



No. 121, September 2015

Sustainable Population Australia – Newsletter

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Paul Ehrlich's population-bomb argument was right

By Paul Murtaugh



Paul Murtaugh

sustain a growing population.

The inexorable strain put on Earth's life-support system by human population growth can be illustrated by considering how many additional person-years are ultimately caused when a person has children. The demographic legacy of a woman (or man) can be thought of as one half of the years lived by her children, plus one fourth of the years lived by her grandchildren, and so on, until her lineage dies out.

Based on analysis of the 2005 demographic data for the world's 10 most populous countries, the average number of person-years added per child ranges from

136 (Nigeria, where fertility is high but life expectancy is short) to 470 (United States). In the United States, where female life expectancy is around 80 years, each child results, on average, in almost six (470 divided by 80) additional lifetimes spent on Earth over ensuing generations.

This amplifying effect of reproduction affects every kind of resource use and environmental degradation caused by humans. For example, when we multiply person-years by projections of per capita carbon use, we see that, on average, each additional child in the United States leads to eventual CO₂ emissions of 9441 tons, about 5.7 times an individual's lifetime emissions. Carbon legacies vary dramatically among countries. The average amount of CO₂ added per child in the United States, for example, is 169 times as large as that in Bangladesh.

Ehrlich's argument that expanding human populations cannot be sustained on an Earth with finite carrying capacity is irrefutable and, indeed, almost tautological. The only uncertainty concerns the timing and severity of the rebalancing that must inevitably occur.

Dr Paul Murtaugh is an associate professor of statistics at Oregon State University. The above, published in the New York Times on 8 June 2015, is a summary of his co-authored paper 'Reproduction and the carbon legacies of individuals', Global Environmental Change, 19 (2009) 14-20.

Population growth costs billions just to keep up

By **Crispin Hull**

The Infrastructure Australia audit issued [in May] would be laughable if it were not so depressing.

So here is the laughable bit – a script I have crafted for John Clarke and Brian Dawe.

Dawe: Prime Minister, Infrastructure Australia says Australia is lagging and must do more. Why?

Clarke (as PM): Because we have to keep up with population growth and economic growth, Brian.

Dawe: And what does IA say we must do to keep up?

Clarke: Spend more money, Brian. Lots more money.

Dawe: And where will that money come from?

Clarke: From you and me, Brian. From the taxpayers. And from road user charges. That's in the report.

Dawe: So taxpayers will have to pay more for roads that are now free. And pay more for railways and airports?

Clarke: Of course, Brian. How else can we catch up with population growth? We are going to have 30 million people in Australia in 15 years' time.

Dawe: Wouldn't it be easier and better not to have the population growth, or at least slow it?

Clarke: You can't do that Brian.

Dawe: Why not?

Clarke: Because the economy benefits. Big companies benefit.

Dawe: So?



Crispin Hull

Clarke: Well, Brian. If the big companies did not make bigger profits they would not donate to political parties who support high immigration and more population growth. These are the political parties that form the governments to raise the taxes to build all the new infrastructure. Simple really.

Dawe: Prime Minister, thank you for your time.

Clarke: Pleasure, Brian.

Ends.

That's the fiction. The truth is worse.

The chair of Infrastructure Australia, Mark Birrell, said, "It is time for this nation to treat population growth as fact; a fact our nation should accept and gear up for."

It is highly self-serving stuff. It does not help the broad mass of the Australian population to set ourselves the task of building infrastructure for more than 200,000 extra people a year – and even more than that in some years.

Some of the audit's findings show how silly this is and put the lie to the argument that we must fill up the empty spaces in Australia or the masses to the north will do it for us.

The audit says that 72% of the 8.2 million population increase to 2031 will go to the four largest cities. Those four cities comprise just 54% of the population today (12,600,000 people).

So this extra population is not filling up the vast empty spaces – it is pouring into the cities and clogging them up, making living conditions worse for the people who already live there.

Figures in the audit reveal that our major cities have now hit a point where they are already too big and that adding to them will result in disproportionate extra congestion – congestion which decreases living standards. The audit says the cost of traffic congestion in the capital cities will go from \$13.7 billion in 2011 to \$53.3 billion in 2031 – up 290%.

The population of the four biggest cities will go up by 46% and the population of the other capitals (now about 2 million) by 27% – an overall increase of 42%.

So on the audit's own figures this increase of just 42% in population results in a 290% increase in congestion. For every 1% increase in population we are getting a 7% increase in the cost of congestion.

Surely, this indicates we have gone well beyond the optimum point in population growth. It may well have been that up to, say, some time in the 1960s or 1970s there was some advantage to extra population. But this infrastructure audit shows the downside is now laden with disproportionate, nasty, costly frustration as commute times get ever longer.

The audit says that growth in demand for non-urban transport is expected to be lower than the growth in GDP. So do not expect much improvement in rural and regional roads.

This audit shows that just to keep up and prevent greater congestion in the major cities will result in a huge

diversion in Australia's infrastructure effort away from things that make life better, like telecommunications, water, energy, schools, hospitals, national parks, public spaces, arts, culture and sport.

Transport makes up 70% of the infrastructure spending required if we are to accept a 36.5% increase in the population by 2031 “as fact”. Nearly all of that will have to be spent on just ensuring commutes do not get any worse.

It does not sound like a great deal of progress to me. The figures more resemble the desperate efforts of Third World countries trying to cope with huge population growth. And incidentally, the audit uses the words “huge population growth” to describe the projected 36.5% growth by 2031. Moreover, that growth rate is described as being in the middle of the range.

If we hit the high end, the damage to our cities will be worse than imagined, because such a high portion of the growth goes to the major cities and just a 1% increase results in a 7% increase in congestion costs.

It is a myth we need these high population growth rates to maintain higher standards of living. Sweden has done pretty well economically and in overall living standards since 1960. If we had had the same population growth rate as Sweden since 1960, Australia's population would now be 13 million. Sweden grew 30%. We grew 130%.

Denmark has also done pretty well with a population increase of less than 25% since 1960.

The lesson from this audit is not that we need to “gear up” to spending billions just to stand still on the transport front, but to seriously question our immigration and population policies.

The audit should make us ask why are we blindly adding to our population and pouring so much infrastructure effort into transport at such a large and obvious cost to other things.

Crispin Hull was a former journalist at The Canberra Times. This article first appeared in the Fairfax media on 30 May 2015.

If everyone lived in an 'ecovillage', the Earth would still be in trouble

By Samuel Alexander

We are used to hearing that if everyone lived in the same way as North Americans or Australians, we would need four or five planet Earths to sustain us.

This sort of analysis is known as the "ecological footprint" and shows that even the so-called "green" western European nations, with their more progressive approaches to renewable energy, energy efficiency and public transport, would require more than three planets.

How can we live within the means of our planet? When we delve seriously into this question it becomes clear that almost all environmental literature grossly underestimates what is needed for our civilisation to become sustainable.

Only the brave should read on.

The 'ecological footprint' analysis

To explore the question of what "one planet living" would look like, let us turn to what is arguably the world's most prominent metric for environmental accounting – the ecological footprint analysis. This was developed by Mathis Wackernagel and William Rees, then at the University of British Columbia, and is now institutionalised by the scientific body, The Global Footprint Network, of which Wackernagel is president.

This method of environmental accounting attempts to measure the amount of productive land and water a given population has available to it, and then evaluates the demands that population makes upon those ecosystems. A sustainable society is one that operates within the carrying capacity of its dependent ecosystems.

While this form of accounting is not without its critics – it is certainly not an exact science – the worrying thing is that many of its critics actually claim that it underestimates humanity's environmental impact. Even Wackernagel, the concept's co-originator, is convinced the numbers are underestimates.

According to the most recent data from the Global

Footprint Network, humanity as a whole is currently in ecological overshoot, demanding one-and-a-half planet's worth of Earth's biocapacity. As the global population continues its trend toward 11 billion people, and while the growth fetish continues to shape the global economy, the extent of overshoot is only going to increase.

Every year this worsening state of ecological overshoot persists, the biophysical foundations of our existence, and that of other species, are undermined.

The footprint of an ecovillage

As I have noted, the basic contours of environmental degradation are relatively well known. What is far less widely known, however, is that even the world's most successful and long-lasting ecovillages have yet to attain a "fair share" ecological footprint.

Take the Findhorn Ecovillage in Scotland, for example, probably the most famous ecovillage in the world. An ecovillage can be broadly understood as an "intentional community" that forms with the explicit aim of living more lightly on the planet. Among other things, the Findhorn community has adopted an almost exclusively vegetarian diet, produces renewable energy and makes many of their houses out of mud or reclaimed materials.

An ecological footprint analysis was undertaken of this community. It was discovered that even the committed efforts of this ecovillage still left the Findhorn community consuming resources and emitting waste far in excess of what could be sustained if everyone lived in this way. (Part of the problem is that the community tends to fly as often as the ordinary Westerner, increasing their otherwise small footprint.)

Put otherwise, based on my calculations, if the whole world came to look like one of our most successful ecovillages, we would still need one-and-a-half planet's worth of Earth's biocapacity. Dwell on that for a moment.

I do not share this conclusion to provoke despair, although I admit that it conveys the magnitude of our ecological predicament with disarming clarity. Nor do I share this to criticise the noble and necessary efforts of the ecovillage movement, which clearly is doing far more than most to push the frontiers of environmental practice.

Rather, I share this in the hope of shaking the environmental movement, and the broader public, awake. With our eyes open, let us begin by acknowledging

Findhorn Ecovillage in Scotland. Irenicrhonda/Flickr, CC BY-NC-ND



that tinkering around the edges of consumer capitalism is utterly inadequate.

In a full world of 7 billion people and counting, a “fair share” ecological footprint means reducing our impacts to a small fraction of what they are today. Such fundamental change to our ways of living is incompatible with a growth-oriented civilisation.

Some people may find this position too “radical” to digest, but I would argue that this position is merely shaped by an honest review of the evidence.

What would ‘one-planet’ living look like?

Even after five or six decades of the modern environmental movement, it seems we still do not have an example of how to thrive within the sustainable carrying capacity of the planet.

Nevertheless, just as the basic problems can be sufficiently well understood, the nature of an appropriate response is also sufficiently clear, even if the truth is sometimes confronting.

We must swiftly transition to systems of renewable energy, recognising that the feasibility and affordability of this transition will demand that we consume significantly less energy than we have become accustomed to in the developed nations. Less energy means less producing and consuming.

We must grow our food organically and locally, and eat considerably less (or no) meat. We must ride our bikes more and fly less, mend our clothes, share resources, radically reduce our waste streams and creatively “retrofit the suburbs” to turn our homes and communities into

places of sustainable production, not unsustainable consumption. In doing so, we must challenge ourselves to journey beyond the ecovillage movement and explore an even deeper green shade of sustainability.

Among other things, this means living lives of frugality, moderation and material sufficiency. Unpopular though it is to say, we must also have fewer children, or else our species will grow itself into a catastrophe.

But personal action is not enough. We must restructure our societies to support and promote these “simpler” ways of living. Appropriate technology must also assist us on the transition to one-planet living. Some argue that technology will allow us to continue living in the same way while also greatly reducing our footprint.

However, the extent of “dematerialisation” required to make our ways of living sustainable is simply too great. As well as improving efficiency, we also need to live more simply in a material sense, and re-imagine the good life beyond consumer culture.

First and foremost, what is needed for one-planet living is for the richest nations, including Australia, to initiate a “degrowth” process of planned economic contraction.

I do not claim that this is likely or that I have a detailed blueprint for how it should transpire. I only claim that, based on the ecological footprint analysis, degrowth is the most logical framework for understanding the radical implications of sustainability.

Samuel Alexander is a research fellow, Melbourne Sustainable Society Institute at University of Melbourne. This article was published on The Conversation on 25 June 2015.

It's time to celebrate lower population growth

By Leith van Onselen



Leith van Onselen

A number of commentators expressed concern in late June at Australia's population growth figures for the December quarter, which came in lower than expected at only 1.42%, arguing that it would materially slow Australia's economy. From *The AFR*:

'The unexpected slowdown in Australia's population throws up

yet another challenge for Treasurer Joe Hockey, who is already battling weak commodity prices and tax revenue, as well as scepticism about his forecasts of the budget returning to surplus.'

CommSec's chief economist, Craig James, said the population slowdown was unexpected.

'Most people looking at the figures would say it was a bit of a surprise,' he said.

Goldman Sachs head of economics and strategy, Tim Toohey, said slower population growth could shave half a percentage point off the Reserve Bank of Australia's 3% to 3.5% growth forecast and make another interest rate cut more likely in the short term.

HSBC Australia chief economist, Paul Bloxham, said it was too early to say if the population slowdown was a trend or a blip, but if it was sustained, potential economic growth would be lower than the long-term trend of 3%.

The fall in population growth to 1.42% needs to be put into perspective. In the year to December 2014, 306,200 people were added to the Australian economy – a figure well above the 173,000 average growth experienced since 1900 (see [Chart A](#)).

When viewed in an historical context, Australia's current level of population growth is still incredibly high.

While most economists like to focus on aggregate GDP when assessing the state of the economy, I prefer to look at the per capita measures, since they provide a much better perspective on whether living standards are increasing for the typical Australian.

After all, what is the point of growing the economic pie if everyone's share of that pie is not increasing? And it is in this context that Australia's fetish with population growth – on the basis that it stimulates headline GDP (more inputs equals more outputs) – runs into deep problems.

As shown in the next chart, 70% of Australia's growth in headline GDP since the GFC has come from growing the population (see [Chart B](#)).

Meanwhile, real GDP in per capita terms has been trending down strongly (see [Chart C](#)).

In effect, Australia's high immigration program has maintained the illusion of growth, while everyone's living standards slide backwards.

Readers might also recall that earlier in the year Infrastructure Australia forecast a massive 290% increase in the costs of congestion by 2031, unless there is massive investment in new roads and public transport.

IA says the cost of road delays in the six largest capital cities was \$13.7 billion in 2011, but is projected to grow by around 290% to \$53.3 billion in 2031 without measures including new roads and more public transport funding.

The report says car travel times in the most gridlocked parts of Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Adelaide and Canberra are expected to jump by at least 20% if there are no measures to boost capacity or curb demand.

'In some cases, travel times could more than double between 2011 and 2031,' the report says.

The audit estimates Australia's population will grow to 30.5 million in 2031, with the biggest four cities growing by around 45%.

The report predicts public transport demand will more than double in Melbourne, and jump by 55% in Sydney, and nearly 90% across other capital cities.

'Unless peak-period passenger loads are managed and capacity is increased, commuters in all capital cities will see more services experiencing "crush

Chart A

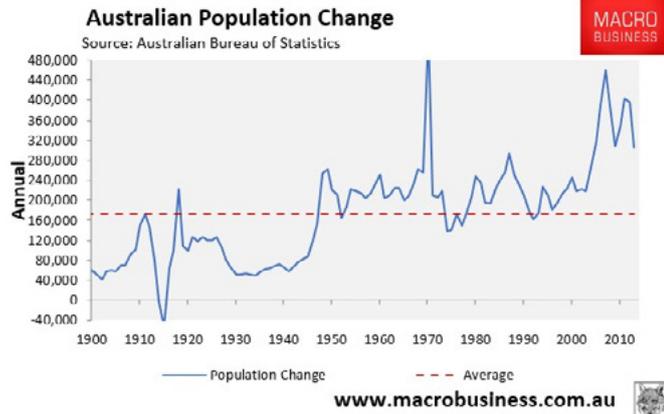


Chart B

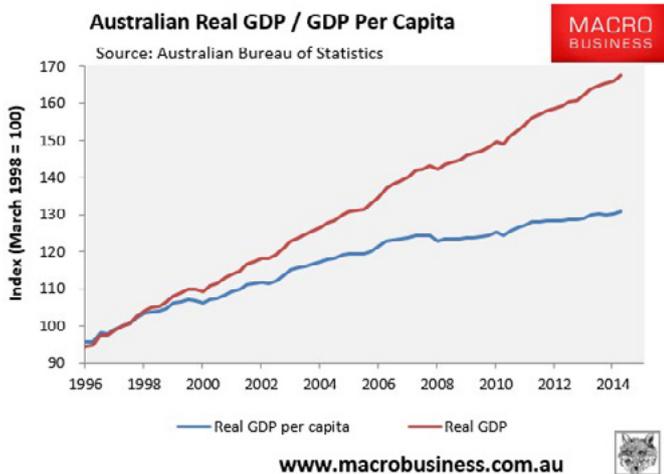
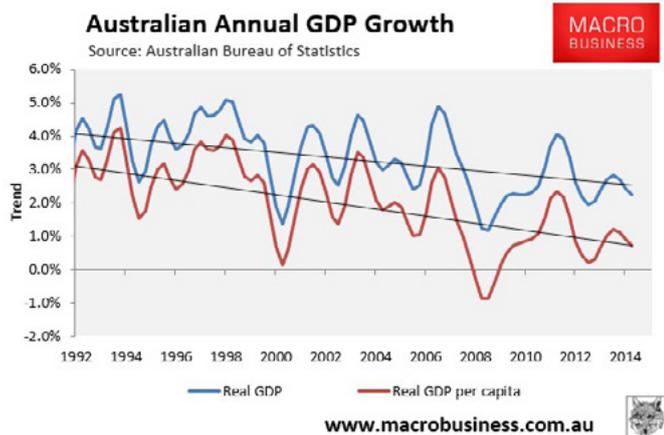


Chart C



loadings”, where peak demand exceeds capacity,’ the report says.

It also says increased private and public funding will be needed to maintain and grow infrastructure networks.

Hardly sounds like a recipe for growing living standards, does it? And yet our governments and mainstream economists continue to push on with the “growth is

good” mantra, funneling more and more people into Australia’s largest cities.

The costs of this approach will, of course, be borne by you and I, who will be forced to spend more time in traffic jams as Australia’s infrastructure – already straining after a decade of rampant immigration – fails to keep up with demand.

We will then be called upon to pay for expensive new infrastructure (e.g. roads, rail and desalination plants) in a futile bid to support the rapidly growing population, but it will never be enough to maintain living standards.

This infrastructure investment may also lower productivity by diverting investment away from productive areas.

Our children and grandchildren will then be required to live in smaller and more expensive housing, often further away from the CBD, as more and more people flood into our major capital cities.

And then in 30 years’ time, they will be called upon to once again ramp-up the immigration intake once the current batch of migrants grows old and needs support – the very definition of a ponzi scheme.

About the only winners from the march towards a Big Australia, advocated by both sides of politics and most economists, will be big business, who will enjoy an ever-growing customer base and will be able to increase sales without becoming more efficient.

We should also not forget that Australia earns its way in the world mainly by selling its fixed mineral resources (e.g. iron ore, coal, natural gas, and gold). More people means less resources per capita. A growing population also means that we must deplete our mineral resources faster, just to maintain a constant standard of living.

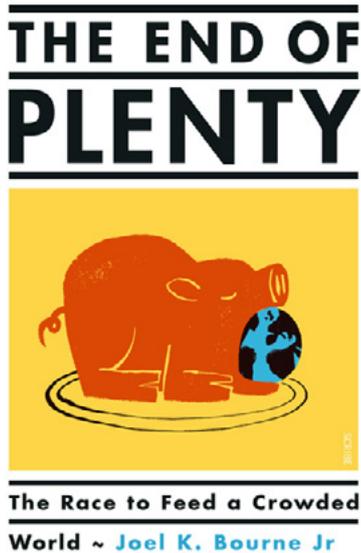
This, dear reader, is why we should be celebrating Australia’s falling population growth (mostly via lower immigration), rather than lamenting it, since it equates to higher living standards for you and I.

As I have noted previously, if all Australia is doing is growing for growth’s sake, pushing against infrastructure bottlenecks, diluting our fixed endowment of mineral resources, and failing to raise the living standards of the existing population, what’s the point?

Leith van Onselen writes for MacroBusiness as the Unconventional Economist.

The End of Plenty – The race to feed a crowded world

by Joel K Bourne Jr
Scribe, 2015, 408pp.



Review by Jenny Goldie

Population growth and agricultural production have been in lock-step ever since agriculture was invented. Every advance, be it the domestication of plants or animals, or irrigation, wet-rice cultivation or the use of legumes in crop rotations, allowed an increase in population. Historically, when famines occurred, people died, birth rates dropped and population decreased.

Rev Thomas Robert Malthus addressed this relationship between food and population numbers in the late 18th century in his famous 'Essay on Population'. His friends at the time described him as a man of 'kindness, sweet disposition and good humour', in contrast to the epithets

thrown at him in the intervening years. He warned: 'Population, when unchecked, increases in geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases in arithmetic ratio.' In other words, population, unless checked, will grow faster than food supplies, risking famine.

Malthus was basically right about the relationship between food and population. He failed to consider, however, the potential for transformational technological change that came with both the British Agricultural Revolution (1750-1850) and the Industrial Revolution that soon followed. He could not have imagined that in the 20th century, world population would quadruple from 1.6 billion to 6.1 billion and grain production, helped along by the Green Revolution, would increase fivefold, from 400 million to 1.9 billion tons.

But can food production stay ahead of population growth? Can the world feed more than 9 billion people by mid-century? Or are we hitting Malthusian limits? These are the questions award-winning journalist Joel Bourne asks in this highly readable book. Coming from a farm background and having studied agronomy before becoming a senior editor with *National Geographic*, Bourne is better placed than most to address whether we can indeed feed an increasingly crowded world.

If you only read Part I of the book you would conclude the answer is no. He describes Norman Borlaug's heroic efforts in improving seeds, introducing fertilisers and irrigation that led to the Green Revolution, one that resulted in an enormous increase in grain yields and forestalled widespread starvation in Asia. Borlaug, of course, was

well aware of the limitations of the revolution. In his acceptance speech for the Nobel Prize in 1970, he warned that, even if fully implemented, it would only give humanity sufficient food for 30 years.

We're past that point now, by more than 15 years, and crises loom, not least climate change and diminishing water supplies. Population growth continues, virtually unabated. In Part II, however, Bourne hints that maybe we can feed the world. He addresses the various ways in which we might improve food supply, through ocean fish farming, modernising agriculture in potential food baskets like the Ukraine, making deserts bloom through better irrigation, developing better seeds through genetically modified organisms (he's commendably objective on the issue), organic agriculture, reducing meat consumption, and lifting grain production in Africa.

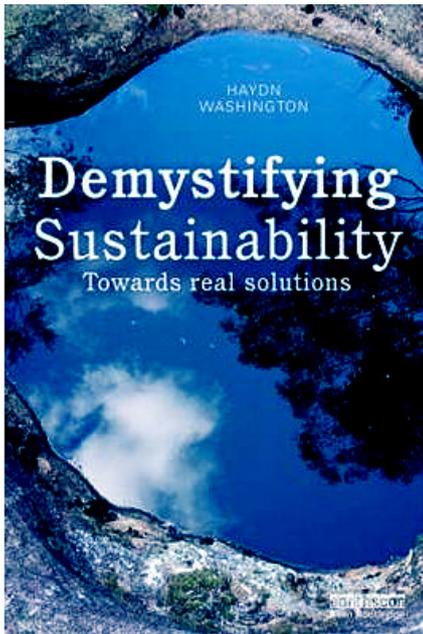
But there's a caveat. We can't feed the world if population growth continues. We have to address the demand side. What then to do? Bourne writes: 'The greatest gift the developed world could give to the developing world – as well as [to] itself – would be to help poor, rapidly growing nations make family planning services free and available to everyone.'

Bravo. Read this book.

Jenny Goldie is a former SPA president.

Demystifying Sustainability – Towards real solutions

by Haydn Washington
Routledge, 2015, 222pp.



Review by Jenny Goldie

Has 'sustainability' become a meaningless buzzword? Even worse, has it become 'sustainababble' – a term Robert Engelman famously coined in *State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?* Has the term been co-opted by those who seek to use it for their own purposes while they continue business as usual?

SPA member and author of this very fine book, Dr Haydn Washington, notes there are well over 300 definitions of 'sustainability' and ever-expanding interpretations of 'sustainable development'. Some choose to keep the definition deliberately vague so as to make

sustainability more 'adaptable'. Clearly, the time has come to demystify the term.

If we are to meaningfully define sustainability, he argues, we must address its three strands: economic, ecological (essential but overlooked) and social. They are mutually interdependent.

Washington has been a leading advocate of the steady-state economy in Australia for some time. His depth of reading is extraordinary with around 100 references for the chapter on economic sustainability alone. In it, he goes beyond the steady-state economy to address whether degrowth might be necessary.

It's easy to define ecological sustainability ('to sustain ecosystems that support human society'). Given that humanity's ecological footprint has already exceeded the Earth's productive capacity, however, we must not only sustain but also solve our current environmental crisis. It is so bad, in fact, that by century's end, half of all species may be extinct. We have to repair the situation and live within the world's ecological limits. Since we are totally dependent on Nature, Washington argues, ecological sustainability has to be the 'key focus' of sustainability.

With his giving ecological sustainability primacy, I wondered whether the chapter on social sustainability would carry the same weight. But it did. Washington covers a range of issues that impact on the issue: equality and equity; justice; social cohesion; democracy; governance, war and conflict. Without social cohesion we will not achieve the other strands of sustainability, yet we cannot focus

on social sustainability in isolation since a sustainable biosphere is non-negotiable.

Given that overpopulation and overconsumption are key causes of our current unsustainability, clearly we cannot discuss sustainability without grappling with both. Despite controversy raging in environmental circles as to whether population or consumption is the most culpable, it is a false dilemma, for the answer is both.

As the book notes, population growth exacerbates most environmental problems; indeed, our sheer numbers are degrading the world's life-support systems. Both climate change and the extinction crisis are merely symptoms of ecological overshoot by an obese humanity. Of course, stabilising our numbers does not guarantee we reach sustainability, nevertheless, not doing so means certain failure.

Having the book so heavily referenced is a strength but may make it overly academic for some readers. In the final pages, however, when he describes in his own words this 'amazingly beautiful world' as he experiences it at the edge of Wollemi National Park, it is highly readable – almost lyrical.

Branch reports

Victoria-Tasmania

Following Kelvin Thomson's need to step aside from the presidency of Victoria First, a possible merger with SPA at the Victorian level or other solutions – formal and informal – for interacting and preserving some identity for Victoria First are being canvassed.

We hope to achieve a cooperative form to suit the members of both organisations and add strength to the population and sustainability movement, but a formal merger may be structurally impossible.

Vic-Tas is looking at how rapid population growth affects our youth and why they are not more politically engaged on the issues. We began informal interviews of young Australians seeking to better know their view on population matters and high immigration. We hope to do some focus groups based on interview findings.

While pro-population growth pieces dominate the Victorian media, excellent letters to the editor, both from members and non-members, and articles published on candobetter.net give hope.

On 24 June I gave a well-received talk on population, energy and sustainability to the group Geelong Sustainability.

Michael Bayliss of SPA and Victoria First wrote an excellent analysis (candobetter.net/node/4521) of a population debate at Thornbury, held in July by federal Labor MP for Batman, David Feeney, with John Thwaites and other pro-growth notables pushing the idea that population growth was inevitable to an audience largely keen to restrain it. SPA members and other population-oriented Victorian groups attended.

We are finalising speaker, date, and venue for the next Vic-Tas AGM and are also organising the next national AGM and seminar to be held in Melbourne in April 2016.

We continue to promote Australian population issues using Roland Johnson's brochure and urge people to sign Mary Drost's petition for an Australian population referendum, which arose from a debate between Kelvin Thomson and the mayor of Melbourne (candobetter.net/node/4066).

Sheila Newman, president

Queensland

The Queensland Branch held successful stalls at two regional environment festivals in June: at Logan and on the Sunshine Coast. A lot of literature was distributed at both, and a number of books sold. Many people took the opportunity to browse the book *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot*, which generated a lot of appreciative comment. We had printed a new booklet containing the comic-strip "7 Billion Unpacked", as something to offer kids, and it seemed to work well. In July we held a stall at the annual conference of the Geography Teachers' Association, with most participants very interested in our material. I gave a lecture at the conference, which was well attended and very well received.

In June, branch members collaborated to write a submission on behalf of SPA to the Productivity Commission's Inquiry into Australia's Migrant Intake. Several branch members also made individual submissions. In July the branch also wrote a submission to the Queensland Government's 'Better Planning for Queensland' consultation about reviewing the State Planning Act. Our August meeting discussed the newly revised United Nations population projections, and why they keep being increased.

Jane O'Sullivan, president

ACT

The 2015 AGM (30 May) resulted in an unchanged committee: Nick Ware (president), Colin Lyons (vice-president), Julia Richards (secretary), David Hennessy (treasurer) and Greg Delany, Christopher Dorman, Vince Patulny, and Michael Thompson. After the AGM a soap-box session brought out a series of orators, all enthusiastic and, perhaps surprisingly, hopeful for the future.

Nick Ware, president

Branch reports

South Australia

Sandra Kanck, John Coulter and I met with the SA Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation, Ian Hunter, in early August to discuss further the pressure that development is putting on the Adelaide Hills area as well as the topics of renewable energy and the proposal for a grid connection from Port Augusta to Broken Hill and the general issue of the infrastructure demands caused by population growth. In July, Sandra Kanck and Peter Martin met with the *Adelaide Advertiser* journalist Tory Shepherd regarding an article she had written in May inspired by The Australian Infrastructure Audit. The article had made a rather odd-sounding statement on the connection between population growth (or the lack of it) and increasing traffic congestion. By all accounts the meeting was amicable and productive.

Michael Lardelli, president

New South Wales

The branch is working with the NSW Nature Conservation Council's Population Committee to present Bill Ryerson from the US Population Media Center (PMC) in November. Bill is one of the most respected and effective population campaigners in the world today and his innovative organisation has an excellent record of reducing birth rates in developing countries through the use of cleverly scripted soap operas. The PMC's email broadcast is also an excellent source of information about current developments and opinions in the field of population. Bill's speaking tour will be a fantastic chance to hear his message and also to share your own thoughts. The day-long event will also feature other presenters including SPA's Mark O'Connor, the co-author of the important book *Overloading Australia*. The venue will be Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts, on Saturday, 21 November, 9am-5pm.

The NSW branch has changed its postal address. All future correspondence should be sent to PO Box 414, Avalon, NSW, 2107.

Kris Spike, president

Western Australia

William Ryerson, founder and president of US's Population Media Center (PMC), and president of the Population Institute, will be in Perth in early November as a guest of SPA WA. Our branch has arranged a public meeting on Saturday, 14 November, at 2pm in the Social Science Lecture Theatre at the UWA. Preparation for this free seminar is well under way. The meeting is open to the public and friends and family are welcome. No booking is necessary. Members will be contacted with further details closer to the date.

Bill has been working in the field of reproductive health for more than 40 years, including developing programs to change the behaviour and improve the health and well-being of people around the world using entertainment-education. Soap operas, it turns out, can change the world. PMC creates serialised dramas (called soap operas) on radio and TV in which characters evolve into role models for the audience for positive behaviour change, and the impact of PMC's dramas are dramatic. PMC is a non-profit, international, nongovernmental organisation, founded in 1998. PMC has more than 15 years of field experience in behavioural change communications and strives to improve the health and well-being of people around the world addressing a variety of issues.

The WA committee has been working to develop a program for the distribution of copies of the book *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot* to opinion leaders. The books were donated to the WA branch through Global Population Speakout. For a review see population.org.au/articles/2015-02-07/buy-overdevelopment-overpopulation-overshoot

SPA WA members and the WA committee attended the Richard Denniss seminar at the UWA Staff House Auditorium on 5 August. Richard is the chief economist for The Australia Institute; his talk was titled 'How to win a fight about the budget: how economic modelling is used to circumvent and shut down debate'. A short review is available at www.ias.uwa.edu.au/lectures/denniss.

John Weaver, treasurer

ACF council election

SPA members who are also members of the Australian Conservation Foundation will have the chance to vote in the ACF council election from now until 25 September. ACF councils last for three years and guide policy and board appointments. Some SPA members are running for the council, so read the nominees' statements carefully to see who is pushing for a stronger population policy for the ACF's immediate future.

Reducing SPA's costs

SPA is encouraging members who receive a paper copy of this newsletter to opt for receiving an electronic copy only. The cost of the paper copy, including postage, is high and will only increase with time. Then there is the cost to the environment. So please email president@population.org.au and opt for the electronic copy only.

New SPA website

As mentioned in the last newsletter, work is advancing on our new website although such things always take longer than expected. Hopefully it will be live by the next newsletter.

Webmaster needed

SPA is seeking to fill the voluntary position of webmaster, so if you have some basic IT skills and a few hours to spare a week, SPA would like to hear from you. We are moving to a Wordpress website, so experience with that software would be handy, but not essential. Email president@population.org.au for more information.

Book for sale

SPA still has some copies of the terrific picture-book *Overdevelopment, Overpopulation, Overshoot*, recently published by Global Population Speak Out and the Foundation for Deep Ecology. It costs \$50 plus \$15 postage within Australia. Send your payment with your name and address to SPA, PO Box 3851, Weston Creek, ACT, 2611, email info@population.org.au or phone the SPA office on (02) 6288 6810 with your credit card details. If you donate \$100 or more to SPA, you can buy the book for \$10.

Sobering facts

In 1981, world population was roughly 4.5 billion and was increasing by about 80 million a year. Now in 2015, world population is roughly 7.3 billion and is increasing by about 83 million a year.

Website: www.population.org.au

The SPA newsletter is published quarterly: in March, June, September and December. Members are welcome to submit material to the editor, to be published at the editor's discretion. Deadline for the December edition is November 1.

Membership applications and renewals should be done via the SPA website or sent to the national office. General inquiries should also go to the national office.

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Disclaimer

While every effort has been made to ensure the reliability of the information contained in this newsletter, the opinions expressed are those of the various authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of either SPA or the editor.