

Green

THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS

magazine

OLYMPIC DAM EXPANSION

GREENING THE COUNTRY

PNG WOMEN MAKE CHANGE

**GREEN
PERSPECTIVES
ON MINING**



WHY I WORK FOR & BELIEVE IN THE GREENS

THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTION MUST HAPPEN BEFORE NOVEMBER 30, 2013. HOWEVER, PUNDITS ARE PREDICTING THAT IT COULD HAPPEN BEFORE THAT - POSSIBLY BEFORE THE END OF THIS YEAR.

As the Australian Greens Campaign Coordinator my job is to work with the states, our Parliamentary representatives, our members and volunteers to make sure we roll out the most comprehensive, strategic and well-funded federal election campaign possible.

For the last 18 months, we have been working together - ready to share our vision of a better Australia in a stronger, more compelling way.

We are working together on new and clearer policies, undertaking community research, developing strategic communications, improving election management systems and sharing our fundraising skills and knowledge.

During 35 years of working for community environment and Aboriginal organisations around the world, I have seen the Greens grow and develop, and watched as they begin to take office in countries around the world.

It's clear that Labor cannot be relied on to transform our society based on fairness, equity and a clean energy future

and I am completely convinced that only through the Greens can we effectively change Australian and global society. I know that I am in the best place to help effect change and facilitate progress which is why I work for and believe in the policies that the Greens are advocating.

In many ways, working for the Greens is a natural progression from working for other non-profit organisations which focus on the same progressive social and environmental issues; it is the political expression of the causes that those who want a more just and a more sustainable planet, spend their lives working towards.

Without the Greens holding the balance of power in the Senate - a real threat with Labor likely to lose seats - we run the risk of an Abbott-led path to a compassionless Australia, putting into peril everything we have all fought so hard for in the last three years.

Please, join me in supporting our federal election campaign. We are the only party at the beginning of the 21st century with a real vision for the future, and we must deliver this message to the Australian electorate.

This is our biggest opportunity yet.

Chris Harris, Campaign Coordinator, Australian Greens.

PHOTOS: CHRIS HARRIS AND BOB BROWN INTERVIEW FRANKLIN CAMPAIGN 1982. PHOTO: IAN SKINNER; CLIMATE RALLY AUCKLAND 2009; CHRIS HARRIS; CAMPAIGNING WITH ADAM STONE QLD 2012.



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The Australian Greens wish to acknowledge that we are on indigenous ground – this land is the spiritual and sacred place of the traditional owners and their ancestors and continues to be a place of significance. Further, we thank them for sharing this land with us and agree to respect their laws and lores.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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CYBER DEMOCRACY

Happy retirement Bob.
Congratulations Christine.

While I have no qualms with Christine as leader, I find it a little odd that a Party which nominates "grassroots democracy" as one of its core values, denies ordinary members a say in who the leader is.

The Greens were formed in the 90's along twentieth century traditional political party structures. Local branches are the core method of organisation and this works well for local issues. However for state or national issues, this structure becomes cumbersome.

Since the 90's, the internet has radically changed the way the planet communicates, however we in the Greens are not able to communicate with each other outside our local region. The creation of a statewide and national cyberbranch would allow all members to have input into policy, foster discussion, debate important issues as they arise (like the recent deaths at sea of refugees) and allow all 10000+ of us to feel like we belong. It would also enable us to directly elect Party leaders.

Cyber democracy is necessary to engage both current members and future generations with the political process. I believe we too must evolve with the times and give all members a direct say in the way we function - and elect our leaders and spokespeople.

STEPHEN KRESS
EAST MELBOURNE, VICTORIA

LET'S STOP TINKERING WITH THE DECKCHAIRS!

I was never more proud of The Australian Greens than in 2009 when they blocked the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS), arguing that it was no solution, that it was worse than not doing anything.

Our Senators' determination to take action against Climate Change was matched by an understanding that it has to be the "right" action. Misdirected or inadequate action can be as dangerous as no action. The first can make the situation worse, the second can lull people into a false sense that something is being done.

US environmental campaigner Ken Ward has been writing recently about his perceived need for the US environmental movement to re-evaluate what it does and how it does it.

"For one, climate will be decided by players now on the field and our major organizations and foundations must therefore be changed or they will stand in the way. The argument that climate can be addressed without the need to reshape US environmentalism is based in the perception that US environmentalism cannot be changed, but if we cannot adapt our own organizations and institution to meet the challenge for which they were founded, why on earth would we think it possible to shift the course of the nation?"

Bill McKibben, the driving force behind 350.org has also been writing, pointing out how little time we have left, and how much we have to do.

In Global Warming's Terrifying New Math, he writes:

"Scientists estimate that humans can pour roughly 565 more gigatons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere by mid-century and still have some reasonable hope of staying below two degrees [warming]."

However, he goes on to explain, The Carbon Tracker Initiative, a team of London financial analysts and environmentalists have reported that the world's known oil and fossil fuel reserves, when burned, will release roughly 2,795 gigatons of CO₂ into

the atmosphere – enough to raise the Earth's temperature far, far above the two degree limit.

One thing is very clear: misdirected or inadequate action is not worth taking.

"...the paths we have tried to tackle global warming have so far produced only gradual, halting shifts. A rapid, transformative change would require building a movement, and movements require enemies."

And in his view, Public Enemy No 1 is the fossil-fuel industry.

"Environmentalists, understandably, have been loath to make the fossil-fuel industry their enemy, respecting its political power and hoping instead to convince these giants that they should turn away from coal, oil and gas and transform themselves more broadly into "energy companies." However, that's not happening. "The five biggest oil companies have made more than \$1 trillion in profits since the millennium – there's simply too much money to be made on oil and gas and coal."

The next few years will be make or break for the planet and our environment. Now is not the time for half-hearted efforts, for playing it safe politically, for worrying about whether we will look foolish or if we will retain seats at the next election.

Now is the time for an all-or-nothing campaign by The Greens, pulling together all the environmental movements in the land. We must transform our energy supply, our economy and our way of life, and we need to inspire the rest of the world to come with us. Safe, reasonable, but inadequate policies and campaigns need to be abandoned. It's time to become "Extreme Planet Savers". Stop tinkering with the deck-chairs and take over the bridge. There's an ice-berg up ahead.

1 Ken Ward www.climatecodeder.org/2012/06/why-we-are-going-nuts.html

2 Bill McKibben www.rollingstone.com/politics/news/global-warmings-terrifying-new-math-20120719

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ALDGATE, SA

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EDITORIAL

CATHERINE GREEN INTRODUCES OUR MINING THEMED ISSUE

I can remember going on a family holiday to Kalgoorlie when I was young and, apart from the double-g prickles and the plumes of flies, I vividly remember my first trip to the Kalgoorlie super pit. My, how it blew my five year old mind! A massive hole in the ground; as wide as the eye could see and so deep that the trucks and people in it looked like pieces of Lego, making it one of the must-see tourist attractions in this Goldfields town. Once the biggest open cut mine in Australia, the Kalgoorlie super pit has since been dwarfed by a number of other mining projects; a hint as to the size and scope of the mining industry these days.

Mining projects can stimulate economic growth and bring prosperity, or so the argument from mining companies goes. But without a commitment to human rights and sustainability, mining companies have the potential to damage the environment irreversibly, and penetrate deep into the heart of the towns where they operate; drastically changing people's way of life, their communities and their culture.

The global mining boom has seen the industry increase its activities both here and overseas and mining moguls, no longer content with the confines of company boardrooms, are finding their way into our media and political decision making. It seemed a perfect time to open up the pages of Green magazine to the theme of mining and invite people from around the country to share their stories.

The contribution from Mark Parnell MLC talks about mitigating the risks of the proposed project in Roxby Downs and finds a position somewhere in the grey area between pro and anti mining; advocating for and finding scientific evidence to support extracting copper, gold and silver, while leaving the uranium where it lies. A hard pill to swallow for some, but perhaps a reality for the communities around the Olympic Dam Mine that rely on this mine for work.

But this modern day gold-rush is not benefiting everyone. Jeremy Buckingham MLC writes a compelling tale of the emerging alliance between the Greens and NSW farmers; unified by their opposition to coal seam gas that threatens both the land and the livelihood of those who farm it.

I was fascinated, as I'm sure readers will be too, by the article from Oxfam about the work it is doing to promote the Extractives Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) within the mining sector. Quite literally, this initiative would mean that payments to and from government's and mining companies would be openly stated and, more importantly, people would have full knowledge of the costs and profits of mining projects in their community. A powerful thing to have when negotiating access to land, compensation, and community beneficiation plans. EITI is a pretty simple concept but one that has huge implications in terms of debunking the economic arguments made on behalf of growing the mining industry in Australia and around the world.

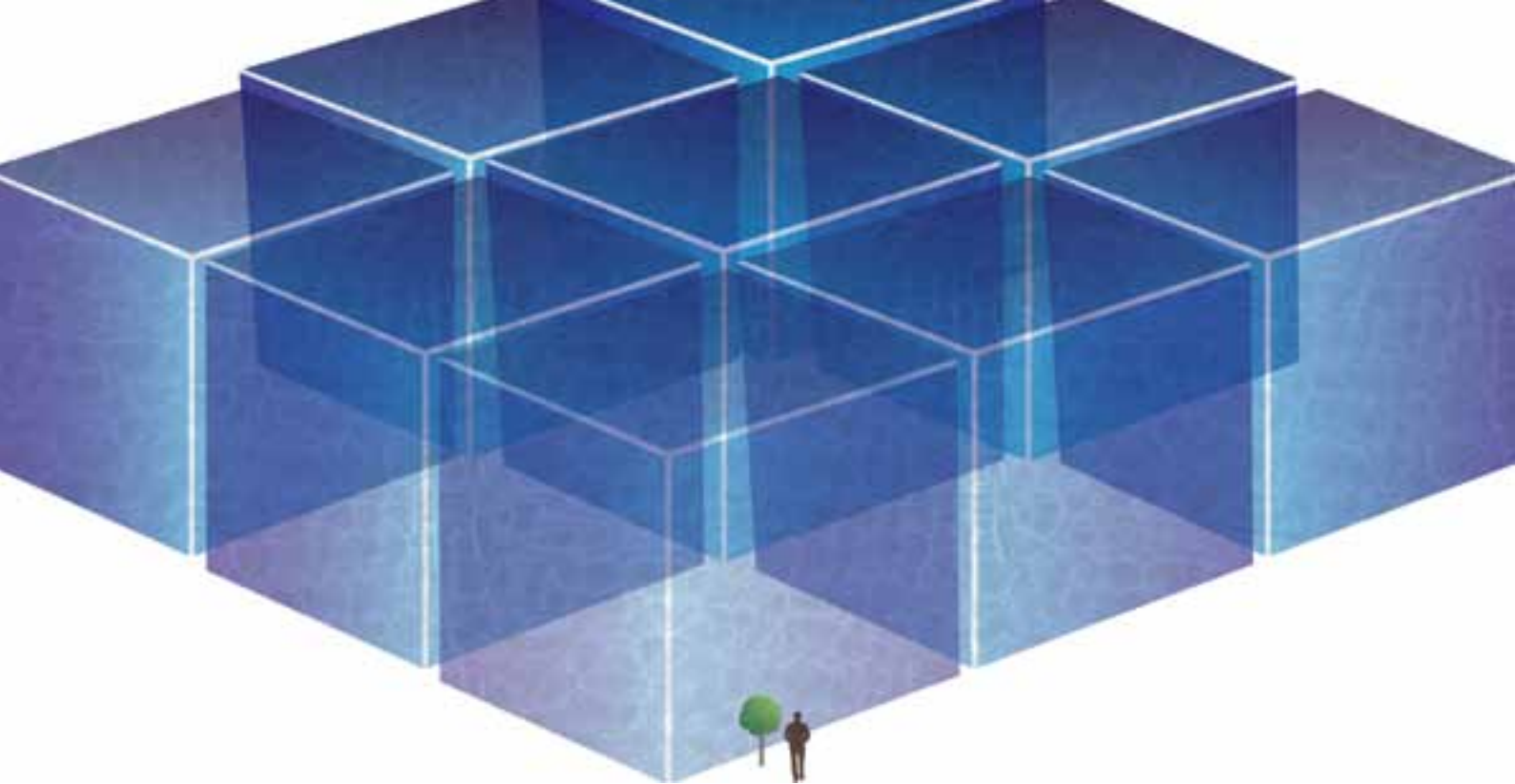
It can seem like there is little room for negotiation or a way to alter the course of the all-powerful mining force. This issue presents just a handful of stories from around the country and the region about the positive and innovative work happening in this space.

We'd love to hear your feedback on this issue. Send us your thoughts via facebook or email to be included next issue. This is your publication, so make yourself heard!

Catherine Green
greenmag@greens.org.au

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OLYMPIC DAM EXPANSION A LAW UNTO ITSELF

BY **MARK PARNELL** MLC, PARLIAMENTARY LEADER OF THE GREENS, SA & FORMER ENVIRONMENTAL LAWYER

Think about the Centre Point Tower in Sydney. At 309m high, it's a massive structure. Now imagine three of them standing end-on-end and you have some idea of the depth of the open pit proposed to be dug in the outback of South Australia. At a kilometre deep and 4km wide, BHP Billiton's proposed Olympic Dam Mine expansion will be the biggest hole in the ground ever dug on the face of the planet.

Beneath billions of tonnes of 'overburden' lies (according to the company) more than \$800 billion worth of minerals, mostly copper but also uranium, gold and silver. The task of extracting the overburden will require the world's biggest fleet of dump trucks operating around the clock for at least four years and burning a million litres of diesel fuel per day to move a million tonnes of rocks per day before they even get to the ore body. The mine will leave behind a new mountain range of waste and the world's largest toxic tailings pile over 44 square kms at the height of the Sydney Opera House.

I think you get the idea. This is a gigantic project with enormous environmental, social and economic implications.

When most people think of Olympic Dam or the nearby mining town of Roxby Downs, they think of uranium; and indeed the present underground mine

is also the biggest uranium mine in the world and it is set to get even bigger. Yet, by volume and by value, Olympic Dam is overwhelmingly a copper mine and its expansion is being driven by the insatiable appetite of the Chinese economy for copper. The uranium component has been shrinking for 25 years and is currently about 20% of the mine's value. Gold and silver are the other key components of the mixed ore body.

The Greens' opposition to uranium mining and the nuclear cycle has been consistent for many decades. But is it possible to extract the copper, gold and silver and leave the uranium behind? It certainly is according to Senior lecturer Dr Gavin Mudd from Monash University's Department of Civil Engineering. Dr Mudd's analysis shows that not only is it possible to leave the uranium behind, but it saves considerable amounts of energy and water and leads to more local jobs in mineral processing. The company's plan is to export most of the ore overseas and with it, most of the jobs.

With such a huge project comes a huge demand for energy and for water. The mine will be the biggest user of electricity in South Australia and the single biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions. The water used in the mine will continue to be drawn from the Great Artesian Basin as well as a new desalination

plant hundreds of kilometres away at Point Lowly on Upper Spencer Gulf. Point Lowly is also the site of the unique annual breeding aggregation of Giant Australian Cuttlefish, a species that gathers there in the thousands every winter and which is known to be highly susceptible to increased salinity such as the brine discharge from a desalination plant.

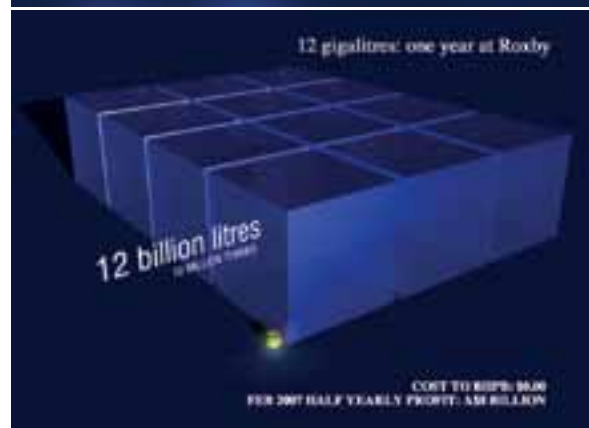
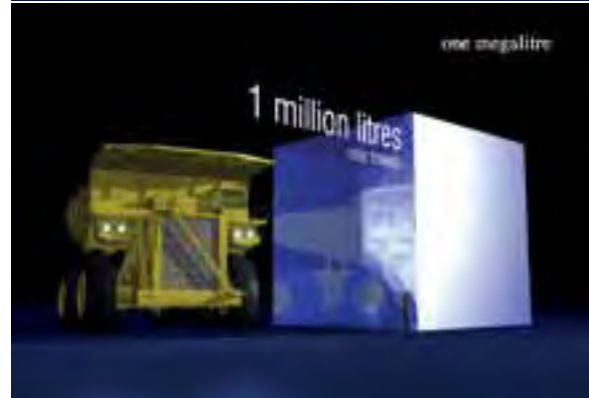
So, how will the project be regulated and managed? Sadly, it's a well known feature of environmental law that only the little players have to play by the rules. The big players usually manage to get special treatment or exemptions to smooth their path to riches. However, the biggest players of all, the big global corporations, are in a league all of their own. If they don't like the regulatory environment, they go straight to the top to write their own laws. And that's exactly what happened last year with the world's richest resource company, BHP Billiton and its proposed expansion of the Olympic Dam mine. Courtesy of a special 'Indenture' Act of the South Australian Parliament, BHP Billiton doesn't have to comply with most State environmental or natural resource laws, or Aboriginal Heritage laws. BHP Billiton's special laws ensure that future governments won't be able to easily change the rules without paying hefty compensation to the company.

The Greens tried hard in Parliament to change this project for the better. To that end we moved a large package of amendments that would have transformed the Olympic Dam Expansion into a sustainable project.

Not unexpectedly, the Greens copped a great deal of flack for daring to ask questions about the project and for moving amendments in State Parliament to try to fix the worst of the environmental and economic problems. Fearful that BHP Billiton would take their bucket and spade and go home, the Government declared that no amendments would be tolerated, regardless of merit. The Liberals lined-up with Labor and all the Greens' amendments were defeated, and the very fact of moving them was decried as "economic vandalism of the highest order" according to the Mining Minister. The Government was also annoyed that its planned celebration on the passage of the legislation was delayed as the Greens scrutinised the deal and continued to propose amendments late into the night. The Parliamentary debate over the Indenture Bill ultimately lasted about 20 hours, which is pretty brief scrutiny for a project that could last 50 to 100 years.

However some economic journalists were prepared to say publicly that the Emperor had no clothes and that many of the promised benefits of the project were illusory. Writing in the business pages of the Australian, Paul Cleary described the royalty agreement negotiated by the South Australian government as a case of "Olympian incompetence". He reported that locking in a low royalty rate for 45 years had "robbed the state's citizens and all Australians of the opportunity to share in the profits of what will become the world's biggest mine", and that "this deal is a monumental example of state government incompetence when it comes to acting as custodian of the nation's mineral wealth."

So, what would a more sustainable project look like? First, it would honour the traditional owners and not seek exemptions from the Aboriginal Heritage Act. Next, it would leave the uranium behind and process



all the copper, gold and silver in South Australia to maximise local jobs. On the energy front, it would commit to 100% new renewable energy to meet its demand. Water for the mine would not come from the Great Artesian Basin and the wind-powered desal plant would be located on the open ocean, where dispersion of the waste brine would be safer and the Giant Australian Cuttlefish would be left in peace. In total, the Greens proposed over 100 changes in Parliament.

Having given BHP Billiton just about everything it wanted, the SA Government now has to wait and see if the company actually commits to the project. Failure to start by the end of the year could trigger a cancellation of existing approvals and the chance to go back to the drawing board. If that happens, the Greens will be there with a plan to better protect the environment and to secure a fairer deal from our mineral wealth for present and future generations. ▲

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Mark Parnell's campaign website
<http://tinyurl.com/markparnell>
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MOMENT WITH A MEMBER

PETER JONES, TAS

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

Since it began – formally from 1992. But before that state Green groups and I was part of Greens WA.

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE GREENS?

I come from a very political family. My family were Socialists for three generations and I joined the Labour Party in the UK when I was 18 before resigning at 19. In terms of nuclear disarmament, there wasn't any party to join at that time. I was in Australia from 1983, and that's the period that Greens parties were starting to form. I felt comfortable with how this crystallised into what became the Greens Party, so I joined.

WHAT WAS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU WHEN YOU JOINED?

Human rights, disarmament and anti-militarism more broadly. I have been involved in running non-violence workshops in Australia since the late 1970s and the Greens were talking about a lot of these issues as they started organising.

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO BE A MEMBER?

Because if you are going to affect any change, you've got to be involved in political parties. I know that's not an altogether popular idea, but basically what all politically active people are trying to do is change public opinion and the minds of politicians. Though there are limits to political parties, if you want to make a difference you need to be involved in one.

HIGHLIGHT / BIGGEST CHANGE YOU'VE SEEN?

Undoubtedly the growth of the Greens. I remember when they were called the Green Independents through the 1980s, and I remember when Bob first stood. The development of the Greens as the third force in Australian politics and a viable political force and global movement is incredible.

WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

Questioning the model that drives our economy of growth is what we should be committed to. It's terrifying when you go to the world's big mega-cities like Cairo or Calcutta - if all these people had the standard of living that we do in Australia, the planet could not sustain it. It's very difficult to challenge that because everyone is committed to better standards of living but the planet cannot sustain this kind of growth.

WHAT HAS YOUR ROLE BEEN IN THE GREENS?

I started working in Parliament for six years for WA Senator Jo Vallentine. I've stood once for the Senate ticket, and once in the lower house in the Tasmanian state elections. Here in Tasmania in the 1990's I was active state-wide. I've put my hand up for committees, fundraising, pre-selection and all those jobs that need doing. I've given out how-to-vote cards, leafleting, fundraising and have been a branch member. I see a lot of my work now as encouraging young people to be involved.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SONG AND WHY?

Ravi Shankar. His live albums are amazing. I could listen to the Sitar for hours.

WORDS: ELIZA HOVEY

Greens' vision is future-sized

BY **ADRIAN GLAMORGAN**, PARTY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER, THE GREENS (WA)

Critics of the Greens (we usually know which papers to buy – or not – to find them!) seized hopefully on Bob Brown's resignation. Surely it would mean the demise of The Greens? So the ensuing upturn in Greens polling delighted the retired but ever-larrikin Bob!

Bob Brown timed his departure from the Senate impeccably, giving Christine Milne an opportunity to establish her credentials as federal parliamentary leader. The nation has at least a year to experience what many Greens members already encounter; Christine Milne grasps complex issues, cuts to the chase, brings a warm heart and a ready wit, is a team player and has all the grit in federal parliament that once saw this same daughter of farming folk stop Wesley Vale pulp mill and lead the parliamentary Tasmanian Greens.

For those of us who have campaigned for Green issues, we know that our movement and our politics is built on more than any one of us. When Bob Brown went to Risdon Gaol during the Franklin campaign, there were still 1200 other protestors willing to show civil disobedience; Peter Dombrovskis' famous "Rock Island Bend" photograph adorned street-fronting windows and thousands around the country kept protesting to make change possible. And that's how Bob knew it was, because our campaigning and politicking is built on nonviolence, participatory democracy, a drive for justice, and a love of the environment. It stops for no one, and it lives in all Green members. Jo Vallentine could be arrested at Pine Gap, and the



protests against American nukes and bases would bound along; Bob could be in gaol (or, be sailing on the Steve Irwin as he is, as I write), and know that we are part of a great social change that will transform the way humans relate and nurture the planet – and it relies on all of us.

The Greens have a vision that is so fundamentally different from the old politics that it's seldom understood by the old political pundits, tabloid talkback-takers and most critical of conservative commentators. Judging us by the standards of the older parties and the post-1945 issues of prosperity, they cannot grasp the fullness of the challenge ahead for us all: to adapt to climate change; transcend the malaise of over-consumption that pollutes our planet, creates social injustice and weakens our spirits. Also not understood is our abiding commitment to find non-violent solutions to problems, whether they be at home, in the community, nationally, or globally.

We can expect setbacks, but what we are building is bigger than any one of us. In a country where politics has become about fear or fiddling on the margins of business-as-usual, Green vision is future-sized. I think of the faithful artisans of the Middle Ages, working on a cathedral they would never see, knowing it would take generations to complete. On this longer journey to sustainability, we may have decades to go, even hundreds more to come. But what we share today, one campaign at a time, one election at a go, is part of building this greater work. ▲

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GREENING THE COUNTRY

BY JEREMY BUCKINGHAM, NSW MLC, MINING & AGRICULTURE SPOKESPERSON

Not long after being elected to the NSW Legislative Council I hit the road to tour mining and coal seam gas affected communities across the State. Out past Narrabri on the Moree Plains of North Western NSW, I had an appointment that I think says a lot about where the Greens are today and where we will be in the future.

It was July, La Nina was in full swing, and a healthy dryland cotton harvest had been replaced by the sowing of winter grains that were emerging in an endless verdant carpet. After 10 years of catastrophic drought farmers were catching their breath hoping to get in front again with a couple of decent seasons. At a time when these farming communities should have been busy marking lambs, planting trees or fixing fences, I was there to talk with them about the threat of coal seam gas which had burst onto the landscape and was a political debate like no other issue in rural Australia's history.

“the opportunity for the Greens to become the voice for regional, rural and remote Australia was beginning to be realised.”

At Gurley in the heart of one of the nations' agricultural powerhouses, we approached the meeting site (a vast machinery shed) with some trepidation I must admit. Utes, tractors and trucks surrounded the shed and silos and I was met by district farmers,

councillors, teachers, mums, kids and farm dogs; many arms-crossed and sceptical. In the past a Green was more likely to be heckled than listened to out here, but they did listen intently to the Greens message about the importance of protecting our agricultural land and water resources from the perils of coal seam gas. When I told them I'd move a Coal Seam Gas Moratorium Bill in the Parliament, they pledged to support it.

As an activist and then politician it was a breakthrough moment; one where the opportunity for the Greens to become the voice for regional, rural and remote Australia was beginning to be realised.

Many country people feel abandoned and betrayed by the pro-coal and gas attitude of their traditional National Party representatives. The crowd listened, questioned and welcomed the advocacy that we Greens promised. In the shed, over the back of a ute and later on the verandah of a beautiful homestead, local farmers and I acknowledged our differences. We also committed to work on these differences and agreed that the fight to save our productive agricultural lands and water from coal and gas was the fight of our lives.

There was recognition that Greens and farmers share a love of country and that by overcoming historical misunderstandings and working together we could hand our land and water to future generations in a better condition and become a joint political force.

There was no better example of this than the massive protest that brought Sydney and the NSW Parliament to a standstill on 1 May this year. Environmentalists and farmers came together in the 'Protect our land

ENVIRONMENTALISTS SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH FARMERS MARCH ON NSW PARLIAMENT SYDNEY ON 1 MAY TO PROTECT LAND AND WATER RESOURCES FROM THE THREAT OF MINING AND COAL SEAM GAS. PHOTO: MAX PHILLIPS

and water rally', sponsored jointly by the Farmers Association, the Nature Conservation Council and the Lock the Gate Alliance. 10,000 Greens, cockies, graziers, thorough-bred breeders, dairy farmers, environmentalists, fruit growers and city dwellers raised their voices in an unprecedented protest calling on the NSW government to reign in the coal and gas industries and to legislate to protect water and land from these damaging industries. It was a spine tingling moment when the deafening chant went up

"City and country, united we stand, protect our water, protect our land!"

This protest and our ongoing work around the country is challenging the popular mythology perpetuated by right wing politicians and pundits that we Greens are a city-based party. That's bunkum and we all know it. While our regional vote is slightly lower than in the city, it has grown in-line with our city vote and there are voters in regional areas waiting for the Greens to fully engage with country Australia. A rise of a few percentage points in country electorates could secure the required quota to elect a Senator in each state, being particularly useful in NSW and Queensland.

I firmly believe we can increase this constituency, a Country Green constituency, without abandoning the policies or principles that attract voters in metro areas. It will grow if we travel to regional communities, meet and listen to people, advocate in parliament and develop policies that respond to regional needs and vision.

Many folk in the country are realising that the Greens are not their enemy and are instead very practical and visionary people. I believe there is also an increasing realisation among traditional environmentalists that rural landholders are custodians of vast areas of Australia and are key to preserving and reviving our environment – not to mention provide us with food and fibre.

The job has well and truly been started. Country Green pioneers such as WA MLC Robin Chapple has worked tirelessly for the last decade in the Mining and Pastoral regions on issues such as range land protection. Tasmanian MLA Kim Booth has fought tenaciously to protect Tasmania's agricultural lands and water catchments from poor forestry practices. And Christine Milne immediately outlined her intent to build on that work when she started as the new Australian Greens leader. In her first address to the nation as leader, Senator Christine Milne said she wanted a stronger connection with the country.

"... rural and regional Australia has a critical role to play in this century particularly in terms of food security in a global context, and in terms of renewable energy and energy efficiency. Rural communities will also be the back bone of environmental sustainability and protection and I am going out there as a country person to say to other country people it is time that the Greens and country, rural and regional Australia really work together."

It's an exciting time for the Greens with a new dynamic leader and a record number of Federal, State and local representatives delivering our policies and vision.

Large sections of country Australia stand at a cross-roads.

Many towns face the prospect of being engulfed by vast quarries or gas fields. Others are turning into fly-in-fly-out mining camps, with the manufacturing and service sectors being squeezed out of the local community.

The alternative vision is one of a sustainable future based on agriculture, a renewable energy industry, manufacturing and service sectors supported by the National Broadband Network, and financial incentives for good land and water management.

The Carbon Farming Initiative is a case in point. A practical and key plank of the Clean Energy Futures package, this reform will deliver a significant income stream to those farmers and land managers who create carbon stores on their land, whilst at the same time paying farmers for stewardship and programs that deliver improved biodiversity and healthier ecosystems.

It was not so long ago that government's used to pay farmers to clear land, cut down trees and drain wetlands. It is now time to recognise the importance and ecosystem values of good land stewardship and restoration, and provide financial incentives for landholders who protect and nurture the land. ▲





PHOTO: SCOTT DALTON / OXFAM-AMERICA

FOLLOW THE MINING MONEY

BY **SERENA LILLYWHITE**, MINING ADVOCACY LEAD, OXFAM AUSTRALIA

The focus on the resource rent tax and carbon price ignores the bigger issue of how Australian companies conduct business around the world and revenue transparency.

A combination of unprecedented commodity prices and resource-rich countries have for years been driving Australian mining investment into the developing world, including into Papua New Guinea, Indonesia and increasingly Africa, where more than 300 Australian companies are active, with current and prospective investment estimated at about \$19 billion.

Yet, countries with large oil, gas and mining industries often have lower economic growth, greater poverty and inequality and more conflict and instability than countries with fewer natural resources—known as the resource curse or paradox of plenty.

There is no doubt private sector investment can drive economic prosperity and reduce poverty in developing countries, provided appropriate regulation, transparency and accountability controls exist. But with poor regulation and sometimes high levels of corruption, mining can be a driver of conflict and insecurity, the cumulative social and economic price of which can dwarf the supposed burdens of the resource rent tax and carbon price.

Large-scale projects such as mining do impact on the natural environment, people's livelihoods, and highlight the growing competition for scarce resources such as land and water. Responsible mining by Australian companies has never been more important, and can reduce the risks of conflict and corruption.

In some countries, these impacts include loss

of housing, land and livelihoods, social unrest and increased violence and conflict. For these people, the cries of “unfair tax” by Australian miners mean little as they struggle to share in any of the benefits of their resource wealth.

Australian mining companies can make an important economic contribution to the developing countries in which they increasingly operate, through tax payments that are fair, just and transparent. The absence of a mature tax administration system in low-income countries is no excuse for Australian mining companies to not meet their corporate responsibilities.

A robust and transparent tax system provides a stable and predictable fiscal environment, promotes growth, combats corruption, fosters regional development, delivers essential services such as schools, hospitals and clean water, and in the longer term reduces dependency on aid.

Initiatives such as the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative (EITI) will assist. The EITI is the leading global initiative to improve transparency and accountability in the extractive sectors. The idea is simple: companies disclose all payments—taxes, royalties, and other — they make to governments, and governments disclose all revenues they receive. The critical aspect is in ensuring this is done on a country-by country, and ideally project-by-project basis, thereby shining a light on companies' contributions to sustainable and regional development through tax.

Australia has pledged \$12.7 million to EITI to support activities in and operation of the World Bank-administered EITI-Multi Donor Trust Fund,

which promotes EITI adoption and provides advice to countries on how to implement EITI compliant reporting processes. While this is an important contribution, as a global mining giant, implementation of the EITI here in Australia would send a strong message that the Australian Government is serious about improved transparency in the extractives sector.

Implementation in Australia also would assist all Australians better understand the economic contribution of the extractives sector in Australia, the incentives and subsidies companies receive, and the value of their natural resource wealth.

The good news is that the Australian government is making some progress in this regard. In March 2012 an EITI Pilot was announced. It is overseen by a multi-stakeholder group of government, business and civil society. Its purpose is to test existing governance and transparency arrangements for revenues and payments across the Commonwealth, states and territories, and inform the Government's decision on whether Australia should move to full implementation of the EITI.

The push for this type of revenue transparency in extractives is gaining steam. Investors, non-government organisations, and regulatory authorities, such as stock exchanges, are increasingly calling for more transparency and regulation over companies' tax affairs, particularly in the extractives sector.

In the US, Congress has passed Section 1504 of the Dodd-Frank Act, a measure requiring companies registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to publicly report how much they pay governments for access to oil, gas and minerals. Details on this regulation will be published next month, but it will cover 60 per cent of the global market value of all extractive industry companies, eight of the world's ten largest mining companies and 90 per cent of internationally operating oil companies.

Countries such as United Kingdom, Norway and South Korea have declared interest in establishing similar requirements, and the European Commission has adopted legislative proposals that require publicly traded and private EU companies to disclose payments to governments made in exchange for oil, gas, mineral and forest resources.

Oxfam and the Publish What You Pay Coalition—a coalition of human rights, aid, faith-based, anti-corruption, environmental organisations and others that support revenue transparency—are keen to see similar listing rules in Australia. The ASX lists over 1000 extractive industry companies, representing 5 per cent of the world's extractive industry capital.

We cannot forget these are non-renewable resources, and supply won't last forever. For many poor countries this is their best chance of alleviating poverty, strengthening their institutions, fighting corruption and getting a fair share of their natural resource wealth. In Australia, it will contribute to a more informed discussion on the economic contribution of the mining sector and growing concerns of a "two-speed economy". ▲



CHECKS & BALANCES FOR OUR NEAREST NEIGHBOURS

BY MARYATI ABDULLAH

Publish What You Pay (PWYP) Indonesia is a civil society coalition that promotes transparency and accountability of extractive resources, and are concerned with promoting transparency in revenue flows throughout the mining and mineral oil industry. Revenue transparency is important to ensure that the flow of payments and government revenues is done in the right way and does not lead to corruption. The critical stages for transparency are from the point of production, mineral commodity sales, the calculation between government and company entitlement, and the payment and accounting of state revenues, both at central and sub-national levels.

One of the successful global initiatives endorsed by PWYP Indonesia is the EITI (Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative). Indonesia's commitment is spelled out in the Presidential Decree about state revenue in the oil and gas, mineral and coal industry, both at central and sub-national levels. Revenue transparency is important for Indonesia, especially for people who live in the vicinity of the mine so they can trust that the revenue of mining is actually contributing to development programs for their welfare. So they are sure that each drop of oil extracted from the earth, and each ton of coal, and all the land dredged from their settlements will bring 'blessings' for their welfare, not a 'disaster'.

Revenue transparency should be encouraged globally, including Australia, because most of the mining companies are multinational. So, with Revenue Transparency these companies not only have to report payments and revenues to their home country, but they also report their payments to the host country where they are exploiting the mineral resources. In the context of Indonesia and Australia for example, many Australian mining companies are operating in Indonesia, extracting oil and gas, gold, and coal. Thus, the companies would not only report the payment and revenues into Australia, but also must report to Indonesia as the host country where the mining operation takes place. Thus, the community around the mine location can check whether the information they convey is correct or not. ▲

Maryati Abdullah is the National Coordinator for Publish What You Pay Indonesia



Does the planet need Christian stewards?

Planetary stewardship and Christian values

BY **DR VICKY BALABANSKI**

As long ago as 1967, an article in *Science* by Professor Lynn White connected the ecological crisis with the Bible – in particular Genesis chapter 1, and the ‘mandate’ it had given humans to ‘subdue’ the earth:

‘The biblical text – especially the reference to ‘domination’ over nature – has contributed significantly to the senseless exploitation of nature for the sole benefit of humans.’

Lynn White, ‘The historical roots of our ecological crisis’, *Science* 155 (1967).

While the impulse to exploit nature doesn’t originate with the Bible, it certainly has found justification in Genesis 1:26 and 28 in the words about ‘having dominion over every living thing’.

White also pointed out that ‘What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny – that is, by religion. To Western eyes this is very evident in say, India ... It is equally true of ourselves...’

Some think that the way to deal with this problem is to shed one’s connection with the Christian faith and look elsewhere for a more eco-friendly religion. But others – and I am one of these – think there are strong strands to the Biblical tradition that can help critique the exploitation of the Earth and serve to craft a better way of living mindfully, frugally and in kinship with the whole Earth community.

I have been working since 1997 with a group of biblical scholars seeking to rethink our reading perspective so that we read the Bible in solidarity with the Earth community – meaning other species and all of creation, not just humans. This has meant being critical of aspects of our inherited tradition, particularly the valuing of the ‘next world’ over our present, fragile and infinitely precious creation. But it has also meant discovering many aspects of the Bible that are profoundly Earth-friendly and pushing ahead to understand them more deeply.

When we first began, most writing about the Bible and ecology tended to engage in ‘cherry picking’—finding the eco-friendly parts of the Bible, and leaving aside the rest. The Earth Bible team, headed up by Professor Norman Habel, worked on different parts of the Old and New Testaments including those that are implicated in providing self-justification for our destruction of creation. We published a series of five volumes which established the approach. These were controversial, because they set out to read biblical texts from the perspective of the Earth using six eco-justice principles: intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, purpose, mutual custodianship and resistance.

It’s all very well to think about the tradition, but the challenge is to translate our thinking into action and more Earth-friendly practices. One major step was the introduction of a ‘season of creation’, alongside other Christian seasons (like Lent and Advent) which shape the worshipping life of many churches. Joy in the beauty of creation has always been an element of Christian worship (just think ‘All things bright and beautiful!’), but the season of creation is a way of celebrating God’s creation, lamenting its destruction and giving our attention to becoming better custodians or stewards of it. The important thing is that this is not an innovation. In one sense this value is part of the Christian heritage, which speaks of God as the creator, Christ as the redeemer of creation, and the Spirit as sustainer of creation. Worshipping God along with all creation (as the Psalms say), and expressing gratitude, love, and a commitment to care for all living things on earth is not new, but our present context makes it urgent in a way that it has never been before.

Over the past decades there have been many Christian groups and individuals who have been taking seriously the challenge to connect their faith with the ecological realities that face the Earth community. One such group is A Rocha, which describes itself as an international Christian organization which, inspired by God’s love, engages in scientific research, environmental education and community-based conservation projects.

Concern for the environment is now main stream in many churches. The World Council of Churches has a major area called 'Justice, diakonia and responsibility for creation', which includes work on climate change, water, and poverty, wealth and ecology. October 4 is a special day for many churches, as it's the feast of St Francis of Assissi, patron saint of animals and the environment.

But why should people do these things based on Christian values? Why not leave out the Christian label, and do these things because of their obvious value to all people and to the Earth? As White pointed out, we are deeply conditioned by our beliefs about our nature and destiny, so for the people who identify with the Christian tradition or are shaped by the values of this tradition – about one third of the human population of Earth – this is a key context in which we think about our priorities and responsibilities. The international cross-cultural strength of the Christian community can make a significant contribution to shaping Earth-friendly values, and the churches are moving in this direction. Churches are well placed as communities which can participate in the struggle to protect the Earth – participate alongside people of other faiths or no faith.

“Churches are well placed as communities which can participate in the struggle to protect the Earth...”

In 2010 there was a World Mission conference, arguably the most ecumenical Christian gathering ever, held in Edinburgh to mark the centenary of the World Missionary Conference in 1910. A shared mission statement, a 'Common Call', came out of the 2010 conference. It has nine paragraphs, and the third paragraph prioritises creation:

Knowing the Holy Spirit who blows over the world at will, reconnecting creation and bringing authentic life, we are called to become communities of compassion and healing, where young people are actively participating in mission, and women and men share power and responsibilities fairly, where there is a new zeal for justice, peace and the protection of the environment, and renewed liturgy reflecting the beauties of the Creator and creation.

And what of Genesis 1:26 and 28? The words about 'having dominion over every living thing' have to be interpreted in dialogue with the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 2, which talks about Adam being formed from the adamah, the earth, and being placed in the garden to cultivate and serve it. This word for serve, abad, is the same word as is used for serving God in Exodus 4:23. Our religious heritage can help us find our way back into seeing our kinship with the Earth. ▲

Dr Vicky Balabanski is Senior Lecturer in Theology at Flinders University, South Australia, and was recently ordained in the Uniting Church.



MOMENT WITH A MEMBER

ALEX SURACE, NSW

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

Since 2010

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE GREENS?

I became a citizen in 2008 and hadn't voted before then, but it was Kevin Rudd's handling of the climate change issue in 2007 and the fact that he didn't want to negotiate with the Greens. When it came to deciding how I would vote in 2010, I realised that to get stronger outcomes for the environment I'd have to support the Greens.

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO BE A MEMBER?

I don't think we have solved these big picture issues of climate change and social justice in Australia and globally, and the fact that the Greens have a global vision for these problems keeps me engaged.

WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

What is happening post Rio+20. I'm concerned about the progress in reforming the global economic system in terms of reducing poverty and inequality, and also solving environmental issues like climate change at the global level. We can become really focused on what is happening in Australia in terms of asylum seekers and the carbon tax, which is very important, but it's also important to campaign on these issues at a global level. I'm disappointed with the outcome of Rio+20 and that it doesn't get enough attention in Australian politics.

HIGHLIGHT / BIGGEST CHANGE YOU'VE SEEN?

I went to Senegal for the Global Greens Congress earlier this year, so seeing about 80 countries represented there, some with elected representatives, and some just starting out as movements was really inspiring. Being able to see them all come together allowed me to really appreciate how global our vision and movement really is. A personal highlight was sitting next to Bob Brown and voting on resolutions with him and other delegates on behalf of the Australian Greens.

WHAT HAS YOUR ROLE BEEN IN THE GREENS?

Mainly through a combination of being involved with Young Greens both locally in Australia and globally. I've been a member of the Global Young Greens Steering Committee since 2010 and am continuing for another term. I was also one of the lead organisers of the Global Young Greens Congress that was in the days before the Global Greens Congress helping bring young Greens from around the world to Dakar.

While I can see myself being actively involved at the global level for many years to come, I also connect with the local too. I'm involved in my local greens group where I live in Sydney. I think it's important to find a balance between thinking big and taking action locally.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SONG AND WHY?

Jimi Hendrix's 'Purple Haze.' It opens your imagination, making you take the time to explore your own interpretation of reality.

WORDS: ELIZA HOVEY

GLOBAL GREENS CONGRESS

THE THIRD GLOBAL GREENS CONGRESS TOOK PLACE OVER THREE DAYS IN DAKAR, SENEGAL. WE'VE GOT AN UPDATE FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW – **ROBYN LEWIS** & **ALEX SURACE** FROM THE GLOBAL YOUNG GREENS AUSTRALIA AND **ALEX BHATHAL**, INTERNATIONAL CO-SECRETARY OF THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS.

FROM ROBYN LEWIS & ALEX SURACE

The 3rd Global Young Greens Congress brought together around 100 young Greens in the days before the Global Greens Congress in Dakar. This created a space for young Greens to enter into dialogue with one another, share knowledge, find our political voice, plan for the coming years and incorporate a youth perspective into the Global Greens Congress.

Young Greens came from around Senegal, Africa and the world. Successful fundraising ensured participants from low-income countries attended, creating a truly global congress. The age of participants varied from 12 to early 30s and included students, activists and elected representatives.

The first sessions were an opportunity for intercultural dialogue. Participants discussed in groups what it means to be Green from their individual and cultural perspective; with bilingual young Greens helping to bridge language barriers. A living library session then allowed for more in-depth connections to be built, with participants sharing personal stories in an effort to dispel stereotypes and prejudices.

A major aim of the congress was to be participatory and engaging. Participants were encouraged to share workshops on topics that interested them. There was a workshops series on Gender and Reproductive Rights, and individual workshops ranging from one by a Dakar based international high school on local environmental projects to workshops on how the Global Young Greens can remain engaged in the international youth movement. We certainly covered a lot of ground!

We also got political – with a day-long General Assembly held where we considered motions, proposals and endorsed an incoming Steering Committee to guide the network in the coming years. This was structured in such a way as to provide an opportunity to strengthen the regional networks. Ultimately most decisions were passed with consensus which was

an impressive achievement given the limited time to get to know each other and build the trust that is required for making decisions in this way. An awesome demonstration of what being green is all about.

The Global Young Greens Congress was also an opportunity to connect locally. We stayed together in dormitories at Stade Leopold Senghor; a training ground for athletes. Food was organised by a local women's group and we enjoyed partying with locals at the beach and dancing the nights away with djembe drummers. We made sure to tread lightly during our time in Senegal, enjoy ourselves and engage respectfully with our Senegalese friends.

By hosting the Global Young Greens Congress just prior to the Global Greens it ensured there was an active and engaged youth component to the event. Young Greens took the opportunity to actively participate in workshops and breakout groups where amendments and proposals were being discussed and debated. It was great to see such openness to ideas from young Greens throughout the Global Greens Congress and just goes to show how inclusive and forward thinking our movement is.

A more in-depth Global Young Greens Congress Report is being compiled and should be available in the coming weeks. ▲

Congress participants from Australia included; Robyn Lewis, Tamar Primoratz, Alex Surace and Amy Tyler

Email: info@globalyounggreens.org

Do Something!

READ

Our monthly newsletter via the website
www.globalyounggreens.org





FROM ALEX BHATHAL

A few months on from Dakar 2012 and the resolutions creating a number of new global networks for all members of the Greens are starting to be implemented. These new networks, including an Indigenous Greens Network, the Global Greens Women's Network, an International Secretaries group, Greens Parliamentarians Association, and Local Government Network form part of the planned future growth in the Global Greens and will link members of Greens parties around the world.

The Congress itself was hugely successful. Held in a stunning, if slightly sandy venue literally 50 metres from the Atlantic coast on the northern outskirts of Dakar city, the three day meeting was attended by over 500 people from 92 countries.

Amongst the largest national delegations were, unsurprisingly, the West African nations including around 20 delegates from Mali, who all suddenly had to leave on the first evening when the border between Senegal and Mali closed due to the recent coup action in Mali. The Australian delegation, with eight official delegates plus Senators Bob Brown and Rachel Siewert and a number of self-funded non-delegates, was also one of the larger national groupings.

There were about 150 Greens from the African Greens Federation as well as several hundred volunteers, mainly from the young people's network of the Fédération Démocratique des Ecologistes du Sénégal (FEDES). Amongst the African Greens were two very prominent Greens; the immediate former Prime Minister of Niger and the Chief Minister of Burkina Faso! The four Greens MPs from Madagascar were also present, as well as the first elected Greens MPs for the Democratic Republic of Congo.

The end of the Congress coincided with the inaugural celebrations for the new Senegalese President Macky Sall, electoral success at a regional level for FEDES (with over 100 regional councilors being returned around the country), and the appointment of Senegal's first ever Greens minister; FEDES founder and prominent environmentalist Haidar El Ali.

The four Greens Federations which make up the Global Greens; the African Greens Federation, the Asia-Pacific Greens Network, the Federation of Greens Parties of the Americas and the European Greens Party, all had meetings prior to the Congress as did the Global Young Greens.

The Australian delegation played a large role in negotiating the successful passage of a proposal concerning the future of the Global Greens; first through our regional Asia-Pacific Greens Network, then through a grueling round of negotiations, and finally to its adoption at the final plenary session. This resolution on the future of the Global Greens included funding commitments from the four existing Federations which will ensure the continued existence of the Global Greens. It also set the schedule for the next Global Greens Congress, to be held in Europe in late 2016 or early 2017. ▲

ALL MARY MAKE IM CHANGE! *

Papua New Guinea

BY SENATOR PENNY WRIGHT

I recently spent four fascinating days in Papua New Guinea, helping to get more women into parliament in the upcoming elections.

When my PNG Greens colleague, the indomitable Dorothy Tekwie, called for support for her bid to be elected in her home electorate of Vanimo Green province and to promote the election of women candidates throughout her country, WA Greens Senator Rachel Siewert and I were ready volunteers.

I've had a place in my heart for this fascinating country since I visited as a teenager. So, forty years later, I was very happy to return to support Dorothy and the 135 female candidates standing in what is still a very patriarchal society where so-called "Big Man Politics" prevail.

Dorothy's main contestant in Vanimo Green is the current Deputy Prime Minister, Belden Namah. It's a David and Goliath battle, given his immense wealth and reputation for doing what it takes to achieve and retain power, but Dorothy has a serious chance.

The current situation for women in politics is very dispiriting. Of the 110 seat legislature, the only current female MP, the respected Dame Carol Kidu, is set to retire at this election. And the much anticipated bill to reserve 22 seats in the parliament for women was defeated in February by several votes, after 21 members walked out. The need for more women in the parliament of Papua New Guinea is absolutely pressing.

The stakes are high. PNG faces great challenges to reduce poverty and increase education and fair distribution of the wealth from its many natural resources. Unfortunately, unless there is a serious improvement in governance, it will continue to be

foreign companies and shareholders (and a few well-placed locals) who reap the benefits, while school attendance and health services – and all the other indicators of wellbeing – will remain low.

The challenges of campaigning 'PNG style' cannot be underestimated. In some ways, similar to Australia – resources, transport issues, getting the message out – but magnified a hundredfold. In PNG, campaign tactics can also include vote buying and intimidation from incredibly well-resourced and sometimes seriously desperate opponents.

“onlookers transformed from mildly curious to enthusiastic ... as they suddenly glimpsed the possibilities for change...”

Rachel Siewert and I arrived in Madang to a traditional 'sing sing' welcome in our honour then set off on a thrilling trip into the mountains, accompanied by a bunch of female – and male – supporters. Our journey took us along steep, twisting, treacherously potholed roads, bordered by thick jungle.

After a day of campaigning we returned home in the dark with a precariously empty petrol tank, barely able to see the road because of Monsoonal-strength downpours and running the risk of unwelcome attention from 'rascal gangs'; adding a frisson of excitement that we don't usually encounter on the campaign trail in Australia!

But what a day! Stopping along the way, Dorothy and Josephine Mandaewe, a feisty and principled PNG Greens candidate for the Ursino Bundi electorate,





OPPOSITE: A LOVELY WELCOME IN MADANG; RACHEL SEWERT AND PENNY WRIGHT WITH TWO OF THE WOMEN STANDING FOR ELECTION IN THE PNG ELECTIONS; JOSEPHINE MANDAWE (L) AND DOROTHY TEKWIE (R); THIS PAGE: THE CROWD AT URSINO BUNDI LISTEN TO DOROTHY TEKWIE.

whipped out their trusty megaphone and rallied the crowds by sheer force of passion and oratory. It was inspiring to see the onlookers transformed from mildly curious to enthusiastic and excited as they suddenly glimpsed the possibilities for change if they were to vote in politicians who acted for the community interest rather than their own.

Rachel and I spoke out too, testifying to the benefits of having women in the Australian parliament who were able to influence policy and lawmaking.

Environmental issues loom huge on the PNG landscape, with abundant natural resources being logged, mined and fished at a pace of knots. Dislocation of communities, tensions about landowner rights, serious pollution and failure to get a fair return from the resources are all issues that are raising more and more concerns among the community.

In a place where might prevails and money speaks volumes, the PNG Greens have only the powerful conviction and tenacity of their leaders.

Irrespective of these many challenges, Papua New Guineans love democracy. Despite more than 800 language groups, intensely diverse cultures and some of the most mountainous and isolated terrain on the planet, they go to extraordinary lengths to get ballot papers to far-flung electorates and walk huge distances to cast their votes.

It is to the credit of Papua New Guinea that they came through their recent constitutional crisis without bloodshed on the streets. Attempts by some players to

defer the elections were met by staunch resistance and they were held over two weeks from the 23rd June as scheduled.

I was proud to see the role Australia played in assisting with the conduct of this vote at the request of the PNG authorities – lending a hand in the distribution and collection of ballot papers (by helicopter and aircraft) and providing other significant logistical support for the PNG Electoral Commission.

The candidates we spoke with are keen to see widespread monitoring and the presence of independent observers as part of the election process, and the introduction of separate polling places for women and men, to reduce the degree of intimidation which can occur.

I feel incredibly privileged to have participated briefly in what is a robust, if challenging process. I acknowledge Dorothy Tekwie, Josephine Mandaewe and the other courageous candidates who are willing to stand by their principles in such a volatile environment and my best wishes are with them at this point in time.

I sincerely hope that all many make im change* and that we will see Dorothy and a good number of other women candidates elected to the PNG parliament in 2012. ▲

✳ *all the women will bring change*

OUR BORDERS ARE SECURE IT'S OUR HUMANITY THAT IS IN DANGER

BY GIOVANNI TORRE, GREENS REFUGEE ACTION GROUP AND GREENS WA



In 2010 the newly minted Prime Minister Gillard delivered a speech on the question of boat arrivals, expressing the need to “protect our way of life”: buying into the disingenuous conflation of two distinct issues – asylum seekers and border protection – which was so effectively developed by Howard and Ruddock. The PM went on to say “I understand the anxiety in the community around boat arrivals”. It is on this foundation - the notion that refugees are a threat to ‘our way of life’, and that the anxiety around them is therefore justified – that all subsequent Labor discussion of this policy has rested. The ALP has completely accepted the toxic and inaccurate boundaries set by the Coalition for this debate. These boundaries go virtually unchallenged within the public pronouncements of the Labor Party (and the Coalition).

The ethical and, ultimately, politic thing would have been to show leadership on the issue. Instead of that craven apology for racist fear and those who manipulate it, the Prime Minister should have laid out the compelling case that shatters the notion the “anxiety in the community around boat arrivals” has any basis in fact. By validating the fear, Labor pitched an approach predicated on the assumption that the Australian public not only does not know any better, but also cannot know any better.

Fundamental to the major party intellectual and spiritual black hole on this issue is their refusal to acknowledge the true nature of the ‘problem’ of boat arrivals, which precludes them from demonstrating an understanding of what a solution is. The proclamations and policies from the ALP and Coalition suggest they

believe a ‘solution’ is something that frightens asylum seekers away from Australian shores.

The problem is that people must flee their homelands; that the processes for application abroad are painfully and often dangerously slow; that other countries are ruthlessly and unspeakably cruel to refugees; and that the heads of the smuggler rings take advantage of a ready supply of desperate people to fleece them of their savings and offer them a cramped spot on a potentially deadly voyage. Until the major parties publicly accept that this entire picture - not just one element of it - is the problem, there will be no ‘solution’.

The Greens have always opposed Labor’s ‘Malaysia Solution’. Put simply, it is a live people trade of 800 asylum-seekers for 4000 *already accepted* refugees living freely but not particularly welcome in Malaysia.

In August 2011 the scheme was defeated in the High Court in a case brought by David Manne of the Refugee and Immigration Law Centre. To Manne, the grandson of refugees who fled the Nazis, the notion that people could reach Australian waters to claim asylum and then be sent to a third country in which their human rights are in serious danger, was repugnant morally and legally. The Court agreed. [1]

On June 27th this year the House of Representatives passed Rob Oakeshott’s private member’s bill to allow the Government to implement the Malaysia Solution. The purpose of Oakeshott’s bill was to amend the Migration Act 1958 “to replace the existing framework for taking offshore entry persons to another country for assessment of their claims to be refugees” and also



to amend the Immigration (Guardianship of Children) Act 1946 to erode the provisions regarding “the making and implementation of any decision to remove, deport or take a non-citizen child from Australia”. [2]

Mr Oakeshott’s ‘compromise’ position is an attempt to outsource Australia’s humanitarian obligations under international law. The primary objective is to stop asylum seekers from coming here, not to stop them from making dangerous journeys per se. It is about protecting borders, to which there is an imaginary threat, not protecting people.

The High Court decision not only rendered the Malaysia swap illegal, it cast doubt over the legality of all offshore processing – including Nauru. The Coalition, in voting against Oakeshott’s bill, voted to keep their own policy illegal out of sheer two-faced cynicism. Kevin Andrews stood up to express his concerns about human rights, something Dr Mohammad Haneef would have found curious. Joe Hockey raged against the prospect of sending a child unaccompanied to Malaysia, yet seems comfortable with the prospect of towing children to Indonesia.

The Greens opposed the bill. To support it would have marked a 180 degree turn on long-held principles and policies. It would have been an offence to reason and to decency, and a betrayal of the many Australians who trusted us with their votes knowing where we stand.

A real regional solution would involve supporting human rights abroad – not only in the countries from which people originally flee, but also in those through which they pass on their way to Australia; completely

overhauling Australia’s overseas asylum application system so it is no longer prohibitively slow; and significantly increasing Australia’s humanitarian intake. Hope, rather than fear, is the answer.

The SIEV X sank almost two months after the Howard Government announced its ‘Pacific Solution’. 353 people drowned. Because Temporary Protection Visas exclude ‘family reunion’, the vast majority of people on board were women and children. Nauru did not deter them, and TPVs meant almost 150 children were on board. These policies are not the solution. The investigation into the sinking of the SIEV X made a series of recommendations, one of which was significant reforms to sea rescue protocols. On June 28th the Greens urged the Government and the Opposition to support this reform, so that never again would a rescue mission begin *two days after* a distress signal was received. This was rejected by the major parties.

There are more than 8,000 asylum seekers in Indonesia, and only two people in the country employed by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to deal with their cases. UNHCR’s annual budget in Indonesia is only \$6 million. If the Australian Government – and the Opposition – are serious about saving lives, we need to support UNHCR in providing a safe pathway to asylum for refugees. The word ‘queue’ is thrown around to depict boat arrivals as sneaky, unjust and, in Tony Abbott’s depraved turn of phrase, “not Christian”. In Indonesia, the wait in the ‘queue’ to be resettled from refugee camps is 76 years. An immediate increase in UNHCR funding of \$10 million from Australia will increase their capacity to assess asylum applications. This was rejected by the major parties.

With Australia accepting 60 people, on average, from Indonesia and Malaysia each year – the pressure to risk a dangerous boat journey builds to boiling point quickly. The Greens proposed an immediate increase in our overall annual humanitarian intake to 20,000, including resettling 1,000 people from Indonesia and 4,000 people from Malaysia, to reduce the incentive to risk a boat journey. This was rejected by the major parties.

And they talk about intransigence.

On Australia Day 2006 I met three Afghan sisters who were celebrating getting their Australian citizenship. Aged 24, 23 and 20, they had applied for asylum seven years earlier and been in Australia for three years. Consider for a moment: in the year 1999, with the Taliban controlling 90 per cent of the country, three girls in Afghanistan aged 17, 16 and 13 applied for asylum in Australia and had to wait four years to get it. They are not an exceptional case. Is it any wonder whatsoever that others opted instead to take their chances by sea?

As a Hazara refugee in Leonora detention centre told me last year:

“The people of Australia must understand we are not criminals, we are homeless. If peace in Afghanistan came back, we can’t stay (in Australia) because we love our country, we all want to help our nation. If Afghanistan have

peace — nobody come across a big ocean with 99 per cent chance of death. All Afghan people take risk and our life risk because they want to work here for peace ... Their life in danger — because of this they cross the ocean to reach here and want protected in Australia.”

The major parties, confronted on the cheap tactic of demonising refugees, claim their target is not refugees but ‘people smugglers’. But while the heads of smuggling rings are corrupt and exploitative, it is the refugees who are punished. The crew are small-fry, desperately poor and also placed in danger by their bosses. The chief smugglers are almost untouchable, enjoying the protection of corrupt officials in their countries of operation. It is not easy for Australian law enforcement agencies to work against smuggling rings under such conditions. As such, if the Government wants to break “the business model of the people smugglers” the principal move must be to dedicate the resources necessary to accelerate the processing of asylum claims overseas. The interminable processes, combined with the oppressive and dangerous conditions in Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, and other states, provides the ‘customers’ for the ‘business model’ of the smugglers. Instead of making the alternative more accessible, the major party approach is to make the smuggler’s path undesirable by making *the destination* undesirable. In other words, the major parties believe a successful policy is one that makes refugees believe they are better off facing repression in Iran, violence in Afghanistan, or persecution in Malaysia and Indonesia than they are reaching Australia’s waters by boat. We have reached a point at which this is how Labor and the Coalition define success. History will see it differently.

This is not about border protection, and it never has been. The nation’s borders are airtight, despite our small population and vast coastline. Every asylum seeker arriving by boat in Australia is subject to thorough background checks and not one - ever - has been found to have committed an act of terrorism or a war crime, or have any plans to commit an act of terrorism in Australia.

For the Government the question of asylum seekers arriving by sea has been a moral crisis, as those within the ALP who mistakenly believe mimicking the Coalition is the electorally pragmatic course of action continue to exercise the dominant influence over policy. For the Coalition it seems whatever moral crisis there once was is now over, as the handful of progressive liberals in their rank shrinks and fades into history. A source within the Liberal shadow cabinet made the Coalition’s agenda clear, again, early last year when they told the journalist Peter Hartcher:

“We had all been asked to come up with potential issues we could run with. Scott [Morrison] said, ‘What are we going to do about multiculturalism? What are we going to do about concerns about the number of Muslims?’ He put it on the table like a dead cat.”

Scott Morrison is the Coalition spokesperson on immigration. His ‘dead cat’ is at the heart of Coalition policy on this issue.

READ THE SUBMISSIONS

The Expert Panel on Asylum Seekers is tasked with reporting on the best way forward in dealing with asylum seekers risking their lives on dangerous boat journeys to Australia. The Government invited Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston AC AFC (Ret’d), the former chief of Australia’s defence force to lead the Panel which also included Mr Paris Aristotle AM, the Director of the Victorian Foundation for Survivors of Torture and Professor Michael L’Estrange AO, the Director of the National Security College at the Australian National University.

Submissions to the Panel closed on 19 July, and the Panel will provide advice to the Government in August 2012.

The Greens’ submission focuses on short and longer term regional actions, by saving lives immediately through escalated resettlement from Malaysia and Indonesia, while working consistently towards the establishment of a New Regional Plan of Action. The Greens also advocate for the maintenance of onshore assessment of people who do come to Australia; consistent with the Refugee Convention and our international obligations.

The full Greens’ submission can be found at
<http://greens.org.au/content/australian-greens-submission-expert-panel-asylum-seekers-o>

A full list of submissions and the Terms of Reference
of the Panel can be found at
<http://expertpanelonasylumseekers.dpmc.gov.au/>

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the presidential election in Iran and subsequent protests and crackdown, the Saffron Revolution in Burma and the junta’s brutal repression of it, and the bloody end of the civil war in Sri Lanka, have played critical roles in the number and composition of refugees arriving by boat to Australia. The mainstream media by and large ignore the role of these ‘push-factors’, as do the major parties.

Even in the peak year, 2010, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Australian waters by boat was about 6500. That same year the UN High Commission for Refugees estimated there were 43.7 million forcibly displaced people in the world: 0.014 per cent of them came to Australia by boat. Last year the number of people seeking asylum in Australia fell by nine per cent, almost all of which was in boat arrivals: From 6500, to 4500. This happened without harsh Temporary Protection Visas; without Nauru; without the ‘Malaysia solution’; and without the ‘East Timor solution’. In addition to being pointless and obscenely expensive, offshore processing is inhumane: offshore detention centres keep asylum seekers as far away as possible from legal, community and medical support from Australia.

Surveys have indicated many people wildly overestimate the number of people arriving by boat in Australia, inflating it as a quantum, as a percentage of total asylum seekers, and as a proportion of total immigration. This is not a coincidence; it is the product of a deliberate campaign of fear by those who have a vested interest - political or economic - in

misinformation and panic.

After visiting Australia in February, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, urged Australians to appreciate the scale of the humanitarian crisis, and the tiny nature of our role in it.

Against the settling of 57,000 people reaching Malta and Italy by boat in 2011, and another 100,000 asylum seekers reaching Yemen by boat, Mr Guterres said:

"It is very difficult for me as High Commissioner, who has to deal with the whole world, to be convinced that 6000 is a very important problem... I understand that in the psychology of Australia, this is an important problem ... but you need to understand also the global perspective".

While a new parliamentary inquiry on how to discourage asylum seekers from taking the dangerous journey by sea is about to begin, findings by the inquiry into the immigration detention system five months ago have been ignored. In March that inquiry recommended that asylum seekers be detained for no longer than 90 days. A majority of the joint committee found that asylum seekers who pass initial health, character and security checks should immediately get a bridging visa or be moved to community detention. The inquiry also called for an end to the current practice of the immigration minister also acting as the legal guardian of unaccompanied children in detention.

The recommendations of this committee must be implemented, and that will be only the first step. This nation's treatment of asylum seekers over the past twenty years has been shameful, and we have a lot of work to do to put things right. ▲



PHOTO: TAKVER



MOMENT WITH A MEMBER

HANNAH AULBY, VIC

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

I joined when I was 16 and that was six years ago.

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE GREENS?

In the lead up to the state election in 2006 I started going to Young Greens meetings and getting involved in media stunts. So I thought joining was a way to support the Greens on top of volunteering.

WHAT WAS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU WHEN YOU JOINED?

The pulp mill was pretty big at that time. But it wasn't one issue; it was about saving the world!

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO BE A MEMBER?

I've found amazing mentors and friends that have taught me a lot. It's for personal and professional reasons that I continue to be a member.

When I finished school, I had been involved for a few years and had strong networks in the Greens. I noticed the difference this made to my feeling of belonging in Hobart compared with friends who hadn't been involved in anything. When they came back to Hobart after travelling they didn't have anything to keep them there. When I came home, I was excited to get back involved with the Greens. Hobart is still my home and a lot of that has to do with the Greens.

Professionally the Greens taught me how to be a campaigner for environmental and social change – and now that's what I do for a living!

HIGHLIGHT / BIGGEST CHANGE YOU'VE SEEN?

When I was working on the 2010 election campaign. We got 22% of the vote state wide, which is the biggest Tassie has ever seen.

When I first joined many people were shocked to learn that I was an active member, and there was a wider perception that the Greens were too radical and not to be taken seriously. Since then things have changed and when I talk to people now 80-90% of people are supportive, or even impressed that I'm involved with such a fast growing, innovative political party.

WHAT IS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU RIGHT NOW?

Climate change.

WHAT HAS YOUR ROLE BEEN IN THE GREENS?

I started out as Convener of the Tassie Young Greens, then Convener of the Australian Young Greens for a while.

Then I went travelling and came back in 2009 and started work on the 2010 campaign. After the election I started working for the Greens Ministers Nick McKim and Cassy O'Connor. That was up until I moved to Melbourne six months ago where I now volunteer at Adam Bandt's office.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SONG AND WHY?

Joni Mitchell's song *Hejira*, because I really relate to the way she talks about travelling – I've always had the travel bug.

PHOTO: ANNEKE VAN DE VUSSE

The Great Green Change

BY CATHERINE GREEN

I came across Nikos at a Greens public meeting in Melbourne. After a dreary day darting between awnings, I was expecting a bedraggled handful of Green die-hards. What I got was standing-room only as members packed the Wheeler Centre to hear Christine Milne and Adam Bandt. Nikos stood up at the end of the meeting to ask a question and proudly prefaced on the roving mic that he used to be a staunch Liberal voter until the last federal election when he and a number of other family members all decided to vote Green. I was immediately curious! I wondered if, more than just an interesting story, this was a sign of the times; families moving en masse toward the Greens? And if so, I need to have a long conversation with my Dad!

So why the Great Shift? I met up with Nikos, his wife Chrystal, and sister-in-law Penny to have a cup of tea to find out why.

You, your wife, your sister-in-law, brothers, parents and in-laws all decided to Vote Greens at the last election after many years of voting Labor and Liberal. How did that happen?

Nikos: It was during the lead up to the last election, so politics was on the radar. We had a lot of questions and we were pretty disillusioned with the other parties. I was a staunch Liberal voter, and the rest of the family were Labor voters and for the first time we were questioning our political orientation. We felt like there wasn't much choice and so we put it all out on the table for discussion. The Greens really came on to the radar through Penny. We met up with Penny one night before the election and she told us that she had voted Greens in a previous election. We went home that night and thought, "Penny voted Greens? But she's nothing like a Greens voter!"

Penny: I work in the community sector with newly arrived Greek migrants, so I see some of those social issues about immigration and access to resources. I initially came across the Greens through a friend who was a volunteer coordinator with the party;



that was the first time I took notice of Greens' policies. The policies were straight forward to understand and were about things that mattered; transport, water, looking after the environment. Prior to that, I was a Labor voter but that was just a reaction and was without being informed. I felt like I could connect with the Greens' policies, but it was also the way that they were communicated. It was straight forward.

Chrystal: We had just become parents at the time and our outlook had changed. All of a sudden we were a family, living in the city and different things mattered. Labor and Liberal were starting to look the same. We initially had in our mind that the Greens were just environmentalists. But I had to educate myself. The things they talked about like abolishing kinder fees, including dental in medicare, gay marriage, refugee rights; these were also things that mattered to us.

Nikos: It was really about making our vote count and having the opportunity to do something different, shake things up. And that wasn't going to happen if we voted for the old parties who seem to only be concerned with playing it safe and staying in power.

Do you feel like there is a bigger shift towards the Greens, with people like you starting to look at the Greens as a real alternative?

Nikos: Absolutely. When we made the decision to vote Greens, we started going to some of their public lectures. Initially we found there were a handful of people at these meetings, but we've seen that group grow and swell even in the time we've been members. So you do feel you are part of a huge cultural shift. And our goal now is to ensure we help keep Adam Bandt in the seat of Melbourne after the next federal election. That's what our focus is. So what we do now is we have conversations with people and get politically active to make sure that happens. We want to help people make an informed choice.

Chrystal: And it seems like you are more connected to the party when you vote Green. I grew up Labor, but didn't associate with the party. Now with people like Adam Bandt here in Melbourne, it seems like you can be really connected to the party.

Having conversations about politics with friends and family? That's normally off the agenda! Have you had some good experiences talking to other people about your move to the Greens and the party in general?

Chrystal: We had that conversation with Niko's younger brother. In the past he hasn't taken an interest in politics. He had just moved to Sydney, got a new job. We had discussions with him about why we were voting Greens and all of a sudden a light went off in his head and he thought, 'you know what? I really like what they stand for and I'm going to vote Greens'. Then he told his partner, and then they talked amongst their friends and suddenly there was a new little pocket in Sydney all voting Greens.



Is it difficult having these conversations, given you were a self-confessed staunch Liberal in the past?

Nikos: I work in the corporate sector and I wear a suit every day, so that can get hard. But it makes me more determined to push the cause. We are a new breed of Greens and as we move into new spheres and push current boundaries we should expect some resistance and questions.

For all the other new members who may be shedding the skin of their Liberal or Labor voting past, what's your advice for them?

Penny: It's funny, because of all of us, the greatest shift has been from Nikos. I came over one afternoon and Nikos had a Greens' t-shirt on after attending a Greens event. Honestly, it was one of the most surprising visuals! If you knew Nikos as the Liberal supporter that he was, that image would have shocked you! But it actually inspired me to be more active.

Chrystal: Only because he is so corporate! On a daily basis you're in a suit and you just don't look like what people perceive a Greens' voter to be! He would have been the poster child for the Liberals!

Nikos: I think it's about harnessing your energy and making that first call to get involved. When you get involved, you make a difference and you *feel* like you're making a difference because you see the results. You see the results at a local level. You see the results at a state level. And you see the results at a federal level when they start putting all these relevant issues on the national agenda. These issues that have been shied away from for a long time are now on the national agenda and it's about time they're pushed to the forefront for discussion!

Penny: One thing we noticed when we would go back and visit family in Greece is that politics is much more a part of the conversation there. And they will protest when something had gone wrong, or they want to be heard or make a difference. We don't do that here as much, maybe because we have had it so good for so long. I always felt that what I voted wasn't going to affect my life one way or another and seeing what the Greens were doing, it was almost like a silent protest for me to start with – voting for the Greens.

Chrystal: Up until the last election we never felt the need to get involved. And now we have posters up in the window of our house, do family letter drops, go to listening posts and constantly have conversations about the movement.

What have you found to be the best thing about being part of the Greens?

Nikos: The thing about the Greens is that they connect with people outside of an election. You can see Adam down at the local farmers market twice a month; he's there just chatting to people. He feels accessible, and he is. After Adam[Bandt] came over for lunch one day, my father-in-law said that after 40 years in this country, no other politician has shown that much interest, or tried to understand what the needs of the people are the way that the Greens and Adam did. For the Greens, politics is continuous engagement not just an isolated election. They are always out there and always listening because they actually want to know. I think that's what gives them currency. ▲



MOMENT WITH A MEMBER

STEVE BRECH, QLD

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN A MEMBER?

I've been a member since 2001 and started volunteering in the mid-90's.... But I did apathy for a long time!

WHY DID YOU JOIN THE GREENS?

I saw the Greens as the only political party that had a long term concern for Australia. Not just the environment, but also social justice issues. I joined when Pauline Hanson was at her height, and it just seemed like the right thing to do.

WHAT WAS THE NUMBER ONE ISSUE FOR YOU?

Protection of the natural environment. The Far North Queensland branch was formed in 1992, and right from the inception there was concern about Rainbow Harbour on the side of Trinity Beach (Cairns). Previously the Lord Mayor had taken people out to protest on the mud flats. It was a big issue. It is always a battle in this town that is a tourist town; between development and protecting the very thing, the natural environment, that people are coming to see.

WHY DO YOU CONTINUE TO BE A MEMBER?

Fear of becoming apathetic again. I did apathy from the age of 18 to about 28, just thinking "I can't change anything anyway". What I've learned is that you can. The more you get involved, the more power you have to change things.

HIGHLIGHT / BIGGEST CHANGE YOU'VE SEEN?

False Cape Development. We were able to hold them up long enough that the Global Financial Crisis caught up with them and halted the development. They said it was only to cater for 500 people, but with 500 people you need other services and roads and we saw it as the thin edge of the wedge. And it wasn't just the Greens; it was the traditional land owners and other environmental groups around here.

WHAT HAS YOUR ROLE BEEN IN THE GREENS?

Everything! Stalls, lobbying, protests...though I haven't been to a protest in about three years. I also just build trust and relationships with people. There are probably four people on the local council that I can ring up and get a meeting with to talk about issues. All of us need to do that.

I also stood in the 2009 state election. I went in thinking that I would be happy if I got 9%. I got 11%!

WHAT IS YOUR FAVOURITE SONG AND WHY?

Maybe not my favourite, but when I was 16 I can remember hearing 'I was only 19' by Redgum. My Dad is a military historian, and that song taught me to challenge authority. I heard my Dad glorifying the army, I started questioning things and took part in my first demonstration. That song got me thinking about social justice.

PHOTO: NATALIA BRUNOV

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Christine's Column

OUT AND ABOUT IN RURAL AUSTRALIA

It is hard to put into words the wonderful experiences and hospitality offered when getting out and about in rural Australia. In Orange, Lee Rhiannon, Jeremy Buckingham and I visited a terrific business which accesses its products from within a 200 km radius and lo and behold in the fridge was bacon from Trunkey Creek. This is for you Bob, from the stomping ground of your primary school years.

Verandas and kitchen tables are so central to life on the farm and there is nothing I enjoy more than having a yarn over a cuppa and enjoying the utterly delicious morning teas.

In Port Augusta, Penny Wright and I met Dave who is Canada's champion capsicum grower and is working to perfect growing vegetables from desalinated sea water using a marvellous mix of innovative technologies including the solar array used to concentrate heat to desalinate the water. Isn't it great to think that fresh vegetables

can be grown on degraded soils using sun and seawater?

We also met the Mayor, who together with the community, is campaigning for the closing down of the coal fired power station and its replacement by a solar thermal one. What a fantastic community campaign.

At Toowoomba with Larissa Waters, I went out to the Felton Valley to meet the farmers under siege from coal seam gas and threatened by extended coal mining. They reminded me of the Wesley Vale farmers who never gave up and these farmers are proving just as courageous

and outspoken. Destroying agricultural land and risking water contamination in an age of food insecurity is madness.

Do you remember Storm Boy? Sarah and I had our own storm boy moment when we flew down to the mouth of the Murray and met with farmers worried by the failure of the proposed plan to deliver water to the lower Murray and Lakes. It was a glorious day and so very beautiful having a bird's eye view of the Coorong.

- Christine





A BIG MOMENT

THE FIRST SENATE SPEECH FROM OUR NEWEST GREEN SENATOR, **PETER WHISH-WILSON**

When I arrived home in Launceston after my first days in the Australian Senate, my daughter Bronte asked me how I felt. The first thing that came to mind was that I felt lucky to have been afforded such a great opportunity to represent the Tasmanian and Australian people, and to have the chance to make a difference to our nation.

Big moments in your life call for reflection.

My first reflection is that I am very privileged to have a loving family and many friends to support me, good health and a rich tapestry of life experiences, some of which I want to share with you.

As a little boy, I lived in the 'red dog days' of Western Australia's early 1970's, but have lived and worked all over the world: as a labourer in the Western Australian mines; as a stockbroker in New York and Hong Kong; as a farmer; stay at home dad and University lecturer. And I've been lucky enough to have brought up my family in one of the most beautiful places on the planet - Tasmania where my family roots go deep.

Today I bring this experience - and my passions - to the Australian Greens, and to the Senate.

I never really planned or expected to be a politician, but rather have been drawn into public life by a series of community campaigns and chance events, the most recent of which was the decision of Bob Brown to retire from the Senate.

In his first speech to this senate chamber 16 years ago, Senator Bob Brown lamented a lack of awareness and political commitment to preventing serious, irreversible, human-made climate change.

It is fitting that, in just a few days' time, we will finally have a price on the pollution that drives global warming, after over forty years of talking and inaction. The Australian Parliament, led in many ways by Bob Brown and Christine Milne, has shown great leadership in taking the first important step in investing in a better future for our grandchildren.

Showing leadership on important issues that you feel deeply passionate about should be what politics is all about. This has always been Bob Brown's message, and will be his lasting legacy.

I believe history will accord him an honoured place amongst the most well-respected and successful political leaders this country has produced.

Several years back, at the height of the legal battle to save the Wielangta forest, I remember hearing Bob Brown talking of how he didn't feel anger towards his detractors. Rather, he felt sad for them. This was

because they didn't share his special gift - an enduring and meaningful relationship with nature, from which he drew so much of his personal strength.

There are millions of voters across Australia who share similar values and a connection with nature.

One thing I have learnt over recent years is that many paths lead to being Green, in terms of both philosophy and action, and it's my experience that no-one has a monopoly on what it means to be an environmentalist, or a social change activist.

There are millions of voters across Australia who share similar values and a connection with nature.

A common thread however is that most of these people can point to an event, or significant turning point that has shaped their life's journey or world view.

On reflection, my journey to this place today started in the late 1990s, when as a young stockbroker in New York I experienced an epiphany of sorts.

The year was 1997. My company, the late Merrill Lynch, decided to restructure our Australian team and send me home to Melbourne. I'm a person who values loyalty - after all my hard work, I was gutted. On the day before my departure, I was offered what was then a dream job, working as part of the global mining research team for UBS Bank Switzerland.

I was given five quiet minutes to myself in the recruitment office to consider my new offer. I was standing and staring out the window of the South Tower, World Trade Centre, watching the Staten Island Ferry cross the Hudson, feeling the hum of that vibrant city when the realisation came, and I was finally brave enough to admit it to myself: I felt unhappy and unfulfilled.

The pursuit of a bigger salary, bonuses and living the high life in New York, meant little to me.

I not only wanted to go home, but from that moment I determined to change my life and pursue a different course, and seek a deeper meaning.

I have since found this meaning in nature, and in the Greens.

You can read the full speech at:

greensmps.org.au/content/speeches/senator-peter-whish-wilsons-first-speech-senate