

Unofficial Welcome – 2015 National LETS Conference

Belinda Moore

Hello! My name is Bel Moore. Welcome to Far North Queensland and thank you to those of you who have come from afar. I am unofficially welcoming you to the 2015 National LETS Conference, tomorrow we will have a more formal welcome and opening address. Our theme is *local abundance, LETS share...*

I would like first and foremost to congratulate Jenni and Katrin, in particular, on an AMAZING conference! I am in awe of the resources they have drawn from LETS, and the wider community. They have led a small but dedicated team of helpers to create an incredible weekend for us all, and deserve a big round of applause!

You're all here for different reasons – to meet people, to learn, to share, to grow, to relax, to observe, to eat – to *connect*. And many of you have heard me speak before about the connections. It's why we are all really here. It's why we do anything. It's what makes us human beings.

I believe LETS is more about these connections than it is about anything else. Young people may think it is radical, older people might consider it frugal, families find it useful... I've long believed LETS to be *necessary*. For me it is the most sensible tool for relocalisation and a resilient community. Everyone trades. Every person in our community has something to offer, and needs something in return. LETS, and sharing abundance, just makes so much sense.

I first joined LETS in Townsville as a 17 year old uni student, living in a new city over 1000km from my family and friends. Through LETS I made the most meaningful connections during my time in Townsville. I learned about my many valued skills, I was accepted and supported, and it was about the only part of launching into adulthood that made much sense at all. To share, trade, swap, support, learn, teach, nurture, harvest, grow, communicate and *connect* with like minds was a huge blessing to me during my few years in a quite ordinary city in the early 1990s. I then moved to a small rural town for 11 years, where I was not involved in LETS and did not really have a similar tribe.

When I moved to the Tablelands in 2006 I was excited to hear about a local LETS group which had been trading for nearly two decades! I emailed founding member Alison and found out about the meetings in Tarzali. I lived over the other side of the Tablelands, but when I moved to Tarzali in 2007, going to these meetings was at the top of my list of being involved in my new community! I mentioned LETS to my friend, who lived near the meeting venue and she said, "Oh Bel, it's just old people swapping pot plants!" Well... I really like older people, and I was keen to grow more gardens on our new farm, so I went along. And there were about half a dozen people, mostly older, trading mostly plants. But the shared meal was really lovely. I was also out of the house on my own (I had six children, aged 3 to 12 years, at the time). I learned so much from these monthly meetings – about gardening, poultry,

local resources and local climate... And I made new friends.

The following year at a LETS AGM I was elected as the new co-ordinator. It was also voted that we begin to use the Community Exchange for online trading and record keeping. The transition took a couple of months, and there was initially a little resistance, but for our small and quiet LETS group here on the Tablelands, utilising the Community Exchange software was a turning point. So a huge thanks to Tim, for enabling us to grow from strength to strength over the past six and a half years. From our initial handful of accounts and 12 trades in the month of November 2008 through to many hundreds of accounts and up to 1000 trades a month now in 2015, and a turnover of over 600 000 Bartles during that time, we've certainly made good use of the software! Thank you also to Annette for your support with the Australian Community Exchange server. Without Tim and Annette, Tableland LETS could not thrive!

During the weekend we'll have opportunities to further discuss the resurgence and growth of Tableland LETS and other exchanges. What's worked, what hasn't. We will also hear fascinating stories and innovative ideas as we explore the future of LETS. Throw in some world class entertainment, a good dose of relaxation and of course, plenty of meaningful connections and I'm sure there will be something for you all to enjoy!

A few housekeeping notes -

No Smoking in or around any buildings. Designated Smoking areas are sign posted. Don't drop butts!

Please turn off lights and close doors in rooms and bathrooms to keep the bugs and wildlife out.

Water from taps is drinkable, but please be conscious of usage.

Toilets are septic, so no chemical cleaners and don't flush any sanitary items etc

A First Aid Kit will be available in the kitchen.

Platypus are regularly seen in the creek, so you might like to go for a walk in the morning or evening. You may swim in the dam and there are canoes for use in the big lake.

Tonight's dinner is made with love by Melitta of that retro café in Yungaburra. We have Katie Wilson here to play her harp for us. Enjoy your meal, sleep well, and have an amazing weekend!