



Householders' Options to Protect the Environment Inc.

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HOPE E-news Bulletin 2017 #08 --- 01 August 2017

The following items have been gathered from various e: newsletters received by HOPE in recent times; and/or prepared specifically by HOPE members and supporters. If you have any news to contribute, please forward to office@hopeaustralia.org.au . Deadline for articles is 15th day of the month.

Editorial

Hello,

Ever dreamt of being completely self-sufficient? Sustainable living is actually quite achievable. Read Roman Spur's inspiring story for more info and great tips and ideas to embark on your journey to self-sufficiency. While you're travelling, have a think about how art could contribute to sustainable living. Andrew's article gets you started there. And there are several more articles in this issue provided by HOPE members and supporters. Thanks to all for your contributions, they are greatly appreciated!

Miriam Sharp, Acting Newsletter Editor

2017 National/International Events Calendar

- [2017 – International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development](#)
- [2014-2024 – International Decade of Sustainable Energy for All](#)

August

- 9 [International Day for World Indigenous Peoples](#)
- 12-20 [National Science Week](#)
- 19 **HOPE Community Forum: An Overview of Condamine Alliance (NRM / Landcare) – beginnings, current achievements and future plans**
- 19 [World Humanitarian Day](#)
- 20 **HOPE information at Toowoomba Languages & Cultures Festival**
- 23 **HOPE information display at U3A Toowoomba's Seniors Expo**
- 21-27 [Keep Australia Beautiful Week](#)

September – [National Biodiversity Month](#)

- 1 [National Wattle Day](#)
 - 1-3 [Building a New Economy for Australia Conference Brisbane](#)
 - 4-10 [Sea Week](#)
 - 5-11 [National Landcare Week](#)
 - 7 [National Threatened Species Day](#)
 - 9 **HOPE quarterly Ordinary Meeting, Toowoomba**
 - 10 [National Bilby Day](#)
 - 11 [Sustainable House Day](#)
 - 16 [International Day for the Preservation of the Ozone Layer](#)
 - 17 [Bushcare's Major Day Out – BMDO](#)
 - 22 [World Car-Free Day](#)
 - 29 [World Maritime Day](#)
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HOPE News --- August 2017

July was a reasonably quiet month for the HOPE office.



Our President (and acting Office Manager) Frank Ondrus attended a 2 day “Making Cities Liveable” conference in Brisbane on 10-11 July thanks to receiving a complimentary registration from the Association of Sustainability in Business Inc.

“The conference was an opportunity for government, academic and industry professionals to discuss public health, sustainability, natural resource management, transport, climate change, urban design, biosecurity and more.” (<https://healthycities.com.au/>)

Networking opportunities with speakers and conference delegates afforded Frank the opportunity to issue some 40 invitations for guest articles for future editions of our enews bulletin.

The office has renewed its membership with Volunteering Queensland and ‘refreshed’ our “Voluntary Positions Vacant” information on their website <https://volunteeringqld.org.au/roles/organisation/4222> and that of Go Volunteer <https://govolunteer.com.au/volunteering-organisations/4222> .

So far, we have received 7 online enquiries from potential volunteers located in Toowoomba, Brisbane and Melbourne.

Our next community forum is on Saturday 19 August and features the work of Condamine Alliance – our regional NRM (Natural resource Management) Body.

The forum is being held at the Toowoomba City Library (Level 3, Cnr of Herries and Victoria Streets) between 1pm and 4pm. Entry is by gold coin donation.

Lastly, HOPE is providing environmental information displays at the Toowoomba Languages and Cultures Festival being held at Queens Park, Toowoomba on Sunday 20 August; and the U3A Seniors Expo being held at the HumeRidge Church of Christ, Hume St, Toowoomba on Wednesday 23 August.

Your support of, and attendance at either or both of these events would be appreciated.

Frank Ondrus, Office Manager – HOPE Inc., ph 07 4639 2135

Succession Planning – a few words from the President

I have been involved with HOPE since 1993. Firstly, as the Convenor of HOPE Toowoomba and then as Coordinator of HOPE Queensland.

In 2007, HOPE became an incorporated association - establishing HOPE Australia as a network of members and supporters promoting sustainable living practices.

I was elected as the inaugural President of HOPE and have retained that position ever since.

My wish was to step down as President of HOPE when I turned 60. That was 4 years ago!

We need to recruit people with “an appropriate mix of expertise and experience” to strengthen our management committee and admin support staff.

Ideally, the Vice President would be groomed to step up into the President’s chair for 2-3 years to provide stability, continuity and leadership to the group.

Members of the admin support staff are invited to step up and assume roles on the management committee. Others are then encouraged to step up into admin support roles.

I invite you to consider what you might be able to personally contribute – and who else we could recruit to fill vacant positions on the management committee and admin support areas.

Regards,

Frank Ondrus, President – HOPE Inc., ph 07 4639 2135

Feature Articles

Public art – a few ideas on its potential contribution to more environmentally sustainable urban lifestyles

(Written by Andrew Nicholson, HOPE member (Qld), 18 June 2017)

Public art has already made a significant contribution to sustainable living internationally in a variety of city and urban settings, and could increasingly do so in the future if more attention was paid to enhancing its existing potential by incorporating it more into policy planning and professional debate. This document contains a brief overview of the environmental sustainability facilitation potential of public art and gives a couple of Australian examples of its application in an urban and city environment. The writing takes cognizance of the recent upsurge in interest in the liveability and environmental sustainability of cities as evidenced by international strategic frameworks that are being developed around urban sustainability issues such as the UN level [New Urban Agenda](#). This policy initiative is aimed at assisting the implementation of the Sustainable Development goals in an urban context and 'sets a new global standard for sustainable urban development, and will help us rethink how we plan, manage and live in cities.'

One of the elements of this policy is to: 'promote safe, accessible and green public spaces' to facilitate human interaction through an increase in public spaces such as sidewalks, cycling lanes, gardens, squares and parks.' There is an obvious nexus with the deployment of a greater amount of public art to help achieve that element of the policy and perhaps this possibility can be placed more squarely on the agendas of future policy debates and forthcoming conferences on urban sustainability issues such as the [10th Making Cities Liveable Conference](#) to be held in Brisbane in July 2017. A quick review of the diverse program for this conference did not reveal any specific presentations on the use of public art to facilitate sustainable urban living. However, several of the conference presentational topics could probably be augmented by considering the deployment of public art in achieving their objectives. To take a few such examples from the conference program: 'Bringing nature and children back into the neighbourhood' 'Active living principles' and 'What motivates a pro-environmental culture?' Each of these strategic objectives could be assisted through the use of public art and a few ideas on this topic are set out below.

There are many existing examples of the use of art in this role around the world. An obvious example is the use of public sculpture and art installations in pedestrian spaces within city centres or as path markers for pedestrian or cycle trail ways through these areas. In that role, public art can become a centre of attraction in itself, encouraging people to walk, cycle or take public transport to view such art in a way that private vehicular transport would not allow so easily. Equally, if the art is situated strategically in regard to existing public transport nodes than that form of lower environmental impact transport can be further encouraged. This role of art, to encourage low environmental impact access to city and urban areas also has the linked advantage of contributing to public health outcomes by encouraging greater levels of personal mobility and exercise. Some research has been conducted on the co-benefits of such a use of public art to encourage lower environmental impact access to cities and public health benefits. The excellent Australian based [Curating Cities](#) website holds many international case study examples from the 1970's to the present day of the contribution that public art can make to environmentally sustainable urban development; one which can also possess social and health benefits. 'Directed at examining the world's leading practices and their possible benefits to Sydney, but in principle - to cities everywhere, this project looks at the ways that art can generate environmentally beneficial behavioural change.'

There can be psychological level benefits from the installation of public art in city and urban areas. Public installation art is known to be able to foster a sense of pride in place, and therefore, potentially, civic pride and positive public engagement with urban and city spaces that come to be seen as enjoyable and liveable public areas to be valued. For example, in the town of Noosa Junction on the Sunshine Coast north of Brisbane, [academic research from 2015](#) has shown that environmentally and culturally themed public art installations could be useful in helping local citizens and visitors develop a stronger sense of place and urban identity – pre-requisites of civic pride and engagement.

If the definition of art is widened to include performance art of various kinds and the recreational and aesthetic plantings of park garden and woodland areas in city urban and peri-urban areas something of a continuum of public art resources for city and urban environments can be envisaged. To some extent there is nothing new in any of these uses of art for public engagement, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment in some of the more cosmopolitan cities around the globe. But what is needed now, perhaps, is the more imaginative and systematic embodiment of these various public artistic elements into existing and newly developing city and urban areas. The attraction of such work to the public is obvious where it has been applied.

A good example in Brisbane itself is offered by the story of the Southbank development in the city. Here a number of the public art elements previously described are present: public art installations, mini-ecology

environments created by well-designed plantings of trees and shrubs, performance art represented in the form of street theatre, musical and other forms of impromptu performance. Additionally, and importantly, the Southbank development is situated adjacent to important public transport hubs on both rail and river and has excellent accessibility for pedestrian and cycle usage. The latter is encouraged by the use of the Brisbane City Council rental bicycles which are also available at the location. The Southbank development is an [acknowledged tourism magnet](#) and popular destination for city residents and sits close by major cultural and artistic facilities of the Brisbane city. Though there was some controversy in the period of its early development, overall South Bank is considered a major success in urban development and revitalization- and substantial elements of that success are embodied in the artistic and aesthetic qualities of the site.

A final use of public installation art considered here is the application of combined environmental art practice and emerging digital technologies to educate the public on environmental issues within public spaces. The emerging field of eco-visualization allows real-time environmental data, for instance on climate or water quality or some other environmental indicator to be presented to the public in an imaginative and sometimes interactive way. One objective is to engage and entertain the public whilst educating them about a relevant environmental issue. Within the last 10 years or so this technology has moved from experimental and artistic one-off projects to applications with more practical and replicable formats. In Australia, for example, an eco-visualization project accessed on smart phones has brought attention to water quality and pollution issues in the [Derwent River in Tasmania near Hobart](#). A trial eco-visualization project [The People's Garden](#) aimed at sharing environmentally supportive messages between members of the public, in real time was also trialled at Noosa Junction on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland in 2013.

As eco-visualization technology further matures, and with the advent of high-resolution digital screens appearing in many city and urban environments, it may be increasingly possible to educate the public in real time on a range of sustainability issues as they go about their daily lives in the urban environment.

[Earth Charter Initiative](#)

Written by Maggie Ng, HOPE volunteer from Victoria



The Earth Charter Initiative is an ethical framework for building a sustainable, equitable and peaceful global society.

Its story began in 1987, when the World Commission on Environment and Development launched Our Common Future Report, calling for a 'new charter' and 'new norms' to lead the transition into sustainable development.

Talk of an Earth Charter took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, but it was not until 1997 that an independent Earth Charter Commission was formed, following an initiative supported by the Dutch Government to develop an Earth Charter.

The Earth Charter was finally released in 2000, after many drafts and consultations drawing on hundreds of international documents.

It is increasingly recognised as a global statement on sustainable development and has gained support from Canadian children's entertainer Raffi, who released a song outlining the principles of the Charter in 2003.

The aim of the Charter is to instil in all people a sense of shared responsibility for the well-being of the global community, all living things, and future generations, through the transition to sustainable living and sustainable development.

Some of the goals of the Earth Charter are to eradicate poverty, allow for equitable economic development, ecological protection, democracy and peace. The Charter sees these goals as being intrinsically interdependent and intertwined.

The Earth Charter was drafted with the most inclusive participatory process ever associated with the creation of an international declaration, which is the main source of its legitimacy as a guiding ethical framework. This document was further given legitimacy by endorsement from over 6000 organisations including governments and international organisations.

A full copy of the Earth Charter is available at <http://earthcharter.org/discover/the-earth-charter/>.

One of the many projects and initiatives put forward by the Earth Charter includes the first Earth Charter school in the UK, which opened in 2014. Avonwood Primary School is the first school to adopt the charter as its moral compass, which informs its curriculum in all of its subjects.

The Earth Charter has also been endorsed as a pedagogical building block by Brazilian authors and academics Dr. Angela Antunes and Professor Moacin Gadotti, who believe it has the potential to “re-educate our thinking and all our senses, with further possibility to rekindle out hope of a future with dignity for all.”

The Earth Charter Education Centre also offers a range of education programs designed to inform adults on the importance of sustainability values and principles in learning and decision making. Implemented under the framework of the UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development with the Earth Charter, these programs equip professionals with the skills, knowledge and values necessary to create a sustainable way of life.

For more information on these programs, which are available in English, Portuguese and Spanish, please visit <http://earthcharter.org/learn>.

Aside from providing an ethical framework for schools and offering educational resources for adults on sustainability and environment, the Earth Charter Initiative has given reports on a number of global issues, centred around Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which Earth Charter International has adopted in partnership with CEE (Centre for Environment Education).

The theme for the first Earth reports addresses the goal of achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls, including equal access to primary education and striving to eliminate discrimination based on gender. The report will be compiled with the participation of individuals, governments, institutions and anyone who cares to contribute their views on each theme.

To take part and contribute your views and experiences on global gender equality, visit <http://www.ceeindia.org/cee/Earth%20Charter%20report.html>.

Recently, the Earth Charter Initiative launched a new app(lication) called Maping, available on both iOS and Android platforms, which allows you to promote sustainable actions and projects through sharing images and videos that meet the aim of this application is to stimulate conversation and show that sustainable solutions exist to our problems.

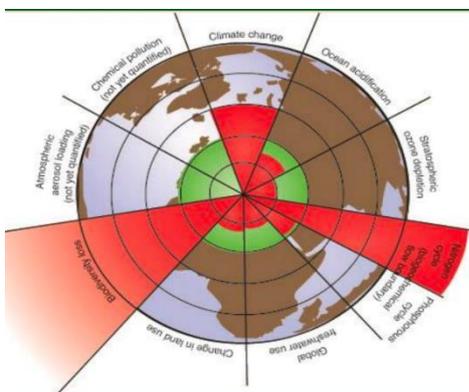
To visit and download the app, visit <http://www.maping.org/> .

The app now has its own affiliated blog with news and updates on the app's launches around the world as well as related events, which can be viewed at <https://maping-blog.com/>. Maping users are encouraged to contact youthcoordinator@earthcharter.org to share their own experiences with the app and how they are using it to share and promote their own sustainability goals and actions.

Review of “Appetite for Destruction” report from World Preservation Foundation

By Dan Bielich, B.Sc. – Climate Science, Completing M Env. Sc.

The World Preservation Foundation released a document called the “Appetite for Destruction”. This document discusses the resulting consequence of human diet on the environment. The premise of this document is that a change in the anthropogenic diet is necessary for a sustainable and habitable planet. The article stresses the argument that preference is no longer priority. Humans high meat intake diet must change for the survival of our species.



Our existence is governed by the state of the planetary boundaries (Figure 1). If we surpass the threshold or limit of any of these boundaries, we potentially endanger human existence on earth. The degree of impact is positively correlated with the potential danger experienced, for example, the higher the quantity of toxic chemicals (such as greenhouse gases) we emit into the atmosphere, the more prominent will be the effects of climate change. Currently, scientific research has been continuously providing concurring evidence suggesting that we have already exceeded the threshold in biodiversity loss through high extinction rates, nitrogen pollution, and climate change.

Figure 1: Planetary Boundaries (World Preservation Foundation, 2017).

The article instigates its main body discussion on the topic of land use, and consequent deforestation as a result of agriculture. The simple, yet informative slides assist in providing a clear, and straight to the point

argument. This article is direct in its communication. This is achieved through the use of short and shocking facts, which assists to grip the readers, and by providing perspective allows a more impactful effect, for example: “We destroy 130 000 square km of tropical forest is deforested each year (the size of Greece)” (World Preservation Foundation, 2017). However, some of the facts are supported by outdated sources of information such as “rainforests have 100 years left” (NASA, 2001).

The article should be commended for its highly-supported information from dependable academic papers. Data and information from sources such as CSIRO and WWF should be taken with caution, as they are notoriously prone to political influences. Furthermore, even though the paper is supported by academic papers, the scientific world is a dynamic community where even the most reliable of sources are consistently being disproven, updated and improved. This is especially enhanced with the exponential upgrade in technological complexity and availability world-wide. Most supporting journals and articles are dated before 2012. Throughout this 5-year period, there have been multiple advancement in not only technology, but concepts and theories in the scientific industry, thus slightly limiting the reliability of information. The most reliable sources of scientific information originate from data sources that has been released within the last two-year period.

The discussion topics are altered promptly, covering perspectives in biodiversity, land degradation, freshwater, nitrogen pollution, ocean and climate. Where again through the use of short and shocking facts, such as “species loss is 1000-10000 faster”, “50% of the world’s agricultural soils are gone”, “By 2030 the world will need 40% more water”, “Overfishing has wiped out 90% of big fish” and “There will be 150 million climate refugees by 2050”, all attempt to manipulate an emotive response from the reader, in the effort to urge change or trigger resilience for a more sustainable future.

The discussion shifts to CSIRO’s projection of Australia’s average surface temperature by 2090 under a high and low emissions scheme. The paper attempts to balance seriousness with humour by utilising humorous photos that allude that climate change is occurring. This is followed by numerous slides that focuses on a positive outlook on the issue of climate change, as well as necessary requirements to avert the global warming crisis. This is a necessary addition to the paper, as the reader’s interpretation of this paper otherwise would be similar to that of a doomsday Hollywood movie.

The paper concludes on the topic of overpopulation, and lifestyle diseases. The agricultural cost of a 7 billion human population is 64 billion livestock per annum. With the anthropogenic lifetime and population increasing, the current preferred dietary requirement (meat diet) is not sustainable. Dr Caldwell Esselstyn continues the discussion by explaining that a “meat free diet will result in the decrease in cases of some of the largest health risks of today’s society, including: obesity, cancer, heart disease and diabetes” (World Preservation Foundation, 2017).

The World Preservation Foundation concludes its article leaving the reader with a well academically supported ideology that a change in the anthropogenic diet is an essential requirement for a more sustainable future.

References

World Preservation Foundation, 2017, <http://worldpreservationfoundation.org/>

Advertising Rates

HOPE is keen to raise some much-needed revenue through the introduction of paid advertising in our newsletter.

At this stage, we are offering business card sized adverts for \$30 + \$3 GST per edition; OR \$300 + \$30 GST for a full year.

If interested, please send your advert to office@hopeaustrlia.org.au and your payment to HOPE Inc., PO Box 6118 – Clifford Gardens, Toowoomba QLD 4350.

(Direct debit banking details available on request.)

World News

ICAN – International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons

Written by Maggie Ng, HOPE volunteer, Victoria



ICAN (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons) is a coalition currently comprised of 440 non-governmental organisations, from local peace groups to global federations, in 100 countries which unite in their advocacy for a strong and effective treaty for banning the use of nuclear weapons.

The ban on nuclear weapons is a pressing issue – they are currently the only weapon of mass destruction not universally or comprehensively prohibited. The use of biological and chemical weapons, as well as land mines and cluster munitions, have all been abolished.

The catastrophic effects of nuclear testing and detonations are many. Aside from their ability to destroy millions of lives and cause acute injury, harmful radioactive particles and rays are released when nuclear weapons are detonated, which can cause cancer, genetic damage and mutations. Their effect on the environment can cause crop damage, climate change, and result in famine. A nuclear war would deplete the ozone layer, causing skin cancer rates to skyrocket.

Though currently based in Geneva, Switzerland, ICAN was founded in Melbourne, Australia in 2007, with experienced disarmament campaigner Felicity Hill as coordinator and Tilman Ruff, public health physician at the University of Melbourne, as chair of the board of management.

The formation of ICAN was initially inspired by the success of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines, which played a pivotal role in negotiating the anti-personnel mine ban convention, also known as the Ottawa Treaty.

Since its inception, ICAN has worked tirelessly to build global public support for the ban of nuclear weapons, through working with governments and groups such as the Red Cross to create conversation and move towards a ban on nuclear weapons.

Some of the ways they do this is through organising global days of action, staging events to raise public awareness, and engaging in advocacy at the United Nations and in national parliaments.

ICAN works with survivors of nuclear tests and the US atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, through sharing their testimonies with both decision makers, and the public.

Several well-known artists, actors and musicians have lent their support to ICAN, including Yoko Ono, Michael Douglas and Herbie Hancock, as well as Nobel laureates Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama.

In 2012 the UN secretary-general praised ICAN for “working with such commitment and creativity in pursuit of our shared goal.”

Since its formation, ICAN has built a solid track record of successful outcomes.

At a review of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010, all nations present expressed grave concern at the continued use of nuclear weapons and the “catastrophic humanitarian consequences” they present.

In 2011, the international Red Cross and Red Crescent, the world's largest humanitarian organisation, adopted a landmark resolution to appeal to all nations to negotiate a “legally binding international agreement” to prohibit and eliminate all nuclear weapons. Nuclear disarmament is now a top Red Cross priority.

In 2012, Switzerland delivered the first in a series of joint statements on the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, urging all nations to “intensify their efforts to outlaw nuclear weapons”. Since then, 159 nations have signed on.

In 2013 and 2014, three major humanitarian conferences were held in Norway, Mexico and Austria, focusing on the many grave impacts of nuclear detonations on the environment, society and our health.

ICAN served as the civil society coordinator for each of these conferences, gaining support from 127 countries in a pledge to change the existing legal regime regarding nuclear weapons.

In 2015, organisations around the world held events in memorial of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombings. ICAN urged governments to fulfil the Humanitarian Pledge by launching a process to negotiate a global ban on nuclear weapons.

In 2016, ICAN campaigned to establish a UN working group to examine proposals for advancing nuclear disarmament. This group met in Geneva several times and report recommending the negotiation of a nuclear ban treaty.

Last year, ICAN's campaign successfully lobbied for the United Nations General Assembly to adopt a landmark resolution to begin negotiating on a treaty which will prohibit nuclear weapons. This historical move signifies an end to two decades of stagnation in nuclear disarmament efforts.

In 2017, negotiations on the new global agreement will be taking place at the United Nations in New York later this year.

Climate-Smart Healthcare: Low-Carbon and Resilience Strategies for the Health Sector

Report from the World Bank Group, <http://www.worldbank.org/>

Climate change is damaging human health now and is projected to have a greater impact in the future. Low- and middle-income countries are seeing the worst effects as they are most vulnerable to climate shifts and least able to adapt given weak health systems and poor infrastructure. Low-carbon approach can provide effective, cheaper care while at the same time being climate smart. Low-carbon healthcare can advance institutional strategies toward low-carbon development and health-strengthening imperatives and inspire other development institutions and investors working in this space. Low-carbon healthcare provides an approach for designing, building, operating, and investing in health systems and facilities that generate minimal amounts of greenhouse gases. It puts health systems on a climate-smart development path, aligning health development and delivery with global climate goals. This approach saves money by reducing energy and resource costs. It can improve the quality of care in a diversity of settings. By prompting ministries of health to tackle climate change mitigation and foster low-carbon healthcare, the development community can help governments strengthen local capacity and support better community health.

Full report available at <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/322251495434571418/pdf/113572-WP-PUBLIC-FINAL-WBG-Climate-smart-Healthcare-002.pdf>

IPEN 2020 Global Plan Goals and 2020 Outcomes

The IPEN 2020 Global Plan identifies clear programmatic goals in its key areas of work and the concrete outcomes IPEN hopes to achieve by 2020 to advance those goals. This document has been developed, reviewed, and approved by the IPEN 2020 Sub-Committee, established by the IPEN Steering Committee and reflects input from IPEN Participating Organizations across the globe. Outcomes outlined in this document are designed to advance IPEN's goals and serve as the basis for IPEN's 2020 Global Plan, which will guide organizational priorities between now and 2020. Read more [here](#).

Annual Pledge/Donation

We invite members and supporters to consider making an annual financial contribution to help cover our operating costs of approximately \$20,500 p.a.

Currently, our income is derived from project grants, fund-raising, corporate sponsorship and donations, but falls well short of our requirements.

Your financial support, by way of an annual pledge or donation, will considerably help us to achieve better financial viability.

National News

**[SpurTopia – Our Sustainable Living Story:](#) *Be inspired to take the first step – create your own Utopia*
By Roman Spur, <http://spurtopia.blogspot.com.au/>**

[This](#) is our sustainable-living story which we would like to share with you to provide information, ideas, inspiration and courage to take the first step in your life. Being less reliant on the system and becoming self-sufficient by growing food, utilizing recycled material and using the urban environment to our benefit, is our passion and lifestyle. We have created "a small kingdom" in a rental property in Brisbane, where we are living a fulfilling life in complete happiness. Enjoying every moment of life, a sense of belonging and achievement encourages us to take further steps into an amazing future ahead of all of us.

Can spiders lure people back to the bush and encourage habitat restoration?

By Robert Whyte

Our Nation needs a tree change. Not just for the people who can afford it; for everyone. Australia is just too different, too fragile and too precious to treat it like a European city or American sprawl. Ok, but what has this got to do with spiders?

Let me explain. As a volunteer with *Save our Waterways Now* I wanted to repair disturbed ecosystems near where I lived in the belief that natural areas are more biodiverse and healthier ecologies. But are natural areas *really* more biodiverse? What proof did we have?

In the Autumn of 2009 I decided to test this hypothesis with spiders, a generalist mid-level invertebrate predator which acts as an indicator for biodiversity.

I carried out spider surveys comparing good quality remnant natural bush with nearby disturbed weedy areas. The results? I found remnant habitat had about three times as many genera and about five times as many specimens as weedy areas, and it makes sense. Plant diversity and structural complexity are the hallmarks of habitat health.

Meanwhile, reassuring myself we were on the right track with habitat restoration had an unforeseen side effect. I became completely obsessed with spiders.

Obviously, I must have been already interested and knowledgeable enough to identify all the spiders I sampled, but now I was moving to a whole new level. Stunning macro photographs of spiders revealed hidden beauty. I created a web site. I met arachnologists. I became one. Spiders were taking over my life. Even my habitat restoration was lagging. One day, just when I thought I might be getting in way over my head, a fellow enthusiast, Greg Anderson, said: "Why don't we do a book?" As the writer of the duo, it was sink or swim. Luckily, I swam.

Over the following eight years of unrelenting spider mania at a personal and professional level, I gradually began to notice I wasn't the only one afflicted in this way. Spiders were starting getting on the news and going viral on the Internet. Peacock spiders in particular, with names like Sparklemuffin and Skeletorus, and "the world's cutest spider" the blue-faced *Maratus personatus*.

Flickr groups, particularly Spiders of Australia, were humming. Facebook sites devoted to spiders (several devoted to Peacock Spiders on their own) sprang up like mushrooms after Autumn rain, proving venues where like-minded enthusiasts could meet and share stories and photos.

I must admit I wasn't prepared for media and public interest to be quite as intense as it has been. The nation became spider mad. I was sticking up for the poor little buggers, curing arachnophobia and extolling the environmental benefits of our eight-legged friends. The book took off. So much so that the first print run sold out in less than four weeks. A second printing is on the way. All well and good, but what about the habitat work?

Reflecting on this journey, I now know the habitat restoration wasn't being neglected after all. All this spider activity has been getting people out into the bush and caring about the environment, more aware of the need for habitat, and even wanting to improve the habitats of their own back yards.

How do I know this? Because people are talking about it, tweeting about it, posting about it and adding their photos to prove it.

Spiders are helping. See Spiderbook Media – <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/vBxNFGDZaj>

[Aquatic Microfauna within Australian Inland Waters](#)

By Dr Robert Walsh, Aquatic Micro-Invertebrate Ecologist

The issue I am bringing to your attention is one of the most important and basic ecological elements of Australian freshwater systems, i.e. aquatic microfauna (ZOOPLANKTON). It is this microfauna that is more prevalent in our lakes, wetlands, dam's, reservoirs, ponds, impoundments and temporary waters; not aquatic macro-invertebrates, which prefer shallow flowing waters.

The issue I am raising is not based on emotions or false perception, but over 20 years of scientific research and actual hands on fresh water natural resource management. I have worked in the field of freshwater science (Limnology) in South Eastern Australia for the past 20 years. During this time, I have been employed at the Australian Water Quality Centre (AWQC) and at the Murray Darling Freshwater Research Centre (CSIRO). The two major freshwater research centres in the Commonwealth of Australia. In 2005, I established Australian Waterlife, one of less than a handful of laboratories to identify freshwater microfauna.

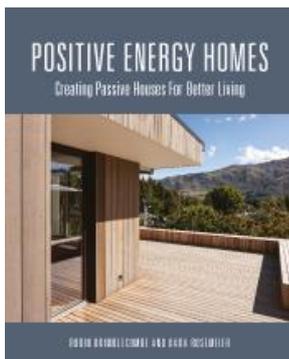
Read the full article [here](#).

Resources

Books – CSIRO Publishing

[Positive Energy Homes – Creating Passive Houses for Better Living](#)

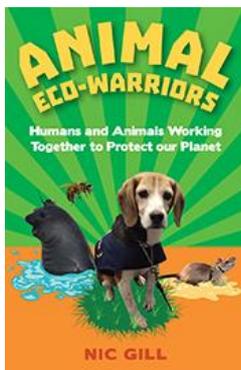
Robin Brimblecombe, Kara Rosemeier



A guide to how positive energy living can be achieved, through homes that power themselves and empower their occupants. Positive energy homes enable people to live healthy and comfortable lives with energy left over to share. Creating a house, you love that produces surplus energy is surprisingly easy with a thorough understanding of how buildings work and careful attention to detail in construction. The Passive House standard, with its well-proven track record, forms the basis for creating positive energy homes. This book explores the Passive House 'fabric first' approach, as well as the science and practicalities of effective ventilation strategies, smart options for heating and cooling, daylight harvesting, and efficient lighting and appliances. *Positive Energy Homes* provides home owners world-wide, architects and builders with an understanding of the principles and technical details of building these houses.

[Animal Eco-Warriors – Humans and Animals Working Together to Protect Our Planet](#)

Nic Gill



Meet the super dogs, hero rats and cyborg bees keeping our environment safe. Come on an action-packed adventure with an amazing mob of animal eco-warriors as they use their special talents to help solve our planet's environmental problems! From the nosy noses of biosecurity beagles at airports to rats learning to sniff out landmines in war-torn landscapes, animals are using their unique abilities to help make the world a better and safer place. With fantastic colour photos of animal eco-warriors at work, this book is full of fun facts on how animals are helping humanity work towards a more sustainable future. There are also plenty of tips on how you can make a difference to the planet. Join the animal eco-warrior team today! This book is ideal for teachers and librarians looking for locally relevant, teachable materials addressing environment and sustainability issues, as well as for children and their families with an interest in animals and science. Perfect for readers aged 9-12.
