



February 2019

## Sustainable Population Australia - Newsletter

Patrons: The Hon Bob Carr • Professor Ian Lowe • Professor Tim Flannery • Dr Mary White • Dr Paul Collins • Youth Ambassador Bindi Irwin

# Ageing Human Populations: Good for Us, Good for the Earth

by Jenny Goldie



Jane O'Sullivan

Phil Cafaro

Frank Gotmark

This was the title of an important Opinion article that was published on-line in the journal *Trends in Ecology & Evolution* (TREE) on 16 October last year. The three authors included Dr Jane O'Sullivan, president of SPA's Queensland branch and a member of SPA's national executive. Another author was Prof Philip Cafaro of Colorado State University and author of many books including *How Many is Too Many*, and co-editor with Eileen Crist of the superb anthology: *Life on the Brink: Environmentalists Confront Overpopulation*. The remaining author was Frank Götmark of the University of Gothenburg.

The article notes that, despite ongoing social and environmental crises driven by human population increase, public concern has instead focused on demographic ageing as the greater challenge, even suggesting that population growth should be rekindled to combat it.

Yet, they say, the literature suggests that the problems associated with ageing societies are both overstated and manageable. On the other hand, trying to avoid ageing by boosting births or immigration is relatively ineffective and creates even greater problems.

The article lists a range of social, economic, and environmental benefits that are associated with older age profiles and stable or declining populations. These benefits more than compensate for any economic imposts to support the elderly.

The authors call on ecologists to study and communicate the negative impacts of human population growth and excessive population density. They should not be deterred by misguided economic arguments favouring continued population growth, they argue.

"In many countries, stable and declining populations due to demographic aging are often reported by the media as a problem or crisis," says Frank Götmark. "But the alternative - endless population growth - is not ecologically possible. Overpopulation leads to serious problems, including excessive consumption, deadly conflicts over scarce resources, and habitat loss leading to species endangerment.

"If we don't reverse overpopulation, what happens next will be a sad story," says Götmark. "We have to recognise that continued population growth is a global threat. Short-term economic concerns, while valid, cannot be prioritised over the long-term health of our environment and our societies."

The research on which the article was based was funded by the Global Challenges Foundation, Stockholm.

*Trends in Ecology & Evolution*, Götmark et al.: "Aging human populations: good for us, good for the earth"  
[https://www.cell.com/trends/ecology-evolution/fulltext/S0169-5347\(18\)30208-8](https://www.cell.com/trends/ecology-evolution/fulltext/S0169-5347(18)30208-8)

## WANTED

### A new national treasurer!

Rob Taylor has done a great job in this role for six years but is stepping down. We need someone as competent to nominate for the position. If you are interested but have queries, please contact Rob at [treasurer@population.org.au](mailto:treasurer@population.org.au). Nominations close 1 March (see nominations form).

## Why do we have a Big Australia?

by Stephen Saunders

This is an edited version the Executive Summary of the paper "Why do we have a Big Australia" published by The Australian Population and Research Institute (TA-PRI) in November 2018.

Are there underlying social or economic factors which tend to perpetuate a cross-party 'Big Australia'? The answer must be 'yes'.

Australia's population growth rate is much higher than world or OECD norms. Overseas and in Australia, environmental policies focus on climate change and not population growth. Nevertheless, globally it appears that more nations have policies to lower rather than to raise population growth. Conversely, Australia and certain other developed nations are going for raised growth. But the Australian discourse glosses over our exceptional policy shift. Our 21st century population spurt is defended as inevitable or normal. Among the rich nations, however, prosperity and living standards are not predicated on high population growth.

The Bring-out-a-Briton 'Populate or Perish' policy was a feature of the post-war reconstruction. Immigration levels receded over the 1970s-1990s while the neo-liberal economic agenda advanced. Then both main parties supported the migration push of the early 2000s. This came to be justified via labour shortages of the mining boom. Immigration remains high and, until recently, seldom questioned or discussed. Our 21st century population settings, deemed critical to 'GDP growth', are removed from the political contest.

The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measure is relatively recent. It began its irresistible rise in the 1940s. Despite economists' reservations, and revision efforts, the usual GDP formulation governs Australian and other budgets. In a default sense only, our population policy resides in the Treasury and is dedicated to supporting growth in aggregate GDP. Though our 27-year 'Economic Miracle' of uninterrupted growth in GDP continues, this growth is now flatter and the underlying contribution of population growth is vital to it. Large claims are made for demographic and economic 'rejuvenation' through Big Australia. The crucial migration and population plans, however, only appear as 'technical' parameters at the back of the budget. Our national, state, and city plans simply assume high population growth for decades ahead.

Over 1972-2006, our population grew by an average of 210,000 a year. But that average has topped 375,000, over the years since. Across the political spectrum a diverse coalition backs this GDP-driven population push. Political parties, Treasury, the Reserve Bank, States, and industry are prominent. 'Progressive' or 'green' voices tend to align with this dominant group. Countervailing

scientific concerns around our carrying capacity and State of the Environment are at a discount. Today the electorate is shying from the dominant program of demographic growth, but their legitimate concerns tend to be sidelined or patronised by the pro-growth coalition.

The federal budget gets the main GDP boost from population growth. States and cities, while also upping their GSPs (gross state products), pick up the tab for infrastructure and services. The states are enthusiastic about population growth but their citizens could be forgiven for thinking that the tab is short paid. Too often, training, education, or transport planners are 'caught short' by rapid growth. In congested cities that have suffered world-ranking housing unaffordability many solutions are on the table - after Big Australia has been taken off the table. City plans for mid-century begin by nearly doubling the population and then assuming that other variables will fit in. Some talk of channelling growth away from the cities and into the regions but 'decentralisation' has never been a meaningful solution for Australia's population growth.

Under the lower migration of the 1970s-1990s GDP growth was usually positive. Since the 1980s, inequality has climbed. Many voters and some economists worry that Big Australia itself works against wages, income or wealth equality, and housing affordability. Which is to say the gains to the few look more assured than the gains for the many. Benefits to the older look more assured than benefits to the younger, or to future generations.

Working from international comparisons, it looks as though mass migration may not be the go-to program to update our economy away from its focus on 'resources-and-services' and towards an innovation economy. Nor do federal and state governments underwrite honest infrastructure plans to cover the high population growth.

In conclusion, the economic and fiscal growth machines dominate our population policy and its population 'projections'. We've climbed well above the OECD population-growth averages. If Big Australia does little for equality of opportunity or future economic pathways, while the environment and services struggle and electors wilt, we ought to revisit the lower population trajectories that applied without harm and not so long ago.



Stephen Saunders

## Human Overpopulation Atlas

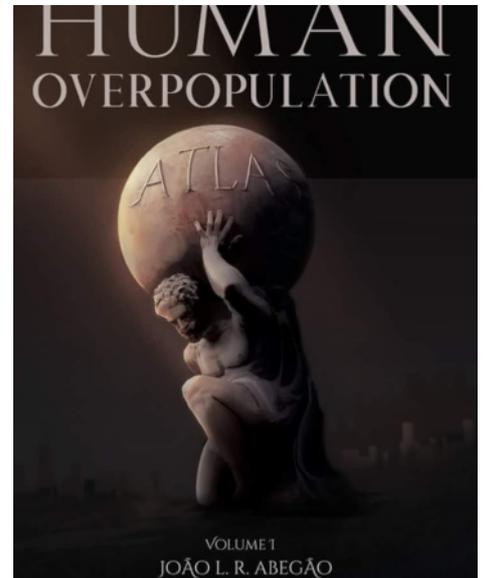
by João L.R. Abegão

The Atlas is the extended Master's thesis of the author at the Department of Biology of the University of Porto in Portugal. This broad review work synthesises knowledge about the past, present and future of human overpopulation.

This first volume of the Atlas makes the case that many of the symptoms of ecological, environmental, sociological, geopolitical and economic predicaments have a root cause in, or are linked to, our vast and rising numbers.

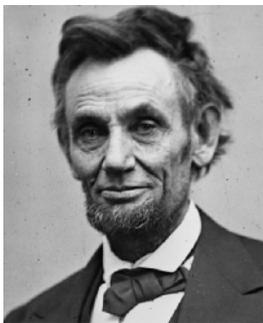
It argues that every new human passenger on this Earth requires food, water, shelter, clothing, energy, materials, technology, transport, infrastructure, space and security and will, in turn, exude residues and waste, alter habitats and pollute the atmosphere, soil and watercourses.

A pdf version of the Atlas can be downloaded at <https://www.overpopulationatlas.com/>



## What Lincoln might have said in 2018

by Barry Jones



*This is the conclusion of his article "Saving Planet Earth" from The Saturday Paper on 10 November, 2018.*

Lincoln delivered his famous Gettysburg Address in November 1863 at the dedication of a Civil War cemetery. I have long speculated what Lincoln might have said in 2018.

Lincoln's speech was only 272 words long. My draft is exactly the same length. There are 12 echoes of Lincoln's text in mine, the words in inverted commas are Margaret Thatcher's from 1988:

*Eighteen years ago, humanity entered the 21st century, facing unprecedented challenges. Global population expands, life expectancy – both in rich and poor nations – and consumption levels rise unsustainably.*

*Earth's raw materials are finite. Water, forests, arable land are under increasing pressure, compounded by "a massive experiment with the system of the planet itself" causing climate change and extreme weather events. Rich, powerful nations exploit weak, paralysed states.*

*Now we are engaged in a great global conflict of values. Gaps between inconceivable wealth and desperate dispossession create political instability, encouraging terrorism and fundamentalism.*

*Although science and technology annihilate boundaries, nations turn inward, reinforcing tribal values; political*

*leaders retreat from global goals of compassion, reconciliation and mutual understanding. There is widespread racism, nationalism, militarism, religious hatred, democratic populism, suppression of dissent; we're using propaganda, resolving problems by violence, promoting fear of difference, attacking organised labour, weakening the rule of law, using state violence, torture, execution. Evidence-based policies are displaced by appeals to fear and anger.*

*The great tasks before us are to dedicate ourselves to recognise that environment and economy are inextricably linked, and act accordingly. The human condition is fragile, and we must abandon rigid thinking, confusing prejudice with principle.*

*We must consecrate ourselves to saving Planet Earth, our home, where our species, Homo sapiens, lives and depends for survival. All nations, and all people, must dedicate themselves to protecting our global home rather than the short-term national, regional or tribal interest. We must highly resolve to save the air, save the soil, save the oceans to guarantee that our species, and the noblest aspects of its culture, shall not perish from the Earth.*



Barry O Jones

## The challenges of overpopulation

by Dr Geoff Davies

The concepts and rhetoric of both old capitalism and old socialism obscure the great opportunities at hand to create a thriving and enduring way of life.

A broader, longer and better-informed perspective might pre-empt unnecessary conflict among putative allies, such as accusations of being racists, or fellow-travellers of either ideology.

The need for a fundamental reorganisation of our societies in order to return them to viability within Earth's biosphere focuses our attention on how we are organised and what our options might be. The conventional framing of our options is a dichotomy between capitalism and socialism. So entrenched is this framing it seems to be difficult for many to imagine anything else, to the point that if you criticise one you are presumed to be a supporter of the other.

This might not be a problem if one or the other offered a serious option for survival, but there is little evidence for this from the past practice of either. Perhaps one of them can, but if so, it needs a more penetrating analysis than one usually gets. The fact that each has continuously morphed makes the framing even less useful for a productive discussion, to the point where it is often unclear what people might mean by "capitalism" or "socialism".

We have learnt a great deal about societies, people and ecosystems since Burke and Paine, Marx and Mill were writing. And we have a pretty fundamental new concept, the self-organising system, to bring to bear, so perhaps we can now do better at identifying options. As well, if one looks without the blinkers of either ideology it is not too hard to identify mechanisms in our societies that serve us very poorly, notably by pumping wealth to the rich, nor to find alternatives that are likely to be much healthier.

It is also important to extend our perspective beyond the past couple of centuries of Western experience. It has become clear only fairly recently that our civified, "civilised" way of life has been both oppressively hierarchical and hostile to nature since its origins about 6,000 years ago. There is much more to come to grips with here than Marx versus Mill, Keynes versus Hayek.

There is also another broad stream of thinking and practice, largely independent of ideologies, that is focused on whether and how we can change our activities and organisation so as to have some prospect of surviving as viable societies. This comprises many things ranging from climate science and ecology through regenerative agriculture, alternative money systems, green cities, and a fully-recycling "circular economy" to the shift of values that must accompany these practical changes if they are to last.

We must be aware that time is critically short and the stakes are by now extreme. We may well be beyond climate tipping points, but we have to proceed in the hope that is not true. We are using resources well beyond any sustainable level and, by many credible estimates, the land, ocean, forests, fresh water systems, soils and other crucial components of our life support system are degrading rapidly. The underlying reality here is that we are, through food, water and air, intimately a part of a dense web of life on Earth, and its health is our health.

One is routinely disappointed by the superficiality and venality of mainstream politicians and their ignorant paymasters and supporting media chorus, who resolutely focus on their extractive conception of life in Australia and on Earth. On the other hand, it is disconcerting to have positive approaches attacked by putative allies, such as John Passant and his recent claim in 'Australia and the overpopulation myth' – evidently shared fairly widely among some sections of "the Left" – that concerns about human population can only serve the cause of racism.

Passant blames most of the current planetary destruction on corporate greed. One can totally agree that corporations are primary agents of the destruction. However, Passant implies that if only corporations are abolished all our troubles will be over. Is it really that simple?

In what I will call modern global consumer capitalism, corporations operate by cultivating materialist addictions in our societies. This makes many of "the workers" complicit, which might have something to do with modern Marxists' failure to attract a large following.

Certainly, we need to reduce our fossil-fuelled over-consumption, but breaking those addictions will not be simple, nor will figuring out how to keep so many people alive and thriving within the limits of a stressed planet.

Even if we did remove corporations and material addiction as proximate drivers, what sort of life and society does Passant envisage would ensue? That is left unclear, apart from vague appeals to democracy and internationalism. Evidently "the workers" will spontaneously reduce their consumption to supportable levels and that will remain true no matter how many billions of people there are.



Geoff Davies



There is indeed enough food to feed the present 7.7 billion mouths, but the planet is already severely stressed. Passant evinces little knowledge of or concern about this. It is either ignorant or disingenuous to imply that Malthus' old argument is the

only basis for concerns about population. It is reprehensible to go further and claim "populationists" are only motivated by racism.

Nor was Marx the only one to point out the divorce between early capitalism and the natural environment. There were also, just as an example, the English romantic poets and Henry David Thoreau.

More pertinently, predatory capitalists are only the latest manifestation of the trope, deeply embedded in our civilisation, that the natural world is there for us to dominate and exploit. Many societies foundered from failing to heed limits in their environment long before capitalism came along.

Passant quotes authorities who claim overpopulation arguments are used to oppress people. This hardly fits Australia's situation, in which the people are burdened by the cost of a very high rate of immigration. Jane O'Sullivan makes a straightforward case that each new person costs around \$500,000 in new houses, shops, schools and basic infrastructure. We are paying over \$100 billion per year in direct costs or lost amenity, for high immigration — money that could boost wages and provide services to those in need.

And in case anyone is inclined to think this piece is an unwitting front for neoliberalism, you might like to see my take-down of George Megalogenis' and others' claims that high immigration and free markets saved Australia from the global financial crisis. Not to mention a book called *Sack the Economists*.

Marx had important insights, but it is as unhelpful to regard his word as the immutable truth, just as it is for the Institute for Public Affairs to revere the alleged "liberal principles" of Edmund Burke.

If one can move beyond 18th and 19th-Century memes and terminology, a positive way forward emerges. Economies are far-from-equilibrium systems, which means markets cannot be left unfettered — as is obvious anyway from the grand neoliberal experiment in social engineering of the past 35 years. Markets can be useful, but they must be managed. They can be managed by attending to the incentives under which they operate, with regulation where necessary.

Governments have essential roles, as the implementers of our collective will and to run natural monopolies and oversee other critical services. The present total corruption of our democratic system needs to be and can be ended — through people power, transparency and strict limits on political "donations".

Banking ought to be a small and carefully regulated service. Media ought to be held to responsibilities to balance the immense privilege they exercise and, preferably, could be owned by their audiences. Local collective ownership can be fostered, better ensuring a fair flow of wealth reaches those who generate it.

Our assault on the land and planet can be quickly reduced just by widely adopting many practices already available. Economic management can focus on simultaneously reducing quantity (of resources extracted, through a circular economy) and improving quality (of life).

A better way forward is there for us to pick up and do. This is not the naïve and oxymoronic green capitalism of "sustainable growth". Rather it is a harnessing the best of our creativity and our immense modern knowledge to the cause of thriving within Earth's abundant biosphere.

*This article first appeared in the Independent Australia in response to an article by John Passant. Dr Geoff Davies is a retired geophysicist at the Australian National University.*

## Worth reading

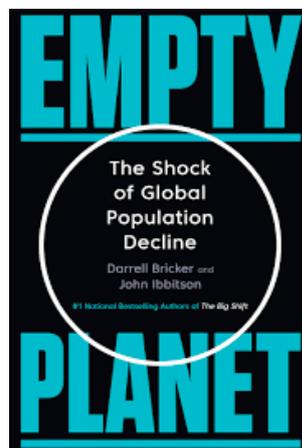
### "The Left case against open borders"

by Angela Nagle.

American Affairs, Winter 2018 / Volume II, Number 4

<https://americanaffairsjournal.org/2018/11/the-left-case-against-open-borders>

## Not worth reading



### "Empty Planet: The Shock of Global Population Decline"

by Darrell Bricker and John Ibbitson.

What empty planet?  
What population decline?  
Don't worry, though, we'll review next newsletter!

# Book Review

## A Sense of Wonder Towards Nature - Healing the Planet through Belonging

by Haydn Washington

Earthscan/Routledge 2019. 235pp \$65

<https://www.bookdepository.com/Sense-Wonder-Towards-Nature-Haydn-Washington/9781138590601>

Reviewed by Jenny Goldie

In this splendid book, Haydn Washington argues that we are not likely to solve the environmental crisis unless society can rejuvenate its sense of wonder at nature. He goes even further: the destruction of nature is assured without a human reconnection to nature. For this reconnection, there must be a capacity to first love the land. He regrets that "so many of us in our society are distanced from our love of the land and have mislaid our sense of wonder."

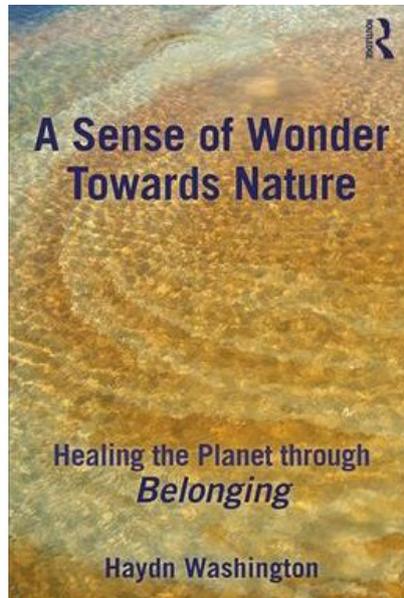
Growing up on Sydney's north shore close to bushland, Haydn connected with nature at an early age, but his moment of epiphany came when he was 18, on the banks of the Colo River, when he awoke to find a lyre-bird staring at him. They looked at each other for some time before the bird turned and went away.

"[W]hile we may love the land all the time, the sense of wonder comes on us at certain times with special force. Indeed, one may call it an 'illuminating moment', an epiphany, a revelation, an 'all-transcending moment' of uplift, belonging, and harmony. One could even call it a moment of grace. My few minutes at the beginning of the Colo River, my moment at dawn with the 'master of mimicry', the Lyrebird, was such a moment," he writes.

Judith Wright, Australia's pre-eminent poet – and the sole Patron of Sustainable Population Australia until her death in 2000 – had an illuminating moment that inspired this poem:

*Once as I travelled through a quiet evening,  
I saw a pool, jet-black and mirror-still.  
Beyond, the slender paperbarks stood crowding;  
each on its own white image looked its fill,  
and nothing moved but thirty egrets wading –  
thirty egrets in a quiet evening.  
Once in a lifetime, lovely past believing,  
your lucky eyes may light on such a pool.  
As though for many years I had been waiting,  
I watched in silence, till my heart was full  
of clear dark water, and white trees unmoving,  
and, whiter yet, those thirty egrets wading.*

I too had such a moment, driving through the Victorian Alps on a warm sunny day with the sun filtering through magnificent gum trees, when a pair of brightly coloured parrots flew down and then ahead of the car



for some time as if to guide us. It was a moment of belonging and harmony, one that stayed clearly in the memory for decades.

Haydn believes that each and every one of us is born with the ability to love the land, the ability to feel a sense of wonder. "Our task is to hold onto our wonder and rejuvenate it so that it continues to burn brightly."

In a hard-hitting chapter, Haydn rails against anthropocentrism, believing it lies at the heart of all our environmental ills and scarring the minds of human beings. On the other hand, ecocentrism "acknowledges our kinship with the rest of life and requires a respect for nature and assumes a duty to protect it."

Importantly, Haydn shares SPA's views on population, and cites the ecologist Eileen Crist "Respecting nature means not degrading it, not pushing ecosystems into collapse. As a species capable of rational thought, it means controlling our own numbers, so as not to cause mass species extinction of the rest of life."

Haydn writes of harmony, believing one can find it in all natural places, "if we do not overwhelm them with human disturbance. A harmony that encompasses both competition and cooperation, and a harmony that can be restored in disturbed places."

As Aldo Leopold so eloquently put it:

*... sit quietly and listen for a wolf to howl, and think hard of everything you have seen and tried to understand. Then you may hear it—a vast pulsing harmony—its score inscribed on a thousand hills, its notes the lives and deaths of plants and animals, its rhythms spanning the seconds and the centuries.*

So, how can we revive our own personal sense of wonder?

Haydn suggests we get out into nature every now and again, into wild places so we can re-experience the world untrammelled. We need to take our children into wild places so they can see nature as it really is and bond with it. We need to take time to ponder, to keep our imagination, creativity, and artistic expression alive, and cherish the imagination of our children and youth in general.

# Book Review

## Factfulness: Ten Reasons We're Wrong About the World – and Why Things Are Better Than You Think

by Hans Rosling, with Ola Rosling and Anna Rosling Rönnlund

Flatiron Books (April 2018) 352 pages.

This is an edited review by Christian Berggren, a fuller version of which can be found at

<https://quilllette.com/2018/11/16/the-one-sided-worldview-of-hans-rosling/>

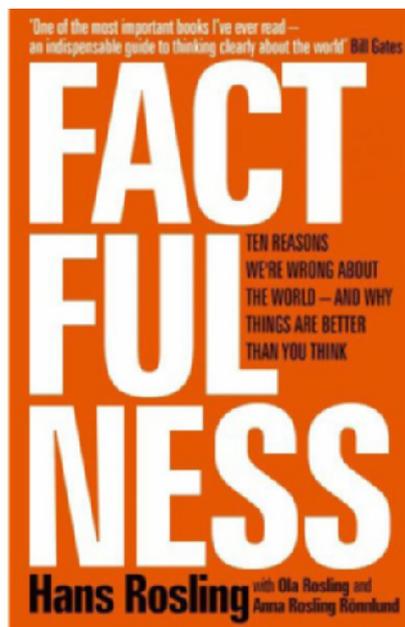
Charisma and upbeat messages about global trends made the late Hans Rosling (1948–2017), professor at Karolinska Institute in Sweden, an international TEDTalk-star, listed among TIME Magazine's "The World's 100 Most Influential People" already in 2012. The posthumous book, *Factfulness* written with his son and daughter-in-law is now becoming a global bestseller.

Unfortunately, *Factfulness* presents a highly biased sample of statistics as the true perspective on global development, avoids analysis of negative trends, and refrains from discussing difficult issues, such as the ecological consequences of the current type of growth and the risks related to the continued global population growth.

Global population development is an important theme in *Factfulness* and critical for the prospect of future sustainability, but the book's analysis is misleading in several ways. The latest UN forecast, published in 2017, predicts that the world's population will rise sharply. Today's approximately seven billion people will probably grow to between ten and thirteen billion by 2100. According to *Factfulness*, there is no reason for worry: population will stabilize at the end of the century, and the key reason for this is that the current number of children is no longer increasing. Moreover, the authors argue, declining infant mortality is directly related to declining fertility: "More survivors lead to fewer people."

All these statements—that the population will stabilize at the end of the century; that future population growth is determined by the current number of children; that lower child mortality leads to lower birth rates and population growth—are questionable.

First, the UN's population forecasts are less stable than *Factfulness* suggests and have changed substantially since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This is especially true for the forecasts regarding Africa: in 2010 the UN predicted that the continent would have 3.6 billion inhabitants by the turn of the century; seven years later, the new UN forecast had increased this figure by 900 million to 4.5 billion. Moreover, new calculations based on Bayesian probability estimates show that uncertainty over forecasts of the world's population in 2100



is greater than previously assumed. According to leading researchers, the likelihood of population stabilization is only 30 percent: "These predictions indicate that there is little prospect for an end to world population growth this century without unprecedented fertility declines in most part of sub-Saharan Africa."

Second, the UN reports do not show that the current number of children in the world determines future population growth. On the contrary, the forecasts emphasize that population growth is strongly dependent on future fertility. For countries with high fertility rates, "there is significant uncertainty in projections of future trends, even within the 15-year horizon of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Fertility declines that are slower than projected would result in higher population totals in all subsequent time periods."

Third, there is no causal link between lower infant mortality and lower birth rates. *Factfulness* presents Egypt as a "public health miracle," as child mortality fell from 30 percent in 1960 to 2.3 percent today. The authors argue: "Now that parents have reason to expect that all their children will survive ... a major reason for having big families is gone." If they were correct, Egypt's population would now have stabilized. Instead, the population increased from 70 million in 2000 to 97 million in 2017 and is expected to increase to 200 million by 2100.

Other African countries display similar trends. In Niger, for example, child mortality has decreased by two-thirds since the 1980s. At the same time, birth rates have increased, leading to an expected population explosion.

The combination of reduced infant mortality with high fertility and high population growth in Africa is an indication of the absence of any clear causal relationship between lower child mortality and lower birth rates. According to the latest UN forecast, Nigeria's population will increase from 191 million in 2017 to 794 million in 2100, Tanzania from today's 57 million to 304 million in 2100, and the Democratic Republic of Congo from 81 million to 339 million.

*Continued page 12*

## Communication Manager's Report

Michael Bayliss

It is with great excitement that my contract with SPA continues for another year. This is only possible because of the amazing and generous donations given by our members. Your support allows SPA to continue to invest in a Communications' Manager paid position in addition to several promotional campaigns that I am running.

Some recent successes to share:

- An article I wrote last year for online journal *Independent Australia* (IA), 'The Overpopulation of Australia', was awarded the most popular article of 2018, with 75 000 reads! This has been great not only in terms of the power of independent media but also in terms of SPA's public outreach.
- In December, I was interviewed by ABC radio on population growth and infrastructure, to provide a counter response to federal minister Alan Tudge. SPA is being increasingly recognised as the 'go to people' for the media seeking an alternative opinion to the population debate.

I am currently assisting the Marketing and Membership team to implement several publicity campaigns. These include: (1) The PopCulture 30 second videos; (2) The 'Tough Crowd' interview web series with comedian Rod Quantock; (3) Patron interview Videos.

The social media campaign to promote the PopCulture videos is going strong. So far, three short animation videos have been watched 23,000 times. These videos can be seen anytime on SPA's YouTube channel or on our PopCulture website.

The 'Tough Crowd' web series will have a first public screening in Melbourne in late February. Comedians Jude Perl and Rod Quantock will be performing at these. Tickets are now available and at time of writing are selling well. After the screening the videos will be available on our Youtube Channel.

Finally, I have edited video interviews for patron Katharine Betts and national president Sandra Kanck. These are available on our YouTube channel and these short, snappy interviews are a good resource to share with friends, family and networks. Expect more patron interviews over the next few months.



Michael Bayliss

## Obituary - Peter Carter (16.11.1929 - 29.10.2018)

by Jenny Goldie

Peter Carter, president of the SPA Victorian branch in the early 2000s, died aged just short of 89 years while riding his bike. What a way to go for a man so physically active all his life!

According to the *Age*, he was a retired Veterinary Surgeon, conservationist, active with Berwick men's shed, U3A, Wilsons Park volunteer group, Landcare, SPA, and the Australian Dingo Foundation.

When he was president, I twice visited Peter and his wife Jean at their home in Berwick on the outskirts of Melbourne. The house once had beautiful views across an agricultural landscape but, even then, suburbia was making its inexorable march across the countryside beyond their back fence. This, as much as anything, inspired Peter to be active on the population issue, producing leaflets and taking a stance at political meetings.

It was through his friendship with Peter North, however, that his contribution was most valuable. Bea Teows, widow of Peter North, writing after Peter Carter's death, said that the latter had been invaluable to her husband when he was writing *Going for Broke: How the Government has*



*Sold Out to Private Interests*. (Peter North died within days of the book being published.)

"He (Peter Carter) encouraged him to write and publish and donated money to publish 2000 copies," wrote Bea. "It was a measure of his confidence in the content and success of *Growing for Broke* that he insisted on such a big print run and on donating money.

"Peter Carter was a vigorous and spirited man, extremely opinionated and sure of his viewpoint. Very logical and had an encyclopaedic memory. The two Peters agreed on policy and philosophy though sometimes not on the implementation of policy. They were intelligent and interested men, both concerned about world affairs."

In all our conversations, it was clear that Peter was devoted to his family. I well remember his interacting positively and actively with his young grandsons. In the death notice, his family wrote: "You have lived a truly inspirational and extraordinary life and are much loved and will be hugely missed." Indeed, he will, and not just by family.

## Population Growth, the Property Market and Wealth Inequality

Robert Braby

Living in Melbourne for the last sixty years and witnessing the gradual and insidious effect that population growth has had on urban congestion, the environment and housing costs, has convinced me that support for population growth is one of the great failings of our capitalist system. Capitalism has many imperfections, but one that is of particular relevance for the population debate is the impact of population growth on property values and wealth distribution.

Elementary supply and demand theory tells us that if the demand for a marketable product increases more than supply its price will increase. So, in the case of land, population growth will increase demand but its supply is fixed (unless we build over water, which is very expensive). So, the price of land increases. The obvious beneficiaries are property owners – the well off. The losers are those priced out of the housing market – the less well off.

Land rezoning to accommodate new housing development is a special case, but who are the real beneficiaries? The Sunday Age (18/11/2018) reported on the intense lobbying surrounding a 133 hectares rezoning application in outer Melbourne that will yield an estimated \$50 million windfall gain to the owners if approved!

Marcus Padley (in the Age 6/6/2018) estimated that the residential property market returned about 10% per annum on average since 1974. On these figures, a simplified calculation suggests that a person who owned \$10 million of property would see its value increase by \$1 million in one year and \$16 million in ten years compounded.

It is clear that property owners have a strong vested interest in continuous population growth. These include, inter alia, property developers, banks and individual investors (including politicians who have substantial prop-

erty interests). Some of these beneficiaries have been very vocal in their support for high rates of population growth.

Private ownership of property is a central feature of capitalism, but also a major cause of the wide dispersion of wealth. Declining housing affordability is one obvious manifestation of this. I have not seen any research into the accumulation of wealth by billionaires or multi-millionaires, but obviously property would be a major component and contributor. And they can have enormous political power, including the power to persuade governments to maintain high rates of population growth - leading to an ongoing spiral of wealth accumulation in the pockets of property owners.

All this bodes poorly for those of us dedicated to the aim of a smaller Australia. But here are some suggestions:

- Support a ban or severe limitation on political donations.
- Ask existing politicians and aspiring new political candidates to publicly declare their property holdings, and require them to abstain from voting on population issues.
- Bring to the attention of welfare organisations, such as the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS), churches and other public-spirited organisations, the effect of population growth on wealth inequality and poverty.
- As a long shot, promote debate on the case for public ownership of land.



Bob Braby

## Avoiding being architects of our own extinction

Ian Brothers

Now and in the near future, humanity must pursue life-style choices that do not contribute to our being the architects of our own extinction. We seem hell-bent on being thus if we consider all the negative, mind-bogglingly stupid things humanity is doing at present. It also seems that we cannot rely on governments at any level to legislate and enforce life-style ideals that will ensure a healthy biosphere.

'Right-living' on Earth is the only priority to ensure our future. Obviously, too many humans living life-styles we cur-

rently enjoy is a recipe for disaster. Our planet, however, can support a large number of humans given changes in life-style choices to minimise pollution and interference with the workings of the biosphere that makes life possible on Earth. This can easily start today with food choices, for instance, to eliminate all animal products from our diet. Immediately this will stop exploitation of aquatic environments and cut down the land area needed to feed people. We must minimise use of transport and boycott plane flight. Have 'staycations'. Practise less is more. Just saying...

# Branch News

## Branch Reports

### Queensland

Queensland branch held its AGM on 19 November, re-electing the committee of Jane O'Sullivan (President), Tony Matta (Treasurer), Anne Tennock (Secretary and Membership Officer). The meeting was followed by a talk by Elin Charles-Edwards, Senior Lecturer in Human Geography in the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Queensland, on "Population futures for Australia: reconciling reality and rhetoric."

The Queensland Government reviewed the "Queensland Plan" which was open for public comment briefly in October, and some members made submissions, although the exercise seemed a 'fait accompli'. During that period, the *Courier-Mail* ran a series of articles spruiking growth, and the need to accommodate it with increased development. SPA member Lavinia Wood led a campaign to respond to the *Courier-Mail* and the journalists involved, demanding that responsible journalism must show both sides of the story. She shared her letters at the AGM and encouraged other members to write.

AELA (the Australian Environmental Law Alliance) ran a two-day international conference in Brisbane in October on "Exploring our Legal Relationship with the Living World – Caring for Country, Rights of Nature and Legal Personhood." I gave a presentation titled "Nature vs. Person – can the 'rights' framework really contain human impact?" in which I argued that our sheer numbers matter, regardless of our behaviours, and that small families should be promoted as an environmental virtue (alongside things like recycling and eating less meat). The talk stimulated lots of discussion and interest.

The branch will be busy over the next few months preparing for SPA's AGM in April and engaging with the Federal election campaign.

*Jane O'Sullivan (President)*

### South Australia / Northern Territory

At the May 2018 meeting, John Tons celebrated the submission of his PhD thesis by presenting a talk 'The politics of scarcity', looking at the growing unemployed 'precariat', the need for long-term vision, the history of how neoliberalism emerged as an economic ideology, and its political triumph from 1980. He led us also into thinking about the cultural and spiritual dimensions of differing worldviews in the context of where we need to go to achieve a sustainable and desirable future.

The offer we made in 2017 to the University of the Third Age to design and present a course on 'A Sustainable SA' came to fruition in 2018, and six lectures were delivered involving five members of SPA. The course ran from May to July.

In June the president of the Qld branch of SPA, Dr Jane O'Sullivan, gave us an inspiring talk on how her branch engaged with Qld geography teachers to develop a set of school materials for use in discussing population issues with their students. This is something we in SA could well consider doing too.

In October John Coulter gave a brief account of the book 'Reclaiming the State' by Bill Mitchell and Thomas Fazi. I reported on the Degrowth Conference in Malmo, Sweden, which reinforced my view from readings that the movement is weak on ecological matters and has little useful or informed to say about population.

Members of the SA/NT group continue to write letters to the media and politicians, with Bob Couch and Michael Lardelli seeming to have the most success in getting published!

Finally, the SA/NT committee made a submission on Nov 6 to the SA Parliament's 'Inquiry into economic contribution of migration to South Australia'. We may be asked to present to the committee soon. We are now planning that the AGM for the SA branch will be held in late February.

*Peter Martin (President)*

### Western Australia

One of our committee attended the Conservation Council of WA Annual General Meeting and Conference and manned a stall during the break periods. It was not as busy as other stalls but did get some comments of 'what a good idea'. We may attempt to have a stall at a City of Perth event during our long weekend in early March. We have organised a venue, speaker and date for our AGM: 2PM 31st March at Heathcote Reserve. Speaker – Professor Peter Cook, from University of WA, Albany.

*Judith Odgaard (President)*

### Victoria

February will again be the busiest month for the Victorian Branch. Branch volunteers will be holding an exhibition stall for the Sustainable Living Festival (SLF) during the Big Weekend in Melbourne's Birrarung Marr from 8 to 10 February. As in previous years, the stall promises to attract a good crowd and some animated conversations. There will also be a talk from us during the Big Weekend titled "Environmental and Indigenous Perspectives on Population Growth".

Melbourne will also be host of the "Tough Crowd" web series launch, which will involve public screenings on 22 and 23 February at Long Play, 318 St George's Rd, Fitzroy North, as part of the SLF. Comedians Rod Quantock and Jude Perl will be performing at the launch. Seats are booking up, and we anticipate this will be a popular event.

On a personal note this is my first report as SPA's Victorian Branch President, and I look forward to working with other Branch members from the most out-of-control growth-hit state in Australia.



*Clifford Hayes*

At the November 2018 Victorian State Election, Clifford Hayes from the Sustainable Australia Party was elected as MLC for the Southern Metropolitan Region. I have resigned my Labor Party membership of over 40 years to join Cliff's team and promote the issue of sustainable population, which has been a casualty of the obsession with growth which characterises the Liberal, Labor, and Greens Parties.

# Branch News

SPA is of course not party political, and its members are welcome to support whichever party they wish to. But anyone wishing to work with me to promote the need for Australia and the world to embrace a sustainable population should feel free to contact me at [pleasant123@me.com](mailto:pleasant123@me.com)

*The Hon. Kelvin Thomson (President)*

## Australian Capital Territory

The ACT Branch has had a rather quiet last quarter for 2018 as we approached the festive season. We held our Christmas Party at Jenny Goldie's new abode in Cooma and a most enjoyable occasion it was, with great food and company to match. The weather changed dramatically soon after we arrived with a chilly mountain breeze greeting us. Quickly it was replaced by a return to hot, still conditions and the need to seek shade under a large shady tree in the front yard.

One of our members, Vince Patulny, gave a talk on population issues broadly and the challenges that our growing population presented both to Australia and the World. There was lively discussion and many points of view expressed.

Our thanks to Jenny and husband Nick for their terrific hospitality which made for a most enjoyable end to 2018 for our Branch.

I would like to thank the Committee for their valued contribution throughout the year and look forward to their ideas and inspiration this year.

We look forward to holding a number of interesting seminars in 2019 on a range of subjects from a variety of speakers.

*Colin Lyons (President)*

## New South Wales

In December, our 2019 Plan was distributed to members as a succinct two-page document. The Plan outlines priority actions and performance indicators for 2019. Actions include: achieve a partnering agreement with CASSE; seek opportunities for presentations on population and related issues and develop a series of key presentations which can be used on request; develop a resource kit and training for members; develop a membership drive strategy.

Graham Wood and Kay Dunne met with the NSW chapter of the Centre for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy (CASSE) to outline a proposal for how NSW SPA and CASSE can work together to support mutual goals. Graham presented ideas for working together, including: promoting each other on our respective websites; sharing of training, for example, skills in communicating issues; jointly supporting recommendations or proposals to Government or media. The suggestions were received positively and the CASSE Committee will formally consider the proposals.

The Woy Woy Probus Club asked for a presentation on migration and population. Alan Jones and Kay Dunne volunteered to prepare and present a talk. This will be in April. Longer term, we aim to develop a series of presentations on population topics which can be used with short term notice.



*(l.to r.) Alan Jones, Rob Child, Nola Stewart, Graham Wood, Peter Green.*

As part of our aim to strengthen membership, Committee members reviewed an analysis of the membership database prepared by Graham Wood. The Committee decided to contact new members to welcome them to SPA and to follow up members who have not reviewed their membership in the past twelve months. Rob Child will prepare contact lists for Committee members to follow.

## 2019 AGM

The Annual General Meeting of Sustainable Population Australia will be held at 11 am Saturday 27 April, at the Griffith University EcoCentre, Nathan Campus, QLD. Nominations for the national executive are invited along with motions to be put to the meeting. See separate form.

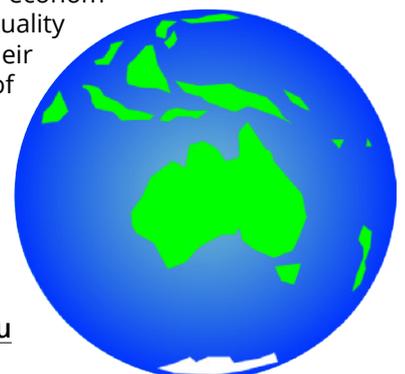


## One Planet

"That population growth, and perpetual economic growth, will no longer be the major objectives of our Government, but instead an alternative economic system that sustains a quality of life for all. This will be their main goal, with equality of opportunity for all people on Earth as an ultimate goal."

From the website of the new political party "One Planet".

[www.one-planet.com.au](http://www.one-planet.com.au)



# Book Review

*From page 7*

How can this pattern with much higher birth rates than in Asia during its corresponding development phase be explained? Factfulness provides no answers; the book does not even mention the problem. Independent observers point to local norms that promote large families, religious resistance to contraception, and a tendency of political leaders to see a large population as a source of political power. According to Tanzania's President John Mugufuli, for example, women who use contraception are lazy and should stop taking birth control pills, as the country needs more people.

In the 1960s, many Asian economies started to change: growth increased, healthcare improved, schools expanded, and child mortality and birth rates declined. However, the transition from high to low birth and death rates did not constitute a causal chain where economic improvements reduced child mortality which lead to lower birth rates. Effective family planning played a big part in the decrease in fertility—from Iran to China and Korea. In China, fertility was halved before economic development took off, contributing to its rapid improvement in productivity and reduction of poverty.

According to John Guillebaud, (Emeritus Professor of Family Planning and Reproductive Health at University College London), lower birth rates usually precede improvements in prosperity, and these improvements accelerate when birth rates continue to fall.

Many observers have criticized the reduced international support for effective family planning today, noting that only one percent of the current development aid goes to family planning. This has probably contributed to the continued high fertility in much of Sub-Saharan Africa which implies a serious drag on productivity growth and reduces the chances of eradicating poverty.

*Christian Berggren is a Swedish professor in industrial management.*

## 2019 SPA AGM

**11am Saturday 27 April**

Griffith University EcoCentre  
Nathan Campus, QLD.

**All members welcome**

*The AGM will be followed by a  
public forum at 1pm.*

# About SPA

**Website:** [www.population.org.au](http://www.population.org.au)

The SPA newsletter is now published every four months: in February, May, August and November. Members are welcome to submit material to the editor, to be published at the editor's discretion.

**Newsletter editor:** Jenny Goldie  
[editor@population.org.au](mailto:editor@population.org.au)  
Letters to editor welcome!

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.