



# NEWSLETTER

## Sustainable Population Australia Inc

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Patrons  
Professor Ian Lowe  
Dr Mary White

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Professor Tim Flannery  
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## Young and old speak out on population



Bindi Irwin Photo: 7 News

Within a couple of days in January, a 14 year old Australian conservationist and an 86 year British naturalist and broadcaster made international headlines on population.

Bindi Irwin, daughter of the late 'crocodile hunter' Steve Irwin, refused to accept the editing of her essay on population by the office of the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton. And Sir David Attenborough declared that humans 'are a plague on the Earth'.

Bindi had been invited to write an 800-1000-word essay for the December issue titled 'Go Wild Coming Together for Conservation' as part of Secretary Clinton's endangered species initiative. In responding to their request to say why she had devoted her life to wildlife conservation, Bindi wrote:

*I believe that most problems in the world today, such as climate change, stem from one immense problem which seems to be the 'elephant in the room' that no-one wants to talk about. This problem is our ever expanding human population. We are experiencing Earth's sixth mass extinction right now. Keep in mind that the previous five were caused by things like asteroid impacts or volcanic eruptions.*

Bindi went on to describe her friend Ruth who lived to be 104 who saw world population grow from 1.5 billion to seven billion in her life-time.

*I must ask the question, how is it possible that our fragile planet can sustain these masses of people?*

She then asks her readers to pretend she's having a party for 15, but 70 show up.

*What do I do? My room is only big enough to fit 15, with 70 we won't have any room to move and dance. I*

*don't have enough food. Do I divide the sandwiches among the 70 people? But then everyone will still be hungry. What about the party bags? Do I only give the party bags out to my closest friends? Isn't that unfair to everyone else?*

*That is the crisis facing mother earth today...*

*How can the poor have any improved lifestyles with more people to share fewer resources?*

The US State Department clearly did not approve and sent it back to Bindi, heavily edited with references to population cut. Bindi rejected the changes and duly withdrew it.

SPA national president Sandra Kanck issued a media release congratulating Bindi on her 'intelligence, wisdom and courage', saying she deserved the support of the Australian community.

Not long before, Sir David Attenborough told the Radio Times: "We are a plague on the Earth. It's coming home to roost over the next 50 years or so. It's not just climate change; it's sheer space, places to grow food for this enormous horde. Either we limit our population growth or the natural world will do it for us, and the natural world is doing it for us right now."

He said that humans are threatening their own existence and that of other species by using up the world's resources. He said the only way to save the planet from famine and species extinction is to limit human population growth.

Sir David is a Patron of SPA's UK sister organisation Population Matters and has spoken often in the past about the need to limit human numbers. This is the first time, however, he has used the term 'plague'.



Sir David Attenborough  
Photo: The Telegraph (UK)

# Interview

## Roy Beck in Australia



Roy Beck in Canberra.

Photo: Rod Taylor

Brisbane and Canberra, winning hearts and minds wherever they went.

*Roy Beck founded in 1996 and is CEO of the 1.4 million strong Numbers USA*

*Roy and his wife Shirley travelled through Australia for two and a half weeks through early January 2013, visiting SPA members and other population activists in Melbourne, Sydney,*

*He is perhaps best known for his gumballs videos: <http://www.youtube.com/user/NumbersUSA>.*

In Canberra he was interviewed by SPA member Rod Taylor. This is an edited version of the interview.

*Rod Taylor:* Is your basic premise that you should be reducing immigration in your country?

*Roy Beck:* NumbersUSA was formed in 1996 to carry out the recommendations of two national Commissions. There was a bipartisan, Presidential Commission, headed by a great civil rights champion, Barbara Jordan, that looked at immigration policy from the point of view of economic fairness and economic needs. That Commission in 1995 found that our high level of immigration was a tool of profound economic injustice to the least accessible members of our society. They found that our mass immigration – and since 1990 we had been taking a million a year – was depressing wages, driving up unemployment and widening the gap between the rich and the poor. So what they recommended was that we should immediately cut immigration by half. Another Commission, that reported in 1996 – President Clinton’s Commission on Sustainability – found that America could never meet its environmental goals of sustainability unless it stabilised its population, and it could not stabilise its population without greatly reducing immigration. That meant cutting immigration from a million a year to about 250,000 a year. So that’s what we were formed on. We were formed in the mid-90s on these Commissions that said for economic justice and fairness, egalitarianism, sustainability and quality of life and the environment, we needed to reduce immigration.

*Rod Taylor:* Is this inherently about globalisation?

*Roy Beck:* There’s no question that today many of the

forces that push for immigration in the United States, and I know also in Australia, are forces that no longer believe in national communities. They’re not for wiping out national communities altogether, but they don’t really believe in them. They believe in globalisation, the global forces in which nation states are passé. So, yes, the libertarian business wing of our countries wants to have a global labour market.

*Rod Taylor:* A lot of our politicians seem very enthusiastic about immigration; and large immigration in particular. Why is that?

*Roy Beck:* In the United States we have a conservative Republican Party and a progressive Democrat Party. The conservative Republicans are driven by their major campaign contributors which are big global corporations and they want a global labour market that continually reduces the American wage rate to something more like the global average. So immigration is very important to them to keep driving down the wages. It’s also very important to them to drive the size of the American consumer market because the average American consumes more than anybody in the world. If you can move someone from a low-consuming country to the United States, they will consume a lot more and be right there in the markets. So what you have is non-patriotic, greedy, globalist business people who make sure the Republican Party does everything possible to make sure the population keeps growing and immigration high.

On the progressive Democratic side, you have a leftist idea which is, somehow or other, the way to assuage the guilt at being lucky enough to be born in the United States, is to have mass immigration that drives down the American workers to more like the world level. Now they don’t say that. There’s no way that they would run for office and say “I’m trying to drive your wages down”. They don’t say that but that’s what they’re doing. The other thing is that most immigrants vote Democratic in the United States. So the Democratic Party, which is the party of labour, goes along with high immigration policies that drive down the wages and working conditions of labour, mainly because it constantly brings in more Democratic voters.

*Rod Taylor:* So they’re importing voters as well as workers?

*Roy Beck:* Exactly.

*Rod Taylor:* For some reason environmentally-oriented politicians in Australia don’t want to touch this. Is it the same in the US?

*Roy Beck:* Very few of our top environmentalist members of Congress will touch population because it involves dealing with immigration. There’re a couple of

# Interview

very good ones. We used to, in the 1990s, have a lot of strong environmentalist Democrats who were fighting for lower immigration and population stabilisation but political correctness is so strong, especially from the academic communities and from the media, that well-organised, well-funded campaigns to classify anybody for population stabilisation as racist, selfish, has scared the progressive environmentalists from speaking out about it.

*Rod Taylor:* You mention one of the impacts is driving down wages, and another the effect on the environment, but do immigrants come in with pockets full of cash and boost the local economy?

*Roy Beck:* That's what a lot of politicians who push high immigration try and make it sound like. There's no question of some well-publicised examples of immigrants who do come in with pockets full of cash. But in the United States, the average immigrant comes in significantly poor. Plus, hundreds of thousands of dollars of infrastructure is required for every additional person in the United States, whether we're adding them through births over deaths or through higher immigration. It takes a lot of pockets - and very full of cash - to pay for those hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of infrastructure. So in the end it's rather a ridiculous idea that somehow it will make your country richer, financially, by bringing in immigrants. No, for the most part in the United States, immigration is the importation of poverty. For example, 57 per cent of all immigrant households with children are on welfare. 57 per cent. There's no way that you enrich a country by importing that kind of poverty.

*Rod Taylor:* What are your thoughts on the mix of race and cultures in the United States?

*Roy Beck:* I started NumbersUSA in 1996. I chose the name 'Numbers USA' specifically because we were going to deal only with immigration numbers. We would not deal with the nationality, the race, the culture or characteristics of immigrants. I'd written four books by this point and I was convinced that a lot of what is said about America's assimilative power was true. We are able to assimilate a lot of people in a way a lot of countries aren't able to. I think we can assimilate anyone from anywhere - as long as the numbers are low enough. What I also know is, when you're discussing culture, you can get off-track so fast - I'm not saying there aren't legitimate cultural issues, there are, and I respect people who can deal with cultural issues in a really responsible and careful way - but what I have found as a journalist in the 1990s and it is absolutely still true today, that when you get into cultural issues, it allows your opponents to get off on things - it gives them an excuse not to deal with things

which are the central issue.

*Rod Taylor:* So it's risky turf, and you don't deal with it.

*Roy Beck:* We don't deal with it at all. We only deal with the numbers. We have grade cards for member of Congress but we only grade immigration actions that would affect the numbers. So if there are immigration actions as to who gets the visas - we don't grade those. We stay absolutely in that area (of numbers) because the numbers are what affects the wages. It's the numbers that engorge the labour pool, numbers that eat up the resources and create the sprawl. We're NumbersUSA.

*Rod Taylor:* The United States has long porous borders. If you're going to limit the numbers, how are you going to do it?

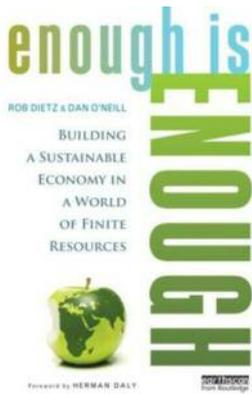
*Roy Beck:* There are three key questions that every nation deals with. They have to decide: how many are they going to let in? Who are they going to be? And how are they going to enforce the rules? Every nation is the same. We're all dealing with the same questions. First of all, we have to choose the right number. Now, we have 45 million people, every year, who come legally to visit the United States. Obviously, to have a system that works, you have to have one that makes those 45 million people feel they have to go home. And most of them do. Now, the key way you keep them from overstaying their visas, and you stop people crossing our borders illegally, is for the word to go out: 'You can overstay your visa, you can illegally cross the border, but you won't be able to get a job.' Because if you can't get a job and you can't get welfare benefits; you're highly unlikely to stay very long. That's our answer. It's mandatory e-verify. (*E-Verify is an Internet-based system that allows businesses to determine the eligibility of their employees to work in the United States. Ed.*)

<http://www.numbersusa.com/>



(l to r) William Bourke, Graham Wood, Nola Stewart and Roy Beck in Sydney. Photo: Shirley Beck

# Book Review



## Enough is Enough: Building a Sustainable Economy in a World of Finite Resources

by Rob Dietz & Dan O'Neill  
Routledge, 288 pp.

Reviewed by John Coulter

In 1969 the US National Academy of Science published a book of essays under the title

*Resources and Man*. It concluded:

*It now appears that the period of rapid population and industrial growth that has prevailed during the last few centuries, instead of being the normal order of things and capable of continuance into the indefinite future, is actually one of the most abnormal phases of human history. It represents only a brief transitional episode between two very much longer periods each characterised by rates of change so slow as to be regarded essentially as a period of non-growth. It is paradoxical that, although the forthcoming period of non-growth poses no insuperable physical or biological problems, it will entail a fundamental revision of those aspects of our current economic and social thinking which stem from the assumption that the growth rates, which have characterised this temporary period, can be permanent.*

Recognition of the necessity, inevitability and desirability of transition to a non-growth or steady-state economy was not new even then. About a century earlier John Stuart Mill had written:

*It is scarcely necessary to remark that a stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the Art of Living and much more likelihood of its being improved when minds cease to be engrossed by the art of getting on.*

Yet despite the clear warnings of scientists and many great thinkers over a long period of time that continuous growth on a finite planet is impossible, its pursuit a serious danger, and its antithesis (the steady-state) having clear advantages, governments, most economists and most of the world media continue to explicitly and implicitly accept continuous growth as the natural, desirable and inevitable order.

Large numbers of conservationists have recognised the urgent need to change the economic paradigm. Many have outlined the characteristics of a new economy.

What has been most difficult is how we get from here to there. What are the steps and how do we overcome the impediments to change? This excellent and 'must read' book by two authors associated with CASSE (Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy) assembles a number of initiatives across a range of economic, environmental and social factors designed to facilitate transition. Dietz is from the US, O'Neill the UK; both provide examples of tentative steps already in train. The emphasis throughout is on comprehensive change, all elements being tackled in an integrated manner simultaneously. Underlying such a complex transition will be a change in values from 'more is better' to 'enough is enough' and from Man the dominant, trying to operate outside the bounds of Nature, to Man an evolved mammal, immersed in and always aware of dependence on a healthy functioning Nature.

The book is divided into three sections. The chapter headings of part two 'Strategies of Enough' provide a good indication of the coverage: Enough Throughput: Limiting Resource use and Waste Production, Enough People: Stabilizing Population, Enough Inequality: Distributing Income and Wealth, Enough Debt: Reforming Monetary and Financial Systems, Enough Miscalculation: Changing the Way We Measure Progress, Enough Unemployment: Securing Meaningful Jobs, etc.

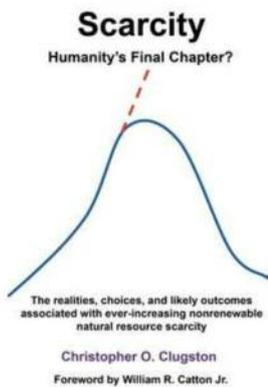
A chapter in part three I found the most challenging; how do we counter the overwhelming emphasis on growth in our parliaments and news media and the almost absent coverage given to the self-evident need to change. The authors point to considerable confusion over growth. We frequently hear polities and others speak of 'sustainable growth' and 'balanced growth'. 'Overcoming this silence (on the alternatives to perpetual economic growth) is a critical step toward igniting a movement aimed at the transition to a sustainable and fair economy'.

The book makes three broad suggestions: make the steady state message more accessible; engage with politicians, journalists and academic institutions in new forums; and build academic capacity for research, analysis and teaching of steady state concepts across every part of the educational system.

Many react negatively to the term 'steady state'. It's suggested we need a new term with strong positive connotations. We need to engage with people emotionally as well as intellectually telling real positive stories, for example, about the advantages of the steady state in relation to equity and employment.

Read the book and join the revolution.

# Book Review



## Scarcity: Humanity's Final Chapter?

by Christopher O. Clugston

*Reviewed by Jane  
O'Sullivan*

The era of 'continuously more and more', which has been humanity's reality throughout history, is over. From here on, it's

'continuously less and less.' According to Chris Clugston, "There is no hope for a brighter future, because the fundamental assumption underlying our limited anthropocentric perspective is wrong." That assumption is that there will always be enough non-renewable natural resources (NNRs) to sustain or improve our wellbeing.

Scarcity is written in a very direct, matter-of-fact style, and moves along rapidly through a logical thread organised under frequent subheadings and illustrated with helpful diagrams. It is an irreverent attack on the anthropocentrism of both mainstream economic ideology and sentimental sustainability advocates. His précis of American economic history through the lens of NNR supply clearly illuminates the blind folly of leadership and delusion of economic analysts. He is shouting from the parapets "The Emperor has no clothes."

Most importantly, Clugston has assembled a meticulous inventory of NNRs, which occupies more than half the book and gives authority to the shorter narrative section. The 89 NNRs include three fossil fuels, 49 metals and 37 non-metallic minerals. He lists their primary uses, critical applications (those without which important societal functions would founder) and substitutes to reach a 'criticality assessment'. He then examines supply and price trends to assess scarcity, from USA ('domestic') and global perspectives. He rates permanent domestic or global scarcity and permanent domestic or global extraction/production peak as 'almost certain', 'likely', 'unclear', 'unlikely' or 'inconclusive', based on consistent criteria.

A point well made is that scarcity does not begin after the supply peak, but before it, when the rate of growth in supply slows and diverges from the rate of growth in demand. As we exhaust more accessible and higher grade sources, the minimum acceptable supplier price overtakes the maximum acceptable consumer price, so that it is no longer viable to expand production. Temporary scarcity may be overcome by new discovery

or improved production efficiency. Permanent scarcity is established when production costs increase more rapidly than productivity gains.

Of the 89 NNRs Clugston has analysed, 63 were classified as 'scarce' before the crisis of 2008. Of the scarce NNRs, 23 are almost certainly in a state of permanent scarcity. He concludes that "no nation, with the possible exception of Russia, is even remotely close to being self-sufficient with respect to economically viable NNR supply." While we are not about to run out of any NNR, we are in the process of running critically short of many. Clugston does not use the term Global Financial Crisis, but refers to 2008 as the start of the Great Recession, being confident that recovery is not possible. He attributes the crisis to mounting NNR scarcities, of which debt exposure was only a symptom. This historical paradigm-change is corroborated by Jeremy Grantham, in his essay 'Time to Wake Up'.

Clugston's prose is deliberately repetitive, like a tutor trying to drum in essential facts to a recalcitrant student. Phrases like 'the underlying cause associated with our predicament is ecological, it is not economic or political' are hammered home, and at every reference to the presumption of business as usual, 'continuously increasing quantities of economically viable NNRs from fewer, smaller, less accessible and lower concentration deposits' is trotted out in full, so that the ridiculousness of this assumption cannot fail to miss you. Such repeated phrases act like welds between different threads of his narrative, forming an inextricable net. Optimism cannot escape. While he anticipates further improvement for some people for some time, collapse will likely be within 35 years.

A chapter on myths and reality moves from cornucopian catchphrases of neo-con economics to those of its leftist opponents, seeking solutions in greater equality or even collapse-preparedness. Included here is the myth that population stabilisation will solve our NNR scarcity problem. Population reduction, along with recycling, efficiency increase and productivity enhancements afford us only a temporary 'stay of execution' at best, not a 'pardon'. True enough. However, damage minimisation should always be a sufficient goal, as even Clugston admits at the end.

In his foreword, William Catton says 'no person who fails to read this book should be eligible for election to high office.' Were it so!

### Changed your email?

It's easy to overlook it but, for the sake of communication within the organisation, we need to know your latest details. Contact Jackie on [info@population.org.au](mailto:info@population.org.au) or by phone: 02 6288 6810

# Book Excerpt



Bill Gammage.  
Photo: Herald-Sun

## Excerpt from 'The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia'

by **Bill Gammage**

*Reprinted with permission of the publisher, Allen and Unwin*

[www.allenandunwin.com](http://www.allenandunwin.com)

*First published in 2011 in Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, London.*

*(from page 150)*

Over wide areas people knew the land's geographic, ecological and spiritual fabric. They knew that the Dreaming was universal, that how they managed country mattered to creation, that they were contributors to the greater whole.

Yet of all creatures they were the most likely to unbalance creation, by increasing their population, so they limited their numbers. Long-term equitable resource use depended on this, otherwise sooner or later it would disintegrate, and in inevitable bad times people would confront catastrophe. Many laws and customs restricted family size, among them mobility, old marrying young, totem prohibitions and restrictions especially for women, abortion, dislike of twins, in extreme cases infanticide, and other powerful 'regulatory mechanisms'. Local populations stayed stable enough to stay within country. There were no population-driven conquests, and almost no territorial expansion: desert Walpiri and food-rich Wiradjuri were rare exceptions. Naturally more people congregated on rich land, and some districts carried more than now, but they spread much more evenly over Australia, and nowhere were they crowded.

This was deliberate. Even allowing for killing diseases which raced ahead of the Europeans (ch 11), Australia had fewer people in 1788 than it could carry. Murray valley and Arnhem Land pioneers thought their districts could have supported twice the people they did, while Geoffrey Blainey estimated Tasmania's 1788 population at about 4000 but its resources able to support about 70-80,000. In arid regions people could afford to leave permanent water and good feed for bad seasons. Everywhere population levels seemed tuned not to 'normal' times but to harsh and erratic uncertainty, and not merely to bad times but to worst times, such as giant floods or 100 year droughts, shorthand for the severest droughts of a drought-ridden continent. People apparently anticipated them, building up resources and limiting population. On the Darling

there is no evidence of drastic reductions in population during droughts. More than likely the Bagundji had adapted themselves and their own population density to a situation where strenuous efforts would support most people during bad seasons and very little effort would support everyone during normal and good seasons (*Allen, H. 'Where the Crow Flies Backwards: Man and Land in the Darling Basin, ANU Anth PhD, 1972)*

Even in plenty people reserved sanctuaries and imposed bans to counter scarcity (ch 10). This is strikingly provident: most societies today, including people who call Aborigines improvident, can't do it. Supporting fewer people than possible is a key feature of 1788. It made resources abundant.

Abundance was thus a precaution, but normal. People usually satisfied their material wants quickly, with less toil than all but the privileged Europeans in 1788. It helped that they ate almost everything, many more foods than Europeans ate, perhaps a greater variety than any society on Earth in 1788. Yet they ate nothing to scarcity or even short of plenty, and they could afford to prohibit food to host ceremonies for hundreds of guests, sometimes for months. Newcomers commented endlessly on plains rich with life, skies dark with birds, seas black with fish. In Tasmania Hardwicke reported places where 'Kangaroo are very numerous and easily caught' and 'in great abundance'. From St Valentine's Peak, Hellyer 'saw kangaroos in abundance, and tracks in all directions.' Throughout a bushwalk near Goulburn (NSW) one night in 1832, Govett heard possums grunting and saw glider possums flying. EPS Sturt thought the Murrumbidgee in 1837 'most beautiful... Every creek abounded with wild fowl, and the quail sprang from the long kangaroo grass which waved to the very flaps of the saddle', and in the 1870s station hands could tickle fish from the river by hand, and shoot possums without leaving camp. 'It is no wonder that the blacks are well-conditioned', Alexander Le Souef wrote near Swan Hill in the late 1840s, 'for no native tribes could gain their living more easily, as their river was full of fish, and the country abounded in game, while quantities of small yams were obtained on the river flats, and the root of one of the large rushes was edible'. Near Bairnsdale (Vic) Angus McMillan saw a lake 'alive with swans, ducks and pelicans... On the north side of the lake the country consists of open forest, and the grass was up to our stirrup-irons as we rode along. The country was absolutely swarming with kangaroos and emus.' 'I have always found the greatest abundance in their huts...' Grey concluded. 'In all ordinary seasons... they can obtain, in two or three hours, a sufficient supply of food for the day.'

# Book Review

## The Biggest Estate on Earth

by Bill Gammage

Allen and Unwin, 2011

Reviewed by Nick Goldie

... about me round I saw  
Hill, Dale, and shadie Woods, and sunnie Plaines,  
And liquid Lapse of murmuring Streams ...all  
things smil'd,  
With fragrance and with joy my heart oerflow'd.  
(Milton: Paradise Lost)

*The Biggest Estate on Earth* arouses some strong negative reactions. In the usually conservative comments section of *The Land*, however, a reader described *Estate* as: “a vitally important book that should be read by every farmer in Australia.”

In December 2011, *Estate* was named the winner of the Manning Clark National Cultural Award. It directly confronts the notion of *terra nullius*, with its shifting and shiftless population of wandering blacks. Gammage's Great Southern Land is a very different place.

As the title suggests, Gammage asserts that Australia was one single “estate” – that is, it was managed at a continental scale. And the main management tool was fire.

Today, as Australia battles damaging mega-fires, the topic of Aboriginal “mosaic” burning is attracting new interest, but Gammage makes it clear that modern farmers and fire authorities are simply getting it wrong. His proposition is that (1) all of Australia was managed, and (2) it was managed by constant attention, over many generations, usually by burning quite small areas in a carefully monitored program. Underpinning this was The Dreaming, and The Law. The Dreaming, says Gammage, has two rules: obey the Law, and leave the world as you found it.

Modern prescribed burns and bushfires are often over thousands of hectares. A typical Aboriginal burn was much smaller, and nearly always with a defined purpose, to encourage grass, to create pathways, or to clear unwelcome understory. There's hardly a page of Gammage's book which does not contain a contemporary reference as settler after settler says: *this is like a nobleman's park!* That is, areas of open grassland, with a few clumps of trees, and fingers of forest usually along ridges. The purpose of all this was very practical: kangaroos emus, and wallabies enjoy fresh green grass, and the belts of forest made perfect cover for hunters.

The people, as Gammage calls them, traveled vast distances along well-defined tracks, and were aware that they were all subject to the same Law. “They knew

that the Dreaming was universal, that how they managed country mattered to creation, that they were contributors to a greater whole. Yet of all creatures they were most likely to unbalance creation, by increasing their population, so they limited their numbers. Long-term equitable resource use depended on this, otherwise sooner or later it would disintegrate, and in inevitable bad times people would confront catastrophe. Many laws and customs restricted family size...”

In some ways Gammage is saying nothing new. He echoes Captain Cook, who said in 1770: “They live in a Tranquility which is not disturbed by the Inequality of Condition ... in my opinion ... they think themselves provided with all the necessarys of Life, and that they have no Superfluities.”

Many early observers made the same point, not always approvingly: the “savages” lived an idyllic life, free from the pressures of hunger or poverty, with a large part of each day devoted to poetry, ritual, and simply (as a teenager would say) hanging out.

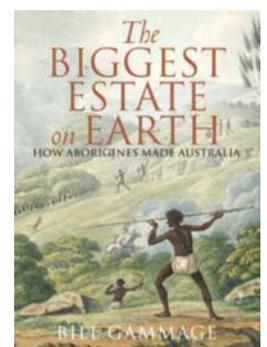
Even Malthus got it wrong, says Gammage. In 1798, after hearing reports from NSW, he theorised that, because the natives of Australia did not practice agriculture, their population was necessarily limited by their limited food supply. Control of population size was indeed an important part of pre-settlement life, but the people had ample food, and did practice agriculture quite extensively.

“People burnt, tilled, planted, transplanted, watered, irrigated, weeded, thinned, cropped, stored and traded,” insists Gammage. But they were not farmers. Why not? Because they were mobile: no livestock, no beast of burden, anchored them. If they occasionally came together and lived in villages, it was only because they were harvesting. And this was by choice.

“They ignored not only Europeans. In the north they knew about farmers ... they watched seasonal visitors from the Indies till land and plant rice, tamarind and coconuts, build stone houses, wear cloth, make pottery and feed domestic fowls, dogs and cats.”

Mobility, according to Gammage, imposed a strict and rigid society, but it was an immense gain. “It gave people abundant food and leisure ... it made possible a universal theology, and it made Australia a single estate. Instead of dividing Aborigines into gentry and peasantry, it made them a free people.”

If only for the interpretation of early Australian colonial art, this is a book well worth reading.





Dr H C (Nugget) Coombs when he retired as Governor of the Reserve Bank. Photo: National Library of Australia

## Nugget Coombs on population

This is an excerpt from 'Australian Lives – stories of 20th Century Australians'. (Angus and Robertson, 1996.) Interviewed by Robin Hughes as part of Film Australia's 'Australian Biography' project.

*You're still working for change and improvement in the world. Do you feel optimistic or pessimistic about the future*

*generally?*

I think I feel fundamentally pessimistic, because I think we are not dealing with the fundamental problems of our society. I suppose the difficulties are expressed best if you look at the population issue. You see, the population is continuing to increase at a fantastic rate, and it is just going to be impossible for the population, as forecast, to be fed, clothed and all the rest of it. It's impossible even if we transform all the ways in which our society is run so that we too accept a lower rate of consumption of resources, so that the rest of the world can come closer to the kind of life-style that we live. I think Malthus, 180 or 200 years ago or whatever it was, said that unless we learn to control the growth of population it will be imposed on us by famine, pestilence and war. Now, we have famine in very many countries. There's food, but they can't afford it. They are starving except for some internally organised charity. Pestilence – well AIDS is a pretty good form of pestilence. And we have wars all over the world.

But even so, despite those things, the population continues to rise. And I don't see any way in which catastrophe can be avoided. At one time when I was particularly interested in this population thing, I went to a friend of mine who was a biologist and I said: 'Is there any other species on the earth that has a rapidly rising population?' 'Oh', he said, 'yes, there are quite a lot of them, particularly insects, but others too.' And I said: 'Well what happens? They can't go on rising forever.' He said: 'No, it rises slowly then it becomes exponential and goes up fast. I said: 'Well, what happens when it gets up here – to the top of the graph?' He said: 'Well, it collapses. It doesn't flatten out, it doesn't drift down, it collapses. Sometimes it collapses into extinction, but most frequently it *almost* disappears – there are a few left and in due course the rise starts again.' Now I don't believe that humans are going to be any different. I think our population will go on exploding and there will be a point where it will

collapse for some reason, perhaps the one that Malthus identified, but there are probably plenty of others.

## European Population Alliance launched

The European Population Alliance (EPA), a partnership of organisations whose aim is to raise awareness of the damaging impacts of population growth both in Europe and worldwide, was launched in January.

According to its website [www.europeanpopulationalliance.org](http://www.europeanpopulationalliance.org), EPA is concerned about accelerating climate instability, biodiversity loss, food and water shortages, deforestation, desertification, soil degradation, depletion of minerals, waste, pollution and rising energy costs. It believes rapid population growth — 80 million per year — multiplies all of these problems.

EPA is working for a global population size that provides a good standard of living for all, a healthy environment and environmental sustainability.

It strongly advocates for universal access to family planning, women's education and empowerment, rights-based policies to stabilise or reduce populations to sustainable levels, more equitable consumption patterns, and more efficient resource use.

The Alliance brings together twelve civil society organisations from nine European countries. All have subscribed to a Joint Position Statement of which SPA is a signatory. Members of EPA have already jointly lobbied the UN and European Commission on the climate change negotiations, the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development, and the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

Speaking for the Alliance, Roger Martin, Chair of Population Matters (UK) said: "This is a good step forward for population concern. Polls across Europe show that most people are already concerned at the environmental, social and economic impacts of the sheer numbers of people today; and of course every additional person, in Europe and across the world, makes all these problems harder to solve. These concerns have been ignored for too long. We aim to push population up the agenda."

The members of the EPA are Assisi Nature Council (Italy); BOCS (Hungary); Chartered Institute of Water and Environmental Management (United Kingdom); Club of 10 Million (Netherlands); Demographie Responsable (France); Ecopop (Switzerland); Herbert-Gruhl-Gesellschaft (Germany); One Baby (Belgium); Population 2.0 (Belgium); Population Matters Sweden (Sweden); Population Matters (United Kingdom); and RientroDolce (Italy).

## TooMuchTooMany – Human impacts on South Africa

David Johnson



David Johnson on Malgas, an island bird colony uninhabited by man

In the August 2012 issue of the SPA newsletter I discussed the overcrowded township of Khayelitsha. Since then, I've been researching the impacts of population and consumption growth not only on the residents of South African communities, but also on South African landscapes and wildlife. I've identified around 100 population and consumption growth sub-

topics and 100 locations around South Africa demonstrating them. In March 2013 I'll launch the next stage of the project "TooMuchTooMany" and commence a three month nationwide journey visiting and writing about these locations and issues. The journey will be covered on the TooMuchTooMany website [www.TooMuchTooMany.co.za](http://www.TooMuchTooMany.co.za)

The people I met in Khayelitsha and discussed in August are real people; reducing them to fertility (or other) statistics ignores the human side of their story and potentially reduces the potential audience engaged. TooMuchTooMany will look at impacts on identified human communities and wildlife, seek to raise awareness and conclude with solutions.

Many South African organisations and their work will feature, from well-known organisations such as WWF-SA to smaller community organisations working in housing, HIV or with children. TooMuchTooMany will cover topics from the housing crisis to contraception, biodiversity to healthcare and immigration to endangered species.

Clearly women's rights will feature prominently. In this SPA newsletter, David Griffiths recommends Marie Stopes as an organisation worthy of support. In October I visited some of the South African Marie Stopes facilities to better understand their particular challenges. A number of Marie Stopes' clinics are closing because, now South Africa is considered "middle income", international funding is being diverted to poorer nations. Mamelodi, a poor community near Pretoria, is one South African community which has lost its Marie Stopes clinic for this reason. Many women in Mamelodi lack the money to afford the transport to the nearest alternative family planning clinic and cannot therefore access the services they desire. The likelihood of unsafe

abortions in Mamelodi has now risen; education and information provision will suffer. Marie Stopes desperately needs alternative funding.

To keep up-to-date, bookmark [www.TooMuchTooMany.co.za](http://www.TooMuchTooMany.co.za), like the Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/TooMuchTooMany](http://www.facebook.com/TooMuchTooMany)) or follow @DavidJohnsonSA on Twitter. Email: [David@TooMuchTooMany.co.za](mailto:David@TooMuchTooMany.co.za)

## Marie Stopes International

David Griffiths, member NSW branch of SPA

The main story in the December 2012 SPA newsletter was to do with family planning empowering women. The UNFPA publication was called "By choice not by chance". There is a charitable organisation – Marie Stopes International (MSI) - whose very aim is to empower women with the right to choose and by helping lift themselves out of the cycle of poverty and ill-health. It does this by providing urgently needed reproductive health services to millions of women in 38 countries. Although stabilising population is not their prime aim, providing reproductive health services goes hand in hand with it. MSI prevented some seven million unintended pregnancies last year. By working with and through local communities and governments, the poorest and most vulnerable women are reached in remote rural areas and poorly serviced urban areas. This system of working with and through existing organisations is highly efficient and makes the best use of resources. There is no coercion for contraception: it merely means that people who do not want more children are given the means of limiting their family size.

MSI has four international offices, one of which is in Melbourne and any money received by them stays in the Asia/Pacific region. A very high 94 per cent of all monies received by the Melbourne office is spent on program support or direct overseas costs. Efficiency of operation means that a mere \$100 will provide 20 IUDs (intrauterine devices).

If you are looking for a worthwhile charity that will have an immediate effect in reducing world population, Marie Stopes International may be the answer for you as it is for me. I am getting on in years and would like to see the results of my charitable donations have a measurable impact in the immediate future, not in years to come with uncertain outcomes. You can donate to this charity through its web site <http://www.mariestopes.org.au/how-you-can-help/> or you can make a donation by phoning 1300 478 486.



## Calling For Expressions Of Interest

### SPA Newsletter Editor

One day a week

Although funding for this position has not (yet) been approved, the national executive resolved at its meeting on January 29 to call for expressions of interest. People with a journalism background or experience in producing a newsletter would be preferred. A commitment to and understanding of the issue of population is also essential. Further information from the current editor, Jenny Goldie on [editor@population.org.au](mailto:editor@population.org.au) or 02 6235 9190.

## Incoming National Executive

The Returning Officer, David Robertson, has announced that, in the absence of other nominations, the following members are deemed elected and will duly take office at the AGM on 13 April 2013 in Brisbane.

President: Jenny Goldie

Vice-President: Sandra Kanck

Meetings Secretary: Nola Stewart

Correspondence Secretary: Jan McNicol

Treasurer: No nominations received

Committee: John Coulter  
Jane O'Sullivan  
Nick Car  
Michael Lardelli  
Peter Schlesinger

*Please note:* Expressions of interest in being treasurer would be much appreciated. While the SPA office handles basic administration, the treasurer must report both to the executive and to the trustees of the Sustainable Population Fund. Further information from the incoming president, Jenny Goldie [jenny.goldie@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jenny.goldie@optusnet.com.au)

## Branch Reports

**QLD:** As a warm-up to election year, Queensland committee members Jan McNicol and

Jane O'Sullivan visited two parliamentarians, State MP Jackie Trad, Labor member for South Brisbane, and Senator Claire Moore, the chair of the Federal Parliamentary Group on Population and Development.

Branch treasurer Tony Matta surveyed the Liberal candidates for Senate pre-selection, most of whom want 'slow growth', indicating some awareness of the stress

caused by population growth but a commitment to bigger Australia. There have been interactions with some members of the Greens, including the endorsed candidate for Brisbane, and encouraging signs that awareness and support for population stabilisation within the greens is growing stronger, but no likely change

of position this year. The message we have received is that population is off the radar for most politicians, as most have not been approached about it for a long time so they assume it is not a concern among the electorate.

All members and supporters are encouraged to ask their local members and candidates about their views on population, and to express their own concerns.

In a membership drive, most of our lapsed members have been phoned and invited to rejoin. The branch will be collaborating with Stable Population Party to run film and discussion nights monthly at Toowong Library - if you are within range, keep the 3rd Monday of the month free. The first of these events will be 18 February. Details will be emailed to current members - please make sure you renew. *Jane O'Sullivan*

**NSW:** At the beginning of the year two committee members, Graham Wood and Nola Stewart met with Roy Beck, CEO of NumbersUSA during his visit to Sydney. The meeting also included William Bourke, president of the Stable Population Party. The discussion was wide ranging and a good exchange of views and opinions occurred.

The next branch event will be a public lecture by Nicole Foss who is being brought to Australia by Sustainability Showcase. The talk will be at the Mitchell Theatre, 280 Pitt St, Thursday, April 4 at 5.30pm. This will be a ticketed event and tickets will be available from [www.automaticearthtour.org](http://www.automaticearthtour.org). A big thank you to our membership officers Rod and Dawn Linklater for kindly offering to host Nicole Foss during her stay in Sydney. *Kris Spike*

**ACT:** In Canberra we had a very pleasant, well attended, Christmas function at the rotunda in Glebe Park, which is a most pleasant garden in the middle of the city. The committee provided food and drink and donations covered the costs. Ecologist and marsupial biologist Dr Hugh Tyndale-Biscoe addressed us on his concerns affected by population increase, and foreshadowed the possible Fenner Conference which we hope will occur this year.

The Canberra and Region committee moved swiftly, on the request of Jenny Goldie, to organise an event where Canberra members could meet with, and listen to, Roy Beck, who will forever be known as "The Gumballs Man". (Do a search on "Roy Beck Gumballs YouTube")

# SPA News

to see a six minute video.) Roy and his wife Shirley were on a private tour of Australia and New Zealand. Roy is an author and lecturer and has been executive director of NumbersUSA since 1997. His organisation has some one and a quarter million adherents, a fact which invoked awe in our Canberra members. NumbersUSA is a computer-based lobbying organisation that 1) advertises its message on the Internet, 2) has its members directly emailing their politicians, and 3) raises its funds very effectively by internet appeals.

Our AGM will be on Saturday 9th March. The position of treasurer has not been filled since the last AGM - Michael Banyard has kindly handled those duties for us.  
*Christopher Dorman*

**SA:** SPA Branch president Peter Martin is organising the S.A. end of a series of conferences at which Nicole Foss will be the main speaker. This will be in April and will include other speakers from SPA such as Michael Lardelli.  
*John Coulter*

**VIC/TAS:** The main population-driven issues which have preoccupied the branch in the last month are state government proposed changes to the residential zones and the Metropolitan Planning Strategy for Melbourne. On 29 November, members of the branch attended a rally on Parliament House steps organised by the Green Wedges regarding changes to the planning zones which will adversely affect areas set aside during the premiership of the late Rupert Hamer to give growing Melbourne some breathing space with low levels of development. At the rally, those present, representing dozens of community groups, voted on a set of motions to take to the Planning Minister, one of which asked the state government "To lobby the Federal Government to curb immigration and stop advertising for new settlers overseas for Victoria in view of the environmental and amenity impacts of the huge population boom and of State Government failure to provide for infrastructure".

Over the pre-Christmas to New Year period, members of the branch had quite a few letters published in the local main media including one which had SPA's name on it.

On New Year's Day, Jill Quirk, Jonathan Page and Vivienne Ortega were pleased to meet Roy Beck from NumbersUSA along with other members of community groups at a morning tea held by Kelvin Thomson MP. Roy told us of the arcane politics around immigration in the US.

The branch is now working towards our 3-day stall at the Sustainable Living Festival at Federation Square 15 - 17 February. Please come and meet us there if you

are at the festival and hear Mark O'Connor who will be speaking on: "Population policies and Big Australia" 3-4 pm 16 February "Under the Gum". For the full program go to [www.festival.slf.org.au](http://www.festival.slf.org.au) *Jill Quirk*

## Please join us on PopForum

*Jill Quirk*

It doesn't matter where you live in Australia from Derby in WA to Strachan Tasmania or one of the major magnets for population growth Melbourne, Sydney Brisbane or Perth; you can join other members of SPA on our e-list "PopForum". All you need is access to the Internet.

PopForum is an e-list where SPA members post articles from the daily press and other sources and exchange ideas or swap experiences. As population growth continues at a fast pace it constantly affects planning and conservation issues so we are dealing with a real onslaught on a daily basis.

PopForum is your email forum and a resource for you as a member of Sustainable Population Australia. You can read the postings by other members, reply to them if you wish or you can initiate your own topic.

Fighting population growth is a serious business and a very difficult task. PopForum has an important role in this battle as it gives our members practice in arguing their points and coming to grips with the issues.

It would be great to meet you there too.

*How to join PopForum*

*Go to the SPA website [www.population.org.au](http://www.population.org.au)*

*Click on - "Take action" and then select "Connect online" then select "PopForum". The moderator will then process your request. Hope to meet you there.*

## Annual General Meeting of Sustainable Population Australia

Abel Smith Theatre, University of Queensland, St Lucia (Brisbane) Qld

9 for 9.30 am, Saturday 13 April 2013

11:30 am to 4:30 pm population symposium, speakers to be announced in the next issue.

All financial members are invited to attend.

For those unable to attend, please note there is a proxy form for voting on the constitutional amendment (enclosed with hard copy and on the website.)

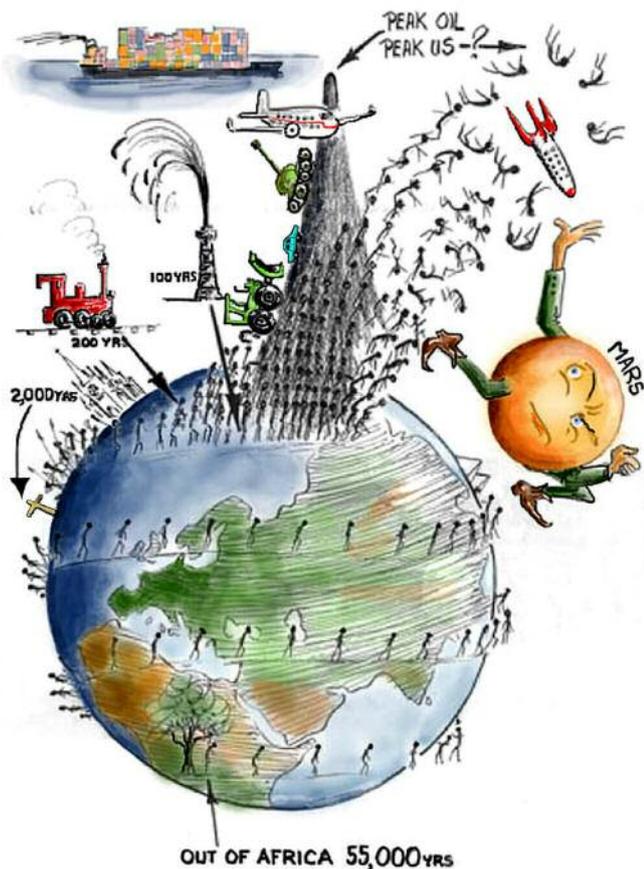
# AUSTRALIAN BUREAU OF STATISTICS 3101.0

Year ending 30 June 2012

	Population	Change	% growth
NSW	7 290 300	78 000	1.1
Vic	5 623 500	89 000	1.6
Qld	4 560 100	86 000	1.9
SA	1 654 800	16 500	1.0
WA	2 430 300	78 000	3.3
Tas	512 000	800	0.2
NT	234 800	3 500	1.5
ACT	374 700	6 900	1.9
<b>Aust.</b>	<b>22 683 600</b>	<b>359 600</b>	<b>1.6</b>

For the year ending June 2012:

- The population of Australia was 22,683,600 people, an increase of 359,600 people since 31 June 2011.
- Natural increase (151,300 people) was an increase of 800 people over the previous year
- Net overseas migration (208,300 people) was 38,100 people higher
- Australia's population grew by 1.6 per cent.
- Natural increase and net overseas migration contributed 42 and 58 per cent respectively to total population growth.



For permission to use this cartoon by SPA member Keith Nesbitt, please contact either Jill Quirk [jillq@optusnet.com.au](mailto:jillq@optusnet.com.au) or Paddy Weaver [weaverp@people.net.au](mailto:weaverp@people.net.au)

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*Formerly Australians for an Ecologically Sustainable Population.*

The SPA Newsletter is mailed bi-monthly to members of Sustainable Population Australia Inc. For further information, please contact the SPA Office or your nearest branch. All membership applications and renewals should be sent to the National Office. Newsletter contributions should be sent there or directly to the editor.

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