



Benalla Sustainable Future Group

Newsletter 32

May 2022

Benalla Sustainable
Future Group Inc.
PO Box 642
Benalla 3672

President's Message

There are two important elections in the offing - and I hope that both will receive your earnest consideration. Both will help shape the future of our nation, and help determine what sort of community we live in.

The first is obviously the Federal election, and for BSFG and all other like-minded climate action or environment groups, we hope for a new parliament that puts these two issues at the forefront of policy decisions. We hope for a just and rapid transition away from fossil fuels, wise use of finite resources, policies to assist communities relocate away from flood-prone areas, policies to prevent further species extinctions, and the list goes on.

The second is not the Victorian State election! It is our own BSFG committee election on the 9th June at our Annual General Meeting. Our current committee is keen to see an expanded number of members join the committee, as a transition measure, to ensure that we have a strong, active voice in our community, especially in this critical decade for action on climate change. Why will this help shape the future of our nation? Well I believe that grassroots community action is probably more important than any federal legislation. We can influence friends and family directly, and others in the community will take notice, including the politicians in Canberra. Sure, we need the money to make the big things happen, but we need the community will to ensure the legislators listen and take action.

Our recent review sessions, so capably facilitated by Cath Botta, and attended by a terrific mix of age groups, has elicited a number of key concerns for the future of our local community, and the world in general. Key to the success of actions that we might embark upon, is dedicated and passionate leadership, and a number of people have indicated a willingness to be involved with one or more of the strategic objectives identified in the review sessions.

The role of the committee is to provide oversight and encouragement for each of these groups, and to administer the Benalla Sustainable Future Group as a whole. This might seem a bit humdrum, but without this leadership, the organisation could easily falter.

Personally, I will be thrilled to welcome new members to work alongside current committee members who have indicated a willingness to continue for 2022/23. Whether you are asked by someone, or willing to self-nominate, please get in touch with me (contact details at end of newsletter).

In case you missed them before, we are including a copy of the summary notes from the review sessions. Please read them, and if any of the objectives strike a chord for you, contact us at bsfginc@gmail.com

Peter Holmes

Next General Meeting

We invite you to attend our Annual General Meeting:

7.30 pm Thursday 9th June 2022

Benalla Uniting Church Fellowship Room

Guest speaker: Dr Lisa Rasmussen

Dr Lisa Rasmussen is a Mercy Health clinician and holder of an Environmental Master's degree.

Lisa's work in reducing the carbon foot print of Mercy Health has resulted in "[Caring for People and Planet, Mercy Health's Strategic Response to Laudato Si'](#)". See the article on page five of this newsletter, 'Helen Haines Meeting on Net Zero Agriculture'.

Supper will be served at the conclusion of the evening.

***Judy Schwarzman
Secretary***

"Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need, but not every man's greed." - Mahatma Gandhi

Benalla Sustainable Future Group Strategic Planning Workshop - April 2022

Workshop objectives

- To reflect on the progress and development of Benalla Sustainable Future Group; including key achievements, and key strengths
- To identify the critical issues, and key opportunities for BSFG that need to be considered in the strategic plan for the next 5 years
- To identify key strategic Objectives for the next 3 – 5 years and priority Actions for the next 12 - 18 months
- To clarify the purpose and vision for BSFG

Key Strengths and Achievements

The workshop participants reflected on the progress and development of Benalla Sustainable Future Group and identified a number of key achievements and strengths including:

- Our Volunteer base
- The sense of community within the group
- Our engagement with school kids on the climate emergency issue
- We have survived and are still operating
- The seeds that were planted are raising awareness
- Establishing networks
- The diversity of issues tackled, approaches taken, and membership
- Practical actions e.g. the bulk food cooperative
- Strong engagement with our community

Key Opportunities and Critical issues

The Workshop Participants reviewed the current operating environment noting the current trends and shifts that are occurring and identified a number of Critical issues and key opportunities for the Group to consider when developing the new Strategic Plan. These included:

Key Opportunities	Critical issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More media channels to get the message out • Increasing trees and greening streets for cooler spaces • A shift to a younger demographic with greater awareness of the issues • Solar gardens/micro grids/virtual power plants • Finding ways to give renters access to solar energy • Build on the success of the bulk food cooperative and food garden • Repair shop concept • Knowledge sharing with new people to the community • Push for localization for food and energy requirements • Focus on practical, small initiatives • Bike/pedestrian friendly urban centers • Focus on what we can achieve • Start where people are at 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for accurate, relevant, science-based information • Increasing stress on peoples lives from the 'consume more' model of living • Harder to cover the basic needs for living (Maslow's hierarchy of needs) • Engagement with community leaders and building relationships with Government (all levels) • Housing affordability • Destruction of the natural environment, increasing issues with feral species and decreasing biodiversity • Cost of power, cost of living pressures • Disengagement with food/sport and the rise in obesity health issues • Waste and the planned obsolescence • Community planning – flood plans, disaster plans, resilience planning • Communicate a message of hope • Engagement with broad community

Our Vision

The participants identified six key goals/objectives for the Benalla Sustainable Future Group. These form part of the vision for what the group wants to achieve in 10 years time:

- Widespread adoption of Sustainable farming systems
- Ecosystem Restoration
- Connected and Engaged Community
- 100% Renewable and community owned energy
- Ecological, sustainable planning and development and Retrofits
- Greening and Cooling for our urban spaces



Our Why

*Connecting with like-minded people,
To use our collective skills,
To act as good custodians for all generations, to ensure a future that is
environmentally sustainable and liveable .*

Strategic Objectives/Goals

The group identified 5 of the goals for actions and initiatives for the next 12 - 18 months. Group members nominated themselves into self organizing working groups to progress the actions.

Strategic Objective	Initiatives/Actions for the next 12 – 18 months
Widespread adoption of Sustainable farming systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a series of forums and on-farm demonstrations• Connect and work with other like-minded groups on common goals
Connected and Engaged Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a Community Hub Space• Develop a program of Community Events and Workshops
100% Renewable and community owned energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop a micro-grid project• Engaging and working with BRC to progress towards 100% renewable energy for Benalla
Ecological, sustainable planning and development and Retrofits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engage and work with council on Sustainable planning and development options
Greening and cooling for our urban spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Showcase and learn from the Grubissa Court example• Develop a pilot park or street space• Develop relationship with council for urban cooling considerations into planning



Attentive and engaged audience at the BSGF review facilitated by Cath Botta

Living within one's means

That's what I was always taught as a young lad - save up, don't borrow.

But the day came when we wanted to buy a house. We were living in the UK then with a young child and as poor as church mice. We borrowed 100% of the cost with the firm I was working for acting as guarantor. It was at a time of rampant inflation.

Ahh, the good old days. Four years later we sold that house for twice the price and returned to Australia, using the proceeds to put down the deposit on a house in Belgrave South.

The cost of a house back then (about 1980) was about two or three times an average salary. A home loan could be paid off by just one person working.

Today entering into home ownership is a daunting task for any young couple and it needs two people working. It's not the interest that's the killer; it's the capital. You really don't want anything to go wrong along the way like a divorce or being out of work.

How did it come to this? I'm no expert but I'd put it down to three main factors. Rapid population growth and not keeping up with supply i.e. high demand would be number one. Next comes treating houses as an investment rather than shelter. Those investment properties may or may not be lived in full time; some are holiday houses. Third is foreign investment. It's estimated to be just 6% of sales now, compared to 15% seven years ago, but those extra buyers can tip the scales.

This issue is high on the list of questions being asked of our politicians as we head toward elections. The two main parties essentially have no answer. The LNP, being the best people to manage the economy (in their opinion) seek to return to business as usual. The Labor party won't even mention dampening investment (negative gearing, capital gains) as that did them no good last time around.

We also have a rental crisis. We have sky-high rents and very few properties available, whatever the price. Why so few places now when immigration has been zero for two years? The government provided plenty of grants for the industry to keep building. My guess is

that many investment properties are now vacant or listed on Airbnb. There is something rather immoral about that when people are left sleeping in their cars.

Let's talk about 'sustainability'. It's the business-as-usual mindset and the growth mentality that has created the mess we are now in. We've got an economic system that is weighted towards high population growth and building houses and infrastructure to match. It is so established that we cannot seem to get off the merry-go-round. The LNP boasts of providing 1.3 million new jobs in the next five years. Where are the workers coming from to take up those jobs? They aren't from our present population. Where are they going to live?

Labor proposes more childcare assistance allowing parents in a family to work more hours. Is that going to give them more disposable income? Or is it just confirming the fact that young couples today who wish to have a family and a house will need to both have full time jobs for 30 years to pay off a mortgage?

Coping with increased numbers means higher consumption. It also means more spreading suburbs, more water usage and more pressure on the environment. It really is time to say, "Enough is enough!"

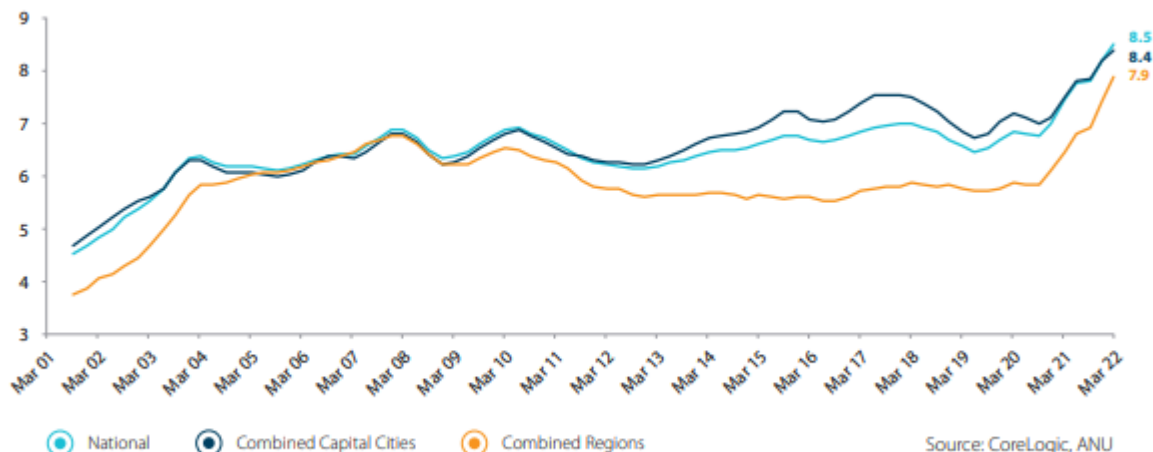
Let's also talk about 'resilience'. During the Covid pandemic we got a taste of what resilience, or the lack thereof, means. Many people have high debt levels, especially young people and those who have recently extended themselves to get into the housing market. Currently we are seeing their fears played out as we enter a time of higher inflation.

We also lack resilience as we rely so much on modern infrastructure and imported goods including fuel. We also rely for much of our national income on exports of iron ore, coal and gas.

One reason for this decline in self-sufficiency is that we invest far too much in housing!

We really are coming up against 'Limits to Growth', not by hitting a brick wall but by encountering more and more setbacks. The course we've been on cannot continue unabated. It's time to live within our means.

Ian Herbert



Value to Income Ratio - National Aggregates

CoreLogic says it takes 8.5 times the average income to service a home loan worth \$750,000

"The expectation is that property prices will fall off the back of higher interest rates, but this shifts the dynamic from trying to come up with a deposit to an increase in the cost of servicing a home loan," says Eliza Owen from CoreLogic.

Lifestyle Emissions

In his book *Living the 1.5 Degree Lifestyle, Why Individual Climate Action Matters More than Ever* Lloyd Alter develops the 1.5 Degree Lifestyle in the second chapter of his book *Equity, Fairness, and the 2.5 tonne budget*.

A [2009 report](#) concluded that globally 72% of GHG emissions are related to household consumption, 10% to government consumption, and 18% to investments. There are agreed carbon budgets for 2030 and 2050 as per the Paris Agreement. Individuals do not have an agreed budget and their emissions vary widely. The average Australian per capita consumption emissions are about 17T, an average Indian about 1.7T and the richest 1% as high as 75 tonnes of lifestyle emissions, directly attributable to individuals and how we live and what we do.

The 2030 Paris carbon budget to stay under 1.5 degrees is 25 gigatonnes. For the global population this is about 3-4 tonnes per year. 72% of this gives a 2030 target lifestyle footprint of 2.5 tonnes of CO₂e per person per year.

The term 1.5-degree lifestyle came from Rosalind Readhead who alerted Alter to a study from IGES, [1.5-Degree Lifestyles: Targets and Options for Reducing Lifestyle Footprints](#). This study provided the basis for his project to live a 2.5 tonne CO₂e budget for a year.

In her Journal [Rosalind Readhead](#) describes her attempt to live a One Tonne of Carbon per Year lifestyle. "*3-2-1 tonnes per person by 2030-2040-2050. Globally, citizens and society need to aim for per-person consumption-based greenhouse gas emissions targets of 2.5 (tCO₂e) in 2030, 1.4 by 2040, and 0.7 by 2050 in order to keep global temperature rise to within 1.5 degrees*".

Admitting that many people in wealthy countries will not like the idea of cutting back so much Lloyd feels the target is a good place to start. Over half of the people on the planet are energy poor and have contributed little to climate change.

The book is a 'look at where our carbon emissions come from and how we got into this mess in the first place.' Lloyd Alter is a long-time contributor to Treehugger, Sustainability for All, <https://www.treehugger.com/>.

Peter Maddock

Editor's Note:

'Admitting that many people in wealthy countries will not like the idea of cutting back so much ...'

Australia is one of those wealthy countries!

So how many of us are prepared to cut back on our emissions? Australians as a whole that is. The ABC's Vote Compass gives us an indication but is not an accurate poll.

It shows that almost 60 percent of voters want 'much more' cuts to emissions, and another 20 per cent said Australia could be doing 'somewhat more'. Overall 79 percent support further action.

But the test is, are people prepared to 'put their money where their mouth is'?

Vote Compass asked the question, 'How much are you prepared to spend per year to prevent Climate Change?' The response to the question was quite split along party lines. You can see the bar chart [here](#).

26 percent of LNP voters were not prepared to spend anything! Most people though were prepared to spend between \$100 and \$1000 per year. 25 percent of Greens voters and 17 percent of Labor voters were prepared to spend over \$2000 but only 5% of LNP voters were prepared to pay that much.

These figures are on the optimistic side. There is a large percentage of the population who never watch or read the ABC let alone would fill in such a survey.

As individuals we try to do our part but at the same time others are out there recklessly consuming or, even worse, promoting fossil fuel use.

It is only government action and legislation that will reduce our footprint quickly enough as a nation. The rapid transition to 100 percent renewable electricity and electric vehicles are the most urgent. It requires both the carrot and the stick to make this happen.

Ian Herbert

Helen Haines Meeting on Net Zero Agriculture

On Friday 25th February I attended a Helen Haines Meeting on Net Zero Farming at the Benalla Gardens Rotunda. I was interested when during the meeting Dr Lisa Rasmussen reminded the audience that yes, we need to look at direct emissions, but we also need to consider Scope 3 emissions which are emissions embodied in the goods and services we purchase.

Later Rhona, one of our members arranged for us to meet Lisa. Lisa described the work she has been doing at Mercy Health where she is lead of the [Laudato Si' team at Mercy Health](#) which aims to guide Mercy Health's focus in sustainability, addressing the six pillars of [Laudato Si'](#): pollution and waste, climate change, water, loss of biodiversity, loss of social cohesion in society and global inequality. A major outcome of this work is [Caring for people and planet, Mercy Health's strategic response to Laudato Si' 2020-25](#). At [Choosing Wisely Webinars](#) there is a November 2021 webinar from Lisa about her work at Mercy Health in reducing the carbon footprint of its health and care services.

Interestingly another person at the Helen Haines meeting said that while farmers do need to look at their emissions, other Australians also need to be looking at and reducing their own emissions.

Prior to my meeting with Rhona and Lisa I had just noticed the book [Living the 1.5 Degree Lifestyle, Why Individual Climate Action Matters More than Ever by Lloyd Alter](#). Lloyd tries to live a 2.5t carbon lifestyle for a year. Lifestyle emissions include direct emissions (Scope 1 & 2) and indirect Scope 3 emissions which are embodied in the products and services we purchase. See my article Lifestyle Emissions in this newsletter.

We are fortunate that Lisa Rasmussen has been able to accept our invitation to be our guest speaker at the BSFG AGM on Thursday 9th June.

Peter Maddock

Net Zero Benalla

On Saturday 7th May I went to a field day at Warrenbayne on forestry and cattle emissions. The farmer Russell Washusen now has net zero carbon certified beef, achieved by his commitment to farm forestry over many years. Through his work as a CSIRO scientist Russell has contributed to the Meat & Livestock Australia [CN30 program](#) which aims to have carbon neutral beef by 2030.

The [Snapshot Climate Tool for Benalla](#) shows the agricultural sector is the largest emitter for the municipality, due to methane from animal enteric fermentation emissions. And the per capita emissions work out to be 27.4 tCO₂e, without considering Scope 3 emissions.

I left the field day feeling that I could not imagine Benalla Council being involved working with the community to mitigate community emissions. See my News article below on [Net Zero Benalla](#), which also appeared in our November 2021 Newsletter. However, the field day showed that farm forestry can lead to major emission reductions in the agricultural sector, and there are other methods being developed which should see further reduction in agricultural emissions in the Benalla municipality.

The Australian per capita footprint is about 17 tCO₂e and my article Lifestyle Emissions in this Newsletter shows we have a long way to go to achieve carbon budgets agreed to in the Paris Agreement. With a 2030 individual Lifestyle Carbon budget of 2.5 tCO₂e we need to rapidly reduce our lifestyle emissions or offset them.

Within BSFG we could advocate for looking at our personal carbon footprints and steps we can take to reduce them. At the start of the ABC series [Fight for Planet A: Our Climate Challenge](#) Craig Reucassel said, "Okay Australia enough is enough, it's time to look at our carbon footprint."

Peter Maddock

Federal Election 2019

The 2019 Australian federal election was held on Saturday 18th May 2019. Shortly before the election on Saturday 27th April 2019, BSFG [Welcomed Shannon Loughnane](#) to Benalla on his [Long Walk For Climate Action](#). Shannon was carrying a petition to Parliament in Canberra asking for stronger climate action.

Describing his walk as a Low-Carbon, Community-Powered Solo Walk Shannon walked all the way from Coburg to Canberra. Committed to his Climate Action Walk being Low Carbon Shannon declined any lifts in Benalla, even from his reception at the Uniting Church to where BSFG hosted him for the night.

Shannon completed his Walk for Climate Action arriving in Canberra about the time the Bob Brown Convoy was travelling through Queensland, just before the 2019 election. Shannon was devastated when Labor lost the 2019 election which some commentators have put down to voter reaction in Queensland to the Convoy.

At least near the end of this election cycle the Federal Government has now set a goal for Australia to be Net Zero Carbon by 2050.

Peter Maddock



Swanpool Environmental Film Festival 2022

This event on **Saturday 18th June** is brought to you by Swanpool Landcare and Benalla Sustainable Future Group. Tickets will be on sale from 21st May at

www.trybooking.com/BYVCL

We ask all our members and readers to book in early for this popular event. Tickets are just \$30 per head which includes afternoon tea and a light evening meal between sessions.

Session One: Assoc. Prof. Michael-Shawn Fletcher,
Feature film '[River](#)'

Session Two: Dr Kerryn Higgs,
Feature film '[GrowthBusters](#)'

Session Three: Short Enviro Film Fest,
Feature film '[Once You Know](#)'

Full program details can be found [on the BSFG website](#).

Ian Herbert & Peter Maddock

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**Deadline for
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Sunday 30th July**



**Benalla
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