

## WHO MADE THE WILDERNESS? INDIGENOUS LAND MANAGEMENT IN TASMANIA

Bill Gammage, author of *The Biggest Estate on Earth*, spoke at UTAS in 2019 specifically about indigenous land management in Tasmania. His lecture was entitled “Who Made the Wilderness?” He explained how indigenous Tasmanians used controlled, specific burning and also not-burning to manage the forests and grasslands,

This lecture can be retrieved on [livestream.com](https://www.livestream.com), search for Richard Jones Memorial Lecture, and note that there are lengthy introductions you might want to skip. Certainly, start at 4 minutes in to skip people shuffling into the lecture theatre! Margaret Steadman first introduces the Memorial Lecture and the story of Richard Jones. Then there is an interesting welcome to country by a local senior elder. If you wish to go straight to Bill Gammage’s talk, that starts 21 minutes into the video.

## FARMING THE LAND - THE INDIGENOUS WAY

Bruce Pascoe, author of *Dark Emu*, has drawn our attention to the developed and sophisticated farming practices of indigenous people before the European invasion. He electrified his audience by evidencing the making of bread here, before any previously known in human history! He has been working on recovering some of the grain growing practices of the first nations peoples here. His description of this project can be seen on YouTube, a lecture sponsored by the Kandos School of Culture. Look up Bruce Pascoe and the title “Farming the Land as if it was Australia”.

It’s also discussed in a Guardian article, 13/5/20, “Time to embrace history of country> Dancing Grass Harvest”

## AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES GENERALLY:

I recommend the following, which explain the concept and practices often entitled Regenerative Agriculture. Note also it was well covered in Damon Gameau’s film, *2040*, which we still hope to show on a Friendly Friday in the Hobart Meeting House when such occasions are resumed.

[www.rant.net.au](http://www.rant.net.au) (Regen Ag Network Tas.), also their Facebook page.

What strikes me as a thread running through all of these, is closeness to the earth and understanding and loving it in the local, specific conditions lived by those close to it, whether indigenous or not. A totally different mindset from the ‘industrial’, profit-above-all mindset behind agriculture as it is commonly practiced in the “developed” world. In this context I read a very interesting article on the women economists who are challenging the hallowed concepts that are ruining the planet, GDP, profit, value, etc. Forbes magazine

## AND ANOTHER THING OR TWO...

1.

This article stresses that the pandemic offers us an opportunity for a reset, to tackle the climate emergency.

[smh.com.au/environment/climate-change-cal-of-the-wild-listen-up-people-time-is-running-out](http://smh.com.au/environment/climate-change-cal-of-the-wild-listen-up-people-time-is-running-out)

2.

Below, an inspirational address

PEOPLE'S CLIMATE ASSEMBLY RALLY. PARLT HOUSE, CANBERRA. 4 FEB 2020

Dr Sue Wareham, President, Medical Assoc for Prevention of War

It's an honour to be addressing this assembly of people who understand the perils that our planet is facing, who care and who are taking action to turn things around. Thank you all for being here. I want to mention in particular and pay deep respect to the traditional owners of this land whose ancestors have nurtured it for millennia, and who have very much to teach the nation about caring for country. We grieve with them for what has been lost. I'm here as a health professional and a peace activist. Health and peace are two of the qualities that most of us strive for not only in our own lives but in our communities, and they are two of the qualities that are already suffering from our changing climate. I'm not going to list the multiple, severe health impacts of climate change, of which we've had just a glimpse this summer, but I'm going to focus particularly on war and peace – what are the links with climate? Again, they are many; here are just a few of them.

Armed conflict and preparing for it consume vast quantities of fossil fuel. A report from Brown University in the US <sup>1</sup> states that the U.S. Department of Defense is the largest institutional consumer of fossil fuels in the world and a key contributor to climate change. In the so-called War on Terror from 2001, the U.S. military has emitted 1.2 billion metric tons of greenhouse gases.

Wars also demand vast budgets. Australia's fleet of F35 fighter jets, to attack other nations, cost \$17 billion (with additional unknown costs to operate and maintain them), but in December last year the PM committed just \$11 million - that's less than 1,000 th the cost of the F35s - to our capacity to fight fires from the air <sup>2</sup>. These priorities are truly insane.

Perhaps the most insidious impact of wars on climate is that they prevent the very cooperation between nations that's desperately needed to address our common threats.

In addition, environmental degradation and climate disruption are increasingly recognised as one of the risk factors that predispose to war. As resources dwindle, droughts take hold, and crops fail, tensions rise. Reduced rainfall is thought to have been a significant factor in triggering the terrible wars in Darfur in western Sudan, and in Syria. Dwindling water access looms as a possible trigger for further wars in the Middle East and in South Asia, where China, India and Pakistan all rely on meltwater from Himalayan glaciers that are warming up.

<sup>1</sup> <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/ClimateChangeandCostofWar>

2 The likely cost of Australia's much-criticised submarines was recently reported to have risen to \$225 billion over their lifetime.

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/government-rejected-major-air-tanker-expansion-20200103-p53onl.html>

2

For all these reasons, XR Peace has emerged in the UK as an essential part of the XR movement, and is emerging in Australia. If you're interested, check out the XR Peace Australia FB page.

Let's bring in another word here: "security", the word used when governments want to send our troops off to invade somewhere else, or when they want to squander more of our resources to prepare for the next war. Right now Australia has a naval ship headed for the waters around Iran, and we're told, with straight faces, that this is about keeping us secure. Another lie, and another perverted notion of what makes us secure.

Meanwhile our govt is negligent on the two greatest threats to our security, which are climate change and nuclear weapons. Yes, let's remember the 14,000 nuclear weapons that still exist. Just 2 weeks ago, on 24 January, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists advanced the hands of their Doomsday Clock to 100 seconds to midnight, the closest they have ever been to global catastrophe, in recognition of the twin existential dangers of nuclear war and climate change.

Our government has done its best to stymie global action on climate and did its best to kill off the nuclear weapons ban treaty, which it still refuses to sign. To use Greta Thunberg's words: How dare they? How dare they talk to us about security - as our country burns, they reject global cooperation, they kowtow to the world's biggest warmonger, and their notions of security are all about security for the big carbon polluters and the war profiteers.

Let's look at an analogy from the world of medicine. If a patient in hospital was suffering overload of a drug that was being prescribed, with blood levels being too high, and if a doctor then came around and kept pumping more of that drug into the patient, the doctor would most likely end up in court and be deregistered so as to prevent further harm.

And yet where is the equivalent measure - the courts or perhaps a mental health facility - for a PM and his colleagues who encourage the pumping of carbon into our atmosphere at dangerous levels, whose incompetence and sheer contempt for knowledge know no bounds? How much longer must we suffer under these people? And this is not a partisan call for a Labor government. While opposition leader Albanese supports the nuclear weapons ban treaty, until he calls for an urgent phase-out of fossil fuels his party is unfortunately a part of the climate problem rather than the solution.

We need hope, and there is hope. I want to offer an example of the power of social movements. Since 1945, generations have lived in fear of nuclear war, and, indeed, the world has come very close on many occasions. But there is considerable historical evidence that the reason the weapons haven't been used again since 1945 is because of the global movement of people united against them. The political cost would be too high for any leader who unleashed nuclear terror. That taboo against using the weapons is extremely

fragile and can't be relied on forever, but it brings hope.

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What each of us does now to address our climate crisis matters enormously. We must: Use our money, our time, our skills, whatever resources we have to continue and strengthen this struggle, cut through the lies and vested interests, demand genuine security for all people, work with the parliamentarians who understand this crisis, and reach out to more of them.

Above all, we must persist despite all the setbacks.

There are many of us; we far outnumber the climate deniers. Even as we grieve for our nation that has lost so much, let us build our solidarity and take strength from one another.