

# **Towards a Vision of a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia: Some Quaker Voices**

**A discussion paper**

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and Brian Turner**

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The cover picture is of a sculpture by Craig Medson, called *Spirit House*. He states that "the circular house of sandstone encloses and protects the spirits of the marble of father, mother and child". It is located in Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens, Sunshine Coast, Queensland. Photo taken by Robert Howell

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## Foreword

*The Earth speaks to us,  
Sings beauty into our souls,  
(And whispers its pain).*

Carol McLean 1987

This booklet offers a vision of hope, at a time of increasing realisation that human action is causing potentially irreversible ecological degradation of planet Earth.

*Towards a Vision of a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia* offers an inspired picture of a future ethical and sustainable society. Compiled by a small dedicated team of Quakers drawing on contributions and ideas offered by other Quakers around Australia, the writers envisage a better world for our children, one in which the Quaker Testimonies of Peace, Simplicity, Equality, Community and Integrity flourish.

The writers consider the quality of life that future generations, our children and our children's children will enjoy, and the actions that are so urgently needed to reverse the current trend towards a compromised environment.

An early Quaker shared our concern for the stewardship of the Earth:

*The produce of the earth is a gift from our gracious creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.* (John Woolman 1772)

However, it is clear that a critical moment in the history of the Earth has been reached. The planet is no longer able to absorb and repair the damage caused by humankind to its atmosphere through the excessive exploitation of its resources, particularly fossil fuels.

The scientific community has spoken with a substantially united voice about these threats and about climatic chaos, but the response worldwide has been divided, inconsistent and ineffective. In addition to global warming, we have yet to face the challenge that our economy is dependent on fossil fuels. There is compelling evidence that this source of energy will be more difficult to extract during the next few decades leading to major cost increases. There may not be enough sustainable energy sources to replace our current levels of use and we will need to learn to live with less. The stories about water scarcity and biodiversity collapse are also alarming.

Hence, there is an urgent need to discern how to live within the capacity of the supporting ecosystems, which we, and all life on earth, depend upon for survival.

This means rethinking how to live, work, learn and play: how to build our houses, move about, grow our food, clothe ourselves, and live and work in cities and rural settings in a sustainable way. As participants in a complex and dynamic civic society, we need to seriously reassess different approaches to our political structures and decision-making processes, to our methods of investment and production, and to our actions for change.

Quakers have a long history of working for peace, sometimes at risk and against the prevailing culture. We are now turning our attention to caring for the earth. In April 2012 the Sixth World Conference of Quakers in Kenya agreed:

*However few our numbers, we are called to be the salt that flavours and preserves, and the light in the darkness of greed and destruction.*

To achieve a peaceful and sustainable society human behaviour needs radical transformation, and this booklet provides a beacon of light, pointing towards an achievable goal. It is a call to action, and I hope that the Quaker and broader community, individually and in groups, will find this booklet a useful and inspiring document.

On behalf of Australian Quakers I would like to thank the writers offering us *Towards a Vision of a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia*.

*Julian Robertson, Presiding Clerk,  
Australia Yearly Meeting,  
Religious Society of Friends (Quakers)*

## **Preface**

We believe that a reawakening of the spiritual is an imperative to generate a delight in the Earth for its own sake and care for its future. This profound truth is embodied in Quakerism. We also want to appeal to people who are not Quakers and share the need for a principled approach to the future. We hope we have provided a vision of a peaceful and sustainable Australia inspired by principles that can be shared by all people who seek to work for such a future.

This booklet does not deal with reversing the considerable damage that has been already done to our ecological systems. Nor does it deal with the future irreversible and extensive damage that will be done. Instead, we present a vision of the future in which the essential parts of the ecosystem have been restored.

We hope this booklet will be a step towards further thinking, reflection, and dialogue at all levels. We are seeking to promote a sense of urgency about the need for shared work to make changes towards a peaceful and sustainable Australia.

The idea for the Vision came out of discussions between the Peace and Earthcare Office, the Quaker Peace and Legislation Committee and the Quaker Earthcare Committee. They supported the compilers in seeking contributions from Quakers in regional and local meetings. Many contributed text and others provided comments on drafts and ideas. In this way, scores of Quakers and some others contributed to or robustly debated the ideas in the Vision. A number of specialists outside the Quaker community also provided valuable feedback.

The compilers selected the text to include, sought additional contributions, amalgamated text, considered feedback and further developed ideas. In this process, the compilers also became writers and shaped the developing Vision.

While this booklet describes our vision of a future peaceful and sustainable Australia, the writing process has been enriched by the wide ranging views among Quakers and in the broader community.

We would like to thank the many people who contributed text and ideas including Margaret Bearlin, Maxine Cooper, Jane Donnelly, Bob Douglas, Lyndsay Farrall, Andrew Glikson, Ruth Haig, Siobhan Harpur, Heather Herbert, Gael Howell, Maree-Rose Jones, Peter Jones, David King,

David Liversidge , David Lowry, Roe Morrow, Molly Harriss Olson, Barrie Pittock, Jenny Spinks, Peggy Storch, Jill Sutton, Phillip Toyne, Jo Vallentine, Yoland Wadsworth, Harold Wilkinson and Peter Williams. We also acknowledge the contribution of Susannah Brindle.

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*Robert Howell, Christine Larkin, David Purnell and Brian Turner*

## 1 Introduction

Quakers have a tradition of opposition to war and support for creating the conditions of peace through understanding and removing the causes of violence. This has involved us in initiatives such as peace education, conflict mediation, support for nonviolent conflict resolution at all levels, and action to promote human rights and equality. In identifying those drivers that will determine a peaceful and sustainable Australia, we see the causes of conflict in the risks and threats of the degradation of ecological systems and in resource depletion and misuse (particularly relating to energy). The ongoing instability and turmoil of financial, economic and political systems and the inadequate responses at regional and international levels to recognise the seriousness of these factors and their resolution are of great concern.

Quakers also have a tradition of seeking and speaking Truth wherever it may lead us. It is this that has compelled the writers of this publication to recognise and document that all is not well with this world. But we can visualise what a world in which these problems have been overcome might look like. In the Quaker tradition, this writing is a prophetic vision.

We begin by examining the values and ethics that caring individuals can bring to bear on these problems – the lens through which we all might examine the current situation to find a better way. The principles necessary for a peaceful and sustainable Australia are equality, integrity, community, peaceful resolution of disagreements, simplicity and respect for nature (Chapter 2). Australians, like many others, assume the right to life, liberty, health and property. But these rights are dependent on the capacity of the planet's supporting ecosystems, and there are no ecological conditions that guarantee human rights. A peaceful and sustainable Australia can only be achieved when we develop a respect for the Earth as well as love of our neighbours.

We then look at what is wrong with Planet Earth and its inhabitants who have largely caused its ailments (Chapter 3). Some environmentalists say the Earth is dying and many inhabitants despair that the conflicts that sap our energy and too often our lives will ever cease.

In Chapter 4, we briefly outline some of the issues and processes that will have to be considered in the period of transition to a better world. And we set no time-table.

The core of our booklet describes our Vision of a future peaceful and sustainable Australia, writing from the perspective of people who are already there (Chapter 5).

We have assumed that the considerable damage done by ecological abuse, including climate warming, has been substantially repaired.

We have also assumed that for Australia to be sustainable, we can expect to have less energy available than today. We are not precise about the level because there will be future technologies that we do not yet know about that will contribute to greater energy efficiencies. We do not know if these technologies will allow us to return to the abundant energy use that we enjoyed in the twentieth century.

Centralised governance systems for national and international government, business and civil society based on energy intensive transport and communications will often be replaced by more energy-efficient communication systems and local and regional arrangements. The likely demise of an economy driven by unlimited growth means that we will need to think more locally and regionally. We expect there will be a change from a global economy based on growth in resource consumption to one based on growth in service provision and wellbeing.

Hence our Vision starts with individuals, families, households and communities. In this future, every Australian has the opportunity for safe and fulfilling relationships in childhood and adolescence, opportunities to explore the world around them, and a sound education. In adult life, they have satisfying work that pays adequately. There is access to support services (including financial support) when things go wrong with health or well-being.

Political, manufacturing, transport and economic structures and processes are directed towards making households and local communities as vibrant, resilient and self-sustaining as possible. In this future society the majority of food is grown locally, and the provision of goods and services through government, commercial, non-profit or cooperative groups tends to be organisationally small and local. Buildings and non-polluting factories are immersed in our communities, so that there is less travel to and from work, and much less transport of manufactured output. We are able to travel but only within the carrying capacity of the planet's ability to support us.

Energy systems are all based on renewable energy. Initially this was at a reduced level of supply, and we had to learn to do more with less energy. Gradually we also developed more non-polluting ways of capturing and storing renewable energy, often locally. Industry now takes responsibility for the whole life cycle of the goods and services that are produced, so that there is far less that is sold; rather, many products are hired, and returned to the producer so they are recycled.

Our economy is based on principles that care for and protect the ecological systems that sustain our world and distribute the benefits fairly. Market mechanisms operate within bounds based on these principles. The financial sector is made up of smaller and usually cooperative banks whose main activity is to receive deposits and fund enterprises providing goods and services according to charters and codes of practice that include respect for nature.

A peaceful and sustainable Australia has a new decision-making process at national, state, regional and local levels. Our federal constitution includes a new responsibility to sustain as far as possible the health of all natural systems. We have a Respect for Nature Ombudsperson who hears complaints when the health of any natural system might be compromised by a government or private agency.

Much of the work of Parliament is done through issues committees. The scope of parliamentary debate is limited to determining and describing issues, goals, outcomes and time frames required if we are to achieve peace and sustainability. The issues committees are made up of citizens with experience in business, service industries, government and the community. Each committee researches and develops its strategy and its recommendations are made available to all citizens for a decision by an electronic referendum.

At last, women have gained full representation in the decision-making levels of all our organisations: government, commercial and civil society. There are now limits on the highest salaries paid in organisations based on the relationship to the lowest paid.

A group of scientists and other experts now advise on population levels in Australia based on estimates of the number of people who could be supported by our ecological systems. Immigration rates are determined from these carrying-capacity calculations and the fertility rate.

Our very limited military forces are now seen as a police force acting in defence of Earth and its people, and occasionally act as part of an international police force under the control of the United Nations and the International Courts. The notion of war and punitive action to resolve conflicts has been replaced by an emphasis on removing the causes of violent conflict. The use of negotiation and mediation is widespread at all levels of society.

We fully realise that the transition to a peaceful and sustainable Australia will not be easy. One of the purposes of our Vision is to describe the kind of society that we desire, so we can then discuss how best to work towards its achievement. We hope that this booklet will contribute to this discussion.

We begin by describing the Quaker principles that underpin our Vision of the future. This is followed by a hypothetical letter from a citizen of this future Australia to her long-departed Aunt Meg, who lived in our current time and longed for but did not live to see this future. In many ways this letter summarises the Vision.

## 2 Principles for a Peaceful and Sustainable Australia

### **Relationships, Values and Ethics**

Values and ethics are the beliefs and principles that every society has to define what is proper and what is of worth. These include what is right and wrong, what are obligations, what is responsible, acceptable and proper in relationships between individuals, between groups and organisations, and between people and the rest of the non-human world. Sometimes these are incorporated in codes, charters and laws, sometimes in cultural patterns, poetry, songs and traditional sayings. The right choice of these values is essential for the survival and sustainability of societies.

The United Nations Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to life, liberty, health and property. But these rights are not absolute: they are dependent on the capacity of the planet's supporting eco-systems, and there are no ecological conditions that guarantee unqualified human rights. So, in contrast to a social contract that emphasises individual property rights and exploitation of nature, a peaceful and sustainable Australia will have the values of equality, integrity, simplicity, community, peaceful resolution of disagreements and respect for nature.

These coincide closely with the values that arise from Quaker insights into humanity and spirituality. Quakers call them testimonies. We recognise that human fulfilment comes from living life in the spirit of love and peace, answering "that of God in everyone". Our testimonies or principles have reflected this approach, expressing a deep hope in our capacity as humans to be creative in dealing with new crises and opportunities in ways that affirm understanding, mutual acceptance, and care for all.

### **Equality**

The Quaker principle of equality is based on the conviction that all people are of equal worth. From the early days of Quakers, women have had equal authority to men, which was very much at odds with the social mores of those times. Equality does not necessarily mean treating people the same in all circumstances. It requires the principle of fairness, where the wellbeing of the least advantaged is promoted and the excesses of well-being sought by the advantaged are socially constrained. It requires social inclusion, such as for those with same sex preference, and the avoidance of exploitation and discrimination of people of different races and religious beliefs. In a society promoting equality men are nurturers alongside women and women are thinkers and doers alongside men. Inequalities contribute to the erosion of "social capital", that is, the cohesion of a society, the degree to which individual citizens are involved in their society, the strength of the social

networks within it, and the degree of trust and empathy between citizens. The research from a recent book, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*<sup>1</sup>, shows that what matters in determining mortality and health in a society is less the overall wealth of that society and more how evenly that wealth is distributed. The authors demonstrate that the more unequal a rich country is, the worse its performance is likely to be in a whole range of variables including: inventiveness and innovation; sustainability; life expectancy; infant mortality; obesity; the status of women; amount of mental illness; use of illegal drugs; imprisonment rates; teenage pregnancy rates; homicide; and bullying among children. Although the benefits of greater equality are biggest for the poorer classes, “*greater equality brings substantial gains even in the top occupational class and among the richest or best educated quarter or third of the population*”. It is for reasons such as these that Quakers try to identify inequalities in our society and strive to redress them.

Quaker sociologist Elise Boulding states that

*“social movements based on the concept of youth-adult partnership for social change – movements addressing the issues of peace building, environmental regeneration, human and social development, and human rights – will have an increasingly important role to play in making the cultural transition that lies ahead...from a world ordered by age and gender dominance systems that suppress much human know-how and creativity...to a world ordered by mutually respectful problem-solving partnerships”*<sup>2</sup>.

## **Community**

The values that are associated with sustainable communities include mutual respect, cooperation, gratitude, creativity, compassion, fairness, forgiveness, courage, mutual aid, trust, integrity, loyalty and respectful use of resources. A society based on these principles promotes, teaches and encourages viable and vibrant communities.

## **Integrity**

Integrity can mean both being truthful and being whole. To be true to our integrated selves, we must strive towards respectful and honest relating in all our dealings. However, in our complex world of today, how this is manifest will actually vary, depending on the person and their circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkinson, R and K Pickett. (2010 2<sup>nd</sup> ed). *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*. Penguin Books.

<sup>2</sup> Boulding, E. (2000). *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History*. Syracuse University Press.

*Every decision we make in our lives is important to the planet's sustainability and to our own personal sustainability. ...*

*In seeking to live with integrity we:*

- *use public transport, bikes, feet, cars, taxis;*
- *buy local, organic, bulk, cheap as possible;*
- *don't consume meat, dairy, rice, wheat, alcohol;*
- *live in group houses, near family, close to activity centres, in the country.*

*Some of these things are mutually exclusive, which is why we don't all do all of them. Our choices are informed by the circumstances and priorities of our lives, which mean that the best choice for one person is not necessarily the best choice for another. ... What matters is that we are choosing to live our lives in conscious ways, with integrity and as close as we can to what we believe ...*

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*"I think when I am writing songs, I am endeavouring to access truth at its very purest within me... As I peer critically at myself and the world around me, and try to express these musings poetically and simply, and above all with integrity, I feel released from normal pressures, and uplifted, as though through the creative process I can appreciate life at its fullest and truest. I think that's why creating anything is so important to young people. We are able to access and acknowledge strength, beauty, frailty, simplicity – elements of life which might otherwise be obscured from view".*

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*The benefits of a vibrant community is demonstrated well in the lecture by young Quakers, which was the result of one and a half years of creative collaboration by 54 Young Friends – aged 16 to 30ish - from around Australia. Their process is an inspirational demonstration of robust community formation into the future. About half of those involved actually presented their "voice" at the lecture, through sharing many voices. In their lecture, the Young Friends explained how they are experiencing and creating new community forms in a way that offers "a real chance to get to know one another in new and unexpected ways that push beyond the normal limits of friendship. This informs the ways we think about ourselves and interact with people in other parts of our lives. ... Expecting to find the goodness in all people transforms our lives and the way we interact with our friends, family and colleagues."*

*They also said "The Quaker way offers us all the remarkable chance to create the world we want to see, right here, right now, and have the full support of a loving community.... In such company, we are prepared to trust with our community, seek to live true to ourselves in every moment, forgive ourselves for sometimes failing in this, and work to create the Society of the future with joyful expectation and excitement about the possibilities ahead".*

Finding our voice – Our truth, community and journey as Australian Young Friends.  
2010 James Backhouse Lecture, Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia

## Peacemaking

There is considerable evidence to show that a sustainable society needs to resolve its differences and conflicts non-violently. Violent societies inflict massive destruction: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. History has proven time and again that war and violence do not bring about justice or a lasting peace. Instead, they always take a terrible toll on civilians. This is why, as a Quaker organisation, we advocate for nonviolent social change. With peacemaking goes building peace through preventive means, removing the causes of war as well as mediating conflict. So Quakers give a high priority to sustaining and promoting peace through peace education and practice at all levels of society. Constructive and creative communication and decision-making is promoted amongst children, youth and adults, females and males, of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds.

This approach recognises that different perspectives are valid, and in fact necessary for a healthy society. Thus:

*“peaceableness is an action concept, involving a constant shaping and reshaping of understandings, situations, and behaviours in a constantly changing life world, to sustain wellbeing for all” (Elise Boulding).*

## Simplicity

*I have long believed that speaking truth is both the simplest way of living your life and one of the most difficult to achieve. Speaking truth with love seems the essence of the teachings of Jesus Christ – and I suspect of all great religions.*

Judith Aitchison 1996: *This we can say* 3.53<sup>3</sup>

As Quakers we believe that our spiritual responsiveness depends on being as free as possible from dependence on, and emotional attachment to, material possessions. Once the basic elements essential for life such as food, clothing and housing are fulfilled, a simple life is a path for a satisfying, fulfilling and enjoyable life. This contrasts markedly with the drive for material wealth that currently dominates Australian society.

As well, simplicity is important because we are currently living in an overcrowded planet with depleting resources. Thus it involves challenging our own standard of living when it is achieved at great expense to the welfare of others.

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<sup>3</sup> Australia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers). (2003) *This we can say: Australian Quaker life, faith and thought*. Website: [www.quakers.org.au](http://www.quakers.org.au).

This principle is aligned with the traditional values of Indigenous Australians. Ngarrindjeri elder Tom Trevorrow stated:

*“our traditional management plan was don’t be greedy, don’t take any more than you need and respect everything around you. That’s the management plan—it’s such a simple management plan, but so hard for people to carry out.”*  
(quoted in the Murray-Darling Basin Authority Proposed Plan)

## Respect for Nature

*The real danger is that with the destruction of so much of the natural world, the spiritual basis of humanity will be threatened. We cannot afford to lose the reflective opportunity of the living desert, the sacred rainforest, the calm of still water. These are places where we can regain our sanity.*

Brian Connor 1997: *This we can say* 5.51

The term ‘nature’ is ambiguous in the sense that it is sometimes used to refer to the non-human world, and other times to the world including humans. Quakers prefer the latter use.

Respecting nature is respecting ourselves as well as the rest of the universe. It is necessary that humanity locates the wellbeing of the entire planetary ecosystem at the centre of all human aspiration and enterprise, as many scientists, poets, artists, organic farmers (the list is long) have been urging us to recognise.

What is required is a return to the idea, and its integration within our social and political systems, that human societies can only survive and flourish when they operate within nature’s laws and limitations. Thus to survive, humans must find a way to create a radical transformation in the worldview, where we do away with the hierarchical mindset and framework which promotes dominance over nature. Humanity must embrace a system of ecologies, networks and relationships in which each entity is comprehensible only by reference to those existing around it.

Susannah Brindle recounts being told by an Indigenous Australian:

*“To come right way to really belong, you Whitefellas must find where you are in one of those dot paintings.”<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> Brindle, S. (2002). *Coming Right Way*. Yearly Meeting Indigenous Concerns Committee of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Australia.

This does not mean that there is no place for market mechanisms, but that they need to be bounded within an exchange relations framework based on human life-respecting values and the resultant ethical principles. An economy in such a peaceful and sustainable world would lead humans to care for and protect the ecological systems that sustain our world, and to mutually create and distribute the benefits fairly. Values needed for this transformation include a sense of stewardship; perspectives of wholeness; and reverence for all life.

It could well be concluded that to experience a sustainable and peaceful Australia, respect for the Earth is essential for the other principles to be followed. If we do not care for the planetary ecology, humans and other living creatures will no longer exist, or else with very few in miserable conditions.

**Box 1: Letter to Aunt Meg – Jill Sutton**

Canberra  
Australia

Dear Aunt Meg,

*It's 2050 and we've come a long way since you died so suddenly. I was only a kid in 2013 but you'd be proud of Australia now, dearest Aunt, and I want to tell you why.*

*You were always asking me to 'get to the point' so I'll be concise. The fact is that, soon after your death and catastrophic bushfires, people began to realise we had no alternative but to come together over the climate change challenge. Even the newly-formed Climate Council advised that climate change was 'increasing the probability of extreme fire weather days'. We recognised that we'd been destabilising our planet's natural systems to such an extent that nothing short of a national referendum was needed to achieve national sustainability. As a result of this, we adopted new federal, state and regional responsibilities for the health of all our natural systems and we appointed a 'respect for nature' ombudsman to hear complaints about irresponsible behaviour towards the environment. This person could hear complaints about any government or private agency, dismiss ministers and was required to report annually, using the Daly laws. Of course this meant an increase in court and conflict resolution activity but it put everyone more on their toes about environmental impacts of all sorts.*

*The government oversight of this activity was given top priority and centered in the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet which oversaw, with multi-partisan support, the introduction of an emissions trading scheme and other environmental legislation to promote direct action for national sustainability. Another development you would have enjoyed, Aunt, was the introduction of a regional level of government with a gradual phasing out of the state level. This allowed considerable contribution from our Indigenous people and a greater focus on the ecological viability of regions. Some of our regions even extended to include parts of neighbouring countries so that our environmental concerns extended across some of our national barriers.*

*This enhanced our opportunities to develop our peaceful relationships with them too. We really opened up, encouraging more Asian and Pacific language learning, more peace-seeking and inter-faith groups, support for the United Nations and global disarmament, re-orientation of our military forces toward peacekeeping and human rights, and legislation to ensure that parliament has the final say in whether Australia goes to war. I know that the change to a totally peace-loving and community development approach in Afghanistan would have delighted you, Aunt Meg.*

*But how on earth did we achieve so much in just a few decades, I hear you ask. Well, you just wouldn't recognise our parliament, the way it functions now, Aunt. We have multi-party systems at all levels of government and a limit of two terms of four years in any particular unit of government to ensure a greater rotation of citizens serving on them. We have an electoral system which prevents a single issue party or one which attracts only a tiny primary vote from gaining representation. Parliamentary debate no longer focuses on minor forays to do with sustaining or blackening someone's reputation. Instead it is limited to the determination and description of the main issues, goals, outcome and time frames... and then an 'issues committee' is appointed to develop detailed implementation strategies within those predetermined timeframes. Its recommended strategy, expressed in plain English, must be endorsed through a universal and electronically communicated referendum if it is to be adopted. If the strategy gets the green light, the public service is required to implement it without further intervention!*

*Oh, and another big change has been that federal, regional and local governments have been empowered to collect tax to pay for their own activities. We've redistributed the responsibilities of the states between the other levels and closed them down. Their parliamentary buildings have been turned into professional teaching development centres. You'd love the way that now, at last, teachers are one of the most respected groups in our nation. Long overdue, I hear you mutter!*

*But I digress. Remember how you used to discuss with me the way almost everything bad was related to the gap between the poorest and the richest in any community? Well, at last we did something big about it. We made taxes much more progressive and we even introduced legislation which made it impossible for the highest pay in any company to exceed more than ten times the lowest pay in the company. What's more we made it unacceptable for the median pay in government, business and civic organisations to exceed five times that in any other organisation, making the whole distribution of income much more equitable. Some of the more privileged sectors of our society are even taking a lead in speaking of the way their reduced standard of living has enhanced their quality of life.*

*Education is now of course widely available and free for all levels. We believe in education for life throughout life, because a lot of participation from our citizens is achieved through deliberative democracy. Our enthusiasm for the principle of subsidiarity brings decision-making close to the citizens and relevant to the land which they know best but, with our equal enthusiasm for equity, we have continued to build up our safety nets for financial security, health and education. We now use sensible indicators for quality of life like the Human Development Index and the Genuine Progress Indicator so that unfettered growth is no longer regarded as a good thing. Without the national emphasis on economic growth, we saw a greater willingness to learn and invest in the arts and to savour our precious lives as they are lived. You were ahead of your times, Aunt, the way you insisted on keeping your personal life style simpler and taking pleasure in the process of making things rather than buying mass-produced goods.*

*Of course, we couldn't just focus on our internal equity without acknowledging the vast inequities internationally which were worrying us in 2013. We set up a Plan for Global Equity (a sort of second Marshall Plan) which now garners from wealthy nations and gives big gifts and know-how to poorer nations. A wellbeing index is used to do the necessary comparisons. Needless to say, as one of the most affluent countries in our region, we have vastly increased our foreign aid, in accord with this plan. With our increase in carefully monitored aid to Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and to struggling African countries we have been able to reduce the need for refugees from these places to risk their lives in boats trying to reach the Australian coast.*

*Our international relations have also improved. We have a Pacific Island worker scheme which has relocated threatened surrounding island populations to stable employment and education on the mainland. Sustainability lessons from Asia and the Pacific have also improved our performance in that area. A bio-regional rather than a national approach to large projects has seen the inclusion of bio-regional representation in the Australian parliament. We realized soon after your death, Aunt, that there was no way we would get an international agreement about ameliorating climate change... so we are encouraging bi-lateral agreements wherever possible. We are already working on one with China and another with Indonesia!*

*Our concerns about foreign ownership of farming land have been ameliorated with the High Court's ruling in favour of most native title claims. This in turn drove us to implement sustainable farming practices, as overseas ownership slowed. We have stopped the process of 'fracking' which we feared was interfering with our water tables, and hence with our most precious resource, water.*

*We have stabilised population in response to an Australian Conservation Foundation policy document which indicated that we had already exceeded our sustainable population level. This was mostly achieved by implementing a massive education program which focused on the environmental impact of population resulting in our national agreements to manage our birth rates. These days people who still crave to care for more children after the regional quota has been reached are encouraged to adopt, and refugees and family reunions are only permitted in so far as the 2012 population level is not exceeded. Our humanitarian refugee program has been allowed to increase in those years when we have made a national decision to reduce our birth rate still further. Naturally this has been controversial, but we are realising that these national moral dilemmas have strengthened our democratic muscle.*

*We have spread people more widely across the continent. In your day, remember, there were eight capital cities but now we have about fifteen cities in a network. They have catered for more regional growth and helped us deal with climate-induced threats such as sea-level rise. As these regional cities have grown we have favoured medium-density infill housing with local shops mixed with green space and local industry. We use mostly cycling, walking and clean-energy bus transport, with car use and parking even banned in some areas. Road transport is mainly used for journeys of 300 km or less and trains for longer journeys. Sometimes smaller village-type settlements adopt their own alternative currencies and energy sources.*

*I want you to know, Aunt, that in these settlements it is not uncommon to see a majority of Asian or African rather than Caucasian faces. We have grown to celebrate and cherish our immigrant and refugee communities. Remember the rumpus in your times about 'boat people'? Now it is often those very same people who are recovering the remote towns in our nation and making them special showplaces for different, more sustainable food production and new ways of communal living. We love them and organise holidays there in preference to overseas trips. Oh and you won't have known that we've had an African-Asian PM. We gained much international credibility with Boitumelo who served one term in this country as PM and then went on to become Secretary-General of the UN!*

*Australia's infrastructure is much more efficient now, Aunt. We encourage interoperability with, for instance, gas ducts being used for base-load wind power, and mining taxes are invested in education and infrastructure. We have an improved mapping of energy flows across the country and our emissions trading scheme has been successfully implemented with the desired reduction in use of carbon fuels. Of course cars using fossil fuels are a thing of the past with electric vehicles the rule these days.*

*How did we do it? Well, do you remember Suntech Power, that Chinese solar company which was established by an entrepreneur who had studied at UNSW? Using his research that company and now many others were able to reduce power costs internationally and massively! Our aluminium smelters shifted offshore to China! Not good for China, I hear you say, but so good for our own environment! Australia's coal industry took a nose dive. I can hear you cheering... and so Aunt, our move to renewable energy was essential... even on economic grounds. Our government, Shakespeare would say, was 'hoist on its own petard'.*

*Money is seen as a tool these days rather than the master... so banks are required to hold 100% reserves and growth is limited by banking charters and codes so that ecological limits are observed. Banks are no longer used as vehicles for speculation, with business graduates moving to innovation in engineering and science, and loans are only approved where the ecological benefits are proven. There has been a growth in the number of smaller banks and investment funds which allow investors to plan more carefully, reducing the spread of their investments and committing their funds for longer periods so that they can actually see the sustainable fruits of their investments.*

*Public debt has remained low, Aunt, and the government does not hesitate to use counter-cyclical monetary and fiscal policies to offset any rise or fall in employment. Australia's economy has opened to international trade especially in the Asia-Pacific. We realised, however, that there was no way unregulated trade was going to meet our desire to achieve more international equity so we have regulated it, as recommended by the senior officials of the Plan for Global Equity.*

*I have already mentioned the way we have gone for safety nets with respect to education and health. With our commitment to education as a public right (and indeed a public and universal responsibility), we gave principals and schools more autonomy in curriculum and a simplified testing schemes. Respect for our teachers and lifelong learning grew alongside the use of technology to free them for more of the creative interactions and deep understanding which all good teaching entails. Formal schooling does not start till the seventh year so that play and physical exercise can be taught early and become a lifelong habit.*

*Health has been developed with a more communal, preventive, wholistic and spiritual emphasis, and mental illness of course is treated much more compassionately. Environments are built with health of the citizens in primary focus.*

*Aunt, we've got rid of that 'cacophony of artificial images' which were so quickly 'created, destroyed and replenished'. We have moved to use of less resources with a focus on design, use of bio-degradable materials and we now emphasise use and re-use. We have moved to local manufacture, cooperatives, local pooling, crafts and tradespeople. People have learned to relate to and to love their neighbourhood and to commit to its sustainable practices.*

*At this point, I think we have about eighty bio-regions used for the management of water, biodiversity and other resource management. In the marginal areas to the north we have found new economic activities such as carbon farming and of course the extensive network of Indigenous Protected Areas protect ecosystems as well as providing employment. Soil health has improved with the reduced use of synthetic fertilizers, revegetation, control of feral animals and increased carbon farming. Water management is at the federal level including the care of groundwater and of whole-of-catchment areas such as Lake Eyre Basin. Water buybacks have enabled the Murray River to flow through to the ocean and there are five year management plans with annual reviews with landholders, scientists and government. Promotion of Blue Carbon and a network of Marine National Parks have saved many marine species and sustainable fishing has been negotiated through the Pacific Regional Cooperation Agreement which has continued a moratorium on mining in Southern Oceans.*

*And you wouldn't recognise our landscape now! The proportion of land under forests has lifted from 19 to 22% (back to the pre-European level). That may not seem much but it's an increase of 20 million hectares! Local communities, across all sorts of tenure, participate in decisions about land and they are made with an awareness of both local and global needs. Building needs are met sustainably with almost no importation. And an awareness of the vital role of forests is widely taught, not only as to their physical but also their spiritual dimensions.*

*There is a much greater natural and local diversity in our food. This, coupled with the forest increase, has provided us with some buffer against severe climate events. It has reduced the incidence of allergy and chronic illness, improved food flavour and allowed hoofed animal grazing to be reduced in overused farming land.*

*A new sort of multi-cultural awareness of the numinous has become an important part of our maturity as a nation, Aunt Meg. Only last night, at a Friday shared dinner with Friends, I was struck by the change in our very attitudes to our meal. We now practise what is called the 'disciplined appetite' which has come to mean that we eat less and slowly, only after talking and cherishing the particular local origins of our food, noting the food miles involved, what soil it grew in, who grew it and who sold it. We eat only foods in season and celebrate the changing of the seasons, about eight in all, mostly in Indigenous terms. You can imagine how this change has shaped even our poetry and has taken us far from the Anglo-Saxon nomenclature of your times, Aunt.*

*But bless you, dearest Aunt, for insisting on being hopeful in the face of the challenges we faced in the early 2000s. You must have known something that I didn't... and I want to thank you for it. Your insistence that national sustainability was a possible goal, despite the intransigence of the Australian public of your own day, still moves me to tears.*

*Much love from Jill*

### 3 Our Current Situation

#### Ecological Capacity and Population

The message from the ecological scientists from a wide variety of disciplines is that the Earth has a finite capacity and humans are exceeding it in many areas. Our planet is sick, some would say dying. A combination of exponential growth in human population and the human economy means we have hit the natural limits imposed by physics, chemistry and biology. The dramatic increase in human population over the past hundred years, associated with our consumerist lifestyle and insatiable demand for more food, fresh water, resources and space, has resulted in a demand for arable land and water that exceeds the available supply by about 50% and we are now damaging the very resources we depend on. The complex ecosystems that enable Earth to adjust to the demands made upon it are no longer able to cope with the activities of 7 billion humans. Despite this, both the number of humans on the planet, and the demands each makes on Earth's finite resources, rise ever higher. Already, we have exceeded a number of critical limits. The goal of perpetual economic growth based on non-renewable resources is unachievable.

The signs of the impending massive crisis of survivability include more frequent extreme weather events, more rapidly melting ice caps and thinning sea ice. We believe that the stress of a growing human population is contributing to the increasingly violent social chaos in large areas of the world as those who have been deprived of a voice and resources become the first to face the consequences of a problem caused by all. We find ourselves entering an era predicted long before now by the likes of Thomas Malthus (1798), Paul Ehrlich (1968) and the Club of Rome in its "Limits to Growth" (1972). We are headed for an era of collapse of civilizations and perhaps at its extremes, the extinction of the human species, as well as of increasing numbers of animal and plant species.

#### *Australian Quaker Children's Questions in 2009*

*The meeting heard from the children, whose message underscored the urgency of Earthcare for their generation. The children shared ideas for actions for Earthcare:*

- *'Use more solar and wind power.'*
- *'Write to the government to fund research into electric, solar and non-petrol cars.'*
- *'Ride your bike or walk when you can.'*
- *'We are sad – start now, please!'*

*The Junior Young Friends (aged 12-16 years) offered a short statement, saying: 'We are concerned that it will be too late soon.'*

## Climate Warming

The international scientific community is overwhelmingly convinced that human-induced climate change, in the form of global warming with associated changes in rainfall distribution and extreme weather events, and in sea-level rise, is real, is happening now, and may reach dangerous levels. These may include tipping points into radically different conditions within this century.

There are uncertainties about the rate of change globally and regionally, largely due to possible "feedback effects" that amplify or reduce the initial effects. There will be many significant physical impacts. Many studies indicate that 4°C or more increase in average global temperature is very likely to be unavoidable. Extremes in evaporation and rainfall will increase globally by a factor of two to six times; present climate models suggest the lower amount, but observations of recent changes in ocean surface salinity indicate it could be at the higher rate. There will be significant rises in average and regional sea levels due to thermal expansion of ocean waters, melting of glaciers and ice sheets, and loss of ground water to the oceans. The sea level rise is likely to be in the range of 50 cm to perhaps as much as 1 or 2 metres by 2100. We face in the near future a complete loss of Arctic Ocean sea ice cover, at least during summer.

*I was depressed by the impotence of a peace testimony in a world which seemed to be constantly at war. The arms trade was abhorrent and diverted much-needed Third World funds from services like health and education. The Quaker emphasis was rightly on exposing these horrors. However, I was more deeply concerned at the wider implication of the peace testimony in a world where the environment was being threatened at every level. The war on nature and our fellow creatures just had to stop. The tragedy was not so much that we were destroying life for future generations but that we had not even seriously started to do anything about it.*

Brian Connor 1997: *This we can say* 3.29

There will be many social impacts. There will be large numbers of refugees within and between countries. Severe food shortages are predicted at least regionally due to increased frequency and severity of floods, droughts and wildfires. There will be severe health problems due to malnutrition, heat stress, spread of disease vectors, and other adverse health consequences. Potential international conflicts are likely, due to large numbers of refugees, poverty, territorial claims, and the possibility of unilateral attempts at geo-engineering projects.

There will be ongoing and increasing problems regarding the agreement (or lack of agreement) on greenhouse gas emission reduction measures such as

carbon trading or carbon taxes. This is already emerging as a major problem of international equity, given past high total and per capita emissions in many developed countries (including Australia). There will be increases in erstwhile disasters due to floods, droughts, and wildfire and disease outbreaks, requiring international aid, emergency relief and possible relocation of victims.

## **Water**

There is a worldwide problem of diminishing water quantity and quality. By 2030, demand will likely exceed supply by 40%. Yet the way we currently obtain water, and the way we use water, is unsustainable. Since the 1950's ongoing drying trends have been experienced in the southwest and east of Australia, with increases in rainfall in the north and northwest. Snow duration and cover has declined and droughts have become more severe. Many important river and wetlands systems have been degraded. A number of stream flows have dropped and there has been an over-allocation of water from many rivers, some for unsustainable farming practices. There has been as a consequence degradation of water quality and reduced quantity.

There is no appropriate national groundwater assessment network or national systematic assessment of river and wetland health and there is no realistic description of likely future groundwater flows. It is not possible to reset past over-optimistic water allocations without an accurate picture of what water is likely to be available. There is no well-coordinated national and state approach to groundwater assessment and use, and decisions are too open to political manipulation by sectional interests. (This is equally true of surface water.) Governments at federal and state level often take short term and ad hoc approaches. Market mechanisms for water allocation are often poorly applied and regulations are frequently both weak and poorly enforced, especially when interstate coordination and proper monitoring are lacking. There is often no serious commitment to 'environmental flows', that is, water to maintain healthy ecosystems for non-humans.

## **Energy**

Most research to date suggests it is unlikely that conventional fossil fuels and clean renewable energy sources will be able to sustain our current levels of economic activity and economic growth as the human population increases, and we will have to learn to do more with less.

Fossil fuels contribute 29.26 gigatonnes (Gt) or 61% of total annual greenhouse gas emissions worldwide, with oil contributing 10.8 Gt and gas 5.87 Gt respectively. While from a current international viewpoint coal is the main problem with global warming, oil and gas are also very significant.

Australia, followed by Canada and the USA, has the highest rate of emissions per person of the developed world. Electricity (34%), stationary energy excluding electricity (17%), and transport (16%) are the three main contributions to Australian emissions. Stationary energy excluding electricity includes emissions from direct combustion of fuels, predominantly in the manufacturing, mining, construction and commercial sectors. The main sources of electricity are black coal (52%), brown coal (23%) and gas (15%), but much fossil fuel is exported for use (and the production of greenhouse gases) overseas. There are very large financial infrastructural commitments (with the support of Australian banks) to increasing Australia's coal exports over the next one to two decades through extraction and transport (rail and port), and many of these are well on the way to planning approval. Developments in gas are also well advanced. The introduction of a carbon price through tax or market mechanisms is unlikely to significantly change this because of the many exemptions in the current regulations.

While there is a problem with fossil fuels in that they contribute to global warming, just as important is that within about 20 years liquid petroleum supplies will have significantly declined. Fracking or coal seam gas production will not significantly alter this in the medium to longer term. But the major issue with fossil fuels is the difficulty of extraction. This has been described with the concept of EROEI ratios. EROEI is *Energy Return on Energy Invested*, also referred to as "net energy," and is declining significantly. More energy is required to obtain energy as the remaining fuel is more difficult to obtain. In the US in 1930 the EROEI ratio for oil was at least 100 barrels returned for each barrel invested, but declined to about 30:1 in 1970 to between 11 and 18: 1 in 2000<sup>5</sup>. As the EROEI ratio decreases, more investment will have to be diverted from other products and services to maintain current levels. The cost of energy will almost certainly increase.

The EROEI ratio for many forms of renewable energy is not high. The manufacture, installation and operation of all forms of renewable energy systems require large amounts of fossil energy. This dependence will diminish in the long term.

A transition to 100% renewable energy may be feasible in the future. Looking at the supply of electricity in the eastern states of Australia, modelling by the Australian Energy Market Operator in 2013 shows that a switch to providing all electricity from renewable solar, wind, hydro and other clean power sources would be technically viable by 2030.

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.theoil drum.com/node/3810>

A community report based on the modelling results found that this switch to renewable energy sources for electricity in the eastern states could cost the same as continuing to use fossil fuels to generate electricity.

Trainer estimates that, under certain scenarios, to meet, renewable sources could only meet one third of total projected energy demands by 2050 under present Australian per capita energy consumption<sup>6</sup>. Renewable energy cannot be a complete substitute for fossil fuel at current and higher levels of use. We will have to do with less.

According to Heinburg, the replacement of fossil fuels with alternative sources of energy is clearly necessary, but presents the world with an unprecedented technical challenge<sup>7</sup>. Transport systems (cars, buses, trucks, trains, aircraft, and ships) can in some cases be electrified; in other cases, petroleum-based liquid fuels can be replaced with biofuels. Energy can be produced from sunlight and wind rather than coal and gas. However, alternative energy sources currently provide only a small portion of current world energy, so a change will require enormous investment over several decades. Realistically it is not possible for this to occur within the necessary time to avert major ecological deterioration.

Nuclear power plants provide about 6% of the world's energy and 13-14% of the world's electricity. There are around 440 nuclear power reactors in operation in the world. Safety is an issue with the accidents at Three Mile Island (1979), Chernobyl (1986), and Fukushima (2011) being the most well known. Building more plants creates a greater possibility of accident, exposure to terrorist activity, and difficulties with waste disposal. China has 25 nuclear power reactors under construction, with plans to build many more. Germany decided to close all its reactors by 2022, and Italy has banned nuclear power. Following Fukushima, the International Energy Agency halved its estimate of additional nuclear generating capacity to be built by 2035. But the US Nuclear Regulatory Commission this year has issued a licence for two new reactors. This will be the first in the US since before the Three Mile Island accident in 1979. Whatever the views about the merits of nuclear power, because of widespread public concern and the long time needed for planning and building new plants, nuclear energy can only be a small part of the solution to global warming or liquid fuel depletion.

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<sup>6</sup> Trainer, T. (2012). Can Renewable Energy Sustain Consumer Societies? A Negative Case. Simplicity Institute Report 12e

<sup>7</sup> Heinberg, R. (2011). The End of Growth: Adapting to our New Economic Reality. New Society Publishers.

## **Food**

Our current food system is unsustainable, discriminates against lower income people, has poor transparency for standards and regulation, is wasteful and is not providing healthy food choices.

Modern agriculture, with its emphasis on high yields requiring high inputs of synthetic fertilisers, chemicals, water and energy, is unsustainable in Australia with its mostly poor soils, low and variable rainfall and other weather events. In the past, these practices have produced high quality grains and livestock delivered to the consumers at a low cost. But they cannot continue to do so under any plausible future scenario with rapidly rising input costs such as fuel and transport and the demands of rapidly increasing urbanised populations.

Consumers still demand perfect quality foodstuffs at all seasons of the year and despite natural disasters, requiring transport over long distances or from overseas. In addition the public has been seduced into buying packaged products replete with preservatives and taste-enhancers, which contribute to obesity and poor health.

The social costs are measured in high suicide rates and family dislocations which are closely associated with drought, an aging farmer demographic and commodity prices. Agribusiness has successfully forced a number of small farmers off the land and into the towns and cities in the interests of efficiency and scale, but at the cost of limiting the access of future Australians to clean, nutritious local food, local knowledge and healthy, thriving environments.

Conversely Australia is a leader in some agricultural methods such as permaculture and conservation farming practices which take into account the variability in soils and climate and relate the products grown to the suitability of the ecosystem to produce them. The knowledge and experience are here to turn around the capture of the food market by agribusiness but it may well take a climate change disaster to bring it about.

The cost of food is the second most important factor affecting food decisions (after taste). The current structure of food prices means that high-sugar and high-fat foods provide calories at the lowest cost and this makes compliance with dietary guidelines difficult for those on limited incomes.

As consumers have become increasingly divorced from the methods of food production, and less skilful at food preparation using basic ingredients, there has been a rise in demands for more information about the food we eat and

more concerns expressed about the safety, regulation and labelling of food. Current transparency is poor leading to loss of trust in our national food regulatory systems.

It has been estimated that at least \$5 billion worth of food is thrown away per year in Australia, and food and organic waste makes up 25-30% of land-filled waste.

In 2008, 37% of Australian adults were overweight and 25% were obese. As well as the health consequences of this, there are environmental costs, with greenhouse gas emissions associated with the unnecessary extra food production required to maintain excess weight.

### **Land, Oceans, Air, and Biodiversity**

The Australian landscape has undergone dramatic changes since the arrival of humans, millennia ago. First, Indigenous people significantly altered vegetation with fire, resulting in the broader extent of eucalypts and other fire dependent species. But the really major changes have been wrought since the coming of Europeans over 220 years ago, bringing agricultural, industrial and technological practices that have dramatically altered land and water use patterns across the continent.

There is now well documented evidence of many of Australia's ecosystems being used beyond their capacity. This has resulted in loss of biodiversity, extinctions of unique flora and fauna, massive increases in the areas of saline and acid soils, depletion of soil carbon, erosion, and cleared or simplified forests. A consequence has also been the diminishing and degrading of waterways and groundwater and many coastal estuaries. Biodiversity includes not just native plants and animals, but landscape scale ecological processes, connectivity, and nutrient cycles.

The causes of these changes are many, but include widespread clearance and fragmentation of vegetation for agriculture and urban use, misapplied irrigation, application of synthetic fertilisers, the introduction of feral animals and weeds and the overuse of native forests.

Similar factors are at work in our surrounding oceans, with fisheries depleted and with Australia now importing two thirds of its domestic seafood. Intensification of development pressure from growing urbanisation is threatening fragile ecosystems in peri-urban and coastal regions. Rapid expansion of mining is impacting on biodiversity and groundwater. Land use planning processes are failing to protect our precious environmental assets for future generations.

There are attempts to reverse these unsustainable trends. The best practice activities of natural resource managers who include conservationists, farmers, fishers and foresters provide some pointers. Identifying corridors or areas to reconnect fragmented landscapes, and managing weeds and feral animals are just some of the activities now underway.

### **Cities, Communities and Life Style**

Australian cities and towns have been established on the principles of territorial occupation of the land, growth and consumption. These settlements have displaced the original Indigenous inhabitants of the land and disrupted pre-existing ecologies. The growth of these cities and settlements has led to the creation of environments characterised by ecological, social and spiritual fragmentation. The cities have erased existing ecosystems and new development is not linked to these natural systems.

Australian cities and settlements continue to consume vast amounts of natural resources. The consumption of these resources is unbridled in order to feed unsustainable energy, food, and housing demands. Disparities of justice are evident in the allocation of these resources and the financial and monetary instruments circulating in these settlements exacerbate this.

Australians in cities and settlements are no longer linked to the silent rhythms of days, months and seasons. Instead we are bombarded by advertisements trying to entice us into buying the last gadget. Our cities have lost the beauty and deep connection with the natural world.

Australians in cities are now living beyond their means and in this environment those resources which are available are distributed unevenly and unjustly. These communities are at risk environmentally and need reassessment of their resource use and infrastructure development to restore this balance. This includes the way we construct our buildings, reorganise our transport systems and supply energy to all institutions within those urban areas.

*There is a danger in the isolation and want of companionship of the dweller in the bush and there is a danger in the hurry, the activity, the excitement of the crowded city... a roar of many voices on religion, on politics, on commerce, on pleasure daily distract... .*

From the Epistle from Adelaide to Melbourne Quaker Annual Meeting 1871:  
*This we can say* 5.38.

## **Economy**

The current Australian and international economic model, neoclassical economics, is primarily based on the belief that the market is the best method for the allocation of resources. It assumes that the individual, led by an invisible hand through an unregulated and competitive market, responds to prices on goods and services, and brings about the efficient maximisation of social welfare. As a resource is used, the market causes prices to rise naturally over time. This encourages the introduction of resource substitutes, new capital and technology. Neoclassical economics assumes that substitution is always possible which makes scarcity only relative. The neoclassical framework has been adapted by some economists to attempt to deal with environmental externalities (where costs of such matters as pollution are not included in the price) and market limitations.

The market does have limitations. With no restrictions, monopolies tend to develop. The market cannot supply public goods adequately and often not at all. Unrestrained markets over time lead to greater numbers of poor people, and a very rich elite. The environment suffers due to inadequate pricing and incorporation of externalities. But the majority of present day economists work in the neoclassical framework, and attempt to make adjustments for market imperfections.

The economic model has adopted a utilitarian ethic that the right action is where greatest benefit or utility is distributed to the greatest number of people. Cost benefit calculations are based on this ethic.

The major difficulty with this model is that its basic principles are not based on modern ethics or science, and its application is compromised by wealthy elites and corporations that skew financial benefits to their advantage. A utilitarian philosophy sees the world's resources basically as there for exploitation for human utility and hence disadvantages the non-human world as well as poor people and countries and future generations. It ignores the laws of modern science that contradict the assumptions that unlimited growth and resource substitution are always possible.

There are major consequences for a growth economy with the decline in the availability of energy and the rise in its cost. If oil prices rise, recession is likely to follow. Four out of the five recessions experienced since 1970 can be explained by increased oil prices. But in the future it will be a long term recession, if we continue to depend on current levels of energy use. Rather than increasing the supply side, we need to look at the demand side, and begin to live with less energy. There is a need to move to ways, values, institutions and systems that greatly reduce the need for materials, energy and ecological

resources. Under these scenarios a growth economy is not possible, and our current financial systems, including our banking institutions, will collapse, and with it the dominant neoclassical economic model.

The mindless pursuit of growth in the production of goods and services does not contribute to a flourishing healthy life (in fact the opposite). The economy is destroying the ecological systems which we are dependent on for life. It is an illusion that the current economic measurements and cost benefit analysis method bring progress and well-being. The current economy fosters conflict and expectations that can never be realised. It is neither peaceful nor sustainable.

### **Domestic and Institutional Conflict**

*I believe that violence is used at many levels to control other people. For many years Quakers have held that international violence is to be avoided at all costs. I believe that violence in relationships is the ground in which other violence grows and that, if we are to develop a just and peaceful society, we must look to reducing the violence within our families. Thus for me, working towards a reduction in domestic violence is very much part of my belief that peace is an essential component of life as it should be.*

Topsy Evans 1990: *This we can say* 3.107

White Australia's early convict origins and territorial occupation of Aboriginal lands was a period of substantial violence. Since then there have been political, social and economic changes that have reduced violence in our community and promoted respect and acceptance of diversity. Although Australia is now relatively freer from physical violence than many other countries, we are not immune from the many more subtle forms of violent behaviour, such as bullying, verbal abuse, emotional manipulation and exclusion.

The denial of rights and marginalisation of some people or groups is also a form of violence and can be structured into the institutions of the society. The treatment of Aboriginal Australians, of asylum seekers, and people from minority groups continues to cast a dark shadow.

The physical and structural forms of violence interact so that, for example, a woman in a violent domestic situation may be trapped not only by her partner, but also by the unequal opportunities and division of resources at a societal level. The societal expectation that she will turn away career opportunities to care for her children may diminish her capacity to earn an income and hence her capacity to leave a violent relationship.

There is inadequate effort on teaching and using non-violent conflict resolution in the home, the school, and our diverse communities and

workplaces. Resolution of conflict through violence is costly, leaving scars that are carried throughout life.

### International Conflicts

*For the present and for the foreseeable future, there is little intrinsic basis for conflict between Australia and her Asian neighbours. However, if our policies continue to be motivated by fear and great power identification, rather than by constructive and purposeful national ideals, we will be inviting trouble. The years ahead in the Asian region will be tumultuous, for the modernising revolution in Asia is far from complete.*

Keith Crook 1970: *This we can say* 5.56

Australia has a long coastline with few people to defend it. Military planners are tied to the US Alliance in a way that leads to Australia becoming involved in distant conflicts (examples: Iraq, Afghanistan), in defiance of public opinion. It also leads to decisions enhancing intelligence sharing and naval facilities, acquiring high-tech equipment beyond our defence needs, and offering access to our ports and bases, and threatening our sovereignty. Money thus spent is diverted from building non-military security. There is insufficient public debate about these issues, given the commitment of the major political parties to the US alliance.

A defence policy, and the role of the Australian Defence Forces (ADF), should be seen as part of a comprehensive set of policies that identify strategic risk and set up ways of minimising that risk. Threats include wide income inequalities, political and economic dominance, ecological degradation, and economic turmoil. Prevention is the best way to avoid widespread and costly destruction through armed conflict. The threat of ecological degradation and its consequences is not significantly appreciated in the Force Posture Review 2012. Nor is the danger of further economic crises. These threats are far more significant than a direct military threat to Australia, which The Force Posture Review 2012 recognised as low.

There is a role for the ADF in border protection for immigration and customs, dealing with anti-terrorist and cyber attacks, providing humanitarian and disaster relief, and being part of an international policing force related to an international justice system. The reliance on the US for military purposes is outdated and inconsistent with the preventive and policing means of addressing the strategic risks<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> Australian Quaker submission to the Defence White Paper 2013  
<http://www.quakers.org.au/associations/7464/files/DefenceWhitePaper2013submission.pdf>

## **Decision Making Processes**

At an international level, the United Nations and related institutional bodies have not been able to deal with the threats of ecological degradation, the growing gap between rich and poor, the power of large multinational companies that ignore their damaging environmental impacts and the needs of local people, the inability to peacefully resolve conflicts, and the ineffectiveness of judicial bodies to bring to account many of the perpetrators of violence against people and our planet.

In Australia there are serious weaknesses in our governance. At a federal level, a short-term perspective leads to a focus on re-election prospects and discourages seeking agreement on matters of common interest. Parliament is open to manipulation by wealthy vested interests, and an economic discourse that misses the true indicators of what makes a flourishing life.

The narrow pursuit of development leads to destructive conflict over resource use (example: mining versus farming) and the degradation and loss of our treasures such as the Great Barrier Reef. The ability of multinationals to exploit our resources without due regard for their negative environmental and social impacts is in part due to decision making processes that do not enable all stakeholders to have a fair say and a just distribution of the benefits. It is still very much a minority adult white male club that dominates our governing processes.

Local decision-making on the whole has to react to and fit in with the policies of the States and the Commonwealth Government.

The current structures and processes of governing significantly restrict our ability to face a turbulent future and make the changes that will protect our essential ecosystems and enable Australians to live satisfying and flourishing lives.

***Box 2 : Treatment of First Peoples – Heather Herbert and Susannah Brindle***

*It is scarcely to be supposed, that in the present day, any persons of reflection will be found, who will attempt to justify the measures adopted by the British, in taking possession of the territory of this people, who had committed no offence against our nation; but who, being without strength to repel the invaders, had their lands usurped, without any attempt to purchase by treaty, or any offer of reasonable compensation.*

James Backhouse 1837: *This we can say* 5.10

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*A motley group of soldiers, officers and convicts arrived with orders to set up base and a prison and food supply in a totally strange country, which they understood was empty and undeveloped, peopled by strange animals and a few ‘savages’.*

*In the event, this struggling group and those who followed them resorted to a great deal more savagery than did the First Nations they found here.*

*It was beyond the thinking of the time, in any part of the world, that this group of seemingly under-clothed, under-equipped humans might have a civilization as old as that of the invaders, an in-depth knowledge of the flora and fauna of the country, and of the spirit of the land; and how humans could most successfully co-exist in and with this difficult land.*

*The British could only try and establish British ‘civilisation’, and discourage native ‘interference’ in whatever way worked. Some tried to convert them to European beliefs and values, and, in some cases, protect them from massacre. There is little evidence to indicate that settlers or their organisers considered that the blacks could have anything to teach them.*

*As time went by, squatters found that black people could be useful workers (and sexual partners) in return for a place to live and some food supplies. There is little evidence they recognised or cared how much they had taken from the black people.*

*Australian Aboriginal peoples over centuries had had much less contact with other cultures than the Eurasian races. They acquired skills and practices relatively quickly, partly to adapt and survive in their new circumstances, no doubt partly with some enjoyment and sense of achievement, even while trying to sustain their own cultural practices, ceremonies and values – a near-impossible aim given their immensely changed circumstances.*

*It took almost 200 years for Aboriginal people to be counted in the census as citizens of their native land, to graduate from universities, to achieve representation in white circles.*

*The last few decades or so have seen great strides in recognition of Indigenous land rights, in the formation of recognized Indigenous peoples' agencies, in chairs in universities and the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), in the numbers of Indigenous graduates in many fields, in appreciation of sporting, artistic and musical ability. Ecologists and anthropologists have recognised the value of their intimate knowledge of the land and surrounding seas. Linguists are working to save the surviving Aboriginal languages. Today they can claim "We have survived!" and the few full-blooded Indigenous descendants, and many mixed-blood people, value their culture and identity, and work to sustain it, in the face of evident racism remaining in all aspects of Australian society.*

*There are still a vastly higher percentage of Indigenous people in prison than of any other racial group. We are frequently regaled with health and life expectancy gaps, the high suicide rates, sexual abuse, and substance abuse. These are all symptoms of a traumatised and disempowered people. Powerlessness is known to be one of the greatest sources of trauma. Black initiatives for bettering their situation struggle for support, and funding is usually too short-term to be effective.*

*Yet governments and bureaucrats, perhaps earnestly seeking to 'Close the Gap', still believe white people know what is best for black people and their descendants. Assimilation to white values and practices is assumed to be the answer. Large sums of money are being allocated to 'closing the gap' in ways determined by white agencies, and largely carried out by well-paid white people. Consultation is both inadequate and misrepresented. Even bodies formed to speak for the Aboriginals are not consulted.*

## 4 Steps for Transition

The basic global drivers that are shaping the future are population; climate change; price increases for fossil fuels, in particular, oil; water and food security; toxins; geopolitical shifts and disruptions; economic swings including market crises; and advances in technology. In this booklet we are primarily concerned with describing our Vision and not how we might get there, so we only briefly sketch out possible paths through the Transition.

Transitions can come about through momentous events or situations, such as wars or natural calamities. At the end of the First World War five empires ceased to exist. At the end of the Second World War, the establishment of international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and the adoption of an economic framework that enshrined growth as a major priority, occurred. Disasters such as earthquakes, tsunamis, droughts and plagues have triggered rapid transitions to different ways of thinking and acting.

Transitions can also occur more slowly and through many causes. The Reformation, the Industrial Revolution, the demise of the USSR, had a number of factors that led to gradual significant change. The bringing down of the Berlin Wall symbolised rather than caused the end of the USSR, and resulted from multiple factors that in combination suddenly reached critical mass. One cause for its demise was the oppression of large segments of its population. Another was that it was unable to economically support the maintenance of a substantial army and the apparatus of control. There was a difference between the rhetoric and ideals of a communist society. Diamond and Tainter<sup>9</sup>, amongst others, have described how societies have responded to ecological disasters: some such as Japan were successful; others such as the Maya were not. The impact of feminism from the 1970s onwards is another example of significant gradual change.

It is not possible to predict how Australia will make a transition to a sustainable and peaceful society. There could be a momentous event, such as a war or natural calamity. A war in Asia and the Pacific over food, for instance, is not beyond the bounds of possibility. A significant trigger for a different Australian policy was the capture of Singapore and the attack by Japan on Darwin during the Second World War. Australians realised that the British Empire could no longer provide the benefits of an imperial power. This led from the 1970s to Australia making much stronger cultural

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<sup>9</sup> Tainter, J (1988). *The Collapse of Complex Societies*. Cambridge University Press.  
Diamond, J (2005) *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. Viking Press.

and economic links with Asia.

Events that could bring Australia to commit to the changes that could lead to a sustainable and peaceful society include the demise of the Great Barrier Reef; a disaster in a uranium mine or mass energy grid through storms brought about by climate warming; or the loss of ice at the North Pole.

Another possibility is substantial increase in prices of energy caused by the decline in the availability of inexpensive liquid fuels. This is likely to trigger an ongoing recession and a collapse of the economic and financial systems. Significant unemployment is likely to follow creating social and political turmoil. Transport, manufacturing and electronic communication systems that depend heavily on energy will fail. There is likely to be a significant reduction in population levels due to famine. Out of this upheaval there is the possibility that sustainable patterns of community life will emerge.

However, it is also possible to imagine a series of factors that cumulatively trigger the transition. These could include factors such as the mainstreaming or the substantial adoption of ideas and practices associated with transition towns, organic and local foods, farmers markets, solar energy systems, fair trade, sustainable community banks, ecologically responsible companies, and the many non-government organizations that recognise the short-termism and short-sightedness of our current models and behaviour. A new generation of young people, aware of the poisoned ecological chalice that our current generation of leaders is handing them, could also be a significant trigger. This would be similar to the generation of young people in the 1960's who brought a new set of values and perspectives to a generation that had sought safety and conformity after the upheavals of the Second World War. The new values will include a respect for nature and the common good, but will also be mixed with some less worthy elements of human nature such as self-interest and avarice. Despite our Quaker optimism we need to acknowledge that these are likely to persist but will not necessarily impede the transfer to a peaceful and sustainable Australia.

Any transition will be disruptive. We humans have unfortunately lost a lot of lead-in time to plan for and implement a smooth transition to a peaceful and resilient world. We are facing a turbulent future where the impacts of ecological degradation and its consequences will impose severe constraints on our current lifestyles and future choices. At some stage a transition will have to face difficult economic, political, social and moral issues.

*You can look at the spiritual poverty of our lifestyle and deplore its pathetic condition, or you can see the immense opportunities for change and improvement, and rejoice.*

Roxanne Hendry 1989: *This we can say* 3.83

***Box 3: An Alternative Scenario for a Transition – Robert Howell***

*The massive acquisition of land holdings by foreign interests during the 1990s and 2000s haunted successive Australian Governments as it became clear that foreign governments and large multinational companies were behind the majority of those purchases and now had significant claims to not only land rights, but also underground resource and water rights. What was initially seen as a threat to Australia's financial stability and national security, acted as a catalyst for Australia's domestic political parties whose different perspectives about climate change had led to decades of stalemate and inactivity.*

*In sweeping reforms the Australian Parliament, both the government of the day and the opposition parties, made critical decisions about Aboriginal title.*

*The Australian Parliament passed legislation to strengthen native title claims put forward by Indigenous communities on their own account or through the Australian National Congress of First Peoples. The Crown ceded rights over land and water and below-ground resources to the traditional custodians. The influence of the National Congress of Australia's First Peoples and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, including Reconciliation Australia, led to a completely new, and yet also far older, relationship between Australians and their environment. The influence of the majority of overseas investors in resource exploitation was minimised.*

*Decisions over native title rights also changed foreign investors' perceptions of Australia as a secure investment opportunity. The climbing costs of importing food and goods had already led to a national approach to sustainable farming practices and a more localised approach to the production of necessary consumables. The same outcome occurred with manufacturing activities: sustainable products produced by Australian owned enterprises and a more localised approach to production funded primarily by Australian investment. Multinational corporations with long-term sustainable practices (such as Plug Power, Ford, Seventh Generation and Steelcase) participated in Australia by forming partnerships for the repair and replacement of existing manufacturing processes with those that had no or minimal landfill impact. As a result, after an initial drop, manufacturing employment in Australia stabilised, and Australia's global reputation for 'green' innovation in manufacturing continues.*



## 5 The Vision

### **Individuals, Families, Households and Communities**

Our focus for a peaceful and sustainable Australia starts with individuals, families, households and communities.

To live a flourishing life each Australian needs to be able to have somewhere to live that is safe, to be able to have enough food and nourishment. Every Australian needs to have the opportunity for safe and fulfilling relationships in childhood and adolescence, opportunities to explore the world around them, and a sound education. In adult life, they should be able to have satisfying work that pays adequately. Everyone needs access to support services (including financial support) when things go wrong with health or well being, to be able to travel to meet friends and family, to have the chance to learn and play, and to do this within the carrying capacity of the planet's ability to support us.

To have rich and satisfying lives requires not only a physical infrastructure (such as houses that are appropriate for the climate), but also an emotional and social infrastructure that enables us to develop close relationships of interest and value.

Our vision is for households and families which embrace cultural and sexual diversity; educate members to resolve differences peacefully; provide physical and emotional nourishment at all stages in life (young or old); and free members as much as possible from the fears, stresses and anxieties that contribute to violence, crime and disorder.

Their households are part of a community that contributes to and supports them. Work, educational and recreational opportunities are in close proximity, as are the health, welfare and correctional support agencies. The majority of food is grown locally, and the provision of goods and services through government, commercial, non-profit, or cooperatives tend to be organisationally small and local. Buildings and factories are immersed in our communities, so that there is less travel to and from work, and much less transport of manufactured output. The greater number of cooperatives and common pool organisations has led to a growth in artisans and craftspersons, and tradepersons who are skilled in house and building conversions, and machinery and appliance design and repairs.

In a sense, a peaceful and sustainable Australia is an Australia of many villages. There is a need for larger decision-making units above the village level, but the political, manufacturing, transport and economic structures

and processes are built on making households and local communities as vibrant, resilient and self-sustaining as possible.

**Box 4: Living the Vision – Peggy Storch (with input from Jenny Spinks)**

*Bega Eco-Neighbourhood Developers (BEND) is an eco-neighbourhood on 30 acres on the edge of Bega, NSW, providing space for 30 households. Land was purchased in 2004, consent given in 2006, and the first households took up residence in 2009. The vision for the neighbourhood focused on social and environmental sustainability, including a mix of affordable rental housing and privately owned lots; an inclusive community utilising consensus decision making; permaculture design principles; conservation areas; and sustainable technologies such as composting toilets, greywater recycling, rainwater tanks, solar hot water, photovoltaic electricity, and solar passive house design. As of October 2012, there are fifteen households living at Bend, including ten affordable rental housing households, and a total of twenty adults and fifteen children. Three more homes are nearing completion, and all the other blocks have been sold for several years and await building.*

*BEND is a not-for-profit incorporated association. One of the first tasks was to formally adopt a Management Statement created by BEND, within the framework of the Community Title Land Management Act under which BEND has been formed. The Management Statement sets out the following ideals.*

*The objectives of this neighbourhood include, but are not limited to the following broad principles:*

- a) Promoting inclusiveness, equality, cooperation, diversity of membership and residency. Specifically, this means the inclusion and respect of all members and tenants in management and decision-making processes, and also cohesiveness and integration with the wider community.*
- b) Living in harmony with the environment. Specifically, this includes the rehabilitation and conservation of endemic ecosystems and the practical application of permaculture principles to establish energy conserving and productive living environments.*
- c) Providing an educational model. The Neighbourhood Scheme will allow for others to learn from it in a way that does not unduly impinge upon the lives of the residents.*
- d) Promoting the use of consensus decision-making. The principles of consensus decision-making are considered fundamental to the management of this neighbourhood and as such all sections of this statement are to be interpreted with regard to this principle.*

*Houses are built out of various combinations of strawbales, mudbricks, earth-rendered recycled iron, sustainable or recycled timbers, lightweight cladding such as Colorbond over good insulation, and exposed concrete floors. All homes are built to a high standard of solar passive effectiveness through northern aspect and effective glazing, thermal mass and good insulation. They require no mechanical cooling and little-to-no additional heating.*

*All homes use solar hot water, composting toilets, and the community grey water recycling system. The whole neighbourhood is completely disconnected off town water and sewer.*

*Most of the privately owned homes, plus the Neighbourhood House, have grid-connected photovoltaic panels. Most of us grow some vegetables, herbs, fruit, berries and eggs.*

*There is a Neighbourhood House with a main gathering/ meeting/ eating space, as well as a kitchen, toilet and shower, a guest bedroom/ office, and communal laundry facilities.*

*BEND worked closely with neighbours to develop positive relationships and in December 2006 sold a portion of land to Mumbulla Steiner School, ensuring the school had the needed physical space to expand. In November 2007 infrastructure works commenced on the lane, greywater recycling systems, water storage and fire fighting tanks, dams and swales. These works were completed in July 2008.*

*One of the most significant achievements of BEND is that a third of the households are affordable rental housing. This was one of the most difficult aspects of the project to achieve and was enabled by a partnership with not-for-profit social housing provider - Community Housing Limited (CHL), with which BEND signed a partnership agreement in December 2007. The residents of this rental housing have formed and registered a cooperative called Bega Eco Neighbourhood Cooperative Housing (BENCH) and are creating a joint management agreement with CHL, including the right to select tenants.*

*The conservation area of BEND, an anabranch of the Bega River, part of the surrounding larger wetlands eco system, has undergone an amazing transformation over the past decade, with thousands of shrubs, grasses and trees of endemic species being planted, largely in partnership with other local land care and conservation groups. The agricultural flats, envisioned one day to be used for organic food production, currently produce organic hay, useful for the local farmer who cuts it, and earning a small income for the BEND Neighbourhood Association to direct back into the land.*

*The community gathers once a fortnight for working bees; once a month for shared dinners; four times a year for General Meetings; and twice a year for Solstice parties. There is a Coordination (Executive) Committee that meets monthly and includes a Facilitator, Treasurer, and Secretary, as well as representatives from each of our Focus Groups—Land, Built Environment, and Social—which meet regularly, as well as BENCH representatives. Decisions are made by consensus and there have been many sessions of training around the use of consensus, effective communication, and good facilitation. This approach has been strongly influenced by the Quakers who belong to the community.*

*“We have had, and will have into the future, many challenges and frustrations and disagreements and delays, a multitude of meetings, and a diversity of opinions about all manner of issues, many of them probably inconceivable to that small group who gathered with such a simple, yet complex, idea in 2002. But through their visionary planning—in setting up our physical environment for maximum collection of solar energy and water storage, in designing the neighbourhood with both permaculture and conservation principles in mind, and in ensuring our social systems are well-placed to deal with inevitable human diversity—we live in a caring, thoughtful, resilient, resourceful, productive, growing neighbourhood.”*

## **Health**

The principles and assumptions that dominated healthcare for many decades have been changed. Instead practice wisdom is being re-united with its roots in wholeness from the old English word “hael”, embracing the physical, social, cultural and spiritual strengths of people and communities. There is emphasis on the integration of the self starting at birth and being reinforced through family, society and formal education that includes physical activity, nutrition, service, spiritual reflection and practice, empathy and understanding.

General fitness and sporting achievements are fun aspects of community celebrations, with high spending on elite athletes a thing of the past. Obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes and some other formerly common diseases are far less common. Mental illness has been significantly reduced by the increased valuing of compassion within communities. There is access to quality and affordable health care. The emphasis on being responsible for our own physical and mental health has greatly enhanced general wellbeing. Healthy lifestyles now underpin sustainability and the ongoing establishment of an equitable and enduring quality of life for all Australians.

## **Education**

In the difficult years of climate warming we learnt that the traditional approaches to education just could not provide us with the creative, innovative and knowledge creation skills and abilities that were needed to adapt to the changing circumstances of shortages of food and energy. So we had to adopt radically new approaches during the transition period using low-energy high-technology means. In particular we had to learn or relearn the skills needed to produce or access locally the basic necessities of life: food, water, shelter. We learnt simplicity the hard way, but we survived.

During those challenging years of transition we learnt that the most valuable skill that education could provide was an ability to be creative and innovative in confronting tensions, embracing differences and solving complex problems. We had to learn new survival skills that have now become a part of our everyday lives. We have learnt how to relate to our neighbours and friends in new, cooperative and creative ways.

Education is now available to all ages and available at any time and in many spaces. Small learning hubs are available throughout the regions and villages. There are spaces for quiet, reflective learning and spaces for dialogue and for building learning communities in myriad forms. There are inside and outside spaces where people can share and learn in community from world renowned experts in online learning. People have taken responsibility for their own learning and they use readily available teachers

and methods to do so. Schools and universities are now much more flexible in modes of learning and the emphasis in trades and professions is on achieving and maintaining proficiency and meeting standards, not on time spent in classrooms.

All welcome to play and to learn about their world – from babies a few weeks old up to people who are physically old and frail. They share their knowledge and skills in creative and knowledge building forms. Mentoring and learning communities thrive because they link local pedagogy about place with global learning.

## **Food**

In the tumultuous years of adjusting to climate change and the changing economy when food production and distribution systems went awry, we relearned the skills needed to grow and process most of our food requirements and how to store the excess for out-of-season use. Cooking skills have been reintroduced into the school curriculum. Now a major preoccupation of people is the collection, growing, processing and storage of food, and the proper collection and reuse of organic waste. This is as it always was, except for a short period of history in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when food production was taken over by giant industrial complexes and packaged up and sold from massive foodstores run by a few corporations. Then we were too busy to produce our own food and ate too much too quickly. Now we appreciate and enjoy it more. We have adjusted our eating patterns towards a primarily plant-based diet, which is healthier and more sustainable, and the levels of obesity in the population have reduced, lessening our demand for food production per person.

Most Australians now have ready access to food-growing gardens and the communal ones in inner-city areas are the centre of community and social activity. All ages, genders and races are involved, valued for the variety of inputs that they can provide. Cooperation is learnt, local trading is common and permaculture principles are the norm. Quakers are often found here as they are skilled in peaceable decision-making and frequently in sustainable practices. The food produced is fresh, tasty, healthy and grown using nutrients from the waste products of the community.

Of course not all food can be produced locally, although we have learnt to enjoy the fruits of the season. During the frequent droughts, floods and winters, we import some food from other parts of Australia, especially the North, but rarely from overseas. We still have farms that produce staples such as grains, some dairy farms and some animal farms on land deemed unsuitable for other food production. The demand for meat has diminished as most of us have found vegetarian meals using home-grown produce are

very satisfying. Some of our excess requirements are exported but not nearly to the extent of former years. We prefer to export (and import) knowledge and skills for meeting food needs rather than the food itself.

When we do purchase food at supermarkets, we are now able to make wiser choices, with clear labeling of the provenance and environmental footprint of each product. We are less distracted by misleading marketing (advertising of all food to children has been banned) and the price and availability of basic healthy foods are subsidised to ensure equitable access for all Australians, including those in rural and remote locations.

The imperative of growing food for a population level augmented by immigration from stressed neighbouring countries has put increased pressure on the demand for water. But water conservation practices on farms, in gardens and in homes, together with increased multi-use of water, reservation of ground-water recharge areas and de-salinisation plants fuelled by solar energy have allowed us to cope so far without resorting to piping water from high rainfall regions to water-deficient communities.

The government's national food plan is now primarily aligned with the desire of people to have a healthy and sustainable food system, not the economic drivers of the agri-food business.

#### **Box 5: Rowe Morrow's Vision**

Rowe Morrow, pioneer permaculturalist and Australian Quaker, has written eloquently about this future.

*Since we Australians developed a deep appreciation of nature and natural systems, a deep spiritual sense enabled us to get food in right order. Now there is abundance. But, it happened, of course, after the terrible famine.*

*Everything slowed down. People drifted outside and stopped and looked at what had happened. We sat in circles and asked, "What have we done?" "What must we never do again?" We looked at the few communities in good health and learned from those communities. Then we decided on the right ordering for food and its ally, water.*

*We asked ourselves, "What is asked of us now?" We realised we must see and listen to the natural world, to see what is left and what needs to thrive. What is our human role? We abandoned roles as stewards and guardians and instead formed lasting relationships with all species and learned to become supportive and enable nature to restore itself. We stopped burning, cutting and ploughing.*

*This is what we decided. We would work co-operatively in communities. We would share resources and meet the basic needs of every person in each community. We would discipline*

*our appetites for “more” and instead, accept “enough”. That, and respect for nature, would be our principles and testimonies.*

*We decided to stay small scale. Socially all villages, neighbourhoods, and bioregions would grow their own foods and trade them internally. We decided on local markets and support systems to enable swapping and trading without money, or use a local currency.*

*We decided to help nature restore Indigenous systems of interdependent plants and animals. So we left nature alone. These natural areas are now established and support clean water, soil building and local products, and are a buffer because, today, global warming effects are so unpredictable. They filter out dust, diseases and weed seeds. And the animals have come back. We are not so lonely now we have their songs, calls and friendship.*

*And as for food: lawns have gone. So have monocultures. Every piece of land in towns and villages grows diverse ecosystems of grasses, trees, shrubs and vines. Most are productive. The run-off rainwater bubbles clean to creeks and streams and wetlands have re-established themselves,*

*You can see we have distributed food gardens in every neighbourhood and distributed orchards with fruit and nut trees lining the roads – now free of huge trucks. And see how, now that so many fewer cars are used – families use their garages to make jams, dry food, bread and biscuits, butter, and small butcheries for the weekly end-of-street markets. Some of course fix the bicycles that have nifty little carts. Children eat most of their meals from trees and community gardens. Our streets are alive and safe.*

*Although climate has never been more variable, all this vegetation and local food has buffered us against floods, river damage and even droughts. Some places suffer so we send them food on the trains, and seed to start again. We all have solar panels, and wind provides communal energy.*

*What is the result of this? Our health has significantly improved. Children are tall, straight and slender. Adults are fit and lean. Allergies seem to have gone. Everyone is involved in food in some way. We understand the weather better. We watch our soils and put back more than we take. We get such joy from other species. We celebrate in our gardens and now make our own music.*

*We have taken in more refugees because we have abundant food and water. As we have brought the sheep to the suburbs and left the brittle lands to recover, the original forests and woodlands are regenerating naturally. Everyone has enough to eat. We import nothing but we spend quite a lot of time processing food for the cold or wet seasons. The food is delicious. We have selected for flavour and abundance. We don't have so much work now the ecosystems are mature.*

*Life is very different but it is very good. People are happier. It is much better. Much, much better and we have confidence in our future and know it will be challenging. We are ready to face it.*

## **Technology, Population, and Design for Infrastructure**

In determining how to live within the capacity of the Earth's ecosystems, Ehrlich and Holdren developed the formula  $I=f(PAT)$ , where human impact is a function of population, affluence and technology<sup>10</sup>. Values should also be part of the equation. These factors interact so that with, for example, the introduction of certain technologies, there can be greater carrying capacity for human life. Simpler life styles again allow great population numbers. There is no question that technology will bring changes to the way we care for the planet, but it will not change the fundamentals of the need to live within the limits set by the planet.

Good infrastructure design and land planning is important in using the equation for a sustainable Australia. The big cities still exist but any population growth was fed into regional centres to diversify the urban grid and to adapt to climate-induced hazards. Rather than build new cities, the emphasis was to work with already existing ones.

Development was the first area that had to be addressed to ensure sustainable infrastructure investment. Within existing cities urban infill has been the order of the day, usually low and medium-rises (maximum height in many is eight stories) surrounded by green spaces and with local business enterprises. The emphasis is on seeing the cities as a series of villages, relatively self-contained, rather than a central business district surrounded by suburbs. Local branches of the national Australian Centre for Dialogue have been established around the country to enable citizens at all levels to contribute to national conversations on important issues.

Physical development now is integrated with social and environmental development. Planning approvals at all levels for a number of decades were only granted when containing an integrated plan to account for all impacts – physical, social, environmental and economic.

These infrastructural design matters are determined by a consultative process with experts and community leaders that set population levels for planning purposes taking into account current technology and affluence or life styles.

## **Transport and Energy**

This design change set the foundation for the building of sustainable infrastructure systems. In transport, cycling and walking were given priority where these were lacking (example: new bicycle lanes) and the majority of

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<sup>10</sup> Ehrlich, P and Holdren, J. (1971). Impact of Population Growth. Science 171 no 3977, 1212-17.

movement within the villages is by these means, but integrated with cost-effective transit, which is a mix of rail and bus. There are clean energy bus transits running along dedicated pathways with fixed stations, rail networks in effect, but with buses rather than trains. Automobile use based on fossil fuels has been priced, as has been parking, to limit its use (in some precincts it has been banned altogether). The resulting shift towards transit use was dramatic, as they are affordably priced, dense, reliable, fast, and frequent.

Moving between cities has also been transformed. There is much less movement because of the limits of energy. The road engine has not been eliminated but made cleaner, and road carriage of freight and passenger traffic has been made more efficient. For distances of 300 kilometres or less road modes dominate, travelling on arterials that are now mostly cleared of traffic congestion. For distances greater than 300 kilometres, rail dominates, in the forms of fast inter-city passenger and freight trains. Autos using renewable energy are still an individual option, but given their operating expense and limited use in urban cores, and given much improved inter- and intra-city transit, they are being taken up by fewer people.

Australia now uses less energy, and that energy is 100% renewable. This largely came about through changing the legislation to enable the creation of small energy companies, cooperatives and trusts that provided village based electricity generation, and pricing systems that included the full cost of non-renewable energy.

As for other infrastructure, planned increase in density, mixed with greater green space, has had the benefit of compacting other built systems such as water, sewer and electricity. There are greater opportunities for “interoperability”, that is, using one piece of infrastructure, such as a duct, for multiple uses. Smaller and fewer networks can be built because users are more concentrated. And there is greater ability to recycle outputs previously considered waste from one system such as transport into energy for another such as electricity.

## **Buildings**

The design requirements and regulations for building of new houses and buildings changed a number of decades ago. The major intention was to ensure good design to take into account the sun for heating during the cooler seasons, and for shade from the sun for hotter times. Very efficient insulation became widespread. Water storage and reuse was maximised. Renewable energy (sun, wind, and tide) systems became universal.

Ensuring new buildings were sustainable was the easier job. More difficult was the conversion of existing unsustainable buildings. The creativity and

ingenuity of young Australian engineers, architects, inventors and designers was impressive and most buildings now meet rigorous sustainable standards.

## **Land and Water**

The planning for resilient land and water use needed a bioregional rather than a village approach. This supplemented a national and state/territory approach to all large policy and program designs. Regional decision-making is now based around natural resource management areas, identified by scientists as appropriate for the sound management of water, biodiversity and other resources.

Soil health has dramatically improved by substantially reducing the need for synthetic fertilisers, and re-vegetation on farms is having a dramatic effect in arresting salinity, biodiversity loss and erosion. Feral animal numbers have become depleted as a result of effective, species-specific biological controls.

Much of this change has been driven by the ability to use parts of farms and coastal vegetation for carbon offsets. This improved the productivity of many farms and grazing areas, and provided much valued income streams for agriculture. It has also promoted the protection and re-establishment of mangroves and sea-grasses. These have proved to be a rich and abundant carbon sink and have further improved fish stocks and habitat for now increasing populations of dugong and other species reliant on these once threatened ecosystems.

Further out to sea, Australia now has a comprehensive network of Marine National Parks, which have resulted in measurable increases in the stocks of many fish species. Scientifically determined quotas have now led to truly sustainable commercial fish harvests.

Many areas in north Australia, marginal as cattle enterprises, have now found new economic activities, such as farming for carbon offsets and opened up opportunities for long-stay remote area tourism providing Indigenous employment.

The vast areas of Aboriginal lands and seas now have an extensive network of Indigenous Protected Areas, to provide an alternative to National Parks in the move to protect Australia's diverse ecosystems and the species that rely on them. Employment opportunities abound for Indigenous people in remote areas which previously had high levels of economic disadvantage.

Water management, especially ground water, is now under control, with strict allowances for environmental protection, leading to a massive improvement in the health of rivers, wetlands and estuaries.

Five year plans are now developed for natural resource management, with

annual conferences involving consultations between land holders, scientists and government to review their progress and make adjustments to them as required.

## **Forestry**

Most land, including that bearing forest, is now managed by the community. The contribution of our First Nations peoples to bringing us to this understanding was very significant. Land that was formerly privately owned is now leasehold, so the proportion of Australia's forests under lease has gone from about 44% in 2010 to about 70%. The remainder, forested land that was formerly state-owned, including state forests and national parks, is now in one category called Communal Forest.

Decisions about the management and care of the forests are now a special case of land use decisions. Much has been learnt about communal decision making relating to native forests since the experiments with community forests in places like India and Nepal and the Wombat Forest experiment in Victoria in the late 1900s-early 2000s. The Landcare movement begun in the late 1900s is now recognised as another forerunner of communal decision-making at the landscape level.

Because of the improved knowledge about the landscape from intensive surveillance, monitoring and modelling, decisions are made with greater certainty than in previous times, despite the challenges of an altered climate and an ever-increasing population putting pressure on the forests to produce more material goods. The bitter wrangling over logging in native forests that was a political feature of the late 1900s-early 2000s ended with the realisation that community needs for building materials and other forest products can be met in a sustainable way from the plantations and by low-impact silviculture in the native forests without degrading the natural biodiversity and spiritual experiences that are now considered essential for our health and well-being.

Where locally available, wood is the preferred house-construction material as it has a lower carbon and environmental footprint than alternatives. Importation of forest products is negligible due to the past depletion of tropical forests, the struggles of other countries to meet their own needs and the high costs of transportation.

An awareness of the changing nature of forests whether from nature, climate change or human manipulation is now part of the education of young people and with it comes an enhanced appreciation of how forests can contribute to our physical and spiritual well-being and the creation of a peaceful and sustainable society.

## **Economy**

The fundamental changes in the way we build our houses, move about, grow our food, clothe ourselves, work and play, came about in part because of different investment, production, reward and decision making systems.

It was recognised that the outdated economic model based on the belief that the market is the best method for the allocation of resources was inadequate for describing the true costs of economic activity. It excluded a number of costs and distorted the pattern of others. It discriminated against future generations, women, people with disabilities, those with minimal income, and the environment. It ignored modern scientific principles. The values it used conflicted with an Australia that cherished fairness for all Australians and a respect for the Earth.

Instead we now use methods based on the Daly Rules or the Natural Step for our economic calculations. The Daly Rules describe the relationship of an economy to its environment. The Output Rule states that wastes should be kept within the assimilative capacity of the local environment. The Input Rule states that harvest rates of renewable resource inputs shall not exceed the regenerative capacity of the natural system that generates them. For non-renewables, depletion rates shall equal the rate at which renewable substitutes are developed by human invention and investment. The Natural Step uses similar criteria.

Our economy is based on these principles that care for and protect the ecological systems that sustain our world, and distribute the benefits fairly. This does not mean that we do not use market mechanisms, but they are bounded within a framework based on these principles and methods. We developed measures that enabled us to accurately describe an economy based on these principles. Policies were developed to provide incentives and regulations that shifted our behaviour away from destroying our planet to caring for it. This resulted in the move to renewable energy, innovative and creative construction, manufacturing and agriculture, and the changes in land and water use and forestry.

The debate about the carbon tax versus an emissions trading scheme became irrelevant when we adopted the Daly Rules. These schemes were designed to include environmental externalities (the cost of cleaning up negative environmental impacts that were excluded from the price of goods and services) in the price. The Daly Rules make this approach unnecessary as the waste from economic activity is absorbed within the local environment, and resources are harvested only at their replacement rate.

We learnt that large disparities of wealth are not in keeping with a peaceful and sustainable society. A rule was adopted that differences between the

highest and lowest paid in organisations could not exceed ten times, and that median differences across the government, business and civil society sector organisations could not exceed five times. Taxes have also been adjusted to assist this rule. This has the effect of reducing the power of sectional lobbyists that had previously unduly influenced our governing bodies. And it has also reduced the ability of (the few) large companies to buy local government approvals.

We also introduced gender ratios and gender impact assessments to ensure that women gained a full representation into the decision-making levels of all our organisations: government, commercial and civil society. Initially we began with government, but the other sectors followed suit when they realised that all applications for government contracts and advocacy to our parliamentarians were not heeded unless their organisation also had adopted gender-balance policies.

*If we are to break the feedback loops of market-driven growth, population growth, and high technology serving consumerism, inequality and the arms race, we must work together and pool our strength, integrity and resources. This will involve political lobbying and developing new ideas and alternative institutions.*

*In the end we must decide what kind of a society we want to live in. Do we want to live in a society that maintains its high consumption lifestyle by condemning others to live in poverty? If not, what steps are we prepared to take to make the kind of society we want into a reality.*

Robin Arnold and Dale Hess 1994: *This we can say* 5.71

## **Financial Sector**

The role of finance has dramatically changed. It was recognised that the old system of uncontrolled money creation by banks whenever loans were made led to a growth economy. In order to pay back loans and interest, extra resources were required. Now it is not possible for private banks to create money because that became the responsibility of central government. In addition to this change, the finance sector developed charters and codes of practice that included respect for nature. This led to mechanisms for identifying how much growth could be achieved within the boundaries of the planet's ecological systems, and well developed measures of what was ecologically beneficial.

This led to three major outcomes. First, there was the demise of banks being vehicles for speculation and a source of money transfer for a small elite of investors and managers. Far fewer business graduates sought positions in banking for profitable careers, but instead in those engineering and science disciplines and in government and non-government health,

educational and welfare organisations that enabled innovation and the production of creative solutions.

Second, there was a significant reduction in the boom and bust business cycle.

Third, banks became the vehicle for money to be provided for the provision of essential goods and services. This did not stop growth and innovation: instead it was directed to the development of new technologies and operations that were more efficient and effective, but within a framework that assessed the true ecological and social risks. Loans were not able to be obtained for new housing or buildings, new business, community or family enterprises or expansions, without an appreciation of how they would contribute to practices and products necessary for an ecologically and socially robust society.

An unforeseen outcome was the growth of smaller more localised banks and investment funds, usually community owned. Depositors and investors saw that investing in large diversified portfolios did not reduce risk, but increased it because they were not able to adequately assess risk. Instead, there was a growth in financial institutions that invested in a smaller number of enterprises with a larger stake in those, but a commitment to stay for a longer period. Managers were able to plan ahead without being worried about their enterprise being bought out, assets stripped, and then sold on for short-term gain.

### **Manufacturing and Urban Industry**

The manufacturing and urban industrial sector of our society is now sustainable right throughout the supply, production and distribution chain. It helped that there was a recognition that we had to move away from being a consumer society addicted to consumption to using fewer resources in more effective ways. There is now much more design in the sector. There was a move away from materials such as steel and plastics, to biomaterials using plants and wood that are biodegradable. The industry now takes responsibility for the whole life cycle of the goods and services that are produced, so that there is far less that is sold. Rather many products are hired, and returned to the producer so they are recycled. This helped to provide the incentive to design products that are recyclable and biodegradable and more durable. Our landfills are very small and are now part of the supply chain to industry.

The fund that was set up by the Government to facilitate the transition to a low carbon economy, using water and energy efficiently, and producing goods and services that were durable, recyclable and biodegradable was

closed down a number of years ago because it was no longer needed. (This fund had built on the *National Greenhouse Energy Reporting Act*, 2001) The application of regulations, codes and standards that led to high quality and sustainable goods is now very easy because manufacturing and industry long ago accepted that quality and sustainability are essential for successful business. The links between our schools and universities, and our manufacturing organisations, are very close with lifelong education providing the scientific, engineering and creative innovations that led to where we are today.

Initially the establishment of an emissions trading scheme (pricing fossil fuel derived carbon emissions) was slow and difficult, but the changes in our economy and financial systems did away with the need for such schemes. This reversal was achieved not only through improved energy efficiency but also by the use of new and non-polluting technologies.

The collapse of coal and iron ore prices during the earlier part of the 21<sup>st</sup> century further assisted in the process of transforming society by force of necessity. The electricity and gas supply infrastructure networks (pipes, poles and wires) remained useful for the transmission of base load power derived from wind, wave power and geothermal sources.

### **National Leadership**

The wise use of land and water resources needed a regional rather than just a village perspective. We found that we also needed to rethink our decision making structures and processes at all levels.

During the time when Australia suffered from the considerable damage done by energy decline and by ecological abuse including climate warming, the democratic structures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century took just as much hammering as the physical landscape. At first, the national and state governments became increasingly irrelevant as people struggled to survive. The collapse of the financial system based on growth in resource consumption meant that income from taxes to support these levels of government significantly declined.

Hence during this transition local government initially became the most critical unit of government decision making. As the country began to recover, robust forms of decision making developed, including consensus decision making, and innovative ways of allocating energy, water and work based on the principles of equality, simplicity, integrity, peaceful resolution of conflicts, and sustainability. Each local authority now has the power to tax for its own activities and have a significant say in the levels of taxes and programs at the regional level.

National government became reinvigorated, and there are now a number of processes that facilitate government at all levels.

First, we rewrote our federal constitution to include at all levels the obligation to sustain as far as possible the health of all natural systems. These systems express, as it were, the personhood of this land to which we must relate. The courts can conduct hearings concerning crimes against the environment. Nowadays however we prefer to use conflict resolution approaches which minimise formal legal proceedings, teach citizens to resolve rather than provoke disagreement, cost less to administer and promote tolerance of diversity.

Second came the appointment of a Respect for Nature Ombudsperson who hears complaints where the health of any natural system might be compromised by a government or private agency. He or she readily makes public his or her annual reports in this area. Departments can be challenged by this Ombudsperson and, in extreme cases, their ministers can be dismissed for lack of respect for nature.

Third, to develop the more detailed strategies for the achievement of the goals determined in the parliament, the government exercises its democratically-derived power to appoint what we have come to call “Issues Committees”. These committees have multi-party and expert input. Each issues committee includes representation of all parties in proportion to their numbers. Major decisions such as going to war or mediating for peace in a foreign country now require a conscious vote by a representative issues committee.

Fourth, to ensure the ethics of the parliamentary process, we established a Parliamentary Commission which ensures that budgeting and staffing for Parliament makes it independent of government control. This included energy budgets.

Fifth, there is a limited term for politicians. Because of the enhancement of the citizen-role, we have a limit on any citizen’s time in any elected unit of government to two terms of four years each.

Sixth, parliaments and committees have a gender-balance. These fixed term committees might, and often do, overlap several terms of government. This has allowed parliamentary candidates to contribute to the public good without being confined to narrow preconceived party positions as they will affect future national issues in the run up to an election.

## **Interaction with other Countries**

Our relations with the rest of the world, particularly our Asian and Pacific neighbours, changed when we made a commitment to become a peaceful and sustainable country.

First, we recognised that any military forces were most effective when they were seen as a police force acting in defence of Earth and its people, in effect an Earth Defence Force. We therefore committed to reducing and changing all our military thinking, hardware and operations to being part of an international police force under the control of the United Nations and the International Courts. The engineering, communications, medical, transport and logistical skills are now committed to positive community building, rather than destroying communities. The old fashioned notion of war has been replaced by an emphasis on removing the causes of violent conflict, and the use of negotiation and mediation with minimal armed police intervention in rare circumstances. We also recognised the broader view of peace that many women mediators bring to peace making and how the absence of formal conflict is not enough: peace also means freedom from domestic violence. Women are now an essential and equal part of the international police or Earth Defence Force.

It was not easy to break our long standing links with the USA, because it was reluctant to recognise the authority and benefit of international institutions and processes such as the International Court of Justice. The decline of the American empire and the emergence of countries such as China, India and Indonesia meant that we were able to gain acceptance in Asia and the Pacific, in particular as a friend to all who supported the principles of justice and sustainability.

Second, the Australian Parliament renegotiated the Pacific Regional Cooperation Agreement (the PRCA). This scheme had been negotiated in the early 2000s between the Australian Government, and elders and political leaders from the most vulnerable islands. While many of us cannot remember a time when the PRCA did not exist, it is important to remember the battles over this agreement. The rapid change in fishing stocks and ocean changes meant that the adaptation approaches which had been negotiated between Islanders and Australian aid agencies did not last past the late 2000s, leading to large-scale relocation of some Islander communities. As a result of the PRCA, Australia and the Pacific Islands now represent one of the world's largest continuous coastlines and Exclusive Economic Zones as well as a significant force in the Law of the Sea Council. When coupled with the Antarctic Treaty System, Australia's role in vital ocean resources is significant. As a consequence, Australia's leadership in sustainable fishing and a continued moratorium on mining in

Southern Oceans means that this bioregion is safe and able to contribute to stabilising the global climate.

Third, we were able to assist in reducing the gap between rich and poor. Priority was given to promoting sexual and reproductive health, with increasing decision-making autonomy for women, youth and children, humanitarian response to disasters, and the extensive development of water and sanitation programs, especially in Asia. But this assistance was linked with development goals that included responsible water and land use, climate-friendly technologies, and sustainable economic development with economic policies that included the Daly Rules to enable us to live with the planet's boundaries. Education levels among indigenous peoples in Australia and elsewhere have risen and birth rates are reducing.

There were a number of benefits in this for us. We set population levels in Australia based on calculations about what could be supported by our ecological systems. A group set up by the Government and made up of scientists and experts determined this. This population level, and taking into account the Australian fertility levels, enabled us to set immigration levels. However, whenever there was hardship caused by war, natural and other disasters, the refugee levels were increased. When we were able to assist, stabilise and improve the living conditions in Asia and the Pacific, the immigration pressures became manageable accordingly.

Significant benefits came through the changes to our economy and the commitment to a fair and equal Australia. These reduced our need for continual increase in resource extraction and use, also for large expenditure on military forces and equipment, the production of materials that did not add to our quality of life, and helped close the gap between the rich and poor. They also did away with the stalemate that had occurred in international discussions about how to deal with climate change and other matters of ecological degradation, where some countries did not want to take the lead in committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions because it might cause loss in economic advantage. When we decided that it was to our benefit to make Australia peaceful and sustainable, we found many other countries followed our lead and developed trade and economic relations on a sustainable basis as well.

## 6 Conclusion

Australians generally are aware of climate change, but struggle to know how serious the implications are and what action to take. Too many are unaware of the impending rises in the cost of fossil fuels, particularly liquid fuels and the consequent need to use less energy. Too many have not made the connection between environmental degradation and the need to shift to an economy that is based on knowing that there are limits to growth. We need to change our values, particularly regarding equality and respect for nature.

This Vision describes a future where Australians live together in a relationship with this continent of ours that enhances rather than destroys. The ethic of respect for nature is supported by the values of equality, integrity, simplicity, community, and peaceful resolution of conflict. By working together and making changes to our lifestyles, we hope to avoid a turbulent, disruptive future.

There is much work to do to try to reverse the damage we are doing to our life-sustaining ecosystems and social institutions, and to prepare ourselves to adapt to a rapidly deteriorating world. In 2008, Australian Quakers adopted an Earthcare Statement that sets the direction in which we hope to move. In 2012, Quakers internationally adopted the *The Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice*. Our Vision builds on the principles and directions of these statements (appended next) to describe a future in which all Australians can live peacefully and sustainably.



## Appendix 1: Australian Quakers' Earthcare Statement

*The produce of the Earth is a gift from our gracious Creator to the inhabitants, and to impoverish the Earth now to support outward greatness appears to be an injury to the succeeding age.* - John Woolman (1720-1772)

We find delight in the grace of creation, and are humbled by the richness of its gifts.

Our very existence depends upon sustaining our intimate relationships within nature. Yet much has been harmed or lost forever through our lack of reverence, our ignorance, denial, waste and ill-considered action. We have set ourselves against the Spirit. We have ignored our interconnectedness with all other living things, weakened our own well-being, and we have diminished the opportunity for fair livelihood.

Once our lack of care caused limited damage. Now our thoughtlessness endangers whole ecosystems, and even the entire biosphere, through global warming, pollution, destruction of habitats, and accelerated extinction of species. We also acknowledge that wars, poverty and overconsumption are part of this spiral of destruction.

We seek to transform this culture of domination and exploitation, of false witness and idolatry, and instead develop a culture of caring for the planet, preparing for future generations of living things and honouring God's gifts. Each of us must now strive to live a just life which values the air, the waters, the soil, living things and the processes sustaining all life.

Given the extent of the crisis and the need for transformative change, despair and fear are likely to arise in us all at some stage. We can be set free in the Spirit to live our lives in radically different ways.

We are called to consider the world as an enspirited whole, to accept no boundary to repairing and sustaining the Earth for the future, and to appreciate more deeply the creative energy in all living things and life processes. We seek to mend what has been hurt, and to strengthen our courage to discern and bear witness to this spiritual care for the Earth.

Friends are not alone on this journey. We must listen to the call of creation, recognise and respect the profound knowledge and wisdom of Indigenous peoples and learn from scientific understanding. We will work with those many others already deeply engaged, who make the links between religious belief, lifestyle, social justice and peace.

We commit to the demanding, costly implications of radically changed ways of living. Let us do so out of joy, celebration, reverence and a deep love of life.

Adopted at by Australian Quakers at Yearly Meeting in January 2008, Melbourne, Australia

<http://www.quakers.org.au/displaycommon.cfm?an=1&subarticlenbr=264>

## Appendix 2: International Quakers: The Kabarak Call for Peace and Ecojustice

*The Call was approved on 24 April 2012 at the Sixth World Conference of Friends, held at Kabarak University near Nakuru, Kenya. It is the culmination of the FWCC World Consultation on Global Change which was held in 2010 and 2011. It is being circulated with the Conference Epistle.*

In past times God's Creation restored itself. Now humanity dominates, our growing population consuming more resources than nature can replace. We must change, we must become careful stewards of all life. Earthcare unites traditional Quaker testimonies: peace, equality, simplicity, love, integrity, and justice. Jesus said, "As you have done unto the least... you have done unto me".

We are called to work for the peaceable Kingdom of God on the whole earth, in right sharing with all peoples. However few our numbers, we are called to be the salt that flavours and preserves, to be a light in the darkness of greed and destruction.

We have heard of the disappearing snows of Kilimanjaro and glaciers of Bolivia, from which come life-giving waters. We have heard appeals from peoples of the Arctic, Asia and Pacific. We have heard of forests cut down, seasons disrupted, wildlife dying, of land hunger in Africa, of new diseases, droughts, floods, fires, famine and desperate migrations – this climatic chaos is now worsening. There are wars and rumours of war, job loss, inequality and violence. We fear our neighbors. We waste our children's heritage.

All of these are driven by our dominant economic systems – by greed not need, by worship of the market, by Mammon and Caesar.

Is this how Jesus showed us to live?

- We are called to see what love can do: to love our neighbor as ourselves, to aid the widow and orphan, to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable, to appeal to consciences and bind the wounds.
- We are called to teach our children right relationship, to live in harmony with each other and all living beings in the earth, waters and sky of our Creator, who asks, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the world?" (Job 38:4)
- We are called to do justice to all and walk humbly with our God, to cooperate lovingly with all who share our hopes for the future of the earth.
- We are called to be patterns and examples in a 21st century campaign for peace and ecojustice, as difficult and decisive as the 18th and 19th century drive to abolish slavery.

We dedicate ourselves to let the living waters flow through us – where we live, regionally, and in wider world fellowship. We dedicate ourselves to building the peace that passeth all understanding, to the repair of the world, opening our lives to the Light to guide us in each small step.

Bwana asifiwe. A pu Dios Awqui. Gracias Jesús. Jubilé. Salaam aleikum. Migwetch. Tikkun olam. Alleluia!

## Suggested Readings

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