

CHAIN REACTION

THE NATIONAL MAGAZINE OF FRIENDS OF THE EARTH AUSTRALIA :: WWW.FOE.ORG.AU
ISSUE # 109 | JULY 2010 | RRP \$5.50

THE FUTURE OF FOOD

NANOTECHNOLOGY IN FOOD

CSIRO'S TOTAL WELLBEING DIET A LEMON

WEEDS, ECOLOGY AND HEALTH

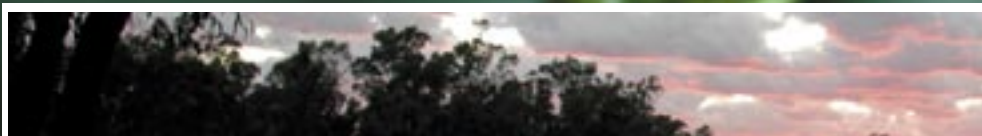
AN AGRARIAN PERSPECTIVE ON LAND USE

COMMUNITY GARDENING AND FOOD
SECURITY

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN VENEZUELA

MAGIC HARVEST PROGRAM

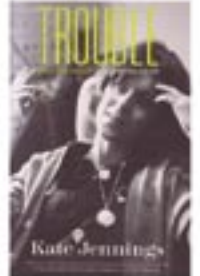
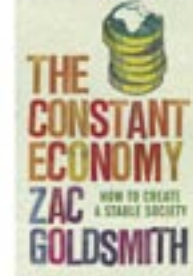
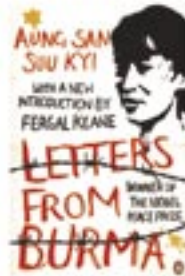
100 MILE DIET



A STUNNING VICTORY -
NSW PARKS FILL THE RED
GUM CONSERVATION GAP

Friends of the Earth BOOKSHOP

Your One Stop Eco Shop



SUSTAINABLE
PROPERTY
INVESTING

The Australian Ethical Property Trust

www.australianethical.com.au | 1800 021 227

australianethical 
investment + superannuation

Australian Ethical Investment Ltd (AEI) ABN 47 000 106 006, AFSL 229040, Australian Ethical Superannuation Pty Ltd ABN 40 070 250 730 RSE Licence 1441. A PDS is available from our website or by calling us and should be considered before making an investment decision. Australian Ethical® is a registered trademark of AEI.

Publisher

Friends of the Earth Australia,
ABN 81600610421

Chain Reaction Team

Jim Green, Cam Walker, Simeon Scott,
Holly Creenaune, Hannah Elvery, Lilly Lowrey,
Georgia Miller, Mara Bonacci

Layout & Design

Lilly Lowrey

Printing

Arena Printing and Publishing, Melbourne

Subscriptions

Six issues (two years): \$A33
Twelve Issues (four years): \$A60
See subscription ad in this edition of Chain Reaction.

Subscription Enquiries

Chain Reaction, PO Box 222, Fitzroy
Vic, 3065, Australia. Ph (03) 9419 8700,
Fax (03) 9416 2081 Email: <chainreaction@foe.org.au>

ISSN: 0312 – 1372

Copyright

Written material in Chain Reaction is free of copyright unless otherwise indicated, or where material has been reprinted from another source. Please acknowledge Chain Reaction when reprinting. Permission to use graphic material must be obtained from the artist.

The opinions expressed in Chain Reaction are not necessarily those of the publishers or any Friends of the Earth group.

Chain Reaction is indexed in the Alternative Press ndex.

Chain Reaction is published three times a year.

Front Cover

Front cover: Ronde de Nice squash, grown and photographed by Susy Morris in Malvern, Ohio, www.ChiotsRun.com

CHAIN REACTION ADVISORY BOARD

Karen Alexander

-Biodiversity campaigner [Vic]

Greg Buckman

- Author/Researcher [Canberra]

Damian Grenfell

- Globalism Centre RMIT [Melbourne]

Jo Immig

- National Toxics Network [Bangalow, NSW]

Geoff Evans

- Sustainability researcher/campaigner [Newcastle]

Binnie O'Dwyer

- FoE representative [Lismore]

James Whelan

- Co-director of the Change Agency [Brisbane]

The board provides big picture thematic and political advice to the Chain Reaction editors, advice on themes for future editions, as well as helping to ensure that a broader range of sectors/ constituencies are represented in the articles. The Chain Reaction editorial team are still responsible for content, editing and design and so any problems, omissions or other failures are ours!

contents

Regular Items

Earth News	2
FoE Australia News	4
FoE International News	6
FoE Australia Contacts	Inside back cover

The Future of Food

Editorial - The Future of Food	9
- Joel Catchlove	
100 Mile Diet	10
- Bridget O'Donnell	
CSIRO's Total Wellbeing Diet a Lemon	11
Weeds, Ecology and Health	12
- Kim Hill	
Food Policy for the Future	14
- Russ Grayson	
Community and Council Working Toward Food Security	16
- Alice Moffett	
The Magic Harvest Program	17
- Tori Moreton	
Community Gardening and Food Security	18
- Claire Nettle	
Food Connect: Thinking Inside the Box for Just and Sustainable Food	20
- Kelly Jones	
Food Sovereignty and Social Change in Venezuela	21
- Ferne Edwards	
An Agrarian Perspective on Good Land Use	24
- Peter Burdon	
Nanotech in Food on the Political Agenda	26
- Georgia Miller	

Other Articles

Ferguson's Nuclear Dump Challenged in Court	28
A Stunning Victory - NSW Parks Fill the Red Gum Conservation Gap	29
- Jonathan La Nauze	
Opportunities Open Up For Conservation in Tasmania	32
- Phill Pullinger	
Victorian Water Quality Report	33
- Anthony Amis	
Traditional Owners and the Australian Alps	34
- Cam Walker	
Geo-engineering and Climate Negotiations - The Elephant in The Room?	36
- Diana Bronson	
Australia's backing for Geo-Engineering Cops International Criticism	37
- Georgia Miller and Cam Walker	
Secrecy on Nanotech Use in Sunscreens	38
- Georgia Miller	
A Stifling Climate: Targeting Social Movements and Policing Protests	39
- Zoë Hutchinson and Holly Creenaune	
The Transition Decade: Reshaping Australia's Climate Politics	41
- Leigh Ewbank	
World People's Conference on Climate Change in Bolivia	43
- Ben Courtice	
Learn Peace - Students Playing a Role in Nuclear Disarmament	45
- Cat Beaton	
Footprints for Peace	46
- Kerrie-Ann Garlick	
People of Bakun Call for the Protection of Ancestral Domains	48
- Ana Brown	



EARTH NEWS

The Plight of The Southern Cassowary

The Rainforest Information Centre has launched a new campaign, 'Save the Cassowary'. The Cassowary is the third largest bird in the world and is thought to have more in common with dinosaurs than most other birds. The ancient Wet Tropics in Far North Queensland depend on these flightless birds to disperse and germinate seeds of the rainforest trees - if the Cassowary becomes extinct, so too would much of the rainforest ecology.

The primary threat to the Cassowary is loss of habitat. With as few as 1000 Cassowaries remaining in Australia, the Rainforest Information Centre is urging the federal government to provide funds to buy back the remaining undeveloped properties in the Daintree and Mission Beach, vital primary habitat for the Cassowary.

Visit www.savethecassowary.org.au and take action by sending a letter to environment minister Peter Garrett, and email Ruth Rosenhek rainforestinfo@ozemail.com.au to request postcards for you and your friends to sign.

Australian Sustainable Energy – by The Numbers

A recent report by Peter Seligman, 'Australian Sustainable Energy – by the numbers', concludes:

1. In theory, Australia could comfortably supply all of its power requirements renewably.
2. In practice, for some interim period, the use of some non-renewable sources may be necessary but the overall carbon footprint can be reduced to zero in time.
3. The major contributors would be geothermal, wind and solar power.
4. To match the varying load and supply, electricity could be stored using pumped hydro, as it is at present on a much smaller scale. In this case, seawater could be used, in large cliff-top ponds.
5. Energy efficiency would be a key aspect of the solution.
6. A comprehensive modelling approach could be used to minimise the cost rather



than the current piecemeal, politically based, ad hoc system.

7. Private transport and other fuel based transport could be largely electrified and batteries could be used to assist with storage.

8. In a transition period, liquid fuel based transport could be accommodated by using biofuels produced using CO₂ from any remaining fossil fuelled power sources and CO₂ generating industries.

The report is posted at <http://energy.unimelb.edu.au/ozsebt>

Public Opinion Forces Nestle's Hand on Palm Oil

A Youtube advertisement produced by Greenpeace has helped persuade Nestle to shift away from palm oil. The graphic ad depicts a person eating an orangutan finger in place of a Kit Kat, highlighting the role of Nestle in causing deforestation and associated orangutan deaths. Following the release of the ad, Nestle said it "had made mistakes" and that it had already suspended purchases from one Indonesian palm oil producer. Nestle has also stated that all of its suppliers will need to ensure that none of the palm oil they supply is connected to deforestation. View the ad at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV1t-MvnCrA

[com/watch?v=QV1t-MvnCrA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QV1t-MvnCrA)

80,000 Australians have called on the federal government to label palm oil as part of Zoos Victoria's 'Don't Palm us Off' campaign. Senator Nick Xenophon has introduced a Bill into federal parliament on mandatory palm oil labeling. This Bill is also sponsored by Senators Bob Brown and Barnaby Joyce.

More information: www.zoo.org.au/PalmOil

Australia's Global Footprint One of The Worst

Australia ranks among the world's 10 worst countries for environmental impact. Research led by Prof. Corey Bradshaw from Adelaide Uni's environment institute found Australia's carbon emissions, rate of species threat and natural forest loss were the greatest contributors to its ninth-place ranking. The 10 countries with the worst global footprint were Brazil, the US, China, Indonesia, Japan, Mexico, India, Russia, Australia and Peru.

Bradshaw said he was surprised that a relatively poor country such as Brazil took out the top spot. "The wealthier you are, the more damage you do, on average," he said. The study found no evidence to support

the popular idea that environmental degradation plateaus or declines past a certain threshold of per capital wealth (known as the Kuznets curve hypothesis).

The researchers developed a separate ranking using a proportional environmental impact index, measuring impact against resource availability. On that scale, the 10 worst countries were Singapore, Korea, Qatar, Kuwait, Japan, Thailand, Bahrain, Malaysia, the Philippines and the Netherlands.

The report, 'Evaluating the Relative Environmental Impact of Countries', is posted at dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0010440. Source: The Age, 6 May 2010.

Government Reverses Farmers' Coal Mining Win

In March, the NSW Supreme Court ruled in favour of two Liverpool Plains farmers, who challenged the right of BHP Billiton to enter and conduct coal exploration on their land. The NSW government reacted quickly by introducing a Bill to amend the Mining Act and legalise the actions found by the Supreme Court to undermine landholders and other parties' rights.

Meanwhile, farmers in Queensland have threatened to blockade coal seam gas development unless the state government imposes a moratorium and delivers answers on environmental issues on the Western Downs and Surat Basin. Basin Sustainability Alliance chair Ian Hallyor said if the government did not impose a moratorium "we will do our own". "We will blockade every site they want to go on," he said.

More information: Caroon Coal Action Group: www.ccaug.org.au

ACT Most Recent to Look to Plastic Bag Bans

After the failure of the federal government to place a ban on single-use plastic bags, state and territory governments have taken initiatives to reduce Australia's plastic bag consumption. South Australia became the first state to place a ban on non-biodegradable plastic bags in 2009, while Victoria introduced a ban on free plastic bags. The Northern Territory and Western Australia are also expected to introduce legislation around plastic bag use this year.

The Australian Capital Territory



More than 40,000 people turned out on May 1 in Auckland to protest the New Zealand National government's plan to open National Parks for mining. *Photo by Suzi Phillips* <http://nominingprotestpix.blogspot.com>

government is the most recent to announce it is also considering a ban on plastic bags, after resident and shopper surveys showed significant support for the change. This is likely to be a complete ban similar to South Australia's, rather than the levee system used in Victoria. The ACT environment minister states this will be easier to monitor and more effective in reducing plastic bag usage.

Container Deposit Scheme Planned for NT

The Northern Territory is attempting to curb litter and the amount of rubbish going to landfill through a Cash for Containers scheme, to come into effect late 2011. Despite heavy lobbying attempts by the beverage industry, the NT government has pursued the scheme, arguing that 95% of the population support it and the scheme will reduce waste going to landfill by 50%. The NT government is only the second government in Australia to commit to such an initiative, with the SA government the first to introduce container deposit legislation, which came into place in 1975. Industry and community consultation for the NT scheme will continue over coming months as the government prepares legislation for the administration of the scheme.

Government information on the scheme: www.cashforcontainers.nt.gov.au

Whaling Action

The Australian government announced on May 31 that it will be taking legal action against Japanese whaling through the International Court of Justice. This is ahead of schedule, with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd initially laying down a November deadline for the end of whaling. Critics have suggested this is a politically motivated move, ahead of this year's federal election.

Whaling proponents Japan, Norway and Iceland are pushing for a lift on the international ban on commercial whaling which has been in place for 25 years. The proposed change is supported by roughly half of the International Whaling Commission's members.

Creating Jobs and Cutting Pollution

A report by the ACTU and the ACF shows that if governments act now to shift Australia from a pollution dependent economy to a cleaner economy it will create 3.7 million new jobs across the country by 2030. The report, 'Creating Jobs - Cutting Pollution: the roadmap for a cleaner, stronger economy', is based on extensive economic modelling of costs and benefits across all Australian regions of taking action to cut greenhouse pollution by 25%.

More information and a link to the report: www.acfonline.org.au/articles/news.asp?news_id=2855



FOE AUSTRALIA NEWS

Friends of the Earth Australia is a federation of independent local groups. You can join FoE by contacting your local group. For further details, please see <www.foe.org.au/groups>.

There is a monthly email newsletter which includes details on our campaigns here and around the world - you can subscribe via the FoE Australia website <www.foe.org.au>.

A Strong Climate Change Bill for Victoria

The Victorian ALP has committed to introducing a Climate Bill for Victoria. This will be released before the state election in November. With the collapse of the federal government's emissions trading scheme legislation, a strong Victorian Bill has become even more important.

There are now climate Bills in the UK, Scotland, South Australia and elsewhere. FoE has been campaigning to ensure that the Victorian Bill will be benchmarked on, and exceed, the Scottish Bill, which came into effect in 2009. Amongst a range of measures, the Scottish Bill commits Scotland to:

- a 42% reduction in greenhouse emissions against 1990 levels by 2020;
- a target of 80% reductions by 2050; and
- annual targets for reduction in emissions.

There are action alerts and further information on our website: www.melbourne.foe.org.au

State Election in Victoria

Victoria goes to the polls in late 2010. As has been noted by the premier, John Brumby, both climate change and water will be significant issues in the state election.

FoE is campaigning on both of these issues. In addition, we remain deeply concerned about urban sustainability, forests, energy policy and a range of other issues. A key aim will be to see the main parties commit to delivering a strong and whole-of-government style Safe Climate Bill, the

replacement of the ageing Hazelwood power station with clean energy, and protection of Melbourne's drinking water catchments.

FoE never endorses 'people, political parties or products', but we do acknowledge that elections offer a great opportunity to influence the direction of society, and so we will be doing all we can to influence all political parties and improve their policy platforms.

Details on our election campaign are posted at www.melbourne.foe.org.au

War Games in Queensland



The Talisman Saber joint US-Australian war games are the largest military operation outside of a war zone. They take place in the NT and Shoalwater Bay in central Queensland, but much of the activity occurs in the oceans off the coast of Queensland - the Great Barrier Reef and the Coral Sea. Friends of the Earth Brisbane is campaigning through the biannual 'Peace Convergence' against the military use of this environmentally significant region.

In late January the Australian Department of Defence released its assessment of the environmental protection put in place for Talisman Saber 2009. They gave themselves an A+ for sustainability.

Notably absent from their report is any assessment of the chemical hazards associated with munitions, nor any assessment of the absence of an emergency plan in case of nuclear accident. Likewise this 'environmental' report leaves no space for discussion of the ongoing issues of

social impacts, including the dispossession of the indigenous owners of the land and the social risks of military personnel to the public, women in particular.

The US navy has a policy of dumping its shipboard waste at sea, as well as the usual ballast, leaks and accidents. The US and Australian military use active sonar in this area, which is known to cause brain haemorrhages in whales and cetaceans and is a suspected cause of whale beaching. Sonar also disrupts the breeding and swimming behaviours of fish, turtles and other marine animals.

The US military has exempted themselves from several key environmental laws. It regularly uses the Coral Sea to the extent that they have a warship named after it.

According to Daisy Barham, the Coral Sea Community Campaigner with the Australian Marine Conservation Society, "Australia's Coral Sea is a staggeringly beautiful place. It is also one of the few marine areas left on the planet where populations of large marine wildlife and healthy, functioning ecosystems can still be found. The world's oceans have less than 1% protection, compared to almost 13% of the planet's land mass. This campaign will put Australia on the global stage as a world leader in marine conservation."

The Marine Conservation Society is petitioning the Prime Minister to fully protect the Coral Sea as a Heritage Park "that can be protected now and for future generations." We urge FoE supporters to sign the petition.

More information can be found here: www.marineconservation.org.au/WhatWeDo.asp?active_page_id=164

Shining Gum Plantations in Tasmania - Mysterious Toxin

FoE Australia is concerned about revelations that Shining Gum (*Eucalyptus nitens*) plantations in Tasmania have been leaching a mysterious toxin into waterways on the east coast of Tasmania.

It has been suggested that 'genetically improved' Shining Gum trees were the source of a mysterious toxin associated with a rise in cancers in the small coastal town of St Helens, the death of thousands of oysters near the Georges River, which is also the town of St Helen's water supply, and the possible start of facial tumours that have been wreaking havoc with Tasmanian Devil populations since the late 1990's. Testing of plantation trees has shown that the leaves of the trees were indeed toxic.

Read more here: www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2007/s2827178.htm and www.melbourne.foe.org.au/?q=node/693

Richard Smith wins Unsung Hero Award

FoE Adelaide activist Richard Smith was announced the winner of the SA Conservation Council's 'Unsung Hero' award on June 17. Here is the award citation:

Richard has been a lifelong activist across a wide range of environmental issues. A high school teacher by profession with a focus on environmental education (and recognised as SA Environmental Educator of the Year in 2008), Richard has been an inspiration to the community groups he has been associated with over the last three decades.

Most recently, in 2009, Richard has been contributed to the new Transition Adelaide West Group - the first initiative in Adelaide to be part of the international Transition Towns movement.

Richard is currently the Vice-President of the Western Adelaide Community Residents' Association and has been a member for over 10 years; he is a member of the Friends of Gulf St Vincent; he is on the executive committee of the Water Action Coalition; he is a dedicated member of the Friends of the Earth Adelaide Clean Futures Collective and is on the organising committee of Transition Adelaide West.

Richard's involvement with Friends of the Earth's anti-nuclear campaigning has been a long one and has provided the group with much support. He has always emphasised the importance of education and has frequently presented to schools and universities on the issues associated with nuclear power and uranium mining.



Volunteers at the South Melbourne Eco-Market.

His creative talents have come to the fore in recent years, helping build and coordinate Friends of the Earth's participation in the last two Fringe Opening Night Parades!

Richard is well-known for his commitment, his dedication, hard work, humour and intelligence in facing some of the most urgent environmental issues of our time. He plays a key role in the environment movement in SA and is a worthy recipient of the Conservation Council's Unsung Hero Award.

Thanks to Cate Kyne

FoE Australia has received a substantial bequest from long time member Cate Kyne. Cate was a life-long activist in the women's and social justice movements.

In recent years she was most active in local campaigns on climate change and in the Transition Town initiative in the inner north of Melbourne. She was a poet and writer, who dedicated her life to a better world. We greatly appreciate her gift to our work.

If you - or someone you know - is interested in leaving a bequest to FoE in your will, please visit www.foe.org.au/about-us/bequest or contact Mara Bonacci, freecall 1300 852 081 or email mara.bonacci@foe.org.au

Eco-Market Underway in South Melbourne

FoE has long planned to develop a series of eco-markets around Australia. These are intended as viable alternatives to the large chains, with around 70% of the range of items you would expect to find in a conventional supermarket, but with stock decisions based on sustainability and equity criteria.

Work has been proceeding on the first site - an old primary school in South Melbourne. Because of the unique location and the partner - the parish of well known priest Father Bob Maguire - we are going to develop a combined eco-market and community hub and we have named it the South Melbourne Commons.

There is much we need to do to get the site cleaned up and renovated and ready to open. We greatly appreciate all the people who have helped so far with our community working bees. We are hoping to officially open the Commons by mid spring.

For further details on the project and how to get involved, please check: www.foe.org.au/sustainable-food



FOE INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Friends of the Earth International is a federation of autonomous organisations from all over the world. Our members, in 77 countries, campaign on the most urgent environmental and social issues, while working towards sustainable societies. www.foei.org You can sign up for 'Voices', the bimonthly email newsletter of FoE International, at www.foei.org/en/get-involved/voices FoE's web radio station broadcasts the voices of the affected people we work with and the campaigners fighting on their behalf. Listen online (in a choice of five languages) at www.radiomundoreal.fm. Check out the FoE International online shop at: www.foei.org/en/get-involved/shop for calendars, t-shirts, greeting cards, subscriptions to FoE publications, and more.



Thuli Brilliance Makama

Awards to FoE Activists

FoE Middle East / EcoPeace's Good Water Neighbors Project has been awarded the Green Globe Award for the best Environmental Education project this year. Life and Environment, the umbrella organisation of environmental organisations in Israel, awards the 'Green Globes' to activists, groups and companies, for environmental action in Israel.

Meanwhile, FoE Swaziland / Yonge Nawe director, Thuli Brilliance Makama, is one of this year's six winners of the prestigious Goldman Prize. Thuli is a real hero and has never faltered in her battle against the big game parks, despite direct threats made against her, her family and FoE Swaziland. She also won a landmark legal case which ensures that NGO representation is brought into the Swaziland Environment Authority's decision-making processes.

More information: www.goldmanprize.org/2010/africa

EC May Redefine Palm Plantations as Forests

A leaked document from the European Commission reveals plans to allow the controversial use of palm oil as a biofuel by redefining oil palm plantations as 'forests'. The expansion of palm plantations is a major cause of tropical rainforest destruction. The draft Commission guidance for EU countries states that cutting down a rainforest and planting a palm plantation would be possible under EU laws aimed at stopping 'unsustainable' biofuels.

More information: www.foeurope.org/press/2010/Feb03_EC_plans_to_sacrifice_forests_for_biofuels.html



Cooking up a Storm Over GMOs

On 17 April, more than 15,000 people joined a protest march in Madrid calling for "Agriculture and Food Free from GMOs" which was co-organised by FoE Spain and consumer and farmers groups and others. Spain is the only EU country that grows GM on a large scale. They also organised an action on the newly authorised GM potato in front of the Spanish Parliament, where cooks and 'executives' from BASF and Monsanto offered tortillas to those entering the parliament.

World Bank Promotes Land Grabbing

FoE International has warned that voluntary principles on land acquisitions announced by the World Bank and supported by UN will legitimise and promote land grabbing in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The warning

was issued as the World Bank released at an April 26-27 meeting its voluntary principles to protect rights, livelihoods and resources during large scale land acquisitions by foreign investors in these continents.

Millions of people's livelihoods are being destroyed by land grabbing, especially those of peasant farmers, indigenous peoples and fisherfolk. Land grabbing takes place when states and the private sector buy up millions of hectares of land to produce food and fuel, mainly for export. The World Bank claims that these acquisitions will promote agricultural investment. In reality they will further entrench corporate agriculture for profit and destroy local livelihoods.

More information: World Bank, <http://go.worldbank.org/67YHA6L0K0>. See a copy of the 'principles' at <http://tinyurl.com/352bafz>

World Bank Energy Funding

International NGOs including FoE International have launched a global campaign against World Bank President Zoellick's General Capital Increase request. A historic global coalition of development, environment, faith-based, human rights, science, community, women's and indigenous rights groups will be targeting donor country governments to withhold funding for the proposed capital increase, because of the World Bank's continued support for dirty energy. The World Bank Group is currently reviewing its Energy Strategy, which will guide its substantial energy investments over the coming decade.

More information: Bank Information Centre, www.bicusa.org/en/Article.11857.aspx

Indonesian President 'Appreciates' FoE's Forest work

Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono has identified illegal logging as another form of entrenched corruption. He said: "I believe there's a mafia in illegal logging. Our mafia task force should be able to look into the possibility that such a mafia exists and to stop them. I also want

to underline the importance of preserving our forests. I've followed Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth which are active in criticising the forest management by our government. I want to give my appreciation for their concerns and hope they will continue their partnership with Indonesia."

However, critics complain that little actually gets done despite the President's frequent pronouncements about environmental problems and corruption. A recent study by the Center for East Asia Cooperation Studies at the University of Indonesia found that the Indonesian military is heavily involved in the illegal logging industry.

Source: www.terradaily.com/afp/100407090930.alixpcfv.html

Germany: 120 km Human 'Chain Reaction' Against Nukes

On 24 April, around 120,000 people linked arms and held hands in a human chain between two reactor sites in Germany. Stretching along the Elbe River, from Brunsbüttel through the port city of Hamburg to Krümmel, the 'Chain Reaction' was a response to the conservative German government's announcement that it would delay the closure of nuclear power plants well beyond 2020. Protesters also demanded the closure of the two nuclear plants at the end of the chain, which have had several breakdowns in recent years. FoE Germany / BUND initiated this successful event and is working on mobilising people for more actions, protests and events. Demonstrations were also held in other regions of Germany. Germany's revived anti-nuclear movement includes several environmental NGOs, and youth, union, religious and political organisations.

FAO Accused of Favouring Industrial Agriculture

On the first day of a UN Food and Agriculture Organisation conference in Mexico in March, FoE International denounced the Organisation's support for polluting industrial agriculture when it should be promoting peasant and ecological agriculture and food sovereignty. FAO's promotion of GM crops flies in the face of its own findings – the International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science and Technology for Development

has concluded that it is unlikely that genetically modified organisms can bring substantial solutions to agricultural issues.

In February, FoE International published the report, "Who benefits from GM crops? 2010," which shows that genetically modified crops are not helping to solve hunger issues in the world. The report finds that claims made by the biotech industry that genetically modified crops can combat climate change are both exaggerated and premature. GM crops could actually increase carbon emissions while failing to feed the world; and more than 99% of GM crops are grown for animal feed and agrofuels, rather than food.

Many governments, including in Europe and India, remain cautious about adopting GM crops. In Europe, for example, the area planted with GM crops has decreased for the fifth year in a row, a reduction of more than 10% since 2008.

The FoE report is posted at: www.foeeurope.org/GMOs/Who_Benefits/who_benefits_full_report_2010.pdf

Europe warning that the global development of tar sands will magnify the climate crisis and damage the EU's environment and development objectives. Political attention currently focuses on Canada as the major producer of oil from tar sands, but the new report reveals that investment by European oil companies – such as BP, Shell, Total and ENI – is expanding with developments around the world including in the Republic of Congo, Venezuela, Madagascar, Russia, Jordan and Egypt.

The report, 'Tar sands – Fuelling the climate crisis, undermining EU energy security and damaging development objectives' is posted at: www.foeeurope.org/corporates/pdf/Tar_Sand_Final_May10.pdf

In Canada, thousands of peoples joined the Olympic Resistance march in Canada on February 12. The group was there to ensure the horror story of the tar sands was communicated to the crowd awaiting the opening of the 2010 winter olympics. Two of the top tar sands investors - Royal Bank and Petro Canada / Suncor - were lead sponsors of the winter olympics.

More information: www.ienearth.org/tarsands



Above: One of the FoE photo competition winners. Gagan Nayar - rally against Dow Chemical on the anniversary of the Bhopal gas tragedy, India.

Tar (oil) Sands Mining

A coalition of organisations including FoE Europe and FoE Scotland have launched a report "Cashing in on Tar Sands – RBS, UK Banks and Canada's 'Blood Oil'" which shows that outside of North America, RBS provides the most finance for tar sands-related companies, totalling US\$7.5 billion in the last three years, equivalent to 8% of the global total.

The report is posted at: www.foeeurope.org/corporates/Extractives/Cashing_in_on_tar_sands_Mar10.pdf

On 5 May, the day of an EU-Canada summit, a new report was released by FoE

2010 FoE Photo Competition Winners

The judges have made their choices for the 2010 FoE International photo competition on the theme "Acting in Solidarity and Building Movements for Change." More than 700 photos were received from 46 countries around the world. The photos were organised into two categories – Acting in Solidarity, and Movements for Change.

The winning photos are posted at: www.foei.org/en/get-involved/photo/2010-winners-page



Support Friends of the Earth

community · ecology · solidarity · justice

We are part of the Australian voice of the largest grassroots environment network in the world, with groups in 77 countries. Whether you decide to get a campaign up & running, volunteer at the fabulous food coop or bookshop, or provide crucial dollars as an Active Friends monthly supporter, it is people like you who keep Friends of the Earth strong. If you are short on time, but big on commitment, take a few minutes to fill in this form.

As a member of Friends of the Earth you are never alone

Help ensure FoE remains a vibrant & independent voice for social and environmental justice. Give your support by:

- ☐ Becoming an **Active Friend** by giving monthly tax-deductible donations
- ☐ Becoming a **New Member** ☐ **Renewing** your membership
- ☐ Giving a **one-off Donation**

Name: _____

Address: _____

State: _____

Postcode: _____

Email: _____

Phone: _____

Mobile: _____

You make the difference · Join Friends of the Earth

active friends

I'd like to make a **monthly donation** of: ☐ \$20 ☐ \$30 ☐ \$50 ☐ other \$ _____ (\$10 min)

The donation will be by (please fillout appropriate card details below):

- ☐ **Direct Debit** from my bank account (the least admin fees!)
- ☐ **Credit card**

A Service Agreement will be sent to you upon receipt of this form. If you would also like to become a member, tick here: ☐ an additional \$20 per year will go towards membership, this is not tax-deductible.

membership

Become a FoE member with a yearly membership payment:

- ☐ **\$150 Supporting Member** (\$100 tax deductible)
- ☐ **\$90 Organisation** ☐ **\$80 Household**
- ☐ **\$60 Waged Person** ☐ **\$40 Concession**
- ☐ **One Year**
- ☐ **Ongoing** (Credit Card or Direct Debit only)

donations

Make a one-off donation (over \$2.00 is tax-deductible): Donation \$ _____ (thank you!)

Direct debit

I/We _____

(Given name)

(Family name)

Request you, until further notice in writing, to debit my/our account described in the schedule below, any amounts which Friends of the Earth Inc may debit or charge me/us through our direct debit system. I/We understand that 1) the bank/financial institution may in its absolute discretion determine the order priority of payment by it of any moneys pursuant to this Request or any other authority or mandate. 2) The bank/financial institution may in its discretion at any time by notice in writing to me/us terminate this Request as to future debits. Bendigo Bank Direct Debit User ID no: 342785

Financial Institution: _____

BSB # _____

Branch address _____

Account # _____

Name on Account _____

Signature _____

Credit Card

☐ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Bankcard Name on card: _____

Card no: ____/____/____/____ Expiry Date: ____/____

CCV no: ____ (last 3 digits on back of card) Cardholder's signature: _____

Cheques payable to 'Friends of the Earth'

Please return to Friends of the Earth, PO Box 222 Fitzroy VIC 3065

Ph: 03 9419 8700 Fax: 03 9416 2081

email: membership@foe.org.au website: www.melbourne.foe.org.au ABN: 68 918 945 471

Editorial - The Future of Food

Joel Catchlove

Despite appearances of strength and efficiency, the globalised, industrialised food system we depend on for our daily sustenance is fragile. It is a system that is highly vulnerable because it is dependent on diminishing supplies of fossil fuels, and it is vulnerable because it degrades the land that it depends upon to the extent that industrial agriculture can be considered a threat to food security. The industrial food and agriculture system is also both threatened by and a key contributor to climate change.

Driven by a neoliberal commitment to free trade, privatisation and the deregulation of markets, the global food system is also one of inequity. There are now over one billion people experiencing hunger in the world, with up to 10% of Australians experiencing food insecurity. The billion hungry are matched by another billion who experience diet-related illnesses from an over-abundance of nutrient-poor foods and lack of access to health-promoting foods.

In February 2010, over 700 farmers, academics, government, health and community workers, environmentalists, permaculturalists, small growers, gardeners, students, educators and other community members gathered in Adelaide for From Plains to Plate: the Future of Food in South Australia. The culmination of almost a year's planning and network-building by Friends of the Earth Adelaide's sustainable food and agriculture collective, From Plains to Plate was a local expression of the emerging movement for building local, community-based food security and sovereignty.

This special edition of Chain Reaction builds on the vast array of ideas, presentations, workshops and proposals shared at *From Plains to Plate*. In documenting emerging projects from South Australia and beyond, we hope that it offers inspiration for communities all over the country to consider how they can cultivate more just and sustainable food systems in their own landscapes.

Starting close to home, inspired by Canada's bioregional eating challenge, Bridget O'Donnell shares some of the things she has learnt as she and her family attempt to eat within a 100 mile radius of their home. Likewise, permaculturalist, urban forager and author of the zine 'How to have an amazingly adventurous life for zero dollars a day', Kim Hill offers observations on the ecology and edibility of common suburban weeds.

Russ Grayson from the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance traces that organisation's journey towards developing just and sustainable local food policy, while Alice Moffett outlines possibilities for council and community collaboration for food security through reflecting on the initiatives of the City of Onkaparinga in southern Adelaide.

Also in Onkaparinga, Tori Moreton offers a model for supporting community-based food production through the Magic Harvest initiative, inspired by the One Magic Square concept developed by Lolo Houbein. Claire Nettle offers a consideration of the food security possibilities for community gardens, while Kelly Jones celebrates the emergence of Food Connect's community-shared agriculture model in Brisbane, Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne. Further afield, Ferne Edwards shares her inspirational observations on work for food sovereignty in Venezuela.

Peter Burdon's piece What is good land use? offers a philosophical consideration of the tension between industrial and agrarian relationships with place and community. Finally, Georgia Miller's documentation of nanotechnology in food and agriculture epitomises some of the risks associated with the industrial food system.

The proceedings of From Plains to Plate, together with the convergence declaration and forthcoming events, are available online at <http://futureoffoodsa.ning.com>.

Joel Catchlove

On behalf of the sustainable food and agriculture collective

Friends of the Earth Adelaide

0435 631 524, joel.catchlove@foe.org.au

A stunning victory

In the April 2009 edition of Chain Reaction, we celebrated a wonderful victory by Yorta Yorta and Wadi Wadi Traditional Owners and their environment movement allies - including Friends of the Earth's Barmah-Millewa Collective - with the Victorian government's decision to protect 90% of the state's red gum forests and to establish co-management of national parks with Traditional Owners. A year later and we're equally pleased to be able to report on a similar victory north of the border. Combined with Victoria's new Red Gum National Parks, the Riverina now boasts a world class reserve system with Barmah-Millewa - the world's largest red gum forest - at its heart. Congratulations to everyone involved. See Jono La Nauze's article in this edition of Chain Reaction.

21 years - you get less for murder!

On June 5 - World Environment Day - Friends of the Earth Melbourne had a wing-ding knees-up at Trades Hall to celebrate Beth Cameron and Cam Walker's 21 years of activism with FoE. Beth coordinates the food co-op and keeps the peace on Smith St, Collingwood. Cam's keeps the peace in the upstairs campaign office, plays a central role in FoE Australia and was on the executive committee of FoE International for six years.

Thanks Beth, thanks Cam.



100 Mile Diet

Bridget O'Donnell

Self-seeded pumpkins drying in the sun at the O'Donnell's. Photo from <http://lifewithoutanchovies.blogspot.com>

For our new year's resolution this year we decided to embark on a 100 Mile Diet, sourcing all of our food this year from within a 160 km radius of our home at Aldinga, South Australia. We live in an eco-village so it was partly an environmental "carbon footprint" motivation, but we also wanted to become more informed about where our food comes from and to get a better idea about what we might be eating in the future as we approach an age of oil depletion.

I had heard about a family in Canada and a family in the UK doing something similar, and we thought it would be an interesting and educational process. Surprisingly, our 15 year old son was on board with the venture too, as his mates at school endorsed the diet as "cool". He has become a little less enthusiastic in the past five months, and has established some loopholes in the project. We decided early on that if we ate at someone else's home, we would accept all foods. It did not take long before he was eating at friends' houses on a regular basis.

For me there have been so many startling discoveries. I had no idea that all canned fish comes from Thailand or Canada. I also had no idea that almost all packaged and tinned foods come from interstate or overseas. It has profoundly changed my shopping habits - I rarely shop at supermarkets anymore, and I buy very few things at the organic food co-op. One of the unexpected benefits has been a huge decrease in the amount of recycling and rubbish that we dispose of - less packaging. We have all lost weight, which I can only attribute to a reduction in calories due to less processed foods with hidden sugars and fats.

One of the greatest challenges of the locavore diet is accessing information about the source of our food. While many retail and hospitality staff may be aware of the location

of their distributors, or the location of the manufacturing, packaging or processing of the products, few seem to be aware of the source of the food. Often people can tell me where the cake is baked, perhaps even where the flour is milled, but rarely where the wheat is grown. In fact, it is difficult for some mills to be accurate about where their own wheat supplies come from at any given moment, as it changes seasonally, and with demand. It is common practice with mills to mix their wheat from various sources, so they cannot differentiate between local or non-local grains.

At first I found this confusing, but the more I thought about it, the more it made sense. If a mill has to meet a certain quota for wheat, it would make sense for it to source as much wheat locally as possible. When the local supplies are exhausted, the mill seeks grain from further afield. It would not make economic sense to store this grain in separate silos just because it is sourced from different locations. So the grains are mixed into one silo. This practice is even carried out with organic and biodynamic grains. For example, the organic wheat milled at Tarlee's Four Leaf Milling, north of Adelaide, is a mix of both organic and biodynamic grains.

Conversations with food industry workers have alerted me to other practices that add further complexity. A bulk food supplier told me that when she orders organic flour, it comes from one particular region in Australia. However, when that particular source is depleted, her supplier will ship her organic flour from wherever they can source it, including America, without alerting her, or considering that she might want to know. The only reason she knows this is that it is labelled 'Product of the USA' on the box. A friend who runs a business producing and selling dukkah relays the same story about her spices. The source of foodstuffs

seems to be deemed irrelevant to customers. The emphasis and importance is on continuity of supply, not integrity of source.

The co-ordinator of my local food co-op tells me that her first priority is reliable supply. She says that she cannot afford to prioritise local foods because of their unpredictability. Her customers will become disgruntled if they cannot purchase what they want at the co-op on a regular basis and will shop elsewhere. Let's face it; most people don't want to have to shop at three or four different places to get their weekly supplies. That's one advantage of supermarkets – convenience. It is hard to compete with the time saving of buying everything you need under one roof.

The next most challenging issue for a locavore is changing the menu at home. Like most people, I assume, I have some standard meals that I can prepare with very little effort, and a few staple pantry ingredients. When we started this local diet, my quick, easy, recipe-in-my-head days were over.

I had to start looking at recipe books again, trying to find new ways to cook things like zucchini when they were in

abundance. And how to cook without things like spices, sugar, and vanilla essence and without the help of curry powders, pastes, sauces and anything canned or packaged.

I do think that eating locally is the way of the future, and ultimately we will be forced to do so with the increased cost of transporting foods vast distances being passed onto consumers. The irony is that we can still buy foods that are shipped half way around the globe cheaper than we can buy foods grown and produced locally. In fact we are lucky if we can even source some locally produced products in our area, because they are exported and there is no local market for them!

Eating local food makes me value my garden, helps me to be aware of my environment, connects me with people in my neighbourhood, and keeps me healthier as the food is fresh and unadulterated. It also reduces my carbon footprint, reduces my waste, keeps me familiar with my kitchen, and interested in new recipes. Not a bad outcome I think

You can follow Bridget's discoveries and recipes at <http://lifewithoutanchovies.blogspot.com>

CSIRO's Total Wellbeing Diet a Lemon

CSIRO Perfidy

Geoff Russell

2009, Vivid Publishing

336pp, pb, RRP \$32.95

ISBN 9780980638134

Order from the Perfidy website: <www.perfidy.com.au>

Perfidy - deliberate breach of faith or trust; faithlessness; treachery

Adelaide-based mathematician, computer programmer and Animal Liberation activist Geoff Russell is well placed to analyse the research behind CSIRO's Total Wellbeing Diet (TWD). He questions the science and the integrity of the TWD with compelling evidence that its main ingredient, red meat, causes bowel cancer. He explains why diets heavy in red meat have such a devastating effect, not only people's health, but also on the planet as the production of red meat contributes to world hunger and global warming while using and polluting water resources.

Russell writes in the preface:

"The CSIRO Board was informed in 2006, by its own staff, that high red meat diets increased bowel cancer, but nevertheless allowed a second edition of the best seller to be published under CSIRO's name, explicitly telling people that

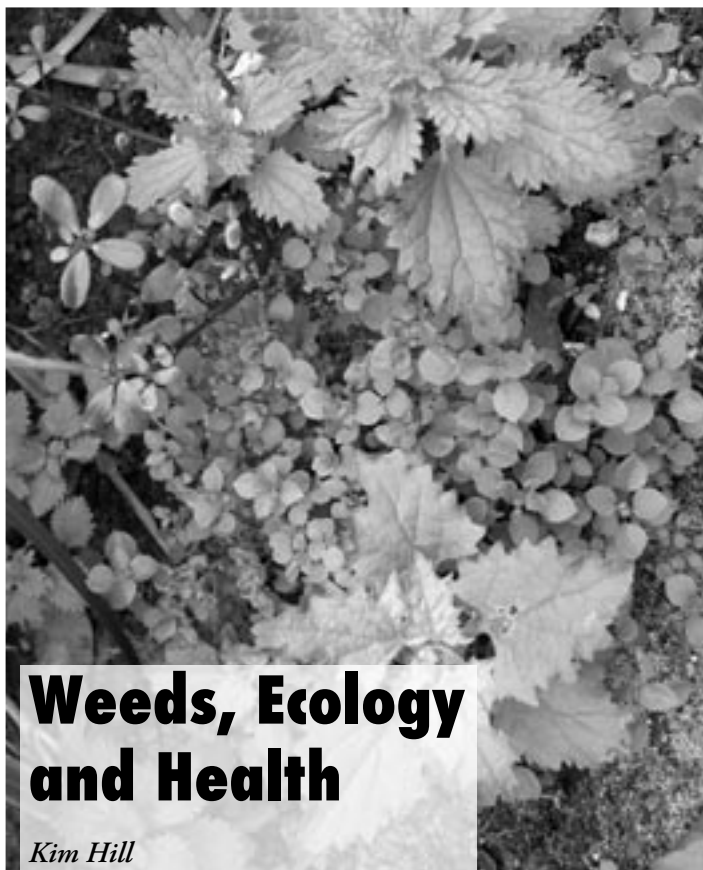
red meat was not a significant risk factor for bowel cancer.

"Perfidy is about that diet and about that "healthy eating plan for life". It will show that the best available scientific evidence is that CSIRO has made a major nutritional blunder. But more than that, the book will also show that the diet and lifetime eating plan are the height of environmental irresponsibility – a fundamental breach of the CSIRO's duty of care.

"The core foods in CSIRO's TWD are red and processed meat, dairy foods and fish. Australia's livestock, primarily sheep and cattle, generate methane, a potent greenhouse gas. The methane from our livestock creates more warming than all of our coal fired power stations and the dairy industry uses more irrigation water than any other industry in Australia. It uses far more than rice or cotton. A CSIRO report, published the year before the initial TWD launch, calculated that the dairy industry used 9 times more water from the Murray Darling Basin than the fruit and vegetable industries combined.

"With ocean fisheries under stress everywhere, Australia already imports 55% of the fish we consume from someone else's ocean, but TWD recommends double the average fish consumption. If you were trying to accelerate global warming, kill the Murray Darling river system and drive ocean fisheries further into decline, you would have a tough time coming up with anything more damaging than CSIRO's TWD."

Ethicist Prof. Peter Singer says: "Read this book: it may save your life. And if enough people read it, it just might save the planet."



Weeds, Ecology and Health

Kim Hill

What is a weed? The generally accepted definition is that it is a plant out of place, but who dictates the right place for a plant to be? The very idea of a weed is a cultural construct. Nature knows no weeds. The American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that “a weed is a plant whose virtues have not yet been discovered.”

What is seen as a weed depends on the context – the location and the values of the person making the judgement – so that a plant that is considered to be out of place is different in a garden, an agricultural setting or a native forest.

The concept of weeds comes from the culture of domination of nature. We feel the need to control our surroundings, and can't stand plants that can look after themselves, exhibitions of nature asserting itself in our man-made environments.

These plants can be useful to us in many ways, as food and medicine, and they have an essential role in repairing damaged landscapes and creating healthy ecosystems. The fact that they grow freely, without any work being done by us, means that they cannot be exploited. For this reason weeds are not valued, and even considered an enemy, in western cultures.

By getting to know our local wild plants and making use of them we can move away from the paradigm of subjugating nature for the purposes of economic growth, and towards a more harmonious and integrated relationship with our world. In times of scarcity, knowledge of local weeds becomes essential to survival. During the world wars, many people became dependent on weeds for food and medicine. When the Argentine economy collapsed in 2001,

the government distributed pamphlets with information about edible weeds.

As we become familiar with the weeds growing in our neighbourhood and use them in our daily lives, we develop a closer relationship with nature. We find ourselves becoming a part of the environment we live in, rather than imposing ourselves on it. Value can be discovered in neglected landscapes, by exploring these spaces that are considered wastelands and recognising them as diverse and abundant ecosystems. A wild food hunt is an adventure which can be so much more fun than shopping. By taking notice of what is happening around us, the changing seasons, and the patterns and cycles of nature, we can learn about the natural world through direct experience, using all our senses. We come to understand that it is the land, not the supermarket, that feeds us. By eating wild plants and animals we significantly reduce our ecological footprint – the amount of land that is cleared and farmed to provide for our needs.

Leafy greens contain almost all of the vitamins and minerals we need. By eating foods that are more nutrient-dense, we reduce the overall quantity of food we need to eat, which means less effort for our body to assimilate, and less effort and cost involved in shopping, transporting and preparing our food. In green vegetables, 90% of vitamins are lost within hours of picking, so by eating directly from the living plant we can optimise our intake of nutrients. Wild plants tend to contain more nutrients than cultivated plants, as they often spread their roots further to obtain water and reach fertile soil.

Obesity is caused by the body craving nutrients and feeling a need to eat more. It is a symptom of malnutrition, rather than a lack of self-control. Many people in western countries don't have access to sufficient nutrients and suffer a range of health problems as a result. Adding a few weeds to our diet could be enormously beneficial to our health.

Medicinal value

Most weeds and leafy greens have some medicinal value. The effects they are credited with vary between cultures and sources, and each individual experiences these effects differently. Animals instinctively know which plants to eat when ill. By getting to know the plants in our local area and tuning in to the way they affect our bodies, we may be able to regain these lost instincts and take responsibility for our own health.

Most leafy greens contain alkaloids – poisons that accumulate in the liver if eaten too often. Different plants contain different alkaloids, so eating a variety provides a range of nutrients and prevents liver damage. This same principle of varied eating, and everything in moderation, applies to all foods.

In the garden weeds have many benefits. The weeds that grow in a particular place indicate the soil condition. For

example dock and sorrel can be found in poorly drained and acidic soils, salvation jane and horehound indicate overgrazed and compacted soil, caltrop and wireweed show that the soil is infertile and dry, and nettle, sow thistle and chickweed grow in rich, fertile loam.

As weeds are often deep-rooted, they bring nutrients to the surface that are not otherwise accessible to more shallow-rooted garden plants. By cutting these deep-rooted plants and leaving them on the surface as mulch, their nutrients then feed surrounding plants. The deep roots also aerate and add organic matter to compacted or poor soils, improving conditions for other plants. Making compost or liquid fertiliser from weeds is another way to return these nutrients to the soil.

Soil protection and reparation

Weeds can form a living mulch, protecting the soil from the drying effects of sun and wind, and prevent leaching of soil nutrients. They can also contribute to pest management by providing an alternative target for pest species, and the flowers can attract predators that control pest insects. Working with nature in the garden by observing and learning from wild plants, insects and animals that exist there can be enlightening, liberating and make gardening much more fun.

In degraded landscapes, weeds are essential in repairing the soil to create an environment where other plants can grow. Weeds are a pioneer species, the first stage in the succession towards the healthy diverse ecosystem of a mature forest. By colonising damaged land, weeds halt erosion, reduce salinity and add organic matter to the soil. They protect other plants from sun, wind and predators. As the plants that form the next stage in the succession grow, weeds are shaded out and the soil conditions become unsuitable, causing the weeds to die of their own accord. Weeds such as blackberry, lantana, gorse and thistles are seen as an environmental problem but are actually nature's way of redressing an imbalance. They are part of the solution to underlying environmental damage.

Ecosystems change and evolve over time, as a result of changing climate, species migration and human impact. Attempting to recreate the environments of 200 years ago is not necessarily a good thing, considering that humans have been altering the Australian environment for 40,000 years already. Ecosystems of 200 years ago are no longer suitable to the conditions, and many introduced plants can be beneficial to our landscapes.

Edible weeds

Some common edible weeds in southern Australia are dandelion, purslane, stinging nettle, fat hen, wild lettuce, mallow, chickweed and prickly pear. When foraging for wild plants, there are a few points to consider. Be sure to

identify plants correctly, as similar looking plants may be poisonous. Also be mindful of potential chemical contamination - railway corridors are often sprayed with herbicides, and runoff from busy highways may contain a range of contaminants. Compared to the amount of chemicals applied to commercially grown fruit and vegetables, most weeds growing in urban and rural areas are unlikely to present a risk. Be conscious of the amount you harvest in any location. Leave enough behind for others to use, both human and non-human, and for the plants to grow and reproduce.

A plant will taste different depending on the conditions in which it grows. The soil type, climate, season and plant genetics can affect taste and nutrient value. Young leaves are much more palatable than older leaves, which become coarse and bitter.

Weeds can be added to salads, with the more bitter tasting leaves used only in small amounts so as not to be overpowering. Weeds can also be cooked in the same way as any other leafy greens, in soups, omelettes or stir-fry dishes. Green smoothies are an easy way to eat more leafy greens, by blending raw leaves with some fruit, for a tasty and nutritious breakfast.

References and resources:

- * Australian Weeds – Gai Stern
- * How can I use herbs in my daily life? - Isabel Shippard
- * Growing Community: Starting and Nurturing Community Gardens – Claire Nettle
- * Beyond the Brink – Peter Andrews
- * Green for Life - Victoria Boutenko
- * Plants for a Future - www.pfaf.org
- * Katherine Kizilos, November 28, 2007, Where the wild things are, The Age, <http://tinyurl.com/28pbuox>
- * Radio interview with David Holmgren – A Permaculture Approach to Weeds www.radio4all.net/index.php/program/14348

Kim Hill works on permaculture, transition towns and community food security projects in Adelaide.

Web: <storiesofcreativeecology.wordpress.com>

Acknowledgement is made of the assistance received as an Adelaide Centre for the Arts TAFE SA student in developing this article

Food policy for the future

Russ Grayson

Growcom wants one. So does the Public Health Association of Australia and sustainable agriculture expert at the University of Sydney, Bill Billotti. A national food policy, it seems, is something of a catchy idea. But what kind of policy are we talking about?

Growcom's proposal focuses mainly on big agribusiness and food exports and it is the likely form of any food policy that would come from our national capital-amid-the-sheep-farms. For small business and the rural smallholder, and for the growing number of community groups gathered around food, where would their voice be in a national policy on food?

Some might argue that a national policy should consider only macroeconomic issues and that consideration of food policy questions around urban food security, access to good, affordable food and the sustainable production of food are really matters for state and local government policy. A counter-argument says that national policy should set the broad agenda on these questions that would be implemented through state and local government policy.

The recent spate of proposals for a national food policies have seemingly come out of nowhere in a very short space of time. All of those mentioned appeared within a period of three months in 2010. Yet, it is to local - not state or national - government that we must look for the genesis of food policy in this country. That was 1997 and it was the work of South Sydney Council.

Still a model

The policy passed by South Sydney Council - called What's Eating South Sydney - proposed support for greater access to local retail sources of fresh foods and to self-help, community food initiatives such as food co-operatives and community food gardens. In these gardens, it was thought, people could grow some of their own perishable foods, primarily the vegetables and herbs, and perhaps some fruits, to help supply the nutrients needed regularly to maintain health.

In the few years between the formation of the policy and South Sydney Council being absorbed into the City of Sydney, the policy did not encourage food co-ops but did enable Council support to flow to community gardens in the area including those on Housing NSW's Waterloo Estate, the first of their kind. Seeking to tap into community-based expertise, the policy enabled Council to enlist the co-operation of the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network.

Soon after South Sydney, Penrith Council adopted a food policy. These were, as far as is known, the first in Australia and a sign that as far back as the late 1990s people were starting to think differently about Sydney's continued access to fresh foods. Now, local government in other states, as well as in NSW, has decided not to await federal or state food policies and to initiate their own.

Food summit

After the initial flurry of innovation in the late 1990s, the idea of food policy as a means of enacting local and state food security and food access initiatives went into hiatus until it was resurrected by the Sydney Food Fairness Alliance (SFFA) in 2009. The Alliance organised an ambitious event - a food summit - spanning the months between its launch in NSW Parliament House in May to the Food Summit - known as Hungry For Change - in October.

Lead-up events were held through the greater Sydney region to identify regional food issues and to pass action items on to the Food Summit. The lead-up event in the Illawarra, south of Sydney, was organised by Food Fairness Illawarra, an organisation that came into existence around the same time as the SFFA. Lead-ups also took place in the Blue Mountains and in the Macarthur district, south-west of the city. They were supplemented by those on the Central Coast to the north and the inner urban/city east area.

Well known nutritionist, chef and author, Rosemary Stanton, was a keynote speaker at the Illawarra lead-up and Michael Shuman, visiting US economist and attorney, working for the Business Alliance for Local Living Economies, was keynote speaker for the inner urban/city east event at Circular Quay. That event was organised by a team from different organisations active in SFFA including Leichhardt, the City of Sydney, Randwick and Waverley councils, Transition Sydney and the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network. Participating in the event were representatives from the Coffs Coast Food Alliance on the mid-north coast.

Keynote speaker at the two-day Food Summit was Jeanette Longfield from UK food education and advocacy organisation, Sustain, an effective organisations seen as something of a model by the SFFA. Sydney's Lord Mayor, Clover Moore, also appeared in her role of local food system advocate.

Food as a focus for sustainability

Just as the rise of the environment movement in the 1980s saw the blossoming of a multitude of community organisations, the blooming of food as a social, environmental and policy issue is creating a forest of organisations to take action on it. With food choices instrumental in a household's energy and water footprint as well as contributing to the incredible volume of food waste produced by both households

and industry, the growing social milieu around food is something the established environmental lobbies seem slow to recognise, though there are exceptions such as Friends of the Earth. These new food groups are in some ways starting to supplant the earlier focus on the natural environment.

The growing social food agenda takes two forms. One is made up of the educational and advocacy groups like SFFA. The other is formed of the organisations actually going out and creating an alternative food production and distribution chain in our cities. This includes a still-small but somewhat bewildering array of initiatives as diverse as food co-ops, community supported agriculture (CSA) schemes and community gardens. In terms of legal structure, these range through incorporated associations, co-operatives and social enterprise. The latter are essentially small businesses trading as not-for-profits as well as for-profit 'social business'. Both have primarily social goals, any operating surplus (the non-profit equivalent of profit) being poured back into the organisation rather than being distributed to shareholders or owners.

Whereas the suspicion of business by environmentalists has in some cases held back the development of the social or ethical investment movement in Australia, it is being embraced and repurposed towards achieving social goals around food by the small, community food system start-ups such as some food co-ops and Food Connect, an adaptation of the CSA model that makes it more resilient and viable. Making its start in Brisbane's warm and sticky subtropics, Food Connect replicas are now underway in Sydney and Adelaide with others to start at Melbourne's CERES centre, Coffs Harbour and, later possibly, the Illawarra and Newcastle.

The value of policy

Policy enables government at all levels to act on something. It enables funds, resources and staff time to be devoted to it and for resources to be distributed to other organisations. This is what makes developing food policies something that is worthwhile despite the possibility of their hijacking by government and industry to serve primarily the agendas of those groups. In this regard it will be interesting to watch the Tasmanian food council, presently in formation, to see how it goes about developing a food policy for the state.

There is the suspicion in our communities that policy would simply support existing food producers and distributors, leaving little or no room for communities to help themselves or for small business, social enterprise or the rural smallholder to find a niche. That this is a valid fear is verified by federal and state government policy in other areas and it is just one reason that government is viewed by the public with more than a little cynicism.

Nonetheless, if the newly emerging community and small business/social enterprise food groups are to truly influence policy, they will have to seek creative and positive

avenues to influence the development of food policy. And if government chooses not to listen or to open political space for their participation, then those groups can make this known in their advocacy.

Wait ... or go it alone?

A current discussion among the community food milieu is whether to wait for government to decide to develop a policy and seek participation in it or, alternatively, to take the proactive approach and start the process themselves in conjunction with other community, small business / social enterprise and professional bodies and ask government and industry to join them.

At least, if government and industry choose not to participate, the outcome might be the development of a citizen's food charter that puts the community and small enterprise agenda before the public and that may provide balance to any future government policy. This could become a major collaborative effort were it to be taken on the road to elicit public input through various approaches from the deliberative democracy toolkit.

We already have the genesis of this in the form of the SFFA's declaration on food stemming from the October 2009 Food Summit, which the organisation presented to state parliamentarians, and the declaration that has emerged from Adelaide's From Plains To Plate food convergence.

Developing these further will require collaboration between organisations and influential individuals, but that is something that can be done if there is the will to make it happen.

Resources:

- * Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network, www.communitygarden.org.au
- * Sydney Food Fairness Alliance, <http://sydneyfoodfairness.org.au>
- * Sustain UK, www.sustainweb.org

Community and council working toward food security

Alice Moffett

The City of Onkaparinga, South Australia, with a population of approximately 150,000 people, sits within the Fleurieu Peninsula and spans from the coast through the McLaren Vale wine region to the foot of the Adelaide Hills. Council's neighbourhood development team has been working with Southern Adelaide Health and the Community Foodies Program to help connect neighbourhoods, develop cooking and gardening skills and to encourage healthy eating.

A catalyst for these achievements has been a Food Security and Health project, funded through a SA Health grant. The Project focuses on food, how people access it, how available it is, skills and knowledge development and the connections to overall health and wellbeing. The community driven project unites residents, gardeners, farmers, nutritionists, health agencies, the food business sector and anyone with an interest in food with an aim of improving the region's food security alongside good health.

Although Australia is regarded as a nation that is food secure there are many people who experience anxiety about not having enough money or the continued ability to access enough food. The region's diversity reflects such differences between various communities and geographical areas within the City of Onkaparinga. Rising prices are making it harder for many to make ends meet and issues such as limited access to transport, insufficient knowledge, conflicting information, lack of skills and food awareness are contributing to food insecurity.

The Food Security and Health Project has identified and connected to existing programs and facilitated the creation of the Food Security and Health Reference Group. This group represents and engages with residents to explore concerns and impacts of food insecurity and support new initiatives in this area. The use of open space technology, world café techniques (which support participants to raise issues and collectively develop solutions) and informal engaging group meeting processes helps to keep the broad representation of people engaged and the result is informative, vibrant and enthusiastic gatherings.

The reference group has been the backbone to the development of a Food Security and Health Discussion Paper which raised four key themes: Food Choices, Growing Food, Food Waste, Recycling and Re-distribution and Food Preparation and Storage. Other considerations under each of these themes are access, availability, sustainability and

social culture. This paper is currently being developed into a planning document that will include an implementation plan with stakeholder partnering to achieve actions that address the themes.

The project includes initiatives that support community self reliance and social justice. Some community initiatives that are being supported and considered by the project include the activities of the Onkaparinga Community Foodies, community gardens, home gardening projects, cooking and gardening classes and community meals at community centres.

An exciting new initiative is an online networking website - www.food4all.ning.com - to share discussions, recipes, cooking skills, gardening tips and information about local events and activities.

A major output from the reference group was facilitating a food security feature at the City of Onkaparinga's Sustainable Living Expo held in May. This event saw food take a key role, with cooking demonstrations, vegetable growing workshops, food tastings of local produce, sharing of educational materials and the first trial of low cost 'food packs' and other food fun. The Food Packs provide all the ingredients to make a nutritious and delicious meal for a family and are aimed to support those on low incomes, provide an alternative to take-away foods and support cooking at home. There were also opportunities for those attending to comment on the Project's Discussion Paper and contribute to an Action Plan.

The Plan continues to be developed and guided by community groups and institutions. It is part of a broader council strategic framework that we are preparing to meet the global and national challenges to our sustainable food supply.

For more information please contact Alice Moffett on (08) 8384 7254 or visit www.food4all.ning.com. The Food Security and Health Project is supported by the Southern Adelaide Health Service, SA Health Promotion Branch and City of Onkaparinga.



Some members of the Food Security & Health Reference Group meeting together. Photo by Alice Moffett.



- development of new skills of growing and cooking (including understanding of food production), and
- better health over time (fresh air, exercise and healthy food).
- closer community and family relationships (working together)

This simple idea extends and complements existing community and school based programs around food security. Two key elements of the Magic Harvest program are a Support Network 'Hub' and Local Skills Pool Development. The core element of Magic Harvest is to build sustainable dynamic 'hubs' within the community with home gardens radiating out from this central point (approximately one square km = walkable). The hub is a place and a community - a space to connect, seek support, share, swap produce and information, and build skills. The hub has a central garden and kitchen (for example, a community or school kitchen garden) as a permanent resource for the community. It is the heart of the program that supports home gardeners through moral support, shared knowledge and practical support in the bulk buying of compost, seedlings, and kitchen basics.

The other essential part of the program is the building of a Local Skills Pool – this utilises Jamie Oliver's 'Pass It On' method for creating the momentum to develop and spread skills of home gardening and cooking.

The two communities selected for participation in the first phase in the Onkaparinga region have health and food security issues but both areas also have a strong tradition of enthusiastic community participation. The Aberfoyle Park pilot is based around a Community Garden Hub run by the Aberfoyle Uniting Church; and the Huntfield Heights pilot is based around the Hackham South Primary School Garden Hub. The project is underway, and with early signs of success it will hopefully be taken up by other communities.

The Magic Harvest pilot is being captured on film to create a half-hour documentary which has been jointly funded by the SA Film Corporation and the Adelaide Film Festival. It will have its world premiere in February 2011 with a free screening at the Noarlunga Arts Centre for all of the families and friends of the participants.

The best kind of inspiration – some quotes from Lolo's *One Magic Square* book:

- "Healthy food can be grown anywhere. Food will grow where you are. Australia's best agricultural land is being covered by suburbs; therefore we should grow our food in the suburbs."
- "A one square meter garden gives you a fair idea how far you want to go. The labour required is minimal and pleasurable because you don't start off with a big project only to find you have overreached yourself, throwing the garden fork away and running to the supermarket for a half a sprayed caulie and two pale tomatoes."

Inspired by Lolo Houbein's book *One Magic Square* (Wakefield Press, 2009) and conceived and produced by McLaren Vale grower/cook educator Tori Moreton, Magic Harvest is a community project inviting suburban residents to change their lives by digging up one square metre of their backyard to grow a productive food garden.

The City of Onkaparinga Community Development Team offered their support and formed a partnership with Tori, agreeing to work on a pilot in Huntfield Heights. The City of Onkaparinga formed the link to the Obesity Prevention and Lifestyle program (OPAL), a joint state, federal and local government initiative offering support for a second pilot suburb in Aberfoyle Park.

Each participating home is provided with a starter kit to help them grow their own vegetables. The kit includes a simple organic grower's guide, a bag of compost and locally grown open pollinated seedlings. The Magic Harvest program takes the non-gardener, non-cook from the beginning and supports them throughout a growing season to become a confident food gardener and cook by providing on-going support around a capacity building Hub, and offering workshops and advice from expert food gardeners and cooks.

Central to Lolo Houbein's book, and this project, is the concept of not only starting small to gain confidence and a passion for gardening, but also growing food we really like to eat. Hence her approach of themed plots - a salad plot, for example, an Asian stir fry plot, or a soup plot. At harvest time the participants will come together to learn how to cook their produce and share a community feast.

The project promotes:

- greater food security (use of productive land in suburbs)
- better eating (fresh home-grown vegetables)

A 'demo' planting at the Aberfoyle Park Hub.

Community gardening and food security

Claire Nettle

There has been a huge resurgence of interest in community gardening, with hundreds of gardens now established around the country, and many more being planned. Community gardens have captured many people's imaginations with their unique ability to grow community, get people's hands dirty, reclaim unloved urban spaces, and contribute to a sustainable local food system. People are increasingly looking to community gardens to foster community food security.

Food security is often associated with contexts involving emergency food aid and people experiencing dire hunger.

In Australia, food insecurity manifests as limited or uncertain availability and accessibility of good food. Food insecurity is about the fear of running out of food, of not being able to feed your family in the way that you would like to, not just about getting enough food to survive. The social and psychological experience of food insecurity is significant, and can have major effects on people's lives and the choices they make, even when they do actually have enough food to eat.

People experiencing homelessness, people living in remote communities, people who are housebound or have limited mobility, and people with chronic illnesses are the most likely to experience food insecurity, followed by people who are unemployed and single-parent households. However, with peaking oil supplies, drought and climate change, ongoing food security is a concern for all of us, not just those in the most vulnerable groups.

One of the ways community gardens can contribute to food security is by enabling people to grow some of their own food, either in individually leased plots or in collectively cultivated spaces. This production happens in a community context – it's not people just looking out for themselves and it's not providing a program to the poor, it's about working towards addressing the food needs of the community as a whole. Some community gardens are exemplars of the possibility of intensive, innovative urban agriculture to produce a significant amount of food from a very small space.

Access to fresh fruit and vegetables is central to food security. People on low incomes often chose energy dense foods – high in fat, high in sugar, low in nutrients – as a way of stretching the food budget: they're more filling for less money. Fruits and vegetables are often lacking in low-income diets. Fresh produce is much more expensive, kilojoule for kilojoule, and is not often available from

emergency food agencies. Growing vegies close to home means eating them fresh, often with a higher nutrient content than produce that has lingered for days between harvest and consumption.

Culture and food

The importance of links between culture and food, and the relationship between maintenance of traditional diets and the maintenance of health are increasingly recognised. Community gardens enable people to grow traditional foods that you can't buy at the shops, including vegetables and culinary and medicinal herbs. Community gardens have become important places where people can preserve and share traditional foodways. This is something that has been particularly important for recently arrived migrants and refugees as a way of maintaining identity, and having access to good food that they enjoy and know how to prepare.

Numerous studies have found that people who are involved with a community garden eat more fruits and vegetables than others living in the same neighbourhood. There's also evidence that when people grow some of their own food – either at home or in a community garden – their overall dietary patterns and food knowledge improves.

Community gardens give people opportunities for practical experience with fresh food: growing, harvesting, preparing, understanding seasonality, and that positively impacts dietary habits. Children who have been involved with growing food are more likely recognize and say they enjoy a wide range of fruits and vegetables.

There are strong precedents for growing a substantial amount of food in urban areas. 'Grow Your Own' and 'Dig for Victory' campaigns during WWI and WWII started out as grassroots movements, and eventually became government decrees.

Forty percent of the veggies consumed in the US in 1936 were produced in urban victory gardens. In a short time, these gardens also changed the way people thought of gardens and of urban land use. Urban agricultural programs around the world produce huge amounts of food for local consumption, rather than trade.

Community gardens are resource hubs for learning about growing, harvesting and preparing food, offering workshops, school programs, and skills sharing opportunities. They support urban food production far beyond the gardens themselves.

Community gardens can make a real contribution to food security, but they are by no means a panacea. Community gardeners are often very aware that they can't provide a community garden plot for everyone, and that a garden plot isn't the right solution for everyone's food needs.

Community gardeners have established a number of food security initiatives beyond the garden gate, including food co-ops, farmers' markets, and not-for-profit grocers.

Insecurity of tenure

Community gardens potential contributions to community food security are also limited by their insecurity of tenure. Despite its increasing popularity, urban food production is a marginalised land use, and many community gardens have leases that are tenuous at best. Gardens have lost their sites even when they have significant community support. Clearly, land with uncertain security of tenure cannot be relied on for long-term food security.

Community gardens are also limited by a lack of resources. Community gardeners do amazing things with very limited resources, but often have real trouble in securing ongoing funding. They often lack the capacity to take on new projects, such as additional food security initiatives. Studies have found that in order to achieve outcomes, community food initiatives like community gardens need secure, ongoing funding.

David Holmgren, one of the originators of permaculture, has recently expressed disappointment in the community gardening movement for not living up to its potential for intensive food production. Until recently, food security hasn't been a focus for many community gardeners. And for some, even food production is secondary to other aims. Community gardens are not just about food production. They're community meeting places, they're art projects, they're about access to urban space, they're about addressing social isolation, they're about skill sharing, they're about exercise and relaxation, and more. If we look at community gardens just as sites of food production, or as food security initiatives, we can miss seeing a lot of the range of other benefits they bring to their participants and neighbourhoods.

Community gardens are starting to be used as interventions in places where there is a significant level of food insecurity. There are now a number of community gardens in remote Aboriginal communities, where access to fresh produce is limited. Last year's House of Representatives Inquiry into remote community stores recommended

support for community gardens. There are also a number of school garden projects in remote communities.

With people starting to look towards community gardens as part of the solution to food security and other issues in the food system, it's a great opportunity for community gardeners to make their work and their impact more widely known. It's also time to look at ways to support and resource community gardens better, so we're not looking to neighbourhood volunteers to provide essential social services.

There have been various calculations of the economic impact of community gardens. However these fail to capture the real contribution of community gardens to health and food access. Community gardens' impact on food security rests not only on saving money on food, but increasing access to nutrient rich, fresh, delicious food.

In my own household, there are times of the year when we pick a bunch of parsley and a bunch of spinach or chard from the garden everyday with no particular effort – the plants self-seed in the garden, and they don't get any extra water.

At the markets, a bunch of organic spinach is around \$3, parsley \$2.50 or more a bunch. So that's \$38 of produce a week.

But I have never walked into the local organic store and spent \$40 on greens.

Our garden doesn't save us much money on food. But having a garden means that we eat lots of extra herbs and vegies. Leafy greens and herbs are some of the quickest and easiest things to grow in a community garden, and are exactly what is lacking in many of our diets.



The Urban Orchard, a backyard produce exchange in Adelaide, heavy with the bounty of the cold season - leafy greens, radishes, herbs, and citrus. Photo from: www.flickr.com/photos/donkeycart

More information

- * Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network, www.communitygarden.org.au
- * Growing Community: Starting and Nurturing Community Gardens, www.canh.asn.au/projects/community-gardens.aspx
- * Community Food Security Coalition, www.foodsecurity.org
- * House of Representatives, 2008-09, Inquiry into remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait community stores, www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/communitystores/index.htm

Claire Nettle is South Australian co-ordinator of the Australian City Farms and Community Gardens Network. A referenced version of this article is available from clairenette@adam.com.au

Food Connect: Thinking inside the box for just and sustainable food

Kelly Jones

Food Connect is a socially and environmentally progressive organisation dedicated to connecting consumers and farmers. The original Food Connect was founded by farmer Robert Pekin in Brisbane as a community supported agriculture-style fruit and vegetable box scheme. Robert envisaged a large community shared agriculture (CSA) enterprise that could develop a local and regional food system for south-east Queensland.

There was no seeding capital so Robert took to the road enlisting farmers and potential subscribers. Food Connect started in 2004 with its now widely recognised City Cousin system - people who open their homes to provide the drop off points for the food grown by our farmers. The energy and persistence provided by Robert and many other people committed to implementing a food system which is better for both farmers and the environment has allowed Food Connect to grow to the point where the Brisbane Food Connect is distributing almost 1000 boxes each week.

The key principles of Food Connect are a fair go for farmer by ensuring fair and stable prices for their produce, that eating local seasonal and ecologically produced food is better for both ecological and sustainability reasons (besides tasting much better), and a commitment to rebuilding our local communities. These principles are built into the modus operandi of Food Connect and frame all decisions taken within the organisation.

We see that current methods of growing and distributing food are deeply flawed and that the market monopoly on fresh food sales in Australia presents a serious threat to our long-term food security, both at the national and the regional level. Additionally, the lack of prioritisation by the 'Big Two' supermarket chains to delivering truly fresh food serves to undermine the health and wellbeing of the population, and purchasing and storage policies by these groups disrupts community perspectives of what fresh food actually looks and tastes like.

The impact on both farmers and the practice of farming resulting from the monopolisation of the fresh food distribution system is clearly deleterious. Farmer incomes have been steadily falling and mental health issues have become a concern as the drive for cheaper and cheaper food impacts upon those who grow our food. The ageing farming workforce should be of concern to all Australians. We are actively working on practical solutions to overcome these serious problems and our box delivery scheme, fair pricing policy and farm tour experiences represent important steps

towards providing consumers with real fresh food choices, changing city folks' relationships with the land, providing farmers with stable income and reconnecting farmers to the consumers via the food they produce.

Food Connect Adelaide was launched in March 2010 by a group of dedicated volunteers supporting its two Adelaide founders. FCA started delivery with 70 eager subscribers and after only twelve weeks of being 'open for business', through the miracles of word of mouth and the internet, we are delivering over 350 boxes to Adelaide subscribers weekly, an overwhelming thumbs up for an alternative, ethical food supply and distribution system and numbers are growing daily. FCA has sourced predominantly local organic growers within a five hour radius of the city to supply subscribers with fresh, super tasty produce.

FCA already has 14 City Cousins operating as community drop off and collection points for our fruit and veg boxes and more are ready waiting until enough subscribers are available in their area to make a new collection point viable. FCA is currently sourcing our produce from around 20 farmers in both peri-urban areas and the Riverland region. Around 85% of the produce sourced by Food Connect Adelaide is certified organic or biodynamic and the remaining 15% is purchased from farmers who use ecological and sustainable growing methods but are not certified.

The challenges in starting up a whole new food supply system in a small market such as Adelaide have been immense, not to mention doing it all without any seeding capital! The mentoring provided by the Brisbane Food Connect crew has provided invaluable guidance and saved us time, money and, no doubt, stress. Our small but dedicated team have done an incredible job to get this social enterprise up and running and the support for our novel, social approach to business that has been shown by our farmers has been heart-warming as has been the community support for such a venture.

Food Connect systems are growing around the country, with Food Connects opening in Sydney, Melbourne, and Coffs Harbour as well as Adelaide. Check us out on our website www.foodconnectadelaide.com.au



Food sovereignty and social change in Venezuela

Ferne Edwards

Photo by Ferne Edwards.

The photograph of hands cupping rice with the Bolivian Constitution stamped on the side of the bag sums it up perfectly - feed both belly and mind to empower and act. Every product on the Mercal supermarket shelves is stamped with a national law to educate Venezuelans of their basic human rights. Regarding the right to food, Venezuela's string of supermarkets – the Mercal, the PDVAL and the recently introduced Bicentennial chain – provide affordable, accessible, healthy and culturally acceptable food for all.

These supermarkets are but one part of a multiple strategy to endorse the principle of food sovereignty - people's right to determine their own food and agricultural policies that extends to restoring control over food production and distribution taken from agro-corporations and international financial institutions back to farmers and citizens.

It's hard to think or act on an empty stomach or when wondering where your next meal will come from. For many Venezuelans, this struggle was a daily reality until the recent past. Hugo Chavez Frias in his rise to power at the end of 1998 as president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, found himself governing a nation experiencing the aftermath of rapid urbanisation, corruption, and overall social, economic and political disruption. Much of Venezuela's burgeoning urban population lived in poverty,

struggling for adequate food, housing and employment. However, through a series of government-led initiatives in direct collaboration with the grassroots population, Venezuela has since tipped the scales from poverty to empowerment in the essential fields of food, health and education for the majority of its citizens.

This shift has occurred in accordance with the Bolivarian principles, named after *Símon Bolívar*, who led struggles for independence throughout much of Latin America in the early 1800s. As described by Schiavoni and Camacaro in *The Monthly Review*, the Bolivarian principles strive for a food system free of corporate control, neoliberal economic policies and unfair trade rules, as exemplified by the establishment of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), a Latin American coalition aiming to forge an alternative system of trade.

Likewise, 'Socialism of the Twenty-First Century' strives to build new social and economic systems based on equality, social inclusion, and shared wealth and resources, while 'endogenous development' implies that the country's development needs can be met first from within the nation by valuing agricultural knowledge from the local and the marginalised, in addition to preserving Venezuela's native seeds, traditional farming methods and culinary practices.

Democracy, along with food sovereignty, represent the final Bolivarian principles, striving to empower citizens to play a direct role in politics, as facilitated by the creation of over 35,000 community councils to monitor local food and other needs throughout the country. From these actions, it looks likely that Chavez will honour his 2008 statement as reported on *Venezuelanalysis.com*: "There is a food crisis in the world, but Venezuela is not going to fall into that crisis. Actually, we are going to help other nations who are facing this crisis. You can be sure of that."

This article, based on the author's observations, sketches Venezuela's journey to feed both the bellies and minds of its citizens, launching a new era of empowerment, action, and hopefully, peace. My visit to Venezuela coincided with a New York delegation of solidarity to explore issues of food sovereignty, social movements and social change. Hosted by William Camacaro, the co-founder of the New York Bolivarian Circle, this delegation offered me the opportunity to explore a Latin American perspective of food social movements.

From what I'd heard, Venezuela's food movement sounded like a dream – an ethical and sustainable food system supported by both government and grassroots sectors to satisfy the principles of food sovereignty. I was also drawn to where this was taking place – a country of contradictions occupied by splendid beauty queens and slouching slums, where intellectually-engaged locals swung politically either left or right, while mystery presided over the country as both national and international media fought over their respective propagandas. I wasn't to be disappointed.

During my visit in 2009, I discovered that most social and

environmental justice enterprises were barely more than five years old, as since Chavez rose to power in 1998, Venezuela had experienced a coup d'état, multiple elections, ongoing economic adjustments and political friction. Although only young, these enterprises were impressive in number, and only time will tell whether they succeed.

Bolivarian missions

First established were the Bolivarian missions, a series of government-supported, anti-poverty initiatives that provide a wide range of free medical clinics and education and subsidised food and housing to meet the population's essential needs.

Examples of missions include the education missions of Robinson, Ribas and Sucre that teach literacy and maths; the indigenous rights mission, Guaicaipuro, to restore communal land titles and defend the rights of Venezuela's indigenous communities; and the health mission, Barrio Adentro, that began with Cuban support to provide comprehensive health care and preventative medical treatment – the newspaper *Correo del Orinoco* reports that this mission alone has saved more than 1.6 million lives. Other missions abound representing issues of housing, environment, voting, science, socio-economic transformation, and culture.

There are a number of missions with food sovereignty-related goals: mission Mercal provides access to high-quality produce at discounted prices, mission Vuelta al Campo encourages Venezuelans to return to the countryside; and mission Árbol recovers forests by replanting and by promoting sustainable agriculture.

Mission Zamora is one of the most contentious, as it seeks to expropriate and redistribute land to benefit mainly poor Venezuelans. This mission is supported by national legislation, the Law of the Land, ensuring agricultural land is used for food production while providing communities with a legal framework to organise themselves to farm idle lands. This Law emerged from a history of extreme disparities in land access and ownership as illustrated by 5% of landowners controlling 75% of the land. As a consequence, much land that could have been farmed remained idle (known as *latifundios*).

The Venezuelan constitution deemed *latifundios* as contrary to society's interests and charged the state with guaranteeing the food producing potential of both privately and collectively held land. Alternatively, the Law in Defense of People's Access to Goods and Services protects the private sector but that sector must also fulfill a social function. There are also laws that require public and private banks to provide credit to farmers at reasonable interest rates, and new laws for debt eradication and relief for farmers.

As identified by Schiavoni and Camacaro, food sovereignty is also endorsed by local farmer-to-farmer programs to exchange knowledge and skills, and by special

funds and support, providing tractors, seeds, training and technical assistance to farming co-operatives.

To preserve the fertility of the fields and the health of citizens, agroecology, a farming practice that works with nature using techniques of composting, seed saving, crop diversification and natural forms of pest control, was established in Venezuelan law as the scientific basis for sustainable agriculture. The Venezuelan government has also launched 24 laboratories to develop biological pest control and fertilizers and to eliminate chemicals. The nation has also imposed a moratorium on genetically-modified crops and is working with farmers and agro-ecologists to develop a National Agroecology Plan.



Photo by Ferne Edwards.

Urban food security measures

Finally, returning to an urban setting, food security measures are in place to provide home-cooked, nutritious meals to those in greatest need (*Casas de alimentación*), to feed school children two free meals per school-day (the School Feeding Program), and to provide employees in workplaces of more than 20 people with a hot meal (the Law for Workers' Nutrition). There are also signs of implementing urban agriculture into Venezuela's cities as demonstrated in 2003 when the government with support from the Food and Agriculture Organisation installed 4000 micro-gardens in Caracas and established 20 horticultural cooperatives in and around the city.

Food sovereignty outcomes in terms of specific products since 1998 include self-sufficiency in corn and rice production (up by 132% and 71%) and a rise in pork production by almost 77%. There has also been significant increase in the production of beef (meeting 70% of national demand), chicken (85% of national demand), eggs (fetching 80%), and milk (meeting 55% of national demand). There have also been significant increases in recent years in the production of black beans (143%), root vegetables (115%), and sunflowers for cooking oil (125%), with exports of surplus pork (meeting 113% of national demand).

Furthermore, government figures from 2009 estimate that nearly 2.7 million hectares of latifundio land has been returned to productive farming. Venezuela's overall food sovereignty and social programs have enabled the country to meet the first Millennium Development Goal of halving hunger and poverty ahead of the 2015 target and have also cut malnutrition-related deaths in half from 1998 to 2006.

There is so much more happening in Venezuela to add to what is written here. This brief overview provides but the bare bones of the beginnings of a living, dynamic landscape of food sovereignty and social change. The projects have just begun and have much yet to learn, but the scope, innovation, commitment and passion of both government and grassroots is truly inspirational. May we learn from Venezuela's journey to feed both our bellies and minds in pursuit of food sovereignty in Australia.

More information:

* Carlson, C., 2007, Venezuela on Track to Meet UN Millennium Goals, Venezuelanalysis.com, October 18.

* Carlson, C., 2008, Venezuela Will Not be Affected by Food Crisis Says Chavez, Venezuelanalysis.com, April 28.

* Morales, Magdalena, 2003, Cuba Exports City Farming 'Revolution' to Venezuela, City Farmer, 22 April.

* Schiavoni, C. and W. Camacaro, 2009, The Venezuelan Effort to Build a New Food and Agriculture System, Monthly Review, July-August.

Ferne Edwards is researcher in sustainable food systems based at the Australian National University, Canberra.

If you are interested in participating on the 'Study Tour to Venezuela: Food sovereignty, social movements and social change', please contact Ferne at ferne.edwards@anu.edu.au

Friends of the Earth invites you to join the **ACTIVE FRIENDS PROGRAM**

What is the Active Friends Program?

The Active Friends Program is one of the best means to support the current and future work of Friends of the Earth. It involves a regular monthly donation a self-nominated amount.

Where will Active Friends donations go?

Friends of the Earth is renowned for making a little money go a long way. Because our administration costs are always kept to a bare minimum, practically all Active Friends contributions directly support campaign work, publications and community engagement. Active Friends donations will help maintain projects such as the Nuclear Freeways Project, protecting Red Gum forests and ensuring climate refugees are recognised and given aid to, to name just a few.

Why is the Active Friends Program vital to FoE?

Friends of the Earth never endorses people, parties or products and does not receive government or corporate sponsorship. To remain a radical and credible voice for social and environmental justice, we need a stable financial base. The Active Friends Program means that Friends of the Earth can engage in long-term campaign planning, and quickly and effectively respond to local issues.

How can you join the Active Friends Program?

To join the Active Friends Program, please fill in the 'Active Friends' section on the reverse side of this page and post to: Friends of the Earth, PO Box 222, Fitzroy, 3065. You can cancel this pledge at any time by contacting the FoE office. All Active Friends donations are fully tax deductible.

www.foe.org.au



**Friends of
the Earth
Australia**

An Agrarian perspective on good land use

Peter Burdon

There are some basic truths that will shape the future of farming and land use into the 21st century. The first is a steady increase in food consumption and fibre produced by agriculture. The second is a deepening environmental crisis and the loss of healthy farming land.

These two trends are on a collision course and present a significant challenge to global food security and environmental health. Our conversion from agrarian, local, integrated food systems to industrialised, monocultural agricultural production has had a number of negative side effects. Throughout each level of our food system this crisis manifests in soil erosion, poisoned groundwater, loss of biodiversity, toxic chemicals in food and fibre, loss of beauty and a myriad of other environmental and social problems. Exacerbating this crisis is the continued expansion and imposition of this destructive system around the world.

Perhaps the best way to introduce agrarian agriculture is through the words of Wendell Berry. Speaking about the fundamental difference between agrarianism and industrial agriculture, he notes: "... whereas industrialism is a way of thought based on monetary capital and technology, agrarianism is a way of thought based on land."

Furthermore, agrarianism is both a culture and an economy. Industrialism is primarily an economy and any notion of culture Berry considers an "accidental by-product of the ubiquitous effort to sell unnecessary products for more than they are worth."

In contrast, agrarianism is place-specific and arises from the attributes of a particular bioregion. Agrarian farmers must know intimately the lay of the land, local plants and animals, soil content, rainfall and potential hazards. They must deeply consider questions such as the best location for a particular building or fence, the best way to plough this field, the best course for a skid road in this woodland, should this tree be cut or spared, the best breeds and types of livestock for this farm.

The human community

Human beings are interconnected and dependent on the land for survival. For this reason, good land use needs to meet the basic requirement of sustenance for all people, including food, clothing and shelter. There is no question that our current system of large-scale, centralised agriculture is failing this most basic requirement.

If we consider one issue, sustenance, over one billion people



Richard Smith tests the cargo-bike at the Food Forest, Gawler, SA.

now go hungry each day. While Kimbrell notes 70 million hungry in Brazil, 200 million hungry in India and 33 million hungry in "the world's number one exporter of food", the United States, Australia too is not immune. Between 7 and 10 percent of Australians experience daily food insecurity, and one in five Australian children regularly miss meals because of poverty.

One of the popular myths of industrial agriculture and one that keeps many of us tied to this system is the idea that world hunger is a consequence of food scarcity and population growth. For example, Monsanto states on the home page of its website: "The world's population is growing. To keep up with population growth farmers will need to produce more food. More food in the next 50 years than in the past 10,000 years combined. American farmers will meet this challenge."

While population growth is an important issue, there are deeper causes underlying world hunger. Indeed, food production has kept pace with population growth and studies by the UN Food and Agricultural Organization indicated that abundance, not scarcity, best describes the world's food supply. A narrow focus on population growth also ignores more important considerations such as landlessness, centralisation and food dependence.

In contrast to the industrial vision for land use, there is abundant evidence that agrarian methods can sustain and keep pace with world population. Numerous studies have shown that small small-scale agrarian farming is more productive than large-scale industrial agriculture. Brian Halweil from the Worldwatch Institute calculates productivity at 1,000 percent more for agrarian farms.

For some this fact is counterintuitive and contradicts the industrial mantra that 'bigger is better'. Halweil reconciles this fact by noting that "... big-farm advantages are always calculated on the basis of how much of one crop the land will yield per acre. The greater productivity of a smaller,

more complex farm, however, is calculated on the basis of how much food overall is produced per acre. The smaller farm can grow several crops utilizing different root depths, plant heights, or nutrients on the same piece of land simultaneously. It is this “polyculture” that offers the small farm’s productivity advantage.”

To illustrate the difference between these two kinds of measure, Halweil analysed an average US Midwestern corn farm. He notes that while industrial farming may produce more corn per hectare than a small farm, the latter grows corn “as part of a polyculture that also includes beans, squash, potato and “weeds” that serve as fodder.” Under the care of a knowledgeable farmer, who understands the land and the network of relationships that exist therein, the polycrop produces much more food. This holds true “whether you measure in tonnes, calories or dollars.” This final point was supported by the 2002 US Agricultural census, which noted that the smallest category of farm “produced \$15,104 per hectare and netted about \$2,902 per acre.” The largest farms, “averaging 15,581 hectares, yielded \$249 per hectare and netted about \$52 per hectare.”

This finding is consistent in every farm-size category. Halweil concludes that: “The inverse relationship between farm size and output can be attributed to the more efficient use of land, water and other agricultural resources that small operations afford, including the efficiencies of intercropping various plants in the same field, planting multiple times during the year, targeting irrigation and integrating crops and livestock. So in terms of converting inputs into outputs, society would be better off with small-scale farmers. And as population continues to grow in many nations, and the amount of farmland and water available to each person continues to shrink, a small farm structure may become central to feeding the planet.”

Ethical considerations

One critical issue concerns future generations. This focus marks a shift from property rights and short-term gain, towards responsibility and obligations for stewards yet to come. This component could prove exceptionally influential if this obligation is defined in a comprehensive fashion.

Aside from duties to future generations, there is a growing movement towards the recognition of nature’s intrinsic value. Intrinsic value can be defined as “all value possessed by nature that is unrelated to human beings.” While philosophers rigorously debate whether nature can have ‘value’ independent from human consideration, for our purpose it is sufficient to note that if nature is valuable, then good land use ought to respect its value. This applies whether the value is intrinsic or extrinsic. Recognition of nature’s value could reside at the level of the biotic community and/or at the level of species. This would first require human respect and then perhaps a duty to not interfere with its functioning.

The land

A well-conceived definition of good land use will dwell at length on the first two themes – sustenance for all people, and ethical, stewardship considerations. However, at a minimum, the agrarian perspective requires us to consider the question of good land use from the perspective of the land and the non-human community that dwells upon it. This entails an intimate understanding of place and knowledge of its needs and the roles it performs.

Consistent with this task, Wes Jackson notes that farmers must look to nature as the standard or as the measure for their action. With his colleagues at the Land Institute, Jackson has carried out this idea through the Natural Systems Agriculture Program. This program seeks to imitate a prairie and produce edible grain harvest through the services it naturally performs. The results of this work have been extraordinary and as Jackson notes “properly designed, the system itself should virtually eliminate the ecological degradation characteristic of conventional agriculture and minimize the need for human intervention.”

A local example of placed-based agriculture is the Brookman family farm, the Food Forest (www.foodforest.com.au). Situated on 15 hectares of rich Adelaide Plains soil, the Brookmans produce a robust polyculture and have gradually adapted their practices to maintain the local ecosystem. Pest and weed control is assisted by the introduction of geese and bettongs. Soil fertility is maintained through composting organic waste, legumes and animal waste. Through intelligent design, the Brookmans also estimate that water use is between one tenth and one twenty-fifth of the average Australian orchard.

Consistent with Jackson’s Natural Systems Agriculture Program, land use for the Brookmans is a constant process of reassessment and adjustment. It is a practice of listening to the land and learning from natural systems. Finally, it is recognition that good land use is a mutual relationship and includes obligation, not just rights.

Of course, a transition toward agrarian agriculture will be opposed by powerful corporate bodies that seem unwilling to recognise that their future interest lies in a radical reversal of the way that we use land. For too long, governments have listened to industrial interests and have forgotten that we are all subject to a greater law.

No directive from parliament can overrule the fact that if we continue to exploit and degrade our land, it will cease to be productive. The penalty for transgressing nature cannot be plea-bargained away, and no lobbyist can have it repealed. However, if we are able to remember and act in accordance with nature, to rekindle our relationship with place and our community, then there is hope for us all and for many generations to come.

Peter Burdon is a member of Friends of the Earth, Adelaide

Nanotech in food on the political agenda

Georgia Miller

According to the ETC Group, nanotechnology will enable agriculture to become: “more uniform, further automated, industrialized and reduced to simple functions. In our molecular future, the farm will be a wide area biofactory that can be monitored and managed from a laptop and food will be crafted from designer substances delivering nutrients efficiently into the body.”

Nanotechnology has potential applications in every aspect of agriculture and food production, including ‘smart’ nano-pesticides and crop surveillance tools, potent nutritional food additives and preservatives, anti-bacterial long life food packaging and ‘smart’ sensors to enable the remote tracking of foods from factory to supermarket and beyond.

Friends of the Earth Australia (FoEA) and other groups have warned that nanotechnology introduces serious new risks for human health and the environment, will lead to further aggressive marketing of highly processed ‘functional’ foods over fresh fruit and vegetables and will intensify economic pressures on small farmers. We have criticised the lack of public debate, government oversight and public choice. We have pointed out the folly of investing in high risk new nanotechnology research, when ecologically sustainable, job-rich organic agriculture is struggling for support.

For the most part, our calls for caution and public participation in decision making appear to have been ignored by decision makers. It is clear that the priority of governments around the world is to secure early commercial competitiveness in the emerging nanotechnology ‘race’. In our assessment, this conflict of interest is one of the key reasons that most nanotechnology products remain effectively unregulated in Australia and overseas. International institutions such as the OECD which are playing a key role in coordinating nanotechnology risk research and policy work also have a stated aim of promoting nanotechnology industry development.

Nonetheless, in the next few months, the Council of European Governments will consider new safety, environmental and ethical assessment and labelling laws for nano-foods proposed by the European Parliament. And in Australia and New Zealand, our food labelling review is considering community calls for nano-ingredients in food to be labelled. We are not holding our breath that these processes will deliver public interest outcomes – pressure from the food industry is great, and political will for

nanotechnology governance is weak – but nonetheless, it’s a start.

Out of the lab and on to our plates

Two years ago, Friends of the Earth groups in Australia, the United States and Europe exposed the growing use of nanotechnology in food, food packaging and agriculture in a feature report “Out of the laboratory and on to our plates: Nanotechnology in food and agriculture”.

When we released our report, the question we were asked most frequently was “which products is it in?” This is still difficult to answer. As scientific evidence about the potential health and environmental risks of nanoparticles has grown, companies – and in particular the food sector – have become increasingly unwilling to discuss their use of nanotechnology.

Nestle, Kraft, Unilever, Sara Lee, Cargill, Hershey, Pepsi Co. – many of the biggest food companies are known to have long-standing active nanotechnology research and development programs, but none of them are prepared to disclose whether and where they use nanotechnology in products.

At the time of writing our report, we found a lot of nano-ingredients for sale, including nano-encapsulated vitamins for sports drinks, nano-preservatives and processing aids for meats, nano-minerals for fruit juice, edible nano-coatings to extend the shelf life of bakery products, nano-colouring agents for dairy products and soft drinks. Some of these ingredients were sold by multinational companies like BASF. Yet despite the huge number of nano-ingredients on sale, we found few companies willing to acknowledge actually using them in commercial foods.

Two years on, the situation hasn’t changed much. There are a handful of food manufacturers willing to acknowledge that they use nano-ingredients in meal replacement milkshakes, a tea, cooking oil and body building products (only the last one is known to be sold in Australia). But the paucity of known commercial uses of nanotechnology doesn’t mean that the technology is not making its way into a wide range of foods.

According to a US Department of Agriculture (USDA) scientist interviewed for a recent story by America Online reporter Andrew Schneider, some fresh fruits and vegetables sold in the US and Canada are now sprayed with a wax-like nano-coating to extend shelf-life and improve appearance. A group of USDA researchers found the coating on apples, pears, capsicums, cucumbers and other produce sent from Central and South America. The scientist told Schneider that the coating was manufactured in Asia. The USDA found no indication that it had ever been tested for health effects.

Is this nano-coating used on imported fruit and vegetables sold in Australia? Unfortunately, the general public and groups like FoEA have no way to know. And not only does the public have no way to know whether or not particular

products contain nano-ingredients or have invisible nano-coatings, regulators are similarly struggling for information. Without the resourcing to do spot checks or analysis of foods sold in Australia for manufactured nano-content, Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) is reliant on industry honesty to disclose any uses of nano. That, coupled with FSANZ's notorious unwillingness to share information with the public, does not instil confidence.

US Food and Drug Administration (USFDA) and USDA food safety specialists interviewed by Schneider stressed that, based on past performance, industry cannot be relied on to voluntarily advance safety efforts. US government scientists said that only a handful of corporations will talk with regulators about their commercial use of nanotechnology. They said that most companies submit little or no information unless forced to. Even then, they say that companies withhold much of the information crucial to evaluating nano hazards, with corporate lawyers claiming it constitutes confidential business information.

Problems with food industry secrecy in relation to nanotechnology use have also been highlighted in the UK. A House of Lords Inquiry into Nanotechnologies and Food backed a mandatory public register of foods and food packaging that contains nanomaterials, and strongly criticised food industry efforts to evade public scrutiny. However – and to the frustration of FoEA, which gave evidence to the Inquiry – the Inquiry explicitly rejected calls for mandatory labelling of nano-ingredients used in foods.

Although some scientists at regulatory bodies are trying hard to get reliable information about nanotechnology's use, there is not yet any mandatory company reporting scheme anywhere in the world. There is also little resourcing for independent research or enforcement by regulators. The push within national governments to ensure nanotechnology industry competitiveness is much stronger than the push to ensure safety, public choice or socially sustainable agriculture policies.

At the level of United Nations institutions such as the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), there is also a strong level of support for nanotechnology industry development that has squeezed out critical analyses of nanotechnology's use in agriculture. Last year, the FAO and World Health Organisation held an 'experts' meeting to discuss nanotechnology's new health and environmental risks.

However, although held during the world's worst food crisis, the meeting excluded consideration of broader social and economic issues and implications for already struggling small-scale farmers. The meeting was closed to non-technical 'experts', did not hear from small-scale farmers' groups such as La Via Campesina and did not recognise the right of communities to reject nanotechnology's use in foods and agriculture. Twelve of the 17 participating 'experts' declared an 'interest' in the topic, but this was considered by the meeting not to constitute a conflict of interest.

Global South

This June, the FAO is holding its first conference on nanotechnology's overall implications for food and agriculture, with a focus on the Global South. Yet this meeting is also focussed on promoting nanotechnology's 'benefits' for the South. Papers were invited to address toxicity risks, but social and economic costs were not mentioned. FoEA has been invited to speak and my presentation will be on the social costs of nanotechnology's use in agriculture and the need for public and farmers' participation in decision making about if, where and what types of nanotechnology get used in agriculture.

Unfortunately, with increasing commercial pressures on academics at universities and public research institutions, there are few 'experts' willing to criticise the pro-industry bias of governments and their failure to ensure public interest regulation. This means that the role for social movements in campaigning for safe and just management of nanotechnology is more important than ever.

The good news is that in the past few years the number of NGOs and unions getting active on nanotechnology issues has grown dramatically. Organic certifying bodies in the UK, Canada and Australia have moved to ban the use of manufactured nanomaterials in certified organic products. Media coverage of nanotechnology issues has also grown, as has debate in (admittedly small) policy circles. It is getting harder for governments and regulators to ignore the need to close legal gaps that leave nano-products effectively untested and unregulated.

The biggest challenge for social movements is now to secure the right for public participation in decision making about nanotechnology, including the option to reject the use of nanotechnology in food and agriculture entirely.

If you would like to get involved with FoEA's efforts to get precautionary and democratic management of nano-foods, please get in touch.

*Georgia Miller is a campaigner with Friends of the Earth Australia's nanotechnology project. Web: <http://nano.foe.org.au>
Email: georgia.miller@foe.org.au*



Ferguson's nuclear dump challenged in court



Muckaty Traditional Owners Mark Chungaloo and Dianne Stokes addressing an audience of 230 people at the Northcote Town Hall, Melbourne, April 21.

Traditional Owners of Muckaty Station in the Northern Territory have launched a federal court challenge over a proposed nuclear waste dump on their traditional land.

A small group of Traditional Owners signed a deal for \$12 million in exchange for roads, housing and infrastructure, but senior Elders from all five of the clan groups that comprise Muckaty maintain that they did not consent to the waste dump proposal.

A team of lawyers from around the country visited Tennant Creek to meet with Muckaty people, and have subsequently launched the federal court action. The Commonwealth government and the Northern Land Council are listed as defendants.

Mark Lane Jangala has been campaigning for several years against the proposed site because of its cultural significance. "I am senior Ngapa man for Muckaty and I did not agree to the nomination of the site, along with other senior Ngapa elders for Muckaty Station who did not agree. We don't want it. There was not even a meeting in town to consult all of the traditional owners," Mr Lane said.

"I want to look after my Country and Dreaming, look after the Sacred Sites I am responsible for and to make sure my children are raised properly in their Country."

Federal resources minister Martin Ferguson has put before parliament draft legislation—the National Radioactive Waste Management Bill - that overrides the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1984 and the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 in relation to site selection. The Bill also overrides any current or future state/territory laws which could impede the waste dump plan and, to add insult to injury, it curtails procedural fairness and appeal rights.

The NT Central Land Council says the government's is pursuing "an approach characterised by the desire to find

a politically expedient solution, contempt for state and Territory laws, and disregard for decision making processes enshrined in the [Aboriginal] Land Rights Act."

Friends of the Earth has launched the Nuclear Freeways Campaign to alert councils and communities along potential transport corridors through NSW, SA and the NT about Ferguson's nuclear dump plans. Most of the waste comes from the Lucas Heights nuclear research reactor site in southern Sydney.

'Muckaty Voices' is a 10-minute video documentary that tells the story of the Muckaty Traditional Owners opposed to a radioactive waste dump on their country. Traditional Owner Dianne Stokes says: "We made the video throughout the Warlmanpa land. It is all of the Milwayi story. Along with that, we have some songs and dances to represent the country. Martin Ferguson has avoided us and ignored our letters but he knows very well how we feel. He has been arrogant and secretive and he thinks he has gotten away with his plan but in fact he has a big gift on his hands."

The video can be viewed at www.beyondnuclearinitiative.wordpress.com



Baby Marlin Melis protesting against Martin Ferguson's nuclear dump plans, Melbourne, April.

A stunning victory - NSW parks fill the red gum conservation gap

Jonathan La Nauze

Traditional Owners and environment groups including achieved a stunning victory in May with the creation of 114,000 hectares of Red Gum Protected Areas in the NSW Riverina.

The outcome brings NSW into line with Victoria, where protection for the majority of its red gums was announced in 2008. After years of political obfuscation, skullduggery and more than one false start, the move by Premier Keneally and her environment minister Frank Sartor was roundly welcomed by our movement.

Late last year, National Parks Association (NPA) spokeswoman Carmel Flint wrote in Chain Reaction that the NSW government had at last begun an independent conservation assessment of the red gum forests. A month later and in his final hours as NSW Premier, Nathan Rees announced his government's response to draft recommendations from the Natural Resources Commission - the Labor government would protect the Millewa forest in a 42,000 hectare National Park and also protect red gum forests along the Upper Murray, Murrumbidgee and Lachlan, whilst supporting the small logging industry out the door with a \$48 million assistance package.

Within days, however, our hopes were chastened as incoming Premier Kristina Keneally announced she would review the decision. Perhaps more ominous was her decision that pro-logging MP Ian MacDonald would be retrieved from the sin bin and restored to his old post of minister for forest resources.

Two months later, our fears were realised. On March 2, Keneally announced her government would permit the logging of 18,000 hectares of the Millewa Forest for five years before "protecting" the gutted remainder in a National Park. Described by the former premier as "the jewel in the conservation crown," Millewa was far too important to be sacrificed in this way. Whilst the decision included positive elements, including handing back the Werai forest to become an Indigenous Protected Area, it also allowed logging to continue there for five years while the hand-back details were sorted out. Our near exhausted alliance kicked into gear for one last battle.

On May 19, the decision was reversed in a stunning victory for conservation and Indigenous rights. The destructive five year "transition logging" was scrapped and 114,000 hectares of protected areas were passed into legislation that night. Whilst substantial red gum areas will remain open to logging, this outcome protects key habitat

for over 60 threatened species including the Barking Owl, Fishing Bat and Superb Parrot.

Combined with Victoria's new Red Gum National Parks the Riverina now boasts a world class reserve system with Barmah-Millewa, the world's largest red gum forest at its heart.

Joint management

The NSW move also recognises the crucial role Indigenous people have to play in conserving Australia's unique natural and cultural heritage. Following Victoria's lead, the NSW government will negotiate joint management of the Millewa forest with the Yorta Yorta people. And taking a step further it will hand back the Taroo and Werai forests to be managed as Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) - an arrangement whereby the Commonwealth gives Traditional Owners funding to manage their land for conservation.

Catching up with Yorta Yorta Chair Neville Atkinson about the outcome, I find he's pleased but "this doesn't mean we take the foot off the pedal." Neville also has a stern warning for the state government: "They have to support this, support our nation to make the deeper social changes that need to happen. If they don't see the full picture Yorta Yorta are not interested. It's a wasted opportunity."

He's talking about tackling the underlying socio-economic issues that keep the local community divided - and his people usually at the bottom: "We don't want to perpetrate on anyone else the disadvantage that was imposed on us - we want to make this a socio-economic opportunity for all. There's no perception that Yorta Yorta can offer something. We can be seen in a different light - not a fringe dweller and welfare recipient - but rather we can bring value to the region."

I get a similar reaction when I ask Deniliquin Indigenous woman Jeanette Crew about the precedent-setting decision to establish Werai Forest as an IPA. "What's happening is a whole new thing in terms of social justice and long-term capacity building for the community. For a range of reasons our people are still not getting the jobs. This process will go a very long way to addressing a lot of those issues. There's going to be so much work needed to bring the country back to health, and it's not just short-term jobs, this is lifetime work, it's inter-generational."

And work is what is in front of this mob - starting with three to five years just getting the IPA off the ground. First



Millewa blockade, June 2009.

up, Jeanette says, a transitional body including Traditional Owners and government agencies needs to be set up to manage the forest whilst the handback negotiations take place. The negotiations will be complicated and at times tense: “It’s gonna be emotional, it’s gonna be long and hard, it’s gonna be confusing, we’re gonna need a lot of high level legal advice.”

But the result will be worth it. Not just protecting country, but the benefits it brings to the community. Jeanette says: “Once we’ve done the work assessing what needs to be done in terms of the management and protection of that area ... there are opportunities for kids who aren’t even born yet to have a career in any of the sciences we need, biologists, botanists and all that sort of the stuff.”

Because the land is to be handed back, it brings long-term benefits that have been missing from previous community development initiatives Jeanette has been involved in: “A lot of the other stuff we’ve done is short-term, the funding has a finite lifetime. Three years the longest project we’ve ever had. This is different - it’s inter-generational. It’s a lifetime change.”

The role of forest blockades

Since May 19 I’ve had many conversations about how and why the campaign was ultimately so successful. One recurring theme was the strategic – and highly effective – use of direct action.

Compared with Victoria, where as early as 2002 the Labor government acknowledged the need for change in announcing a regional red gum forest assessment, the NSW government ignored the compelling scientific and legal case

for conservation until the last moment. Until it was finally shamed into rational and democratic policy-making late last year, the government seemed happy to let Forests NSW run the state’s wild West like a crooked small town sheriff. Sustainable yields were not reassessed for two decades, for example, and Forests NSW did not even bother to conduct the most rudimentary impact assessments required by state Environmental Planning legislation.

In September 2007, NPA gave up politely raising the issue with an aggressively pro-logging forestry minister and took the case to the Land & Environment Court. Before the trial began in earnest, the Court ordered Forests NSW to stop blocking NPA scientists from surveying the forests. Within three days a number of threatened species were located in compartments scheduled for logging, yet the government still refused to halt logging whilst the surveys and court case were completed. A week later, the first red gum blockade was set up by activists in the Moira forest.

The blockade attracted significant and widespread media attention, forcing the hand of a government that had so far managed to dodge accountability. After four days of tense negotiations, a reluctant minister Ian MacDonald agreed to an out-of-court settlement which saw serious curtailments placed on the logging whilst an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared and Traditional Owners consulted.

The second blockade came nearly two years later when it became clear that the EIS would merely grant a legally dubious tick of approval to existing practices and Forests NSW would continue to log in breach of both state and commonwealth environmental laws. That blockade (discussed in edition 107 of Chain Reaction) levered a significant step forward.

Once more faced with a government in Sydney unwilling to hold Forests NSW to the law and fearful that the federal government would prove equally timid, environmentalists and Traditional Owners decided to stop logging in the Millewa Forest. Backed up by clear evidence that the logging was unlawful under at least two pieces of environmental legislation, Friends of the Earth joined Red Gum Forest Action and the Yorta Yorta people in a blockade which prevented logging for 10 days.

The effect on public debate was electrifying. Ex-premier Bob Carr entered the fray, calling on Premier Rees in the Sydney Morning Herald to show leadership and protect the red gums. In the end, Rees made a move that should have occurred years before. Finally bringing the Riverina into line with every other forest region in the state, he ordered a regional forest assessment be undertaken to establish the conservation needs of the red gum forests and where and under what circumstances any future logging should be allowed to occur. The rest is history.

There are many reasons these two blockades were so effective. On both occasions, activists intervened only when every other democratic avenue had been exhausted, and the state seemed unwilling or unable to uphold its moral and legal duty to ensure the logging did not damage the environment. There was a clear outcome in mind and a legal foundation to our claim. Traditional Owners gave approval and participated in the blockades. Perhaps we were also just lucky.

The resulting media attention was brought to bear on a legal and political crisis that otherwise may have been successfully swept into the darkest corner by government spin doctors. Pressure bore down on government from a suddenly informed and outraged public and from logging contractors angry they were being prevented from carrying out their work _ work that Forests NSW kept telling them was both legal and sustainable. On both occasions something had to give, and thanks to the brave and disciplined actions of activists in the forest and in Sydney negotiating rooms, it was the government's intransigence that broke.

Werai Indigenous Protected Area

At Werai, the Traditional Owners have achieved something few believed possible. The 12,000 ha state forest is to be handed back as freehold, for management as an Indigenous Protected Area. I spoke with Jeanette Crew about how this unfolded. "In the lead up, people thought it was pie in the sky, but if you don't raise the issue it doesn't get addressed."

Too true. In March 2008 we met in Deniliquin when red gum conservationists began a comprehensive engagement program with Traditional Owners across the Riverina. Our aim was to negotiate land management proposals that would deliver environmental and Indigenous outcomes.

We were keen to explore any option that would protect ecosystems and secure Traditional Owner rights to country, and believed jointly managed national parks to be the most politically feasible and legally secure option available.

Many groups agreed with us. From the outset, however, the Wamba Wamba pushed in another direction. Whilst supportive of our conservation goals, experience had made them skeptical of partnering with the state conservation agency and not afraid to explore alternative options.

Friends of the Earth had always eyed the Indigenous Protected Area program with a wistful 'if only' attitude. A great program for Traditional Owners who have already had their land returned, we didn't feel it showed much promise for State Forest where vested logging interests were lined up against any conservation move, let alone Indigenous land justice.

The Wamba Wamba were happy to talk to us, but they wanted a lot of questions answered that we weren't in a position to do. They commissioned an options paper from the Environment Defenders Office examining alternative management arrangements for Werai Forest. Shortly after, they began dialogue with Forests NSW about the IPA program. In 2009 they jointly began an IPA-funded project to look at joint management options for the northern part of Werai – an area of limited appeal to the logging industry because of its low timber yields.

By the time the Natural Resources Commission regional assessment came to town, an IPA was considered viable by both parties, and Commissioner John Williams listened with interest. He recommended that the entire forest – including areas the loggers wanted to keep – be handed over to the Wamba Wamba. And the Labor government took his advice.

"I think I'm still pinching myself," Jeanette told me. "Even though that's what I believed in and wanted, and in my own head didn't have any doubts that it could happen ... it's bigger than anything we've achieved before."

Jonathan La Nauze is the Barmah-Millewa Collective Coordinator at Friends of the Earth, Melbourne.

On June 5, two weeks after the red gum announcement, forestry minister Ian MacDonald resigned from the ministry. The following week he announced he would quit parliament.

Opportunities open up for conservation in Tasmania

Phill Pullinger

The March 2010 Tasmanian election was a potentially land-mark result for a much more constructive approach to conservation and environmental protection in the island state.

For many years, conservation issues have deeply divided Tasmanians, and politicians have often deliberately looked to play sections of the Tasmanian community off against each other for political gain. This has been most starkly characterised by the 'environment versus jobs' wedge.

The classic environment versus jobs wedge in Tasmania has been over the logging of Tasmania's native forests. Whilst the vast majority of Tasmanians would like to see their native forests protected, politicians and some industry groups have consistently and often successfully misrepresented the protection of native forests and the future for timber workers' jobs as an either-or proposition.

However, this has now changed in Tasmania. In mid-2009, a coalition of environment groups, business and community leaders and timber workers formed a broad coalition to deliver a solution to the conflict over forests. "Our Common Ground" is a coalition that is working to deliver a holistic solution that protects high conservation value forests, shifts commodity timber production out of our native forests, delivers a largely plantation based timber industry with a small native forests sector, and creates new economic and community opportunities.

This is a win-win scenario that has resonated strongly with the Tasmanian public, and contrasts starkly with the deep concern about the unhealthy relationship that has traditionally existed between big timber companies and politicians from the major parties. This unhealthy relationship was epitomised by the fast-tracking of the pulp mill approval process, a lightning rod for public concern and anger in recent years.

The strong public desire for the protection of our native forests, reform of the timber industry, and the cleaning-up of the unhealthy relationship between politicians and the timber industry had a major impact on the election result in March. A clear message and mandate for change was delivered. A 12% swing against the majority government occurred, and for the first time, the Greens polled over 20% of the vote in a state-wide lower house election. As a result, a negotiated agreement was reached between the State

ALP and the Greens, and Australia now has its first Greens Minister in the new ALP/Greens government.

Since the election we have seen a much more constructive approach to conservation issues, with both major parties looking to build a better working relationship with environmental NGOs. The state government has committed to restoring the size of parliament in Tasmania, and has already shelved a divisive proposal to bulldoze a forestry road through the Tarkine Rainforest – instead re-directing funding to other more constructive projects.

The state government has also indicated its desire to see a holistic solution to the forests issue. Solving this issue is no doubt going to be fraught with difficulties, problems and pitfalls. However, there are now emerging opportunities for a solution. There has been a recent change in the board membership at Gunns Ltd, Tasmania's biggest timber company. The company has also been making some encouraging sounds about wanting to find a new direction that is not based around ongoing entrenched conflict with NGOs and the Tasmanian community.

Big changes in the national and international market-place are key drivers pushing change upon the industry – with public and environmental NGO expectations around the protection of our native forests now converging with expectations in the market-place that timber products are not sourced from our native forests.

Established amongst huge conflict and controversy over recent years, Tasmania has a huge plantation estate in the ground – nearly 300,000 hectares. This plantation estate – attached to a range of necessary reforms and improvements in its management regime, particularly in relation to pesticides and water catchment protection – is capable of providing more than enough resources for a robust wood and wood products industry, hand in hand with the protection of our native forests and a niche, high-value, low-volume native forests sector. Such an outcome will allow Tasmania's native forests and their outstanding world heritage, wildlife, water, climate, landscape and cultural heritage values to be protected.

Phill Pullinger is director of Environment Tasmania. www.et.org.au

Victorian Water Quality Report

Anthony Amis

In May 2010, Friends of the Earth published a report looking at the water quality issues in the Victorian communities of Ballarat, Bendigo and Benalla. The main years of interest were 2005-2010.

Whilst the environment movement has placed much attention on water quantity issues, a surprising lack of information has been provided concerning the quality of water, particularly in times of climate change-induced drought. In April 2008, Ballarat's water supply had dropped to 8% capacity. Between April and July 2007, Lake Eppalock (part of Bendigo's supply) had fallen to <1% capacity and Lake Eildon, the largest reservoir on the Goulburn fell to 5% in May 2007.

The past few years therefore played havoc with water supplies in Ballarat and Bendigo, so much so that a \$180 million, 130 km Goldfields Superpipe was constructed to alleviate the water crisis in these communities. This new pipeline pumps irrigation water from the Waranga Western Channel, which in turn sources its water from the Goulburn River system. (Water is diverted from the Goulburn River at Goulburn Weir, north of Nagambie, and channelled into the Waranga Basin. From here the water is channelled west, via the Waranga Western Channel and north into Australia's largest irrigation area).

The report finds that Ballarat had several times more breaches of Australian Drinking Water Guidelines (ADWG) than Bendigo and Benalla combined. These breaches mainly related to aesthetic concerns, such as pH, Total Dissolved Solids and Hardness. The main health concern appears to be associated with lead, which appears to be entering water supplies through old lead solders in brass fittings and copper pipes.

Blue Green Algae was detected in most of the reservoirs that supply Ballarat and Bendigo with drinking water, and the algal generated toxins MIB and Geosim were detected in the Ballarat Supply. Increased levels of Power Activated Carbon and Alum were required by Central Highlands Water to deal with these problems. Manganese levels appear to increase during drought conditions due to stratification of the water levels.

Also of major concern was the lack of testing by water authorities for agricultural pesticides used within the water supplies, particularly in the Ballarat supply, which consists largely of potato crops. The authorities test for only of a



Goulburn Weir, northern Victoria – now an important drinking water source for 200,000 people.

small portion of the pesticides used within the catchment, usually organochlorine pesticides, which effectively were banned by the early 1990s but whose residues may remain in the soil and waterway sediment. Friends of the Earth estimates that up to 80 pesticides of risk to water supplies could be used in Ballarat's drinking water supplies and possibly 60 pesticides in Bendigo's, yet the authorities only test for a small fraction of these substances.

The herbicide Atrazine and insecticide Endosulfan were detected at low levels in Lake Nagambie between 2004-06 in monitoring carried out by Goulburn Murray Water. Recent research is showing that endocrine function can be impacted at extremely low doses with some toxins having non-monotonic tendencies, where smaller doses may actually be more toxic than higher doses.

Pesticides used to kill aquatic weeds such as Mexican Water Lily and Cabomba are also a concern at Lake Nagambie, as is the surrounding catchment dominated by cropping, pasture and some vineyards, most of which use different concoctions of pesticides.

The report is posted at: www.foe.org.au/resources/research-papers/water/water%20report..pdf/view The report also contains detailed maps of the catchments in question.

Traditional owners and the Australian Alps

Cam Walker



Paul McLeod (left) and Mick Harding at the Sustainable Alpine Communities forum, Mount Buller, May 2010.

If you walk into the town square in the Victorian ski village of Mt Buller, you will be greeted by a sculpture of a mountain cattleman on his horse. In all of the 'high country' towns of south-eastern Australia and throughout the ski resorts, there is a preoccupation with the history of the cattle families that, for generations, drove their stock into the mountains.

There are roads, buildings and events all named after these pioneers, stickers on cars, photos and sculptures, and endless homage to these tough people and their way of life. But where are the images or mention of the indigenous people who lived in this country for perhaps 1000 generations?

We are all aware of the ongoing struggle by indigenous peoples to assert their rights - to their land, culture, and economic development. The mainstream news does report on the Kimberley, Top End and North Queensland - most often when there is conflict around indigenous communities, be it the Wild Rivers legislation in far-north Queensland, or the NT Intervention, or gas developments in WA. And Traditional Owner groups are more and more on the media's radar, as when the Yorta Yorta were successful in getting the state government to commit to the first jointly-managed national park in Victoria's history.

But one struggle for recognition that is almost unknown - outside the community where it takes place - is the one by Traditional Owner groups with connection to the Australian

high country. A few years ago, a man who thought he knew a lot about indigenous history told me that much of the Alps were 'orphan country' - land that has no-one left who has connection, responsibility, or rights relating to land. It was, in his words, 'wilderness' because the original people were gone.

This would come as a shock to the 100 Aboriginal Traditional Owners from across the Australian Alps who came together in May 2010 in Jindabyne to share ideas at their second five-yearly First People's gathering.

The Australian Alps have been inhabited by indigenous nations for millennia. But as Taungurung man Mick Harding said recently "we were removed from our lands" by the invaders and "scattered to the four winds". Disease, murder and relocation were the order of the day, and a century passed with outsiders paying little attention to those who remained.

First People's gatherings

But over the past decade or so, a growing number of people and communities have been re-establishing connection to their country, and the focus for this has been the First People's gatherings. If people know anything at all about pre-invasion culture in the High Country, they will be aware of the journeys to the mountains to gain access to the Bogong Moths that migrated from the western plains of what is now NSW. They provided a great source of fat and protein and all manner of business and ceremony occurred around the annual gatherings to gather the moths. This ancient tradition of gathering together in the High Country was resumed at Dinner Plain in Victoria in 2005.

Uncle Ernie Innes of Taungurung country in Victoria said that the 2005 meeting was the first time Elders had come together in that part of the mountains for 150 years. He said that from this meeting it was agreed to put governance structures in place so Traditional Owners could speak with one voice across the Alps. As Mick Harding has noted, meetings and other events have "reignited our bond as Traditional Owners of country - this is something we did for many thousands of years".

Since the 2005 meeting, a key focus of the group has been to establish a working relationship with the government authorities that manage public lands across the Alps. This has been a success, with strong relations developed with the Australian Alps Liaison Committee, which includes the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, Parks Victoria, ACT Parks Conservation and Lands, and Parks Australia, all working with Traditional Owners through a body called the Australian Alps Traditional Owner Reference Group. There are now also Reference Groups in NSW and Victoria. In 2006, the involvement of Traditional Owners groups was officially acknowledged in the new management plan for the Kosciuszko National Park.

Now, Aboriginal Elders have decided to formalise

the relationships that have been recreated through plans to develop a memorandum of understanding between Traditional Owner groups across the Australian Alps, which includes up to 20 groups. They stretch from Gippsland (Gunnai / Kurnai country) and the ranges to the east of Melbourne (Wurundjeri and Taungurung) all the way across the Snowy Mountains to the tablelands to the north and east of the Alps - to the traditional lands of the Ngannawal people near what is now Canberra. The intention is also to see a treaty developed which would then be agreed on by all other land users and managers. The aim is to acknowledge and enshrine the reality of continued indigenous existence and connection to land.

Sustainability forum

In 2010, Paul McLeod and Mick Harding attended the annual Alpine Resorts sustainability forum, which was held at Mount Buller. Both of them spoke passionately about the need for proper recognition of the fact that no indigenous groups ever gave up their sovereignty. They called on the managers of the ski resorts to do what the Parks Services have done in recent years – to acknowledge Traditional Owners, and work towards developing partnerships with them.

Apart from simple recognition that indigenous peoples still maintain connection to their country, a key aim of this new partnership will be to develop economic and employment opportunities for these communities. Paul, a Yuin man with family connections across the Australian Alps, said “our ultimate aim must be to see the development of accredited, indigenous run tourism”, using the system that is in place and works well in the NT as a basis.

Mick echoed this sentiment, noting that prior to invasion, local people had robust and well-connected local economies, which had been broken as people were displaced. “We want to be able to develop a healthy economy again, one that includes opportunities for our people.” In addition, groups need support from resort management so that “we can build our capacity so that we can take our rightful place in mountain communities.”

Paul noted that a good relationship is developing with some resorts – especially Perisher in NSW. Traditional Owners do an opening ceremony there at the start of the ski season. But both Mick and Paul stressed that the relationship must be far deeper than this and must include real economic opportunities for communities.

Where to from here?

Traditional Owner groups are reasserting themselves, and reminding the rest of the world that they still exist and continue to hold connection to country. They are strengthening their own relationships with their country and to each other. In the political realm they can see that

there are many needs, and they will need support and solidarity from the broader community for all of these to come to fruition.

These tasks include:

- gaining access to funds to allow ‘caring for Country’ work;
- training and employment opportunities;
- a memorandum of understanding, then a Treaty, with other land users in the Alps;
- full involvement in all management plans for public land across the Alps;
- a Keeping Place or Culture Centre;
- indigenous-controlled tourism; and
- joint management of the existing national parks.

As Mick said at the conference, “we have moved past consultation - we now need partnerships so everyone (in the indigenous community) can fully engage in the economy”. In the short term, they see the need to build relations and start partnerships with all land users and managers, including the ski resorts.

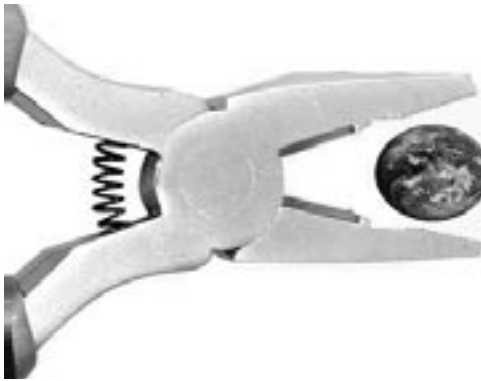
This should start to see growing public recognition, for instance through signage and much more information becoming available about the history of Aboriginal people and their ongoing connection to land.

This, in turn, will help to educate the broader community, especially those who come up to the Parks, the resorts and the mountain towns. And perhaps, in time, we will see the living presence of indigenous peoples, if not replacing, then at least gaining equal space with our current fascination with the mountain cattlemen.



Geo-engineering and climate negotiations - the elephant in the room?

Diana Bronson



BONN, Germany (June 5) – The two-week long session of climate negotiations in Bonn is suffering from inertia and the sentiment of urgency that was so palpable in lead-up to Copenhagen is rare amongst the 4000 mostly lacklustre delegates.

ETC Group is here to inform people about geo-engineering and to recruit more groups and individuals to our Hands Off Mother Earth campaign. We have the impression that the elephant in the room in these negotiations is geo-engineering as Plan B. Many delegates and NGOs here do not know what geo-engineering is, let alone how fast it is advancing as a policy option in key capitals like London and Washington. The small number of countries that are in the midst of deciding to invest in this high-risk option are not forthcoming with the information.

Increasingly decisions on climate change are being made outside the UNFCCC framework, and so it is with geo-engineering. We know that geo-engineering will figure prominently in the next report of the IPCC. But no country has brought this issue into the formal negotiating process where its progress could be slowed down. In fact, prominent geo-engineers have testified before parliamentary committees expressing their fear that if geo-engineering comes before the United Nations, there is a strong likelihood that countries will be alarmed at the prospect and ban it.

At the recent meeting of the scientific body of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in Nairobi, that is what happened. A 2008 de facto moratorium on ocean fertilisation (dumping iron in the ocean to stimulate the growth of massive marine algae blooms in order to sequester more carbon) was reaffirmed, and expanded to other geo-engineering technologies. The language that will be formally debated by countries in October in Japan at the CBD

conference reads “... in accordance with the precautionary approach ... no climate-related geo-engineering activities (will) take place until there is an adequate scientific basis on which to justify such activities and appropriate consideration of the associated risks for the environment and biodiversity and associated social, economic and cultural impacts.”

NGOs and sympathetic countries will have to work very hard to make sure this language sticks. Unfortunately, it was placed in brackets - signalling a lack of consensus - at the last minute by Canada.

The governance of geo-engineering is already scattered across several multilateral bodies, none fully equipped to stop unilateral geo-engineering experiments from going forward. There is the Environmental Modification convention, designed primarily to prevent hostile acts of environmental modification; the London Convention and Protocol on marine dumping that has been debating how to identify what constitutes a “legitimate scientific experiment” on ocean fertilisation; and other bodies such as the UN Convention to Combat Desertification and UNESCO have also waded into the debate.

So far the CBD is the most advanced in its analysis, the most widely ratified instrument, and most likely to adopt a strong position that puts the climate crisis in its proper context as related to ecosystem destruction, species extinction, and other dramatic and urgent global problems.

Clearly, a more comprehensive approach is needed to govern this sector. Ideally, we would have an international convention that would evaluate all new technologies before they are released on the market. That way, the precautionary principle could be systematically applied and risks would be properly assessed and avoided. In the meantime however, it is vital that geo-engineering experiments on our one and only planet earth be prevented from proceeding unilaterally, for as some scientists have shown, real experimentation of these technologies in many instances is equivalent to deployment. Small-scale experiments will not deliver the kind of data scientists are seeking to influence something as large and complex as the climate system.

The debate on geo-engineering has so far been dominated by a small group of scientists and corporate interests from industrialised countries. The Hands Off Mother Earth campaign is an invitation to get the rest of us involved. Check out what you can do at www.handsoffmotherearth.org

More information:

* Recommendations adopted by the CBD Subsidiary Body
www.cbd.int/sbstta14/meeting/in-session/?tab=2

* ETC Group www.etcgroup.org

Diana Bronson is programme manager with the ETC Group.

Australia's backing for geo-engineering cops international criticism

Georgia Miller and Cam Walker

High-level international discussions are focussing on the threats of a more direct form of climate intervention – ‘geo-engineering’. The UN’s Subsidiary Body of Scientific, Technical and Technological Advice recently recommended a formal moratorium on carrying out geo-engineering experiments.

But in March this year, the Victorian government was the sole ‘strategic partner’ and major sponsor of a heavily promoted conference devoted to advancing geo-engineering. The ‘Asilomar’ conference represented a huge practical and public relations push by geo-engineering proponents to give the controversial sector a veneer of respectability.

So why did the Victorian government not only provide \$250,000 in funding to be the sole ‘strategic partner’ of the conference, but also commit to advocate for the conference recommendations – sight unseen? There are already international perceptions that Australia is not serious about reducing greenhouse emissions.

Efforts at Copenhagen to negotiate climate agreements that favoured Australian industry at the expense of rigorous emissions reduction provoked strong criticism from other delegates. Now, given the parlous state of international negotiations to cut greenhouse gas emissions, a significant concern is that unproven geo-engineering techno-fixes will be used as a smokescreen for inaction.

Geo-engineering, or large-scale intentional climate manipulation, remains an untested, largely hypothetical and high-risk new sector. Many eminent scientists are sceptical that sending small mirrors into outer space, pumping sulphate nanoparticles into the stratosphere or triggering giant algal blooms in the ocean, will really save us from dangerous climate change. Some suggest that the unintended consequences could be catastrophic.

Nonetheless, there are no shortage of techno-optimists and entrepreneurs willing to bet they can find a quick techno-fix to climate change. In May, the London Times newspaper revealed that a team of scientists and engineers funded by billionaire Bill Gates are planning to carry out a 10,000 square kilometre ‘cloud-whitening’ experiment. If it goes ahead, this ‘cloud-bleaching’ experiment would be the largest known geo-engineering field trial to date.

At present, there are few rules or restrictions on carrying out geo-engineering experiments, irrespective of their

ecological risk. A 2008 meeting of 191 nations at the UN Convention on Biological Diversity supported a de facto moratorium on ocean fertilisation (which Australia, Brazil and China opposed until the last minute). However this has been poorly policed. There are no restrictions on atmospheric manipulation.

Serious scientific concern exists about the ecological and social risks of geo-engineering experiments gone wrong – disruption to regional rainfall and weather patterns, acidified oceans and soils, depletion of the ozone layer, crop failure and population displacement. Geo-engineering is also vulnerable to misuse by self-interested actors for commercial, political or military purposes.

Fossil fuel proponents are already trying to use geo-engineering as a reason to postpone measures to cut emissions and are doing their best to win government supporters, especially among those nations dependent on emission-intensive industries.

So at a time when scientists are trying hard to regain momentum for international action to reduce emissions, efforts by the Victorian government to promote geo-engineering are particularly unhelpful.

The Victorian government has taken action to drive investment in renewable energy. Yet recent analysis by Green Energy Markets, commissioned by Environment Victoria, found that renewables still contribute only 5.4% to Victoria’s electricity generation – up less than 1% from 2000 - while 91.5% comes from burning coal. Over the past decade, Victoria’s carbon emissions from burning brown coal have grown by nearly 10%.

Hazelwood, one of the dirtiest power stations in the industrialised world, was due to be decommissioned last year. The Brumby government extended its operation for another 20 years. Worse, the government supports building more coal-fired plants. Documents leaked last year also revealed that some in state Cabinet want to establish a brown coal export market.

At the same time as Victoria is considering an expansion of its dirty brown coal sector, and while renewables are languishing, the state’s sponsorship of the high profile geo-engineering meeting is a very bad look. If we are to avoid Australia being denigrated at home and overseas as an irresponsible climate wrecker, it’s time to get serious about the real business of emissions reduction.

This means a dramatic rethink in both federal and state governments’ approach to energy and climate policy. The Brumby government should start phasing out use of brown coal, arrest its flirtation with climate manipulation and bring in serious measures to support a transition to renewable energy. Smoke and mirrors are not a good basis for climate policy.

Secrecy on nanotech use in sunscreens

Georgia Miller



Following on from our Safe Sunscreen Guide, Friends of the Earth (FoE) thought it would be interesting to see what the same 140 companies included in the guide were prepared to tell members of the public who used their products.

Our survey found a high level of industry secrecy – nearly half the companies refused to give a straight answer about whether or not their products contain nano ingredients, even when contacted repeatedly by someone claiming to use their products.

Several companies refused point blank to answer questions about their use of nano, while several others admitted that they themselves didn't know whether or not they used nano-ingredients. The full report of our survey, and related media coverage, is posted at nano.foe.org.au

Nano focus at ACTU OH & S conference

At this year's annual ACTU occupational health and safety conference in Canberra, minister for industry, innovation, science and research Kim Carr was invited to give a keynote address on the OH&S issues of nanotechnology.

Disturbingly, he focussed on economic opportunities associated with nanotechnology and glossed over the early scientific findings that nanoparticles could pose very serious risks to workers' health. He failed entirely to acknowledge that some forms of carbon nanotubes are known to present asbestos-like health hazards.

Many of us were left extremely concerned that the

Rudd government appears more committed to industry support than it does to preventing a repeat of the asbestos tragedy. Nevertheless, there was an excellent workshop later in the day to address nanotechnology's health and policy challenges, which FoE was happy to speak at.

Breakthrough in the quest to create artificial life

The field of 'synthetic biology' is the convergence of nanotechnology, genetic engineering and information technology. For years, researchers in Australia and overseas have been using synthetic biology to design and create artificial DNA.

In May, after many millions of research dollars and 15 years of hype, a research team led by controversial US scientist-entrepreneur Craig Venter announced that it had created the world's first synthetic organism. The researchers synthesised from chemicals the entire DNA of a new microbe, then inserted it into the empty shell of another bacteria. The artificial bacteria then replicated successfully a thousand times.

'Synthetic biology' organisms are touted for use in agrofuels, agriculture, manufacturing, environmental clean up, medicine and military applications. Craig Venter's research is funded by companies such as BP and Exxon Mobil, which have a poor safety record. Yet despite fears that this first 'designer microbe' heralds a new era of biosafety, security, ethical and legal challenges, the Australian government has no capacity to manage the new risks of synthetic biology.

Help us ratchet up the pressure for public interest management of nano

The issues around the science of the small just keep getting bigger and we need your help to tackle them! If you are interested in getting involved with the work of the FoE nanotech campaign, please get in touch. Thanks for great volunteer efforts in the past few months by Silvia Carbone, Emma Belfield and Fiona Thiessen. We wish Fiona the best of luck as she returns to Colombia mid-year.

Nanotech campaign contact

Georgia Miller: georgia.miller@foe.org.au

Web: nano.foe.org.au

People of Bakun call for the protection of ancestral domains

Ana Fonoti Brown

Australian mining company Royalco Resources Limited recently executed an options agreement with Brazilian mining giant Vale SA, for exploration and farming of copper opportunities in the northern Philippines district of Bakun. Indigenous peoples account for the majority of the district's population.

Indigenous group Bakun Aywanan, or Defend and Nurture Bakun, has organised community resistance against large-scale mining in their municipality. Several dialogues have occurred between the communities and the local government, with petitions presented to the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) to reject Royalco's application for exploration.

When I visited the Bakun area in December 2008, I listened to personal accounts from community members claiming that since the entry of Royalco, communities and families had been divided, affecting peace and order in the area. Bakun Aywanan alleges the process under Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), facilitated by NCIP-Benguet and undertaken by Royalco, was in itself flawed and manipulated. FCIP is designed to protect the rights of indigenous communities and is compulsory under Philippines law for resource extraction on indigenous lands.

There are many Bakun community members who support mineral exploration. However, FPIC legislation requires the consent and effective participation of the community as a whole. A key component is that consent must be informed. In a country where around one-third of the population lives in poverty, mining has the potential to bring income and development opportunities to traditional landowners, if conducted in a responsible way. But historically, resource extraction by international companies in the Philippines, as in many developing countries, has often brought human rights abuses, devastation to the environment, and little benefit to local people.

A World Organisation Against Torture report to the European Parliament on human rights in the Philippines states "policies in mining, land reform and export economic zones have very direct links with violence." The report further states that "policies promoting investment in mineral extraction that do not take into account the rights of the people affected provoke demonstrations that are often met with violence by private security forces."

The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 allows foreign access and control of every aspect of the local mining activity from exploration, development to utilisation. The Act gives 100% foreign-owned mining corporations the right of control over mineral lands. In 2006 the former UK Minister for International Development, Clare Short, led a team of human rights and environmental experts on a fact-finding visit to the Philippines to examine the impact of mining on the environment and people's livelihoods, saying she was "deeply shocked by the Philippines and the mining companies have failed to comply with national law and international standards".

Opposition groups in Bakun are also concerned about the effects large-scale mining will have on the natural environment and food security. The fragile Benguet pine forest has been and remains the main source of timber for mining operations in Benguet, the province where Bakun is located. Hydroelectric dams supply water for irrigation in agriculture and development activities and serve as a habitat for fishes, a source of livelihood for the nearby communities. Many parts of this province have been declared protected areas. However, nearly 45% of the area of the province has mineral claims and mining applications by multinational and local mining companies.

Oxfam Australia has reported that in the Philippines "some Australian mining companies may have contributed to human rights abuses and environmental destructions." The introduction of methods such as open-pit mining and submarine mine waste disposal have proved lethal: a toxic spill of cyanide and other contaminants at Lafayette's mine on the island of Rapu-Rapu had a devastating effect on local livelihoods and marine life resulting in five major fish kills in 2005. Mass local protest ensued, which, coupled with Lafayette's financial problems, led to the company's voluntary suspension and bankruptcy.

The demands by community for honest and transparent negotiations are fraught with legal obstacles. However, encouragement for the people of Bakun comes from at least two cases - the NCIP accepted community petitions against mining projects as sufficient basis for recognising that the projects did not have the informed consent of affected peoples, resulting in the NCIP and Local Government Unit rejecting them.

Ana Fonoti Brown has recently formed a group called Responsible Bottom Line (Australia) to work on corporate social responsibility issues. Email rb australia@bigpond.com

A stifling climate - targeting social movements and policing protests

Zoë Hutchinson and Holly Greenaune

Late in 2009, the state of Victoria upped the ante against growing non-violent direct action at coal-fired power stations, legislating to significantly increase penalties for ‘protest-related disruption of critical energy infrastructure,’ following a commitment by all state/territory energy ministers in 2008.

Victoria’s Electricity Industry Amendment (Critical Infrastructure) Act 2009 introduces a range of new penalties, including one years imprisonment for trespass, and two years imprisonment for damaging, interfering, tampering, or attaching something to electricity infrastructure.

Activists have long ‘locked-on’ to sites they regard as destructive or unjust: attaching themselves to machinery, trees, buildings, and even each other within such sites. Now, in Victoria, with other states soon to follow, the simple act of attaching your body to anywhere on a coal-fired power station can land you two years in gaol or a fine of \$28,000.

Criminalising non-violent protest

We have witnessed a spectacular expansion of police powers in the last decade: from the deliberate criminalisation of specific protest methods; to broadly banning a range of dissent against major events like the 2007 APEC meeting; to the creation of ‘lock-down’ powers to control any public ‘disorder.’ But in general the critical examination of the stealthy swell of police powers has been lacking.

Faced with a failure by governments domestically and internationally to act on climate change, the growing movement for climate justice is stepping it up beyond letter-writing and lifestyle-changing and turning to mobilisation and non-violent direct action. In other words, for many activists, non-violent direct action is seen as a way to challenge power interests, inequalities and prejudices that may be blocking the pathway to real action on climate change. However, in some ways social movements seem ill-prepared for repression or acts that make collective action more difficult. In general, social movements in this context may be ill-equipped to make such repression backfire or to use it as a way of effectively communicating issues of injustice.

The new Victorian penalties for protesting at coal-fired power stations came in the wake of the September 2009 ‘Switch Off Hazelwood – Switch on Renewables’ protests. Energy minister Peter Batchelor said the legislation was

motivated by the last “round of protests, where people organised and practiced to get arrested.” Five hundred people converged on the Hazelwood power station in the LaTrobe Valley, one of the dirtiest coal-fired power stations on earth.

Policing protests of major events in NSW

Last October, the Major Events Act 2009 was passed quietly in New South Wales Parliament. It received little parliamentary discussion or public attention. The NSW government claimed to be using garden-variety ‘uniform provisions’ from legislation controlling previous events to ‘increase transparency, certainty and consistency’ for major events. But these ‘uniform provisions’ are drawn from extraordinary and controversial pieces of legislation, which expanded police powers and seriously curtailed civil liberties for ‘one-off’ events. Many of the overly broad and draconian legislative provisions are now on the books permanently.

Protest groups have often used gatherings of heads of states or conferences of corporate executives as focal points for dissent, as a watershed for budding social movements. But when protest meets major events in Australia, it is now being met with increasing legislative limitations and heavy-handed policing. In NSW Parliamentary discussion about the Major Events Bill 2009, no-one acknowledged a major event could be a ‘political event’ or the target of protest – politicians preferring instead to stick to sporting events.

What constitutes a ‘major event’ is not explicitly defined and largely left to the discretion of the minister. The minister also declares the ‘major event venue’ – which could include the event location, any hotel accommodation, transport, public areas, and potentially multiple suburbs of Sydney – without the scrutiny of parliament. The Act then creates expanded ‘controlled areas’, restricting signs and advertising, and banning people from distributing ‘prescribed articles’ without approval, which could include information about protests.

Entire ‘categories of persons’ can be prohibited from entering a major event venue, or the entire venue can be closed to the public – this could be a significant area. Disturbingly, people can be directed to leave a ‘major event venue’ if an ‘authorised officer’ believes on ‘reasonable grounds’ a person ‘is about to contravene a provision of this Act or the regulations’. If they don’t leave, they may be removed, with reasonable force.

The new NSW Major Events Act strongly resembles the provisions of the APEC Meeting (Police Powers) Act, rapidly passed in 2007 (on the same day as the significant emergency powers - the Cronulla racist riot powers - were reenacted on a permanent basis). It gives police wide powers to establish road blocks, search people and vehicles, seize and detain prohibited items, and exclude people from the specified zones in Sydney’s CBD.

During the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation meeting, then NSW police minister David Campbell could order large

‘declared areas’ that were not open to challenge. Campbell said the act created ‘extraordinary policing powers that will be available temporarily’ and ‘represent a departure from normal policing powers.’

The permanency of these powers sets a worrying constraint on the ability to exercise the right to freedom of expression or assembly. During APEC, the operation of the laws meant that the very act of exercising these rights, in practice, became an act of civil disobedience. Turning protest into civil disobedience per se is a key risk of this new legislation.

Expanding police powers for ‘public order’

Beyond directly targeting protest methods, and generally limiting dissent to ‘major events’, protests are further affected by other new and expanding police powers. At the 2008 Camp for Climate Action in Newcastle, NSW, police used ‘emergency’ riot control powers. It was the first time these expansive police powers – enacted in the wake of the large-scale Cronulla racist mob violence in the Law Enforcement Legislation Amendment (Public Safety) Act 2005 – were used against a political protest. This law allows a ‘lock-down zone’ to be declared by the police ‘to prevent or control the public disorder’. In such a zone, police have extensive new powers to:

- Establish roadblocks;
- Stop and search people without the usual requirement of a warrant or a ‘reasonable suspicion’;
- Require people to disclose their identity including their name and address;
- Seize and detain anything; and
- Give dispersal directions to an assembled group.

In Parliament, NSW Premier Morris Iemma said, ‘These powers are not intended for use in respect of peaceful protests, union demonstrations and the like.’ However, the powers themselves contained no express limitation. They allowed lockdown powers to be deployed at a peaceful public demonstration against the expansion of the Newcastle coal port.

The Camp for Climate Action involved a week of public education on climate change and community organising; with a day of non-violent direct action beginning with a street march to the coal terminal. Some protesters aimed to occupy the rail line to stop coal trains for the day. Protest organisers had met with police for several months beforehand: police made clear those who crossed onto the rail tracks would be arrested. However, at no stage did police seek to challenge the authorisation of the main protest march in the Supreme Court.

As the street march was about to commence, police began confiscating banner poles, placards, clowning props, drums and other belongings. When organisers questioned such police actions, they were informed a Cronulla riot ‘lock-down zone’ had been declared across several surrounding

suburbs. This declaration surprised and confused the crowd – people were unsure about what they could or could not do. Many saw it as an act of intimidation by police. The declaration of extra powers set the scene for the heavy-handed policing that followed: searches of protesters, further confiscation of personal effects, and enforcing the ‘emergency’ move-on dispersal power with lines of police horses.

Employing the Cronulla ‘emergency’ powers against street marches exhibits the misuse of such power. But in the required annual review of the use of Cronulla riot powers, the NSW Ombudsman concluded there was a legitimate exercise of power by solely examining dubious police ‘intelligence’ logs. For instance, the police ‘intelligence’ log said people were stockpiling oranges to be used as missiles. These slices of oranges were, unsurprisingly, used for snacks for the large crowd. Glaring flaws in police intelligence, combined with the failure of the Ombudsman to critically examine the log, shows a problematic system of ‘checks and balances’. Indeed, the Ombudsman itself has recommended the amendment of this legislation to explicitly include a right to freedom of assembly. This recommendation has not been implemented and therefore ultimately, the use of the Cronulla riots ‘emergency powers’ against protesters sets a troubling precedent for the right to freedom of expression and assembly in Australia.

What next?

Climate activists anticipate a long-term social struggle to change energy sources and reduce carbon pollution. The state, too, is preparing for a climate movement to grow over the coming decades – and possibly for significant backlash as people experience the impacts of climate change – by moving to foreclose space for dissent.

Clearly, campaigns about climate change cannot simply be about changing energy sources or reducing carbon pollution. In the wake of the Copenhagen climate talks, German activist Tadzio Mueller said, “In the context of the escalating climate crisis as well as the total (albeit expected) failure of governments to deal with the problem, we absolutely have to (be able to) take disobedient, illegal actions: to shut down coal-fired power plants, new nuclear plants, or socialise the renewable energy sector.” But for any dissenting actions to be at all feasible, we need to organise together to resist and delegitimise repression and increased police powers – and not just new laws that target climate activists, but also those designed to control and criminalise working class, indigenous and migrant communities.

We need resourced, broad and sustained support for people who face huge penalties for taking action at coal-fired power stations. We need to better prepare as we collectively mobilise around ‘major events’ – and as police numbers and new offences endlessly multiply, we need to find new and more creative ways of campaigning.

The transition decade: Reshaping Australia's climate politics

Leigh Ewbank

Several environmental groups have banded together in Australia to encourage a new approach to climate action. They're steering away from incremental approaches, which have largely failed, and instead are promoting a holistic Transition Decade.

Spearheaded by Friends of the Earth, Beyond Zero Emissions, Climate Emergency Network and the Sustainable Living Foundation, the Transition Decade (T10) presents a shared framework for individuals and community groups to develop, then implement initiatives to put Australia on the path of sustainability by 2020.

"The T10 alliance recognises the urgent situation humanity faces as clearly outlined by the most current climate science," says Beyond Zero Emissions director Matthew Wright. "It also recognises that wholesale change is needed to set our society on a safe climate and ecologically sustainable path."

The campaign starts with community mobilisation, aiming to build a foundation to push for government policy change starting in 2012 and then for a greater economic shift toward sustainability starting in 2014. Building a campaign platform around a decade of transition helps bypass "incrementalist failure," Wright said. The model establishes a timeline for the groups' shared sustainability agendas, which he argues makes it easier for the business, economic and social communities to align their priorities, and much harder for the proposed policy mechanisms to be corrupted by vested interests.

"We won't achieve sustainability or a safe climate future without large sections of society working together, sometimes in different ways, but towards the same goal," Wright said.

The T10 Alliance was launched as the Labor government's national climate agenda stalled. The Australian Senate rejected the government's key climate initiative, the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), which sought to establish a national cap-and-trade system. The government has delayed further consideration of the CPRS until late-2012 at the earliest. Under the leadership of Tony Abbott, the Liberal and National parties have branded the emissions trading scheme "a great big tax" and vow to prevent any carbon-pricing measures from taking effect.

The Australian Greens add another layer of complexity to the political situation. The Greens challenge the Rudd government to "break the CPRS deadlock" by implementing

an interim price on carbon. The proposal would impose a \$20 per tonne "price" on carbon emissions for two years. According to the Greens, the interim measure would allow Australia to start addressing its ballooning carbon emissions and provide the Parliament with enough time to resolve political differences over the emissions-trading legislation.

Wright argues that the climate policies presented by both the major political parties are inadequate given the scale of the challenge: "The policy proposals from the Liberal and Labor parties completely ignore the climate science and will achieve nothing. The government and opposition have no direction. They take a pathetic approach and have no plan. They have no way forward for the Australian people."

While both Wright and Cam Walker, campaign coordinator for T10 member Friends of the Earth, recognise the Greens' proposal as a political "circuit breaker" with the potential to provide a signal to investors and the community, it does not establish a long-term goal for decarbonisation. Their qualified support for the measure comes with a reasoned skepticism towards the effectiveness of cap-and-trade policies, and a reminder that comprehensive climate policy will do more than just price carbon.

In contrast to the efforts of the larger environmental organisations that have mostly focused on the government's emissions-trading agenda and the outcome of the Copenhagen negotiations, the T10 Alliance presents a platform for collaboration. It emphasises practical actions by citizens rather than targets and treaties.

"The incremental approach of the major environment groups is almost universally accepted as a failure," contends Wright. "There was an expectation amongst the broader community that Copenhagen would set us on the right path but the UN process has also been a failure thus far. The people that understand climate change are looking for an alternative focus for action. T10 provides this focus together with a compelling vision and urgency."

Walker says "T10 is attempting to break out of the climate change 'ghetto', and mobilise the majority of society." He argues that a broader and more collaborative approach to campaigning demanded an alliance of organisations that already use collaborative models. This was the rationale behind Friends of the Earth, Beyond Zero Emissions, Climate Emergency Network and the Sustainable Living Foundation forming the core of the alliance, "rather than [groups] overly focused on their own profile or badging".

While the decade-long focus of the T10 Alliance is a first for the Australian climate movement, the United States has already seen the emergence of similar campaigns. The T10 Alliance cites the Repower America campaign as a key inspiration. Just as Repower America seeks for the U.S. to produce 100% of its electricity from renewable sources in a decade, core T10 ally Beyond Zero Emissions has used the alliance to launch its own initiative to achieve this aim.

The advocacy group is in the process of preparing a detailed Zero Carbon Australia 2020 plan for Australia to transition to 100% renewable energy. "We have used the scientific evidence to decide on an end-point, the best engineers together to put a plan in place," Wright said. "We present a blueprint for going from the polluting economy we have now to a zero emissions economy in 10 years."

Walker agrees with the need to transition Australia's energy system and believes it can be done in a way that reduces emissions while creating thousands of new jobs.

Whether the Transition Decade is able to reshape Australia and kick-start the stalled climate politics is still to be seen. Yet, even in its early stages, the T10 alliance and shared campaign platform represents a serious attempt by leading non-government organisations to develop then implement sustainable solutions in Australia.

More information: www.t10.net.au

Leigh Ewbank is a graduate of RMIT University's Bachelor of Social Science Environment degree with Honours and was a 2009 summer fellow at the California-based think tank, the Breakthrough Institute. Leigh writes about climate change and environmental politics at www.theRealEwbank.com.

This article was originally published by the popular US climate blog 'Solve Climate' <http://solveclimate.com/blog>



World people's conference on climate change in Bolivia

Ben Courtice

The world's governments are already gearing up for the next round of climate talks in Cancun in December. On May 31, a meeting of governments discussed how to limit protest at Cancun, how to restrict the participation of civil society groups in the negotiations, and how to ensure that no country includes include civil society groups on their delegations.

The Copenhagen climate conference last December saw activists excluded from the summit, such as Friends of the Earth International chair, Nnimmo Bassey. Bassey was explicitly banned. On April 19-22, Bassey was welcomed at the alternative summit in Cochabamba - the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth. The summit was called by Bolivia's President, Evo Morales, an indigenous socialist leader elected after a popular uprising threw out the previous president. Thirty-five thousand people attended from over 140 countries, including 26,000 from Bolivia alone.

According to Bassey, the Cochabamba summit is "critical to the future of the planet because we are having discussions among people who are in the front line of being victims of climate change." He said FoE rejected the supposed "agreement" that came out of Copenhagen, "because if it is allowed to stand, poor and vulnerable nations will be exposed to grave danger".

Poor pay the price

Poor nations are already suffering, including Bolivia, which is facing water shortages as its glaciers disappear. Neighbouring Peru has suffered catastrophic mudslides due to heavy rains. Yet these poor countries have only contributed a minuscule share of the world's carbon emissions.

Speakers at the conference discussed ways that the current international order is making the poor pay the price for climate change and adaptation. Third world crop land is being taken for biofuels, and is being bought up for rich nations' food security. Walls are being built to keep the world's poor from escaping their devastated countries.

For these reasons, Bassey said, the climate justice movement needs a program for action that includes food sovereignty, energy sovereignty and a rejection of agro-fuels, which are "causing mass starvation by taking farmland that used to be used for food for people and

using them for crops for machines." On Copenhagen, Bassey said "the political commitment expressed by countries that accept the accord ... means that we can expect a temperature rise of more than 4°C.

What this will mean for Africa, for other continents, is a temperature rise of more than 6°C. This would lead to the collapse of agriculture, water supplies and a massive increase in climate migration."

Climate debt

The conference called for the world to adopt a target of maximum one degree warming, and therefore to aim for 300 ppm CO₂ in the atmosphere. To this end the conference called for rich nations to adopt targets of 50% emissions reductions (based on 1990 emissions) by 2017. These are similar to the most radical demands being pushed by the climate movement in the West, such as the Climate Emergency Network here in Australia.

But emissions targets were only part of the conference's demands. It also called for payment of climate debt: for rich countries to set aside 6% of their GDP for aid to poor countries in both mitigating climate change and adaptation to the effects that are already being seen. That is a lot – but comparable to many nations' military budgets.

The conference's climate debt working group noted that to honour climate debts means a focus not merely on financial compensation but also on restorative justice and on restoring the balance, integrity and harmony of the Earth and its climate system.

Leave the coal in the hole

This climate debt of the industrialised nations is hard to deny. But is it fair for Bolivia to point the finger at Australia, when Bolivia depends on fossil fuel exports for their own income too?

Unlike Australia, Bolivia could not end their fossil fuel exports without extensive alternative development first. Bolivia does not even have safe, drinkable tap water yet. If Australia ended coal and gas exports, the main pain would be felt by a few mining multinationals. Australia is a rich country with the capital to diversify. Abandoning their main export is a much harder call for a poor country like Bolivia.

Nevertheless, Bassey finished an address to the conference with the slogan: "Leave the coal in the hole, Leave the crude oil in the soil, leave the tar sands in the land, where mother earth kept them."

The issue of extractive industries (mining and gas) in Bolivia is already contentious – local communities often clash with state-backed mining projects over issues like unsustainable water use and control of indigenous lands. Debate on these issues will continue in Bolivia and its allies like oil-exporting Venezuela.

The contradictions of an economy that has historically been based on extractive industries almost exclusively are like the Gordian knot. It is near impossible to judge from the outside how to unravel the conflicting demands of the environment, social development, and the national economy. But paying the climate debt could cut this the knot cleanly in two, in Bolivia and many other countries.

Paying the climate debt would undermine the unjust economic system that keeps the poor world poor and the rich world rich. It would enable genuine development, without fossil fuels, for poor countries. This is a crucial demand for climate activists in the industrialised countries to support.

At Cancun, as at Copenhagen, poor nations from Tuvalu to Bolivia will again demand action. The elite who pushed the Copenhagen accord through are digging in their heels doing nothing. But the conference at Cochabamba initiated a valuable alliance of world people's movements with some of these governments.

We as activists have a job to organise protests across the world during Cancun. This was one of the actions called for by the Cochabamba summit. If we have a government with bad policies – or no policy – on climate, they will take that to Cancun.

Much of the discussion at Cochabamba was radical and anti-capitalist. Some (such as Evo Morales) talk particularly of a kind of socialism, but all seemed to consider the Andean indigenous concept of *vivir bien* – living well, not at the expense of others – to be essential to any way forward. There was the great sense that a better world is both necessary, and possible – if we fight for it.

The Peoples Agreement adopted at Cochabamba is posted at: <http://pwccc.wordpress.com/2010/04/24/peoples-agreement>

Ben Courtice is a climate activist, socialist and FoE member in Melbourne who attended the conference in Cochabamba. He publishes a blog at <<http://bccwords.blogspot.com>>.

Thanks to Green Left Weekly's Federico Fuentes for permission to use the interview with Nnimmo Bassey.



Australian activists paint a banner with Bolivian kids. Photo by Steve Denshire.

Learn peace - students playing a role in nuclear disarmament

Cat Beaton

In 2007, many governments supported a UN resolution urging all governments to promote disarmament education. This followed a report on disarmament education tabled in the UN General Assembly that noted the importance of the issue globally. The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in Australia has taken a leading step towards this aim, launching an education package called 'Learn Peace'.

ICAN takes literally the old slogan 'think globally, act locally'. The Learn Peace package for Australian students includes a workbook outlining activities that encourage students to enter the global arena of decision-making, treaties and education about nuclear weapons and disarmament. The activities inspire and empower students to make a difference in their future and in their world. They also complement existing global, peace and values education initiatives.

The activities are divided into four categories _ English, arts and drama, social studies and outreach. In the classroom students are guided in running a United Nations debate, organising writing and art competitions, conducting opinion polls and designing your own peace symbol.

While the issues surrounding nuclear weapons are far from light, the education resource has been designed to encourage humour and hope and always keep the focus on taking positive steps for change.

Hawkesdale College in rural Victoria is a prime example of the potential of the project. Middle-year secondary students engaged with Learn Peace activities for two years. They opened up dialogue with other overseas students though online conferencing to discuss nuclear weapons and non-proliferation issues. In a letter to the school, Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd commended the students for taking pro-active steps on world issues.

The Hawkesdale College students who began working with Learn Peace continue to involve themselves in this type of education. Twelve-year-old Hawkesdale College student Belinda asks, "Why can't countries trust themselves enough to abolish their nuclear weapons?"

Marg Murnane, a teacher at Hawkesdale College and a strong advocate of peace education, was responsible for introducing and driving the Learn Peace project at the school. Marg believes that there is a frightening complacency amongst adults around the issue of nuclear weapons. She

notes, "The threat of intentional or accidental launch of these weapons is as relevant today as it was in 1945. We must mobilise young people by giving our students a voice in abolishing the greatest threat to humankind and our future."

Students and youth show a real interest in this issue. They are quick to understand that there are still around 23,300 nuclear weapons in the world today, each posing a threat to global security and life as we know it. Like climate change, nuclear weapons have the power to destroy entire populations, change our environment and affect health for many generations to come. Unlike climate change, it could occur in the blink of an eye, or the press of a button. The memories of the terror and loss at Hiroshima and Nagasaki have never left us as a global community and are the inherited legacy of this current generation.



Top: Sherbrooke Community School's year 9-10's get involved in 'Learn Peace' and take action for Nuclear Abolition Day. Photo by Jo Mogilewska.

More information:

* ICAN - Learn Peace www.icanw.org/learn_peace

* United Nations disarmament education resources www.un.org/disarmament/education.

Cat Beaton is the Disarmament Education Project Coordinator for ICAN - the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons. cat@icanw.org



Footprints for peace

Kerrie-Ann Garlick

Arriving in New York.

Five years ago, after the disappointing result of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference, Footprints for Peace members committed to walking for five years in the United States and Europe to build global resistance to the nuclear industry. Our vision since 2005 to 2010 was fulfilled beyond our imagination.

On May 1 this year, four walks from the four directions came together in New York, creating a beautiful, strong gathering of 200 people from all over the world displaying colour, creativity, diversity, resistance and solidarity for a nuclear free future. On the same day, there was a women's walk in Australia happening in solidarity and a walk in Scotland being organised.

With the support and help of many people we had successfully created peace walks for five years in Ireland, Scotland, England, France, Switzerland, Germany and Belgium and today it was a fabulous feeling to walk over the George Washington Bridge, New York and down Broadway with Native American people leading the walk.

I thought of all the people we had met over those five years who are working so tirelessly for a nuclear free future, and more importantly for those who we are walking for – the people who are suffering daily at the hands of the nuclear industry. It was one of the most amazing experiences I have had on a walk and has given me such enthusiasm to continue our work for a world without nukes.

Over the 80 days on the walk from Oakridge, Tennessee, where the Y12 nuclear weapons facility overshadows the beautiful town and land, and covering a distance of 800 miles to the United Nations in New York, we had much support from the local communities who housed, fed and hosted the walkers as we came through their towns. We discovered that at the grassroots level there is a massive

peace movement carried in the hearts of American people. The media gave us front page news in over 20 newspapers along with dozens of radio interviews and coverage on one of America's largest news channel - CNN - as we walked closer to New York.

There were frequent evening gatherings that drew large numbers of people from diverse backgrounds, who left with a greater understanding about the dangers of the nuclear industry and the connections between uranium mining, nuclear power, weapons and waste. We spoke in schools, community centres, churches, town halls, mayors offices and council buildings, reaching thousands of people along the way.

Australian Greens Senator Scott Ludlam's 'Climate of Hope' DVD was screened at every evening gathering during the walk. The DVD was met with great enthusiasm from local people who were inspired to organise more screenings in the future. We distributed massive amounts of literature from Australia through our nightly stalls and on the streets as we walked.

On Sunday May 2, a rally was organised by Abolition 2000, and 10,000 people marched on the streets of New York from Time Square down to the United Nations. This included 2000 people from Japan who came for the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the NPT to voice their desire to rid the world of nuclear weapons.

One of the most powerful moments of the day was when the abolition flame, carried since the beginning of our walk, met with four other flames from Hiroshima. Together these flames were carried at the front of the rally with Mayor Akiba from Hiroshima, where the flame originated; Mayor Bob Harvey, who lit the flame in Hiroshima and took it to NZ for the start of the World March; Kenneth Deer,

secretary of the Mohawk Nation at Kahnawake; Rafael de La Rubia, coordinator of the World March; and Marcus Atkinson, international coordinator of Footprints for Peace. At the end of the rally, two of the abolition flames were presented to Sergio Duarte, the UN Under Secretary and High Representative for Disarmament.

NPT Review Conference

The 2010 NPT Review Conference itself was disappointing. Hillary Clinton in her opening speech declared an increase of US\$100 million in funding for the International Atomic Energy Agency to step up its promotion of nuclear energy. For me this set the agenda for the NPT to focus more on the 'peaceful use of atoms' rather than creating a serious action plan to dismantle nuclear weapons.

So I decided to ditch the talks at the NPT Review Conference and get involved in the non-violent direct action being organised by the War Resisters League. Marking the beginning of the NPT Review Conference, the War Resisters League on Monday May 3 declared New York City a nuclear weapons free zone at Grand Central Station. Twenty-two people from all different age groups were arrested for asserting that nuclear disarmament should begin in the US. As people rushed to work, huge banners on either side of the station read 'Nuclear Weapons = Terrorism'.

About 80 of us circled the information booth and continued walking around handing out flyers and carrying banners urging the US government to disarm. We handed out 2000 flyers in just over an hour. At 9am, when most of the flyers had been handed out, the 'die-in' began and people started to get arrested. About 40 people supported the people doing the 'die-in' by singing songs, including verses of 'We gunna keep on walking forward'. It was wonderful to be a part of this action and to be inspired by many people risking arrest.

The other inspiring event during the NPT was the Commission on Sustainable Development that was happening at the same time. The issues of mining and waste are part of the Commission's current two-year work cycle. The NGO Women in Europe for a Common Future organised a lunch event on 'Uranium Mining – Clear Perspectives on a Dirty Business', where we heard stories from a Navajo woman, Bettie Yazzie, whose husband died from lung cancer in 1974 after working 10 years in a uranium mine site operated by Union Carbide Corporation. She only speaks Navajo and was accompanied by a translator, Gilbert Badoni, who is Navajo himself and the son of uranium miner from Colorado. We heard that Gilbert's entire family has cancer.

We heard from a man from the Khasi tribe of Meghalaya in India who has been defending the rights of indigenous people in West Khasi Hills of north-east India who live in an area of great biodiversity but also on high-grade uranium

reserves. The central government of India and the state government of Meghalaya want to cut down 500 hectares of virgin forest to mine the uranium. Look out for a film 'Where the Clouds Come Home' about proposed uranium mining in Meghalaya - you can see the trailer at <http://smallseedfilms.blogspot.com>

Included in the event was a fabulous panel discussion including the president of the NGO 'Aghir in Man', who spoke about the impact on the Tuareg tribes in Niger of the uranium mining activities of French nuclear operator AREVA. We heard from Citizens for Justice, Malawi on the social, economic and environmental effects of uranium mining and Malawi's newly-opened uranium mine at Kayelekera (see www.cfjmalawi.org). And we heard from Ulla Kloetzer from Women Against Nuclear Power, Women for Peace, Finland on uranium mining and nuclear waste repositories in Finland.

Footprints for Peace has launched a campaign for the next five years and beyond to commit to organising grassroots non-violent direct actions for a nuclear free future, beginning at Yeelirrie, Western Australia, next year. We will organise actions in Australia, Canada, the US, Europe and Japan.

More information: www.footprintsforpeace.net

Australian women's peace walk to Canberra

From March 13 to May 24, the women's FootPrints for Peace walk travelled from Brisbane to Canberra promoting a nuclear free future.

"Caring for our country is important to all of us, particularly as new uranium mines and a global nuclear waste dump are being proposed", said Cassie McMahon. "This has been a journey where we have connected with many community groups and cross pollinated our knowledge and passions by sharing stories, experiences and insights about how Australia can become more peaceable, sustainable and nuclear free."

More information:

http://footprints.footprintsforpeace.net/australia/australia_index.htm or www.brisbane.foe.org.au/blog/12

