

# 15<sup>th</sup> National Outdoor Education Conference

20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> of September, 2007 | Ballarat, Victoria



*“Sustaining our Spirit of Place”*

**Outdoor Education A u s t r a l i a**

Network of Outdoor Education Associations

[www.outdooreducationaustralia.org.au/conferences/2007](http://www.outdooreducationaustralia.org.au/conferences/2007)

# “Sustaining our Spirit of Place”

Global warming, terrorism, drought, asylum seekers, whale slaughter, stem cell research, bay dredging, religious fundamentalism ... sometimes it seems as if there are just too many things going bad in the world; sometimes it threatens to overwhelm us.

As educators – teachers, leaders, researchers, facilitators – we have a responsibility to transcend our personal response to these and many other local, national and global issues that inundate us. We spend our professional lives working to help the next generation make sense of this world – and perhaps, to help them make it better.

In 2007 the 15<sup>th</sup> National Outdoor Education Conference offers a forum for educators working in the Outdoor Education field to meet, discuss, argue, learn and continue striving to meet this responsibility.

## **A Bit of History**

- The 2001 National Outdoor Education Conference held in Victoria, had as its theme – Our Sense of Place. It asked ‘what is the direction of Outdoor Education?’ and ‘what is its relevance in Australian society?’
- The 2003 National Conference held in South Australia, had as its theme – Relevance: Making it happen. It sought to examine the history of Outdoor Education in Australia and synthesise this with the newly formed Outdoor Council of Australia.
- The 2005 National Conference held in Queensland, had as its theme – The Challenges we face. It endeavoured to engage with the issues that confront our profession in the context of a fast changing world.

The 15<sup>th</sup> National Outdoor Education Conference will build on the foundations of these conferences to continue to affirm the contribution of Outdoor Education to Australian society.

- In January 2005, the United Nations declared a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.
- In late 2006, representatives from state and territory Outdoor Education Associations agreed to form a representative national body – Outdoor Education Australia.

These more recent developments impress the national and global nature of education in, about and for environments, and will serve as the framework for the 15<sup>th</sup> National Outdoor Education Conference.

## **Sustaining our Spirit of Place**

Spirit of place refers to the unique, distinctive and cherished aspects of a place. It’s the invisible weave of culture and the tangible physical aspects of a place, and it’s the interpersonal aspects of our relationships with a place.

It’s the urban and the rural, the domestic and the commercial, the local and the global. It’s the indigenous and the non-indigenous.

In short, it’s the very stuff of which Outdoor Education is about.

In using the term ‘sustaining’ we’re embodying a number of concepts:

- We’re linking to our past: what have we done before?
- We’re linking to our future: what can we do next?
- We’re linking to our environment: how can we protect this place and encourage others to do likewise?

So, for the 15th National Outdoor Education Conference, we’re encouraging delegates to consider: What have we done in the past that will help us in the future – for us, our students and our world? What are people doing, teaching, learning? What will our students need to help them in this uncertain world? How can Outdoor Education help this place, our world?