Implementing Organisational Foresight:  
A Case Study in Learning from the Future

Maree Conway  
Director, Foresight, Planning & Review  
Swinburne University of Technology  
PO Box 218, Hawthorn, 3122  
Australia  
Email: mconway@swin.edu.au  
Telephone: 61 3 9214 8491  
Fax: 61 3 9214 8636

Dr Joseph Voros  
Scenario and Strategy Analyst  
Foresight, Planning & Review  
Swinburne University of Technology  
PO Box 218, Hawthorn, 3122  
Australia  
Email: jvoros@swin.edu.au  
Telephone: 61 3 9214 8063  
Fax: 61 3 9214 8636

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Abstract

Swinburne University of Technology established an internal foresight unit in 1999, with a brief to integrate foresight into existing University planning processes. At the same time, the Australian Foresight Institute, an academic unit with a focus on teaching, research and consultancy was established. The existence of both scholarly and practical foresight work in a single institution provides a unique environment in which the University can begin to learn from the future to strengthen its existing strategy development and strategic planning processes.

Implementing foresight at Swinburne is about three years old. This paper is a case study of that implementation to date. It will discuss the intellectual framework being used to underpin foresight implementation, how we have gone about integrating scenario planning into the University since July 2001, and outcomes so far. Particular attention is paid to how foresight is being implemented in an organisational setting with entrenched planning processes and a sometimes unhealthy degree of scepticism, and how the outputs from scenario planning will be used to inform strategy development and decision making.

Introduction

Swinburne University of Technology is a large tertiary institution located in Melbourne, Australia, and in Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam. In Australia, it is a dual sector institution with two higher education divisions and one vocational education division. In total it has 37,000 students with around 37% of those students in the higher education divisions. There are approximately 2000 staff who work across six campuses. Swinburne became a university in 1992 after a long history of providing high quality vocationally and professionally oriented education.

In 2002, it is an institution striving to be different. It aims to focus its activities in selected learning and teaching and research areas and to build on its strong links with industry. Its dual sectors provide it with a unique opportunity to provide industry with a ‘one stop shop’ with educational opportunities from apprenticeships through to PhDs. Swinburne’s future is “to be a pre-eminent entrepreneurial university from the Asia-Pacific, thriving on new ideas and knowledge and exploiting our intersectoral heritage to create value for our stakeholders”. It has five strategic themes which inform strategic planning at all levels of the University:

- The Entrepreneurial University
- The Research Intensive University
- Internationalisation
- Flexible Learning and Teaching
- The Intersectoral Advantage

This paper will provide an overview of what is being done at Swinburne to integrate a long term futures perspective into planning, and to begin the process of shifting worldviews about Swinburne’s future as a university.
Foresight at Swinburne

Slaughter (1999: 287) writes that an organisation can use several options to develop a capacity for strategic foresight:

- upgrade an existing strategic analysis capacity;
- create a new team;
- buy in external expertise; or
- a combination of these.

At Swinburne, the final option was taken – by creating a new internal unit (FPU/FPR) with existing strategic planning staff, upgrading their capability with training and development and by hiring new staff with existing expertise in foresight work, and then developing the new function. At the same time, an academic unit, the Australian Foresight Institute (AFI) was established to provide teaching, research and consultancy in foresight. The Vice-Chancellor and Vice-President ‘brought’ foresight to Swinburne in 1999, after realising that it would add a much-needed dimension to both the University’s planning processes and its academic profile.

Swinburne is therefore rather unusual in that it is an institution ‘walking the foresight talk’. The University both teaches foresight as an academic discipline in the AFI, and is are engaged in incorporating it into continuing strategy development and strategic planning processes in FPR. Swinburne has provided the environment in which a distinctive opportunity to establish foresight as both an area of academic excellence and as an area of competitive advantage for the University can be realised. This paper deals with the internal unit (FPR) and the work being undertaken to integrate foresight into continuing planning and strategy development processes.

FPR is charged with the mission of developing, implementing and continuously improving the University Planning Framework in ways that meet the needs of the University community, and with developing a strong foresight and strategic thinking capacity to underpin and inform the University’s strategy development. When it was established, FPR’s brief was to review existing University planning processes, and shift those processes from paper to people and from compliance to action. The University Planning Framework\(^1\) was established in 1999 and incorporated foresight for the first time. FPR’s real task, then, was to integrate and promote foresight in a new planning system that was being introduced into an organisation suffering funding cut-backs, academic re-profiling, which was often characterised by cynicism, personality politics and territory defending, and whose staff were accustomed to compliance models of planning and quality assurance. That task was daunting. There was fortunately, a lot of goodwill, and some very clever people who were allies, and who helped in the process of introducing Swinburne to the idea of foresight and how it could enhance University planning processes.

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\(^1\) The University Planning Framework incorporates foresight in the form of strategic intelligence scanning and scenario planning, with 10 year planning (University Statement of Direction 2010), triennial and annual planning, performance reporting, quality review and resource allocation. The aim is to have all elements fully integrated by 2005.
Some time was spent at the outset pondering how best to introduce foresight at Swinburne in terms of education and methodology, while at the same time developing an intellectual framework that would stand up to the deconstructionist tendencies of university staff. See Conway (2001) for a more detailed discussion of the incorporation of foresight into the strategic planning process at Swinburne.

A Foresight Model

The following section outlines a generic foresight process or framework developed for Swinburne by Dr Joseph Voros. The process is designed to not only fit in with the University Planning Framework, but to also be widely applicable to foresight work in general, in a variety of contexts ranging from desk research to workshops to unit planning to organisational direction-finding. The framework has proven to be a useful basis for adaptation to specific projects within academic and administrative units at Swinburne.

Experts on strategic management, such as Mintzberg (1994) have characterized the essential difference between strategic planning and strategic thinking. In essence, Mintzberg says, strategic planning “has always been about analysis – breaking down a goal or set of intentions into steps, formalized those steps so that they can be implemented, and articulating the anticipated consequences or results of each step”. This is clearly an activity requiring thinking which is strongly analytical, logical, deductive and pragmatic in order to ensure that things stay ‘on track’.

“Strategic thinking, in contrast” he says, “is about synthesis. It involves intuition and creativity” to formulate an integrated perspective or vision of where an organisation should be heading. It is generally intuitive, experimental and disruptive (Liedtka, 1998) and attempts to go beyond what purely logical thinking can inform. Because information about potential futures is always incomplete, the thinking required for success in this activity needs to be ‘synthetical’ and inductive, rather than analytical and deductive.

Foresight in an organisational context is best conceived and positioned as an aspect of strategic thinking, which is meant to open up an expanded range of perceptions of the strategic options available, so that strategy making is potential wiser. Strategic thinking is concerned with exploration, often based on limited and patchy information and options, not the steps needed for implementation of actions, which is the realm of strategic planning.

The interface between these two activities is strategy development or strategy making, where a particular goal or objective is usually set or a decision made. Mintzberg, Ahlstrand and Lampel (1998) discuss 10 major ‘schools’ of strategy and their different assumptions and approaches. The ‘cognitive’ school is concerned with the ‘mysterious process’ of the actual creation of strategy. The focus is on assessing options, examining choices, making a decision, and/or setting a destination.
Strategic thinking is therefore about exploring options, strategy development is about making decisions and setting directions, and strategic planning is about implementing actions. All three are needed and vitally necessary for successfully confronting the strategic environment.

Foresight at Swinburne has been positioned as an element of strategic thinking which informs strategy making, which directs strategic planning and action. Care is taken to stress that it does not replace strategic planning but rather enriches the context within which strategy is developed, planned and executed.

The Swinburne foresight framework builds on the work of Horton (1999) who laid out a broad, three-phase process for doing foresight work. Phase One consists of gathering inputs, Phase Two is the foresight work itself, and Phase Three is Outputs and Actions. Phase Two of her process consists of two steps: a Translation step which translates information gathered in Phase One into a form the organisation can understand, and an Interpretation step, where the translated knowledge is converted into understanding.

Using Mintzberg’s notion of the separation of strategic thinking from strategy development and strategic planning, the Swinburne framework separates Horton’s Phase Three into two distinct elements: the Outputs of the foresight process; and the Actions taken as a result of it. The Actions step is really just the usual process of Strategy Development and Strategic Planning (what will be called Strategy below), the concepts of which are familiar to people in organisations.

The framework also explicitly separated the outputs of Foresight work from Strategy because of the very real possibility of Foresight becoming a convenient scapegoat for ineffectual action. In other words, one must be clear that the Foresight process simply provides input into the consideration of decisions and the implementation of actions, which is the role of traditional strategy work. If this strategy work is not done, or done badly, it must be clear that it is a separate activity from the ‘foresight work’ which preceded it. Because ‘foresight’ is usually new and unfamiliar (and may have opponents within the organisation who either see it as a threat or simply don’t ‘get’ it), in such real-world political environments as organisations, this clarity of the separation of roles and responsibilities cannot be over emphasised.

In broad outline then, the framework uses a four-phase approach: Inputs; Foresight; Outputs; and Strategy, but which differs from Horton’s significantly in the details of the phases, especially the Foresight phase. This broad outline is shown in Figure 1. The comments on the right hand side of Figure 1 indicate either the type of activity involved, or the main focus/output of the phase.
Slaughter (1999: 287) has discussed the development and application of strategic foresight and suggested several foresight methodologies which could be employed. He gives four main types:

- Input methods;
- Analytic methods;
- Paradigmatic methods; and
- Iterative and Exploratory methods.

In brief, Input methods are used to gather intelligence from a variety of sources. This type of method maps closely with Horton’s Inputs phase, and the Inputs step in Figure 1. Analytic methods are used to analyse and assess factors and their interrelationships, usually as a first step towards deeper and more detailed work. This is similar to Horton’s sub-step of Translation. Paradigmatic methods seek to deepen understanding, and thus have a similar goal to Horton’s Interpretation sub-step, but again differ somewhat. Iterative and Exploratory methods are used to explore future states to create the ‘forward views’.

Combining, in this way, the essential ideas of Mintzberg’s separation of roles and responsibilities of strategic thinking, strategy development and strategic planning; the broad phase approach of Horton; and the specific methodological ideas of Slaughter, we arrive at a generic framework for foresight work. This framework is designed to be scalable from individual to workgroup to organisation to higher degrees of human interaction.

The four key elements of the process - Inputs; ‘Foresight’ work; Outputs; and Strategy – are discussed below, and a more detailed diagram of the generic foresight process is shown in Figure 2.
While some terms are used which are similar to those of Slaughter and Horton, the terms used here have a different meaning than those implied in their work. This time, the comments on the right hand side of the figure are some typical questions used to illustrate the type of activity or thinking which is undertaken at each step. They are not definitive, but rather attempt to show the ‘flavour’ of the thinking or activity at that step.

Figure 2: A Generic Foresight Process

- **Inputs.** This is scanning for strategic intelligence and the gathering of information. Many methods, techniques and frameworks exist, of which the ‘Delphi’ technique and ‘environmental scanning’ are perhaps the best known. The tools and techniques of ‘competitive intelligence’ are also relevant here. It is the point where, in workshop formats, the members of the workshop group are asked for their ideas and insights, such as through brainstorming ideas or a ‘near-future context’ process. Slaughter (1996) and (2002) lists some key questions designed to open out the thinking about the ‘near future context’. When the activity of gathering inputs is undertaken at the organisational level (as opposed to brainstorming in workshop contexts), we use the term ‘strategic intelligence scanning’ (as shown in Figure 1), or sometimes simply ‘strategic scanning’ (Brown, 1999, p.9) in preference to the somewhat passive term ‘environmental scanning’ or the somewhat negative term ‘early warning system’. Most strategic planning involves something called ‘environmental scanning’ which ‘everyone knows’ how to do. Our approach to strategic scanning (Voros, 2001) is distanced somewhat from existing ‘well known’ methods of environmental scanning, so it was deliberately called something which did not sound the same.
• ‘Foresight Work’. This can be conceived as comprising three broad steps which follow a logical sequence.

The first step is Analysis, which is best considered as a preliminary stage to more in-depth work, rather than as a stand-alone technique itself. The question asked here is ‘what seems to be happening?’ The goal is to seek a ‘first cut’ at creating some order out of the bewildering variety of data which the Inputs step usually generates, usually using trend analysis, cross-impact matrices and other such analytical techniques. Forecasting is also a common activity here. The results of the analysis then inform the second step.

Interpretation, the second step, asks the question ‘what’s really happening?’ and seeks to ‘probe beneath the surface’ (Slaughter, 1989) of the analysis to look for deeper structure and insights. This is the realm of critical futures studies (Slaughter, 1999b, p203), causal layered analysis (Inayatullah, 1998), systems thinking, and other ‘depth’ approaches to futures thinking. The third step is the actual creation of forward views.

Prospecion\(^2\), a term invented by Dr Joseph Voros to capture the activity of purposefully looking forward to create forward views. This step is where various views of alternative futures are explicitly examined or created. It is where scenarios, ‘visioning’ and ‘normative’ methods are located in the broader foresight process. ‘Backcasting’ methods are also located here, rather than in the Analysis step, because they presume the existence of a forward view to backcast from. The ‘flavour’ question asked at this stage depends upon which type of potential futures are under consideration—possible, plausible, probable or preferable.\(^3\) The one shown in Figure 2 is for the broadest class of futures we consider: possible—‘what might happen?’ (i.e., based on any new knowledge which might emerge in the future). We also use ‘what could happen?’ (i.e., what is allowed based on our current knowledge and understanding of how the world works?) for plausible futures; ‘what is likely to happen?’ (i.e. what do the current trends suggest?) for probable futures; and ‘what do we want to happen?’ (based on our value judgements) for preferable futures.

• Outputs. The outputs of foresight work are: (i) the actual range of options generated by the work (these are tangible); and (ii) the changes in thinking engendered by the whole process, especially the insights generated in the Interpretation step and by the creation of forward views in the Prospection step (these are intangible). The intangible output might be somewhat difficult for some hard-headed, ‘objective’ people to appreciate, or even recognise. But it is undoubtedly the more important form of output because of the way it alters the very mechanism of strategy development itself, namely the perceptions of the mind(s) involved in strategising. One question which captures the essence of the activity at this step is ‘what might we need to do?’ It tends to generate an expanded perception of options as a result.

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\(^2\) From ‘pro’ = ‘forward’, ‘spect’ = ‘look’, and ‘-tion’ = the noun form of the action. Thus ‘prospecion’ (the stress falls on the second syllable) is ‘the purposeful activity of looking forward and/or creating forward views’. This word also acknowledges the French school of futures work and their term la prospective, as well as the European use of the term ‘prospective thinking’.

\(^3\) A form of this taxonomy goes back at least as far as Henchey (1978). The form of the futures questions takes some inspiration from Hancock and Bezold (1994).
At this point, foresight has done its job—the generation of (hopefully) an expanded perception of strategic options available. Strategy is the final part in this four-part framework.

- **Strategy.** Very little will be said about strategy, given the earlier discussion about the relationship between foresight, strategy and planning. Suffice it to say that since foresight has done its job, it now hands over its Output for consideration by decision-makers in making decisions and directing strategic actions for implementation (i.e., strategy development and strategic planning). The results of the Strategy step need to be fed back into the Inputs of the overall foresight framework in an ongoing way, closing the loop, so that continuous re-assessments and ‘course corrections’ are possible along the ‘strategic journey’. The foresight workshops and seminars being run at Swinburne have made use of Tibbs’ (1999) metaphor of the ‘strategic landscape’ to encapsulate this notion of a strategic actor undertaking a strategic journey into the future, so that the concept of a strategic journey has been seeded prior to the Swinburne Scenarios Project.

A more detailed form of the foresight process is shown in Figure 3 showing, in particular, some of the methods applicable at each step. The process is designed to be as general as possible so that it can be applied on any scale, from the individual level to workgroup to department to organisation to society, etc.

![Figure 3: Foresight Methodologies](image-url)
Foresight in Practice

This section explores how foresight at Swinburne has been put into practice.

At the same time as the generic foresight framework was being developed, FPR was producing two foresight ‘education’ publications: (i) Foresight Snippets – short, monthly emails which consisted of three snippets of information about the future not necessarily related to education; and (ii) prospect, a quarterly Foresight Bulletin which included full-length articles on the future of higher education as it related to Swinburne’s strategic themes. The aim of these publications was to introduce to staff the concept of thinking about the future as an organisation and to highlight some key work being done about the future of the university. There were both essentially strategic scanning reports (Inputs) although they were not ‘sold’ as such.

The foresight publications had been published for about three months when the first scenario planning workshop with an administrative unit was piloted.

In early 2000, an exploratory scenario planning activity had been run to see how the methodology might be used at Swinburne. It was clear that staff involved in the process loved it, but the managers who were divorced from the process saw little value in it. The scenarios produced from this workshop were not sufficiently well developed for them to be used in the continuing strategic planning process, but the experience as a whole reinforced both the value of the methodology, and the need to balance the involvement of staff at the coal-face and of senior executive managers in the scenario process.

A decision was then taken to work initially at the unit level to introduce the methodology to staff before the Swinburne Scenarios Project was run at the University level. This proved to be very successful, particularly in administrative units. Three sequential workshops have now been developed which take staff through a modified scenario planning process. The workshops are still introductory in that the scenarios are not fully researched or developed, but they have proven to be a successful way to trigger conversations and thinking about the future. Facilitation work has also been undertaken for individual projects at Swinburne such as the Student Experience Project. Causal layered analysis is used in these workshops as the primary methodology.

Feedback from staff who participated in both the scenario and project workshops has been almost universally positive. The aim of these workshops is not to produce scenarios for use in continuing planning, but rather to expose staff to a different way of thinking about the future. These workshops were therefore most successful at the analysis and interpretation level of foresight since they provided staff with an understanding of how a futures oriented approach could inform their thinking about their work and changes that might need to be made. In one case, however, the scenarios and discussion emerging from one set of workshops has been used to inform the decision making process related to the purchase of a new computing system in that unit.

The unit workshops were suspended as the Swinburne Scenarios Project became a reality in March 2002. The Project aims to generate a shared understanding about the
University’s future operating environment, and to identify and begin to address strategic issues and challenges in that environment. It aims to enrich the operational context in which decisions about Swinburne’s future are made today.

Hardin Tibbs and Susanne Haydon (Synthesys Strategic Thinking) were employed as consultants to facilitate and bring some external credibility to the Project. The initial Project plan included a number of staff seminars, informal lunches with senior managers, and a series of internal and external interviews that surfaced the issues that needed to be discussed in the scenario process.

While scenario methodology usually includes an internal interview step, we viewed this stage as an opportunity to obtain an external perspective on Swinburne as an organisation. Swinburne is a very devolved university, and has three quite distinct teaching divisions in Australia. A number of tensions and operational practices had emerged over time, and despite having an intersectoral strategy and a single published vision for the future, it was becoming quite clear that there was no “one Swinburne”. This internal interviewing stage allowed an external, and therefore perhaps more objective, perspective to be developed on the internal workings of Swinburne which could then form the basis of the scenario workshops themselves.

Two workshops were planned, one to identify the critical drivers of change for Swinburne, and one to work on the scenarios themselves. In between, it was intended to undertake a detailed environmental scan to support the emerging scenario logics. The workshops were originally to be attended only by our senior executive managers, but it became clear that, for a number of reasons, attendance at the planned day-long workshop would be problematic. The participants were expanded to include heads of school to ensure we had a critical mass and because, at this stage, we were looking to use learning and teaching as the focus for the scenarios.

The first workshop did not use the formulaic scenario planning process since the internal interviews indicated that there were a number of issues that needed to be dealt with before scenarios could be considered. Hardin Tibbs therefore introduced the concept of a timeline to focus on Swinburne’s history as a university and what its future might be. This process allowed all the various opinions and issues about Swinburne’s future to surface and be discussed. Rather than focus on critical drivers of change therefore, this first workshop instead sought to find some common ground from which scenarios might be developed. What emerged did confirm that Swinburne’s three Australian divisions were somewhat in conflict about the future of the University. After some spirited discussion though, a conceptual model for core business shared by all divisions emerged, and the genesis of the second workshop was born.

The two consultants and Joseph Voros locked themselves in a room for a week to work on the scenarios, and to ensure that they could document every trend and issue used to create the scenarios. Again, rather than follow a formula to create the scenarios with a matrix, a combination of broad scenarios and business models for universities were used to create the framework for the development of four stories of Swinburne’s future.
The first workshop in March suffered from a Swinburne idiosyncrasy – that of dwindling attendance throughout the day, so that at the end of the afternoon, we have five people out of the original 18 left in the room. The second workshop was much better attended than the first, and no one left which was taken as one indicator of success!

Two scenarios emerged from the two broad frameworks and four business models used in the second workshop. Draft scenarios were then reviewed by a small number of key senior managers to check internal consistency and logics. This small group included someone who had not been involved in the second workshop and had not therefore participated in the scenario generation. This step was taken to further develop the sense of ownership in this group of staff who will play a critical role in using scenario thinking in our continuing strategic planning.

A Work in Progress – What Next?

This first scenario planning exercise is, at the time of writing, about half complete. The ‘prospection’ stage of foresight work has been completed, and the outputs (the scenarios themselves and supporting material) are now being finalised.

The next stage is to work with each of the University’s strategic planning groups (there is one for each of the five strategic themes), to get their input on how the scenarios might develop within the context of their strategic theme. We will be seeking to answer the question: if the events described in the scenarios actually occurred, what strategic response would the University make? More time will then be spent doing more research if needed and testing options and strategic implications with the planning groups, and other major groups in the University. An options paper will be prepared for consideration at the November 2002 meeting of our Joint Planning and Resources Committee (our ‘peak’ planning committee).

Once endorsed by that Committee, that options paper will be taken to the Council Planning Workshop in April 2003 for what is being termed the strategy review and decision making phase. This stage will seek to answer the question: are the University’s current strategic themes the best ‘fit’ for its future environment? At this stage, a decision might be taken to confirm, or add to our five strategic themes. The University Planning Conference, a broadly representative forum, will meet in May 2003 to consider implementation issues and priorities for the continuing – and routine – planning cycle. During this process, those issues which we need to monitor will be identified, as will indicators that will show progress is being made in the right direction.

The Project will be evaluated in the second half of 2003, bringing it to a close. The Project is taking time and is probably slower than was expected, but experience has shown that taking time to ensure that staff understand the scenarios and what they are saying about Swinburne’s future environment is critical.
An additional staff member will be employed in FPR to strengthen the University’s capacity for analysis and interpretation, and to support the new Strategic Intelligence Database which will go on-line later in 2002. This Database will record electronically scanning “hits” which have been identified using an environmental scanning framework developed in-house (Voros, 2001), and which will be available to the University community.

Unit workshops will re-commence in the second half of 2003, with the addition of a new workshop on “Using the Swinburne Scenarios” to inform unit strategic planning.

Outcomes and Lessons Learned

- In an organisation that has never heard the word ‘foresight’ used in the planning context before, the first stage of implementation – that of introducing the term and associated concepts - is laughter and lateral jokes. As the laughter dies down, the words of the cynic are heard – “this is a stupid thing to do – we think about the future anyway, why are we wasting our time on this fantasy stuff?” These mutterings died down after the Vice-Chancellor announced publicly that foresight is great, and we’re doing it, whether you like it or not. But, that was the easy part.

- As indicated earlier, the decision was made to spend some time working at the unit level to introduce scenario planning to staff before that methodology was used for the University. This strategy has appeared to work well, as there are now a number of ‘foresight champions’ in the organisation. As with any strategy, what has worked at Swinburne might not work somewhere else given the need to ‘tailor’ the strategy for the organisation.

- As with all organisational change, talking to people is critical. A lot of time has already been spent talking with people, but it emerges that such conversations will be continuing. One key message in these conversations has been that while foresight is a process to support thinking about the future, all planning involves some notions about what the future might be like. The aim of Foresight at Swinburne is to surface everyone’s individual thoughts about the future and test the assumptions on which they were based in order to develop a shared and agreed view of what Swinburne’s future can be like.

- More time will need to be spent ‘selling’ the scenarios and the process. A video is being produced that will be used to explain both the process and the experiences of staff who were involved. It is hoped that implementation will be easier now that the key managers have been through the process and have responded positively to it, but the admirable tendency of university staff to question and test all things new has made our implementation strategy more challenging than originally envisaged.

- Staff in the FPR had been trained using the GBN scenario planning methodology, and that methodology has been used as one input into the methodology we have been developing for our unit workshops. The ability to be flexible in terms of adapting different scenario methodologies to suit both the context and the emerging findings of the Swinburne Scenarios Project proved to be a critical success factor.
• A strong emphasis was placed on knowledge transfer during the time that the external consultants were on site. Using consultants is not cheap, and it is intended to continue using scenario methodology in the future using internal expertise. Indeed, that was one of the justifications in the budget submission for the project. So, knowledge transfer was critical.

• Holding the workshops off-site turned out to more important than had been originally thought, as was the timing of the workshops. The first workshop was one day, but asking senior managers who were ‘too busy’ to take a day out of their work life was seen as too onerous. The second workshop was run from mid-afternoon to mid-evening with dinner included, and this worked well. It seems that managers would rather give up their evening than their work-day.

• Perhaps most importantly, signs are emerging that worldviews might be shifting, or at least that there has been a shift from open antagonism to acknowledgement of the process as a new and good model.

Concluding Comments

Foresight at Swinburne is still very much a learning process for Swinburne and for the FPR. It is clear that it is a long-term project, and that the past three years have really only established the base from which to proceed with further implementation. The use of scenario planning as the initial methodology is only the first step in introducing the future into our planning processes. While scenarios will remain part of our formal planning, other methods will also be introduced over time to assist the organisation to develop a more coherent forward view.

Slaughter’s words (1999: 300) continue to provide a source of motivation and drive for staff in the FPR since they indicate clearly the desired end-state of organisational foresight:

The near-term future can be clearly understood by developing the right capacities, asking the right questions and nurturing the right people. The careful use of such resources provides organisational access to an evolving structural overview of the next couple of decades … Organisations that participate effectively in this process will find a range of valuable outcomes: they will seldom be overtaken by change, they will not succumb to crisis management, they will find it easy to avoid problems and seize opportunities, they will develop long-term vision and a kind of forward-looking prescience.

With a new Chancellor in 2002, and a new Vice-Chancellor and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor set to arrive on the scene in 2003, it is both an exciting and an unknown time for the University. FPR’s aim is to have foresight accepted by staff and embedded in the University Planning Framework before the end of 2003. To some extent, the future of foresight at Swinburne depends on whether or not that deadline is achieved. Only time will tell.

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