



# Benalla Sustainable Future Group

Newsletter 15

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Benalla Sustainable  
Future Group Inc.  
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## President's Column

### *Apology*

I must apologise for not producing an August newsletter as we would normally do. Unfortunately, our editor was away and without his skills we were unable to put it all together.

Unfortunately this newsletter is a month late, but better late than never. This means of course that we are fast approaching the 'festive season' so I would like to convey 'Season's Greetings' to all our readers.

### *A Pathetic Retreat shows a 'Lack of Spine'!*

The Turnbull government has been forced into a U-turn on climate change policy less than 48 hours after releasing details for a policy review next year.

Katharine Murphy, writing in *The Guardian*, *What an extraordinary, gutless capitulation by Josh Frydenberg*, (7/12/2016) says, "Just 24 hours of controversy from entirely predictable quarters and a carefully calibrated process to try to engineer a truce in Australia's utterly wretched climate politics has been all but abandoned by its architects."

"Josh Frydenberg has gone in the space of 24 hours from saying quite clearly the government would consider an emissions intensity trading scheme for the electricity sector to trying to pretend he said no such thing."

"This retreat is pathetic – and the consequences of it stretch far beyond yet another apparent failure to do what needs to be done to ensure our economy makes an orderly transition to the carbon-constrained world that the Turnbull government willingly accepted when it signed Australia up to the Paris international climate agreement this time 12 months ago."



"Yet again the Turnbull government has shown the voting public that it is a divided, roiling, rudderless, chaotic and gutless political outfit, locked into a cycle of chasing its own tail, jumping nervously at shadows."

The government now faces accusations that it is forcing up electricity prices and reducing energy reliability after abandoning the plan to even consider a climate scheme that experts say would have tackled both.

Frontier Economics chief, Danny Price, a former advisor to Mr Turnbull and a government appointee to the Climate Change Authority board, said the government had turned its back on an option that would have reduced prices. He said an emissions intensity scheme would improve reliability by helping the electricity industry plan for the closure of aging coal plants by investing in cleaner stations.

"This shows a lack of spine. The policy vacuum that it leaves will do exactly what they are trying to avoid," Mr Price said. "By doing this they are the party of increasing electricity prices and reduced energy security." (*Criticisms fly after emissions U-turn, Adam Morton, Heath Aston, The Age, 8/12/2016*)

Adam Morton writing in *The Age* on 9/12/2016 (*Scheme 'could save \$15B'*) informs us that the Turnbull government has been sitting on advice that an emissions intensity scheme - the carbon policy it put on the table only to rule out just 36 hours later - would save households and businesses up to \$15 billion in electricity bills over a decade.

While Malcolm Turnbull has rejected this sort of scheme by claiming it would push up prices, analysis in an Australian Electricity Market Commission report handed to the government months ago finds it would actually cost consumers far less than other approaches, including doing nothing. It finds that would still be the

case even if the government boosted its climate target to a 50 per cent cut in emissions by 2030.

Depending on the level of electricity use and the target adopted, modelling by Danny Price of Frontier Economics found costs would be between \$3.4 billion and \$15 billion lower over the decade to 2030. Costs would be \$11.2 billion lower over this time assuming average electricity use and the existing climate target.

Morton also reports that a preliminary report into the future security of the electricity market by chief scientist Alan Finkel, which was presented to a COAG meeting, states that investment in the electricity sector has stalled because of "policy instability and uncertainty" – and warns that current federal climate policy settings will not allow Australia to meet its emissions reduction targets under the Paris agreement. While it makes no recommendations, the Finkel review cites the market commission, Australian Energy Market Operator and Climate Change Authority as all having found an emissions intensity scheme would have lower costs and less impact on energy security than other policies considered. Malcolm Turnbull rejected the advice of the chief scientist.

Waleed Aly, in an opinion column in *The Age*, 9/12/2016, says that Malcolm Turnbull will never have a credible climate change policy. He writes:

"To be honest, I can't really be bothered getting breathless about what the Coalition did on climate change this week. Sure, it should be remarkable that members of the Turnbull government variously said they would consider an "emissions intensity scheme", that such a scheme was a "stupid" idea, and then ultimately that it wouldn't be considered at all. In a saner world, this would inflict some kind of whiplash. But in this world, it just seems predictable. Probably the least predictable aspect was that the Turnbull government even suggested it might be open to some version of carbon pricing in the first place."

"Because we've known for years now – at least seven of them – that the Coalition can never offer a policy like that. Not even if its leader wants to. Not even when this would unite environmentalist and business groups (as it presently does). And not even when the most obvious, low-cost policy is the one that most closely matches the Liberal Party's ideological convictions: market-based responses. Indeed, the greatest hallmark of the Coalition's baked-in streak of climate denialism is the extent to which it will contort itself not to have a credible policy."

Twelve months ago, shortly after Malcolm Turnbull had replaced Tony Abbott as Prime Minister I headed this column as follows: **New Prime Minister - New Climate Policies or just a Different Suit?**

The answer to that question is very clear today. It is the hard-line back benchers who control climate policy, such as Cory Bernardi who said transitioning to an emissions intensive scheme was "one of the dumbest things he had ever heard." Malcolm Turnbull has clearly sold out on his principles to remain as Prime Minister.

*John Lloyd*



*The Age, 9/12/2016*

### **Java express - Discard your coffee pods – and your eco-guilt**

Published in *Gourmet Traveller (Australia)* Oct 1 2016

In partnership with Australia Post, Nespresso has produced a special postage satchel allowing customers to mail back their used coffee capsules for recycling – on Nespresso's dollar. The satchels, which are available to buy at all Nespresso boutiques, hold up to 130 capsules and cost \$1.90 each. Nespresso covers the return postage so it's a pretty fair (and feel-good) investment.

In addition to the mail-back option, customers can still drop off their used pods to one of the 18 collection points at Nespresso boutiques, and now also at hundreds of florists around the country. "Because our capsules have used coffee grounds, we needed to find partners that are familiar with handling organic waste," says Loïc Réthoré, general manager of Nespresso Australia and Oceania, who is an avid recycler. "Florists have experience in that respect and provided a perfect fit."

All the used capsules go straight to a recycling plant where specialist machinery separates any used coffee grounds from the aluminium pods. The coffee is composted and the pods are compressed so that down the track the aluminium can be made into new products. "We are constantly trying to make it easier and more convenient for consumers to recycle," he says. "This is a nationwide recycling program, meaning that everyone, regardless of where they live, can now have access to a recycling solution."

The Nespresso Australia Post satchels can be bought at all Nespresso boutiques, or online at [nespresso.com.au](http://nespresso.com.au).



## **Environmentally Sustainable Business Award**

Earlier this year Benalla Sustainable Future Group and Sun Real jointly sponsored an Environmentally Sustainable Business Award as part of the Benalla Business Network Business Excellence Awards. Sustainability Victoria provided assistance with establishing the criteria and judging the award. The winners of the award were D & R Henderson. The following activities contributed to this win.

### **Using Recycled Timber Reduces Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

D&R Henderson is the only particleboard manufacturer in Australia using large volumes of recycled timber. The company operates a recycled wood collection service to selected customers, bringing their joinery and timber waste back to Benalla to be re-used for particleboard production.

Since mid-2010, approximately 130,000 tonnes of recycled wood have been diverted from landfill. D&R Henderson is now Australia's only manufacturer of particleboard comprising 100% recycled wood waste. Thanks to their innovative cleaning tower, the company has created a 100% recycled product that meets Australian Standards.



The Cleaning Tower machine was installed new on site some years ago to process recycled wood into a raw material for particleboard. The timber comes from old pallets, crates and furniture offcuts. The timber scraps are shredded into chips, then run through the Cleaning Tower. The Cleaning Tower removes non-wood matter such as metal (ferrous and non-ferrous), plastic and stones as the recycled material 'falls' down the five storey high Cleaning Tower machine.

A large storage shed keeps the recycled wood raw material dry enabling 33% increased processing capability through the Cleaning Tower machine. Also, it requires less energy to process dry wood than fresh.

## **Energy Efficiency**

The Company's participation in the Federal Government Energy Efficiency Opportunities program has resulted in up to 17 percent energy saving on gas and electricity consumption. Older metal halide lights have been replaced with induction lights saving 278 tonnes per annum greenhouse gas emissions due to reduced electricity consumption.

Instead of sending industrial waste wood dust to landfill the Company recycles the dust as a drying machine fuel, saving 12,253 tonne per annum of wood dust going to landfill. Also the wood dust fuel reduces the amount of natural gas being used and reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

### **Waste Mitigation**

All the waste wood material from the saw mill is used in the manufacture of the particle board.

Cardboard, plastic and metal waste are segregated on the Benalla site and collected for recycling to avoid sending as general waste to landfill saving the environment and the Company cost.

## **Watch out Santa: The North Pole is 20°C hotter than normal**

It's been a tough couple of weeks for Santa and his helpers. Temperatures around the North Pole reached a shocking 20°C hotter than usual and Arctic sea ice extent is also at a record 28% lower than normal.

At least five buoys near the pole recorded temperatures above 0°C in the past week ... during what is supposed to be the coldest time of the year.

According to NASA, sea ice cover is at record low levels, even worse than the previous record-low in 2012. To put this in perspective: sea ice cover in the Arctic lost a chunk the size of Queensland this October.

### **The root cause?**

Scientists are linking the extremely warm temperatures to the trend of record-breaking hot months experienced earlier this year, contributing to the near-record ice melt during this past summer and fall.

### **Why is this trend so alarming?**

For starters, these high Arctic temperatures are occurring during what is supposed to be the coldest time of the year. 'Polar night' is a period when the sun rarely rises and temperatures are supposed to be dropping, creating the necessary conditions for sea ice to grow and thicken.

While large variability in temperatures is common in the Arctic, what's unique about this episode is the duration and magnitude of the much warmer than normal temperatures.

*"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world;  
indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."* Margaret Mead

### **Is this the new normal?**

This is the second year in a row that the North Pole has been abnormally hot. In late December of last year, a buoy near the North Pole also recorded temperatures above 0°C.

While the rest of the world continues to smash temperature records each year, the Arctic has been warming at twice this rate – with a dramatic impact on sea ice cover.

It might seem really far away (and it is!) but if the North Pole keeps warming, you'll feel the impacts too.

Although ice is re-forming, the delay caused by these warm Arctic temperatures could mean it's still very thin when the summer melt season arrives in July next year. This could cause faster and more widespread melting in 2017.

**Climate Council, 30.11.2016**

### **How much is that air conditioner really costing you?**

Australian families could save more than \$700 on their energy bills by reducing their air-conditioning habits this summer, a national survey reveals.

Two-thirds of Australians who have air-conditioning are guilty of bad habits such as leaving it on when they leave the house or to cool the kitchen while using the oven, the energy plan comparison site Mozo found. Mozo estimates the collective cost of air-conditioning habits to hit \$2.5 billion this summer alone.

A substantial portion of that is while we are sleeping. Nearly three in 10 people leave the air conditioner on overnight so they can sleep under a doona, said Mozo's director Kirsty Lamont. "This is Australia's most expensive bad habit, with an eight-hour a night aircon habit adding around \$270 to your bill over the summer, or \$1.1 billion nationwide," Ms Lamont said.

### **Tips to save money on summer air-conditioning:**

- Each degree warmer will save you 10 per cent off your energy bill, so when the AC is on, aim for a comfortable 24 degrees rather than Arctic.
- Open windows at night to allow cool breeze in, kick off the covers and sleep under a thin sheet.
- If you do have the aircon on, close windows and doors and use a door snake to keep the cold air in and turn it off once the room is cool.
- Instead of leaving the aircon on while you go out on a hot day, close up the house and draw the blinds.
- Install a cat or dog door so your furry critters can let themselves in and out and find the coolest place around, unless there's a heat wave.
- Make the most of summer evenings by cooking on the barbecue or enjoying salads and quick pastas rather than switching the oven on.
- Check the forecast and do your washing on a sunny day so you don't need to use the AC unit or dryer.
- Invest in door draft stoppers.

**Victoria Ticha, The Age, 12/12/2016**

### **Benalla's Renewable Energy Future**

A Community Forum was held in October to discuss a future clean energy plan for Benalla. Ninety people attended to hear about the benefits of community owned renewable energy and to hear how other towns were planning for a renewable energy future.

Community renewable energy projects strengthen local economies by:

- developing renewable energy industries,
- providing jobs and training and
- keeping the financial benefits within the local community.

Such projects also educate people about renewable energy and involve them in creating a sustainable low-carbon future. The Victorian Government is encouraging local communities to transition to a clean energy future and have established the New Energy Jobs Fund to support communities across Victoria that would like to initiate renewable energy projects.

Following presentations by the guest speakers, attendees were asked to form small groups to discuss what they saw as the key opportunities and challenges of exploring a renewable energy project for Benalla. Groups recorded their ideas which will be used as the basis for planning a renewable energy future for Benalla.

A Renewable Energy Working Party has been formed to progress the project of developing a future renewable energy plan for Benalla and has established the following key objectives:

- Improve energy efficiency and reduce energy use in Benalla.
- Promote awareness and support for renewable energy by the Benalla community and Council.
- Develop a Future Energy plan for Benalla.
- Encourage significant increase in local energy generation in Benalla.
- Increase and keep the financial benefits of renewable energy generation locally.

A submission for funding to support this project will be made to the Victorian government's New Energy Jobs Fund. The second funding round is now open and will close on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

**John Lloyd**



## **Limits to Growth**

I have over the last few months attended a number of Council Community Meetings seeking input to the Benalla and District 2036 Community Plan.

Recently I attended a meeting where the Draft Community Plan was available for Public Consultation. You can download a copy [here](#).

The plan did pull together many admirable aspirations people have about the type of community they want to live in. However, from an environmental viewpoint I felt there was little on climate change mitigation although renewable energy was mentioned as was adaptation to climate change. There was also a reliance on increasing population and *sustainable growth*.

In the introduction on page 3, two dot points struck me as being incompatible; Planned Population Growth and a Sustainable Environment. Item 24 on page 16 of the draft plan sets a 1.5% - 2% target for planned population growth while the following Item 25 calls for the plan to facilitate 'sustainable growth'. 2% growth is a doubling in 35 years.

At the 2016 Swanpool Environmental Film Festival we heard guest speaker Dr Kerryn Higgs talk 'Collision Course: The Growth Delusion', which received a standing ovation. Kerryn is the author of the book '[Collision Course: Endless Growth on a Finite Planet](#)'. Kerryn sold all the copies she brought with her and also took orders. Read an excellent review of Collision Course by Herman Daly [here](#).

For many years I have subscribed to a newsletter from [Population Matters: For a Sustainable Future](#). The most recent newsletter is running a raffle to celebrate 25 Years of work. The raffle is for the book '[Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot](#)' published by Global Population Speak Out (click the links to read online).

The book is mainly a photo essay with quotes. The book begins; "Every major problem facing humanity is exacerbated by a needlessly ballooning population. So why is the explosive growth of the human family - more than seven fold since the Industrial Revolution and still expanding - generally ignored by policy makers and the media?

And why has the environmental movement chosen to be mute about the fundamental driver of species loss and the destruction of wild habitats around the globe. Isn't it time to start speaking out about the equation that matters most to the future of people and the planet?"

At the Public Consultation meeting I did question and comment on the Draft Community Plan goal to *facilitate sustainable growth*. However, I don't think there will be a change to this goal in the final plan.

The Draft Community Plan asks on page 7 for feedback on two vision statements. I chose the second because it had the words "people making individual choices".

As individuals the choices we make every day leave our ecological footprint on the planet. And we also live within a system which determines to a large extent the size of this footprint whatever individual choices we make.

In terms of Ecological Sustainability, it seems to me development plans whether local, national or global need to start recognising planetary boundaries, the right of all species to ecological space and the [Limits To Growth](#).

**Peter Maddock**

## ***Global Trends in Climate Change and Refugees - Are they connected?***

Most people are aware of the rapid increase in the number of refugees/people seeking asylum on a global level. In fact this is the first time in the history of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) that the number has exceeded 60 million. A recent report released by them in June 2016, Global Trend, provides some staggering statistics.

Wars and persecution have driven more people from their homes than at any time since UNHCR records began. The report noted that on average 24 people were forced to flee each minute in 2015, four times more than a decade earlier, when six people fled every 60 seconds. Forced displacement worldwide, based on data from governments, partner agencies and UNHCR's own reporting, found a total 65.3 million people were displaced at the end of 2015, compared to 59.5 million just 12 months earlier.

Our media continually remind us of the racial and political conflict that is contributing to this situation in areas such as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq etc. however there are others that we hear less about. Iran, Sri Lanka, Somalia, South Sudan, Myanmar to name of few, but they don't usually grab the headlines, unless there is an event that is deemed to be newsworthy e.g. people in trouble at sea, terrorist incident etc. A quick search on the internet will reveal the countries of origin and the number of people leaving their homes to seek a better life. The Refugee Council provides a quick snap shot of the countries of origin of refugees under UNHCR's mandate (top ten) in 2014.

<http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/getfacts/statistics/intl/countries-origin-refugees-unhcrs-mandate-top-ten-2014/>

So how is this relevant to climate change? The language surrounding what is being referred to as "migration" is quite complicated and uses terms such as "internally displaced persons", "stateless persons", "asylum seekers" etc. However if we confine our thinking to those who are forced to flee their homes due to the long-term effects of climate change - erratic weather, droughts, and the gradual loss of land due to rising sea levels – are they, or will they, be considered to be refugees and therefore have the same legal and humanitarian rights as those that are fleeing persecution?

It would appear that they may not, as the UNHCR defines a refugee as...

A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries.

<http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/>

Julia Blocher, writing a review of an interview with Peter Singer, provides the following information:

Human mobility in the context of climate change is complex. Limits to a more nuanced understanding of this issue may be due to a lack of agreement on the legal definitions and the methodological choices made to project numbers of environmental migrants, as well as - importantly - an understatement of the agency and adaptive capacities of people. Communities in coastal and low-lying areas that may be affected by sea-level rise in the future are affected today by recurrent natural hazards, coastal erosion, land subsidence, and saltwater contamination of arable land.

Empirical studies, including from the United Nations University, have explored how migration contributes to livelihoods and household adaptation strategies.

Experts tend to agree that the types of movements that might fall under that moniker "climate migrant" are varied and complex. Robust estimates by the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre fall short of accounting for people living in prolonged displacement, displaced across borders (generally agreed to be a minority), or migrating away from their homes due to the long-term effects of climate change. People migrating due to loss of land may be the largest – and would be considered labour migration under current definitions.

Julia also points out that climate change experts have largely been reluctant to attribute individual weather events to climate change, thus making it difficult to attribute displacement due to climate- or weather-related disasters, to climate change.

(As the climate changes, are 750 million refugees predicted to move away from flooding? Julia Blocher The Conversation August 4, 2016)

So will the people living on islands in the Pacific Ocean, who are losing their homes due to rising sea levels, be considered "refugees"? Given the huge number of refugees/asylum seekers/displaced persons etc. that already exist, how will they be viewed? Will the developed world see that they have a responsibility to them given that the global response to action on climate change has been patchy at best? How will Australia respond?

Naomi Klein reminds us in her 2016 Edward W. Said London Lecture, of the many assaults on the

environment which result in the displacement of people, particularly indigenous people, who then have no choice but to seek refuge elsewhere. In particular she reminds us of the environmental challenges of the Middle East and states that they are impossible to ignore by those of us who are interested in geopolitics. The region is intensely vulnerable to heat and water stress, to sea-level rise and to desertification. She draws our attention to the "aridity line" defined by Israeli architect Eyal Weizman In his latest book, The Conflict Shoreline.

The so-called 'aridity line' encompasses areas where there is on average 200 millimetres of rainfall a year. This has been considered to be the minimum for growing cereal crops on a large scale without irrigation.

The Syrian border city of Daraa falls directly on the aridity line. Daraa is where Syria's deepest drought on record brought huge numbers of displaced farmers to the city in the years leading up to the outbreak of Syria's civil war. It's where the Syrian uprising broke out in 2011. Drought wasn't the only factor in bringing tensions to a head, but the fact that 1.5 million people were internally displaced in Syria as a result of the drought clearly played a role.

<http://www.lrb.co.uk/v38/n11/naomi-klein/let-them-drown>

So has the current conflict in the Middle East been influenced by climate change? What other areas of our world will see social and political unrest develop in the setting of a changing climate? What will the world do to meet the ongoing needs of displaced people who are forced into seeking refuge elsewhere. All food for thought.

**Freida Andrews**

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