to the resources that we take for granted is being questioned. (Common: 1995, Trainer: 2002) Recent water restrictions, the Victoria gas crisis in the 1990s and the impact of forced rolling blackouts on some of this world's major cities electricity systems are highly visible examples.

The recent tsunami disaster has elicited all sorts of extreme claims about the increased risk of natural disaster. Whether that risk has or has not increased is irrelevant. No matter how high, that risk, is just one of a large number of possible social shocks that existed before this one event, and continue to exist after it.

The work of Gunther Schmid, like much of our lives, relies on the assumption that we will be capable of maintaining current western lifestyles. It relies on our ability to continue to use fossil fuels for the production and transport of goods and services. (Consodine et al: 2004) Yet, social shock means that even in western nations, our traditional systems do not always apply. And, that we need alternatives and back up systems to help us deal with situations that our usual systems and policies don't function in.

A recession impacts on the employment and income potential of many. A natural disaster creates short-term anarchy and schizophrenic social systems, until order is

returned. The impact of fossil fuels on our world through global warming, or the impact of rising oil prices suggests long-term impacts that will dramatically change our world. (Bakhteri: 2003)

In this context, downshifting becomes a relevant case study because in most instances downshifters actively undertake a life change involving a shift away from dominant western ideology and practice. They pursue systems that place less reliance on traditional structures. Downshifters, either consciously or unconsciously, are cushioning themselves against forms of social shock.

Like the woman I interviewed in Barker's Creek who prides herself on learning to grow a new vegetable each season and develops new production skills making her own yogurt and bread. She is developing a skill set that leave her less reliant on our systems of mass production and consumption.

To us it seems preposterous that there won't always be an adequate food supply.

My wife's Babuska kept large stores of tinned food her entire life and always had a thriving vegetable patch. She, like thousands on Ukrainian immigrants, thought they would always have food until Stalin invaded and the country starved.

The threat of an invading dictator, I admit, is probably not high on the list. But, Australia's Stalin could be climate change, or genetically modified crops, or simply a lack of water.

Many continue to identify the problems with the interdependence of global systems and these systems of high-energy fossil fuels, especially oil. (Bakhtiari: 2003, Holmgren: 2003, Trainer: 1999) They all propose ways in which we should be preparing for the social shock of having to operate systems using less energy.

The oil industry has a growing awareness of the challenges that confront our society. Buford Lewis, Exxon Mobil's Manager for Research and Development acknowledged at the World Energy Congress in Sydney last year that unless we made significant steps in fuel efficiency that we would run out of oil before the middle of this century. (Porter: 2004) That is less than 50 years away. It is within many of our lifetimes.

Rural Australia should heed the words of the likes of Burford Lewis. They are more susceptible to small ripples of change. At least, they will be the first to confront them. Rural areas are more isolated, have smaller populations and smaller economies. Current social models leave them vulnerable to social shock as they have less capacity to absorb the impact of a disaster.

This has been observed on a regular basis: as drought leads to economic distress across rural farming communities; or when a factory moves operations offshore and

small rural centres have a massive increase in unemployment; or as the costs of resources rise putting greater strain on rural profits.

These events are forms of social shock. They impact on the way rural labour markets operate and the notion of transitional labour markets can be used in the short term to help deal with specific situations (Bulis et al: 1996). In the long term they will help deal with a society that has less access to energy to create the infrastructure that has powered industrialisation.

In the future, we will return to a time when paid work is not a concept that dominates our lives. We will be involved in a broad spectrum of community activity that will include working in specific skills based roles, engaging in many forms of community service, contributing to the growth and production of our own food and supporting the maintenance of vital infrastructure.

The role of downshifting

Downshifting is a well-documented phenomenon in Australia and overseas. Analysis suggests up to 30% of Australian's are participating in a process that is economically less productive. (Hamilton & Mail: 2003) Down-shifters happily report that less money gives them more time, less stress and an increased feeling of control and happiness. (Breakspear & Hamilton: 2004)

Downshifting offers policy makers a benchmark to help support positive change. Those who have downshifted have demonstrated an ability to undertake a significant transition within the current policy climate.

What have downshifters done and why? How have they done it? And, what are the results?

These are all beneficial questions to those attempting to create policy that better supports the life/work balance and delivers positive and socially productive labour market transitions

A majority of downshifters exist very comfortably within contemporary economic and social frameworks. They simply exist with less. It is an easier process for baby boomers, in their late-40s or early 50s, who have developed a sound financial base and are supporting their children less. (Hamilton & Mail: 2003) But, they are not the only demographic making a transition.

My initial research into downshifting in Central Victoria adds to the collected work that continues to identify lower income families making the transition. A transition to a life that is downsized is a transition to a simpler life. But, for many people I

interviewed is was also based in deeper philosophical reasoning. My research agrees with work from The Australia Institute. It helps contradict some perceptions that downshifters are simply high-income earners escaping from the stressful life of the corporate world. (Breakspear & Hamilton: 2004).

These downshifters are part of a tradition that in the Mount Alexander Shire can be traced back to the counter-culture era of the 60s, when a group of young hippies set up homes in the hills of Castlemaine. The local yarn suggests that in the event of a nuclear strike on Melbourne the group had through some measure established that Castlemaine was one of the closest points to Melbourne still a safe distance from nuclear fallout.

The young families and individuals I have interviewed in the Castlemaine region have entered into transitional labour markets of their own choice. There have been no policy shifts to support them in their decisions. They have navigated their way within current welfare and workplace policy. None have been forced into the job market because of redundancy or the desire for career change. The move into the transitional labour market is an obvious lifestyle choice made counter to many current social trends.

Mount Alexander's rural labour market serves some 9400 residents. Its labour force numbers just over 4000. With a strong manufacturing presence, but also a leaning towards tourism and arts based industry. There is an identified need for more local jobs to increase the capacity of the local economy. (Barker: 2004)

However, of 40 individuals interviewed not one was unable to find some form of paid work when they felt it was required; despite an unemployment rate that fluctuates around 9%.

Some spent time on unemployment benefits, but did so through choice to fulfil some other aspect of their life before returning to some form of paid work. One couple even treated it as a form of paid maternity and paternity leave.

It is easy to dismiss this new wave of alternative lifestylers pursuing the seachange as the latest bunch of optimistic ideologues. It is more challenging to ask what policymakers might learn from such a group. TLMs are about dealing with change in a constructive way. About seeing each day in the context of a whole life and how society can best support people to be productive and capable human beings.

A whole life is subject to more transitions than we probably imagine. The impact of social shock means TLMs are relevant in more than just current labour market systems. In a society more exposed to the shock of natural disaster, economic collapse and environmental degradation we are all exposed to the need for flexible life and work arrangements.

Downshifters are trying to soften the blow of anticipated social shock.

The Central Victorian community: labour transitions and the structures that surround them

David Holmgren is a Central Victorian. He is the co-originator of the concept of Permaculture and has contributed significantly to knowledge base of systems design. His latest reworking of Permaculture, something many may perceive as a form of organic gardening, is a progressive take on systems design. He has a strong interest in the edges of systems.

The edge is where systems are at their most dynamic. The edge between sea and land is where coral reefs flourish and are the most biodiverse areas of the ocean. The edge or the fringe of our cities has attracted the artists and culture makers. At the edges of science the great discoveries are formed. (Holmgren: 2003) The edge holds many things that are superfluous, but it is the wealth of activity that occurs there that can give rise to important ideas.

Points of transition are edges. So, TLMs are actually dealing with the most dynamic and interesting points of people's employed lives - the points where everything happens. The work itself is just the gap in-between.

Central Victoria is another edge. A community who are not simply participating in transitional labour markets, but are engaging and creating new local economic and social systems around them.

Central Victoria is north of the Great Dividing Range starting around Macedon and Woodend and extending across to Daylesford. Bendigo is the best definable northern boundary and it travels between Lake Eppalock in the east and Maryborough in the west. For the intent of this scoping study, all participants involved lived in the Mount Alexander Shire.

Mount Alexander Shire is in the middle of Central Victoria. It is a small rural shire with limited infrastructure and a small rate base. Its history is rooted in gold. The main town, Castlemaine, became a hub for the Forest Creek Diggings one of the world's richest shallow alluvial goldfields. (Bradfield: 1983)

From the beginning, the residents of Mount Alexander were on the edge. People in a melting pot of culture and poverty struggling for the sake of possible fortunes in the clay of the goldfields. The kinds of grievances that led to the Eureka Stockade in 1854 were given voice at Castlemaine on a rise that became known as Agitation Hill. (Bradfield: 1983)

Mount Alexander, therefore, has played a significant role in Victorian labour market history. New ideas and rights that were fought over in Ballarat were spawned in Central Victoria, on the edge of the goldfields.

Policymakers would do to look at the new edges that are forming in this area. And, to similar areas where new social systems are developing in places like Lismore in New South Wales, Maleny in Queensland and in communities in the south western corner of Western Australia.

These communities are functional models of transition. Individuals involved in the process of navigating their own employment. Families involved in navigating their own balances. Communities involved in developing new labour markets and local economies to support the decisions of the individuals and families.

Let us refer to a case study to demonstrate.

The Inland Seachangers: Case Study 1

*Names have been changed by request

Mark and Jane* moved from inner city Melbourne 3 years ago. They are typical of the new wave of immigrants to Central Victoria: young and family-orientated, not tertiary educated, but interested in ideas.

They have two young children and Jane has decided to stay home and look after them. They are renting with a view to buy in the future.

Initially, Mark stayed in his job working for a television station in Melbourne and commuted regularly. He stayed with friends when he worked late and was unable to catch the last train. The travel didn't suit the lifestyle Mark and Jane wished to pursue. So, within a short time he found part-time work as a builder's labourer working around Castlemaine.

Mark indicated the pay was less, but after you took away the costs of travel, time away from home and their new community – the value of both jobs balanced out. His focus was strongly about transitioning to the local labour market. Working in Melbourne did not give him the connection to people and local systems that he and Jane were seeking.

Mark enjoyed the part-time work, taking on a greater role in parenting and feeling a greater connectedness to his community.

Being part of a community is what a majority of interviewees identified as being the main reason for their decision to downsize. Their desire is to not simply exist within,

but to contribute to a greater entity that provides support in return. Consequently, Mark and Jane have been involved in developing new systems with friends to support their lifestyle that includes a reduced income and less paid work, but greater capacity to contribute to more community activity.

Mark and Jane worked to establish a communal garden where four families committed time and a small amount of money to get the garden started. Together, everyone would plan what they would plant and then work together to prepare beds and plant and maintain the vegetables. This food supplements the four families grocery shopping and provides organically grown produce for 8 months of the year.

Other food co-operatives downshiffters are involved in include: Community Supported Agriculture, a Food Box Collective and numerous informal trade and barter arrangements.

Mark and Jane also entered into an arrangement purchasing power tools and gardening tools with other families. Three families all contributed an amount to the purchase of a tool that represented an equal percentage of their income. The purchases have included a mulcher, a vacuum cleaner and a power saw.

The system, Jane explained, spreads the cost of items used infrequently across enough people so that you had adequate use at the smallest possible cost. It is not an anti-consumer attitude, but a smart consumer attitude that spreads the economic load and the responsibility for maintaining the equipment.

Jane does not put the children in formal care, but has a playgroup network who share early childhood texts and ideas from a variety of schools such as Montessori and Steiner. They are considering home-schooling, but Jane is impressed with a local state primary school who have developed a community stream. This stream involves parents being actively involved in setting the curriculum and attending classes to teach skills outside the mainstream curriculum.

This couple has established co-operative systems to support their chosen lifestyle in a rural town with one part-time income. In increasing systems that give them more responsibility for their own food they have decreased their reliance on exterior food sources which protects them from extra costs due to the impacts of social shock like drought and rising petrol prices.

Their lifestyle is one they call 'simple living'. They are vegetarian, practice re-using products and recycle only when necessary. Their focus is on conserving energy and limiting what they refer to as their ecological footprint. They are investing more in local economic and labour market systems. Through co-operative purchasing, returning to informal methods of childcare and contemplating alternative schooling systems.

Transitional Labour Markets: How the Central Victorian experience can be used as a model for short-term societal shock.

The previous case study dealt with systems outside of labour markets: the development of alternative systems to production of food, utilisation and purchase of resources and education systems. These systems are helping Mark and Jane make a transition away from dependence on the labour market to provide full-time paid employment to ensure they live the quality of life they wish to. It allows them access to a lifestyle in which work is no longer a transaction in which you gain money so that you may make further transactions for the goods and services you need. Work instead becomes what you do to provide yourself with many of the goods and services you need.

These observations will perhaps better serve policy makers in a more distant future; a future that will require a more strategic use of local time and resources. Still, there are examples of downshifters in Mount Alexander who manipulate the current labour market systems to suit their lifestyle choices.

Operating within the system: Case Study 2

*Names have been changed by request

Trevor and Lisa* have rented in and around Castlemaine for 7 years. They moved from St. Kilda where they had both lived for over a decade. Their move was stimulated by a wish for a country lifestyle that they believed would better suit their worldview.

Both of them worked part-time for six years, until Lisa became pregnant and they had a baby. During the pregnancy they had read widely and felt strongly about research indicating the importance of parental contact during the early years of a child's life.

So, when the baby arrived they both quit their jobs and lived on welfare payments for one year. They treated the Australian welfare system as a form of paid maternity and paternity leave.

Trevor admits that financial it was tight. They still rent, and may never afford a place in Castlemaine on their part-time income, but they are happy with that. There is no urge to purchase a house.

Lisa indicated that living on part-time wages meant that they were used to a standard of living others would struggle with. And, the impact on their daughter of the experience – only time will tell.

They both returned to part-time work, but ensured they structured their working hours so that one parent is always at home with their daughter.

This is an example of people changing despite policy. While this is an extreme example, it possibly reflects what many first time parents would love: to spend the first year with their child without the distractions of having to earn an income.

Early childhood research argues that the better quality parenting and support a child gets during the formative years of birth to 6 are crucial. The evidence presented to governments demonstrates future cost savings due to the development of capable and less reliant adults. (Ochiltree & Moore: 2001)

This case study demonstrates several important points.

1. That within existing policy some families can create their own system of paid maternity and paternity leave for up to one year.
2. That individuals understand the research that is being presented and some are acting upon it better than policy makers.
3. That labour market policy that valued investment in children would provide a more capable future workforce.

Looking into the glass ball: policy development for the future

Many participating in the process of downshifting are participating in a major shift in social perspective. Currently, paid work is still seen as the dominant activity. Transitional Labour Markets still place major emphasis on paid work and how transitions revolve around it. (Schmid: 1998)

Downshifters in Central Victoria are contributing to a change in this paradigm. They see paid work fitting into a life that involves a wide range of vocational activity: volunteering, community support, self-provision of food and services, recreation and community child-raising and aged care.

Whether this is a social anomaly sitting with other alternative communities like in Eltham in the 40s and 50s or Maleny in Queensland today is beside the point. Aspects of this paradigm shift appeal to the mainstream for a variety of reasons and could support the informing of policy that will support system change necessary for 'good' transitional labour markets. (Schmid: 1998)

The importance of shifting social systems that co-exist with transitional labour markets is eluded to by Schmid who outlines four criteria that could support positive TLM take up.

“Within this framework, Sweden comes probably closest...It has a rich infrastructure for individual empowerment, practices job rotation, allows a flexible take up of entitlements to family time off, provides regular income replacement during these leaves and has partly individualised the right to parental leave by introducing a one month ‘papa sabbatical’.” (Schmid: 1998)

In Sweden, policy is beginning to articulate the concept that paid work is an activity that is undertaken to contribute to the quality of that life, not the sole purpose of it.

All downshifter in the study regularly participate in the paid workforce. It is impossible to completely create new economies and societies in a world so interconnected. Plus, as exemplified in Sweden, paid work is one aspect of a well-rounded life.

But, many downshifter’s point to the fact they are establishing a life for themselves and their children that will be less threatened by shocks. They directly refer to environmental and oil decline disasters, a demonstration of the philosophy behind their decision. For them, quality of life becomes something one is able to provide for ones self, rather than being reliant on complex interconnected systems.

This is important to rural communities. Developing some level of self-sufficiency will help protect more isolated regions of Australia from the impact of rising energy costs and future social shock.

Rural Australian labour markets have avoided the eye of research and analysis for many years. (Garnett & Lewis: 1999) There is the potential to start to develop some innovative policy that will support rural Australia to be a dynamic global player through agriculture and trade, but maintaining a level of community self reliance that will enable communities to withstand the impacts of events like drought.

Clive Hamilton’s body of work is arguing this is what people want: ‘Australians say that money-hunger conflicts with their deeper values and preferences.’ (Hamilton & Mail: 2003) Social policy should be interested in those ‘deeper values and preferences’ because that is what will create a happier society. A happy society is a more well-adjusted, capable and supporting society. Downshifter generally indicated they are happier because of what they have changed and where they are now. (Breakspear & Hamilton: 2004)

This happiness is a policy framework of empowerment, advocacy and self-reliance.

What policy will support a labour force to be empowered and self-reliant? Or, is it not enough to look at it in isolation – like downshifter does labour market policy need to develop a more holistic approach.

Central Victorian downshifter I interviewed refer regularly to the challenge of compromise. How well one compromises is usually demonstration of how successful the transition is. A large number found they were unable to make all the life changes they anticipated they could. Yet, they have embraced the transition as part of a life process, rather than a single step.

In terms of employment, this means they are in a constant state of transition and gaining skills to provide for oneself is as important as gathering skills to undertake paid employment.

It means that policy makers need to start embracing a wider sphere. We need to approach the labour market in new ways and ask the same questions, but consider different answers. What is the labour market? How big is it? Who is included? The bigger the responses, the more likely a holistic approach will be required.

One downshifter spent years commuting to Melbourne to continue working. While doing this he studied horticulture, but after a few years and once qualified he found paid work in revegetation and landcare projects. He now uses his horticulture skills to grow his family of three most of their summer vegetables. He gives free seminars about revegetation to landholders and encourages an understanding between the quality of people's bush blocks and the significance that has on the water catchment.

The interconnectedness of transitional labour markets is more sophisticated than a transition from part-time to full-time or full-time to retirement. I would like to use the issue of childcare as example to demonstrate this interconnectedness.

Schmid argues that his 'empowerment criteria calls for a well developed infrastructure both for childcare and keeping employability during the period of shortened working time or interrupted care'. (Schmid: 1998) His proposed solutions would require a level of child support and education that currently does not exist. Professional development of staff is only one area that would need to be significantly increased if it was to be successful.

I have no problems with policy development that supports the strengthening of these institutions, but after listening to many downshifter I have reservations about our belief and trust in the ability for us to create a level of quality childcare that we as a society can be happy with. A level of childcare that actually equals the benefit of a child being looked after by a parent.

Currently Australian childcare is facing a crisis. Not simply from a lack of places to meet demand, but from significant issues in workforce development and general quality of support. While, recent developments in Britain and models from Scandinavia have allowed Australian early childhood professional to strengthen their evidence base and call for greater investment and systematic improvements. (Ochiltree & Moore: 2001)

The idea that the policies of geographically compact nations can match the challenges of a country as geographically sparse as Australia is wrong. Policy makers are all too aware that policy can not simply be translated from one community to another without addressing the specific needs of the new population. (Marston & Watts: 2003)

Schmid brackets his own concerns in reference to compensation for childcare – '(who can measure the productivity of this care?)'. (Schmid: 1998)

The fact is, you cannot. Early childhood evidence is resounding. Even on the Centre for Community Childhood Development website Professor Frank Oberklaid states: 'The most critical environment for infants and young children is that provided by their parents. Confident and competent parents can understand and respond to their child's needs. This will provide the best start for their young child'. (Oberklaid: 2004)

This is the evidence base that the sector is completely aware of. If we are to pursue appropriate policy, we should therefore be promoting as much contact between parents and their children during the early years of their life. There is no investigation into the economic impact of this dilemma. Policy makers too often fall back into the rather rudimentary 'bums on seats' approach to workforce numbers, productivity and economic growth.

Childcare can never match the quality of a child raised by parents, neighbours, extended family and the community.

And, this is the type of informal care downshiffters are pursuing.

Downshiffters in Central Victoria demonstrate a commitment to this and other community supports that do not rely on government or institutional intervention. But, when matched against the research of experts' holds up better than the policy that is created to govern people's lives.

Playgroups and informal community care play a major role in the Mount Alexander Shire. Parents, outside of any significant policy change share the childcare and paid work arrangements by both working part-time. There are also many households who live on one part-time income.

This is a major challenge for labour market policy. It represents another call for a shift away from traditional growth economies to a new form where economic growth needs to be measured in increased happiness and well being, greater community connectedness and richness in the intangible, rather than obvious market orientated forces.

Still, in a possible future world where fossil fuels decrease and we do not have the amount of energy to maintain current systems this is a model that may well become more prevalent.

Conclusion

In background papers for this conference one problem that is articulated is not a lack of jobs, but a lack of good waged, full-time jobs that allow for self-sufficiency. (Considine et al: 2004, Schmid & Schomann: 2003) This is a very market orientated approach to a problem that looks completely different when a community development approach is applied.

For rural Australia, it isn't just jobs that are disappearing, but community and health systems as well. And, if you consider the continued call for more time with family then the problem perhaps isn't the lack of good-waged, full-time jobs. In this sense the problem is an increased promotion and expectation of unnecessary material wealth that creates the need for an unattainable level of good waged, full-time jobs.

Rural Australia needs new systems to help with transition. The ability to maintain many economic and community systems through regular shock, whether from the natural world or global markets, are increasingly difficult. While, rural Australians are forced to take more control over their lives; downshiffters are providing evidence that this is possible.

Many people, both rural and metropolitan, still need support to be able to make the shift to a life that better reflects the commitment they want to make to their families and communities.

It is the role of policy makers to create an environment in which attitudes can change. A healthy policy environment that supports the health and well-being of a community by developing systems that support a rich and diverse life produces an environment in the community that provides the same.

Downshiffters in rural Australia are developing pockets of resistance. They are developing local economies that aim to cushion the impact of the global economy or natural disasters on their towns.

There is evidence in these developments for policy makers to provide more substantial support to rural Australia through constructive labour market policy that supports not just the transition of individuals, but also the transition of communities to become more capable of providing for their needs at a local level.

Daniel Donahoo: More time, Less Money

End Notes

- Barker, J. (2004) *State of the economy audit: a report for the Mount Alexander Shire* (prepared by) National Economics, Clifton Hill
Available: http://www.nieir.com.au/code/research_centre/reports/economic/mount_alexander.pdf
- Bittman, M. , Hoffman, S. & Thompson, D. (2004) *Men's uptake of family-friendly employment provisions* Policy Research Paper No. 22, Department of Family and Community Services, Canberra
- Bradfield, R.A. (1983) *Owen Jones : labour pioneer on the Castlemaine goldfield*, Castlemaine Mail, Castlemaine
- Breakspear, C. & Hamilton, C. (2004) *Getting a Life: Understanding the downshifting phenomena in Australia*, Discussion Paper no. 62, The Australia Institute, Canberra
- Bulis, H., Lawrence, G., Stehlik, D. and Gray, I. (1996). *The Shifting Sands of Disadvantage: A Social Policy Analysis of Drought*. Paper presented at the United Nations Natural Disaster NDR 96. Conference Surfers Paradise. September.
- Clark, E. & Soulsby, A. (1999) *Organisational Change in Post Communist Europe*, Routledge, London and New York
- Common, M (1995) *Sustainability and Policy* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge
- Considine, M, Hancock, L, Howe, B & Ziguras, S (2004) *From risk to opportunity: labour markets in transition – Background Paper*, Centre for Public Policy, University of Melbourne, Melbourne
- Garnett, A. & Lewis, P. (1999) *Trends in Rural Labour Markets*, CLMR Discussion Paper Series 99/9, The Centre for Labour Market Research, Murdoch
- Hamilton, C. (2003) *Downshifting in Britain: A sea-change in the pursuit of happiness*, Discussion Paper No. 58, The Australia Institute, Canberra
- Hamilton, C. & Mail, E. (2003) *Downshifting in Australia: A sea-change in the pursuit of happiness*, Discussion Paper No. 50, The Australia Institute, Canberra
- Holmgren, D (2002) *Permaculture Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*, Holmgren Design Services, Hepburn
- Marston, G. & Watts, R. (2003) *Tampering With the Evidence: A Critical Appraisal of Evidence-Based Policy-Making*, Australian Review of Public Affairs, Vol 3. March
Available:http://www.econ.usyd.edu.au/drawingboard/journal/0303/marston_watts.pdf
- Oberklaid, F. (2003) *Vision for Australian Children* on the Early Childhood Connections website
Available: http://www.rch.org.au/econnections/parents/index.cfm?doc_id=1270
- Ochiltree, G. & Moore, T. (2001) *Best Start: Evidence Base Project*, Centre for Community Child Health, Department of Human Services, Melbourne
- Pocock, B. (2003) *The Work/Life Collision* Federation Press
- Porter, I. (2004) *Expert calls for further research to help conserve oil reserves*, The Age, 8 September
- Rees, P (2000) *People, principles and profit; Investing locally*, Green Connections, Vol. 31 Sept/Oct
- Robinson, B. (2002) *Global Oil Vulnerability and the Australian Situation* West Australian Government
- Samsam Bakhtiari, A. M. (2003) *The World Oil Production Capacity Model*, International Oil Conference Paper, Copenhagen
Available: <http://www3.telus.net/public/a6a20277/>

Daniel Donahoo: More time, Less Money

Schmid, G (1998) *Transitional Labour Markets: A New European Employment Strategy*, Discussion Paper FS I 98-206, Social Science Research Centre, Berlin Available: <http://www.wz-berlin.de/default.en.asp>

Schmid, G & Schomann, K (eds) (2003) *The Concept of Transitional Labour Markets and Some Policy Conclusions: The State of the Art*, Working Paper No. 2003-01, Social Science Research Centre, Berlin Available: <http://www.tlm.net>

Toffler, A. (1970) *Future Shock*, Random House, New York

Trainer, F. E. (1995) *The Conserver Society: Alternatives for Sustainability*, Zed Books, London

Trainer, F. E. (2002) *Can solar sources meet Australia's electricity and liquid fuel demand?* The International Journal of Global Energy Issues