

## **Summit wrap up of presentations and take-home messages from Session 1, Monday, 19 April 2021**

We heard first from **Dr. Michelle Maloney from the Australian Earth Laws Alliance** – an organisation which has an objective of helping to change the systems of our law, politics, education, and other institutions to allow for sustainable development which does not destroy the planet – this is the idea of Earth Systems governance

AELA works to find answers to the question of how we can live well in this place, on the Earth and in our regional and local home areas. Dr. Maloney talked about the importance of the way we think about the world; and what we consider representing progress and success - and how this way of thinking, mindset or worldview then has a major influence on how we treat the natural world and our environment. She pointed out the contrast between the worldviews of the settlers who developed Australia from the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to that of First Nations, indigenous people who have been here for tens of thousands of years.

**Take home messages:** we need to become more aware of the consequences for unsustainable development following on from a human centred view of the world - and contrast it to a holistic worldview, where it is understood that humans are simply one part of the interconnected web of life - in which everything is connected to everything else. This mindset is far more supportive of sustainable forms of development.

**Dr Andy Le Brocque**, an ecologist and sustainability expert from USQ described the mass extinction of living things that we are now experiencing. He put some numbers and figures to this biodiversity crisis – the loss of animals, plants, and other species in the so-called Anthropocene era - the age of humans we now occupy. So, millions of hectares of forests are being lost every year; and up to 50% of coral reefs that have been damaged worldwide. There has been a major loss of species across the board in the last 40 years or so – with an increased risk of losing even more living things if uncontrolled climate change trends continue.

### **Take home messages:**

To reduce some of this loss of wildlife - we can make more sustainable lifestyle choices, for example about how much we consume, and the different types of foods we eat. And we can use the following principles of first: understand the science of what is needed for better protection of living things and natural systems, then educate others about those needs; and then advocate for or demand better forms of nature protecting development from our leaders.

**Jane O'Sullivan** from the **Sustainable Population Australia** organisation laid emphasis on the ability to have smaller families as a personal contribution to reducing human population growth and therefore to human society becoming more sustainable in the future. She gave us some facts and figures about growing human populations and the negative environmental impacts they have. She also challenged some of the long-established arguments that increased human population benefits quality of life.

**Take home messages:** There are individual lifestyle choices which can be made about parenting and numbers of children born. And there is a need to bring talk about the negative impacts of increasing human population growth into public debate much more frequently.

### **Paul McDonald CEO of Southern Queensland Landscapes (SQL)**

Described how the organisation had been set up originally to deal with salinity and other landscape environmental issues in the south-east Queensland area. The organisation now deals with a very large catchment area, bigger than the size of Victoria state. SQL works with landscape managers to find ways to improve the productivity and environmental health of landscapes. The organisation works with the reality of significant environmental changes in the region, such as water availability. For example, there has been a long-term, 40% decline in rainfall and 60% decline in stream flows in the region over past decades.

**Take home messages:**

Paul described the challenge of working with land managers who do not necessarily access the usual knowledge bases on sustainability problems such as climate change or long-term weather and rainfall trends. SQL has therefore had to develop new forms of working with, educating, and influencing such people - and finding ways to work effectively with the mindset they possess, and their individual approach to managing their properties. He also mentioned ongoing work that seeks to connect First Nations indigenous knowledge of land management with existing, European or Northern Hemisphere influenced land management practices.