



No. 150, February 2023

## Sustainable Population Australia -- Newsletter

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

### A review and an inquiry into Australian migration



Minister Clare O'Neil  
photo SMH

Sustainable Population Australia (SPA) has made a comprehensive submission to the federal Department of Home Affairs' review - *A Migration System for Australia's Future* - announced by Minister Clare O'Neil at the Jobs and Skills Summit in September.

Written by Dr Jane O'Sullivan on behalf of SPA, the submission argues that high levels of immigration have solved none of the problems it was intended to fix, while

exacerbating all of the issues of most concern to Australians, from job insecurity and falling real wages to housing unaffordability, inadequate infrastructure, environmental degradation and greenhouse gas emissions.

SPA has made a number of recommendations in its submission that include:

- A sustainable scale of migration, based on a vision for an ecologically sustainable population and economy, must be the bedrock criterion
- A net overseas migration (NOM) of no more than 60,000 a year should include a generous allowance for humanitarian refugees
- All skilled migrants should be employer-sponsored and initially temporary. Permanent skill visas should only be offered to those who have demonstrated a period of appropriately skilled employment
- To ensure that the jobs migrants fill are actually skilled and needed, the Temporary Skilled Migration Income Threshold (TSMIT) should be at least 10% greater than the median full-time wage, that is, the TSMIT should be set at around \$90,000 a year, not the current \$53,900.
- Caps should be placed on the proportion of international students enrolled in any course, perhaps no more than 25% except in courses specifically intended to prepare foreign students for further study.
- The family reunion system should be tightened to reduce its widespread abuse as a method for commercial chain migration. Only those who have gained Australian citizenship should be entitled to sponsor a newly-married spouse. At least five years on a permanent residence visa should be required before qualifying for citizenship.

The three reviewers, Dr Martin Parkinson AC PSM, Dr Joanna Howe and Mr John Azarias are scheduled to report back to the Government in early 2023.

Meanwhile, the Joint Standing Committee on Migration is holding an inquiry into the role of permanent migration in nation building: *Migration, Pathway to Nation-Building*. The very loaded terms of reference are:

1. The role of permanent migration in nation building, cultural diversity, and social cohesion;
2. Immigration as a strategic enabler of vibrant economies and socially sustainable communities in our cities and regional hubs;
3. Attraction and retention strategies for working migrants to Australia;
4. Policy settings to strengthen skilled migrant pathways to permanent residency;
5. Strengthening labour market participation and the economic and social contribution of migrants, including family and humanitarian migrants and vibrant economies partners of working migrants;
6. The role of settlement services and vocational training in utilising migrant experiences, knowledge, and opportunities; and
7. Other related matters that may assist the inquiry.

The second one in particular: "Immigration as a strategic enabler of vibrant economies and socially sustainable communities", suggests a profound lack of objectivity in this Inquiry. It's not the Joint committee's fault; they didn't write the terms of reference. The Government did, or specifically Minister O'Neil. This is not to say that SPA doesn't want vibrant economies or socially sustainable communities, but there is a presumption that only immigration - and a large program at that - can deliver these things.

The Government must be taken to task over these terms of reference. SPA will make a submission but anyone can. It does not need to be large - even just a page will do. Write to:

Committee Secretary, Joint Standing Committee on Migration, PO Box 6021, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600. Send in hard copy or by email: [migration@aph.gov.au](mailto:migration@aph.gov.au). The deadline for submissions is 13 February 2023 (so be quick!) JG.

## Not a voice but a shout

by John Coulter



John Coulter

*Many have argued that our civilisation may collapse before the end of this century. In contrast Aboriginal people have survived in this country for at least 50,000 years.*

In the latter half of 2023, Australians will be required to vote on 'an indigenous voice to parliament'. It's intended this will provide indigenous Australians a direct input to the parliament on issues that parliament believes particularly concern them, a significant step forward which should be supported. Such issues will be referred by the parliament or government to a body of aboriginal representatives selected by aboriginal people themselves from across Australia. On the surface this would seem eminently reasonable and within the prevailing bounds of existing democratic practice but as this paper argues the prevailing economic and political paradigm has no future.

The present proposal does not go far enough:

1. The issues referred to this representative indigenous body will be determined by government and the recommendations of the representative body will be fed back to government to consider within its own political and economic paradigm.
2. Indigenous culture does not sit comfortably within the mainstream. The emphasis that indigenous people place on important issues don't always translate into directions and actions that the mainstream white growth-economy driven society would readily endorse. And there's the rub and the main point of this essay.

Non-indigenous Australian life and pursuit is built around 'the economy' and that economy is based on the pursuit of growth. GDP growth of 1% is alright, 3% has every economist, politician, economic commentator and journalist shouting that Australia is doing very well and is 'out-performing' most other countries. If GDP falls by 1 or 2% the same spokespeople will wring their hands and provide advice on correcting this disastrous situation to return Australia to growth. Every aspect of Australia's management must be directed toward more growth.

But there are other voices in Australia and around the world: scientists and a few heterodox economists who warn that the growth path is unsustainable and headed for collapse. They remain unacknowledged by Australian politicians and most mainstream Australian journalists.

And here is the link with 'the voice' or 'the shout'.

There is abundant evidence that the 'growth forever' belief system permeating every aspect of the mainstream

view of the future is unsustainable and cannot but unravel in coming decades. Climate change gets a lot of attention but is only one of many inextricably intertwined indicators of our unsustainable trajectory. Equally important is galloping loss of biodiversity, declining fresh water supplies, declining fish stocks and the running down of mineral resources accompanied by rising energy costs as we chase ever lower grade ores. All these matters require simultaneous action guided by a different world view.

Very many have argued that for these reasons our civilisation may collapse well before the end of this century. In contrast Aboriginal people have survived in this country for at least 50,000 years. If Australia had avoided colonisation, it's more than likely Aboriginal people would still be here 50,000 years from now. What is it in that culture that ensures its survival? What may we learn from our indigenous cousins?

Rather than continue the destruction of Aboriginal culture, should we not consciously and deliberately recognise the superior value of the attitude within this culture toward Nature and a sustainable future and so build a new culture which embraces both?

I am not espousing a view based on 'the noble savage'. I am not suggesting that we live in caves. There is much good that science and 'the enlightenment' have added to quality of life. But growth economics and its equation between quality of life and ever-increasing consumption of Nature is not a plus. It is a minus that destroys as it grows.

Australians have already exceeded Nature's ability to sustainably provide for our manufactured wants. The 'environmental footprint' of the average Australian is so large that if the whole world were to consume Nature as we do, humanity would need four Earths to sustainably fulfil those wants. As the mainstream economic paradigm seeks even more growth, it is clearly announcing to the majority of the world's poor that we believe it is our right to take an unsustainable and unfair share of Earth's dwindling resources.

If we really do care about both the existing poor and our soon-to-be poor descendants, then we must reduce our material demands to about a quarter of our present per capita consumption. Much has been written by many authors about what are essential needs and what are non-essential and largely artificially created wants. I don't intend to recount their work here. It is worth noting however that approximately half the world's population lives on less than this amount.

The socioeconomic, growth-oriented zeitgeist which permeates every aspect of mainstream Australian culture has brought us to a point at which approximately half Earth's mammals have become extinct in the last 50 years and the rate of extinction is increasing. Of all mammals on Earth 96% are humans and our supporting livestock; only 4% are wild animals.

Emissions of climate changing gases continue to climb causing Professor James Hansen, one of the initiators of global knowledge of climate change in 1988, to remark, 'all we've done is agree there is a problem'. On its present trajectory it's thought that global temperatures could be 3 – 4°C higher by century's end, threatening all life on Earth including our own.

In contrast is a view that we humans are a part of all life; Nature and other life forms have an innate right to exist and flourish quite separate from us. We are part of the land, and the land is part of us (land is Nature). It is not something to be owned like a commercial good, to be traded for a 'higher value', dollars.

Rejecting the growth paradigm, building a new culture which integrates both the understanding of Nature which comes through science and the deep conviction that Nature and non-human life have their own abiding rights and values incorporates the elements vital for a viable, sustainable future for all Australians. Acknowledging that an essential contribution to this new culture comes through our indigenous brothers and sisters who have lived it for 50,000 + years is far more essential than simply allowing consultation within a soon-to-be collapsing society built on unsustainable growth.

*This article first appeared in Pearls and Irritations on 9 January 2023.*

## We have a training shortage, not a skills shortage

by Crispin Hull



Crispin Hull

Speaking of corporate power, Labor, just like the Coalition, is beholden to big business's determination to have access to cheap labour through the immigration system.

Last week, Immigration Minister Andrew Giles announced that more than three million visas have been finalised since 1 June.

I asked his office for a break down in the types of visas, but have had no reply at time of writing.

Giles's media statement was self-congratulatory, stressing the speed and efficiency compared to the Coalition Government. The statement got hardly any media coverage.

These visas were processed at a rate of 600,000 a month. And there are another 755,000 waiting. This is sausage-machine stuff which means applications cannot possibly be given the scrutiny they deserve.

Within a couple of days of Giles's announcement, the Government was forced into announcing a taskforce to deal with widespread visa rorting linked to sex trafficking, foreign worker exploitation and drug crime. The trouble is the ease with which people can get visas and then overstay.

Surely, the temporary working visa system needs more scrutiny, not just for crime, but more generally.

The people coming in temporarily still strain infrastructure and health and education systems. Moreover, many see temporary work and education visas as a way to permanent residency.

It is a path to dangerous over-population. This year's permanent migration was ramped up to 190,000 because businesses are screaming about a "skills" shortage.

This at a time when our hospitals and schools are stretched. Infrastructure is beyond stretched. Repairs and replacement of infrastructure destroyed in the floods and bushfires has hardly begun. That should be given the priority, not increasing the strain by bringing in more people so employers can make a fast buck off low wages.

When COVID struck and immigration stopped, many economists predicted a 15 per cent unemployment rate. They were completely wrong. Unemployment dropped to the lowest in 40 years.

We do not have a skills shortage, but a training shortage and exploitative wages.

The income threshold for the temporary skilled migrant income is \$53,000. We should not be giving "skilled" places to people who can only command that below-par income when the median wage is \$83,000.

Or if someone has a valuable skill which only commands \$53,000, then that skill is undervalued and underpaid in Australia.

We need to ramp up the threshold to the median wage or at least the \$70,000 suggested by the Grattan Institute this week, and to ensure that people with the skills we want to attract are paid at least the median wage. Better still, we should train people already here, if necessary, paying them to train.

That way we would not have to provide all the extra infrastructure at taxpayers' cost.

But employing businesses hate that idea. They want to exploit cheap labour and let the rest of the community pick up the environmental and economic costs.

*This was the second half of an article that first appeared in The Canberra Times and other Australian media on 22 Nov 2022.*

[www.crispinhull.com.au](http://www.crispinhull.com.au)



# Book Review

## How to fix a broken planet – Advice for surviving the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

by Julian Cribb

Cambridge University Press. January 2023. 218pp.  
US\$16.95 on the Cambridge University Press site and  
on Australian Amazon.  
A\$32.61 for the paperback and A\$15.90 for the kindle edition.

Reviewed by Jenny Goldie

In his earlier book, *Surviving the 21st Century*, Julian Cribb first identified 10 interconnected mega-risks. In this book *How to fix a broken planet*, he expands on that theme by offering comprehensive solutions that societies and individuals can make.

The world is in crisis. This crisis has a number of elements that include

- The extinction of species on a scale never previously witnessed
- Key resources such as soil, water and forests are becoming scarcer
- The threat of nuclear conflict is high
- Earth's climate may soon tip out of control, spelling disaster for civilisation
- Chemical poisoning is already out of control
- World food supply teeters on a knife-edge
- Despite Covid-19, we are unable to prevent future pandemics
- Artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies are out of control
- Human population is growing at speed, increasing the risk we will run out of resources
- There is widespread denial and failure to recognise the reality of our plight.

Here are his solutions

- Outlaw all nuclear weapons
- End all extraction and use of fossil fuels
- Create a circular global economy
- Develop a renewable global food system including regenerative agriculture
- Return half of the world's current farmlands to forest or wilderness
- Create a new Human Right Not to Be Poisoned
- Voluntarily reduce the human population to a sustainable level
- Prevent future pandemics by ending environmental destruction
- Give women a greater role in world and community leadership
- Draw up an 'Earth System Treaty' and integrated survival plan at a global level.

Radical solutions but necessary given current solutions are simply not good enough. For instance, the UN Convention on Biodiversity is being developed to tackle loss of plants and animals and calls for significant increases in protected areas to around 30 per cent of the planet's land and sea, while at the same time meeting human needs. "And therein lies the problem," writes Cribb, "the plan ... evades the questions of population and growth in consumption, probably for reasons of political expediency."

Cribb blames overpopulation for many of the world's ills, such as pandemics. "When superficial factors are stripped away ... the principal driver of today's pandemics is human overpopulation – an unpalatable truth which government and UN officials are reluctant to voice aloud," he writes.

And with regards to food: "Voluntary population reduction is ultimately key to sustaining the world food supply and ensuring there is enough for all."

Indeed, he sums it up in the chapter devoted to population: "Overpopulation drives and compounds all the other threats which constitute our existential emergency." He notes that in a single life-time, global population has grown from two to eight billion and, if it continues growing at 1 per cent a year, there will be 21 billion humans by 2120.

Cribb reminds us that, when such population explosions occur in nature, the animal runs out of living resources, and there is usually a mass die-off and its numbers crash abruptly back to where they started, or even below. Humans are by no means immune from such a population crash.

Thus, he argues: "The central issue of human population growth is not whether it is good or bad, but whether we can avoid a devastating crash..."

In this he is supported by SPA's national executive member Dr Jane O'Sullivan whom he quotes: "*What this issue is really about is trying to prevent a huge die-off of people. Overrunning our natural resources can only lead to more deaths from starvation, conflict and disease – because we are already in overshoot. The only alternative pathway is voluntary restraint on the number of human births while, at the same time, we try simultaneously to reduce our consumption and environmental impact per person.*"

The way to avoid the crash is to reduce fertility. The way to do that is through voluntary family planning and Cribb rightly lists all its other benefits, not least raising the living standards of the poor, reducing child deaths, and slowing and even reversing the scarcity of land, water and resources.

This is an excellent chapter in an important book that deserves wide readership.



# Obituary

## Vale Haydn Washington

It is hard to think that this man, so much larger than life, has died. He was only 67. Haydn finally succumbed to cancer a mere week after publishing his last paper. We knew he was going some weeks before as his friends had asked for pictures of bush landscapes to adorn his coffin. I held off sending mine for fear it would somehow speed his demise and sent it only when I heard he had died. A friend propped it on top of the beautiful coffin, duly pasted with pictures of the bush, at the funeral in his beloved Blue Mountains.

SPA national executive member Dr Jane O'Sullivan helped Haydn with the proof-reading of his last paper. After his death, Jane wrote: "Haydn was a prolific and passionate writer and speaker on sustainability, degrowth, the need for population stabilisation and denialism against both climate and population realities. He wrote or edited many books. He was active in CASSE and the Ecological Economics community.

"And he was a generous, humble colleague who supported others to raise their voices. I worked with him over the past couple of months to get a paper published on population denialism.

"Thankfully it was published a week before he died. Here is the link to the paper (it is open access): <https://www.mdpi.com/2673-4060/3/4/57>"

At the funeral, his older brother Matthew described Haydn's extraordinary life that began with an idyllic childhood near Middle Harbour in Sydney where the two brothers roamed the nearby bush. Haydn came to love nature and was an avid bushwalker, starting when he was in his final years at the International School near Macquarie University. Before university where he studied ecology, he and three other 18-year-olds walked over five days down the Capertee River to Colo Heights, walking through the largest wilderness in NSW in the 'wondrous' Colo River gorge. One morning he woke to find himself eye-to-eye with a Superb Lyrebird, with which he felt a momentary one-ness. He eloquently described the experience in his book 'A Sense of Wonder' and in a poem 'Colo':

*Now I remember,  
Wild river flowing  
Mother of waters,  
Cliffs of light rising.  
This is my home ...  
Canyons and chasms  
Jungle and plateau,  
And architect's mountains  
Stone wizard's wielding.  
The land of the Lyrebird  
Harp song calling,  
Soft breeze blowing,  
Dreamtime falling  
To blanket the eyes.*

After communing with the lyrebird, he offered his services to Milo Dunphy at the Total Environment Centre and Haydn became the secretary of the Colo Committee, established that very night. In the 1970s this committee was responsible for the formation of the Wollemi National Park. (A few years later, he was part of a bush-walking party that discovered the Wollemi pine.) It was not their only campaign: they started the campaign for the Gardens of Stone near Lithgow which was made a national park in 1994. Haydn also worked on the NSW rainforest campaign, the Franklin, and later the Daintree/Wet Tropics campaign.

In 1985, Haydn took a year off to travel South America. It was in Torres Del Paine national park in Chile that Haydn became a poet, which he described as the 'single most glorious feeling in my life'. He subsequently published two books of nature poetry - 'Gift of the Wild' and 'Poems from the Centre of the World' and contributed to two collections, edited by Dexter Dunphy, Milo's brother.

A year after he was a speaker at the 2013 Fenner Conference on Environment, organised by SPA on the subject 'Resources, Population and Climate Change', Haydn organised the successful 2014 Fenner Conference on 'Addicted to Growth? How to move to a Steady State Economy in Australia' with a remarkable line-up of speakers. It was life-changing for many attendees.

Perhaps his most valuable contribution to SPA was his involvement in the Nature Conservation Council of NSW where he twice served as executive officer. He was influential in the Population and Consumption (now Population and Sustainability) sub-committee.

Haydn died in the house he built for himself at Rylstone on the edge of the Wollemi National Park, looking across to the Blue Mountains, with his beloved brother Matthew beside him. He is greatly missed but his legacy will remain.

*Jenny Goldie*



*Haydn Washington*



## Campaign Update

Michael Bayliss, Communications Manager

My personal SPA highlight for 2022 were the results of the 8 Billion Day writers' competition. Not only did we receive a high number of responses, almost half of these were written by school-aged children from ethnically diverse backgrounds.

It is impressive that our competition was successful in engaging both young people and migrant communities. On this note I have also just released an episode of Post-Growth Australia Podcast (which I host on behalf of SPA) where I interview Isabella Cortes, Colombian born, 26 year old Vice President of Women for Conservation. It is reassuring to me that young people are increasingly engaged in this conversation and furthermore, reaching out to SPA.

The competition also supported SPA's other efforts around 8 billion day on 15 November. These included a briefing note authored by Jane O'Sullivan: "8 Billion Day facts and myths: A guide to the 8 billion global population milestone on 15 November." SPA launched a media release in support of the briefing note that attracted some media attention. I also had an article published at *Independent Australia* and an interview on a well-regarded USA-based podcast.

It is true that SPA's voice did not rise above the general din in the media claiming that 8 billion was a celebration or a non-event. However, considering the small size of our organisation and our limited resources, I do believe that - once again - we can be proud of punching above our weight.

On 1 December, SPA released a new discussion paper by our distinguished Patron, Dr Paul Collins: "How many Australians: the need for Earth-centric ethics". A message from Tony Zappia MP was read out. Promotion of the paper was backed by a social media campaign and may be read online at our website.

Looking ahead to 2023, SPA will be launching a campaign highlighting the impact of population growth on the housing crisis. Our membership and marketing team has been working toward the creation of graphical assets, short videos (with the help of SPA volunteer Rod Taylor), a briefing note and a landing page on the website. We are looking to launch this campaign in February, where we hope to engage and connect with stakeholders in the housing crisis sector, such as resident groups, tenancy support groups and charities. This campaign is part of SPA's medium term goals in reaching out to community groups to work toward a common cause of countering the growth narrative touted by politicians and the business lobby.

We are also planning to trial some digital billboards for display around South East Queensland. I would like to thank the 'billboard planning team' for taking this project on, including Michael Thompson and Judith Odgaard from the Executive Committee, joined by Queensland members Simon Cole and Vaithehi Subendranathan.

We are also planning toward the launch of 'The Ponzies' later this year. This brickbat style event will take aim at the growth lobby and will combine the seriousness of the Walkley journalism awards with the more fun and satirical Ernies Awards. Know any public figure who deserves a wooden spoon nomination? Send your ideas through to [media@population.org.au](mailto:media@population.org.au)

As well as our campaigns, SPA continues to send out media releases, including five media releases over December and January. Although the growth lobby continues to be the loudest voice in the media, the good news is that SPA is making an impact, with our media releases being published in a variety of print media and with Jenny Goldie being interviewed on community, mainstream and talkback radio. We are also lucky to have many dedicated members who write quality letters to the editor, many of which get published, offering an antidote to the torrent of growth positive articles being written in recent months.

While it is tempting to be pessimistic in regard to SPA's cut-through, our statistics show that SPA is continuing to move onward and upward in our impact. Our social media reach and following continue to grow under the capable direction of our Social Media and Promotions Coordinator Martin Tye. Even our membership numbers are on the increase after a couple of years of holding steady.

Thank you to all SPA members who donated for our end of calendar year appeal. It is through financial and volunteer support from our members that SPA can continue doing the critical work that needs to be done.



population.org.au



**The housing crisis – not just a supply crisis, an overpopulation crisis**

#HousingCrisis  
#OverpopulationCrisis

# 8BD competition

## Winners of the 'Eight Billion Day' writers' competition

Michael Bayliss

On 15 November 2022, according to UN estimates, the global population reached eight billion people. This means that the world's population had climbed another billion in just 11 years, which is unprecedented.

At SPA, we wanted to capture a broader public sentiment regarding what people truly think about eight billion of us sharing the planet, given that the issue of overpopulation is so often brushed off by the mainstream media.

We invited all Australians who were not current members of SPA to answer the following question:

"In 100 words or less, say what eight billion people means for the planet, the environment and for you."

We are delighted to have received dozens of high-quality submissions from a hugely diverse range of respondents, including many school-aged writers. It was very difficult for the judges to make a shortlist due to the high quality of prose, poems and insights that we received. We would like to take this opportunity to thank our volunteer panel of judges, Vaithehi Subendranathan, Simon Cole and Mick Thompson. We would also like to thank our webmaster Alex Geppert for making it possible for people to submit their entries through our website. Michael Bayliss managed and oversaw the project.

A difficult decision had to be made from our judges and below are the winners as well as the shortlisted entries:

**Winner:** Claire from Queensland.

"Eight billion people on Earth means Environmental disaster for all on our planet. The pressure on the Environment to house feed and sustain such a huge population is mind boggling. In the past few decades, the natural Environment has had to endure increasing challenges brought about by this continuing population growth. Earth is suffering because continued population growth is detrimental to every one of us by reducing the finite resources of our planet."

We believe that Claire has hit the nail on the head and highlighted the main issues with efficient and clear prose. Congratulations to Claire, who won a \$100 gift voucher for this winning entry.

**Runner up:** Esther from New South Wales.

"Eight billion people on our planet means:  
Eight billion hungry souls we need to feed,  
Eight billion producers of carbon greed,  
Eight billion people who need a place to live,  
Eight billion educations we should try to give,  
Eight billion people who must go from place to place,  
Eight billion contenders for nature's limited space,  
Eight billion creators of plastic debris,  
Eight billion polluters of the air and sea.  
Eight billion people is just way too many,  
Numbers wise humanity already has plenty."

Esther, 10 years old, was one of our youngest respondents. We were impressed by her creative use of poetry and rhyme, and she demonstrates that the issue of overpopulation is a real concern for younger generations. Esther agreed to participate in a QandA for SPA, which we include in this newsletter.



**Shortlist:** Craig from Western Australia.

"The Global Footprint Network stated that by the 28th July 2022 the planet's human population had exhausted the "biological resources that Earth regenerates during the entire year." Therefore, we need to seriously consider what the impact of eight billion people will be. A human population of eight billion people on a planet with finite capacity to provide resources and assimilate waste is not sustainable. Our food system is almost wholly dependent on the inputs of non-renewable inputs such as fossil fuels and phosphorus. We've caused a decline in wildlife populations of 69% since 1970. Biodiversity is key to healthy ecosystems."

Craig impressed the judges with his thorough, well-researched evidence-based response.

**Shortlist:** Maria from Victoria.

"Eight billion humans on our planet impacts each and every one of us and how we live. The quality of our planet's finite resources of clean water and quality topsoil to sustain the life of all species is impacted, due to overwhelming human population. Animal husbandry and intensive farming has caused diseases, changed the environment and natural topography. Pollution, climate change and stress on our planet is evident. It is our moral responsibility to act, educate and reverse as much as we can, before it is too late."

Maria's response was also very insightful, highlighting the multiplying impact that population has on industrial farming and on other species.

**Young writer honourable mention:** Yanming from South Australia.

"If there were eight billion people on earth, then there won't be that much food, and hard for everybody to survive on earth, and perhaps there will be up to more than 10 billion people because people could get babies and then grow up. And also people need work harder for more houses. The world would get more and more squishier. And the world's sound would get louder maybe. But it could be easier to make friends."

Yanming is a year 1 student from Marryatville Primary School in Adelaide. The judges were very appreciative of the unique and insightful perspective on a complex issue from such a young writer. Congratulations Yanming!



# 8BD competition

**Young writer honourable mention:** Zhizhan from South Australia.

"Eight billion people is too much, and I know for a fact that lots of people agree. More people mean essential things like food and water become more costly. This will ruin not only our lives but also the planet and environment! We are all worried about our resources, food and things we love! I've had enough of the overpopulated world. It's unfair to all living things that we're not doing anything to act on it. We should have a plan to control the growth of population. We have to act NOW!"

Another student entry from South Australia, the Judges felt Zhizhan's palpable concern over eight billion people and his call for urgent action. Definitely deserving of an honourable mention.

*Please join us in congratulating all these wonderful shortlisted entries from informed, concerned, passionate and talented Australians.*

## Interview

### SPA speaks with runner up of 8 billion competition Esther Li

Esther Li, an accomplished young writer (age 10) was the runner up winner to SPA's "8 Billion Day Writer's Competition."

The judges were very impressed by strong insightful writing from a young writer. Esther, who lives in New South Wales, kindly offered to speak with SPA further on her love of reading and writing as well as her perspectives on the issue of overpopulation.

**SPA: Esther, tell us a little more about yourself, your love of writing and some of your past writing achievements.**

**Esther:** My name is Esther Li, and I am ten years old. I have been an avid reader ever since I could remember because I love immersing myself in fantastical realms while also learning profound messages in the process. I also have a passion for writing both short stories and poems. I enjoy writing because I can express my emotions and portray vivid scenes within my own imagination for others to experience. Recently I self-published two books on Amazon, a novel and a poetry anthology. I have also previously won 1st place in the W.J. Kite short story competition, as well as highly commended for the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Competition and the Shepton Snowdrops Poetry Competition.

**SPA: How did you hear about SPA's writer's competition and what was it about the question or the theme of 8 billion that made you want to enter?**

**Esther:** I first heard about the SPA's writer competition through a notification in my email from W.J. Kite. After winning the competition last year, I have regularly received emails from him with information about upcoming competitions and ways to continue improving my writing. I was very interested in the theme of 8 billion because I really love nature and appreciating its beauty is a theme in a lot of the poetry I write. The prospect of overpopulation destroying our environment and the beauty of nature is an issue I really care about and is hence why I was inspired to enter this competition.

**SPA: Is overpopulation an issue that you have thought much about before this competition?**

**Esther:** Overpopulation was an issue I had heard about before this competition, but didn't give that much thought to. I was mainly concerned about environmental issues such as climate change and deforestation, without realising their direct link

to overpopulation. However, this competition made me think about how overpopulation directly exacerbates things such as climate change, deforestation and the emission of greenhouse gases, because with more people we will need more resources.

**SPA: Almost half of the entries to our competition came from school aged students such as yourself. Is population an issue that is shared or talked about among young people? Is it difficult for young people to discuss openly as it is for older generations?**

**Esther:** Overpopulation is an issue that is increasingly talked about among young people, mostly because it's a very real and looming threat for us. Whereas it was a distant issue for older generations, for us overpopulation and its implications for the environment is a problem we will soon need to address. As we see the number of people in the world rise and rise and rise, we know it comes with the loss of habitats, wildlife, increased population, and rising sea levels. Therefore it's not difficult for us to discuss openly, but rather something we talk about often and should talk about even more.

**SPA: What are your other environmental interests or passions when you're not writing?**

**Esther:** I am very passionate about the preservation of habitats and wildlife, as I think the diversity of the natural world is so interesting and beautiful. I am also interested in ways we can preserve and clean up the environment, such as by reducing waste and actively removing harmful materials such as plastic.

A link to Esther's Poetry Mosaic e-book can be found here at Poetry Mosaic eBook : Li, Esther : Amazon.com.au : Books

A link to her book "Alice & the Japanese Gem Heist" can be found here.





# Sister Organisation



**POPULATION**  
MEDIA CENTER

**Cody Peluso**

**Digital Advocacy & Mobilisation Manager**

**SPA: Cody, tell us a little about yourself, your role with PMC, your passions and what drives you.**

I have spent nearly 20 years working on political and advocacy issues across the United States. At Population Media Center, I am working on advocacy and communications to educate, engage and inform people about sustainable populations, sexual and reproductive health and the rights of women and girls. I am driven by people across the world who are working to make their communities more sustainable, healthier, just and fair. I am driven by the diverse wild animals who we share this earth with. Coincidentally, I had the opportunity to live, study and play rugby in Australia, and travel across the country – its open space, animals, ecosystems and biological diversity. The memories and experiences I had in Australia help to remind me what, and who, I am fighting for, every day.

**SPA: Why is population, despite remaining a controversial issue, important to you?**

Population is important to me because I know so many of the issues I care about, the health of our planet, poverty and hunger, global conflict and war, animal extinction – are directly correlated to an overpopulated planet. It is important to me because the problem is so clear and evident to me that it is impossible to ignore – unless I purposefully choose to ignore it, which I refuse to do. The math is simple. The solution is simple. I believe in human rights for all, and the beautiful part of that is population decreases as human rights increase.

**SPA: Population Media Centre empowers communities across the globe by telling transformative stories. One of the countries you work with includes our neighbours in PNG. Tell us one or two examples of your programs and the positive difference these have made.**

In Papua New Guinea, PMC co-created two radio shows with the United Nations. They were called *Echoes of Change* and *nau em taim*. Listeners to *Echoes of Change* were 2.8 times more likely to seek family planning services than non-listeners! This project was also partially funded by AusAID. *Echoes of Change* aired twice weekly in Papua New Guinea on FM 100, the country's most popular and far-reaching radio station. *Echoes of Change* was one of two PMC radio shows airing at this time as part of the Millennium Development Goals Radio Campaign, for which PMC was an implementing partner for the United Nations. Our entertainment education projects work because we can address multiple-complex issues during a radio-drama.

**SPA: What can you tell us about the power of story-telling in putting a positive frame and shifting attitudes toward embracing smaller families?**

What has been remarkable for me to learn, both in life and in my professional role at Population Media Center, is the power that role models have in our lives. I have spent the majority of my career working with direct messaging, and if I am being honest, it hasn't been all that effective. People love stories. They love characters they can relate to. I was shocked at the impact our stories have across the world, and I would point you to our impact page (Impact | Population Media Center) to see the profound effects stories have in changing fertility rates and the sexual and reproductive health choices of women across the world. We know stories have the power to create smaller families, as a direct result of choice.

**SPA: Why do you believe collaboration is important among population organisations? How can SPA members, or Australians, support the good work being done by PMC?**

Collaboration is the only way forward. Let's be honest, far too many organisations don't have the willingness to work in the space we do, because it is hard. When we collaborate, we learn, we inspire, we amplify our collective voice. I saw organisations like SPA placing successful op-eds which swayed opinions and gave voice to our community. I was inspired by so much of the work being done in Australia and other places. People in Australia can support us by advocating their government to financially support more international projects like the ones we produced in PNG. Of course, if they are financially able and willing, they can also donate at [Donate | Population Media Center](#). You can share our work online, with your family and friends, and together, we can show the world there is a better way, that promotes human rights, especially the rights of women and girls, that can make our planet so much more sustainable.



Cody Peluso

# Branch News



*"We can't go on like this. We can't push human population growth under the carpet. I would encourage every single conservation organisation, every single government organisation to consider the absurdity of unlimited economic development on a planet of finite natural resources."*

Jane Goodall

## VIC/TAS

The Victoria and Tasmania Branch has been more active recently. We had our first social catch up in a while after lockdowns and other Covid restrictions. This was held at Vegie Tribe, an all vegan restaurant in the Melbourne CBD. Our committee member Ian Butterworth has written an article which was published in the Geography Teachers Association of Victoria December 2022 edition of their newsletter which is great news. Last year, Jenny Warfe and our former Secretary Jill Quirk made a submission to the Inquiry into the Protections within the Victorian Planning Framework. The inquiry report made a number of references to the branch submission which goes to show the importance of doing these submissions as an organisation. Finally, we will be hosting the next National AGM on Saturday 1 April and we look forward to it.

Daniel Webby

## WA

With the 'build up' until Christmas and then the kick-in of hot weather, much of WA appears to then aestivate with little happening till into February. The Branch has finally jumped through all hoops and have been allocated a spot at UWA's Open day at the end of February to be followed by the Hyde Park Fair over the following weekend.

Judith Odgaard

## NSW

**Members Forum:** The scheduled one-hour NSW Branch Meeting for Members (or Members' Forum) on 30 November, was cancelled as only two members responded. The branch is looking at other ways to engage with members yet keep it fairly simple and brief as most people are time-poor these days.

**Committee Meeting:** The first NSW Branch Committee Meeting was held on Saturday 21 January. Various prospective projects were discussed, particularly in relation to those which might interest and involve member participation. Suggestions are welcomed.

**Letter Writing:** We already have a small albeit dedicated group writing letters back to the *Sydney Morning Herald* in response to misleading articles. Some of these responses do get published. However, the more people who respond in support of stabilising the population, the more likely the editors are to publish this viewpoint. If anyone (from any state) is interested in joining the team to write back to the *Sydney Morning Herald*, ideally on the same day, please contact Alan (ar7jones@optusnet.com.au), so we can include you in our WhatsApp group. We can then send you any relevant articles so you can respond, if you are available. Alan can also forward guidelines which will increase the chances of being published.

**"Strategic Plan for Humanity":** Branch President, Graham Wood, has been trying to find a professional editor who is available to edit the content and structure of his book. If anyone knows of an editor with a background in sustainability who might be available, please contact Graham (lorraine\_graham@optusnet.com.au).

## Qld

Despite the holiday hiatus in January, the Queensland branch has been busy. At our AGM in November all committee members were re-elected, plus one. Steven MacDonald from residents' group Redlands2030 gave a presentation on a large development in Moreton Bay at Toondah Harbour that will displace a natural sanctuary for birdlife. On 9 November we were treated to a lunch hosted by our President, Edward Smith for visiting ACT Branch member, Rod Taylor. A good time was had by all. Jane O'Sullivan gave a talk to Wildlife Preservation Society of Queensland (WPSQ) Bayside Group, which was well received.

At our final meeting for 2020 in December we were joined by two new members, discussed the constitution review and approved a budget for billboard advertising. In September, we formed a subcommittee to investigate the use of billboard advertising to extend SPA's reach to the general public. It includes Queensland's Simon Cole and Vaithehi Subendranathan, ACT's Mick Thompson and WA's Judith Odgaard. We agreed to focus a trial run in south east Queensland where population growth is fastest. After receiving our proposal for funding, the Queensland branch approved a budget of \$1,000 and National Executive approved \$3,000. We are coordinating with the



SPA Flyers arrive in Queensland



# Branch News

Membership and Marketing team. Mick Thompson and World Population Balance contributed past experience. We have met several advertisers, sited many locations and learnt a lot about how advertisers market their expensive products. The intention is to simply raise awareness of the SPA brand and measure results via website hits, memberships and donations.

*Simon Cole*

## SA/NT

Robyn Wood and Sandra Kanck had a productive and warm meeting with the MP for the SA federal seat of Makin, Tony Zappia, on 7 December. He said that he liked the SPA discussion papers, and commented that 'SPA is almost a think-tank'!

We have requests in to meet with SA Planning Minister Nick Champion and new federal MP Louise Miller-Frost.

Peter Martin did a presentation to Unley Rotary based on the course SPA ran earlier for U3A, and had a letter published in the *Tiser* marking the 8 billionth human. In the meantime, we are about to reach out to environment groups, as well as more Rotary groups, to offer one or more presentations that we are currently working up. Stephen Morris in particular has been busy building a database of SA groups and addresses for us to approach, as well as helping create new PowerPoints.

Michael Bayliss added a paper to the SPA website drafted by the SA/NT group titled 'The Case Against High Immigration'. We also sent a letter to Mr Ian Henschke, Chief Advocate, National Seniors Australia, offering to discuss with him our thoughts on how incentives that encourage retired people to remain longer in the workforce,

say as part-time, might help counter the pressure from the endless growthists for worker imports. We noted that the last budget did lift the amount (a little) that 'retired' people could earn before having their age pension docked, but we thought that was a miserly, short-sighted gesture and should be greatly increased.

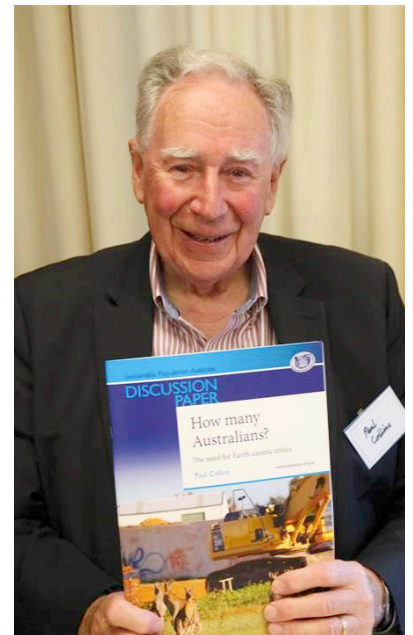
Finally we were very pleased to see our favourite committee member Dr John Coulter back home and recovering from his latest bout of illness, and busy again on Popforum.

*Peter Martin*

## ACT

Members of the ACT branch were delighted to attend the launch of the discussion paper *How Many Australians?* commissioned by SPA and written by our Patron Dr Paul Collins at the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture on 1 December. We made it our Christmas party and a good time was had by all!

*Colin Lyons*



*Dr Paul Collins and the discussion paper he wrote for SPA*

## SPA Annual General Meeting

All financial members of SPA are invited to attend the AGM at

**11am Saturday 1 April**  
(morning tea available from 10.30am)

**at Hawthorn Library**  
584 Glenferrie Road, Hawthorn VIC 3122  
and by Zoom

Please note there are a number of proposed constitutional amendments that will be sent to all members in advance of the meeting.

Nominations are invited for national executive.

The AGM will be followed in the afternoon by a public meeting with prominent speakers.



*Hawthorn library*



# Branch News

On 4 February last year, Dr Graeme Dennerstein, president of the VIC/TAS branch placed the following advertisement in The Age with the kind permission of Michael Leunig to use his cartoon. We thought it was worth running again here!

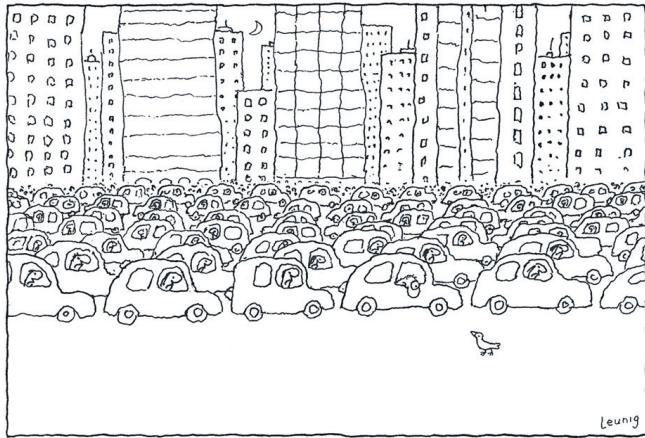


Image reproduced with permission of Michael Leunig

The evidence is beyond dispute: environmental degradation, wildlife extinction and climate change are directly related to increase in human population. The pandemic has taught us that viral spread is population dependant and the economy can survive without population increase. For the sake of our children's future our politicians can no longer keep casting 'overpopulation' into the too hard basket and must now correct their views on migration and promote overseas aid with particular attention to voluntary family planning.

**SUSTAINABLE POPULATION AUSTRALIA (SPA)**  
Check out our website:  
[population.org.au](http://population.org.au)

G12905415AA-030222

## 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 but 300 words maximum and in electronic form!

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.

### SPA national office

PO Box 85, Deakin West ACT 2600

phone: 0434 962 305

email: [info@population.org.au](mailto:info@population.org.au)

### SPA national office bearers

**President:** Jenny Goldie | 0401 921 453

[president@population.org.au](mailto:president@population.org.au)

**Vice-president:** Peter Cook | [vp@population.org.au](mailto:vp@population.org.au)

**Meetings secretary:** Sandra Kanck | (08) 8336 4114

[meetingsecretary@population.org.au](mailto:meetingsecretary@population.org.au)

**Treasurer:** Tony Matta | [treasurer@population.org.au](mailto:treasurer@population.org.au)

**Committee:** Jane O'Sullivan | Alan Jones | Graham Clews  
Stephen Saunders | Robyn Wood

**Webmaster:** Alex Geppert

[webmaster@population.org.au](mailto:webmaster@population.org.au)

**Membership officer:** Andrew Verlei

[membership@population.org.au](mailto:membership@population.org.au)

### Trustees of the Population Fund

Sandra Kanck | Tony Matta | Jenny Goldie

### Regional branches

**NSW President:** Graham Wood

[nsw@population.org.au](mailto:nsw@population.org.au)

**WA President:** Judith Odgaard | 0477 002 821

[wa@population.org.au](mailto:wa@population.org.au)

**VIC/TAS President:**

Graeme Dennerstein | (03) 9379 7777 (AH)

[vic@population.org.au](mailto:vic@population.org.au)

**ACT President:** Colin Lyons | 0434 531 449

[act@population.org.au](mailto:act@population.org.au)

**QLD President:** Edward Smith

[qld@population.org.au](mailto:qld@population.org.au)

**SA/NT President:** Peter Martin

[sa@population.org.au](mailto:sa@population.org.au)

### 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.