

“Big Australia - a concrete desert run by corporations?”

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In 2010, a scientific literacy survey of the Australian general public found about 30% believed that humans and dinosaurs had coexisted on Earth; one third also thought it took one day to revolve around the Sun. It takes a year. It's unclear whether any politicians were questioned.

In 2019, Australia continues to suffer from a plague of massive ignorance and greed.

The most obvious symptom of this plague is the plan for a Big Australia with a population of 50 million or more. Endless growth like a cancer upon the earth.

No matter that this ancient continent has limited arable soil. Or that our river systems are in a parlous state, the Murray Darling Basin is slowly dying, our mammal extinction rate the worst in the world, our forests clear felled for woodchips, soon to be burned for bio-energy.... No problem mate ... She'll be right.

But she won't.

The collective dedication to ignoring the fact that civilization is doomed because of human induced climate change, the catastrophic loss of biodiversity and the obscene dedication to growth at any cost just doesn't register with our governments.

A recent report by the UN indicates up to one million species face extinction due to human influence that has undermined the natural resources on which our very survival depends. The report says the accelerating loss of clean air, drinkable water, CO2 absorbing forests, pollinating insects, protein fish rich fish and storm blocking mangroves – to name but a few of the dwindling services rendered by nature pose no less a threat than climate change. Biodiversity loss and global warming are closely linked.

The major and minor political parties are wilfully ignorant of the environmental crises facing not only Australia but the entire world. Yes, I'm including the Australian Greens in this indictment because their leader and the current Green parties are strongly supportive of increased immigration.

Australians are provided with a daily dose of propaganda by the Murdoch media – surely one of the most destructive anti-environmental forces of darkness at work in our world today. His media supports governments hell bent on growth, development, massive immigration, infrastructure and dollars. With no thought to the future for human and non-human survival.

Unlike most conservation organisations in this country, Australians for Animals Inc is 100% opposed to Big Australia and our current unsustainable immigration rate. This ancient land has a carrying capacity, one is well exceeded.

What are the real costs of this insanity? Neither the state nor federal governments have balance sheets which value forests, rivers, rainfall, wildlife, fresh air and healthy soils. No value is given to ecosystems with no estimates of the costs of the catastrophic economic losses as the ecosystems on which we depend for life are destroyed.

Our democracy is taking a massive hit. Legal challenges to government decisions are well nigh impossible. Laws which provided for public interest challenges have been repealed, Memorandums

of Understanding between the Commonwealth & the states replacing legislation. Bilateral agreements between the Commonwealth and states ensuring even less public accountability.

What about the cost to wildlife? How much suffering, disease, and homelessness must our non-human refugees endure? Why do we humans imagine that animals suffer less than humans? How many people have seen koalas cry when their homes are chopped down?

Allow me to detail some of the driving forces of darkness behind our political and legal systems.

In 2015, Greg Hunt as Minister for the Environment, launched a Memorandum of Understanding known as the Common Assessment Method. In simple terms, the MOU allowed for one only national listing of species and plants identified under the EPBC Act designations.

Local, and regional species are no longer eligible to be upgraded. Although states can make submissions to upgrade a state species, given the cross border implications of the MOU, this Agreement effectively ensures the weakest possible protection for species and the environment.

All states have signed on to the MOU. The CAM can't be legally challenged. There were no public notices, submissions, discussions with scientists and NGOs.

If the MOU doesn't do the job, then the Bilateral agreements will as they provide for wholesale wipe-outs of environmental resources with no legal recourse. NSW is particularly fond of State Significant Infrastructures and State Significant Developments which preclude legal challenges allowing a big green light to governments.

As you would be aware, one of the first acts on winning the NSW election by Gladys Berejiklian was to axe the Office of Environment & Heritage. NSW is now the only state without an environment department. Protests face up to 7 years imprisonment.

In Queensland, the planning laws are the equivalent of obfuscatory gibberish. There are so many strategies, regulations, guidelines, etc. that allow any developer and government to hide in a deep dark impenetrable hole. Queensland's Nature Conservation Act is incapable of protecting a field mouse let alone vulnerable and threatened wildlife.

There's no provision for compliance, monitoring, enforcement, no hot lines to report or stop illegal clearing. Any action is post clearing.

Just before Federal Parliament closed down, the Chair of the Senate Inquiry into Faunal Extinction delivered an interim report.

Senator Janet Rice's summary of Commonwealth environmental protections is damning.

"The most important issue to arise from the Inquiry thus far is how totally inadequate our current Federal legislation is in terms of protecting the environment. We're dealing with the drivers of extinction. The EPBC Act is totally inadequate to deal with the situation — the problem is there's no framework for protection.

So many developments are not referred to the federal government for approval. There are no actions to minimise impacts, a lack of monitoring and compliance.

We have a situation where Federal legislation leaves it up to the states to implement approvals and no mechanisms for follow up. Offsets are a total joke — they don't work. They're accepted as the mechanics to ostensibly deal with impacts but incapable of doing the job."

As I'm a long standing mainstream professional investigative journalist, trained in objective journalism, I interviewed Senator Rice for Independent Australia. I asked her why the Inquiry and the Greens do not consider the Big Australia plan a disaster for the environment and why they continue to promote major immigration.

Given the sheer mountain of evidence provided to the Inquiry from some of the most experienced scientists in this country demonstrating looming, irreversible environmental and biodiversity crises, one would expect the Greens would be a driving force against Big Australia.

Janet Rice ducked the question. As did Greens Leader Richard di Natale when I met with him in Melbourne late last year. The Greens standard answer is that the level is sustainable, it's just not being catered for in the right way.

It's worth remembering that the 2016 State of the Environment Report spelled out the future scenario which one would assume was available to the Greens. This is an excerpt.

“The concentration of Australia's population near the coast, mostly in urban areas, creates substantial pressure on coastal ecosystems and environments in the east, south-east and south-west of the country.

The greatest impacts of population growth and demographic change on the environment are in our capital cities and along the coast of Australia, particularly in Queensland.”

The ABS provides data on the level of migration to and from Australia in 2018.

Overseas migration to and from Australia in 2018, resulted in a net increase to Australia's population of 237,200 people:

- There were 526,300 migrant arrivals which was an annual decrease for the first time since 2014.

Essentially, what this political vacuum in environmental reality means is that there is NO major or middle of the road party focused on the conflict between major immigration and the impacts on biodiversity and the environment. The Greens have sold out. The wildlife refugees in our own country have no currency. The major Australian conservation groups hide behind political correctness rather than focusing on the destruction this massive immigration is creating. Thankfully, the Sustainable Australia Party, and Animal Justice are making inroads but these gains are very small steps at a time when we need an eight lane highway.

But the real blame needs to be shafted where it belongs. When governments allowed Rupert Murdoch to take over the bulk of Australia's mainstream media outlets, a propaganda outlet was established. As a journalist, I'm appalled by the bias and misrepresentation and lies in the Murdoch press. There's no possibility of counter-acting this propaganda. His media is stridently anti the environment, anti –democracy, pro coal, big Australia, big business, political corruption, foreign ownership and censorship.

The ABC isn't much better. Occasionally the Sydney Morning Herald bites a baby bullet. Yet in spite of all the censorship, the polls show there is NO majority support for increased migration and the environment is rising on the list of electoral concerns to fourth place.

Time does not permit me to detail examples of the wanton destruction my group has witnessed. But we are aware via our Facebook Koala Crisis page that the devastation to coastal forest ecosystems is happening in Queensland and NSW at an exponential rate.

The basic question in response to this outrageous destruction is this. Are there any solutions ?

Yes.

The sustainability of Australia can no longer be the responsibility of environmental organisations. The legal and scientific professions have major responsibilities, so too do academics, teachers, business leaders and the mainstream media. If there is to be a healthy future, it is now the responsibility of every thinking Australian.

Ecosystems must be legally protected. Legislation must protect the public interest rights to challenge developments, the Murdoch monopoly on mainstream media must end, the Common Assessment Method, Bilateral Agreements must be repealed. Politicians need to be compulsorily educated on environmental matters.

I would like to leave you with a suggestion you obtain a copy of *Killing the Koala and Poisoning the Prairie* by Paul Ehrlich and Corey Bradshaw. The book is essential reading if you have any doubts about the current situation in this country.

I'll finish with an excerpt from the book.

... It is the duty of every rational citizen to call out the insanities, the ridiculous statements, the self-serving political actions and the stupid justifications provided for screwing over our only home.”

ends