



Sustainable Population Australia Inc.

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16th February 2016: for immediate use

Media release: 24 million people is nothing to celebrate

Today Australia's population is predicted to reach 24 million, having come much faster than some were expecting. In October 2009 it was 22m, 23m in March 2013, now in Feb 2016 we have hit 24m. Each extra million is arriving at a faster rate, the consequence of exponential growth - and it will get worse.

Environment group, Sustainable Population Australia (SPA) asks what 24 million people means for Australia. SPA's President, Sandra Kanck, says the answer is congestion, loss of biodiversity, impossible demands on infrastructure, water shortages, more climate change, more urban sprawl and astronomical real estate prices. "The Australian government has no overarching plan for managing these problems which will only get worse with still more people", says Ms Kanck.

Australia's most recent 'State of the Environment Report' listed climate change, population growth and economic growth as the principal drivers creating challenges for our environment.

"Why do governments ignore these issues, continuing to seek larger population numbers, despite recent surveys showing that most Australians do not want any population growth, and an overwhelming majority not wanting our population to exceed 30 million? Yet Australia is on track to have 34 million people by 2050. With the existing resources, each of them will have to consume close to 30% less of everything than today's 24 million.

"Net migration accounts for more than half our population growth - about 60% in the past decade. To have any chance of living sustainably Australia's net migration rate must be heavily reduced (but our humanitarian obligations to refugees must still be met).

"Governments use population increase as a lazy way of maintaining GDP growth, but they do not factor in its costs. Increasing evidence shows that growth is the problem, not the solution.

Sixty-eight percent of Australia's water budget goes on agriculture. With increased population, urban users will be competing with farmers for that water. Simultaneously climate change impacts will cause a predicted decrease in rainfall of 10% by 2030 and 20% by 2050.

"The development lobby - those who stand to gain from population increase - will tell us that there will be another technofix to get us out of the mess. That it happened in the past does not mean it will happen again. Putting your faith in a miracle is not a plan," said Ms Kanck.

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About Sustainable Population Australia: SPA is an independent not-for-profit organisation formed in 1988 to promote an understanding of the effects of human population numbers on the biosphere and society.