

2021 youth summit wrap up from Day 2 - 20th April 2021.

Clem Campbell – the Earth Charter

Mr Campbell started off by reminding us that we will all need to become global citizens in outlook if we are to progress the goal of authentic sustainable development. He went on to outline the provisions of the Earth Charter - an important document which was developed out of the ‘unfinished businesses of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

Mr Campbell also pointed out that world peace is an absolute requirement of developing a sustainable and socially just society. One of the key principles of sustainability which he described was the notion of ‘being more’ in terms of personal development rather than ‘having more’ in terms of greater levels of affluence and consumption.

Take Home Messages:

Future leaders including the youth of today need to find a ‘new normal’ for us all to follow – if we are to achieve sustainable development. Whether that be in terms of energy or resource consumption, waste production - or any of the other processes that drive modern society. We need to develop a preferred future and vision and then advocate for a peaceful and sustainable future world.

Liz Bowen– Soka Gakkai Seeds of Hope and Action initiative.

Some of Ms Bowen’s points included:

- We are all interconnected with each other.
- As individuals we can influence change to achieve more environmental and social justice.

She went on to describe the Seeds of Hope and Action artwork panels which cover many sustainability themes including in inequality – the gap between the haves and have nots, the uncontrolled climate change problem and biodiversity loss. The artwork panels also included inspiring stories from many individuals around the world, including youth members. Each story demonstrated how developing and applying principles of compassion, courage and perseverance could help achieve major, inspiring outcomes.

Take Home Messages:

Join with other courageous people of goodwill to push for reform and move us towards a truly sustainable future society. We can use the Earth Charter as a sustainability ethics and values guide to help achieve this. And an important principle is to remember that it is important to achieve inner spiritual change, and to adopt greater levels of compassion for all other living things - as much as it is to work for political and external system level reforms and change to foster sustainable development.

Dr Polly Burey, USQ – Loop-de-loop: circular economy viability into the future

Ms Burey introduced some of the principles of a circular economy and why they are important. The recovery of materials permits less use of raw resources, and it helps prevent waste.

She then took us through some of the scientific knowledge about things like the amount of energy involved in the manufacture of aluminium cans versus glass containers. She pointed out that there are current problems with Australia's approach to waste management especially since China stopped taking our waste for reprocessing. There is a particular problem around the management of electronic waste or e-waste, a growing waste stream in this country.

Take Home Messages:

There is a need to change mindsets and thinking about the whole idea of waste and to see as an opportunity rather than a problem - as a raw material that can be used in other forms of production, rather than something that needs to be dumped.

And we need to get much better on food waste. The average Australian produces 300 kilos of waste food per annum. We need to find new uses for all forms of food waste – looking for opportunities with both producers and consumers.

Michael Hockey – TRC Waste Services - Greater Toowoomba Waste Management Facility. A video described the work and innovations at the management facility. It showed a wide range of different waste streams that can be handled at the facility and the various provisions put in place to stop effluent run-off, to minimise dust and the risk of other pollutant impacts on the local area. There are also lots of health and safety systems in place.

The Facility is well regarded within the wider waste management industry and has gathered several awards for the way it is designed and operated.

Take Home Messages:

The Facility achieves an impressive 60% reduction of waste diverted from landfill. This relates to the circular economy ideas presented previously. There is also a contribution of solar electricity into the energy consumption of the facility. The Facility processes recycled polystyrene and recycles it into bricks. This product then goes to Brisbane before being bulk shipped to a processor in Indonesia where it is used as an input to produce ABS (Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene) plastic products.

It is regrettable that we do not yet have onshore processing of such materials in Australia. Hopefully, a home-grown circular economy for this material can be developed soon.