



Benalla Sustainable Future Group

Newsletter 22

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Benalla Sustainable
Future Group Inc.
PO Box 642
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Next Meeting

The next General Meeting of Benalla Sustainable Future Group will be held at the Benalla Uniting Church on

Thursday the 25th of October from 7.30pm

until about 9.30pm.

For this meeting we are screening the short film Takayna 2018 from Patagonia Films.

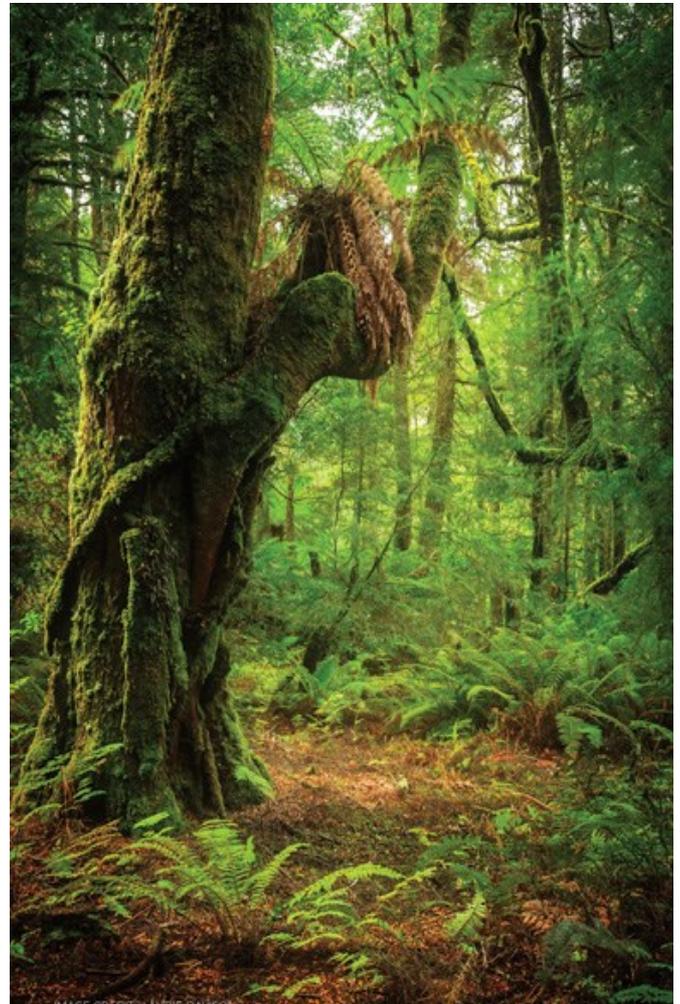
Takayna / Tarkine in north-western Tasmania is home to one of the last tracts of old-growth rainforest in the world, yet it's currently at the mercy of destructive extraction industries, including logging and mining. This documentary unpacks the complexities of modern conservation and challenges us to consider the importance of our last wild places.

The film shows Nicole Anderson a rural doctor in Smithton who runs deep into the Tarkine reporting on the hidden logging activities in the region. Bob Brown appears in the film and activities around the Franklin River are shown. A short interview with a former timber worker highlights how small communities relying on extractive industries for employment may feel threatened by efforts to protect the Tarkine, particularly when they feel they are sustainably harvesting old growth forests.

We are hoping the film will lead us to a discussion of how we can save our environment from further degradation when our economy is geared to infinite growth. See for instance the article 'Environmental Protection versus Economic Growth' in this issue.

Note that Takayna has some coarse language. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting. Tea, coffee and biscuits will be available after the film.

Peter Maddock, Secretary



TAKAYNA
/ TARKINE

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

Per Capita and Total CO2 Emissions

In the September 11 2018 edition of The Ensign lift out Country News, there was a letter from Mr Thomson called Change is natural, not our doing. This article was responding to an earlier opinion letter calling for a reduction of carbon emissions and increasing renewable energy generation. Mr Thomson felt the evidence for our carbon emissions causing climate change (warming) was contradicted by the recent extended snow season we have experienced. He also questioned why China and India are allowed to increase emissions while Australia must reduce them.

The article concluded by saying, "Those people who believe in global warming/climate change should immediately disconnect from the electricity grid, sell their cars and homes, and move to the nearest cave! This will cut emissions and the rest of us can get on with our lives in peace."

The recent extended snow season does not contradict the evidence for human induced climate change through increasing emissions of greenhouse gases. The overall trend is warming despite local anomalies. It is interesting that the group Protect Our Winters, <https://protectourwinters.org/>, are now mobilising the outdoor sports community against Climate Change and participated in the recent Peoples Climate March, <https://peoplesclimate.org/>.

The letter makes no comparison of the Per Capita emissions of China and India compared to Australia. Very convenient when pointing to the high total emissions of other countries, ignoring that Australians have one of the higher Per Capita emissions.

EDGAR, the [Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research](#) has recent comprehensive information on country emissions for 1990 to 2016. The table below shows some 2016 CO2 per capita emissions and that Australia is ranked 10th highest. I have also included Total CO2 emissions for comparison.

Notice in the table that, yes, Australia is responsible for only 1.2% of total CO2 emissions. However Australia ranks 10th highest for Per Capita CO2 emissions. Although China is responsible for 29.2% of Total CO2 emissions, on a Per Capita basis the Chinese are responsible for only about half the emissions of Australians and Americans.

And while India is responsible for about six times the emissions of Australia, on a Per Capita basis Australians emit nearly nine times the amount of an Indian. So this is why Australia must reduce its emissions while India and China may increase, assuming a Contraction and Convergence process to achieve a Safe Climate by 2050.

I do think Mr Thomson has a point however, when he says that those who believe in climate change should be taking dramatic and radical steps to reduce their emissions. He suggests disconnecting from the electricity grid, selling their cars and homes, and moving to the nearest cave!

Polling suggests that increasing numbers of Australians want the government to do something about climate change. However, we as individuals can take action now to reduce our emissions. Every time we start our car, we are supporting the fossil fuel industry. Every time we fly, we boost considerably our Per Capita emissions. Our personal consumption expenditure accounts for a major proportion of our personal carbon emissions.

I am sure there are many things we can do now to reduce our emissions, without moving back to a cave. We live in a market economy and our dollar counts.

Peter Maddock

Country	Ton CO2 Per Capita	Rank out of 208	Total KTON CO2	% Total CO2
Australia	17.22	10	414,989	1.2
United States	15.56	16	5,011,687	14.0
China	7.45	41	10,432,751	29.2
India	1.92	124	2,533,638	7.1
World	4.80		35,755,322	100.0
EU	6.75		3,433,672	9.6
2050 C & C for 1.5C	1.50	See my article in the June 2018 Newsletter , Per Capita Greenhouse Emissions for a Safe Climate.		

"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

Change of Habits to Reduce Waste

Now that single use plastic bags are no longer supplied by supermarkets, there have been several comments made by the public, implying an inconvenience. To deal with this, it will require a change of our habits and here are a few suggestions to help this change.

Since we have become so used to bags being available at the shops, we forget to take them or to put them in the car. So, after emptying your shopping bags, put them straight back in the car and not in the kitchen cupboard. Make sure they live in the car.

People have been using plastic shopping bags as bin liners and now feel the need to buy bin liners to replace them. The solution to this is not to use bin liners at all. Since Benalla Council and some of the other councils in the North East now provide green bins, food scraps should now not go in the waste bin. Therefore, the waste bin is not as likely to become soiled. And if it does, all you need to do is wash it.

People have also been using the plastic bags to pick up their dog droppings. If you live in a municipality where compostable bags are supplied for green recycling, you can use them for the dog waste and put them straight in the compost bin.

Now that we can live without the plastic shopping bags, we need to take the next step and get rid of the small plastic bags we use in the fruit and vegetable sections of shops. Again, this needs a change in habits. The first thing everyone can do is to reduce the waste, by reusing the bags. Like the suggestion above, of putting the shopping bags straight in the car, we can put the small plastic bags straight back in the car with the shopping bags.

The next step is to reduce the use of these bags. Fruit and vegetables in bunches, such as bananas, truss tomatoes, etc. don't need a bag. If you need small quantities, put them straight in the shopping basket and then at the check out straight in your reusable shopping bag. Avoid pre-packaged fruit and vegetables. And if you can't, get them from your fruit and vegetable shop instead of the supermarket.

The final step is to stop using these plastic bags altogether and purchase some reusable mesh bags. Fruits N Fare has them, or you can get them on-line: <https://www.ebay.com/bhp/mesh-produce-bags>. An alternative is to reuse the orange net bags oranges come in.

Some people may argue that the production of these reusable bags have an environmental cost. This maybe so, but the suggestions listed here are aimed at reducing our waste. This can be achieved by everyone and are all about simply changing our habits, to help deal with our growing waste problem. We need to get on top of that as a matter of urgency.

Mike Hillenaar

Electric Vehicle Revolution

Shhhhhhhhh!

Don't tell the politicians there's a quiet revolution happening.

To paraphrase the "forest for the trees" saying - "you won't hear the clamour of the revolution for the silence it creates".

In the past week it was announced that Australia's first fast electric vehicle charging stations are to be built at Euroa and Barnawartha North, and expected to be operational by the end of October. These chargers will have the capability of recharging an electric vehicle in 15 minutes, giving the car a range of up to 400 km.

Installation of these first two stations will give rural Australians more incentive to purchase an electric car, and local businesses need to get on the bandwagon pretty smartly if they are going to have a share of this potentially lucrative market. The question that comes to my mind is, "What happens to all the petrol fuelled vehicles currently in circulation once this revolution goes into top gear?"

I see an opportunity for conversion "kits" to be developed, so that existing vehicles can have their motors removed, and replaced with electric drive and battery systems. A company in Castlemaine has been doing this with a particular imported vehicle for quite a few years now, so if this process can be adapted for any existing vehicle, there will be no need for vehicles to be sold off for scrap.

I suspect that in countries with high sales of electric vehicles already happening (such as Norway with legislated sales targets in place), dedicated electric vehicles are being built. My concern is that this is yet another example of new technology replacing old (with the old being thrown away), but in this case we should use the existing resource as the most cost effective way to move into the future. This is particularly relevant, if we consider that the world is rapidly using up its existing available resources.

Peter Holmes



Earth Overshoot Day

I recently came across an ABC News article [Earth Overshoot Day: We used a year's worth of resources in seven months](#). There is a date every year when the world's resource bank goes into overdraft. In 2017 Earth Overshoot Day was marked globally on August 2. For the rest of year we were in the red. More on [Earth Overshoot Day](#).

Earth Overshoot Day is calculated by the [Global Footprint Network](#) each year and is the point when the amount of natural resources, such as trees, fish and water humanity takes from the Earth reaches the total that can be regenerated over the entire year. The article shows country based comparisons and if every country in the world lived like Australia, Earth Overshoot Day would have been on March 12. If like China it would be June 23, or Cuba December 2. Want to calculate your own footprint; <http://www.footprintcalculator.org/>.

According to their calculations, we're using the resources of 1.7 planets every year. To rein in our ecological spending, we'd need to push Earth Overshoot Day back 4.5 days each year to be living within our single-planet means by 2050.

But how can we keep going after overshoot? Donnie McBain, tutor in Sustainability Science at the University of Newcastle uses a bathtub analogy to explain the concept. "Imagine a bathtub full of water, with the tap running and the plug out at the same time. It is possible for more water to flow out of the bath than into it for some time without the water in the tub running out. This is because the significant store of water in the bath acts like a buffer. The same goes for nature." A more detailed explanation from Donnie McBain in [The Conversation](#).

Perhaps there really are Limits to Growth!

Environmental Protection versus Economic Growth

I recently received an email from CASSE, the [Centre for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy](#). CASSE President Brian Czech has challenged large well know Environmental NGO's in the US to a debate "[Is there a conflict between economic growth and environmental protection?](#)" Brian Czech argues there is a conflict and that these NGO's will not succeed in their efforts to protect the environment while the overriding domestic policy goal is economic growth.

George Monbiot recently wrote in The Guardian that [while economic growth continues we'll never kick our fossil fuels habit](#). He poses the question why are we not leaving fossil fuels in the ground now that we have electric cars. The reason is growth in the number of internal combustion powered cars. Oil production is about to hit for the first time in history 100 million barrels per day. This growth is often driven by an increase in pointless consumption in rich countries which are already meeting their needs.

Even growth in green products and technologies still relies largely on fossil fuel based energy. Clean growth is as much of an oxymoron as clean coal. Electric vehicles have driven a new resource rush, [particularly for lithium](#), that is already polluting rivers and trashing precious wild places.

The short film Takayna 2018 for our General Meeting on October 25th looks at the problem of mining and forestry in one of the last tracts of old-growth rainforest in the world, the Tarkine in North Western Tasmania. How do we ensure the protection of wild places from resource extraction in the face of demands for jobs and growth? It is hoped the film will lead us to a discussion of how we can save our environment from further degradation when our economy is geared to infinite growth.

Dr David Shearman the honorary secretary of Doctors for the Environment Australia and Emeritus Professor of Medicine at Adelaide University recently had an opinion article on ABC News, [Human survival cannot be left to politicians. We're losing our life support systems](#). Dr Sherman's article highlights the loss of bee and insect populations and the effect on food production, and also the general loss of biodiversity through the key facilitators of biodiversity loss, population growth and the economic system, which ignore the finite nature of planetary resources.

The economist Kenneth E Boulding quoted that "Anyone who believes in indefinite growth in anything physical, on a physically finite planet, is either mad or an economist." Boulding in his influential 1966 essay [The Economics of the Coming Spaceship Earth](#) identified the need for the economic system to fit itself to the ecological system with its limited pools of resources.

The Benalla Sustainable Future group is a coalition of diverse individuals with different ideas and we work by using action groups which focus on particular areas. I wonder if the topic of environmental protection and economic growth could be the basis of a BSFG action group. Can we have our cake and eat it too?

Quoting from George Monbiot article, "Let's be embarrassing. Let's break the silence, however uncomfortable it makes us and others feel. Let's talk about the great unmentionables: not just climate breakdown, but also growth and consumerism. Let's create the political space in which well-intentioned parties can act. Let us talk a better world into being."

Peter Maddock



The UN's 1.5°C Special Climate Report

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently released a special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. The report outlines the considerable challenges of meeting the Paris Agreement's more ambitious goal of limiting warming to 1.5°C, the global effort needed to achieve the target, and the consequences of not. It tells us that hitting this goal will be challenging, but not impossible. And it highlights the benefits of hitting the target, by pointing out that global warming will be vastly more damaging if allowed to reach 2°C.

The report says hitting the 1.5°C target will require a "societal transformation" to reduce greenhouse gasses as based on current policies we could experience global warming of more than 3°C.

The world will need to be carbon neutral by 2047 to give us a 66% chance of hitting the 1.5°C target, or by 2058 to give us a 50% chance. This will mean:

- Sourcing 70 -85% of electricity from renewables by 2050.
- Putting a price on greenhouse emissions.
- Using technology to remove CO2 from the air.

The world has had about 1°C of warming so far. At 1.5°C we will see:

- More heatwaves, floods and droughts.
- Up to 90% of reef corals lost.
- Damage to crops and fisheries.
- Threats to global economic growth.

But by avoiding 2°C of global warming, we will:

- Protect 10.4m people from sea level rise.
- Halve the number of people without enough fresh water.
- Reduce death and disease from heatwaves.
- Make it easier to deliver most of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

Australian government backs coal in defiance of IPCC climate warning

Once again the current Federal government ignores science in favour of ideology and the power of the climate change deniers in the Liberal and National parties.

The government has rejected the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report's call to phase out coal power by 2050, claiming renewable energy cannot replace baseload coal power.

Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack, said Australia should "absolutely" continue to use and exploit its coal reserves, despite the IPCC's dire warnings the world has just 12 years to avoid climate change catastrophe.

He said the government would not change policy "just because somebody might suggest that some sort of report is the way we need to follow and everything that we should do". McCormack said he "understands the concerns" expressed in the IPCC report, but admitted he hadn't read it yet.

"I'll certainly consider what it has to say. But the fact is coalmining ... and coal-fired power stations do play an important part of our energy mix in Australia and will do so going forward."

The treasurer, Josh Frydenberg – who as energy and environment minister championed a policy to reduce emissions by 26% in the electricity sector – warned that without coal "the lights will go out on the east coast of Australia".

The environment minister, Melissa Price, said the IPCC report was designed to inform policymakers but was not "policy -prescriptive". She told ABC AM she had not read the whole report, and said Australia's policies were "adequate" to meet its 2020 Kyoto target.

Price conceded there had been "a slight increase" in Australia's emissions but blamed an increase in liquid natural gas production. She dismissed scientists who say Australia will miss its targets as "their opinion" but said she was "very comfortable" with Australia's trajectory.

Price said it would be "irresponsible" to commit to phase out coal by 2050 because clean coal technology could be available by then.

The prime minister, Scott Morrison, has claimed Australia will meet its Paris climate agreement targets of reducing emissions by 26% to 28% on 2005 levels by 2030 "in a canter". The claim is contradicted by environment department figures showing emissions are rising and advice from the Energy Security Board that Australia will fall short under a business-as-usual scenario.

Morrison said Australia's emissions per capita were "at their lowest level in decades" and the government's focus was "to ensure that electricity prices are lower". Advice from the Energy Security Board suggests the dumped national energy guarantee would have reduced household power bills by \$150 a year.

Prior to the IPCC report the government did its best to hide the latest report on greenhouse gas emissions by releasing it on the Friday afternoon after the interim findings of the banking royal commission were released, and as the nation prepared for a weekend of football finals. The government had held onto the information for months, seemingly waiting for the right time to "take out the trash". The news for it, and for us, was grim. Australia's greenhouse gas pollution levels have risen yet again.

The reporting of Australia's rising emissions has been buried on a number of occasions, with data released on Christmas Eve, on weekends, holiday periods, or during major events. It's a cynical attempt to avoid scrutiny.

For Australia to achieve its (inadequate) target greenhouse gas pollution levels must be trending downwards, however for the year to March 2018 emissions increased by 1.3 percent. This is the third year in a row that greenhouse gas pollution has risen.

Australia is one of the most vulnerable developed

countries in the world to the impacts of climate change. Heatwaves are becoming longer, hotter and starting earlier in the year. In the populous south of the country, dangerous bushfire weather is increasing, and cool season rainfall is dropping off, stretching firefighting resources, putting lives at risk and creating challenges for the agriculture industry.

The unprecedented bleaching events on the Great Barrier Reef in 2016 and 2017 resulted in mass coral mortality, with the 2016 bleaching event at least 175 times more likely to occur due to intensifying climate change.

The burning of coal, oil and gas is causing temperatures to rise at unprecedented rates and is making extreme weather events more intense, damaging and costly. The window of opportunity to effectively tackle climate change is closing fast. We need to rapidly and deeply cut our emissions. The solutions are available. We need to accelerate the transition to clean, affordable and reliable renewables and storage technologies and ramp up other climate solutions in the transport, agriculture and other sectors.

At a time when credible federal government climate policy remains missing in action, it has never been more important for transparent greenhouse gas pollution information. Yet the federal government has consistently withheld or hidden vital emissions data; it's a serial offender when it comes to climate censorship.

John Lloyd

Sources:

Australian government backs coal in defiance of IPCC climate warning, Paul Karp, The Guardian, 9/10/2018.

A cynical attempt to avoid scrutiny, Martin Rice, Climate Council, Sydney Morning Herald, 1/10/2018.

The UN's 1.5°C special climate report at a Glance, The Conversation, 9/10/2018

Getting the Message Out about Climate Change

How often do we have to write letters? How many IPCC reports does it take? Locally there is considerable action and our representatives are hearing the message. From the latest issue of WATCHWORD:

"Bravo to Franny and Lizzy for organising a snap protest outside Cathy McGowan's office on August 22nd. On September 12th, Cathy gave a speech in Parliament about community renewable energy across Indi and how we are a template for the rest of Australia. [Please see the speech and transcript here.](#) She also asked a question to the [Prime Minister about energy policy](#) and climate change. And she gave a follow up [90 second speech about](#) Indi residents demanding action on climate policy! Cathy was also on RN breakfast on September 13th talking firstly about women's representation and then [about renewable energy in our region](#)

This is a great opportunity for us to contact Cathy to congratulate her on her stand. Please email her at: cathy.mcgowan.mp@aph.gov.au "

WATCHWORD also reports that the Knitting Nannas are keeping the pressure on Sussan Ley: "Each Thursday these grandmothers stand up for the future of their grandchildren and the planet. Last week one of them gave Sussan a copy of the newly released book 'The Coal Truth'. Say hello to the Knitting Nannas from 12.30 to 1.30pm every Thursday outside Sussan's office. Or phone her office to ask if she's read the book! "

Closer to home the scribe in a local paper, writing about the recent weather, said:

"The world's climate is so vast and complex that it is reasonable to wonder - will science give us just the facts or the answers that we think we want to hear? The history of technology tells us that it will be a bit of both because we often hear of back-flips over what once was a certainty; e.g. the earth is definitely round, as seen and photographed from space rockets, now it's ok to eat eggs again and aspirin is no longer considered beneficial for the over 70s!"

There is a great deal of wishful thinking in this piece of prose. The science is very clear and, as I have written before, it's just basic physics. There is no doubt whatsoever about temperature rise in the atmosphere and the oceans in response to increasing CO2.

The biggest unknown is humankind's response to the crisis. The graphs of CO2 and methane emissions continue to rise unabated.

In another conversation (with a close relative) I was told that the ABC exaggerates the extent of the problem. That's even more wishful thinking! I'm pleased that in recent weeks, maybe with a bi-election due, Climate Change is in the news and candidates are again being questioned on their stance.

Ian Herbert

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