



# NEWSLETTER

## Sustainable Population Australia Inc

No. 98  
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*Patrons*  
Professor Ian Lowe  
Dr Mary White

*Hon. Bob Carr*  
Professor Tim Flannery  
Dr Paul Collins

## Still on track for Big Australia



Minister Tony Burke

Did Sustainability, Population and Communities Minister Tony Burke know that May 13 was Black Friday? For on this day he launched the long-awaited Sustainable Population Strategy. Was it a bleak joke at our expense? He set no targets, merely decentralised.

"We have communities where there are not enough workers and communities where there are not enough jobs - a locally targeted approach to addressing population growth and change is needed," Mr Burke said.

SPA National President Sandra Kanck said: "This is nothing short of the deck-chairs on the Titanic solution: put them in clusters on one part of the deck or spread them evenly, the Titanic will still sink," Ms Kanck said. She claimed the Government's consultation process on a population strategy for Australia was only ever for show.

Crispin Hull, writing in his weekly column in the Canberra Times, noted: "As Voltaire said of the Holy Roman Empire (it was neither holy, nor Roman nor an Empire), the Gillard Government's Sustainable Population Strategy, is not a strategy, has no population aim and is certainly not sustainable."

Monash University's Dr Bob Birrell said the document was "of very little relevance" to addressing the problems facing Australian cities. "Burke has obviously had to accept the

government's decision that higher skilled migration is the number one priority," he said.

Federal Labor MP Kelvin Thomson courageously broke party ranks and criticised his government's population strategy. He said the current rate of population growth was not sustainable and the Government has missed an opportunity to curb growth. "At present we're on an upward trajectory which shows no sign of abating. "I believe if we took the opportunity to set population targets... this would place us far better to deal with cost of living pressures. The failure to set targets means we're still on our way to big Australia, with net overseas migration tracking towards 180,000 per annum, which is the number Treasury says will see Australia's population rise to 36 million by 2050," Mr Thomson said.

In fact, the Budget on May 10 saw an increase in permanent migration visas to 185,000. As well as this, Immigration Minister Chris Bowen's media release

<http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/cb/2011/cb165287.htm> proudly announced that "the government will fast-track permanent residency for temporary business (subclass 457) visa holders who have spent two years in regional Australia and where their employer will continue to sponsor them for a further two years."

Unless there is a dramatic change in policy in coming years, it appears we are indeed headed for a Big Australia.



Kelvin Thomson MP

# Report

## Australia 2050: Population Challenges to Sustainability

Australian Academy's Annual Symposium.  
6 May 2011. Shine Dome, Canberra

by Jenny Goldie



Lord Bob May.

Photo Jenny Goldie

In his keynote address, Australian-born **Lord Robert (Bob) May** of Oxford and former UK Chief Scientist, addressed the natural limits to population growth. He noted that in the past 150 years, that humanity's ecological footprint had grown by about 50, with population increasing seven-fold and per capita energy use also seven-fold. In 2009, the ecological footprint was 2.7 hectares while the biological capacity was only 2.1 hectares – thus we have overshot our carrying capacity. Nevertheless, we know we can bring down birth rates by educating women, although this is impeded by the suppression of women which is a core value of some religions. As Adair Turner has shown in an important paper of the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*, there is a clear negative correlation between high fertility and economic growth.

Food security looms as an issue, Lord May said. The Green Revolution (1965-2000) doubled food production using only a tenth more land, while global population rose by 60 per cent. It also relied heavily on nitrogen fertilisers, the use of which expanded seven-fold. There are now signs of saturation in the Green Revolution, however, and new problems are emerging. By 2050, the availability of fresh water will have intersected with demand. In 2007, 55 per cent of all the nitrogen fixed for fertilising the soil came from the Haber-Bosch process, but this depends on fossil fuels which are a finite resource. In addition, the extinction rate of flora and fauna is now 1000 times higher than the fossil record. This will have a big impact on ecosystem

services such as the pollination of plants.

Dr **Tony Fischer**, of CSIRO Plant Industry, said the main threats to agriculture from increased domestic population growth are loss of horticultural farms on the outskirts of cities, especially Sydney and the Sunshine Coast, and the loss of rural political influence as most of the added population will be in cities.

Then came the current Australian of the Year and chair of CSIRO, **Simon McKeon**, with possibly the most thoughtful and considered presentation of the day. Was economic prosperity dependent on significant population growth? Well, no. 'I am not enthused by Big Australia,' he said. There was only a two per cent difference to 2050 in GDP per capita between the high and low growth scenarios. Population growth is not that important, it is just another measure and, besides, we must consider other factors such as environmental protection for the sake of future generations. Population growth puts pressure on land and water, and Australia has a very poor record in maintaining biodiversity. Australia is yet to determine its optimum population and, in the meantime, there is no need to grow in a rapid manner, he concluded.

**Vanessa Rauland**, addressed whether our cities could reduce their carbon footprint while increasing their populations. No! if it's business as usual but Yes! if we make fundamental changes to our resource use and lifestyles. We need to change from a 'linear' to 'circular metabolism' through decentralisation and green infrastructure.

SPA Patron and former Australian of the Year, Professor **Tim Flannery**, suggested that a Reserve Bank-style body be set up to set targets for population and review them each year, based on various Key Performance Indicators such as employment, greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity, transit times etc. If these are deteriorating, then the committee would decrease the target.

Other speakers included **Tom Hatton** from CSIRO on water (coastal cities will be OK thanks to desalination), **Alison King** (sustaining the freshwater environment for other species with more humans is a real problem), **Graeme Hugo** (need some population growth to replace retiring baby boomers but there are substantial environmental constraints), **Maria Deveson Crabbe** (poverty is associated with high population growth rates), **Sir Peter Gluckman**, Chief Science Advisor to the New Zealand PM (science does not make policy – it informs policy) and finally, the splendid organiser, **Roger Short** (we have a plague of people and are approaching the perfect storm caused by a growing population with increasing per capita consumption.)

## ECONOMIC GROWTH

by *Bruce Dinham*

Politicians and economists keep telling us we need economic growth, our prosperity depends upon it and lack of growth would be calamitous. What is economic growth?

A measure of the economy is the amount of money spent over a particular period, with some adjustments to avoid double counting and to allow for inflation. This is called Gross Domestic Product or in short, GDP. An increase in GDP is called economic growth.

Economics has no morality in that it makes no distinction between good and bad or between essential and non-essential. While GDP includes essential food, clothing, housing, education, health services (including aged care) and law and order, a large part of it is non-essentials, such as professional sport, advertising, fireworks displays, luxury and sports vehicles, fashion clothing, speculative finance, alcohol and tobacco, gambling, horse racing, tourism and other indulgences and extravagances. GDP is as much a measure of waste as it is of needed product and could just as well stand for Gross Domestic Profligacy.

Waste in non-essentials is not all we need to consider. The inescapable end effects of almost everything we buy or do are increased pollution, greater environmental degradation and more rapid depletion of finite resources, especially oil. Because they are not monetised or accounted in money terms, end effects (or in economists' jargon, externalities) are ignored and not included in GDP. Nevertheless they are real and significant. Together with waste in non-essentials they are part of economic growth.

The reality of economic growth, when all parts are considered, is that far from being beneficial it is an insidious cancer, with wide spread and damaging symptoms. Water shortages, greenhouse emissions, climate change, land erosion, river and dry-land salinity, over-fishing, deforestation, species loss, urban sprawl and traffic congestion are some of them. It is said economic growth creates employment but this is a fallacy. Economic growth is a consequence of employment not a cause.

We talk about carbon trading, build expensive energy consuming desalination plants, fritter around mandating half-flush toilets and banning incandescent light globes, subsidising hybrid cars and solar panels but this is only dealing with effects not the cause. The cause is that there are too many of us and we are wastefully spending and consuming more than we need (and calling it economic growth). We need to remember a fundamental

fact – we live in a finite world, the more of us and the more we use now the less there will be for the future.

Benefits of economic and population growth are a delusion. Instead of a mindless pursuit of growth a government concerned for the future and not hostage to self-interested growth lobbies (business and industry will always want growth because it means bigger and easier profits) would stop encouraging growth and be planning and acting for an orderly transition to a stable no-growth economy. With a stable economy and population there would be no need to keep building new houses and expensive infrastructure and meeting continually increasing demands for services. Resources now wasted on these could be used instead to improve our way of life instead of the continual deterioration we suffer at present from needless growth.

So what can we do? Well here are a few ideas for a start:

- Stop the lunacy of paying people for having children.
- Stop allowing expenditure on advertising and promotion as a taxation deduction  
(There is an old saying “a good wine needs no bush”. Most advertising is aimed at encouraging non-essential, wasteful consumption, persuading people to buy things they neither need nor really want).
- Make foreign aid contingent on recipient countries having effective education programs for fertility control and means of control readily available.
- Allow immigration on humanitarian grounds only.

On the question of immigration, it is said there is a skills shortage but from a different viewpoint it can be seen as a surplus – a surplus of profit-seeking companies eager to rip out our mineral resources and sell them off to foreign buyers as fast as they can. When they have taken all they want, find another gullible government somewhere else and leave us to deal with the holes in the ground and the mess left behind. In effect, our country is being used as a quarry and turned into a big rubbish dump - a good example of economic growth.

*Bruce is a member of the SA branch of SPA.*

### Report on AGM

The following were declared elected:

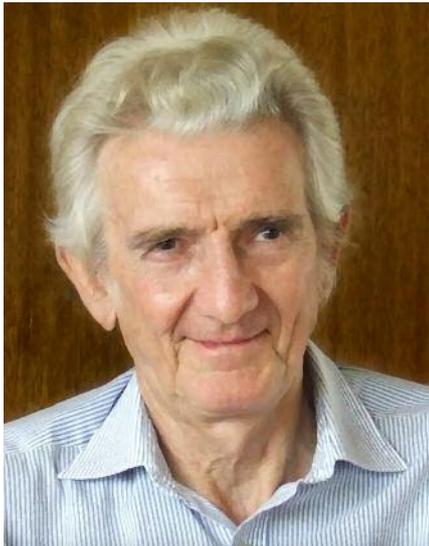
**President:** Sandra Kanck, **Vice President:** John Coulter, **Treasurer:** Michael Banyard, **Correspondence Secretary:** Jill Quirk, **Meetings Secretary:** Nola Stewart, **Committee Members:** Geoff Buckmaster, Jane O'Sullivan, Peter Strachan, Paddy Weaver.

All three motions before the meeting were carried.

## Parks, zoos and freezers

*This is an edited transcript of ABC's Ockham's razor from 3 April 2011 featuring SPA member Melvin Bolton from Yepoon, Queensland.*

**Robyn Williams:** Knut is dead. Poor little polar bear -- grew up in the zoo in Berlin and seemed to be suffering stresses. He was rejected by his mother, confused by people, and was said to be put off by the presence of the public. So zoos in modern times: does one unhappy example give an indication of how they're doing?



Melvin Bolton

**Melvin Bolton:** Some people think they should all be closed down, not just the bad ones but zoos of every kind. Wild animals, they say, belong in the wild. The problem with that argument is that for some species it is already pertinent to ask 'what wild?'

Land use is contested wherever there are human interests. And when land is converted to agriculture, let alone urbanised, it comes to be seen through different eyes. Plants that used to be wildflowers now appear as weeds. And wild creatures often can't help being pests, or more serious threats to productivity. This of course, is why we have national parks and other protected areas.

Yet even protected areas have their critics. Some people protest that it's just plain wrong to lock up land for lesser forms of life when people could be farming it. There is also the argument that protected areas in the developing world exist for the privileged at the expense of the local poor, who get locked out of useful land. In principle, it makes obvious sense to have locals sharing the benefits of protected areas, but what if there is not much to share? Not all threatened habitats can yield tons of game meat or attract busloads of wealthy tourists.

In practice, the bigger parks and reserves around the world have commonly been divided into zones so that core areas can be fully protected while surrounding buffer zones may be opened to local folk who need to gather bush materials. But supplies of firewood, thatching grass, building poles, wild fruits and honey

are all susceptible to over-harvesting. With hindsight we can see how buffer zones have acted as magnets for people and livestock. When reserves become oases of wild goodies surrounded by miles of unrelieved cropland or overgrazed pasture, human settlements are likely to be clustered around the edges. Some of the finest parks in Africa and Asia have lost their buffer zones and are being eaten away by encroaching agriculture. For many years I worked as an ecologist for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, so I've seen all this at first hand.

And yet, without having the locals on side, no protected area is likely to succeed. So, more often than not, conservation comes down to being creative with public relations problems. Around the Chitwan National Park in Nepal, for instance, different breeds of cattle are being introduced. They have a much higher milk yield than the local cows so fewer of them will be needed and grazing pressure within the park ought to be reduced. This will only buy time though, if human numbers are still increasing.

At the level of individual species, the big, potentially dangerous animals are particularly hard to protect against people-pressure. So, in this sense, when conservation battles are being lost, it's often the strong that perish first. The big cats, for example, are declining in number almost everywhere. In the UK, bears and wolves were exterminated centuries ago and it seems highly unlikely that they could ever be re-established in that crowded land. European beavers, on the other hand, might just make it. In 2009, after ten years of planning and extensive consultation, a few were reintroduced into relatively quiet parts of Scotland, on a trial basis.

Yet some countries have a higher population density than Britain, and there will be many nations in that state by mid-century, especially in Asia but also in Africa. Rwanda already has a much higher population density than Britain and by mid-century the numbers will have more than doubled. Rwanda, together with the Congo and Uganda, are home to the mountain gorilla. Uganda has a wealth of wildlife and spectacular national parks but by 2050 there will be over a thousand people to the square mile; 400 to the square kilometre.

Conflicts over land use, and between people, wildlife and domestic stock, will inevitably increase over much of the world. It isn't reasonable to expect harmonious coexistence. In some cases it will make sense to build barriers, such as electrified fencing, around protected areas, but barriers can prevent seasonal movements, dispersal of individuals and other aspects of territorial behaviour in big mammals. In turn, this creates a need for more management interventions until we are trying to keep animals captive in natural surroundings. There

# Opinion

comes a point, with small protected areas, where they cease to be viable, self-sustaining units and we might as well call them open-range zoos. In other words, the transition from wild to captive is a continuum.

The Javan rhinoceros is an extreme case in point. It once ranged over much of lowland Asia but its future now rests with about 50 individuals that still exist in a patch of forest on the western tip of Java. This is the Ujung Kulon National Park, which offers the rhinos about 30,000 hectares of sanctuary. The area probably won't support many more rhinos so their numbers can't be much increased where they are. When a species ends up in such a precarious position, then as a wild animal left to nature, it really has no future. At best it will gradually dwindle away but extinction could come quickly with one outbreak of disease.

Conservation breeding, outside an animal's normal range if necessary, can make a difference. The World Conservation Union lists about 40 species which still survive in captivity but are considered to be extinct in the wild. Lots of things can go wrong with captive breeding and release projects, but much has been learnt in recent years. Broadly, there are three crucial things to consider.

The first is genetics. Nobody knows how much of the original gene pool is contained within the remaining Javan rhinos, but with so few left, the death of one individual could mean the loss forever of precious components. The more complexity we can keep, therefore, the more likely it is that some individuals will be able to survive the unexpected, such as climate change, and carry the species long into the future. Genetic variation is the substrate of biodiversity.

The second essential is to retain the natural behaviour of animals. The genetic predispositions might be there, but there must also be opportunities for expressing them. An animal that has grown up on floorboards, for instance, can be quite unable to climb about in trees when the need arises. Young animals in the wild sometimes have a huge amount of learning to do. In enclosures this has to be provided for as far as is practicable.

A third essential, and often the most difficult to manage, is successful rehabilitation to the wild when animals are released. It may have to be a gradual process and strategies differ from one species to another. But in no case is there any point in putting animals back into the same situation that was causing their decline in the first place. If there is no secure habitat, perhaps because it's too far gone, or has become a war zone, then conservation breeding in other places may have to be maintained indefinitely. The hope in this case is that the

human population will peak this century at not more than ten billion, and then a slow decline, back to a more sustainable level next century. Pressure on the land should then relax.

Captive breeding is almost the last ditch in our defence against animal extinctions, but zoos can't be devoted to conservation and research, no matter how many their directors might like the idea. Any conservation activities must be balanced with the need to remain popular with the public. Personally, I think zoos should be popular places for a day out, especially with children, but they are extremely expensive to run, and money and space are always limiting.

I said just now that captive breeding is almost the last ditch of conservation strategy. The only measure beyond that is to preserve living material in a freezer. With the seeds of plants this is relatively easy and there is a hi-tech global seed bank deep in the permafrost of Arctic Norway. It's a lot more difficult with animals but some materials, after special preparation, can be kept alive in liquid nitrogen at minus 196 degrees Celsius. In 2004, the Frozen Ark project was launched in Britain as a registered charity. The aim is to collect and store DNA, living cells and, where possible, eggs, sperms or embryos from animals that are expected to disappear within the next few decades.

Of course, all this can apply only to the species that we know about. The millions of types, mainly at the microscopic level, that we don't know about could be a lot more important for human survival. But that's another story.

**Robyn Williams:** Which we'll tell another day.

For the full transcript, go to:

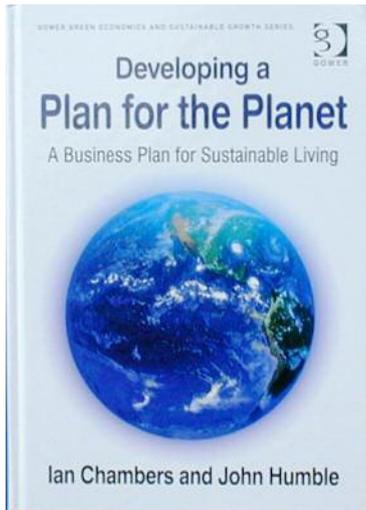
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2011/31/78824.htm#transcript>

## OBITUARY

One of the first members to join SPA's NSW Branch, Edward Elsom, passed away at Greenwich Hospital on 3 May after a long battle with cancer. He was 72. Ed was active on the Branch Committee for many years and also served for three years as Branch Secretary until 2006, when his hobby farm demanded more of his time. In the earliest days of the NSW Branch, meetings were held at President David Griffiths' home at Mosman, and the burble of Ed's motor bike coming up the drive would announce his arrival. He continued motor bike riding until a short time before being hospitalised. He'll be sadly missed.

*Gordon Hocking*

# Book Reviews



## Developing a Plan for the Planet A Business Plan for Sustainable Living

by *Ian Chambers and John Humble*

Gower Publishing Limited 2011 328pp

Reviewed by *Jenny Goldie*

You have to love a book that gives primacy to population growth when listing key global challenges. Not only does it get a chapter in its own right, population growth permeates discussion of the nine other challenges: climate change, energy supplies, water and food supplies, sustainability and biodiversity, extreme poverty, global health, universal education, conflict and peace, and financing a sustainable world.

The challenges are nearly all interconnected, making matters worse. Rising population puts pressure on food and water supplies, and increases greenhouse gas emissions. Climate change in turn exacerbates water shortages, lowering agricultural productivity and potentially increasing regional conflicts. On the positive side, however, this interconnectivity means that addressing one of the challenges can have a positive impact on others. For instance, educating women will not only help reduce poverty but also slow population growth since educated women have fewer children on average.

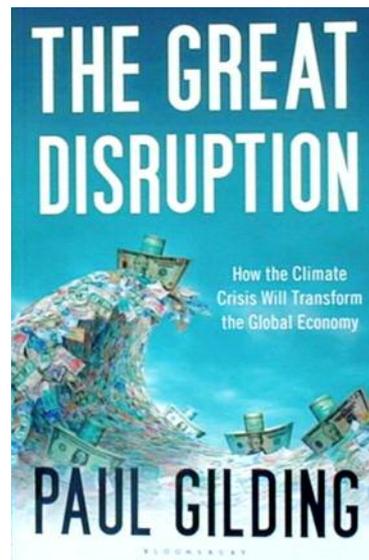
This is more of a manual or textbook than a narrative-style book such as *The Great Disruption*, the review of which follows. It is written in simple English and amply illustrated with cartoons, tables and boxes with examples of what is being done. It contains a wealth of information about the current state of play globally and provides excellent advice on what strategies to adopt, not only by businesses but by communities, individuals and government.

The authors suggest the ARROW approach: Avoid, Reduce, Replace, Offset and Watch and adapt. For instance, with respect to energy sustainability, businesses can: avoid travel by using audio and video-conferencing; reduce high-energy consumption areas such as lighting and refrigeration; replace current technologies with alternative energy-efficient ones; offset where it is not possible to reduce or replace, such

as selecting offsets when purchasing airline tickets; and monitor (i.e. watch), adapt and improve their sustainability strategies.

After helpful sections on best practice global management and on developing and managing a plan for the planet, the authors move to its implementation. This is about leveraging all the key participants: international organisations and government, businesses and the power of the people. The spiritual imperative is not forgotten and the authors note that, while the world's faiths have great diversity, they have in common two central tenets: humans are stewards of the earth and not its owner; and that each human being has a responsibility to others. Therein lies hope that we might be able to address these overwhelming challenges.

This is a very worthy book and deserves a wide audience. Its message is excellent. Its editing left something to be desired, however, and the cartoons were amateurish in execution and detracted from the essential seriousness of the message.



## The Great Disruption

by *Paul Gilding*

Bloomsbury, London, 2011, 293pp

Reviewed by *Jenny Goldie*

I once knew the environmentalist Paul Gilding in a distant kind of way in Canberra some twenty years ago. Then he left to head Greenpeace in

Amsterdam. Friends reported he had since 'gone over to the dark side', that is, to the corporate world and that he now had five children. So scepticism kept me from buying the book for some weeks.

When I read the first line, however, I was disarmed. "The Earth is full," it said. While Gilding was referring more to the human economy than to the number of people per se, nevertheless, the Erhlich/Holdren  $I=PAT$  equation was taken as a given. Population size does matter.

The thrust of the book is that we have reached the limits of the Earth, as espoused in the 1972 *Limits to Growth*, and that we have to adopt a steady state economic model. On the way we have to pull out all stops to

# Book Reviews

mitigate climate change by the rapid transformation of our economy away from its dependence on fossil fuels and towards developing low carbon technologies and renewable energy.

Gilding is the first to acknowledge that the contents of the book are not original; rather, it is a compilation of the writing and research of many people over the past 50 years. Longer, when it came to his references on the need for a steady state economy: Adam Smith (18th century), John Stuart Mill (19th) and John Maynard Keynes (20th) as well as the contemporary Herman Daly are all cited.

If dangerous climate change is to be avoided, Gilding supports the Bill McKibben (350.org) view that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions must be brought back down to 350ppm. (We are currently at 390ppm). This will require radical policy changes, though he worries that it may take a crisis before people move on to a war footing (as Lester Brown advocated in *Plan B* – reviewed in the last issue.)

If we don't have economic growth, how do we eliminate poverty? As in kindergarten, we have to share, says Gilding. The trickle-down effect of economic growth has not been enough – 1.2 billion people are still mired in grinding poverty. So with the limits to growth having been reached, we in the richer world have to share the limited and finite resources of the Earth.

This is an impressive book. After all my scepticism, Gilding's corporate background turned out to be an asset because he understands how business works and needs to change. The book's only real flaw is that, having acknowledged population as part of the problem, it fails to address how further growth in numbers might be stopped. I assume, with five children, Gilding didn't want to go there.

two men in a Land Rover careen down an almost vertical slope in the Jordanian desert, and is forced to drive into and through a threatening crowd of mysterious not-quite-human beings to escape.

The story is carried along nicely by the central group of characters. Contemporary issues such as population, food security, and the break-down of society are just below the surface. Hendry seems to have traveled widely, and his descriptions of place (the Jordanian desert, Scotland, Switzerland, the Outback, the Rockies) are deft. He is also at home with technology, weaponry, and computers, and writes of flying vintage aircraft with convincing detail.

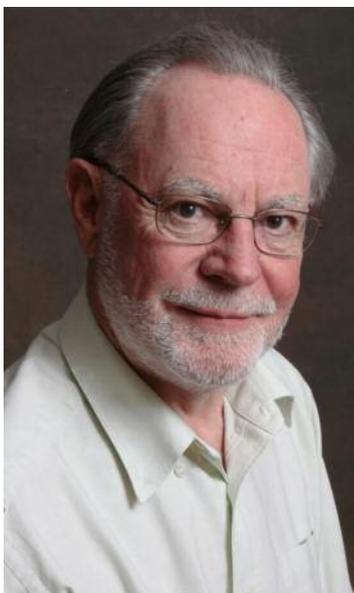
We have received a number of novels on population and ecological themes over the past few years, the best of them probably *The Face in the Smaller Picture* (2008) by SPA member Melvin Bolton, a very convincing tale about Australia, Ethiopia and people-smuggling in the near and dysfunctional future.

*Seeds of Destruction* is a fine ripping yarn. The author says that he wanted to create the sort of novel he would read on a long flight, and in this he succeeds – this reviewer put the book down, exhausted, long after midnight. But the book often reads as if it is a first draft. There are patches of clumsy writing, and one gets the impression that Hendry wrote the book in a hurry, and his publisher didn't bother with tight copy editing.

This isn't mere pedantry. Even in a ripping yarn, competent grammar should allow the reader to be carried along on the stream of events, without being interrupted by split infinitives, hanging participles, or ambiguities.

It also takes a very skilful writer in the action genre to overcome the difficulty of building a persona amidst the flying bullets - (think of Tom Clancy or Ian Fleming). Here, Hendry is only partially successful. His tough guy hero, Peter Cossi, is a memorable character, as is the Steve Jobs look-alike Brad O'Connor, the inventor of the O'Connor super-computer. Others are less well realised, and indeed when one of the female leads comes to a nasty end on a Scottish cliff, it's hard to care very much.

*Seeds of Destruction* would certainly while away the time on a long flight, but it might raise more questions than it answers. For an 'environmental' novel, the conclusion is oddly ambiguous. Without wanting to give away too much, one can only say that the villains come to a deservedly sticky end – but the villains (from within their sinister glass and steel head office in Switzerland) are the very ones who are concerned about over-population and environmental degradation. Perhaps I was taking it too seriously.



## Seeds of Destruction

by *Allan Hendry*

Olympia Publishers,  
London, 2011, 250pp

Reviewed By *Nick Goldie*

*Seeds of Destruction* is described on the cover as "a complex, action eco-thriller", which is a fair description. It is certainly complex, and full of action. The novel opens with a bang as

# SPA Conference

## “Resources Boom: Benefit or Burden?”

WA branch conference that followed the SPA AGM. Sunday 3 April 2011

Paddy Weaver *Introduction*

The resources boom, which helped the Australian economy weather the global financial crisis, has become a driving force for population growth in WA, Queensland and the Northern Territory. Demands for increased skilled migration comes most strongly from the resources companies but is also sought by other employers losing workers to the resources sector. Many in the population believe that the promised wealth from resource development will filter down to the population at large. The reality has proved rather different. Local steel fabricators are not getting the expected employment as much of the contract work goes overseas to cheaper Asian companies, resulting in many firms laying off engineers and design staff. In a recent campaign, WA engineers joined with Unions WA calling for more construction work to come to local industry. The local community is beginning to realise that the impact of resource development for those who live here is rising costs of almost everything, overloaded services and aggravation of critical water shortages. The latter has been so severe that a Japanese government-sponsored company suggested backfilling ore ships with recycled Tokyo water as a source for WA. The time is right for a serious consideration of the costs and benefits of resource development and the population growth it is driving.



**Dr Mal Washer MP**  
*‘Development and the Future for WA’*

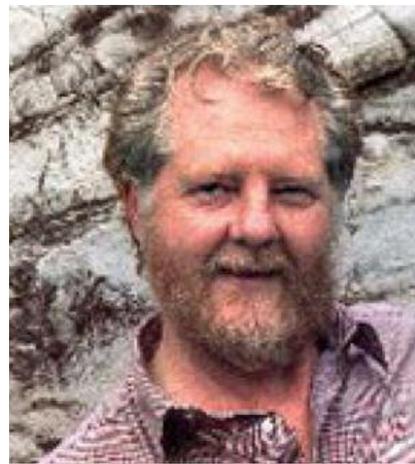
According to Dr Washer, Access Economics expected the projected resource development would generate 220,000 jobs in WA alone by 2017. Over half of these jobs would be in the skilled categories of professionals, managers, technicians

and tradesmen. At the peak of the last resources boom, July 2009, the unemployment rate had dropped to 2.7 per cent. It increased to 5.4 per cent during the financial crisis but already has dropped back to 4.5 per cent. The impacts of this demand extend beyond the resources

industries themselves, raising wages and creating shortages in other sectors.

Dr Washer also pointed out that the WA Workforce Development Plan recommended increased participation from underemployed and disengaged older workers and other underrepresented groups. He noted that 64 per cent of permanent immigration were skilled in 2009/10. Yet temporary immigration through 457 visas provides employers with a faster, more flexible avenue of recruiting skilled workers, with no cap on numbers. 457 visas allow people to stay between three months and four years but in recent years more than half convert to permanent residency status. While WA has only 10 per cent of Australia’s population, it has over 80 per cent of its advanced minerals and energy projects.

Australia and especially business should put more money into training existing unemployed for skilled positions, Dr Washer said. He argued that, as the richest generation ever, we should put more of our own wealth into our support in old age. He said that the claim ‘ageing justifies immigration’ is false. Sustainability was not possible with our increasing population. Australia should also increase the amount given to family planning programs overseas.



**Mark O’Connor**  
*‘How population growth hurts us all’*

Mark showed an overcrowded train in India as an illustration of where we do not want to be going. He pointed out the reality of Australia’s carrying capacity using three maps - fertile areas of

Australia (minimal), the rainfall distribution (largely coastal, plus Top End) and then the map of where these areas coincided, showing that a very small proportion of Australia is suitable for cultivation. Rainfall reliability is critical.

Mark acknowledging Sheila Newman’s work with regard to dependency ratios - children are dependent for longer than elderly people and the flow of wealth is actually from older to younger rather than the other way around. He also mentioned welcome input on the subject of population from individuals such as the late Norman Borlaug and organisations like the Anglican Church.

# SPA Conference



**Dr Jane O'Sullivan**  
*'The Invisible costs of population growth'*

Jane demonstrated the failure of population growth to live up to promised economic returns. She said economists are mainly preoccupied with the rate of growth in the economy rather than

caring about where this is taking us.

More people require more infrastructure but existing infrastructure also has to be maintained and has a lifespan of perhaps 50 years on average. Thus, to maintain existing infrastructure with a 50 year lifespan requires two per cent replacement every year. Existing taxpayers pay for this depreciation and also subsidise the cost of new infrastructure for new arrivals. The income from the taxes of new arrivals is far outweighed by the increased cost of infrastructure to support them. For developed countries an estimated 12.5 per cent of GDP is required for every one per cent growth in population. We have now a \$770 billion backlog in infrastructure, according to Infrastructure Australia.

Affluence and foreign exchange provided by the mining boom have partly concealed the impoverishment due to population growth. David Richardson's 2009 paper for the Australia Institute showed that the minerals boom had raised average wages by only 0.8 per cent and in fact lowered them outside the mining areas.

Jane pointed out that an increased GDP (or GNI) for the nation did not indicate a gain for its people. Benefit to individuals is reflected by an increase in GDP per person. And yet increasing total GDP is so often the measure used by our politicians and economists. This increases with bigger population but there is no evidence that more people results in more GDP per person. In fact there is no relationship, among the world's nations, between the rate of growth of GDP/GNI per person and the growth rate of a nation's population. In the case of Australian States there is, however, with those with the highest rates of population growth generally doing worst.

The former head of Treasury John Stone has described his surprise at finding there was simply no evidence for the economic benefits of immigration: Jane had never seen an intellectually rigorous study that did so.

**Sandy Boulter** (former Head of Planning for Margaret River Council) *'In defence of NIMBYs'*

The focus on third party right of appeal by Sandy

puzzled interstate visitors. This was not surprising since WA is the only state that limits appeals on planning decisions to those with property adjacent to a proposed development or with some direct pecuniary interest. It was pleasing that around 30 of those attending this last session were involved in some protest or other at what were termed local community issues. Discussion ranged widely and was largely local in context even though the problems are probably common to all Australia's major cities.

*The meeting passed a recommendation that the WA Branch of SPA form a subcommittee to focus on local community issues stemming from population growth, and also on the restrictions on democratic processes under WA's current planning*

## LETTER

I have made a second attempt to get persuade Victorian Greens MP Greg Barber to reconsider his complaint that limiting child support to the first two would "punish" poor and Muslim families which tended to be more numerous.

It was out of the question to grant them an exemption, I wrote, and in time they too would come to accept the need for sustainable population; we could not use China's draconian methods, only apply social and economic pressures to attain this vital end.

I also mentioned that overabundant children were a drain on resources (including job creation) leaving less for the physically and mentally ill, for example, and a strain on the community's tolerance and good will.

At least his party does have a policy on population, declaring it to be a world problem and offering suggestions for tackling it, unlike the fudging and denial found in the major ones.

*Paul D Prentice, North Fitzroy Vic*

## Latest from ABS

	Population at end Sept qtr 2010	Population Change over previous year	%
NSW	7,253,400	95,200	1.3
Vic	5,567,100	90,500	1.7
Qld	4,532,300	82,200	1.8
SA	1,647,800	17,400	1.1
WA	2,306,200	47,300	2.1
Tas	508,500	4,100	0.8
NT	230,200	2,900	1.3
ACT	359,700	6,000	1.7
<b>Australia</b>	<b>22,407,700</b>	<b>345,500</b>	<b>1.6</b>

## National President

*Sandra Kanck*

He was only 11 months old and much loved. He died of renal failure in May 2011. In the 21st century we would say that was a failure of the medical system. But only in a developed (first world) nation would we say that. If it was a developing (third world) nation we might nod our heads sagely and say that this is a fact of life.

My 25 year old friend, Patience, lives in a village in South Africa where I met her in March of this year. But her village of 7000 residents does not have a doctor. They have a nurse who must be stretched to the limit as the sign outside the health centre advises that she provides "Maternity services, Child health and Immunization, Family planning, Sexual transmission of diseases and AIDS... and fifteen other services.

A few days before I met Patience, my group visited Soweto. The tour guide pointed to a 6000 bed hospital and told us of the critical shortage of doctors and, shrugging his shoulders and taking the opportunity to make a political point to a busload of Australians, told us rather cynically "they've all gone to Australia".

I do not know how often a doctor is able to visit Patience's village. But I do know that in rural areas of South Africa such visits can be months apart, with people coming from miles around, standing in long queues all day to see that doctor, often being turned away at the end of the day because they didn't make it to the head of the queue. They are told to come back in two months when the doctor next visits.

The moral of this story is that Australia's voracious head-hunting of professionals from developing countries has a double-whammy, both environmental and social. It results in more feet in Australia's environmental footprint, and lives needlessly lost in South Africa – and no doubt many other countries – because we as a nation have immorally chosen to asset-strip the best educated in developing countries. I have no doubt that our nation's wealth and acquisitiveness has led to the death of this child. His mother was my friend Patience.

Sandra and Patience



## Branch reports

**NSW:** It is with much sadness that the branch learned of the passing of one of its more active members. Ed Elsom served as secretary to the branch for several years and was always good humoured about doing the rather thankless job of taking and reading minutes. His contributions and insights will be greatly missed.

Our latest forum was a presentation from the group Beyond Zero Emissions which was a compelling argument for the urgent transition to renewable energy based upon new and improving technologies. The population issue was touched upon only briefly in their presentation so the question time proved to be a good chance for a free exchange of views. The branch's next event will be on the 25th of June at the Sydney Mechanics' School of Arts at 2pm. The first half will be a presentation by award-winning photographer, Michael Hall. Michael has decided to chronicle not just the beauty in the world but also the destruction that is occurring due to mankind's ignorance and greed. It promises to be a very stimulating and moving slideshow. This will be followed by an extended "open mic" session for members to air their views on anything they wish to speak about.

*Kris Spike*

**SEQ:** The SEQ committee will be running stalls simultaneously at two sustainability festivals on World Environment Day on 5 June: the Logan Eco Action Festival and the Pathways to Sustainability Expo organised by HOPE in Toowoomba. Jane O'Sullivan will also be speaking at the Toowoomba event. We are also making plans for a full day film festival on 21 August, featuring the Australian premier of "Mother: caring our way out of the population dilemma" and a local premier of "State of Seige".

*Jane O'Sullivan*

**VIC:** The April SPA newsletter reprinted a Herald Sun article "Bigger may not be better for Melbourne says key minister", but the current state government seems to embracing growth as much as its predecessor. The topic still unduly graces the time and space of the daily media in many guises: a nature reserve to the west of Melbourne threatened by a new suburb; a council in an inner working class suburb reeling from the planning minister's announcement of an unprecedented 25 storey residential tower; the planning minister extolling the imperative of growth and accommodating it; residents fighting to retain amenity in the face of overdevelopment in a suburb whose praises Barry Humphries used to sing with the refrain "...For it's all beautifully quiet in Highett." Growth is relentless and many of SPA's members work on all important local fronts to mitigate the damage. It has become a full time occupation for those who care.

# SPA News

Vivienne Ortega, Jennie Epstein, Jill Quirk and Jenny Warfe from the branch committee have all had letters published in recent weeks in the mainstream media. A committee meeting was held on May 14th. We are planning a stall in the growth area of Pakenham on 11 June and our branch AGM will be held on Saturday afternoon July 16th at Balwyn Library meeting room. Victorian Members will shortly be advised of details.

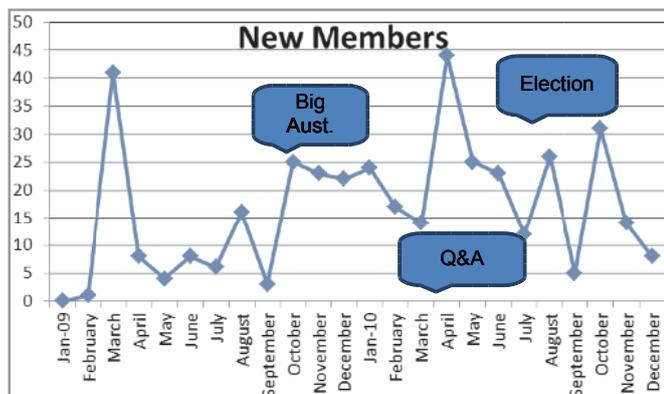
*Jill Quirk*

## Looking for New Levers – Membership

*Dr Michael Banyard, National Treasurer*

We expect that pulling a lever usually evokes some response. The response depends on what lever is pulled. Getting the right response depends knowing what lever to pull. The size of our SPA membership and particularly the recruitment of new members are the result of a number of factors. These including public awareness of the population issue, public awareness of SPA, how well we articulate our message and how efficiently we are able to capture new members.

Looking at our new member numbers for 2009 and 2010 is an interesting exercise. 2010 was a Federal election year where population was hotly debated. It provided SPA with a situation where population was given the sort of media coverage that we could never buy. One could say that our ability to ‘capture’ new members would not, in the circumstances, be limited by public awareness. The issue was started with Kevin Rudd’s “Building a Big Australia Speech” to the Business Council of Australia on 27th October 2009. The chart shows that our new members surged, from a low base, in October and showed a slow decline until a second surge in April 2010.



The ABC’s 7.30 Report ran a four-part series on Population in January 2010 and there appeared to be a corresponding increase in new members in January also. ABC’s Q&A also hosted a series of programs

which discussed population in 2010. These included “Premiers, Population and Politics of Fear on 19th April; “New PM & Population” on 5th July; “Population Debate Special Dick Smith’s Population Puzzle” 12 August.

The numbers reported are from the SPA National database (Field:DateJoined). Memberships are processed in batches approximately twice monthly and hence the time periods may not precisely agree with political events.

The intense debate continued until the Federal election on 21 August 2010. Some within SPA had hoped that the number of new members would increase substantially in the election year. While they did show some improvement overall with new members increasing from 157 in 2009 to 243 in 2010 the numbers were small.

In fact the increase did not match our natural attrition, our overall numbers fell. Given that, in this period of time awareness of the issue was ‘non-limiting’ we need to work on our understanding of why more people are not “up in arms’ about the issue of their future and their children’s future. Of particular interest is why younger people are poorly represented in our membership. A pilot study undertaken by students at Swinburne University had trouble recruiting sufficient numbers of students principally because many felt unable to talk about the issues. The fear of appearing racist or the “taboo” of population was the main factor.

None-the-less we must continue to understand our market better so we can engage larger numbers of our community in this difficult challenge. To this end a Marketing & Membership steering group has been set up by the National SPA Executive to examine the question in more detail which will build on work of the last two years by the ACT Branch. We would be interested in hearing from any SPA member with extensive professional marketing experience who wish to help. Please contact Michael Banyard on [treasurer@population.org.au](mailto:treasurer@population.org.au).

Positions Vacant  
Person or Persons with Marketing Experience. Remuneration Zero.  
Contact Michael Banyard  
[treasurer@population.org.au](mailto:treasurer@population.org.au)

# Snippets

## City's population explosion

The Age, Tim Colebatch, *April 1, 2011*

MELBOURNE'S outer suburbs are growing faster than any other area in Australia, part of a record-breaking trend that has seen Melbourne's population closing the gap on Sydney.

The city's outer suburbs are leaving coastal Queensland and Western Australia's mining towns in their dust, as more than 1000 people a week pour into Melbourne's fringe.

<http://theage.domain.com.au/real-estate-news/citys-population-explosion-20110331-1cng1.html>

## World population to reach 10 billion by 2100

UNITED NATIONS, 3MAY – The current world population of close to 7 billion is projected to reach 10.1 billion in the next ninety years, reaching 9.3 billion by the middle of this century, according to the medium variant of the *2010 Revision of World Population Prospects*, the official United Nations population projections prepared by the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which is being launched today.

Small variations in fertility can produce major differences in the size of populations over the long run. The high projection variant, whose fertility is just half a child above that in the medium variant, produces a world population of 10.6 billion in 2050 and 15.8 billion in 2100. The low variant, whose fertility remains half a child below that of the medium, produces a population that reaches 8.1 billion in 2050 and declines towards the second half of this century to reach 6.2 billion in 2100.

[http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Other-Information/Press Release WPP2010.pdf](http://esa.un.org/unpd/wpp/Other-Information/Press%20Release%20WPP2010.pdf)

## Forget the baby bonus, Indian newlyweds get cash not to have children

by *Karishma Vyas*, AFP April 28, 2011

While countries like Japan, Canada and Australia hand out "baby bonuses" to encourage people to have children, couples in one part of India are getting cash to do just the opposite.

Maharashtra state is paying newlyweds a so-called "honeymoon" bonus to delay starting a family, with the twin aims of slowing population growth and improving women's health.

<http://www.news.com.au/money/money-matters/forget-the-baby-bonus-indian-newlyweds-get-cash-not-to-have-children/story-e6frfmd9-1226046488325>

# ABOUT SPA

*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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