



Testimonials

Our Fellows: What they Say



Karen O'Reilly **2005 National ISS Institute** **Overseas Fellow**

Supported by DEST, Commonwealth Government

Karen O'Reilly, Metal Fabricator and Welder, was invited to share her experiences as an ISS Institute Fellow at the 17th Annual ISS Institute Fellowship Awards, November 2007 at the RACV Club, Melbourne

Square Pegs in Round Holes

Welcome distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen and Fellows to this, the 17th ISS Institute Fellowship awards ceremony. I especially wish to congratulate the new Fellows into the fold, as this day marks the first day of a very special path for you all. Carolynne once shared an observation with me: that ISS Fellows are united in their characteristics with one being we are 'square-pegs-in-round-holes'. I have decided that this is a very important observation as it is telling of particular personal attributes that separate and distinguish you all from the 'ordinary'. Being a 'square-peg' is, of course, never the easy route. But, it is reflective of certain essential qualities that makes you, you. It's reflective of your life passions, observations, ability to question, courage to stand up for your beliefs and desire for improvement. It's one of the reasons that we are now honoring you here today.

I have been asked to briefly share with you, a little about my Fellowship journey in the hope that those here may gain some insight into the importance of the work undertaken by the ISS and (at least one of) its Fellows!

Two years ago I was working as a Metal Fabricator and Welder. Although a good job, there was little prospect for career development or advancement. Maybe due to certain stagnant and outdated social perceptions of the metal trades, there has (in Australia) traditionally been a lack of career development and pathways to 'Master artisan' for tradespeople – and I was looking for something new. At the time of applying for my Fellowship I was employed by 'Skilled Engineering', now I'm teaching at Swinburne TAFE. I first began teaching welding one night a week at Victoria University (VU), and it was through VU that I discovered the existence of the International Specialised Skills Institute.

I was extremely impressed by the ISS's vision. It made me think more carefully about the many skills deficiencies (or skills gaps) in my area of work. I was so impressed to learn that this organisation gave Fellowships to tradespeople, as I had never known of anyone offering these kinds of opportunities before.

In 2005, I was awarded the 'National ISS Institute Overseas Fellowship' for Victoria, sponsored by DEST, Commonwealth Government, to undertake a study program to gain a comprehensive understanding in Pipefitting as well as design, creativity, innovation and problem solving in engineering trades.

I have always been a creative person and have held the firm belief that engineering trades is an industry requiring highly creative and innovative skills – this is an area of some contention as it challenges traditional perceptions of trade engineering and what it means to be a good tradesperson.

For many years, although qualified as a 'Metal Fabricator and Welder', I'd worked on site in an area of my trade that was not taught to me as part of my formal apprenticeship training.

I'd made pipe work for the ANZAC Frigates in Williamstown and designed and installed stainless steel piping for beer production at CUB, now 'Fosters Group' in Abbotsford. Although this was the work I performed, the absence of its training was always painfully obvious, and it was from other tradesmen, I learned of a trade called 'pipefitting' that existed in other countries, but not here in Australia.

It is interesting to note that in response to this deficiency, tradespeople and industry have created what is essentially an unofficial 'sub-trade' of pipefitters out of necessity...

After much research, I eventually teamed up with both the WTIA as well as a man in the USA named Phil Campbell who is a senior training coordinator of the prestigious United Association of Journeymen and apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry of the USA and Canada (or 'UA'). Phil had also been responsible for building a brand new pipefitting training centre in Nevada USA, and invited me to visit the complex and as well as attend the UA's week long trainer-training program in Ann Arbor Michigan to meet with pipefitting trainers from across the USA and Canada.

When I finally arrived, I was overwhelmed by the magnitude and sophistication of the UA as an organisation. It has over 400 purpose built trade training centres throughout North America and approximately 330,000 members, 60% of who are pipefitters. The UA understand the importance and value of education and invest heavily in the quality of their training centres and staff.

It is only through these overseas Fellowship opportunities that skills areas can be formally identified. For this reason, the ISS play a very important role in the improvement of quality training in this country. I am hopeful that one day, we too will be in a position to introduce such quality pipe training here...

And finally, I'd like to congratulate our new Fellows, and leave you all with this final thought: The only place where success comes before work is in the dictionary.



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Warwick Johnston **2005 The George Alexander** **Foundation/ISS Institute Fellow**

**Sponsored by The George Alexander
Foundation**

Warwick Johnston, Engineer, was invited to share his experiences as an ISS Institute Fellow at the 16th Annual ISS Institute Fellowship Awards, December 2006 at RACV Club, Melbourne

A Major Landmark in Your Personal and Professional Life

Permit me, if you will, to speak directly to the Fellows. You'll be privy to the conversation, of course, and I trust that you too will benefit from hearing these insights. I will generalise for you my own personal experiences as a Fellow, as an example of what is possible, with the hope that I may inspire you to excel and exceed that which I and other Fellows have been able to achieve.

The impact of an ISS Institute Fellowship upon your professional and personal life will be profound.

Becoming a Fellow is an entry into a club of people with some shared understanding. Although you all represent a broad cross-selection of society, covering different fields, backgrounds and specialities, together you are a group of people with one thing in common... a vision. A vision that has assisted you to identify a specific skills gap in Australia, a vision too of how that skills gap may be rectified, a vision of the benefits which this will bring to Australia.

This vision extends to the journey you're about to embark upon, a journey that you yourself have charted. At the commencement of this journey, you may feel some sense of anticipation, dread. For whatever your background, your present expertise, your specialisation... you are about to become Australia's leading specialist in a skill not yet found in this country. In this sense you are stepping into uncharted territory, and whatever course you had plotted, you will find that the Fellowship will take you to places and learnings beyond which you have presently imagined. I wish you great courage and also great enjoyment on this journey.

The greatest tool you will find at your disposal is the legitimacy brought to you by the ISS Institute Fellowship. As Australia's future leading specialist and advocate in a given field, people within Australia will be calling you to ask for advice. Overseas you will find that the research and knowledge that you take with you, the insights into the Australian market and how it relates to world's best practise – this will be knowledge that international leaders are keen to learn. Because of this, you will find doors opened to you and specialists willing to share their expertise. In this way, the Fellowship is the best possible formula for accelerated learning.

Your journey will all be enhanced by the support and wisdom of those who have made a similar journey before, those Fellows of years past and particularly the excellent staff of the ISS Institute. So go overseas with confidence.

Personally, my journey involved the field of solar powered air conditioning. A field of increasing relevance, as the world awakens to the threat of climate change, a force likely to increase our air conditioning needs. Australia, a land of sun with significant need for air conditioning is very likely to benefit from mastery of this technology, through development and successful application. Yet the technology is a mystery for most Australians, presently being developed in countries that may be cooler, but which have much higher energy prices. By identifying the skills gap, how it may be addressed, and the benefits which would result from this action, an ISS Institute Fellowship was born.

This saw me travel to Germany, Austria, Spain, Israel, and Singapore – along the way meeting with passionate and intelligent people, leaders in the field.

I was able to learn a lot from each encounter, but also pass on a growing wealth of information based upon my research to date and understanding of the Australian market. The Fellowship opened up a door of legitimacy to my visits, and I was welcomed as someone with an interesting perspective – unique even amongst the professionals I visited – that of having a broad technology-independent market awareness.

Along the way, I met amazing people, experts in their field, and made some lifelong friends. In addition to professional benefits, I have benefited personally from the confidence associated with my achievements, for one cannot be thrust into a position of prominence and influence without learning some personal skills, including organization, logistics, communications, and international relations. I've been gratefully supported by people who believe in me, notably 'The George Alexander Foundation', the ISS Institute, and, of course, my employer – a visionary in himself.

Since my trip, I've presented to the Australian and New Zealand Solar Energy Society, completed a report which has been well received, and been invited to speak at various other conferences. Opportunities have opened up, and I regularly receive calls asking my respected opinion. This Fellowship has truly changed my life, as I hope that it changes yours. All of this is possible for you, for this Fellowship is what you make of it.

Treat this ceremony, therefore, as a rite of passage, for you will find it to be a major landmark in your personal and professional life. The life you have led to this moment is over, your new life is now beginning. Whether your skills be related to the environment, technology, the arts, cuisine, or preserving our heritage, I wish that each one of you becomes influential, effective, and helps to bring skills to Australia for our national benefit, so that together we may create a rich vibrant future.



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Athol Wark

2004 ISS Institute Overseas Fellow

**Supported by the Commonwealth Government,
Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST)**

Athol Wark, Chef/Consultant, was invited to share his ISS Institute Fellowship experiences at the 15th Annual ISS Institute Fellowship Awards, December 2005 at Melbourne Town Hall

Journeys and Persistence

I welcome you all to this the 15th ISS Institute Fellowship awards ceremony. I wish to pay tribute to all new inducted fellows, class of 2005, on a fantastic job and standard set. You have all been chosen for your passion and dedication to you chosen skills and fields of expertise to raise the bar of excellence even higher.

The journey has just begun for you all to achieve self-excellence and knowledge, and to put into place what you have committed yourselves to in your chosen fields.

In gaining these fellowships the journey will be rewarding and very fulfilling, mixed with a lot of emotion and passion as you continue to grapple with questions and answers that challenge your minds.

There will be moments of frustration as you stumble with ideas and directions, but may I assure you the rewards and the support of the ISS Institute management and Board are enormous in both technical expertise and solutions to your questions. There are no problems only solutions. The rewards are great ...

You will find you will gain in stature, strength and knowledge that you never knew you had, together with experiences and people you meet abroad, these will be life changing times and will change how you look on things again in the future.

The best advice is to enjoy yourself and have fun, you have done the hard work, the rest will follow, as the fellowship is designed to fall into place with what you have done so far and questions you have put in place.

This class of 2005 ISS Institute Fellowship winners is your new network circle to draw strength from each other and to help each other in your journeys and will be a great part of your support mechanism. You will also have access to past fellows to draw on their experiences and how they managed their outcomes, so you will not be alone on this fantastic journey of education, and will be called on to mentor the 2006 Fellows and beyond.

I wish to share briefly my experience with you all as a ISS Institute Fellowship winner, as to what can be achieved through your chosen ISS Institute Fellowship.

I won the 'ISS Institute/DEST Overseas Fellowship' for the Northern Territory in 2004 to undertake an overseas study program to gain a comprehensive understanding in value adding to regional produce. In adapting regional products into a culinary uniqueness and a fusion of flavour using ancient produce with today's cookery methods and how to make native ingredients, viable and sustainable in today's marketplace as specified in my fellowship agreement.

My journey started in Alice Springs where I am based as an Executive Chef, Culinary Ambassador, for the past 4 years.

The food I am creating has been a synthesis of my surroundings and my mentors teaching in this wonderful Industry of mine. Motivating me to experiment, with the myriad of gastronomic flavours, the use of freshest and best quality ingredients all play a pivotal role in my creations of 'Wild Foods of Australia', living in Central Australia has hardened my resolve to succeed in my chosen field.

To find my outcomes to my fellowship, the journey took me to Miami, Johnson and Wales Culinary Academy in Florida, North Campus for 5 weeks where I introduced my recipes and experimented with grass roots culinary students. I was able to showcase my skills to these young, hungry for knowledge and uniqueness in food, group of students who wanted to leave no stone unturned. My findings where superseded as the result showed an unequivocal need for those skills and flavours to go global.

Continued...



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Washington DC beckoned next, with a visit to the Embassy of Australia, to do a showcase culinary demonstration to the US Botanical Society. It was their 100th year and I gave a lecture to a packed audience that was to take 1.5 hours but ran to 3 hours, with so much interest and enthusiasm shown and so many questions asked then answered.

A dinner at the Australian Embassy Homestead, of Deputy Chief of Staff, Peter Baxter, to host both sides of the US Congress members was held to again showcase the unique flavours of Australia and to help promote the Australian USA free trade agreement. An outstanding ovation was noted.

A Johnson and Wales F and B Summit was held in Providence, Rhode Island, where again these unique flavours were showcased.

The culmination of my USA taste down under was held at the Hotel Conrad Miami Hotel, whereby 250 invited guests dined on Blackened Wakha Pukha Dukha crusted

Royal Tasmanian salmon with lemon myrtle hollandaise, pink grapefruit, Australian wild lime, coriander and gin sorbet. Culminating with wattleseed espresso ice-cream with sticky wattle seed balsamic syrup served with a shot of sambuca jelly, to mention a few items of the menu.

A TV show of South Florida today with Colin Hay (Men At Work) was another highlight and a proud moment to be an Australian and on an ISS Institute fellowship winner, being beamed live into people's lounge rooms.

On return to Central Australia, the NT awarded me a joint culinary Ambassador together with a great mentor, Chef and friend Jimmy Shu.

World Expo Japan 2005 was to be my next stop to showcase my 'Wildfoods' selection reoperate on a world Asian stage, this was awesome and again so much learnt and motivation gained.

Hawaii the 25th Louis Vuitton Food, Wine and Film Festival was to be my most recent stage in October to showcase and capture the imagination of a tough culinary audience – 8 events in 10 days, a gruelling schedule but very rewarding.

The future looks bright and lots of work still to do.

These are just some of my experiences I have the pleasure to have shared with you and what commitment and passion can do for you.

ISS Institute is in this to build an economically strong Australia through delegates of its citizens – you and I are on this journey together.

May I leave you with two sayings that have summed it up for me in 2005:

1. "Leadership requires courage, do not follow where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail".
2. "Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence, talent will not, nothing is more common than unsuccessful men/women with talent. Genius will not. Un-rewarded genius is almost a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent all powerful".

Good luck and a job well done to all of you. From behind the stove and years of cooking.

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