



Sustainable Population Australia

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Dr Rush Holt
American Association for the Advancement of Science
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Dear Dr Holt,

Sustainable Population Australia Incorporated (SPA) is an Australian-based environment group which campaigns on the need for an ecologically sustainable population. Our diverse membership comprises a significant number of scientists who help us in this endeavor.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science has recently held its Annual Meeting and I hope it was a productive one. However, I am most disappointed to hear that AAAS rejected an application for an information booth from the group *Scientists and Environmentalists for Population Stabilization* (SEPS). SEPS has informed me that this happened previously in 2014, and that this current rejection – according to AAAS itself - was based on the mission, focus and actions of SEPS.

SEPS' mission statement is "*to improve understanding within the U.S. scientific, educational and environmental communities of the fact of overpopulation and its social, economic and environmental consequences at both national and global levels. We advocate for U.S. population stabilization followed by its gradual reduction to a sustainable level by humane, non-coercive means*". As for their actions there are two that stand out: "*SEPS endeavors to educate scientists, the public, the media, and policy makers on the environmental consequences of population growth*" and "*operating exhibitor booths on population issues primarily at the annual meetings of environmental scientific societies in the U.S.*" Nothing in the above statements would appear to provide a basis for rejecting their application,

I am also aware that AAAS rejected an application for a booth from a member group of SEPS, *Californians for Population Stabilization*, for your 2012 Annual Meeting. Similarly an application from *Population Institute Canada* for the 2012 Annual Meeting was rejected by AAAS. The suggestion that has been made to me is that this is censorship.

I would be most interested to hear from you about these decisions and what the position of AAAS is in relation to population - a quick glance at the "Policy and Publications" section of your website disappoints as it appears not to address the issue at all. This is peculiar given population impacts would surely be of interest to those of your membership who are climatologists, biologists, hydrologists, agronomists, ecologists, soil scientists, oceanographers, epidemiologists etc.

In Australia, your sister organization, *The Australian Academy of Science*, has taken on the issue of population over a number of decades. In April 1994, the Academy produced a strong statement within a larger document "Population 2040: Australia's Choice":

"If our population reaches the high end of the feasible range (37 million), the quality of life of all Australians will be lowered by the degradation of water, soil, energy and biological resources. Cities such as Sydney and Melbourne will double or triple in size, multiplying their current infrastructure problems and their impact on the surrounding regions of the continent. Alternatively, new cities of their present size and impact will have to be sited, built and serviced. Moreover this large population would continue to grow for decades after 2014, and the quality of Australian life would continue to fall. In our view, the quality of all aspects of our children's lives will be maximized if the population of Australia by the mid-21st Century is kept to the low, stable end of the achievable range, i.e. to approximately 23 million."

As a scientist you may be aware of the work of Prof Frank Fenner who oversaw the eradication of smallpox. Until his death, Professor Frank Fenner was a much-loved member and patron of SPA. The Australian Academy of Science now conducts the annual *Fenner Conference on the Environment* and in 2013 the conference on "Population, Resources and the Environment" was jointly organised by SPA with the Academy. In 2014 SPA and Australia's *Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation* published a complete book, "Sustainable Futures", containing the papers presented at that conference.

There is no good reason for a scientific body such as yours to shy away from dealing with the issue of population, indeed to the contrary – although I would be interested in any argument you might present to say that I am wrong. Perhaps AAAS might be emboldened and inspired to follow the example of The Australian Academy of Science.

It can be difficult for groups such as yours and mine to raise the issue of population: there are always some people ready to denigrate because they choose to assume that the group is being xenophobic or racist. Nevertheless population is such a vital issue with such enormous ramifications that we cannot ethically walk away from such discussion. I hope that AAAS will see it in these terms, and I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



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cc. SEPS