



# NEWSLETTER

## Sustainable Population Australia Inc

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*Patrons*  
Professor Ian Lowe  
Dr Mary White

*Senator the Hon Bob Carr*  
Professor Tim Flannery  
Dr Paul Collins

## Employment growth not keeping pace



*Prof Bill Mitchell*

much comfort to the unemployed.

Fortunately, Bill Mitchell, professor of economics at both Charles Darwin and Newcastle universities, was interviewed that evening by Waleed Aly on RN Drive. Professor Mitchell reminded us that to be classed as employed, you only needed to work one hour a week. He explained that there are, in fact, three sources of labour underutilisation or wastage. First, there are the 'official unemployed', those classified by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) as actively seeking work but unable to find work. Second, there are the 'underemployed', those working less than full time but who would like to work more. Third, there are the 'hidden unemployed', those who would like to work but have given up actively seeking it.

If you add the 700,000 officially unemployed to the 900,000 underemployed and the 180,000 hidden unemployed, you get total unemployment of 14.5 to 15 per cent, rather than the 5.7 per cent official figure.

In the previous month, 14,800 new part-time jobs had been created but 4,400 full-time jobs had been lost, such that total employment growth was 10,300.

"The overwhelming reality is that employment growth has not been strong enough to match the underlying population growth rate," said Professor Mitchell, "...so

that as the population grows, we have to create more work just to stay running on the spot."

"What's been happening is that, though employment has been growing – very, very weakly - it has been outstripped by population growth. In the last six months, full-time employment is trending down and about 84-85 per cent of employment being generated, modest though it is, is part-time work."

ABS released another set of figures of interest in June, namely, the latest quarterly figures on population, these for the year ending 31 December 2012. They showed population growth inexorably rising to 1.8 per cent (from 1.4 to 1.5 to 1.6 to 1.7 over the previous quarters). Population grew by 394,200 over the year, 60 per cent of it driven by net overseas migration (235,900 – up 17 per cent on the previous year) and 40 per cent by natural increase (152,000).

Not long afterwards, Kevin Rudd became Prime Minister again. He was quick to assure everyone that he no longer believed in a 'big' Australia, rather a 'sustainable' one. For a nanosecond we all relaxed but he then added the words: "If you've got the settings right ... then, of course, the country can grow". It seems the leopard has not changed his spots. And it was borne out by the Cabinet reshuffle, made necessary by some of the brightest and best Ministers resigning the front bench in support of Julia Gillard. Rudd axed the Population portfolio which he had himself created in response to the furore set off by his original 'Big Australia' comments. Not that it had been of much benefit to those of us wanting an end to population growth. Minister Tony Burke who held the portfolio merely sought to redistribute people rather than address overpopulation. And now Tony Burke has taken over the reins of Immigration. Should Labor retain power after the forthcoming Federal Election, we shall see whether Burke can exonerate himself by reducing immigration. Ironically, his predecessor Brendan O'Connor has taken on the Employment portfolio. Perhaps they could have a chat?

*JG*

## Revisiting the Chesapeake Bay

*The Effect of Population Growth on America's Largest Estuary*



Prof Tom Horton

by **Tom Horton**,  
Professor of  
Environmental Studies at  
Salisbury University,  
Maryland, USA

When the U.S.  
Environmental Protection  
Agency (EPA) conceded  
in 2007 that Bay cleanup  
would fall far short of a

2010 deadline, a one-word response said it all. "Duh," Roy Hoagland, a vice president of the Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF), told The Washington Post.

Since 1998, the CBF has kept its own report card on Bay health, based on 13 indicators of water quality, habitat and marine life. Its goal was a score of 40 by 2010, on a scale of 0 to 100. This would return the Bay to the considerable health it enjoyed 40 or 50 years ago. In 2013, the CBF raised the Bay rating for the first time in years to just 32, which they equate to a D+ grade.

Analysis performed river-by-river around the Chesapeake by University of Maryland scientists in 2011 gave similar scores, in the C- to D range. The EPA, which oversees the restoration, expressed Bay health in 2008:

*\*\*Water quality: 29% of goals met; habitat: 35% of goals met; chemical contaminants: 47% of goals met.*

*\*\*Blue crabs, the Bay's last great commercial fishery, are at historic lows, with both Maryland and Virginia sharply restricting the catches of beleaguered watermen.*

*\*\*Oyster harvests once accounted for a fifth of everyone fishing for a living in America, but they are virtually gone except as a farmed crop supported by hatcheries on land. Shad, once harvested in the millions of pounds, are at 3% of restoration goals.*

*\*\*Nitrogen, the Bay's principal pollutant, is close to twice what a healthy Bay could stand, with only slight overall reduction in Bay waters since the 1980s, and rising levels in some rivers. Nitrogen comes from farms, development, auto and power plant emissions, and sewage-treatment plants and septic tanks. A potent fertilizer, it fuels explosive growth of algae when too much enters waterways. The algae can be toxic and absorb oxygen needed by marine life; it also makes the water murky, shading out light needed by sea-grasses vital to fish and crabs. The same problems, all related to human population growth, now plague coastal*

*waters around the globe.*

These are the facts, 30 years after the Chesapeake's restoration began: at least short-term improvement is possible if we strengthen political will, enforce the environmental laws that achieved major air and water improvements in the 1970s, increase funding by several billion dollars, and reform weak zoning that permits rampant development of the Bay's sensitive shorelines and rural lands.

Even so, a blind spot remains. It is the American allegiance - some would say addiction - to perpetual economic growth, and to encouraging an ever-expanding population of human consumers to support it. This is the American, pro-growth-economy mantra we are up against:

Growth is good, or necessary to our economy, or at least inevitable and must be "accommodated."

So accepted and unchallenged is this premise that day to day, we discuss it little more than we do the gravitational force that holds us to the planet. But this misinformed attitude unfortunately leads to a far worse philosophy: America seems to blindly insist that with better plans, management, and technology, the human population and economy can grow indefinitely while assuring a sustainable and high level of environmental quality, including room for the rest of nature. We vow to return today's Bay, inhabited by 17 million people, back to the 1950s - when 8 million people lived along the watershed. We presume we can, in other words, reduce our current environmental impact by half. And reduce it enough extra to totally offset all the new impacts on air, water, and land from the 1.7 million more projected to move to the Bay watershed every decade.

That is what we continue to assume, with the connivance of most elected, environmental and science leaders, even after 30 years of failing to do it: Growth is good, Growth is necessary, Growth will come, Growth can be accommodated. These are the greatest, most uncritically accepted, and fatally flawed assumptions made by those charged with protecting the natural resources of the Chesapeake Bay and our nation as a whole.

By an end to growth we do not mean an end to capitalism, stock markets, free trade, innovation, the profit motive, or even to greed and corruption. Economic development would continue to underpin our prosperity - a shift to building more comfortable, affordable, and energy-efficient homes versus more homes; to producing tastier, more nutritious burgers with less impact on the environment, rather than more and bigger ones; to rebuilding our cities and towns and

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mass transit systems versus expanding roads and the suburbs. This focus on a "steady state" economy, rather than on a high-growth one, will better serve those already here, instead of making endless and expensive accommodations for all who might be induced to come.

And while the Chesapeake and its water quality are the focus of my research, the implications extend to the nation as a whole; and across a range of growth-related factors determining our quality of life, from traffic congestion and loss of open spaces, to the more regulated existence that ensues when accommodating more people in a finite space.

We already know what we need to do. For decades, government and environmental leaders in the Bay region have acknowledged that growth without limits is at odds with a sustainable environment.

At the first modern Maryland-Virginia conference on Bay health in 1977, the concluding speaker, marine scientist J. L. McHugh, summarized the meeting:

"One theme has run like a thread through this conference... an issue that is almost always evaded and certainly never addressed seriously... the human population explosion. If we cannot cope with it, maybe everything else will be in vain."

In 2000, an update of the Chesapeake Bay Restoration Agreement advised that new people moving into the Bay watershed "could potentially eclipse" all past environmental gains.

The 2003 "Chesapeake Futures" report questioned "whether growing population, unchecked resource consumption and a casual disregard for the natural environment will overwhelm our attempts to restore the Bay."

In 2007, a federal scientist explained to The Baltimore Sun why pollution was actually increasing again in several tidal rivers: "The pressures on the Bay watershed have stepped up significantly in the last decade... population growth has increased."

For 36 years, the message has been clear: population growth and development are destroying the Bay environment, and our best efforts and latest technologies are not reversing the damage. In fact, they can barely keep up with it.

But, when the time for action comes, it seems questioning the expansion of the economy and the population are off the table - either because they are considered sacred cows, or they are just too hard to deal with. It is assumed we can cure the symptoms while vigorously expanding their root causes.

Only a few decades ago our politicians and environmental organizations forthrightly questioned

whether continued growth was good. Over 40 years ago, President Nixon's bipartisan Commission on Population and the American Future (known as the "Rockefeller Commission" after its chairman, John D. Rockefeller, III) reported:

"We have looked for, and have not found, any convincing argument for continued population growth. The health of our country does not depend on it, nor does the vitality of business, nor the welfare of the average person."

The U.S. could cope with continued growth, the Commission said, "but in so doing we shall pay a cost reckoned not in dollars but in our way of life. We should concern ourselves with improving the quality of life for all Americans rather than merely adding more Americans."

If anyone had listened, the Chesapeake would be a much healthier place. There were around 206 million Americans when the Rockefeller Commission published its report in 1972. Had the nation adopted a stable population policy then, the U.S. population might have peaked at 230 million by 2030, according to estimates based on U.S. Census Bureau data. Instead, according to the Census Bureau, we have more than 315 million Americans already and are projected to reach 400 million by shortly after mid-century.

Had the 1972 policy recommendation been adopted, the watershed area population would be about 15 million people in 2030. Instead, it is at nearly 17 million now, headed for 25 million or more by 2050.

So why do we persist in ignoring a widely acknowledged root cause of pollution like population growth, in light of our failure to clean up the Chesapeake Bay (and many other national environment messes)?

Why, despite decades of commissions and studies linking growth and environmental decline, and despite a burgeoning commitment to forging a "sustainable" society, do we keep pursuing growth without limits?

Our history of trying to restore the Chesapeake has been one of filling in the gaps of pollution - focusing first on sewage and factories, later on the runoff from farms and paved surfaces, and then recognizing the role of dirty air falling on the watershed and realizing the cleansing, filtering value of trees, oysters, and wetlands. Human numbers and an economy built on their constant expansion is the missing link. Continuing to ignore growth renders most environmental progress in all other areas temporary. It mocks aspirations to live sustainably with the rest of nature, and erodes our quality of life.

*A longer version of this paper was first published by Negative Population Growth [www.npg.org](http://www.npg.org)*

# Federal Election

*In early July, SPA sent a number of questions to eight political parties and a reminder three weeks later. Only Stable Population Party answered the questions directly, and the Greens responded in more general terms. Labor and Coalition staff pointed us to documents on the web. Wikileaks' campaign manager simply "wished us well in all our endeavours".*

## STABLE POPULATION PARTY



### 1) What size population would your party like for Australia at current standards of living?

We would like to stabilise Australia's population as soon as practicably possible, aiming for a population of around 23-26 million through

to 2050. It's time to think better, not bigger.

### 2) Do you support the Houston review recommendations on lifting the humanitarian intake to 27,000?

The Stable Population Party supports a generous intake of around 14,000-20,000 refugees per annum, depending on circumstances. This is the highest per capita resettlement of refugees and asylum seekers in the world.

It is important to note that extra billions spent on increasing refugee intakes could be better spent on targeted and productive foreign aid, prioritising female rights and education, and voluntary family planning services. We should acknowledge that overpopulation drives the resource scarcity behind most current conflicts and forced migration, and start addressing the root cause.

### 3) Do you support the current move by the Government to tighten the 457 visa temporary workers' program?

We want a comprehensive audit and review of all permanent and temporary immigration programs which would likely result in significant reductions in low priority and/or counter-productive programs, such as the 457 visa.

The major problem with the 457 visa is that it contributes to unsustainable population growth. A stable population will also promote education and training to increase job opportunities for all Australians.

### 4) Do you find the latest population growth rate of 394,200 (1.8 per cent) excessive, about right or not enough?

The population growth rate is certainly excessive. We would like to see a stable population, that is, an end to

population growth.

### 5) If immigration as a whole is to be reduced, what program would you cut (skilled, family reunion, business, humanitarian)?

It is important to understand that population stabilisation is about both migration and native fertility. In order to achieve the best case scenario of a stable population of around 26 million by 2050, we advocate the following two-point plan:

1. Limit government birth payments to each woman's first two children
2. Adopt a balanced migration program, where permanent immigration is equivalent to permanent emigration (Skilled and family reunion components would likely be significantly and proportionately reduced, following a full review of the immigration program).

### 6) Are you concerned that climate change and peak oil might affect the carrying capacity of the country?

These issues make it more important to engage the precautionary principle and stabilise our population as soon as practicably possible. A stable population will help protect our environment including food, water & energy resources.

### 7) Are you concerned that infrastructure has not kept pace with population growth?

Yes. According to Infrastructure Partnerships Australia, we now have a national infrastructure deficit of \$770 billion. The obvious reason is population growth.

A stable population will help relieve overstretched infrastructure including hospitals, schools, roads and public transport.

## THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS



The Australian Greens acknowledge Australia's current projected population growth is reaching the ecological limits of the nation and that Australia cannot support a population based on current projections of around 35

million in 2050. This will result in even greater pressures on Australia's infrastructure and public services, our unique environment and our quality of life. The Australian Greens have a specific Population Policy in our policy platform. Like the rest of our party's policy platform, our population policy was developed by our membership. Our policy acknowledges that current population growth is outstripping the environmental capacity of the

# Federal Election

planet. The Australian Greens population policy is that Australia's population policy should be determined by its commitment to:

- ecological sustainability;
- global and domestic social justice and equity, including women's rights;
- intergenerational equity;
- multiculturalism;
- international human rights obligations; and
- decent wages and conditions for all workers.

The Australian Greens believe that population policy should not be primarily driven by economic goals or to counter the effects of an ageing population. While Australia cannot support a population based on current projections of around 35 million in 2050, the answer to what is a sustainable population policy requires a proper inquiry, based on solid evidence and thorough public consultation, an inquiry which makes recommendations for a coherent national population policy. An Australian population policy must consider the geographical distribution of human settlements rather than just concentrate upon population size at the national level.

The Australian Greens recognise that population growth is a global problem requiring global solutions and that as a species we are rapidly degrading the world's natural resources and exceeding its ecological limits. Australia should be taking the lead in finding global solutions. The Greens advocate Australia's overseas aid budget is increased to 0.7% of GNI with more funding for literacy and reproductive health programs for women and girls. In addition, Australia has an obligation to accept humanitarian migration including that resulting from climate change. Numbers are not the only consideration for a sustainable population and while population is a significant factor in whether or not Australia is sustainable, our per capita consumption is critically important too. Let's become better informed, let's not allow false accusations of racism prevent us from having a proper debate.

## AUSTRALIAN LABOR PARTY



On 13 May 2011, then Sustainability, Population and Communities

Minister Tony Burke launched *Sustainable Australia - Sustainable Communities*. The Strategy's focus was on population change rather than setting arbitrary targets, driving growth to regional areas by attracting skilled workers and more houses to where job opportunities are, and alleviating pressures in outer suburbs of major capital cities by supporting more local jobs.

The Labor Government promised to deliver housing and targeted immigration to where there was a shortage of workers and promote efficient infrastructure and local jobs where there are congestion issues.

Thus, over \$230 million in the 2011-12 Budget included:

- \$100 million for a **Suburban Jobs initiative** to drive more job opportunities within easy reach of where people live in the outer suburbs of Australia's major capital cities.
- \$81.4 million in new investments in the **National Urban Policy** to help cities become more productive, sustainable and liveable, including \$61.4 million for a smart managed motorways trial to cut motorway congestion and \$20 million for a **Liveable Cities program** to invest in the development of urban renewal projects that improve access to jobs and housing.
- \$29.2 million for a new **Sustainable Regional Development initiative** to support better sustainability planning in regions experiencing high growth.
- \$11.5 million for a new **Promoting Regional Living Program** to support Australia's regions to market themselves as an alternative to living in a major capital city; and
- \$10.1 million for a new **Measuring Sustainability program** to develop a set of sustainability indicators that can be factored in at a regional level to better inform decision makers.

In addition, the 2011-12 Budget outlined 16,000 new places for skilled migrants through the **Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme**, a 60 per cent increase on the previous year.

Minister Burke said the new **Regional Migration Agreements** would boost effectiveness of the migration program by ensuring it responds to changing economic needs, including building the skills needed in regional areas. He added that the Prime Minister would also begin a COAG process that asks state premiers to lead development of Commonwealth-state reforms that are of particular relevance to their jurisdiction whether it be demand for workers or addressing congestion.

*Sustainable Australia - Sustainable Communities* was informed by advice from three advisory panels, a sustainable population issues paper and a public consultation process in which over 370 public submissions were received.

To obtain a copy visit

<http://www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/population/index.html>.

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## COALITION



**2010 Policy for Population and Immigration.** The Coalition believes Australia needs a population that our services can satisfy, our infrastructure can support, our environment can sustain, our society can embrace and our economy can employ.

Australians living in our major urban areas today are experiencing growing pains. The impact on their quality of life caused by services and infrastructure failing to cope and an environment under stress, cannot be ignored.

The Coalition's record of strong economic management demonstrates we are committed to growing Australia's economy. However, prosperity should not be won at the cost of sacrificing our quality of life. As a result, we cannot allow population growth to become a lazy substitute for improving productivity and participation to achieve economic gains.

Fuelling population growth today must not rob future generations of the quality of life and opportunities we currently enjoy. That is what sustainability is all about.

The Coalition believes Australians are looking for up-front, sustained investment in infrastructure and services before they will support higher increases in population.

The Coalition will:

### 1. Establish 'Guard Rails' for Population Growth

The Coalition will set clear parameters for population growth by tasking a renamed Productivity and Sustainability Commission to advise on population growth bands considered sustainable. This advice will provide the framework for setting migration programmes.

### 2. Take Real Action on Immigration

The Coalition will reduce Australia's annual rate of population growth from more than 2 per cent under Labor, to our historical long-run average of 1.4 per cent within our first term. This will require reducing our annual rate of net overseas migration from 298,924 in 2008-09 to no more than 170,000 per year by the end of our first term.

### 3. Make a Clear Commitment to Skills Migration and Regional Australia.

The Coalition will ensure that two-thirds of our permanent migration programme will be for the purposes of skilled migration.

A Coalition Government will also quarantine the level of employer nominated skills migration and temporary

business visas (457s) to at least the levels it inherits... (and)... will seek to liberalise arrangements for temporary business visas...

### 4. Establish A Clear and Consultative Process to Restore Control

The Coalition will commit to the production of a White Paper on immigration that will reframe the structure and composition of Australia's immigration programme to address the policy challenges of sustainable population growth.

<http://www.liberal.org.au/sites/default/files/ccd/0725x30LPAPopulationandImmigrationPolicy.pdf> Also, see subsequent speeches by Immigration spokesman Scott Morrison [www.scottmorrison.com.au](http://www.scottmorrison.com.au)



**Population, Resources & Climate Change**  
implications for Australia's near future

## FENNER CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT

10, 11 October 2013

Shine Dome, Acton, Canberra

**Organised by Sustainable Population Australia**

Register before the end of July and take advantage of early bird rates! Book online at

<https://www.amlink.com.au/secure/html/fenner2013.html> or [www.population.org.au](http://www.population.org.au).

The conference program can also be found at [www.population.org.au](http://www.population.org.au)

**Keynote address by Professor Paul Ehrlich**

Other speakers include:

Suzanne Cory, Hugh Possingham, David Lindenmayer, Chris Dickman, Bob Birrell, Mark O'Connor, Jane O'Sullivan, Michael Lardelli, Ian Dunlop, Sharyn Munro, Rhondda Dickson, Michael Jeffrey, Gary Jones, Ian Lowe, Michael Raupach, Tony McMichael, Paul Collins, Haydn Washington, Kelvin Thomson, Julian Cribb and Roger Short. Richard Denniss is after-dinner speaker.

*Early bird rates: \$200 (\$150 concession)*

*Standard rates in August and September: \$220 (\$170 concession)*

**GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIPS AVAILABLE!**

A number of scholarships are available to graduate students to attend the Fenner Conference. The scholarship pays for registration, lunch and teas though not the conference dinner.

Graduate students can apply by writing to [president@population.org.au](mailto:president@population.org.au) saying, in 200 words or less, why attending the conference would be useful to their studies. Applications close COB Friday 23 August.

# Book Review

DONATE TO THE CONFERENCE! This will help us cover conference expenses but also enable us to publish conference proceedings. All donations to the Australian Academy of Science are tax deductible. Send cheque to:

Events manager Mitchell Piercey  
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or contact Mitchell at [mitchell.piercey@science.org.au](mailto:mitchell.piercey@science.org.au) or (02) 6201 9462 and he will give you details for direct debit. Many thanks!



## STATE OF THE WORLD 2013 – Is sustainability still possible?

*The Worldwatch Institute*

Washington/Covelo/London 2013, Island Press, 442pp  
Reviewed by Jenny Goldie and Peter Martin

According to Robert Engelman, president of the Worldwatch Institute, we live in an age of sustainababble, a cacophonous profusion of the uses of the word sustainable. The original meaning was ‘capable of being maintained in existence without interruption or diminution’, however, *sustainable* and *sustainability* have lost both meaning and impact.

This extraordinarily comprehensive book gets us back on track. Thirty four exceptionally well written chapters by numerous authors including two Australians – Brian Martin and David Christian – assess the profound challenges we face and provide the cultural and institutional solutions we need to address them. There is much to digest and it takes time, but by its end you feel an element of hope that there is a path forward to a sustainable future, albeit not the one we are on. As James Gustave Speth has written: “All we need to do to destroy the planet’s climate and ecosystem and leave a ruined world to our children and grandchildren is keep doing exactly what we are doing today.”

The book is divided into three sections. The first, *The Sustainability Metric*, attempts to make the concept measurable and thus meaningful. Exactly what does ‘environmentally sustainable’ mean? How do we get on a trajectory that will continue indefinitely without threatening future life? The book notes increasing global interconnectedness – not just economic and social, but also through global environmental and biophysical events. For instance, it suggests that the fires that destroyed much of Russian wheat harvest in

2010, perhaps a function of climate change, contributed to food shortages that helped trigger the ‘Arab Spring’.

Energy is the master resource, of course, and the book addresses the critical issue of EROI - Energy Returned On (Energy) Invested. Energy underpins all economic activity. The explosion in economic activity over the past century has been underpinned by cheap energy. Once a barrel of oil equivalent in energy delivered a hundred back (EROI = 100:1) but now it’s down to 19:1 or even in the US, for both oil and gas, 11:1. All the renewables except hydro are below 10:1 and corn ethanol could even be less than 1:1. Yet - and this is a big wake-up call - the critical threshold for a modern economy could be 10:1. A post-carbon world may well mean a post-industrialised world.

The second section, *Getting to True Sustainability*, addresses the actions, policies, institutional and behavioural changes and reduction in scale of human activity needed to get to a truly sustainable society. Importantly, it addresses new ideas for measuring social progress and human well-being (as against GDP) and suggests possible radical changes to banking and tax policy. If sustainability is to be achieved, there has to be a shift from merely “growth” to “development” in the real sense of improving human well-being, recognising that growth has significant negative by-products. Along the way, corporations have to stop free-riding their way to global resource depletion and move to being a true partner in sustainability.

The third section, *Open in Case of Emergency*, looks at what we must do as a society to meet the challenges that are already confronting many of us, not least climate change. Canadian Naomi Klein provides a multitude of ideas on what it will take to make the transition to sustainability, for example, rebuild the public sphere, reverse privatisations, introduce long-term planning, regulate corporations, publicly fund 100 per cent of election campaigns, and so on.

In addition is the need to legally recognise the rights of other living creatures in the biosphere; to revitalise and rebuild governance to support sustainability; address new ways to rebuild local economies; see whether connections can be made between deep ecology and religion; and learn from Cuba’s forced retreat from consumerism. Cuba managed to survive its various embargoes by concentrating on health, education and welfare and ensuring reasonable equality. It provides a beacon of hope for the rest of us.

In the final chapter, *Is It Too Late?*, Kim Stanley Robinson compares science to capitalistic economics. Science is “an emerging system of health and justice, a political force of immense power and force for good”

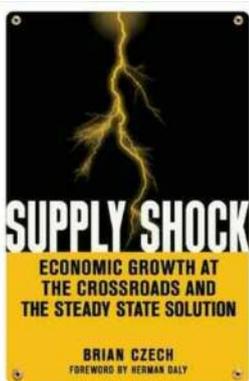
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with “its own rules, which are both utopian and highly effective in the physical world.” Economics, on the other hand, is blind to the realities of our biosphere and as our ultimate life support. We should therefore, Robinson argues, be supporting science in every way we can. Were economics given an infusion of the scientific method, we could formulate our economic plans within the paradigm of ecological thinking, with the biosphere’s \$33 trillion worth of unpaid services finally accounted for, valued and preserved.

While there is no specific chapter on population *per se*, Engelman comes to grips with it in no uncertain terms in his opening chapter. “[T]he more of us there are, the less of a share of any fixed resource, such as the atmosphere, for each of us to sustainably and equitably transform or consume in a closed system. All else being equal, the smaller the population in any such system, the more likely sustainability can be achieved and the more generous the sustainable consumption level can be for each person. With a large enough population there is no guarantee that even very low levels of equitable per capita greenhouse emissions or resource consumption are environmentally sustainable.”

Perhaps someone could tell that to our re-new Prime Minister Rudd who said recently that he was in favour of a ‘sustainable’ rather than ‘big’ Australia, but added: "If you've got the settings right ... then, of course, the country can grow". A splendid example of *sustainababble*.

With its 50 pages of endnotes, this book has enough substance to be a university textbook, yet it is highly readable. Richard Heinberg describes it as a “pivotal book that marks a defining moment for our species”. We couldn’t agree more.



## **SUPPLY SHOCK: Economic Growth at the Crossroads and the Steady State Solution**

by *Brian Czech*

New Society Publishers, 2013  
Reviewed by *John Coulter*

Brian Czech is the founder of CASSE, the Centre for the Advancement of the Steady

State Economy, an organisation that has spread worldwide with Dr Geoff Mosley, former Executive Director of the ACF, the Australian anchor and others such as SPA member, Richard Sanders being actively involved in Queensland and Ian Macindoe in Sydney. SPA linked itself to CASSE several years ago recognising, as we always have, that both population and environmental

demand must be stabilised at an environmentally sustainable level if humanity and Nature are to survive.

I first became aware of the notion of a steady state society when in 1973 I read Herman Daly’s collection of essays under the title of *Toward a Steady-State Economy*. Herman Daly writes both an introductory paragraph and the foreword to this book. But in 1973 the notion was not new. Daly points out in his own essay in the ‘Toward...’ volume. J.S. Mill writing in the middle of the 19th century said, ‘...the increase in wealth is not boundless...I cannot...regard the stationary state of capital and wealth with the unaffected aversion so generally manifested toward it by political economists of the old school. I am inclined to believe that it would be, on the whole, a very considerable improvement on our present condition...’

Unlike Daly, Czech is not an economist but a wildlife ecologist and as Daly points out in his foreword the two of them have worked toward similar conclusions from opposite directions: Daly incorporating more understanding of the natural world and especially thermodynamics into his economic thinking and Czech starting in the natural world and working toward economics which has come to dominate so much of industrialised-world thinking and motivation. Czech could see the effects of continual economic growth on the Natural world which he sought strongly to protect.

I’m sure all of you have picked up a book wanting so much that its reading will bear out the promises of the author’s name, his/her known associations and philosophy, reviewer’s praises, only to be disappointed. Here, I thought, would be the book I could recommend to all those doubters who believed that continuing growth was inevitable and/or desirable or who could not accept that the transition to the steady-state was inevitable and learn how the transition could be managed. When the subject matter is the steady-state economy and the promise is how we might transition from the present unsustainable growth oriented economy to the steady-state, the disappointment is upsetting. The book is prescribed with a number of praising reviews. One by Hermann Daly recommends that it be put in all classrooms, boardrooms, town halls and policy circles, indeed all will be convinced to accept its message.

Unfortunately, I cannot share this endorsement. I suspect that most who do not already share the view and enthusiasm of the author will not be convinced by this book. The reason is not to do with its content but the author’s somewhat rambling style. There is too much about the historical reasons for the dominance of the growth model. I fear that the uncommitted will switch off before grasping enough of the essential

# Book Reviews

message. The book reads more like a transcript of a very long interview with an intelligent very knowledgeable person who frequently brings in things somewhat peripheral to the immediate context. So this is not a book with which to proselytise the cause of the steady state. Two other recent books both of which I have reviewed for this Newsletter are more readable and comprehensible: *The End of Growth* by Richard Heinberg and *Enough is Enough* by Rob Dietz & Dan O'Neill also from CASSE.

That being said there is much in this book which SPA readers will find valuable. How is it that economics has come to believe that resources are infinite? Czech takes us through classical economics which accepted that the inputs to production were land (natural resources), capital and labour to the point late in the 19th century when Henry George (*Progress and Poverty*, 1879) exerted considerable influence on political economy. George recognised rent on land as unearned income. As the supply of land was limited, population growth made land more valuable causing rents to rise, thus raising the unearned income of the land owning class to the detriment of the labourer. George suggested a 100% tax on unearned income.

Czech points out that 'George once had far more world-wide support than Marx..... Philosophers, the likes of Leo Tolstoy, prime ministers including David Lloyd George and revolutionaries like Alexander Kerensky were among the champions of "Georgist" political economy.'

Henry George and his following thus threatened very powerful interests: the land-owning class whose income from rents rose steadily as populations increased. Czech shows how this vested interest class set the foundation for the economic growth-oriented system we find ourselves in today. Land (resources) were removed from the classical production trio so that only labour and capital were required and taxes on these two, especially labour should be the basis of government revenue. Thus we find today many economists and not a few politicians claiming that 'throw enough money and labour at a resource constraint and the constraint will disappear'. Resources are infinite and endlessly substitutable.

Czech quotes Mason Gaffney, economics professor at University of California, Riverside, co-author of a book *Corruption of Economics*, 1994 who says 'To stop Henry George the fortune hunters hired professors to corrupt economics and halt democratic dialogue. The use of that corrupted economics continues to this day'. And 'Few people realise to what degree the founders of

neoclassical economics changed the discipline for the express purpose of deflecting George and frustrating future students seeking to follow his arguments'. Czech goes on to quote Gaffney at length spelling out in detail who the powerful were and who they appointed to key positions in departments of economics as well as some of the content of debates between George and these newly appointed professors. Among the economists named are some of the most revered names in the present text books of neoclassical economics.

The lengths to which Czech goes to explain the history of the present, almost unquestioned, growth economic paradigm is the crux of my complaint about this book. It's terrific for those of us already committed to questioning growth to have this explanation. It adds a further layer of justification for our rejection of growth economics even though growth economics falls over by direct comparison with the real biophysical world. But it seems to me that a reader not already on this wavelength is very likely to get bogged down in this detail and not continue reading. The essential message from this considerable portion of the book is simple. Growth economics was founded in corruption. Corruption maintains it today. What we need to transition from growth to steady state is how best we can overcome this corruption. In the final chapter I did not find suggestions as to how this endemic corruption may be tackled.

Daly says in his foreword, 'We live in a full world—and full world economics requires that empty-world economic growth policies be radically changed'. This volume will give you a good idea of how we have come to be so dominated by the growth paradigm and convince you (yet again if that is necessary) that we need to change and change quickly. But we need a lot more about the transitional steps to shift us from growth to the steady state.

## AUSTRALIA'S IMMIGRATION POLICY



Apologies to Walt Disney, the Sorcerer and his Apprentice

Thanks to Kevin Schaffer!

# SPA News

## BRANCH NEWS

**NSW:** Several branch members attended the recent Climate Action Summit held at Sydney Secondary College. The subject of population growth was covered by Dr. Haydn Washington who gave an excellent seminar on population being a large and often ignored elephant in the climate change living room. Unfortunately the talk was not given to the full summit audience and many climate campaigners still need convincing that addressing population growth is relevant to reducing emissions.

The committee has taken a decision to fund a \$200 scholarship for a graduate student to attend the Fenner Conference in October. A student from UNSW is the recipient.

Branch President Kris Spike will be standing aside 5 weeks before the federal election to contest a NSW senate place for the Stable Population Party. Graham Wood will be acting president during this period. The Branch AGM has been set for the 9th of November.

*Kris Spike*

**VIC/TAS:** The latest ABS data for the year to December 2012 show that Victoria experienced the largest numerical population increase of any state at 99,500, (a growth rate of 1.8%) In some of the growth areas of outer Melbourne the growth rates are at or above 7% p.a., a doubling time of 10 years! One council has put its foot down to limit population growth by putting a ceiling of 3000 on the numbers of new dwellings. The airwaves in Victoria are a cacophony of competing interests about congestion, traffic and infrastructure needs for a growing population. Most prominent as been the Proposed East West link which has ignited the ire of public transport advocates, lovers of Royal Park in the path of the road and those who will be affected because of proximity of their houses.

The branch has issued 4 media releases since the last report, one concerning a new town (Merrifield) to be built to the north of Melbourne, another about the need for the state government to heed local feedback on population, in response to the Wyndham council's call for a cap on population growth in the area, one for World Population Day, July 11th, and a 4th about the speakers topic at the forthcoming Annual AGM.

A Victorian student has been selected to attend the Fenner Conference in Canberra later this year and the branch will contribute \$400 the fares and accommodation for PHD student, Matthew Walker.

The branch AGM will be held on July 20th with Guest speaker, Dr. Bob Birrell of Monash University, Centre for Population and Urban Research on the topic 'Why is immigration running at record high levels when

unemployment is increasing?'

*Jill Quirk*

**SA:** SPA has been busy organising events in Adelaide, starting with the 'Sustainability Showcase' event featuring Canadian activist Nicole Foss on April 27. Local speakers included Assoc. Prof. David Paton on biodiversity, Assoc. Prof. Phillip Lawn on economics, SA Cycling Institute chair Jeremy Miller, and Adjunct Prof Rob Fowler, president of the Conservation Council of SA. Michael Lardelli, Nadia McLaren and others assisted in managing discussion groups and their reporting after lunch, before Rob Fowler and Nicole wrapped up the day.

We noted that none of the 100 or so attendees chose to join the population discussion group. We decided that meant that even people who care about sustainability issues (1) still find population too hard to deal with, (2) they think it's not an issue at all, or (3) they are already convinced and wanted to explore another topic!

A second SPA meeting has been organised for July 27 to follow the local AGM. Our speaker will be Qld geologist Simon Michaux, who will talk firstly on 'peak mining', and then later present and workshop ideas on developing a self-sufficient community. His first presentation begins at 1.30 pm, in the Rennie Lecture Theatre, Johnson Labs, G29, University of Adelaide, and his second presentation is scheduled to end at 4.00 pm.

SPA-SA is also taking part in National Science Week this year, organising a debate on the topic of endless economic growth. While it will give us chance to challenge the pro-growthers with serious facts and arguments, this event is also about poking fun at the powerful triumvirate of business, government and the mass media that keeps the growth throttle fully open and at the same time the lid firmly on any questioning or discussion of growth as a goal. The event is at the Astor Hotel, 437 Pulteney St in the city, 6.30 – 8.00 pm, Wed 14 August, \$5. (See details at <http://www.scienceweek.net.au/sustainababble>).

*Peter Martin*

**ACT:** On 3 August 2013, 2 pm at Havelock House, Mark O'Connor, who was a SPA committee member from the early days, and served for a decade until 1998 as National Vice President, will address a Canberra and Region meeting on the topic 'Human happiness in Australia: Is there a sweet-spot for population size?' Mark will be standing as a Senate candidate for the ACT for the Stable Population Party. At the Annual General Meeting in Brisbane in 2013 then National President Sandra Kanck presented Mark with a framed certificate awarding him Honorary Life Membership of Sustainable Population Australia Inc. The ACT SPA

# SPA News

committee is agog with anticipation for the Fenner Conference to be held in Canberra on 10-11 October.

*Christopher Dorman*

**QLD:** The State Government is running a new community engagement process called The Queensland Plan, about achieving a better future for Queensland. It's a good opportunity to make your views known. The online consultation is running through July and August.

You can log on and submit your comments to each question.

<http://queenslandplan.qld.gov.au/get-involved/have-your-say/> There are plenty of opportunities in there to highlight the population issue. Brisbane City Council's consultation on the new City Plan has closed at the end of July. Hopefully submissions from members will keep pressure on Council to join the dots, but there will be no letting up of measures to increase density and reduce resident scrutiny of developments in Brisbane.

The Queensland Branch held a very successful stall at the Logan Enviro Action Festival on 2 June.

Unfortunately, our stall at the Sunshine Coast World Environment Day Festival on 9 June was cancelled as storm weather demolished the marquee that would have housed us. We continue to have monthly film-and-discussion evenings at Toowong Library, on the third Monday each month. Any members who know of upcoming community events where we might run a stall, or groups looking for a speaker, please let the branch know.

*Jane O'Sullivan*

**WA:** The six applications from postgraduate students for the Fenner Conference Sponsorship were of such a high standard that the WA Committee decided to award a second all-expenses-paid grant to attend this meeting and regrets not being able to afford another two. Our selectors were impressed not only by the quality of the applications but also by the diversity of the research students' enrolments in fields including psychology, law, business and agriculture. We hope that the conference will offer ample opportunity for attendee input as these are young, concerned voices that deserve a hearing.

SPA members and others have provided a steady stream of letters to the papers and calls to talkback radio with population and related concerns. Notable was a letter from Astrid Herlihy, long term member of the Committee of the WA Branch. Astrid is now seriously ill and it would seem an appropriate time to acknowledge her great contribution to the population campaign and a whole host of community issues from before the founding of our Branch over 20 years ago.

Committee members are proposing to hand out flyers at the two Sir David Attenborough lectures in this last

week of July and have planned pre-election approaches to political parties for the coming election. This may be quite difficult as approximately 50 groups claim to be fielding candidates.

*Paddy Weaver*

## SPA at the Climate Change Talks in Germany

*Jane O'Sullivan*



Once again the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held a two-week negotiating session in Bonn, Germany, at the start of June. I had the privilege to represent SPA at this conference. SPA applied for an exhibit space in the foyer, as well as a side event. For the first time, both applications were successful. Although the number of people taking an interest in the population issue is still small, we are slowly building receptiveness in various quarters.

The talks themselves were mired in frustration. Of the three bodies constituted under the UNFCCC, the Subsidiary Body on Implementation (SBI) could not open its discussions due to a disagreement about the agenda. This prevented important discussions on a "loss and damage" mechanism, to help developing countries respond to climate impacts. The Subsidiary Body on Scientific and Technical Advice (SBSTA) spent much of its time discussing whether or not to discuss Agriculture, having had the proposal to do so on the table for 18 months. The Ad Hoc Working Group on the Durban Platform for Enhanced Action (ADP) progressed discussions on 'equity', how the responsibility for emissions reductions should be distributed among nations. However, this remains vague and conceptually in conflict with the current position that each nation's commitments are for that nation to decide.

In general, the climate talks sputter along with just enough progress to keep the process itself alive, while getting no closer to adequate action. In the four years that SPA has been involved, it has become harder to introduce the idea of acknowledging population growth or family planning. After the Bali Action Plan in 2007, a comprehensive treaty text was drafted for negotiation. We could identify relevant points where population growth should be mentioned, and discuss appropriate wording with negotiators.

*continued p12.*

## Australian Bureau of Statistics

Population at end of December 2012

<http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>

	<b>Population</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>% Change</b>
NSW	7 348 900	90 400	1.2
Vic	5 679 600	99 500	1.8
Qld	4 610 009	92 500	2.0
SA	1 662 002	15 600	0.9
WA	2 472 700	83 000	3.5
Tas	512 400	400	0.1
NT	236 900	4 200	1.8
ACT	379 006	8 600	2.3
<b>Australia</b>	<b>22 906 400</b>	<b>394 200</b>	<b>1.8</b>

Natural increase recorded for 2012 was 4.2%, or 6,300 people, higher than the natural increase recorded for 2011.

Net overseas migration (immigration minus emigration) for 2012 was 17.0%, or 34,400 people, higher than the net overseas migration for 2011.

### POPULATION OFFSETS

PopOffsets is unique - the first project in the world that, simply and transparently, enables individuals and organisations to offset their carbon footprint by reducing carbon emissions by supporting family planning.

This great initiative by Population Matters in the UK is worth supporting. Go to <http://www.popoffsets.com/>

*(continued)* Since that draft was abandoned in Copenhagen, there is no such text, and it seems the number of issues of principle that must be agreed before a text can be drafted only gets longer. Nobody wants to add population to that list.

Nevertheless, the UNFCCC meetings are an extremely valuable forum for us to engage with international agencies and to introduce population dimensions to a wide range of research and development projects. I hope members continue to support our involvement.

### FEDERAL ELECTION

It has come to our attention that some people are planning to write "Reduce Immigration" on their ballot papers. Back in 1983, many voters wrote "No Dams" in an ultimately successful campaign to stop the damming of the Franklin River in Tasmania. This is a valid exercise providing it is only done in the margins and interferes in no way with conveying the intention of the voter. Others feel that writing "Stop Population Growth" or "End Population Growth" would be more in-keeping with the objectives of SPA which is primarily about population rather than immigration *per se*. Feel free to write what you like, but don't invalidate your ballot paper!

## ABOUT SPA

*Formerly Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population.*

The SPA Newsletter is mailed bi-monthly to members of Sustainable Population Australia Inc. For further information, please contact the SPA Office or your nearest branch. All membership applications and renewals should be sent to the National Office. Newsletter contributions should be sent there or directly to the editor.

**Newsletter editor:** Jenny Goldie  
editor@population.org.au 256 Baroona Road,  
Michelago NSW 2620

**Webmaster:** Nicholas Car 0438 227 737  
webmaster@population.org.au

**Website:** [www.population.org.au](http://www.population.org.au)

### SPA NATIONAL OFFICE BEARERS

President: Jenny Goldie Phone 0401 921 453  
president@population.org.au

Vice-president: Hon. Sandra Kanck 08 8336 4114  
vp@population.org.au

Minutes Secretary: Nola Stewart 02 9686 3542  
meetingsecretary@population.org.au

Correspondence secretary: Jan McNicol  
secretary@population.org.au

Treasurer: Dr Rob Taylor  
treasurer@population.org.au

### TRUSTEES OF THE POPULATION FUND

Mr Gordon Hocking

Mr Ross Kingsland

Dr Bill Sorby

### SPA NATIONAL OFFICE

Administrative Office: Successful Alliances  
Office: 2C, 18 Napier Close, Deakin ACT 2600  
Address: PO Box 3851, WESTON CREEK ACT  
2611

Phone: 02 6288 6810 Fax: 02 6288 7195

Email: [info@population.org.au](mailto:info@population.org.au)

### REGIONAL BRANCHES

NSW: President: Mr Kris Spike. Ph:02 96803245  
[nsw@population.org.au](mailto:nsw@population.org.au)

WA: President: Dr Harry Cohen AM Ph: 08 9386  
1890 [wa@population.org.au](mailto:wa@population.org.au)

VIC: President: Jill Quirk Ph: 03 9509 7429  
[vic@population.org.au](mailto:vic@population.org.au)

ACT: President: Dr Christopher Dorman  
Ph: 02 6251 1945 [act@population.org.au](mailto:act@population.org.au)

SEQ: President: Dr Jane O'Sullivan  
Ph: 07 3379 8090 [seqld@population.org.au](mailto:seqld@population.org.au)

SA: President: Peter Martin Ph: 0417 776 494  
[sa@population.org.au](mailto:sa@population.org.au)