

## **Network Mawson Lakes: International and local links**

**Ania Zysk (BA(psych.), BSW, MSW)**

University of South Australia, GPO Box 2471 Adelaide SA 5001 [www.unisa.edu.au](http://www.unisa.edu.au) [ania.zysk@unisa.edu.au](mailto:ania.zysk@unisa.edu.au)

Recent studies show that connections made with the local community are a natural and effective way for international students to learn about cultural norms, gain social support and enrich their study abroad experience. However, many international students have limited opportunities for meaningful interaction with locals.

The Network Mawson Lakes Project is a unique model of collaboration between local residents, clubs, businesses, schools, the university, the police, the council and international students. It has facilitated connections between international students and local residents through a variety of initiatives. It has brought social and economic advantages for international students and local residents through volunteering opportunities, collaborative projects and partnerships. These opportunities also support a deeper understanding of other cultures and lifestyles and thereby create greater harmony, understanding and tolerance in the local community.

Through a discussion of the history and evolution of the Network Mawson Lakes Project this paper explores how a community development approach can be a useful tool for developing practical solutions that assist international students to have greater interaction with local residents. It will demonstrate how community development principles such as community ownership, networking and sustainability have been the essential tools underpinning the framework for this process and are useful tools for building international and local links.