



## Newsletter

### Transition The Grove

...transitioning to thriving resilience in a low-carbon low-oil-dependent future in Ferny Grove, Upper Kedron, Ferny Hills, Arana Hills, Keperra & Woolshed Grove and the mountain catchments of Kedron Brook

#10 – May 2010

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*Grandchildren having an OOOOBY experience*

### The OOOOBY Experience

**Ooooby** is a new word coined by recently renewed interest in suburban gardens. It shouldn't be anything new to me because I was raised on mostly home grown vegetables, fruit, eggs and the occasional chook. By now, if you're really quick, you will have twigged that Ooooby stands for **Out Of Our Own Back Yard!**

Much of our food is transported vast distances “from paddock to plate”. Food production depends on petroleum for transportation, packaging, production equipment, fertilisers and pesticides. Many individuals, communities and government agencies are exploring ways to increase the

resilience of our food supply by relying on more localised food sources. Home gardens, community gardens, shared gardens, food cooperatives, farmers markets, backyard blitzes are just a few of the ideas taking root.

However, there are some mental barriers to overcome before ooooby really takes off. I know, because I have a mental barrier of my own.

Being raised in the days of smaller houses on large quarter acre blocks when there was plenty of room, and backyard gardens were expected, you'd think I'd have gardening in my blood. My father came from Clydeside industrial housing in Glasgow and could hardly believe his good fortune when he ended up with a large, flat, fertile back yard in New Zealand. It is not surprising that gardening became his passion and our back yard was like a well managed market garden. My uncles and grandparents were the same.

Well, I missed out on that gene. I was brought up in the emerging world of electronics, computers and science and the novelties that caught my imagination didn't involve digging, weeding, watering and all the other things my father seemed to love. I just took the fresh food for granted.

My various attempts at gardening have usually started out well enough but, despite great family examples to follow, they were never very fruitful, eventually failed and were abandoned. Well I've recently had a breakthrough, one of those "Aha moments"! I have realised that my problem was in starting out trying to replicate Dad's beautiful quarter acre, without the experience and know-how to get it right. But he didn't start out like that. He started out small, learned as he went along, and as he gained experience and confidence his garden grew larger. By the time I arrived on the scene he was so skilled that I could never hope to emulate his results.

So now I'm starting out very small and gaining my own experience. A while ago I sowed a very short row of carrot seed. Then the chook got out of her run, had a good scratch and devastated the row. Nothing happened for ages. Then a few sprouts. Then some recognisable carrots which steadily grew into a bunch of about eight big, tasty orange beauties. Not enough to feed a family, but enough to give me confidence to have another go. Now I'm waiting for rows of carrots, onions, silver-beet and a few other things to emerge.



*This 'one square metre garden' provided all of those sweet potatoes.*

It is surprising how much produce can actually come off a 600 square metre suburban block with much of the area taken up by house, swimming pool and brick paving. Over the past few months a number of pumpkin vines spread prolifically. They didn't seem to care about brick paving, they just grew over it. They required almost no care, and we recently harvested a good crop. The same thing happened with sweet potatoes. Then there's all the stuff that grows above the ground like runner beans and passion fruit, and food trees bananas, paw-paws, mulberries and so on.

Now, here's a funny thing. Supermarkets like all their produce with nice smooth skins, even sizes and symmetrical shapes. They waste enormous amount of fresh food because it doesn't conform to their standards of visual appeal. On the other hand, with all their manufactured products, they package them in a range of sizes and flavours, and embellish the containers with all kinds of colours, words and pictures that are probably of no interest to most customers.

So why not grow your own? Home grown produce comes packaged for your convenience in a wide range of shapes and sizes. Each has it's own unique colour scheme. The packaging is reliably edible, recyclable or biodegradable. The flavour is superior, and it comes with the great sense of satisfaction that you grew it yourself. And it doesn't have to be transported vast distances to get to your table.

I still remember my father often sitting down to a meal and happily reeling off with pride. "Peas out of the garden, beans out of the garden, carrots out of the garden, beetroot out of the garden, potatoes out of the garden....", according to the season.

Go on, try it, you'll like it...

John Tennock

## THE HANDS -

**Our constitution and incorporation is now completed and approved! We are now officially Transition The Grove Inc.** Thanks to all who contributed to completing this important step.

### The One Square Metre Garden

What a wonderful month it's been to get active and busy in the garden and kitchen and workshop.

Digging **1 square metre garden** out the front. Harvesting a huge crop of sweet potatoes with the grandchildren from the 1 square metre by the letter box. Definitely a photo occasion.

Harvest time for pumpkins and **cumquats**. The cumquat crop is getting bigger and bigger every year, and so juicy. They get left on the tree and picked one a day, eaten whole, for a yummy vitamin package.

**Getting into the garden.** John built a potting table from salvaged weldmesh. Just the thing. The weather is absolutely fantastic for gardening, the soil all moist. Start on 1 square metre per day. Do some pruning. Make some compost heaps. Get out some reading up on how to do composting and start to understand I've been doing it wrong for a long time! Get some vege seedlings from the market and plant them in compost in a polystyrene box. Check they are growing and they are looking healthy. The Chinese cabbage is doing well. Clean out the quail cage and put the straw and droppings on the garden. The **paw paws** are growing well. The **jackfruit** tree is thriving and thrusting.



Making **quail-egg pancakes** for the grandchildren to tuck into, and home-grown **pumpkin scones** for the U3A group. Our vegetarian daughter came to tea and we fed her our been dish with **lima beans** grown in the garden and lots of herbs from the garden and a capsicum.

### Chooks and Bees

Transition The Gap invited us to an evening with a guest speaker on **keeping chooks** in the backyard, and **keeping bees** in the backyard (especially native bees for pollination). City Chicks is a home-business in The Gap



specialising in everything poultry for the backyard. Question: **What's the best chook for me?** Do I want the eggs, or an interactive pet? Hybrids are great egg-layers and last about 2 years laying an egg a day. (Iso Brown, Australorp Hybrid, White Leghorn Hybrid). Purebreds lay fewer eggs per year but last about 5 years. The Light Sussex is the biggest, with a beautiful personality. Silkies are docile. Australorp purebred, Rhode Island Red. Bantams are docile and not destructive. Brisbane City Council allows up to 6 females of different types of poultry on a block up to 800 square metres. Over 800 square metres you can have 20 fowl.

Nylon bird netting over runs will stop scrub turkeys coming in with ticks and diseases. Clipping hens' wings on one side stops them flying over 1.2m fences. Putting leg bands on with phone number on is a good idea. Feed chooks 120-150gms/bird/day in the late afternoon and let them free range forage in the morning and give them the household edible scraps. Chooks do 2/3rds of their pooing at night. Put 8 inches of deep litter straw under their perches.

### Getting to Know Each Other

Local people are coming out of the woodwork showing interest in Transition in The Grove. Most don't know each other. Many felt isolated in their interests such as growing their own veges. Now they are finding they have a vibrant common bond of enthusiasm.



But we are in the very early days of meeting each other for the first time, getting to know each other and starting to chat and do things together.

We've had to use far more of that early enthusiasm working on tough business stuff like preparing the Constitution and going through the Incorporation process than any of us wanted, but now its through!!!

We can enjoy meeting each other, and growing at an organic pace. Starting to poke this thing and learn how to do it and use it and work together.

## Inaugural Management Committee and SubGroups

The inaugural **Management Committee** members are:

John Tennock – President  
John Jordaan – Treasurer  
Byron Adams – Secretary  
Anne Tennock – Sub-group Organiser  
John Tennock – Web-site Coordinator  
Shannon Lisle – Management Committee Member  
Ann Ellis – Management Committee Member  
Sasha Adams – Management Committee Member

More importantly, the Sub-Groups and Forums for community discussion, getting to be able to identify people interested in working on the same areas, and working on the Energy Descent Action Plan are starting to be active.

They have been set up interactively on the Transition The Grove website, and some people have been walked through the joining process to test it for bugs and get it started.

Within the next month this will go live on the web, and there'll be information about how to access it and try it out. Hopefully it will then be able to grow steadily to become a powerful tool for the community to use and for local groups to emerge. These Sub-Groups and Forums will be the heart of Transition The Grove.

## Website Joomla Migration

It hasn't all been play. There has been hours and hours and hours and hours of work put into migrating the **website** into the new Joomla interactive format. It is nearly ready, and looking good. People who drop by are now joining online by going through the online registration process, helping any bugs in the system get ironed out. As soon as incorporation is all complete, the next step is to get a domain name and to load the website onto where it will live. Then is the time to release the web address widely right across The Grove so everyone can have access to use it. It is hard being patient and getting it right rather than rushing ahead too fast. Below is a bit of a sneak preview to give you some idea of the facilities it provides.



## Preparing the Newsletter

We had some **Newsletter feedback** to the effect that the format is too dense, too many words,...most people wouldn't stop and read it, they want something more engaging with more pictures. Felt a barrier of complexity. Another email requested details of the source of some collected quotes, which are hard to track back to. They come from going to a whole lot of public talks and taking notes along the way. But the point is taken and additional effort will be put into trying to capture that sort of information systematically. Sorry for all the words, but some of us have those sorts of brains. **What is needed are more people with other sorts of brains to start feeding in contributions.**

Getting the last TTG Newsletter out late! John edits it, but it still needs checking before it goes out. This also involves having gradually built up an email list for people it gets sent to.

## Web Forums for Sustainable Maintenance

John fixed a computer that 'died' by the method of using **web forums** to get advice and instructions. He pulls the whole computer apart and follows instructions, identifies the bit to be replaced, and we get it locally, and bingo the computer is working again.

Next day John uses the same web forum method to do a major service of the car. The forum included detailed instructions, a full manual, lots of clear photos, encouragement, and the car got serviced fully.

## Local Currency 'Trading Day'

Manufactured first **local currency**: swap vouchers for a trading day. Everyone brought something to trade, and received a swap voucher for each item from the central 'bank'. They were then used to 'purchase' another item, 'paying' the swap voucher back to the 'bank'. The swap vouchers were paper and brightly painted. It was great fun. Grappled with the practicalities of manufacturing 'currency' (not for legal tender of course), and how to make it difficult to counterfeit. A paint-box of colours helped.

## Local Health Initiatives

The **North-West Health Community Consultative Committee** (NWHCCC) met and discussion is moving more and more to preventative health and sustainable health in the local community. There are big Federal Government reports to digest on their local health initiatives.

Health crops up again and again during the month: The Energy Bulletin ([www.energybulletin.net](http://www.energybulletin.net)) article on **Sustainable Medicine: An Issue Brief on Medical School Reform** is spot on. Must get it to the NWHCCC.

## Snippets

### Living Sustainably in the Suburbs

**U3A Living Sustainably in the Suburbs** course at Arana Library with locals coming along and very enthusiastically sharing their stories and doing garden tours together and watching DVDs and chatting and eating scones.

This course is continuing on next term, and preparations are also in place to start a course for the general community through the Arana Library

### Living Local

Walk down to Ferny Grove markets to buy veges. Bananas and strawberries from around Caboolture are 'local'. Find a beaut set of men toys for the grandson.

Roast for tea on Sunday night at Arana Leagues.

John off to State Emergency Service for another training session. Belonging local and participating in local action matters so much.

### Vege Garden at the NW Community Health Centre

Malcolm Boal is doing awesome stuff in the **garden at the North West Community Health Centre** in Keperra. Growing tomatoes, lettuce, carrots, spring onions, cabbages, beans, peas, corn, capsicum, and radishes. The proceeds are going to the Centre's HACC (Home and Community Care) clients.

## What heals the Environment?

### Slow Time and Grandkids

A very **slow-paced day**. Local time. Not lazy, but living at a sustainable pace, and having the obligatory 'day of rest', which probably meant that people in the olden days had good love lives!

Looking after and playing with the grandchildren. This matters.

Brisbane Transition Hub planned what to do on World Environment Day, and the question came up: **What heals the environment?** Not as obvious as you might think at first. Something to meditate on.

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## THE HEART –

### An ethic of inclusiveness

Transition The Grove is founded with an ethic of inclusion and journeying together to a secure future. The journey entails encouraging each other, seeking hope, and caring for each other. There will be mistakes to be forgiven.

According to A.M. Campbell in *A Past: A Revolution in Public Ethics*, inclusion is the exception rather than the norm as the dominant social ethic, yet it is inclusion that has seen us all blessed with the benefits of public health, sanitation, water supply, burial, freedom from slavery, equality for women, healthcare, education, and social welfare.

The horrific alternative, a society founded on an ethic of social exclusion, has historically seen anyone different, poor, weak, frail, criminal, mentally ill, indigenous, of different ethnicity, even women treated brutally and as less than human. Under this ethic, humans could be tortured, outcast or purged from the body politic.

There is ample evidence throughout history of people and groups identified as deviant, non-conformist, or other being scapegoated or subjected to genocide, especially in times when the mainstream population are under pressure.

As oil prices rise inexorably and threaten the very foundations of our lifestyles, and as climate change bites more and more, we will be moving into the sorts of extreme conditions in which social chaos can degenerate into exclusive social structures with great brutality.

To perceive the danger beforehand, and to make a commitment right from the start to recognise everyone living in The Grove as part of our community in an inclusive ethic, we are making a commitment to a caring, supportive, kind, tolerant transition through extremely challenging times. How we do this, we will discover, but it is the task we set ourselves: to discover how to go forward together inclusively.

We are made up of all sorts of people. There will be people with all sorts of problems. People will have different values. They will behave in all sorts of different ways, some of which will be extremely disruptive. This is our challenge: to own all this within our own boundaries, and to learn how to handle and work with difference inclusively, not expect to be able to make it go away elsewhere, or to deny people's rights to differ.

Our clear definition of our community means inclusion is working together with people we are getting to know and trust more and more. What goes around, comes around.

### Modern Storytelling

Most people are aware that the scientific fact, the head stuff, about climate change has been discussed and debated in scientific circles for a very long time. We have known about Greenhouse Effect since it was documented over 100 years ago by the Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius.

It took until 1992 before the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC or FCCC) emerged from the Earth Summit, in Rio de Janeiro. The objective of that treaty was to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic influence on the climate system.

Yet, as recently as last year, at the Copenhagen Climate Change conference, world leaders still found it impossible to agree on effective action to avert catastrophic climate change.

What is it with us? We have insurance, safety regulations and emergency services to help us avoid or deal with unforeseen hazards. Yet, even though we have foreseen the threat posed by climate change, we appear unable to initiate an effective response.

It's pretty obvious that human behaviour is motivated much less by the facts in our heads, than the desires in our hearts. Just look at advertising of all kinds., whether for political influence, or marketing promotion. Advertisers know that there is no profit in presenting facts. They aim straight for our hearts.

In developed countries it might seem that we no longer come to terms with our circumstances through the arts - through the song, dance, graphic arts and storytelling we see in many other cultures. But it's not hard to see that we still need this process, it's just that today we find it in different media like TV, movies, ipods, and the internet.

The past 12 months or so have seen the creation of some very powerful modern stories that connect with our struggle for a meaningful response to impending climate catastrophe. We are still far from making the necessary changes to our lifestyles, but there are promising signs that we are starting to respond at an emotional, motivational level.

A couple of examples of new-media storytelling:

- In December 2006, (according to Wikipedia) writer James Cameron described his movie **Avatar** as "*a futuristic tale set on a planet 200 years hence ... an old-fashioned jungle adventure with an environmental conscience that aspires to a mythic level of storytelling*". The January 2007 press release described the film as "*an emotional journey of redemption and revolution*"...but the significant issue is that this was the most expensive movie ever made, with a budget close to 500 million dollars. You don't invest that sort of money unless you are pretty confident about your audience. And, sure enough, during its release the movie broke several box office records and became the first movie to gross 2 billion dollars. They knew their audience needed this story.
- Now our own ABC is breaking new ground with **Bluebird AR**. (The AR stands for Alternate Reality). According to the ABC website: *Bluebird AR is a new way of experiencing drama as it unfolds in real-time across the internet. You're invited to engage with this drama, either by involving yourself in the events or watching as they unfold - the level of commitment is entirely up to you.*



*Alternate reality narratives such as Bluebird involve a fictional scenario that occurs and is played out against a backdrop of real world activity.*

*The events and characters in the story are entirely fictional but they interact with reality online, including existing social media spaces and through websites created by the ABC.*

So why has the ABC chosen to base the story of Bluebird DC on the concept of geoengineering, an area of climate science which has recently become more openly discussed as a potential "plan B" should the world fail with options to mitigate and/or adapt to global warming?



*Svante Arrhenius*

Clearly they see that this subject has strong emotional resonance with the younger generation who are most likely to engage with an initiative like this.

The first episode on billionaire philanthropists is fascination.

It's an intriguing concept. Check it out at <http://www.abc.net.au/innovation/bluebird/>

But there are also more conventional publications that tell the story of our struggle with this difficult topic.

December last year saw the publication of *Storms of My Grandchildren* by Professor James Hansen, America's leading scientist on climate issues

This book is Professor Hansen's whistle-blower's account, while still at the top, of how our political system is so wilfully, deliberately blind to environmental realities that we have no choice now but for citizens to take direct action. Hansen said he had a duty to speak out because the first line of NASA's mission statement is a pledge "to understand and protect our home planet", then Bush appointees deleted the commitment. **Yes: They erased the commitment to protect planet Earth.**

There is only one precedent in the climate record for the warming. It happened at the end of the Permian period 251 million years ago, when the world warmed by 6 degrees. Almost everything on Earth died. A solitary pig-sized creature, the Lystrosaurus, had the land to itself for 30 million years.

Why won't the government do its job? We get only legislation that "coal companies and utilities are willing to allow". If we made the leap to a world powered by the wind, the waves, and the sun, they would hemorrhage profits, so it is not allowed. We are all being held hostage to the profit margins of a few polluters and their lobbyists.

Hansen's story takes a turn you don't expect from one of America's most senior government scientists: He says the citizenry have to rise up, and if necessary, break the law. He has started to study the writings of Gandhi and reckons if any situation justifies civil disobedience, it's this one, this time. To stop environmental destructivism. **The fact that the scientist who knows most about global warming is prepared to take these steps to jolt us awake should tell us something.**

Hansen says that if the leaders won't act, they should spend a small amount of time composing a letter to be left for future generations, explaining that the leaders realized their failure would cause our descendants to inherit a planet with warming oceans, disintegrating ice sheets, rising sea level, increasing climate extremes, and vanishing species, but that it would have been too much trouble to oppose business interests who insisted on burning every last bit of fossil fuels. By composing this letter, the leaders will at least achieve an accurate view of their place in history.

To learn more about this important book check out the web site at <http://www.stormsofmygrandchildren.com>

One of the comments quoted on this web-site is very pertinent:

*If you want to know the scientific consensus on global warming, read the reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. But if you want to know what the consensus will be ten years from now, read Jim Hansen's work.*

— Dr. Chuck Kutscher

## **Facing our Grief, Unlocking a Way Forward**

*Collapse, Transition, the Great Turning, why words matter*  
(published in Energy Bulletin [www.energybulletin.net](http://www.energybulletin.net)).

Many people insist that we should focus only on 'Transition' and the 'Great Turning' because these words make more bearable and palatable the challenges of present and future time. The word *collapse*, they argue, should be ditched. The author, Speaking Truth to Power, disagrees:

- As a historian endeavouring to make sense of human history, she sees monumental changes do not



- occur in one fell swoop, but over time through a variety of changes
- Could not agree more that we are navigating a Great Turning
  - The stage at which we find ourselves at this present moment is the collapse of every institution within industrial civilization. (She challenges anyone reading these words to give an example of one institution that is not in a state of obvious, irrevocable decline.)
  - We are profoundly in the early stages of a shattering unravelling such as our planet has never experienced in human history. It must not be minimized.
  - Coming to terms with the reality of myriad, ubiquitous forms of collapse in the first decade of this century is imperative.
  - We have only to observe the breathtaking changes that have transpired in the past three years to notice an undeniable unravelling of this civilization. A collapse by any other name is nevertheless a collapse.
  - The themes of death and rebirth in our human psyche are particular pertinent.
  - We have just begun. Our work now is to be present with what is, even as we hold the larger vision in our hearts. To be present means to be willing to look.
  - In her book *Sacred Demise: Walking the Spiritual Path of Industrial Civilization's Collapse*, without savouring and practicing those attributes moment to moment, we cannot endure the future emotionally or spiritually. We need to prepare emotionally and spiritually.
  - The proper response to death is respect and ritual, to review and appreciate and honour and express our gratitude. To reconnect the broken, separated pieces
  - All the daily deluge of increasingly frightening information about climate change, world financial markets, extinction of species, unrelenting natural disaster: this, all of it, IS the Great Turning. It also IS the collapse of industrial civilisation.
  - Who would not want to be revelling in rebirth? Yet rebirth does not, cannot occur, without death.
  - We are going to have to live through the ghastly consequences of what unprecedented growth and disconnection from the earth invariably produce. Perhaps we need this death in order to mould, shape, treasure, and protect the new life we ache to create.
  - In present time, what we can do with the unravelling is honour and respect what everything that is dying has given us. We can creatively construct rituals that acknowledge what the oceans, the land, the animals, and all other treasures of this beautiful planet have provided. We can thank and bless them, and we can invite our loved ones to join and co-create rituals with us.
  - Above all, it appears that we are being asked to allow our old way of life to die. Something in us is dying as we walk through the war zone, with all the life this cataclysm is extinguishing. Perhaps we need that death in us in order to unequivocally grasp in every cell of our bodies that disconnection, endless growth, competition, and entitlement kill everything. Perhaps humanity requires devastation of this magnitude in order to become a new kind of species – the kind of species that will never again allow such madness to prevail on this planet.
  - Even in the face of horror, we can (must!) have moments of humour, play, and elation. Our visions can inspire and sustain us, producing periods of unprecedented community and conviviality in the here and now.
  - Accepting the natural process of collapse as the first step in the Great Turning is profoundly liberating and empowering.

## Difference and Inclusion

*A discussion at a Transition The Gap meeting over 'who we are' in the Transition movement in relation to World Environment Day and different groups in our local community. The discussion recognised that there are different 'languages' and 'meanings' that are used by different groups in our community. For example, a football club has a sort of language, a church another sort, kids at the skateboard rink another sort, businesses another, young mums another, retired people another...*

We all have things in common, and we all have our own interests and ways of looking at the world that give our lives value and meaning.

How do we respect and work with the whole spectrum of meanings that people in our community bring to their lives? By not all being identical, we have the richness to contribute more fully out of our different strengths and understandings.

Planning for Transition and preparing an Energy Descent Action Plan in our community isn't about people all having to be like some mythical 'us'.

This means learning about the groups in our community, what they are doing and what is important to them. It means that the language of Transition and Energy Descent needs to be big enough and real enough for people to be able to relate it back to the things they care about.

It might mean the footie team approaching it in one way, local doctors another way, local churches another, but we are all on the same team working for a future for our community in The Grove.

### **Some Reasons Why Facing the Transition is Hard to Do**

The systematic barriers to positive change are entrenched and insidious.

- Women are the biggest emerging global market ever seen (delayed marriage, lower birth rates, divorce, higher incomes) and are targets for goods in the convenience, luxury and technology categories. Seriously un-sustainable!
- Conservation is antithetical to a consumer-based economy. The 3,000 advertising messages we inhale per day, and the huge (70%) of the economy based on consumer spending, keeps us buying.
- The environment is stuck in the political divide (Liberals, Labor and The Greens are not on the same page).
- Habits are hard to break. Natural living doesn't come naturally for most Australians, no matter how hard we may try.

From: *7 Reasons why Greening Up is Hard to Do*, by Anna Clark

### **How Does Climate Change Affect Me**

*Climate Change is happening.* It affects:

- My job, my income, my whole financial security and ability to support my family
  - What do I do when my family wants expensive status things
- My ego (If I can't demonstrate my status by consuming more, who am I?)
- My children and grandchildren
- My farm
- My worldview
  - Is growth good?
  - Is a bigger house better?
  - Is a bigger car better?
  - What are the real costs of overseas travel?
  - Is more wealth better?
- What if I can't fix it?
- Is it my fault?

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## **THE HEAD**

### **Climate Variability in Queensland**

If you want to fix a complex system that is broken, whether a TV, a motor car, a computer, or the climate system, you have to understand something about how it works. The better your understanding, the better your prospects of a successful fix. Despite a smokescreen of misinformation from vested interests, who oppose action on climate change, there is a very strong web of reliable public information sources including Radio and TV programs, websites, and public lectures and seminars on the subject.

For example, the The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) has an informative web-

site – <http://www.nccarf.edu.au>. They also run a series of regular free seminars open to members of the public, students of all ages, educators and policy makers interested in how our society must adapt to survive the unavoidable impacts of climate change.

On 19 May, the NCCARF public lecture was on **What controls year-to-year and decade-to-decade variability in Queensland rainfall?** Held at the QCA Theatre at Griffith University, South Bank. The speaker was Dr Nick Klingaman from the UK National Centre for Atmospheric Science.



Queensland experiences large year-to-year and decade-to-decade fluctuations in its rainfall, with damaging consequences for the state's agriculture and hydrology. A collaborative project between the Walker Institute at the University of Reading and the Queensland Climate Change Centre of Excellence is examining the drivers of this variability in rainfall. The project's aim is to understand the physical mechanisms by which these drivers influence Queensland's weather patterns, including extreme events such as tropical cyclones.

This talk introduced the key drivers of Queensland's rainfall on yearly and decadal timescales, the El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and the Inter-decadal Pacific Oscillation. The influence of these drivers has waxed and waned over the 20th century, which has amplified and reduced, respectively, the magnitude of droughts and floods in Queensland. Decades of strong connections between Queensland rainfall and ENSO, for example, have also been decades of strong year-to-year variations in rainfall across the state.

The talk also demonstrated that year-to-year fluctuations in total Queensland rainfall are reflected primarily in changes in the frequency of rainy days, not changes in the amount of rainfall on rainy days. The frequency of extreme rainfall, defined as days with more than 25 mm of rain, is particularly important.

Finally, the talk discussed the work that will be performed during the next two years of this project, including the potential to generate new datasets of tropical and extra-tropical cyclones for eastern Australia.

This kind of research informs the Climate Change Strategy being developed by the Queensland Government's Office of Climate Change. Their web-site at [www.climatechange.qld.gov.au](http://www.climatechange.qld.gov.au) states that - *Climate change is one of the most significant challenges facing the world today.*

## Climate Change Hits Mainstream TV

Television has more and more stuff on or including climate change and peak oil and food security. The science, the language is typically spot-on, right at the crest of what it is we are struggling to understand and take on board. It is moving very fast:

- **ABC The American Future: A History** by Simon Schama exploring fascinating moments in American history in an effort to understand the present, especially the consequences now being experienced
- **ABC: Miniseries: Burn Up.** The head of a powerful oil company uncovers the darker side of the industry after an environmentalist's accusations force him to re-examine his beliefs regarding climate change. Peak oil also gets a big look in.
- **SBS Return of the Bible Plagues**
- **ABC: Britain From Above.** Journalist Andrew Marr explores Britain from high in the sky, looking at all the networks of complex systems that operate Britain. It makes clear the operating a country like Britain is a hugely complex process with massively interdependent systems, all with potential to collapse if a breakdown occurs.
- **SBS: The Hottest Place on Earth.** In Ethiopia looking at how a tribe thrives here with camels and goats to provide food, and a well in a river bed.
- **SBS Insight on Population** (with Dick Smith talking about national food security)

## The Emperor's Clothes

On 24 May at The Avid Reader bookshop in West End, two of the leading thinkers and writers on the subject of sustainability came together to discuss their new books and the issues that face the planet today. Raj Patel (*The Value of Nothing*) and Bill McGibbon (founder of *350.org*, and author of *Earth - we're now living on a different planet to the one we have*) spoke to two full packed houses (it had to be repeated).

Some of the key points from this talk:

- 2008 was the world's first climate change driven crisis as food prices went up in response to a pattern of weird weather events, interrupted harvests, and biofuel production
- Alan Greenspan was meant to be the smartest man alive. When the wheels came off, Greenspan admitted a flaw in the model of unfettered free markets and infinite greed. He indicted the very model. He was forced to eat crow. **That Greenspan moment was a profound “Emperor has no clothes” moment of our time.**
- We've let a lot of things get 'way too big to fail' – energy, agriculture,...
- The moment we're running into is the 'Limits to Growth' moment
- People fought way back against the selling up of the commons.
- One billion people are going hungry right now.
- There are models all over the place of how to get it right. e.g. Peasant agriculture, small farms produce less carbon.
- **We need to build those types of systems everywhere in the world right now. We're going to need them. Resilience (food, energy, culture, localisation).**
- We also need to politically engage in the fight that staunches the flow of carbon into the atmosphere, fast. There is no shortcut to this political work.
- Practice the arts of citizenship that we've been encouraged to let go.
- If we take stock of the transition we can make it highly democratic, because the fuels we are moving to are more local. Australia has way more than its share of sun and wind and wave energy. Not 'too big to fail'.
- Nuclear power plants in the US have fighter jets protecting them now. Centralized energy is very vulnerable.

## Nuclear Power and Climate Change

Is nuclear power the solution?

This interview (or transcript) from ABC Radio National Ockham's Razor website on **Nuclear energy: a panacea for climate change?** [www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2010/2910830.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rn/ockhamsrazor/stories/2010/2910830.htm)

This interview unpacks in detail the arguments for nuclear power as a panacea for climate change, and matches them with the lived experience of the global nuclear power industry. First-rate information for making a balanced assessment.

## The Face of Peak Oil

### *Peak Oil in action*

The oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the oil spill off the Kimberley region – these are what Peak Oil is like: chaotic, far too costly, technically at the limits or beyond of human capability, vastly destructive in a desperate attempt to get oil that is less and less accessible. No other easy options.

*A.L.T.*



*Kimberley (WA) Oil Spill 21/08/2009*

## The Head - Planet Earth: We Have a Problem



**Planet Earth: We Have a Problem** – YouTube video by David Wasdell.  
Presented in 7 parts on between 5 and 10 minutes each.

David Wasdell is possibly the foremost climate systems analyst on Earth: he tells it like it is, because he sees no reason to lie. When he talks, you listen, because failure to listen to his unique brand of unfiltered, unpoliticized, science-based analysis is failure to listen to the voice of reason.

He says we have to go into a period of negative radiative forcing (global heating energy) merely to end up with a stable, non-catastrophic climate system, "that's the overall strategy. It is not, of course, the strategy being addressed by the IPCC...they are addressing a climate agenda that is way out of date from the reality of the system as we know it today."

Wasdell is an angry man. He has stared into the abyss, time and time again, and realised that we are acting like spoilt children in a party where there is nothing but cake and chocolate laced with cyanide: spoilt children who will kill themselves in search of a toxic dream.

**Just search YouTube to find the links or go to the Apollo Gaia Project website at <http://www.apollo-gaia.org/PlanetEarth>**

### Snippets

Alternative Technology Association: Doone Wyborn on **Enhanced Geo-thermal** talks very hopefully about the potential of now proven geothermal energy in Australia; and Dane Muldoon of The Solar Guys talks on **Designing Large-scale Photovoltaic Systems**.

Old movie: John Steinbeck's **Grapes of Wrath**  
Poor farming practices turned Oklahoma into a dustbowl. This sensitive film is very relevant to today.

George Monbiot has a lot to say on climate change

on the Internet and argues well.

You can find him at <http://www.monbiot.com>

Transition The Grove member Maggie May's favorite website for daily checking of articles is the Energy Bulletin website [www.energybulletin.net](http://www.energybulletin.net)

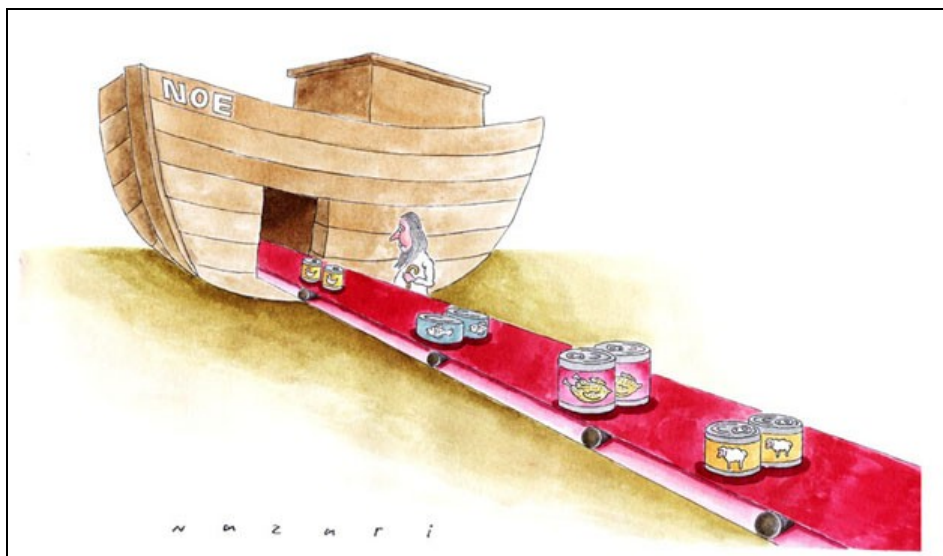
Sustainable Medicine:

An Issue Brief on Medical School Reform

This article can be found on the [www.energybulletin.net](http://www.energybulletin.net) website

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*And, back to the subject of fresh food.....*



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That's it for May

Please check out our web-site at [http://www.tennock.com/j\\_data/TTFG/](http://www.tennock.com/j_data/TTFG/)

**Contributions:** *If you would like to submit relevant material for this newsletter, it should be in the form of properly composed articles, on a single topic, of not more than 1000 words. Articles may include suitably sized pictures, preferably in .jpg, .png or .gif formats. Please include a title, and indicate the category (The Head, The Heart or The Hands) in which the article should be included. Please send each article as a separate email attachment in either an MS Word (.doc) or Wordpad (.rtf) format. Please do not send as text in the body of an email. Please include your full name and contact details.*

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