



Benalla Sustainable Future Group

Newsletter 29

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Benalla Sustainable
Future Group Inc.
PO Box 642
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President's Message

Climate Change has not disappeared Under a Covid blanket

Greetings to all our members, and best wishes for a more 'normal' year in 2021, whatever 'normal' feels like from now on!

Of course, health challenges aren't the only issues we face in the future. The climate crisis continues to escalate, and so we are faced with the task of refocussing our political leader's attention back onto taking real action to avert the worst effects of climate change.

Thankfully there is a new President in America, and an immediate shift in emphasis and intent to tackle climate change. Joe Biden says that they have wasted four years, but in reality, the accumulative effect is that the wasted years have compounded the problems. It will now require a Herculean effort on the part of America (and all nations) to make up for lost time.

We in Benalla, have 'lost' twelve months in our endeavours to approach Council to declare a Climate Emergency, and develop plans to help our community mitigate the threat of climate change. However, we do have a new Council, and so there is an opportunity, and a hope, for us to convince enough councillors that there is a crisis.

This program commences on Friday 26th February at the Benalla Town Hall with our Climate Science talks, and if you have not already registered to attend, I urge you to do so, not just for your own enlightenment, but to show solidarity of support for our efforts to convince Council and politicians that there is an emergency.

I have just read Tim Flannery's latest book, 'The Climate Cure - solving the Climate Emergency in the Era of COVID-19', and, as usual with Flannery's writing, it is a no nonsense, tell it as it is expose of the crisis. However, to balance the ledger, Part 2 of the book examines the potential cures, and offers hope for

the future. If you haven't read it, get hold of a copy - it is not going to blind and confuse you with science, because it is so clearly and concisely written.

I have alluded in past newsletters, to the need for succession planning in this organisation. BSFG, and its predecessor BDEG, have many long-term dedicated members, who have diligently fought for environmental issues, giving countless hours of their time in a voluntary capacity, serving in leadership roles on committees, coordinating action groups, attending conferences, lobbying Councils and politicians, writing letters, producing newsletters, organising environmental film festivals, facilitating AV equipment, etc, etc.

Many of us have been involved in such voluntary positions for our entire adult lives (and some of us probably won't stop!), but we need the next generations of 20-, 30-, 40-, 50- year olds to step up and take up the fight. It was not only the previous generations who have caused the problems we now face - we are all part of the problem, each and every generation.

Peter Holmes

Next BSFG Meeting?

BSFG invites all members and their guests and neighbours to attend the

**Climate Change Talks
being held at Benalla Town Hall
on Friday 26th February at 7 pm.**

Full details are in an article on the next page. Please be early so we can start on time.

Our next scheduled date for a

**BSFG General Meeting
is on
Thursday March 25th at 7.30 pm**

and the plan at this stage is to screen the Bob Brown Foundation film 'Forest Defenders'

We will keep you posted.

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

BSFG to host Climate Science Talks at Benalla Town Hall

Benalla Sustainable Future Group is excited to have two very experienced Climate Scientists accept its invitation to come to Benalla on Friday 26th February, to address the very important subject of Climate Change - the present facts, and the future projections, especially for our local region.

This event will take place at Benalla Town Hall commencing at 7 pm sharp, but attendees are advised to come early to secure their seats in the hall as it is a free, non-ticketed occasion.

Text 0438 625 638 or email bsfginc@gmail.com to book a place.



Dr Leanne Webb has been a Climate Scientist for over 15 years, since completing her PhD at Melbourne University, and has worked for much of her career with Professor David Karoly at the CSIRO Climate Research Institute in Aspendale. She works as a Climate Change knowledge broker, and has extensively researched the impacts of climate change on the agricultural industry, and in particular the wine sector. Leanne was part of the team that prepared climate projections for Australia, released in 2016, and is currently engaged with the University of NSW in a study looking at the impacts of climate change on Indigenous health.



Dr Lynette Bettio is a Senior Climatologist with the Bureau of Meteorology in Melbourne, has a PhD in Climate Science, and is a former resident of Benalla and student at FCJ College. She examines and communicates on changes to Australia's climate including long-term trends in rainfall and temperature, and the interaction with extreme events. Lynette co-authored the 2018 and 2020 'State of the Climate' reports produced by the CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology.

Rarely do we have the opportunity to hear about climate science first hand, from scientists at the forefront of climate research, together with an opportunity to ask them questions, so BSFG is urging the community to embrace this chance.

Also of particular interest, will be a brief talk by the Mayor of Indigo Shire, Jenny O'Connor, related to her Shire's declaration of a Climate Emergency, and their proposed actions in response to that declaration. Indigo is one of more than 90 Local Governments representing over 8 million citizens in Australia, that have already taken this action.

The evening will provide the opportunity for attendees to participate in a short Q&A session, and conclude with a light supper.

Climate Emergency update

On the 2nd February, I travelled to Melbourne for the first seminar of a new series related to Climate Emergency, under the banner Reset.21.

Speakers were David Spratt (author of Climate Code Red - written in 2008!!), Sir David King (former scientific advisor to the UK government), and Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick (UNSW Climate Science researcher, particularly in the areas of heatwaves and bushfires frequencies and intensities).

David Spratt's main point was that it is already too hot - we are on target to reach 2 degrees of warming by 2030. Tipping points have already been, or are close to being reached. The Australian carbon emissions budget on a per capita basis is on target for being 'spent' by mid 2025 (the amount that we shouldn't exceed if we were to keep warming to 1.5 degrees).

Sarah Perkins-Kirkpatrick focussed on data and graphs that clearly showed that the frequency and intensity of heatwaves and fires has definitely increased and accelerated over the past two decades.

Sir David is the founder and chair of the Centre for Climate Repair, looking into large scale projects that will assist with draw-down of carbon from the atmosphere. Notably, he didn't place much faith in CCS, unlike our PM!! One project that seems to have some traction is coating large areas of the deep oceans with iron laden dust, which will absorb the carbon, and at the same time have a beneficial effect on the ocean fish populations.

Some climate information and projections that he shared were that the Arctic is warming at three times the rate of the rest of the planet, and that methane gas explosions are occurring, creating craters. When all of Greenland's ice melts, sea levels will be 7 metres higher. Even at 2 metres of increase, most of Vietnam will be inundated, with calamitous implications for rice production in Asia. Djakarta would also be flooded, and over 300 million people would have to be relocated. He also spoke about almost implausible schemes to help re-freeze the polar regions.

All three speakers emphasised the point that countries touting net-zero emissions by 2050, have all failed to grasp the seriousness of the problem. David Spratt stated that he had yet to meet a politician in Canberra who actually deeply understood the climate crisis. Sir David said that in his belief, the poles had already reached their tipping point - a scary thought, given the implications of the melting of the permafrost and methane gas release in the Arctic. He also talked about his concerns for the Himalayan region - fears that are now becoming even more evident.

Peter Holmes

Societal Transformation required to Stay Below 1.5°C

To tide us over until our next newsletter some time ago we included on our website home page a link to [Peter Sainsbury's Environmental Roundup on a Sunday on Ian Menadue's 'Pearls and Irritations' website](#). When I followed the link, I found Peter's article [Sunday environmental round up, 17 January 2021](#). Note that if you click on Author Archive: [Peter Sainsbury](#) you will get all Peter's articles.

With some good and bad news about climate change from 2020 about half way through the article there is a report on Germany's Heinrich Boll Foundation which "has prepared [A Societal Transformation for Staying Below 1.5°C](#)". While the immediate focus is on 1.5°C, the report takes it as given that this cannot be achieved without concurrently tackling the many other social and ecological global crises. In particular, the report challenges the reliance in most other plans on continued global economic growth until 2100, which is 'difficult to reconcile with ambitious climate goals – certainly when currently considering the closing window still left for limiting global warming to 1.5°C'. Consequently, the central plank is that the countries of the global north will de-growth their economies (producing and consuming less), countries of the global south will increase their consumption, and wealth and income will be drastically redistributed. A *socio-ecological transformation* is the focus rather than dangerous and/or currently unavailable *technological solutions* (so, nuclear power will be phased out, no carbon capture and storage technology, no geoengineering). Fulfilling human needs, solidarity, decelerating life and achieving a good life are prerequisites whether or not they directly contribute to achieving the 1.5°C goal".

The above Societal Transformation link takes you to the Heinrich Boll Foundation website page where you can freely [download](#) the short book 'A Societal Transformation Scenario for Staying Below 1.5°C'. The book makes the argument that the IPCC relies too heavily on 'dangerous and/or currently unavailable technological solutions' to limit global warming to 1.5°C.



Peter Sainsbury's articles are hosted on <https://johnmenadue.com/> where there are many articles on a wide range of topics. Climate under Public Policy has an extensive list of climate change related articles <https://johnmenadue.com/category/public-policy/climate/>.

Peter Maddock

BSFG Web Team

We recently welcomed Food Co-op members Heath and Kim to our Web Team. Heath and Kim came to our screening of the film Kiss the Ground last year and in addition to the food co-op have attended one of the REB meetings where they expressed an interest in promoting our groups activities on social media, principally using Instagram. We look forward to working with Heath and Kim promoting BSFG activities.

Heath has created an Instagram account <https://www.instagram.com/benallasustainablefuturegroup/>. So, if you have Instagram have a look and follow.

Remember we also have Facebook and Twitter accounts. You can access all our social media accounts from the social media icons on our websites, www.bsfg.org.au and www.reb.org.au.

Bev and Peter have been compiling a calendar of environmental events during the year. Apart from being informative this calendar might also help our group promote and carry out activities related to these events during the year. While many events are international, we are hoping to list local events including our own activities during the year such as our meetings and the Swanpool Environmental Film Festival.

World Wetlands Day:

<https://www.worldwetlandsday.org/>

Clean Up Australia Day:

<https://www.cleanup.org.au/>

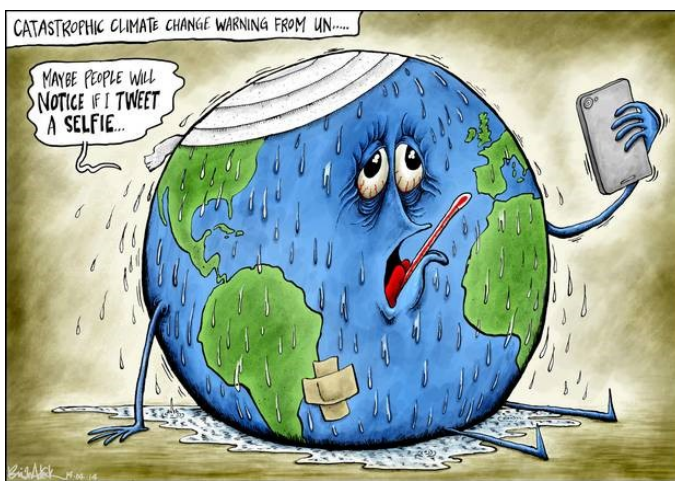
World Environment Day:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/environment-day>.

The list is quite long, and we are still working out a good way to present this information.

If you wish you can use the web team email to contact us about our websites and social media, bsfg.web@gmail.com.

Peter Maddock, for the Web Team



The EV Revolution may just be Sooner Than You Think!

The advent of Joe Biden to the US Presidency may just be the catalyst required for the EV revolution to explode across the world. His recent announcements, giving great support for electrifying the entire Federal vehicle fleet, as well as research into battery efficiencies, and constructing 500,000 vehicle charging stations across America, will surely hasten the end of the internal combustion motor vehicle.

The contrast with Australia's wishy-washy recent 'policy' announcement could not be more stark! Under current government thinking, we will be left far behind in the uptake of EVs, missing the opportunities to develop industries and employment opportunities across Australia.

Australia is already a world-leader in building fast-charging hardware, and also builds electric buses and trucks. We have vast resources of lithium, copper and nickel to feed into the new vehicle technologies.

Presently, Australia's uptake of EVs is only 0.6% of the annual new vehicle sales, compared to 4.2% average globally. (In a number of European countries e.g. Norway, that uptake is far higher, due to government legislation banning sales of new petrol driven vehicles after 2025). As a result of the US announcements, motor vehicle manufacturers there have immediately decided to phase out their fuel powered cars within ten years, so the flow-on effect world-wide will be very significant.

I have previously mentioned the issue of 'stranded assets' - motor vehicles with internal combustion engines may well be just another such item, so think very carefully about whether your next vehicle is fuel-powered or electric! As the change to EVs occurs, the uptake will increase exponentially, and the availability of petrol and diesel will reduce conversely.

Our role locally, is to now convince our Councils and local MPs to heed the warnings, and be pro-active in meeting the needs of this revolution, and a good place to start would be the installation of vehicle charging stations, and electrifying Council and government vehicle fleets, and assisting public transport to also electrify.

Peter Holmes

Does an EV suit your needs?

Adding to Peter's article above, I have just been reading an article in The Conversation which appeared in my inbox on 8th August. You can read the full article [here](#).

And a second article followed dealing with 'range anxiety'. You can read that article [here](#).

I've had range anxiety many a time with a petrol or diesel car so I don't think it's just an EV problem! I can see RACV service vehicles in the future carrying a reserve of kWhs to plug into as well as cans of fuel for all the ICE (internal combustion engine) vehicles still on the road.

What's very interesting to read are all the comments about why we should or should not transition quickly to EVs. Most of our BSFG newsletter readers I think would say the prime reason is to get rid of fossil fuels and help avoid catastrophic Climate Change.

Other reasons, apart from Climate Change, are:

- they are quieter,
- they accelerate faster,
- they are more economical to run,
- they should cost less to service.

But over-riding all of these benefits at the moment is the cost of an EV compared to an ICE equivalent. ICE vehicles have been mass produced for a century and all the development costs have been written off. EVs are still at the beginning of the price volume curve. So we are all hanging out, waiting for the cost to come down.

In theory an EV should cost less than an ICE. There is far less complexity but vehicle manufacturers all seem to want to complicate things. Mechanical simplicity is being overridden by electronic and software complexity. Battery cost is the biggest factor for price parity and there are two ways that might be achieved - mass production and technology advancement (e.g. solid state batteries). I think we will see both.

Energy and Environment Minister Angus Taylor in his Future Fuels report has been promoting hybrid vehicles but that's the [worst of both worlds](#) as far as complexity goes. What a dud plan!

There is another factor in favour of EVs and it could happen sooner than later if government, business and regulators were to get behind it. You can have a two way connection to your house.

The average EV has a 40 kWh battery which is about four times greater than a typical house battery. Why would I buy a house battery if I can use my car as a house battery instead? I can use 10 kWh of an evening and only be using 'a quarter of a tank' - and then I can top it up the next day when the sun shines.

If a large percentage of households do this and we all have smart meters, will we need pumped hydro? Or gas peaker plants?

In our own case I can see an extra benefit. We are at the end of a long mains supply cable and if (or when) a bushfire comes through here we don't expect to have mains power for days. An EV car won't even be able to get down the road. It would be nice to use it as an emergency power supply. Even suburban dwellers might like to have this option for power outages.



Nissan is promoting this V2H (vehicle to house) capability in its new Leaf models. You can read about it [here](#). V2H is already happening in Japan. The comments section in this article from 'The Driven' gets very lively!

I've got a little more to say about EVs on the next page.

Ian Herbert

Are you part of the One Percent?

You might be surprised.

In another [recent article](#) in The Conversation Alex Baumann from Western Sydney University and Sam Alexander from the University of Melbourne explored how the richest 1% of the world's population have gone even further ahead during the COVID-19 pandemic. The world's billionaires went ahead by a whopping 27%!

Some readers may remember Sam Alexander. He gave a thoughtful talk about 'life in a degrowth economy' at the 2018 Swanpool Environmental Film Festival.

So how much do you have to be worth to qualify to be in the top 1% in the world? Well the answer from a Credit Suisse report from October last year is that A\$1.3 million will get you into the club.

An Oxfam report in September last year lamented how the richest 1% of the world's population are responsible for more than twice as much carbon pollution as the poorest half of humanity.

The latest official data shows the average Australian household has a net worth of A\$1,022,200. Australia's richest 20% of households – about two million of them – have an average net worth of A\$3.2 million.

When you divide your household nett wealth by the number of people in your household you might slip out of the top 1%. You qualify for the top 10% though if your individual income is over A\$150,000. Australians are a fraction of the planet monopolising global wealth.

The authors go on to explain that to get off the treadmill and reduce growing inequality we must urgently experiment with new land and housing strategies.

That doesn't seem to be anywhere on the radar of our current Federal government and doesn't rate high on State government agendas. Social housing was talked about, coming out of COVID, but now seems to be forgotten. The Federal government's main fiscal stimulus was tax cuts and instant asset write-offs.

Quantitative easing and a Homemaker package has led to more investment in private and investment housing and higher house prices. Rents have risen. Young people are the ones who struggle the most with these rises and inequality just grows worse.

Returning to the Climate Change theme, none of this stimulus bodes well for the reduction of fossil fuel emissions here in Australia. The whole thrust of the exercise is to return to the pre-COVID economic model as soon as possible. That is only being thwarted now by the lack of international travel and the threat of closed state borders.

The market for large 4WDs is booming. The price of second-hand Landcruisers has gone up, not down. The instant asset write-offs for businesses probably put more large ICE vehicles on the road. Large caravans are in hot demand. Everybody is also just itching to get back into airline travel though they may be reluctant to book a cruise ship ticket for some time. Personally we may not be flying anywhere but we do want to take the old ICE campervan out and about.

We talk about the need to act on Climate Change but the Australian population as a whole is not yet ready

for degrowth or even acting to reduce inequality. Two small actions I would like to see in the May budget are increases in fuel taxes and money spent on social housing - but that's just wishful thinking.

I expect we will have a pause now in GDP growth and that low growth, or even 'degrowth' will be with us while the present quarantine system limits are in place. Scott Morrison and Josh Frydenberg must be quietly fuming! Our GDP growth has been totally dependent on population growth - immigration and foreign students.

Population growth has been averaging 350,000 for the past decade. GDP per capita has flat-lined. It took a pandemic to put on the brakes.

We are also not immune from what is happening in the rest of the world. Our plan for resuming business as usual assumes the rest of the world will cooperate, trade and tourism will revive and peace will prevail around the planet. That too to my mind is rather wishful thinking.

Ian Herbert

Inland Sustainable House planned for an ageing population

Desert Rose House recently won an Australian Engineering Excellence Award.

About 70% of people living with dementia actually live in the community, not within an aged care setting. House designs [like this one](#) may provide the answer.

The house design was submitted and built for the 2018 Solar Decathlon in Dubai but we think it has many features applicable for inland Australia, particularly in a warming climate. It contains many automatic thermal control elements which are available off the shelf.

David Blore

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