

## Green New Deal research resources

Compiled by Andrew Nicholson, HOPE senior researcher QLD, 31 March 2020

The **Green New Deal** (GND) initiative is getting quite a lot of attention in Europe, the UK, the USA, and even a bit more in Australia. As I understand it from my reading across a range of recent interpretations, the GND constitutes several interconnected ideas. It is being suggested that:

- The GND is an economic strategy that could form a bridge between the urgently needed rapid decarbonisation of society, from global to local level, and the equal necessity of supporting those communities/workers which would be marginalised by that process. This strand of categorisation of the GND also resonates with increasing critiques of neoliberal economic models and policy, and their manifest failure to deliver outcomes of reliable economic prosperity, social justice and equality, public wellbeing, and environmental and ecological planetary health.
- The GND is a way of gaining a 'social licence' from the wider community - to implement the decarbonisation strategy noted above. One view is that we have the technical means and scientific understanding to carry out decarbonisation now, and that some of the 'low hanging fruit' has already been picked: e.g., as exemplified by the increasing uptake of alternative energy sources; and by the evolving, strategic vision of Australia's opportunity to produce 'Green' Hydrogen as part of a new Hydrogen economy hub – one which could serve the Asia Pacific region. Notwithstanding these early achievements, more difficult work to progress decarbonisation is now required.
- The GND is an opportunity to construct an authentic, optimistic and inspiring narrative about the opportunities for future prosperity and wellbeing in a decarbonised world. Because, after the low hanging fruit have been picked, the next stages of decarbonisation will require much more community level behaviour change, as well as conventional economy reshaping and reform. It is anticipated that this is the situation in which public/political pushback will occur most strongly; and the GND is being touted as one way of diffusing the inevitable, initial resistance to proposed major social and economic change.
- The GND could be a way for the Green and conservation movement 'to get back into the game' of achieving fundamental reform to the destructive, extractivist, pro-growth models of development that have torn up the planet, oceans and atmosphere, and marginalised so many communities, over the last 40+ years. There are many theories about the demise of environmentalism as an effective force. The GND, from my interpretation, is in effect proposing a critique of a pox on both your houses; by rejecting both neoliberal economics and the reactionary environmentalism, albeit understandable, that has been doing battle with it for decades. The GND is looking to provide a fresh start, one based upon a better economic model: a model that factors in, seriously and authentically, social and environmental dimensions of human wellbeing for every economic development decision that is taken.
- The GND can therefore, to my mind, also be considered a strategic reimagining of the hallowed 1990's concept of the Triple Bottom Line (TBL) which envisaged that, indeed, all sustainable development decisions would give proper credence and weight to the social and environmental dimensions of proposals, and not just the economic bottom line. The TBL was in turn a key refining concept within an authentic definition of Sustainable Development as it evolved from the late 1980s. Sadly, over subsequent decades, the concept and terminology of Sustainable Development itself was increasingly co-opted to serve the interests of neoliberalism and the various pro-growth mantras. Perhaps in the process of its future implementation, GND initiative might be able to restore the credibility of sustainable development as a model of genuine human progress.

So, Alison, I wondered whether, as part of your ongoing research, you could have a look at some of the resources on GND I identified in the attachment – and perhaps factor some of those ideas into your thoughts on future decarbonised economy job creation in Australia. I look forward to catching up with you for a chat on this topic sometime. Could you perhaps suggest sometimes for a telephone, Skype or other social media connected contact? I know made a brief reference in previous correspondence to the significance of the Triple Bottom Line concept, as well as the Australian Greens, and their take on GND – so ignore that duplication in this memo – which is part of an intended larger piece of research I am now going to do on GND initiatives.

## Some recent articles and resources on the Green New Deal

### In the UK:

On the topic of planning for a 'just transition' for workers in currently high carbon intensive industries, I have been struck by some of the recent work being done on the Green New Deal (GND) – for example in the UK where the [New Economics Foundation](#) has produced a number of reports exploring different aspects of the challenge: [how to fund a GND](#); and on [Climate Transition and High Carbon Workers](#). It was also the case, sadly, that the electoral defeat of the Labour Party at the last general election there in late 2019, denied us the chance of seeing what a [GND as implemented by a political party](#) might look like in practice.

All of this material is at a general strategic level of analysis, and of course the UK cultural context is different to that in Australia – but I think we need to be across the various strands of thought that are emerging on the GND internationally. I am starting to believe the PR that it could be the missing jigsaw piece or, using a different metaphor, could be the bridge that links the needs for rapid greenhouse gas elimination with the wellbeing of communities currently reliant on the fossil fuel sector for their existence.

I am also taken with the argument that it is the 'social licence' to reform the fossil fuel sector that is the key ingredient to aid progress. I think that one of the GND emphases: on developing a compelling, exciting and believable narrative on the opportunities which can be provided by a new, low carbon era should be a focus for our future efforts.

In that regard I recommend you also listen to David Powell, Head of Environment and Green Transition at the New Economics Foundation, talking in January 2020 at the LSE, UK on [What is the Case For a Green New Deal?](#) As the first speaker, Powell talks in general terms about how a GND might enable the low carbon transition debate to cut through with the public more effectively.

### In Europe

The European Green Deal proposed by the European Commission late last year is attracting a lot of interest, both positive and negative and, again, I want to get my head around this version of a Green economic strategy - in order to determine whether there is something really new here or whether, frankly, we are dealing with just another example of neoliberalism poured into green bottles - to ruin another metaphor. The Guardian's Fiona Harvey and Jennifer Rankin did a [comprehensive piece on the European proposals](#) in early March 2020 - which might be a better starting place than the rather turgid reports emanating out of Brussels so far.

### In Australia:

We have Adam Brandt and the Greens who have [been spruiking the benefits](#) of the GND albeit only in outline form at present. Since the Coronavirus hit big time and pandemonium ensued it seems that there are some researchers, [as per the Conversation recently](#), thinking about the current, massive fiscal stimulus efforts by government in the wake of the virus; and comparing this to where similar stimulus monies went at the time of the GFC. A question being asked is whether the current economic response to the pandemic crisis could provide an opportunity to help the transition to a decarbonised economy - at the same time as tackling the immediate public health challenge of course.

And there was a major conference on the [Green New Deal held in Adelaide](#) in January 2020, which was billed as an *opportunity to discuss and explore the elements of a Green New Deal for Australia, informed by the work of some of the world's leading progressive economists. Speakers will provide insights into their work and offer ideas for progressive change.*

Having had a quick look at the website for this event, nothing really jumped out in terms of concise digestible content - -but there might be some useful facts and figures within the video content listed on the website, or in the Resources section, or the spin off group: the **Just Transition Action Group**, that came out of the conference.

### The United States:

Notwithstanding the COVID-19 crisis there at present, has shown a lot of interest in the Green New Deal, even in the era of Trump – and probably as a direct result of that era. A 2019 piece in The Conversation explored mainly the [economic cost of a GND in the US](#) and how it could be paid for. And politically, in the

run up to the elections over there, although it does not now look as if he is to be the anointed Democratic candidate for the White House, the set of principles/manifesto put out by [Bernie Sanders on the GND](#) is worth consideration – particularly on the points that go to addressing what Bernie would do for workers who had to be relocated from existing jobs within a just transition. The provisions look pretty solid to me, but I would be interested to hear your thoughts