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President's Column

Ross Kingwell

AARES Achievements

The 53rd Annual Conference of the Society was held in Cairns in February. The Local Organising Committee (LOC) led by John Rolfe (Chair of the LOC) worked long and hard to deliver an outstanding conference. They were ably supported by All Occasions Management (the conference organiser employed by AARES). Working together they ensured that the conference was well-supported by sponsorship and all events ran smoothly to schedule. A highlight for me was being able to spend several hours out on the Great Barrier Reef as part of a pre-conference tour. Learning about the reef and spending a few hours swimming over part of it was a truly memorable experience.

A further highlight of the conference was the number of young professionals who attended the pre-conference dinner. About 20 more students registered for the Cairns conference compared to the previous annual conference. The Society values the involvement of its younger members and to that end the Council agreed to a \$6,000 sponsorship of E-Crew in 2009; its main event being held in Bathurst this year. The AARES sponsorship will go towards scholarships that subsidise travel and accommodation for young attendees.

The AARES 2009 conference sponsorships from Land&Water Australia and ABARE were much appreciated and their continuing support of the AARES annual conference will ensure AARES is able to continue to attract keynote speakers such as Prof Ross Garnaut. His presentation was reported in print in The Australian, The Financial Review, North Queensland Register, and via radio (ABC Rural Radio). Besides Prof Ross Garnaut the conference attracted four Federation Fellows as invited speakers. Thanks to the work of John Rolfe and the LOC AARES now has a one year membership with the Australian Associated Press for

additional media distribution during the year when symposia and special events will be held by our Society.

Papers presented in Cairns are available at the web-site AgEcon Search thereby providing global access to AARES members' research. Thanks must go to Phil Pardey, the AARES President-elect for his work in ensuring AgEcon Search is an on-going resource for AARES members.

Tracy Henderson has overseen an electronic survey of the AARES membership in 2008 and provided an interesting report earlier this year. The key findings are reported in this issue of *News & Views*.

The editors of AJARE (Tom Kompas, Jeff Bennett and Quentin Grafton) continue to do a great job; and have some statistics to prove it! In 2006 the review process from submission to acceptance took on average 151 days; last year it took only 74 days.

Issues and Work In Progress

This year will see our Society and our Council tackle some major issues. Firstly, on behalf of Council, Tracey Henderson, as Manager of Promotions and Development, with the assistance of Phil Pardey and Jeff Bennett, will bring to the Council a proposal regarding a process by which AARES members can be engaged in setting the strategic direction for the society and consider associated changes to its name and the name of the Society's journal. To stay a vibrant and relevant Society requires that we occasionally review our performance and discuss how and where we want to head.

Secondly, also on behalf of Council Bob Lindner (as chair), Phil Pardey, Jeff Bennet and Ross Kingwell will be examining the mechanics of seeking tenders for publishing the Society's new journal.

Thirdly, the corporate branding exercise for our Society that was initiated in 2008 is continuing and further improvement of our Society's web-site is underway.

Fourthly, Rob Fraser has been given support from our Council to establish a European branch of AARES, to be created on a 3-year trial basis with a review at the end of the 3 years to decide whether it should continue.

Special Thanks To

- John Rolfe and the Cairns LOC for their great service.
- Past-President Chris O'Donnell for his guidance and support in recent months.
- members of Council, especially our hard-working secretary Mary-Ann Franco-Dixon, Glen Ronan (Treasurer), Tracy Henderson (Manager of Promotions and Development); to Tom Kompas, Jeff Bennett and Quentin Grafton (our AJARE editors) and folk like Bob Lindner, Julian Alston and Phil Pardey whose sagely influence is appreciated; and
- Annie Hurst for the rigour and quality of her administrative skills.

Contributed Papers from AARES 2009 National Conference

Dear AARES Delegates,

I have finished loading all papers provided (unless otherwise instructed) from the 2009 AARES Conference in Cairns, Queensland onto the AgEcon Search Website. AgEcon Search is an open-access web site (<http://agecon.lib.umn.edu>) hosted by the Department of Applied Economics at the University of Minnesota. The site is supported by the American Agricultural Economics Association. The site is an archive of working papers, journal articles and

conference proceedings. The database is searchable and full text papers in PDF format are available for free. Authors retain copyright.

To access papers, click on the link <http://agecon.lib.umn.edu>, select the institution Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society – 2009, limit the search to the 2009 Conference (in the drop down menu), you can either search by author, title or keywords, or view all papers if required.

Chantelle Dolphin,
All Occasions Management

E-survey results are now available!

In December 2008 our Society surveyed all current and recently lapsed AARES members to determine member satisfaction with past AARES activities, to clarify demographic characteristics of AARES members, and to identify opportunities for AARES to offer greater value to members.

The survey population comprised all AARES members over the period 2006 to 2008, where their email addresses remained valid (N=749). A total of 132 questionnaire responses were received by the closing date of 3 December 2008, representing response rate of 18% (132/749).

Tracy Henderson (Manager – Promotion and Development) has reported to the AARES Council and the 2009 AARES Annual General Meeting on the survey's key findings and these are outlined below. More detailed quantitative and qualitative survey results are available from your AARES Councillor, Branch President, or Branch Secretary.

Key Findings

Demographics

The majority of respondents (60%) have typically been members of AARES for 10 years or less. A significant proportion of respondents (27%) have been AARES members for greater than 20 years.

Respondents are distributed across all AARES Branches.

The majority of respondents are 46+ years of age (55%). A small number of respondents (5%) are less than 25 years of age.

The majority of respondents are employed in the university/teaching sector (40%). 16% of respondents are employed by the State/Territory public service, 10% by the Federal public service; 15% are self-employed; 9% are employed by the private sector, and 2% are students.

Respondents indicated their main work areas were:

- natural resource management/ resource economics (61%);
- environmental/ ecological economics (40%);
- policy (35%); and
- farm management economics (31%).

Involvement with AARES

- 47% of respondents indicated they never/ rarely attend AARES Branch meetings
- Key reasons for non attendance were too much travel involved (31%), and AARES meetings clash with other commitments (31%).
- 36% of respondents have not attended an AARES Annual Conference over the past five years.

- 62% of respondents attended the 2008 AARES Symposium
- 27% of respondents attended the 2005 AARES Symposium
- 27% of respondents attended the 2004 AARES Symposium

AARES products and services

The following AARES products and services were considered extremely valuable or valuable by respondents:

- AJARE (73% of respondents)
- AARES Annual Conference (65%)
- 72% of respondents visit the AARES website at least once every six months
- The majority of respondents rated the format, content, and frequency of production of *AARES News & Views* as average or excellent.
- The majority of respondents (72%) are satisfied or highly satisfied with their AARES membership.
- 53% of respondents rated the ease of renewing AARES membership as easy or very easy.

Actions

Council has agreed to the following actions, and encourages input from Branches to propose further actions.

1. Improve the quality of the AARES membership database;
2. Improve the ease of obtaining and renewing AARES membership;
3. Reinvigorate the AARES website and corporate branding;
4. Obtain feedback from AARES 2009 Conference Sponsors;
5. Clarify the future strategic directions of AARES in consultation with AARES membership.

The complete results of the survey have been communicated to all AARES Councillors, Branch Presidents and Branch Secretaries for discussion at future Branch meetings. Council will move forward on priority issues at their next Council meeting in May. If you have any additional input to help grow our Society, please contact your Branch Councillor or others on Federal Council.

Obituary: Dr Robin Johnson

(Born 27/12/1927; Died 18/07/08)

Over a 50-year career, Robin Johnson wrote over 100 papers, a significant number of which were published in peer reviewed journals. Robin was a respected New Zealand agricultural economist, a prolific researcher and author, and a long-time public servant with the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Professionally, he is remembered for his many contributions to our professional organizations, his skills in training, mentoring, and for encouraging other economists and public servants. He was also an active mountaineer and a family man.

Robin was born in Christchurch, studied at the University of Canterbury, Lincoln College, Massey College and then at Oxford University. In 1968 he received his doctorate from the London School of Economics and in 1971 became Assistant Director of the newly-formed Economics Division of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries in Wellington, where he spent most of his working life.

In 1974, Robin was one of the instigators in forming the New Zealand Branch of the Australian Agricultural Economics Society. This Branch later became the New Zealand Agriculture and Resource Economics Society (NZARES), but strong links remained with the Australian Society. In 1994, he served as President of the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES) and was editor of its journal, *Review of Marketing and Agricultural Economics*, from 1994 to 1997. Robin was also a member of the New Zealand Association of Economists. He regularly attended annual conferences of these societies and presented papers until his 80th year.

Robin was formally recognised several times for his contribution to his profession. He received the 1990 Commemorative Medal for Services to Agriculture. In 1996, he was made a life member of the New Zealand Agricultural and Resource Economics Society. In 1998, he was made a Distinguished Fellow of the Australian Agricultural and Resource Economics Society (AARES).

Robin is survived by his wife, Ruth, son Simon, daughter Sarah and son-in-law, Steve.

Rod Forbes and Simon Johnson

Reports to the 2009 Annual General Meeting

Secretary's Report

Mary-Ann Franco-Dixon

Council of the Society

The 2008 Annual General Meeting was held on 7 February 2008 at the Rydges Lakeside, Canberra, ACT, Australia. At the meeting, the following office bearers were elected:

President: Chris O'Donnell
President Elect: Ross Kingwell
Secretary: Mary Ann Franco-Dixon
Treasurer: Glenn Ronan
Manager Promotion and Development: Tracy Henderson
Editor, News and Views: Richard Reeve

Allan Rae automatically assumed membership of Council on becoming Immediate Past President. Jeff Bennett is the member of the Executive Council representing the Editors of *AJARE*.

During 2008, the following members represented their Branches at Council meetings:

Australian Capital Territory: Jeff Bennett
New England: Terence Farrell
New South Wales: Michael Harris
New Zealand: Allan Rae
North America: Julian Alston/Nick Piggott
Queensland: Mal Wegener
South Australia: Glenn Ronan
Victoria: Kerry Stott
Western Australia: Bob Lindner

Business of Council

Council met four times since the last AGM: 8 February 2008, 22 May 2008, 26 August 2008 and 9 February 2009.

Some of the prominent matters considered by Council in 2008 were:

- The 53rd AARES Annual Conferences in Cairns in 2009
- Adoption of a new financial year of 1 October to 30 September.

- Symposium in Adelaide in May 2008
- Corporate branding
- The 54th AARES Annual Conferences in Queensland in 2010

Committees

The following members were appointed to committees of the Society in 2008:

- Nominations Committee for President-Elect, Distinguished Fellows and Distinguished Life Member: Allan Rae (Chair), Julian Alston, Don Maclaren and Bob Farquharson
- 2008 PhD Prize Committee: Caroline Saunders (Chair), Tihomir Ancev and Oscar Cacho.
- 2008 Masters Prize Committee: QQ Huang (Chair), Dan Marsh and Rod Duncan.

Prize Winners 2008

Masters Prize winner:

No winner

PhD Prize winner:

Helen Scarborough

Prize for the Best Article in AJARE:

Graeme J. Doole for his paper "Optimal management of annual ryegrass (*Lolium rigidum*Gaud.) in phase rotations in the Western Australian Wheatbelt".

Prize for the Best Article in Connections:

Alistair Watson for his paper "Watering Victoria: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly".

AARES /AAEA Young Professionals Exchange Travel Award - Heading South

Greg Galinato

AARES /AAEA Young Professionals Exchange Travel Award - Heading North

Deadline for nominations is end of February.

AARES /AAEA Young Professionals Exchange Travel Award - Heading West

Graeme Doole

AARES /AAEA Young Professionals Exchange Travel Award - Heading East

Deadline for nominations is March 31 of this year.

Distinguished Fellows

John Mullen and Rob Fraser

Distinguished Life Member

Mal Wegener and John Kerin

Quality of Research Discovery Award

David J. Pannell (2008), Public Benefits, Private Benefits, and Policy Mechanism Choice for Land-Use Change for Environmental Benefits, *Land Economics* 84 (2): 225-240

Quality of Communication Award

Pannell, D.J., Hailu, G., Weersink, A. and Burt, A. (2008), More reasons why farmers have so little interest in futures markets. *Agricultural Economics* 39(1): 41-50.

Prize for the Best Article in the Connections

Alistair Watson for his article "Watering Victoria: The Good, The Bad and The Ugly"

Acknowledgements

I have enjoyed my third year serving as the Secretary for the Federal Council. I am still enjoying the experience and would like to express my thanks to Chris O'Donnell (President), Glenn Ronan (Treasurer), Annie Hurst (Office Manager), and Tracey Henderson (Promotion and Development Manager). I also extend thanks to Michael Cameron, our website manager and Richard Reeve, News and Views Editor. I also wish to acknowledge the work done by all members of the Council, with special thanks to those who are standing down from Council this year.

Treasurer's Report

Glenn Ronan

I am pleased to present my fourth Treasurer's Report to this Annual General Meeting of the society. During the past four and a half years, with support and encouragement from Councils led by Presidents Deborah Peterson, John Mullen, Allan Rae and Chris O'Donnell, I have been able to advance a number of changes, important to good governance in the areas of the financial team, the bookkeeping system and risk management. I also acknowledge the on-going support and 'corporate memory' of previous Treasurer, Mal Wegener. Changes have included:

- Establishing and maintaining a team of good people with the skills and experience essential to a high standard of bookkeeping, auditing and regulation compliance;
- Adopting an electronic accounting system and achieving transaction transparency and consistent reporting and budgeting;
- Clarifying the income-tax exempt status of the society with a private ruling from the Australian Taxation Office (ATO);
- Clarifying the scope of the Professional Indemnity insurance to embrace all office bearers, including Branch office bearers;
- Adjusting the Federal-Branch surplus sharing arrangements for national events to a fairer point, providing greater incentive for Branches in contracting with Federal Council for events, and
- Implementing a change in financial accounting year from calendar to 1st October to 30th September to aid achievement of audited (ie signed) accounts at the AGM in February.

Financial Position

AARES financial position and transaction details for the period 1 January, 2008, to 30 September, 2008, are detailed in the files from the Auditors, Grant Pearce & Associates, and e-Account Books by Central Office Manager, Ms Annie Hurst. In presenting this report to Council I acknowledge the good services of Ms Hurst and Mr Grant Pearce and his team, especially Ms Prue Brown.

Issues and Outlook

Several important financial decisions during the past three years merit refreshing:

- In September 2006, **conference registration** fees were increased by \$50. At the time sponsorship for AARES 2007 was less than targeted. The benefit of the conference registration fee increase are reflected in the surpluses from AARES 2007 (NZ Branch, Queenstown) (combined with achievement of excellent sponsorship at a very late stage, combined with a tightening of cost control) and AARES 2008 (ACT Branch, Canberra);
- In May 2007, **membership fees** were adjusted up by modest amounts for the first time in several years. The outcome of that decision is reflected in subscription income of \$53,636 in 2007 and subscription income of \$44,238 in 2008, and

- In May 2008, Council, in consideration of appeal for improved incentive by SA Branch re the 2008 Symposium, **lifted the range of 50:50 income-splitting with Branches to \$10,000 for both symposia and conferences**. While host Branches are required to insure against risks for national events, Council carries the risk of adverse outcome losses; hence retention of a cap on surplus sharing.

We currently have 115 3-year memberships out of a total membership of 590 (19.5%). Of these, 63 expired at the end of 2008 (i.e. they ran from 2006 - 2008). Central Office is not aware of how many of these members have renewed for a further 3 years. I have not attempted to factor in the income effect of three-year memberships into the budget. It is a point of greater concern in budgeting member registration income that many members are not satisfied with the degree of difficulty involved in renewing their membership.

Major events continue to be both a major income opportunity and a major risk factor for the society. Working capital for annual conference is now in the range \$20,000. With AARES 'seed' funds still at \$5,000, the gap is supported by our preferred event organisers, All Occasions Management (AOM). I have recommended that Council consider this matter in consultation with AOM.

Summary/Conclusions

The society's financial position remains sound, with trading in recent years exceeding budget expectations and adding to the strong balance sheet, net assets around \$430,000. The position is desirable and appropriate to the level of risk involved for a relatively small society (less than 600 members) conducting activities to contemporary international standards in both flagship print publication and major events.

To safely support conferences in the vicinity of \$250,000 expenses, major events are now requiring attendances in excess of 200 and sponsorship in the range \$60,000 to \$80,000. While aiming to break-even at least, actual outcomes have been generating surpluses in the range \$20,000; a level of contribution important to income, coverage of overhead expenses and contingencies, such as the GST arrears. The strong balance sheet is a form of insurance for the level of risk involved. There are no guarantees that all activities will be as successful as those in recent years as we enter into an era of elevated financial stringency in many local and overseas organisations in connection with international economic crisis.

It is not always clear to me that all office bearers, especially at Branch level, have an adequate appreciation of the importance of their roles to the activities, governance and trading of the society. Late, partial or non-forwarding of Branch reports is an indicator example. The capacity of Branch volunteers to commit to and manage national activities on a schedule and at a scale critical to successful outcomes is a steepening challenge of the times.

These factors represent internal challenges to financial performance. From a Treasurer's perspective, it is very important that Council adequately support and recognise those office bearers who are volunteering, performing and very often achieving outcomes where expectations are exceeded.

Management of journal and event contract/understanding detail and relationships with publishers and event managers are key to satisfactory trading and maintenance of equity. Lower interest rates on deposits and actual or intended organisational downsizing, public and private, are local evidence of the deepening international economic crisis. These factors represent external threats to future trading which have only partially been factored into the 2009 budget. In this circumstance it is also extremely important that all members join with Council in respecting and maintaining quality and influential relationships with the array of current, past and prospective event sponsors.

NZARES

Planning has begun for the NZARES two day annual conference in Nelson on the 27th and 28th August. Calls for papers will go out soon, as will notification to AARES members of the Heading West award that pays for travel to the New Zealand conference. So start working on your potential papers now.

There was a good turn out of New Zealanders at the Cairns conference with a pleasing number of our members mentioned in the awards ceremony. It is always valuable for members of the smaller New Zealand economics and resource community to mix with the larger Australian group and gain exposure to the large body of work underway across the Tasman. Equally we welcome those who are interested to attend our conference.

We are very interested in the Australian Policy on agricultural emissions and a possible emissions trading regime as the change of government in New Zealand has resulted in a rethink of our own policy and a greater likelihood of closer alignment with Australia.

Noticeboard

Heading East and Heading West Awards – The Australia-New Zealand Exchange Program

Applications are now invited for the Heading East and Heading West awards. The AARES (NZ branch) will provide a grant of NZ\$1500 to assist the Heading West winner to travel to Australia to attend the AARES 2010 conference in Adelaide. The Heading East winner will receive a grant of A\$1000 from AARES to attend the AARES (NZ branch) conference in New Zealand in late August. The conference registration fees for the winners of this award will be waived.

Selection process The selection committee comprises the President of AARES and President of the New Zealand branch of AARES.

Applications must be submitted to aares@anu.edu.au by September 30 2009 for the Heading West award and by June 30 for the Heading East award. Applications are to include a short proposal addressing the applicant's claims against the selection criteria along with a copy of their CV which includes a record of their publications.

Selection criteria First, consideration shall be given to professionals early in their career and/or those for whom funding to attend the Conference would be difficult to obtain from other sources. Award recipients must present a paper at the Conference representing original work that has not been published in its current form. Preference will be given to papers that are on issues of relevance to both countries, and to those involving cross-jurisdictional comparisons, however, all papers will be considered. Co-authored papers are acceptable. Applicants should identify how the award would facilitate interaction and cooperation with professionals in both countries. Applicants must be members of AARES. The Heading West award will be given to members normally resident in New Zealand.

Nominations for President-Elect and Distinguished Fellowships

The Nominations Committee calls for nominations for President-Elect and Distinguished Fellowships for the year 2010. Formal nominations should be submitted to aares@anu.edu.au by June 30, 2009. Nominations for President-Elect should be dated and signed by the nominator, a seconder, and the candidate.

Distinguished Fellowships are awarded to individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to agricultural and resource economics and/or the activities of AARES. Past winners of this prestigious award are shown on the AARES web page at: http://www.aares.info/award_winners. Nominations should include a brief biography.

Employment

Economist

Departmental Professional Officer Grade II /III , Parramatta/Negotiable, Temporary Full-Time.

Total remuneration package valued to: \$93,434 p.a. (Salary \$67,420-\$84,671).

Undertake economic and social analysis and provide advice to the government and the Department.

Selection Criteria:

- Appropriate degree level tertiary qualifications in at least one of following fields: economics, resource economics, social and economic assessment, water resource management, or public policy.
- Ability to think critically and strategically and respond quickly to emerging issues, including aptitude to respond quickly to changes in government priorities.
- Knowledge of water management and planning issues.
- Well developed project management, research, analytical and problem solving skills.
- Well developed oral and written communication skills, in particular report writing.
- Competence in the use of computing resources, including word processing, spreadsheet and database software.
- Sound understanding of public administration and the machinery of government.

Job Notes: Applicants should refer to the Information Package for any special information or conditions relating to this position.

Information Package: Send email to dwe.infopack@dnr.nsw.gov.au with 033 in the subject line. This is an auto response.

Inquiries: Bruce Cooper (02) 9895 7992

Closing Date: Friday, 1 May 2009

Vacancy Reference No.: DWE2009/033

Research Economist

Departmental Professional Officer Grade I, Parramatta/Negotiable, Temporary Full-Time.

Total remuneration package valued to: \$70,925 p.a. (Salary \$48,173-\$64,273).

Undertake economic and social analysis and provide advice to government and the department.

Selection Criteria:

- Appropriate degree level tertiary qualifications in at least one of following fields; economics, resource economics, social and economic assessment, water resource management, or public policy.
- Knowledge of water management and planning issues.
- Well developed written and oral communication skills.
- Good interpersonal skills including negotiation, conflict resolution skills and the ability to influence and persuade.
- Ability to research, coordinate and initiate projects.
- Ability to use spreadsheets and database computer programs for reporting.
- Ability to work cooperatively as part of a team.
- Ability to organise and achieve work objectives.

Job Notes: Applicants should refer to the Information Package for any special information or conditions relating to this position.

Information Package: Send email to dwe.infopack@dnr.nsw.gov.au with 034 in the subject line. This is an auto response.

Inquiries: Bruce Cooper (02) 9895 7992

Closing Date: Friday, 1 May 2009

Vacancy Reference No.: DWE2009/034

Australian Journal of Agricultural and Resource Economics

Did you know that as a member of AARES you have free online access to AJARE? Content is available at www.interscience.wiley.com/journal/ajare. Visit the site to read over 10 years of content, including the recent special issue on Property Rights. You can also sign-up to receive free email alerts when each issue of AJARE is published – click here to register.

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AARES Connections for N&V

Glenn Ronan presented the *AARES Connections: Farm, Food and Resource Issues* report to the AGM on 12 February at AARES 2009, Cairns, North Queensland, on behalf of the editorial team, Bill Malcolm and Glenn Ronan (co-editors) and Nanette Esparon (liaison with web-manager at University of Melbourne).

- Connections commenced in 2001 and is now in its 9th year
- 95 articles have been published
- 11 articles were published in Connections in 2008;
- Three articles were short-listed for the annual award:

Paper 85 on *A Virtual Paper on Virtual Water* by Dave Appels, Alistair Watson, David Briggs and Mike Woolston;

Paper 86 on *Food Miles: A Critical Evaluation* by Ismo Rama and Patrick Lawrence and

Paper 93 *Watering Victoria: the good, the bad and the ugly* by Alistair Watson

- The Judging Panel comprised Bill, Glenn, John Mullen and Leanne Orr
- The winner of the third annual award was Dr Alistair Watson, Freelance Economist and Adjunct Professor, Latrobe University for his paper on Watering Victoria
- The 2007 joint winner of the Connections Award, Dr John Mullen, presented the 2008 award to Victorian Branch President, Gavan Dwyer, in the absence of AI with a view to a presentation to AI at Victorian Branch function.
- In his report to the AGM Glenn referred to intention to invite Guest Editors to contribute articles in 2009; an idea for North America where the American Agricultural Economics Society's Choice magazine, edited by Walter Armbruster routinely invites guest editors to coordinate articles.
- Glenn met with Dr Lin Crase at Wodonga Campus of Latrobe University in early March and Lin has kindly agreed to be a Guest Editor this year.

The editors welcome contact from prospective contributors or volunteers to become guest editors. Connections can be accessed via the AARES website:

<http://www.agrifood.info/connections/2009/>

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