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Sustainable Population Australia -- Newsletter

Patrons: The Hon Bob Carr • Professor Ian Lowe • Professor Tim Flannery • Dr Katharine Betts • Dr Paul Collins

Population growth contributes to all pressures on environment: SoE report



The State of Environment 2021 report (SoE), finally released on 19 July by Environment and Water Minister Tanya Plibersek, reveals that Australia's ecosystems are collapsing, and our unsustainable actions are threatening our own wellbeing.

The SoE is quite explicit: population growth contributes to all the pressures on the environment. Not that you would have known from most of the media coverage. Nevertheless, it's there – all of the 12 chapters (Air quality, Antarctica, Biodiversity, Climate, Coasts, Extreme events, Heritage, Indigenous, Inland water, Land, Marine and Urban) refer to population.

For instance, in the Land chapter, it says: "Our cities and towns are growing, and there is increasing demand for land to be used for built infrastructure to support population growth. As a result, the built environment is outcompeting other land uses, and leading to removal of land from agricultural production or clearing of natural areas. These changes in settlement patterns have also changed our bushfire exposure..."

In the Biodiversity chapter we read: "Direct threats to biodiversity associated with human activity include those related to accommodating a growing population in cities and regional areas, with associated urban development and infrastructure for transport, power and services. Pressures also include disturbances associated with recreation and tourism, hunting, fishing and collecting, which can impact biodiversity in even the most remote areas of Australia."

And under Coasts: "Over the past 200 years, natural systems have been challenged by increasing urbanisation and the expanded presence of artificial light at night (ALAN) in the form of streetlights, industrial or residential facilities, and vehicles. ALAN can hide or distort the natural day-night and seasonal patterns of light, causing various ecological changes."

As for Inland Water, the report says: "Human use of water – for consumption, household use, agriculture and industry – is one of the major pressures on Australia's water resources. The main uses for which water is abstracted in Australia are agricultural (70%), urban (20%) and industrial (10%) purposes."

The report rightly notes that rapid population growth Australia experienced until Covid closed its borders, resulted in urban expansion. It says: "For the natural environment and green spaces, the potential pressures from greater urban expansion include:

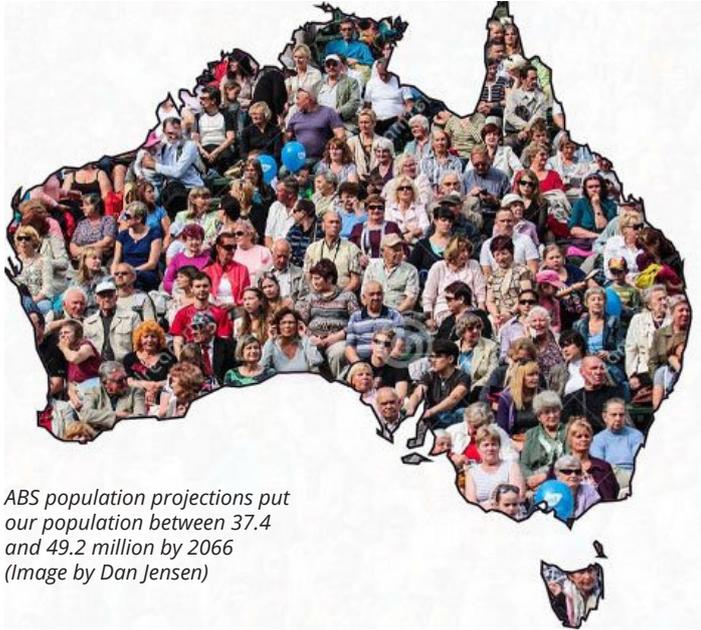
- land clearing, which is the main cause of biodiversity loss in Australia. Land clearing also exacerbates erosion and salinity, reduces water quality, increases the impact of drought and contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions
- less greenspace and tree canopy cover, at least in the early decades, as existing vegetation is cleared for new development and new vegetation takes time to grow. This can result in significantly greater heat in these areas and reduced rates of walking and cycling for residents
- fewer gardens and thus biodiversity. 'New suburbs in Australia have significantly less cumulative areas of private gardens compared to established suburbs'
- greater pressure on our coasts and waterways. These high-value areas are attractive locations for homes, yet they are often sensitive ecosystems that suffer from the impacts of buildings and infrastructure.

The SoE painted a bleak picture of biodiversity decline, with habitat loss to blame. It says: "Clearing of native vegetation is a major cause of habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as heritage and biodiversity decline. The primary drivers of native vegetation clearing in Australia include expansion of land dedicated mainly to agriculture and, to a lesser extent, forestry and infrastructure (including urban development). Land clearing is also a significant contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, and, conversely, land can absorb emissions through vegetation regrowth."

So, who clears the land? People do. There are too many of us making too many demands on the land and as a consequence, our plants and wildlife are in crisis. JG

Over-population: The unpopular political hot potato

by Sue Arnold



ABS population projections put our population between 37.4 and 49.2 million by 2066 (Image by Dan Jensen)

A VERY LARGE elephant in the climate change room is the most telling evidence of a national and international refusal to discuss, much less address, the most critical issue facing humanity.

Over-population.

The major driver of climate change. Too many people for the planet to feed and shelter.

A United Nations (UN) report published in 2017 indicated the world's population would reach 9.8 billion in 2050. *The UN's latest projections for 2050 are similar, at 9.7 billion.

The report projected much of the growth would be concentrated in nine countries, listed in order of their anticipated increase: India, Nigeria, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Pakistan, United Republic of Tanzania, USA, Uganda and Indonesia.

Far more complex reporting (see World Population Prospects 2022) by the UN demonstrates a crowded future is still in the timeline.

The world's population is now projected to reach eight billion on 15 November 2022. India is projected to exceed China as the world's most populous country sometime in 2023.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency says human activities are responsible for almost all of the increase in greenhouse gases in the atmosphere over the last 150 years.

Two geoscientists and a philosopher from the University of Chicago estimated the ultimate cost of carbon to humanity. The results came out closer to \$100,000 per ton of carbon — a thousand times higher than the cost to the current generation.

Population Media Centre (PMC) in the U.S. indicates the ecological degradation of overpopulation leads to more deforestation, decreased biodiversity and spikes in pollution and emissions which will exacerbate climate change.

'Ultimately, unless we take action to help minimise further population growth heading into the remainder of the century, many scientists believe the additional stress on the planet will lead to ecologi-

cal disruption and collapse so severe it threatens the viability of life on Earth as we know it.'

According to a study in PMC's report, a family with one fewer child could reduce emissions by 58.6 tonnes of CO2 equivalent per year in developed countries.

The report predicts the population of Australia is expected to experience slower, but still positive, growth through the end of the century. According to a regional population estimate, Australia/New Zealand (lumped together) will reach 31 million in 2022, 34 million in 2030 and 38 million in 2050.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics population projections released in 2018 predicted Australia's population to reach between 37.4 and 49.2 million by 2066.

None of these statistics takes into account the estimated ecological carrying capacity of the continent or allocates any economic value to forests, biodiversity, rivers, clean air and water.

To achieve post-pandemic recovery, the NSW Government is advising an immigration surge that would be disastrous for the environment.

Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd welcomed a "big Australia". His devotion to this concept led to major public angst for then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard who said she wasn't in favour of Australia "hurtling down the track towards a big population".

In 2011, Professor Tim Flannery suggested our nation's arid and fragile interior and fickle climate make a population of between six and 12 million a practical carrying capacity.

A paper on Australia's ecological footprint provides a detailed study indicating the footprint of the average Australian is approximately six hectares per capita:

'This is more than four times the globally available "fair share", placing Australia among the top five consuming nations of the world. The result highlights the unsustainable global nature of the Australian lifestyle, particularly the level of consumption of energy and animal products.'

Research and reports on the impacts of population pressures are hard to find in 2022. In essence, the issue disappeared from public policy and scrutiny aside from some regular advertisements by Australian entrepreneur Dick Smith and workshops held by Sustainable Population Australia.

In 2013, the Public Health Association Australia indicated severe consequences that inform:

... population pressures amplify inequities in access to income, education, health and other social resources within and between countries, which contributes to inequities of power between citizens, and can lead to violence and destabilisation of social structures, as well as deforestation, desertification, soil degradation and loss of agricultural land.

Further, inequities in power between nations lead to pressures on less developed countries to grow unsustainable crops at the expense of self-sustainability, in order to pay debts.

According to an article in *National Geographic*: *Population and climate change are inextricably linked problems. Agriculture is a major emitter of greenhouse gases but, as Professor Clive Hamilton points out in his book 'Requiem For A Species: Why We Resist The Truth About Climate Change': "Population*

growth will make the task of reducing... emissions much harder because food is the first item of consumption humans must have."

Black Summer bushfires were estimated to have cost farmers up to \$5 billion. No estimate of the economic value of the loss of approximately three billion animals has been made.

Yet, the World Economic Forum states:
'Humans derive approximately \$125 trillion of value from natural ecosystems each year... more than half of the world's GDP (\$44 trillion) is highly or moderately dependent on nature.'

Balance sheets that ignore life's foundations provide an extremely lopsided set of values by which nations' fiscal policies are governed. Evidence demonstrates that the fundamentals have not been learned despite exponential increases in environmental losses and devastation caused by climate change.

The fact that we are currently experiencing the sixth mass extinction has little or no political currency.

Independent Australia spent some time researching major conservation organisations' policies and campaigns focused on population growth impacts on the environment.

Not one major organisation demonstrated any population policy. Environmentalists prefer not to discuss or focus on this major question. Conflict over the impacts of population growth at the political level ensures the issue remains divisive.

The Australian Greens believe:
'The current level of population, population growth and the way we produce and consume are outstripping environmental capacity. Australia must contribute to achieving a globally sustainable population and encourage and support other nations to do the same.'

The party also contends:
'Our environmental impact and ecological footprint are not determined by population numbers alone but by a range of factors including per capita consumption patterns and levels, distribution of resources, agricultural practices for domestic consumption and export, levels and types of industrial activity and production, urban design and transport options.'

Former Greens leader Bob Brown disagrees.

As reported by *The Conversation* in 2020:
Brown recently declared the world's population must start to decline before 2100, telling The Australian newspaper: We are already using more than what the planet can supply and we use more than the living fabric of the planet in supply. That's why we wake up every day to fewer fisheries, less forests, more extinctions and so on. The human herd at eight billion is the greatest herd of mammals ever on this planet and it is unsustainable to have that growing.

Sustainable Population Australia states:
'Humanity's impact on the environment is a product of our population and our environmental footprint per person... Humanity has been exceeding the sustainable carrying capacity of the Earth since 1981, according to the Global Footprint Network.'

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) noted in 1994 in its submission to the Jones Inquiry into Australia's carrying capacity:
'Every extra person and every unit increase in consumption increase the need to rectify the situation.'

Vox journalist David Roberts summed up some of the reasons why population growth remains in the too-hard basket:
'When political movements or leaders adopt population control as a central concern... let's just say it never goes well. In practice, where you find concern over "population," you very often find racism, xenophobia, or eugenics lurking in the wings. It's almost always, ahem, "particular" populations that need reducing.'

Adding the fact, according to the Refugee Council of Australia, that one per cent of humanity is currently uprooted, it begs the question as to where this big slice of humanity will be resettled.

The Albanese and State Governments must ensure the issue of population growth sits inside the climate change policy envelope together with biodiversity loss.

It's time to recognise the limitations of this ancient land.

*Figures have since been updated.

This article first appeared in Independent Australia on 17 July 2022 and is reprinted with permission.

Australia should rethink its policy on immigration and population levels

by Crispin Hull



Crispin Hull

Big corporations can so often be relied upon to put their short-term profits over everything else, from the public good right down to even their long-term survival.

We saw that in spades over the past fortnight, with greedy power companies sitting at the roulette or poker table of Australia's electricity grid and bluffing, raising bids, holding, or speculating on whether another oligopolistic supplier will hold out for the big one or cash in and take the profits now.

In that environment they could risk gambling themselves out of business or make windfall profits for their shareholders. And they did.

It was raw capitalism, "regulated" by a feeble, straw regulator.

The last thing on the power companies' mind was the orderly provision of electricity to the nation's consumers.

Fancy an electricity supplier, whether fossil-fuel or renewable - but usually a gas-based supplier - deliberately withholding electricity supply in time of dire need, all in the hope that people would get even more desperate and retailers would become willing to pay even higher

Opinion

astronomical prices. The supplier's profits go through the roof, but too bad for the wrapped-in-blankets consumers who have to pay for the passed-on costs.

Much was spoken about political integrity in the election campaign. Great. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese at least has a deal of control over that. He can discipline errant Labor ministers and MPs, and can influence Parliament as a whole.

But he faces a greater challenge in ensuring corporate Australia behaves itself. If he doesn't, he will be blamed, just as the Coalition was rightly condemned for dragging its heels on banks behaving badly (and for allowing for-profit nursing homes to abuse their elderly clients; and for doing nothing effective on renewables because it would offend their fossil-fuel donors).

Examples of corporate selfishness abound - individually and industrywide. However, there is one example of corporate selfishness and short-sightedness in Australia that transcends the rest: the incessant calls and demands by business to ramp up immigration so it has a cheap pool of labour and a way to hold workers in check.

John Howard started the ramp-up. Industrial relations dominated his agenda throughout his political life. He ramped up immigration not because he was enamoured of multiculturalism, but because he swallowed the idea that a cheap labour pool would dampen union activity and workers' rights and create a pool of unemployed at the ready.

Then Kevin Rudd kept it up, because as a player on the world stage he liked the idea of a "Big Australia".

What will Albanese do? With any luck he will be like many of us who took joy at seeing so many "Staff Wanted" signs in shops, cafes, restaurants and elsewhere as immigration was effectively halted in early 2020 because of COVID.

Unemployment plummeted, against all predictions. The minimum wage has risen. It is nice to be wanted.

But now we are "living with COVID" - despite more deaths in 2022 than 2020 and 2021 combined. Business is back to its old tricks, demanding cheap labour be brought in to be exploited and to put pressure on local workers. The demands completely ignore the long-term economic, social, and environmental damage in the form of suppressed wages, infrastructure stress, health queues, congestion, and destruction of agricultural land and wildlife habitat for housing.

High immigration makes things harder for the broad mass of people, including the migrants of all colours and creeds who have settled here.

Albanese should put full employment, higher wages, and the environment ahead of the short-sighted demands of business.

Australia's need for high immigration is over. We have benefited immensely, both socially and economically, from the program, from the end of World War II to about the 1990s. Thereafter, a good cost-benefit analysis would show it has been downhill.

During lockdown, many people thought that post-COVID would be a time for a major rethink about a whole range of policies. That has manifested itself in a change of government.

There are, however, disturbing signs that the new government is still wedded to the same old views on immigration.

The new Minister for Immigration, Citizenship, Migrant Services and Multicultural Affairs, Andrew Giles, told SBS at the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia conference this month: "An absolute priority for me is dealing with the neglect and gridlocking of the visa system and also citizenship processing that has been result of a long period of neglect of immigration functions of our nation under the Liberal government."

Sounds like increased immigration to me.

A major defect in Australia's immigration program is that the minister can decide the level of immigration without reference to the other two levels of government that bear the brunt of the infrastructure and services cost: the states and local government.

Another defect is the lack of debate about what the intake should be, and what it would mean across the economy and environment in the long term.

A single minister should not have the power to set the intake, even if that minister does consult others. This is especially true because corporate and industry-association donors have the most influential voice.

The intake level should be at least debated in Parliament, and even be an instrument disallowable by either house of parliament. The people should have a greater say.

And given the thoughts about COVID resets, perhaps the intake level should have to be approved by the national cabinet.

It could save Albanese some grief. If people think we are going back to the same old pre-COVID Big Australia for the benefit of big business - and to hell with the consequences for the broad mass of people - it will cost Labor electorally, with more votes going to the Greens.

But Albanese is probably smart enough to know that. He is not as beholden to business as Howard, and is more in tune with workers and not as self-important as Rudd.

This article first appeared in the Canberra Times of 21 June 2022.

Abortion Bans Are a Natural Outgrowth of Coercive Pronatalism

by Nandita Bajaj



Nandita Bajaj

Reproductive control prevents people from reproducing. Coercive pronatalism does the opposite—forcing women to reproduce when they don't want to.

Contemporary attacks on reproductive rights are motivated by many things. Least among them is a genuine concern for the lives and well-being of the babies our system abandons shortly after birth.

Chief among them is a penchant for coercion, hostility to women's autonomy and self-determination, and a desire to enforce our status as mothers first, and human beings a distant second.

Forcing people to have children when they're not inclined to do so is a kind of extension of the "great replacement" conspiracy theory propagated by the far and not-so-far right. It contends that as birth rates fall and immigration rises, "real" nativist populations are getting replaced by outsiders ready to do the will of globalist political elites. That's absurd, but no less absurd is the proposed "solution:" forcing women to have more children.

That's part of the import of rising coercive pronatalism. Beyond the subtle messages in movies, art and culture glorifying parenthood, and unsubtle messages from family members telling women point-blank they are expected to produce children, coercive pronatalism puts institutional pressure on people to have babies. This is often done in the service of nationalist, religious, ethnocentric, racist and/or nativist and xenophobic agendas. It may take the form of restrictions on contraception, or propagandist myths around contraceptive use, or loan forgiveness and other financial incentives in exchange for having large families.

If these inducements don't convince women to have children, then abortion bans are instituted to force them into it against their will. Anti-democratic abortion bans are in effect in China, Russia, Hungary, Brazil, the U.S. and Poland, among others, often justified by nativist, baby-bust alarmism. According to the U.N., such policies lead to more unsafe illegal abortions, greater maternal mortality risks from unintended pregnancies, and a rise in unwanted births.

As a result of failed family planning policies and pronatalist cultural narratives, 45 percent of the six million pregnancies in the U.S. are unintended, and approximately a million unwanted children are born each year. Unintended pregnancy rates are highest among low-income women, women aged 18–24, cohabiting women and women of colour. For mothers in marginalised communities, unintended pregnancies rob them of educa-

tion, empowerment and career opportunity. For babies born into families missing the material and emotional resources needed to flourish, unintended pregnancies cause suffering and documented adverse physical and mental health outcomes.

In the course of my career studying, teaching and raising awareness about reproductive rights, I have come to realise that even subtle pronatalist pressures are enormously powerful in shaping women's life paths and self-esteem. I grew up in India, the second most populated country in the world, where cultural expectations that women will procreate are overpowering. But even in the so-called "industrialised" world, there is no escaping the pressures to have children even when it is not what we truly desire.

These pressures are the water in which we swim, so ubiquitous that for many of us, it's difficult to even discern what we truly desire. People make their "voluntary" reproductive choices in a cultural and institutional context that constrains them not to remain single, not to choose a child-free path, not to bear only one child, not to have elective sterilisation, not to experience ambivalence or regret about choosing parenthood, and to only choose biological parenthood (including IVF over adoption). We would do well to ask what women would choose if they didn't have to navigate this treacherous landscape.

Reproductive control through coercion has been associated with preventing people from reproducing, especially those in marginalised communities. Coercive pronatalism does the opposite, forcing women to reproduce when they don't want to. But it's still an abrogation of reproductive rights, just as forced sterilisation programs are. The fight for reproductive liberation must combat coercive pronatalism. It's just as much a violation of our bodies and our psyches as other forms of coercion.

As an instructor of the first-ever graduate course on pronatalism and overpopulation, I see daily the impact of pronatalism on young people of different genders. When they are offered the opportunity to examine the pressures put on them to reproduce, and to see the alternatives that lie beyond, they experience an enormous sense of relief and liberation. If we truly value human life, and not just in an embryonic state, we must extend those opportunities to all people of reproductive age and break out of the coercive pronatalist narrative that surrounds us.

This article appeared in Ms Magazine on 7 June 2022. Nandita Bajaj is Executive Director of Population Balance.

<https://msmagazine.com/2022/06/07/abortion-bans-coercive-pronatalism-forced-birth/>

Sister Organisation

SPA speaks with Alice Oppen from Women's Plans Foundation



Alice Oppen OAM

Alice Arnott Oppen (OAM) is not only a SPA member but also the founder of Women's Plans Foundation (WPF) based in Sydney. In 2011 Alice was awarded an OAM for services to the community through roles for heritage, women and charitable purposes.

Alice took the time out from her busy schedule to share a little bit about herself and WPF with SPA.

Alice, tell us a little about yourself, your passions and what drives you.

"I began life as an English teacher, publishing Shakespeare: Listening to the Women in 1999. I've been committed to environment and feminist groups since the '70s, and campaigned to keep Arnotts Ltd. Australian, then served on the Arnotts Board until 1997. A Fellow of the Institute of Company Directors, I served on its National Education Committee and not-for-profit boards."

Tell us how your environmental concerns and activism informed your decision to found what Women's Plans (now Women's Plans Foundation) in 2002.

"Twenty years ago(!) in 2002, I started Women's Plans, formalised into a charity in 2004, funding family planning as a component of overseas aid programs, advocating women's enablement and global sustainability. We aimed to provide actual contraception as well as education about it, to make a real difference; every pregnancy averted is an incremental benefit to the whole."

What are the main objectives and projects of WPF today? Any specific recent campaigns you would like to mention?

"Our challenge has been to transform a negative – no pregnancy – into a positive, contraception. We now urge increased provision of family planning in the Asia Pacific, to enable women to deal, not just with their own, but with world pressures: gender equity, population rise and climate change. Through MSI Asia in Cambodia we reach youth via a social media network offering services, myth-busting with reliable information. Through Australian Doctors International we reach nearly unreachable remote areas of PNG with teams including family planning services.

We share the one world, but it is becoming more disturbed. When I was born, there were about 2.2 billion people sharing the world. Now heading for eight billion,

hear the stresses cracking. While reproductive rates of fertility are going down, the total has gone up, and ever more babies are being added to our mix. A 1.05% decrease in fertility out of eight billion is more people (81.8 million) than a 2% decrease of 7 billion (65.5 million). I want to concentrate on meeting the problem at its conception, as a more lasting response to migration and climate pressures. Call for universal access to contraception: make parenthood optional!

The term family planning says so much more than the word 'contraception'; we need to ensure that young people realise that they are not just avoiding a commitment to nurture now, before they are ready – they are planning for the whole sustainable human family in the future."

What about the future of WPF? Any changes?

"Twenty years on, I am proud to announce that Jane Malcolmson succeeds me as Chair in August, when I become Patron. Jane has held senior leadership and creative roles in the national and international arts sector, working with four of Australia's most significant cultural organisations – the Asia Pacific Screen Awards (a subsidiary of the Queensland Events Corporation), the Australian Chamber Orchestra, World Orchestras and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. This expertise has been expanded through consultancies and membership of several not-for-profit boards, including WPF. Jane has comprehensive knowledge of WPF's needs and challenges."



Jane Malcolmson

As a SPA member yourself, where do you see the intersection between SPA and WPF objectives and how can SPA members support or become involved with WPF?

"We value SPA for partnership in vision, transmitted in SPA e-News, with overview and links to significant press items, and in conferences. We have exchanged speakers and supported each other as individual members, and are the stronger for it."



To find out more or to support WPF, visit them at their website www.womensplans.org

SPA Campaign

National Campaigns Update

SPA has started the first half of 2022 on a high note, with the Fenner Conference ('Making Australian Agriculture Sustainable'), the 'Population and Climate Change' discussion paper and the 'Let's Rethink Big Australia' social media election campaigns. They were all successful in lifting SPA's profile and impact.

For our end of financial year appeal, we included some graphics detailing our campaign to date in our mail out, which we also include here. It appears that our efforts resonate well with our members and supporters, as we gratefully received tens of thousands in donations. Every campaign costs money and time and this is only possible with the generosity of our members and supporters. Your every dollar or volunteer hour counts, so on behalf of SPA, thank you so much.

The results for our Federal Election social media campaign have come in and they look good. Almost 190,000 people saw our 'Let's Rethink Big Australia' message in the six weeks leading up to the election on May 21. During a time when direct travel and face to face campaigning still remains a challenge, social media has been an essential tool for SPA to get its message across.

Speaking of social media, SPA welcomed the appointment of our new Social Media and Promotions Coordinator from 1 July. As a long-time SPA supporter, Martin Tye is a Twitter expert and Degrowth campaigner who joins as the newest SPA staff member and we are certain he will be an asset to the organisation. While not all of us are social media users, it has become an essential tool to get the message across as SPA moves with the changing times. Already, our Twitter following has jumped significantly to over 1000. You may even like to start a Twitter account so you can follow @SustPopAus and read (and even share) the insightful tweets and links that Martin is sending almost every day.

Since the election campaign, SPA have teamed up for a second time with Your Life Choices (YLC) online journal. With a following of hundreds of thousands, YLC is promoting three SPA written articles, including opinion pieces for World Population Day (July 11) and Earth Overshoot Day (July 28). Last year YLC teamed up with SPA to conduct a survey among YLC's readership about attitudes toward Australian population policy. SPA recently released the results of this survey on our website, which show trends very similar to those conducted by the Australian National University and The Australian Population Research Institute. That is, a clear majority of respondents do not want a big Australia.

Post-Growth Australia Podcast (PGAP) reached its two-year anniversary in June this year. Since its inception, its three seasons have attracted over 10,000 downloads so far. The most recent episode for World Population Day, '3 Women 2 Countries 1 Message', interviewed population activists from the USA and Canada and had attracted much interest from the broader community.

Our campaign manager Edward Smith has been busy in contacting all the major unions on the critical importance on population policy change in Australia. Further, as part of SPA's Let's Rethink Big Australia campaign, he is contacting community groups dealing with the local impacts of population growth, such as those resisting the conversion of bush to suburbs. If you know of any such group, please forward their details to Edward on rethink@population.org.au and he will make contact with them.

Michael Bayliss
Communications Manager

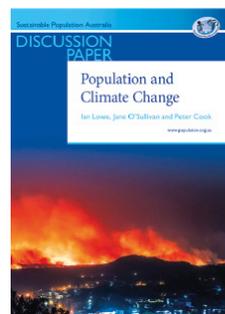


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...so we shouldn't be asking the experts to tell us what the future will be like; we should be asking ourselves, as we have been doing for the last two days, what we want the future to be like and then thinking about how we can bring it about, rather than the dystopian future which is a product of 'business as usual.'"

SPA Patron Prof. Ian Lowe, from his closing speech at the 2022 Fenner Conference.

Campaign achievements



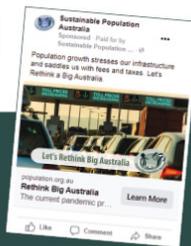
SPA's 'Population and Climate Change' discussion paper published February 2022.

Fenner Conference on sustainable agriculture at the Shine Dome, Canberra, 17-18 March 2022.

SPA Achievements 2022 p1



'Let's Rethink Big Australia' social media campaign,
April 2022 on Twitter and Facebook.



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SPA Achievements 2022 p2

SPA Member Profile

Martin Tye - SPA's new Social Media and Promotions Coordinator



Martin Tye

I would like to begin by saying that to me, this appointment is both a great honour and responsibility. I have been passionate about the population issue my entire adult life and I can assure you all I will be doing my absolute best to promote our critically important message.

I am a long-time member of SPA and would describe myself as a committed environmentalist who has a strong understanding of how population impacts ecosystems. In addition to this I am a representative of CASSE (the Center for the Advancement of the Steady State Economy) and understand how important population is to sustainable economic systems. I have also run three times as a political candidate for the Sustainable Australia Party, a party which - I'm sure many of you are aware - is very much across the population issue. I will be bringing this combined expertise, plus plenty of passion and energy to my new role with SPA.

The first thing you will notice will be an increase in the volume of Facebook and Twitter posts. I would urge you all to join the conversations. This is your chance to talk to each other and to your fellow Australians, and to bounce ideas and thoughts around. Social media is powerful tool and its power increases as more people engage. Twitter in particular is excellent for breaking new ground. If you haven't used it before, let me assure you it is easy, so please set up an account, follow us and join in. Let's try to create as much meaningful and constructive dialogue as possible. The one rule, as with any conversation, is always be polite and respectful, even where you may strongly disagree with another's point of view.

The ramping up of SPA's social media presence, enabled by the creation of this new position, is an exciting project with great potential to expand our audience. I ask you all to get behind it and get involved. I look forward to working with you all as we take awareness of the ecological, economic and social implications of the population issue to the next level.

World Population Day

3 Women, 2 Countries, 1 Voice for World Population Day 2022

by Michael Bayliss

In the most recent episode of Post-Growth Australia Podcast (PGAP) I had the honour of interviewing three giants within the population sustainability movement: Karen Shragg from the USA as well as Madeline Weld and Valorie Allen from Canada.

It was an important opportunity to host an episode that highlights female perspectives on the overpopulation issue in a movement that is sometimes perceived to be male dominated. It was also an opportunity to explore the similarities and distinctions of the population sustainability movement between three countries, USA, Canada and Australia, which are among the fastest growing developed countries.

Finally, and perhaps most crucially, this podcast aimed to help ensure that overpopulation was both front and centre for this year's World Population Day. World Population Day is a United Nations observance that takes place each 11 July in order to increase awareness of population growth and how population related issues intersect with issues related to the environment and development.

While the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) seems keen to shy away and even brush off the importance of any dialogue on overpopulation, "3 Women, 2 Counties, 1 Voice" argues that overpopulation remains a critical existential threat and that advocates of tackling the issue are here to stay. This is all the more necessary in light of the various agendas that are attempting to stymie nuanced discussion on population.

For example, to say that I was slightly taken aback when I first read the UNFPA's statement on World Population Day 2022 would be an understatement. Their headline reads: *"A world of 8 billion: Towards a resilient future for all."*

From the get-go, things start to look precarious. They go on to say that:

"Then there will be alarmists claiming that the world is on the verge of either disastrous overpopulation or catastrophic population collapse."

As an advocate of tackling overpopulation, I can't say that I felt very welcome by first being called an alarmist and then being placed in the same boat as population boosters such as Elon Musk.

It gets better, with the closing lines claiming that: *"In an ideal world, 8 billion people means 8 billion opportunities...Let no alarmist headline distract from the work at hand... In a world of 8 billion, there must always be space for possibility."*

During a time in which there are critical food and resource shortages and when the impacts of climate change are affecting the lives of many across the world, these sentiments present as empty platitudes promising misplaced optimism divorced from reality. Especially when we consider the fact that there are hundreds of millions of unintended pregnancies every year.

World Population Day

In a world of 8 billion people, there is insufficient space to share Earth generously with other species. In a warming world of 8 or 10 billion people, there may not be sufficient space to feed everyone. Opportunities contract when people become too numerous, a reality that can't be wished away.

It is becoming obvious that we are working within an increasingly hostile playing field when the UNFPA seems not only to be shying away from its own day of observation, but labels population sustainability activists as 'alarmists'. During times such as these, it is becoming ever more critical that 'alarmists' such as ourselves join together to reclaim World Population Day.

And what better way to do this than by celebrating the contributions of three brilliant female activists. Listening to their stories and their passion to create a better and fairer world, it is impossible to accept the UNFPA's accusation that those talking about human numbers "strip people of their humanity". I was inspired by their compassion and conviction, and I hope other listeners are also.

The three guests of the podcast: Madeleine Weld, Valorie Allen, and Karen Shragg.

Madeline Weld, president of the Population Institute Canada recently wrote a great article for The Overpopulation Project entitled "The 'Silent Lie' in Coverage of Madagascar's Famine". On this episode of PGAP Madeline goes on to highlight the many similarities between the population policies of Canada and my home country of Australia. For example, both countries are perceived as being 'underpopulated' by international standards despite the fact that they both have low carrying capacities. One obvious example is that much of Northern Canada is too cold for human habitation, whereas much of inland Australia is too dry and infertile.

Valorie Allen, author of a new book "8 Billion Reasons Population Matters" was invited to reflect on how the nature of activism has changed for her over the years. One of the

reasons why she now advocates for population sustainability and, more broadly, economic Degrowth, is through her reflections on her legacy as an animal liberation and environmental conservation activist. Valorie points out that any gains for the animals or the environment made at the time were rendered obsolete by the demands of more people and more economic growth. Therefore, Valorie now advocates for addressing the 'root causes' of our current predicaments.

When invited to share her vision for a Post-Growth future, Karen Shragg put forward an ambitious but achievable vision in which Degrowth is the topic of choice for mainstream television. This is a future in which sustainable population activists, far from being considered extremists, were in high demand on interview panels such as Jimmy Fallon or David Letterman. Such a world would be in the right frame of mind to take sustainability seriously and to take on the required transformations of our lifestyles and social institutions. Karen reminded us that the current media avoidance of overpopulation was not always the case: back in the early 1970s, Paul Ehrlich was interviewed more than 20 times by Johnny Carson on The Tonight Show. What will it take to reverse the deepening denial of limits to growth?

I resonate with my three guests in hoping that, one day, hopefully sometime very soon, population and post-growth will become 'talk of the town' issues that will make it onto mainstream interview shows. Until such time, however, alternative media such as 'The Overpopulation Project' and 'Post-Growth Australia Podcast' shall carry the torch.

First published in The Overpopulation Project 26 July 2022.

Michael Bayliss is the host of Post-Growth Australia Podcast. In each episode of PGAP, he talks to experts to unpack the notion of post-growth societies and what this means for us, for future generations and for the planet. PGAP is made possible by the support of Sustainable Population Australia (SPA).



Madeleine Weld



Valorie Allen



Karen Shragg

Branch News

NSW

NSW branch had a Committee Meeting on 2 July 2022 focusing on their projects for the near future, one of which will be emailing NSW members asking for volunteers to join a "Tiger Team" of letter writers who could respond fairly quickly to misleading articles, or provide support for good articles in the SMH and other media. There was also discussion of organising face-to-face meetings with organisations, but there was great concern about the current escalating COVID figures.

NSW branch have also set a date (13/8/22) for our next AGM and will be notifying NSW members at least 10 days before that meeting, in the hope that members will attend. This way not only will members have a good idea of what SPA is doing or will be doing, but also encourage members to attend and contribute or ask any questions of the NSW Committee. A NSW branch Committee Meeting will follow on straight after the AGM.

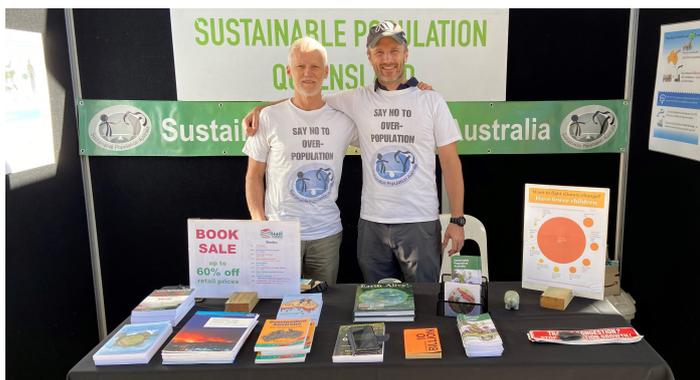
The Membership Officer, Lesley Scott, has contacted lapsed NSW members and received a very positive response from those who replied, most of whom had purely just forgotten to renew.

The NSW President, Graham Wood, has been focussing heavily on his project relating to a plan for a sustainable future, reading new reports as they have come out and incorporating changes following the change of the Federal Government.

Graham Wood

QLD

On 3 June, Queensland Secretary, Dr Jane O'Sullivan, gave a presentation at the conference of the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists Environmental Sustainability Network. The talk, titled "Human overpopulation and the myths that prevent us from addressing it", was very well received and stimulated animated discussion and much positive feedback from participants. Thanks go to anaesthetist and SPA member Cath Hellier for putting population on the agenda.



Simon Cole and Edward Smith at LEAF

On 5 June, Queensland Membership Officer Simon Cole and President Edward Smith ran a stall at Logan City Council's Logan Eco Action Festival (LEAF) at Griffith University. SPA had exhibited last year and it was a great opportunity to lift our stall game. The locals were mostly students and local residents and were very receptive to SPA's message. While stalls do not have the reach of electronic media, they allow a depth of engagement that is only possible face to face. We not only changed some minds and built some awareness but had a great time. Logan City Council deserves praise for resisting greenwash capitalism and continuing to allow actual environmental groups to exhibit

- SPA was joined at LEAF by organisations such as ACF and Sea Shepherd. This is in stark contrast to Brisbane City Council's Green Heart Fair, held in May, which purports to be a 'sustainable living festival'. Neither SPA, ACF nor Sea Shepherd were invited to exhibit at green Heart fair, but Volvo and Officeworks were.

Edward Smith

ACT

It has been a quiet period as far as activities in the ACT are concerned. We have held one Committee meeting in the period at which we discussed the importance of holding another public meeting as soon as we could arrange for an interesting speaker and time that suits them. Arranging new speakers whose message would appeal to members has always been a challenge. All committee members have been requested to think about speakers and or topics which will garner the interest of the wider membership.

We had a substantial discussion about whether the organisation's name was the best one, given the difficulties it poses for SPA to spread its message and overcome inaccurate views about what we stand for.

There was also discussion about the disappointing result for candidates concerned about population issues in the recent Federal election. It was felt that without the ability to afford television advertising and newspaper advertisements, it was an uphill battle to make a significant impact on the major parties or even on other well-funded independent candidates.

Our committee now meets on a bi-monthly basis.

WA

Nothing much to add to last Newsletter's report, unfortunately. We joined, along with others, to support the group fighting the construction of the Bunbury Outer Ring Road at Gelorup in the south-west. Though more of an environmental issue, it is the result of our forever growing 'growth'.

What follows are some details from an extract of that group's letter to the new Minister for the Environment and may be of interest to our readers. "71 hectares of native vegetation that contains 3,000 mature trees including Critically Endangered Tuart Woodlands and Endangered Banksia Woodlands which provide rich habitat for Critically Endangered Western Ringtail Possums, Endangered Black Cockatoos, as well as a host of other Endangered Species will be cleared. An estimated 100 individual Ringtail Possums will be displaced and typically they do not survive relocation due to their territorial nature. The corridor is providing hundreds of breeding hollows and food for the Possums and Cockatoos, as well as playing a crucial role in absorbing carbon. The proposed clearing is estimated to release 16,000 tonnes of stored carbon. This impact is unnecessary as there are 1600 hectares of cleared land adjacent to the bushland corridor. It is feared this will open land up to subdivision."

On a positive note, we have acquired a very swish pull up banner (to replace the two that 'disappeared') and an elastic 3-sided tablecloth complete with logo! All we need now are some fairs/open days where we can participate.

Judith Odgaard

Branch News

VIC

The Vic/Tas Branch has been rather quiet the last couple of months (we are missing our secretary too) but we are planning a face to face get together within the next couple of months. I am currently nominating SPA for the Australian Conservation Foundation's Peter Rawlinson Award.

Graeme Dennerstein

SA

The SA-NT branch held its AGM on Friday 22 July, and the same committee was returned. SPA national patron Ian Lowe addressed the meeting, summarising the Climate and Population

discussion paper he prepared recently with Jane O'Sullivan and Peter Cook. With zoom attendees, the audience was a healthy number of 30 people.

Perhaps the main development for the local group recently has been an increase in letters published in the media, plus more committee-based activity. Stephen Morris has put considerable work into a database of the various audiences we could be communicating with better, and branch Secretary Robyn Wood has stepped up email contact with members. Various ideas for new activities have been discussed by the committee, including the need for a clearer vision for a stable population at national and state level, and the social and environmental benefits of that.

Peter Martin

News

In a historic and far-reaching decision on 24 June, the U.S. Supreme Court officially reversed Roe v. Wade, declaring that the constitutional right to abortion no longer exists.

As part of her response, Dr. Herminia Palacio, Guttmacher Institute President and CEO, said:



"Decades of research consistently show that abortion bans and restrictions don't reduce unintended pregnancy or demand for abortion, and they certainly do not help people improve their health. Rather, they impose significant hurdles to obtaining care, causing stress for people in need of abortion and leading some to experience forced

pregnancy and all its troubling consequences.

"Evidence also shows the disproportionate and unequal impact abortion restrictions have on people who are already marginalised and oppressed—including Black and Brown communities, other people of colour, people with low incomes, young people, LGBTQ communities, immigrants and people with disabilities.

"This decision comes when the need for abortion is actually growing in the United States. The 930,000 abortions obtained across the country in 2020 represent the first sustained increase in abortion in almost three decades—and more than one in three of these abortions were obtained in states that are certain or likely to ban abortion."

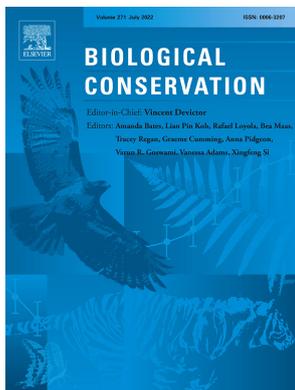
Overpopulation is a major cause of biodiversity loss and smaller human populations are necessary to preserve what is left

by Philip Cafaro, Pernilla Hansson, Frank Götmark

Biological Conservation

Volume 272, August 2022. 109646

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biocon.2022.109646>



Highlights

- Global biodiversity decline is driven in large part by excessive human populations.
- Population decline opens up important opportunities for ecological restoration.
- Further research is needed into how human demographic changes help or hinder conservation efforts.
- Conservation biologists should advocate for smaller populations, in both less developed and more developed nations.

Abstract

Global biodiversity decline is best understood as too many people consuming and producing too much and displacing other species. Wild landscapes and seascapes are replaced with people, our domestics and commensals, our economic support systems, and our trash. Conservation biologists have documented many of the ways that human activity drives global biodiversity loss, but they generally neglect the role of overpopulation. We summarise the evidence for how excessive human numbers destroy and degrade habitats for other species, and how population decrease opens possibilities for ecological restoration. We discuss opportunities for further research into how human demographic changes help or hinder conservation efforts. Finally, we encourage conservation biologists to advocate for smaller populations, through improved access to modern contraception and explicit promotion of small families. In the long term, smaller human populations are necessary to preserve biodiversity in both less developed and more developed parts of the world. Whether the goal is to save threatened species, create more protected areas, restore degraded landscapes, limit climate disruption, or any of the other objectives key to preserving biodiversity, reducing the size of the human population is necessary to achieve it.

New Ministers

Ministers in the new Albanese Government of relevance to SPA

The Hon. Andrew Giles MP	Minister for Immigration, Citizenship and Multicultural Affairs
The Hon. Tanya Plibersek MP	Minister for the Environment and Water
The Hon. Chris Bowen MP	Minister for Climate Change and Energy
The Hon. Tony Burke MP	Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
The Hon. Catherine King MP	Minister for Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Local Government
The Hon. Brendan O'Connor MP	Minister for Skills and Training
Pat Conroy MP	Minister for International Development and the Pacific



Andrew Giles MP
photo ABC

Shadow Ministers

The Hon. Dan Tehan	Shadow Minister for Immigration and Citizenship
Ted O'Brien MP	Shadow Minister for Climate Change and Energy
Senator the Hon Jonathon Duniam	Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry
Senator the Hon Michaelia Cash	Shadow Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations
Senator the Hon Bridget McKenzie	Shadow Minister for Infrastructure, Transport and Regional Development
The Hon. Sussan Ley MP	Shadow Minister for Industry, Skills and Training
The Hon Michael McCormack MP	Shadow Minister for International Development and the Pacific

About SPA

Website: www.population.org.au

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editor@population.org.au

Letters to editor welcome but 300 words maximum and in electronic form!

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