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Vision rewarded

This issue's lead feature article (page 18) celebrates Brad Norman becoming the first Australian in 25 years to win a Rolex Award for Enterprise. Only five of these coveted international prizes are presented every two years – they recognise outstanding endeavour that advances human knowledge and well-being.

Norman, a whale shark specialist, has won global acclaim for his innovative efforts to understand and raise the conservation profile of these majestic but little-understood fish. His ECOCEAN project is of particular interest to *Ecos* because through uniquely adapted technology and the power of the Internet, it is engaging people in communities across the whale shark's range – including tourists, divers, shark fishermen and officials – to contribute personally to safeguarding the future of this beautiful creature. We encourage other Australians to follow Brad's example and apply for the 2008 Awards.

On page 22, Graeme O'Neill provides a summary and a new perspective on the pros and cons of biofuels. The growing fervour about alternative fuels is understandable given the recent rises in the price of oil and parallel calls for anti-greenhouse measures, but biofuels' environmental, economic and social credentials are under deeper scrutiny as their production increases. There are some potentially significant unforeseen impacts to weigh up against the local benefits they bring, and we must be under no illusion that their cost will be any relief.

The other Focus (page 8) discusses the mechanisms of social change, and



considers the rapid societal shifts that will be required over the next decade in order to meet the challenges of climate change and our other sustainable development

imperatives. Matthew Brace examines historical cases of such shifts, and then profiles the role of the new social entrepreneurs – leaders who work against the status quo to drive the mechanisms of change and lead societies forward.

Finally, the prolonged drought in central Queensland has brought home the reality of critical water shortages, and has led to the planning of controversial new dams as one intended solution. On page 14, Wendy Pyper reviews the increasingly heated debate surrounding the viability and both environmental and community impacts of the proposed Traveston Crossing Dam. As was the case for the recently constructed Burnett River Paradise Dam, there are significant concerns about the manner in which the project is being orchestrated. The article also discusses the conjecture over the long-term effectiveness of dams generally, as a drought mitigation option.

Enjoy your reading.

James Porteous
Managing Editor



CSIRO Livestock Industries

Next, in issue 134

December–January's issue highlights the problem of carbon and other nutrient depletion from agricultural landscapes. The export of crops and stock from rural areas permanently removes the basis of healthy absorbent soils, breaking the natural carbon cycle that normally returns key nutrients. We go back to the future to look at the role organic waste is starting to play in restoring the viability of farmed soil.