

GREEN

MAGAZINE OF THE AUSTRALIAN GREENS

THE BIG PICTURE



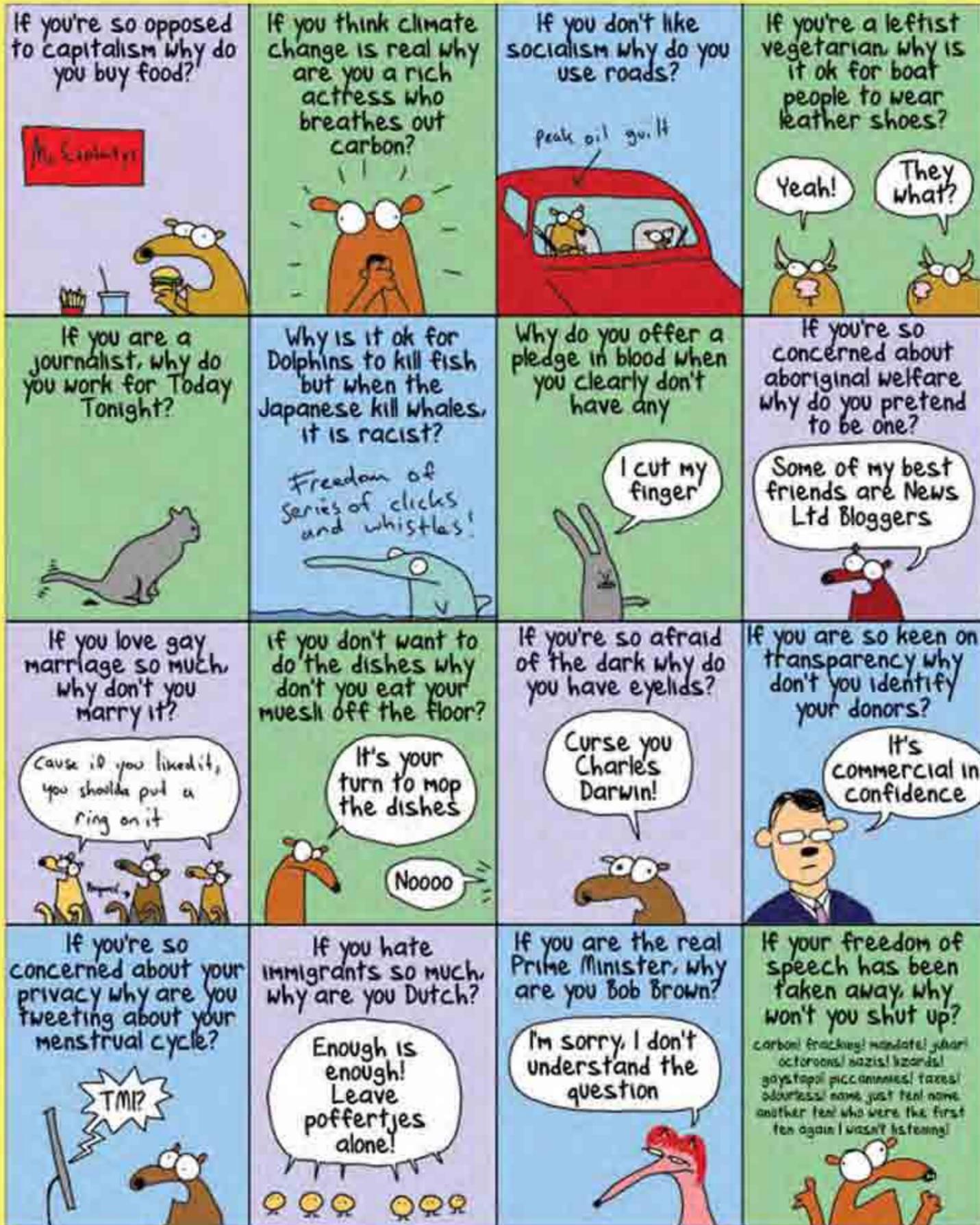
green planet:
what's
happening
across the
globe

is economic
growth good?
how is the
environment
impacted?



green
economic
policy: what is
the fact and
fiction

Hypocrisy



GREEN

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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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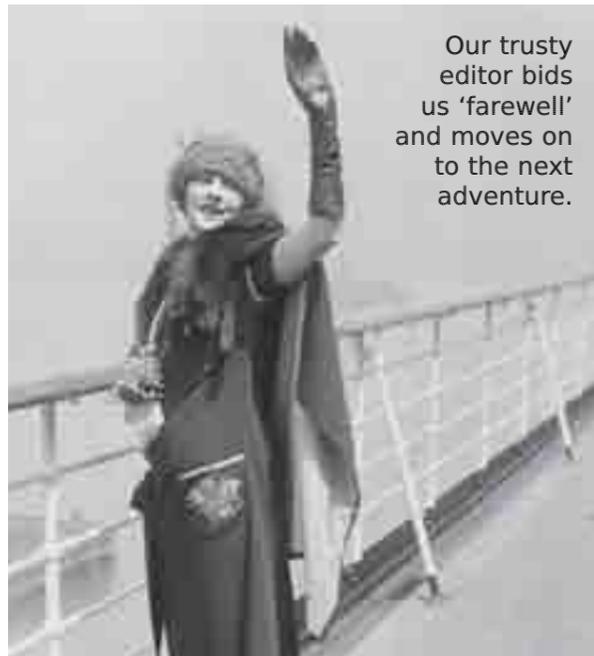
This edition of *Green* magazine tackles some big issues: economics, the possibilities of a global parliament, the repercussions of our growth-at-all-costs system and of course the biggest move for our nation - the introduction of a price on carbon. Every page is full of compelling arguments and ideas, all of which could have filled an entire magazine on their own. I encourage you to sit down over a cup of tea and dive in at the deep end.

I am sad to say this is my last edition as editor of *Green* magazine. It has been a pleasure and a privilege to edit the magazine over the past few years, a time where the party (and our political landscape) has seen significant changes. As a Greens member, it has been exciting to see the growth of the Australian Greens, particularly in federal parliament. As an editor, it has been a challenge to reflect and celebrate these adequately, and I hope that I have done them justice. My time creating *Green* has shown me what a broad church this party truly is, one that seems impossible to encapsulate in these pages.

My thanks to the Australian Greens Communications Working Group members who have guided the magazine through these years, along with the team-members who have worked to bring each edition to fruition, including Roselina Press, Libby Henstock, Tim Norton and Bianca Durrant.

I look forward to seeing *Green* magazine continue on as a hub for debate and discussion, and I urge you all to share your thoughts in the letters page, or by submitting your own articles.

Lefa Singleton Norton - Editor
greenmag@greens.org.au ▲



Our trusty editor bids us 'farewell' and moves on to the next adventure.

Apologies

In Issue 34 of *Green* we printed 'Power of the Positive' by Holly Hammond. We incorrectly stated that Holly was writing on behalf of the Change Agency. Holly is the Director of Plan to Win, a social movement learning project. Her views do not represent the Change Agency.

The editor would like to apologise to Libby Connors, founding member of the Queensland Greens and activist, who was the author of the last Queensland contribution for *Green Party News*. This was incorrectly attributed to Bernie Williams.



I was so pleased to read your 'misuse and abuse of language' edition of *Green*.

The environmental movement and Greens have long been a favourite whipping boy for those who feel disempowered, frustrated over the state of our planet or who feel guilty over their own inaction. Or, more so, from those who have opposing agendas.

Over the years I kept a list of prejudicial terminology used in media to refer to environmentalists - and that grew to nearly 200, everything from 'elitist' to 'extremist' to 'single issue' to 'greenie', and so many more. Whilst it is sensible to keep alert to genuine feedback, it is also prudent to understand where this language comes from and the power that it wields.

On one occasion when a media headline screamed: "Search Party Dispatched for Lost Greenie" I rehashed the entire article replacing the word *Greenie* with *Redneck* and faxed that back to outlets side-by-side. The aim was to illustrate to media personnel their benign acceptance of pejorative language that they would not dare to use in reverse contexts. That example had a sobering effect on local media.

Got something to say? Drop us a line at greenmag@greens.org.au



Quite often we allow pejorative language to be used, not realising its power. By way of example, those opposing *voluntary euthanasia* almost always reduce the term to *euthanasia* - and deliberately so - and this truncated form is often taken up by media and commented on without correction. I am one of many who strongly opposes euthanasia, the killing of another person, but who strongly supports voluntary euthanasia (a compassionate reform espoused by Greens and many others). The latter requires consent, the former is straight murder.

We should not put up with the murdering of language.

CHRIS HARRIES
former editor of *Green*



The populist media is giving a lot of coverage to people asking the Prime Minister to call an election, to have a mandate for the carbon tax. On one hand, this is ridiculous, since there was no election for/against the GST, or compulsory superannuation, or declaring war on Afghanistan or Iraq.

The idea is also amusing, since there already is an election mandate. The only reason it's on the agenda is because of Greens in both

chambers of parliament. Yes, the PM said before the election that there wouldn't be a carbon tax under her government, but that took into account the assumption that Labor could win a simple majority in its own right. Instead, voters expressed how phenomenally unimpressed they were.

In Australia, we vote for parliament, and parliament negotiates the policies their electorates voted for. This, right now, is exactly the way the system was envisioned to work, hundreds of years ago. It works because of the hard work and ideals of the Australian Greens.

GORDON DOUGLAS
Pascoe Vale South,
Victoria



I joined the Greens recently because of their rational and responsible policies on the twin issues of population and sustainability. It is a matter of concern that the party seems to be obsessed by climate change. For example, Dan Cass' article in Issue 34, where he says that hate speech undermines constructive debate, not on all the critical issues we face as a species, but just on climate change.

The back cover of that same issue gave prominence to Aldous Huxley. In his brilliant,

reflective essay, *Brave New World Revisited*, Huxley says that the central problem facing humanity, for at least the next century and probably longer, is overpopulation. This, he says, is the backdrop against which all other issues will be addressed.

The problem with getting our priorities wrong on this front is that, while we are waiting for the possible impacts of anthropogenic climate change to be felt, population continues daily on its relentless course to disaster. And this is a crisis which is definite and imminent, whether you are talking "up close" about housing and welfare, or at the global scale of refugees, resource depletion, loss of habitat and species extinction.

If, as I believe, rapid depletion of fossil fuels will mean a much lower level of emissions than feared by the IPCC, then we will find that we have spent our effort, and more importantly our time, on the wrong "central problem".

The carbon tax debate is another example of this misplaced focus: Marion Rae, also in Issue 34, talks of the critical need for policy to make polluters pay and foster investment in renewable energy. I could not agree more. But for me, a carbon tax or emission trading scheme



In 2012 the Green Oration will celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Tasmanian Greens.

Join us at the Hobart Town Hall, Friday, 27 March, at 7.30pm.



with these objectives is mandated by our need to achieve genuine sustainability, not out of fear of uncertain climate impacts.

PETER WARD
Nairne, South Australia



The Australian Greens need to provide an alternative budget model that clearly rejects the fixation both the major parties have with minimum taxation for big business and returning the federal budget to surplus in 2 years.

Having a "balanced budget", or a surplus, serves no practical purpose, solves no economic or social problems, and can only ensure that existing infrastructure problems, health and education and training needs, will not be met as our population continues to grow.

JOHN GLAZEBROOK
Endeavour Hills, Victoria



Frances and I would like to thank you for this great issue of the mag. The *First Dog on the Moon Pledge* has been

taken by us and some of our friends. But the other articles, particularly those reviewing the language of politics helped us put into words the despair we often feel listening to confrontational, aggressive and uncompromising language. Our problems are too great for this sort of approach. It is destructive and unproductive, at least in any creative way. Though it might help to 'beat' an opposing political party and get the reins of power, even if held with little sensitivity as to where and how we need to go as a society in a global world.

JAMES & FRANCES
THORSEN



I was pleased to see Mike Pepperday's article about the process of choosing an Australian president as it draws attention to an issue which should be important to all Australian Greens members.

Although somewhat disillusioned with Paul Keating, I've never had any doubt that he was right in the policy he announced to the House of Representatives in a speech on June 7, 1995. Following the advice of

the Republican Advisory Committee he proposed "that the Head of State be elected by a two-thirds majority vote in a joint sitting of both houses of the Commonwealth Parliament on the nomination of the Prime Minister and the Cabinet". As John Stuart Mill recognised in his essay *Considerations on Representative Government* we can't return to the direct democracy of ancient Athens and need to be able to trust our elected representatives.

The present system of the Governor-General

being appointed by the Prime Minister has generally worked well. There were party political appointments made by both sides of politics but the holders of the office were aware of their responsibility as the representative of the monarch to remain above politics, with the one notable exception that resulted in the dismissal of the Whitlam government.

The problem is that our head of state is a foreigner and no matter how much we may admire the holder of the office he or she will be unable to

represent the interests of both the United Kingdom and Australia when these interests are opposed. Direct election of our head of state is not a solution as any candidate who wants to be elected will need to conduct an expensive campaign which will inevitably involve the support of a political party.

Some change to our constitution will be necessary before we become a republic and this will require bipartisan support (which won't be easy to achieve) but I suggest that the best starting point for

discussion of the issue is the plan which the Prime Minister outlined in 1995. We need to make sure that the failure of the 1999 referendum is not repeated.

IAN EDWARDS
Inner Sydney Greens



ED: Thank you to all our letter writers. We encourage you to write a letter to the editor on any issue. Letters are requested to be no longer than 400 words and will be edited for length. Please email them to greenmag@greens.org.au ▲

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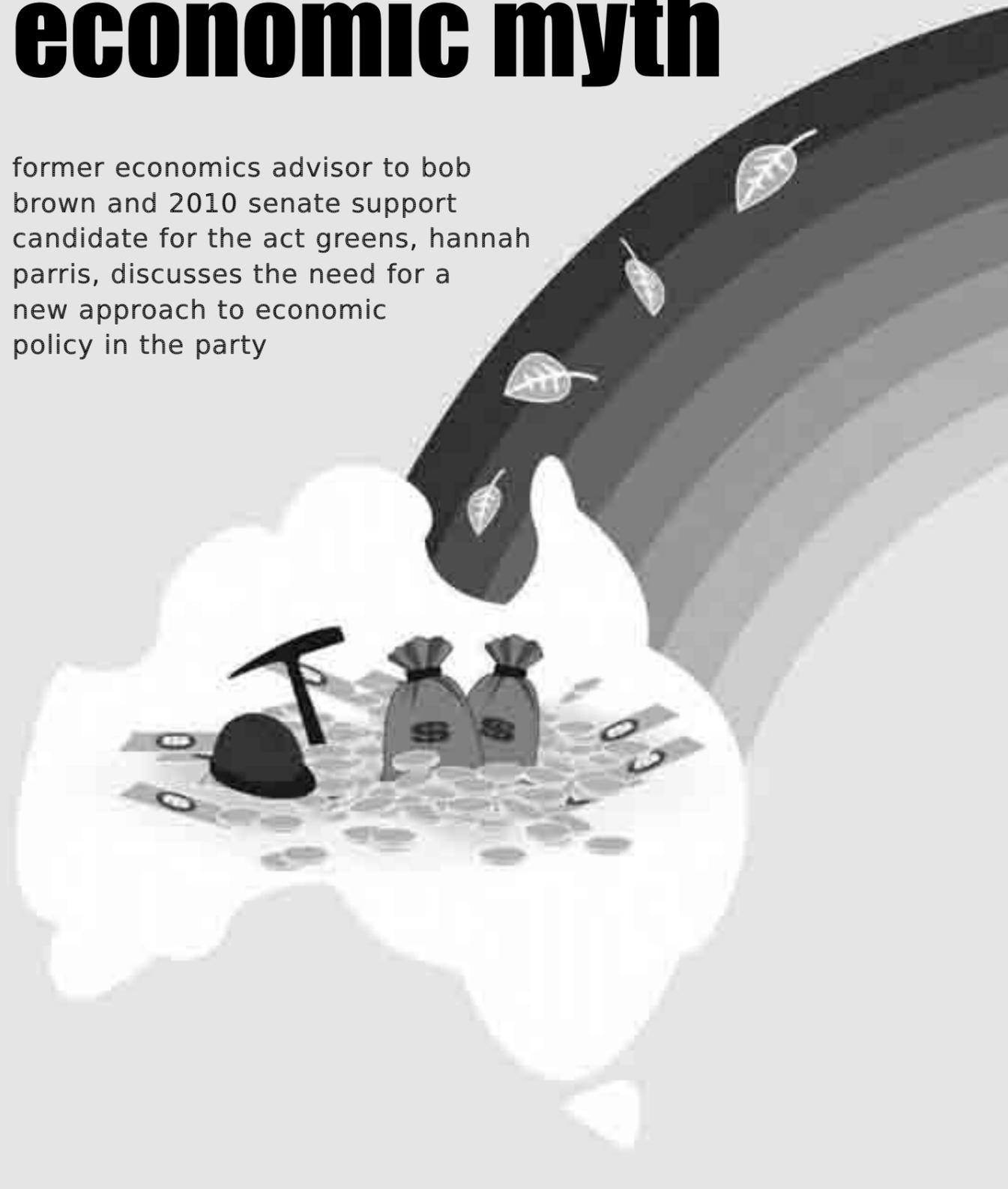
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greens and the economic myth

former economics advisor to bob brown and 2010 senate support candidate for the act greens, hannah parris, discusses the need for a new approach to economic policy in the party



It is a familiar news story. The Government does a press conference extolling its ability to ‘get the budget back into surplus’ at any cost and the Coalition predictably counters with nit picking criticisms of how it would implement its version of the neo-liberal economic agenda. Tweedle dum and tweedle dee and so begins yet another slanging match between the two political parties over who is better at doing the ‘economy thing’ – an issue that seems to have become the altar at which all other public policy values are sacrificed.

The Greens have a different perspective on economic matters, and tend to engage in a very different way on economic issues. I suspect that commentators think we lack a strong perspective on the economy, because while we are seeking to influence national debate, we are perceived to step aside from the nitty-gritty of major economic debates, and let the old parties get on with it.

This perception probably has some truth to it and it certainly holds some weight with the media and voters. I believe it is timely to consider exactly what our approach on economic policy issues is and what, if anything, needs to change.

Discussions I’ve had with party members suggest two prevailing opinions on our relationship with economic policy. First, some Greens argue that engagement with economic agendas is not really our thing and takes our attention away from issues that are ignored by the two major parties. This is partly true: in a party founded upon ecological preservation, peace and disarmament, social justice and democracy, it can feel like an odd step to consider something as prosaic as tax policy or budget deficits.

However, others argue that as our influence grows we do ourselves a disservice by avoiding engagement in the real debates about the management of Australia’s economy – something which is, after all, one of the major functions of government. There is a sense that strengthening our economic credibility could broaden our electoral appeal and allow us to fight the other parties on terms they cannot ignore.

We can reconcile these seemingly opposing views by remembering that economic policy, in the context of political debate, is actually rather broad. It includes all the things you would expect: the budget (government spending, surpluses and deficits), tax policy, spending on infrastructure, banking/financial regulation, industrial regulation, and trade and foreign investment policy. But it also includes other public policy areas that are important for economic management: industrial

relations, immigration policy, natural resource management and urban planning, for instance.

Perusing this list, it is no surprise that, in fact, the Greens are already involved in many different economic debates (although notably avoiding others) even if we call it something else. We do this because economic policies are one of the best ways to achieve what we really want: a socially just, peaceful and ecologically sustainable society. Refusing to use economic language or to shy away from economic policies does us a disservice because it means we are less likely to get the credit for things we already do. When we are criticised for being economically illiterate, our defense is hampered by the absence of party language on the economy or economically literate examples of why this is not true.

An example of our confusion regarding economic policy was in the common refrain amongst party strategists during the last federal election that people don’t vote for the Greens on economic policies. Yet our policy and pursuit of a price on carbon is a major macro-

“...as our influence grows we do ourselves a disservice by avoiding engagement in the real debates about the management of Australia’s economy.”

economic reform on par with the floating of the Australian dollar or tariff reform. Another example is our lack of engagement on the unfolding economic crisis in Europe and the related ongoing “occupy wall street movement”. Here are people, out on the streets, demanding that the very core ideas of our economic system be renegotiated to serve the majority of people - and our political representatives have nothing to say about what is going on?

A recent workshop held at National Conference brought together a diverse range of members to discuss these issues. It is clear there are a range of different levels of expertise, experience and views on “Greens and the economy” but the workshop clearly articulated a common feeling that we have an obvious gap – a clearly articulated vision on Australia’s economic future - and a strong appetite within the membership for us to develop one.

This lack of articulated vision matters for several reasons. First, the old parties are just that – old, with old thinking that clings to a quarry view of Australia’s economic development. Beyond political point scoring on tactical issues, there is very little strategic debate about the economic future of Australia in our national parliament. Importantly, neither of the old parties grasp the economic risks and opportunities of transitioning to an ecologically sustainable society – but we do. The failure of these parties, and the visionary thinking of ours, is not lost on the many progressive community groups, think-tanks and many large and small businesses whose

vision for Australia leaves the political debate far behind, and for whom public policy is a constraint rather than the vital enabling mechanism they need to fulfill their green economic ambitions for Australia. This represents a huge opportunity for the Greens. Careful building of strategic relationships with progressive economists, business groups and companies seeking to build the new green economy, combined with a clear 'big picture' vision of what we want to achieve, can be a different, but powerful way to pressure the government to implement the systemic economic change we desire.

Our climate agenda, our industrial relations policy, our support for the NBN and our call for a trust fund for investing the proceeds of our mineral wealth are a great start in piecing together this notion of a 'grand vision'. But a clear-eyed look at our policy effort beyond that shows that we come up with worthy but somewhat marginal ideas about what constitutes economic reform. The reality is, banning ATM fees, having a go at the high salaries of CEOs, taxing 'the rich' or proposing a small business tax cut for which the vast majority of SMEs will never enjoy, is not the stuff of economic reform.

Instead, just imagine what could happen if we work with the banking sector to turn their voluntary sustainable codes of practice (called the Equator Principles) into new banking regulation? How many jobs could be created if we actively support the recycling industry's efforts to grow its reprocessing sector? How can we encourage the vast amount of superannuation funds to invest in a sustainable Australia beyond the mining boom. The question is: can we find a way to engage with these less familiar sectors in a way that will deliver the strong policy outcomes we want?

The second reason the Greens need to engage in the economy agenda is to advocate for a return to what economic policy should be: a tool to achieving a happy, sustainable and thriving community. The other parties confuse this with economic policy (read growth) as an end in itself: I grow my GDP therefore I am. The same can be said for the financial sector, which is so full of its own self-importance that it has forgotten its original (and most important purpose) was to act merely as a facilitator for promoting business investment and individual economic welfare.

This gap between economics as politics and everyday experience of a person's economic welfare is well understood by the community. Who out there does not feel disenfranchised when, struggling to pay a bill, our political leaders tell us everything is okay because we achieved economic growth last quarter? The Greens are the only party capable of considering economics (and its related areas of finance and tax policy) as a tool for the people and the community, and not vice versa. Bob Brown's banking reforms on ATM fees is important in this context, but more can be done in the areas of re-defining economic progress, challenging the near paranormal fear of government debt and the divorce of economic policy from other social goals. If the Greens fail to articulate this in Parliament, who will? ▲

Hannah Parris is currently the ACT Greens Lead Delegate.

Steps Towards Better Policy

At the end of the day politics remains a practical exercise, and the issues I've raised require not a theoretical debate, but the development of concrete actions for our parliamentarians. We should promote a productive and energising debate within the party – and a commitment by the National Conference workshop to develop an ongoing discussion is a great development. As a starting point, the Greens:

1. Need to talk up our economic credentials in the work we already do – by deliberately using economic language in situations that warrant it and to audiences that are receptive to it – business people, journalists and within the chambers.
2. Need to develop and use our own language about the economy. We aren't interested in economic growth or economic development for its own sake. But we are interested in prosperous, vibrant, resilient communities and the role a healthy economy plays in developing that.
3. Need a dedicated economic spokesperson in the Federal Parliamentary Team. The economic portfolios are too complex to be shared as one of many and varied portfolios in the Leader's Office. We need dedicated resources in order to gain traction in the policy and media cycle.
4. Need to go beyond economic policy by press release and be unafraid to engage in the 'big picture' economic debate. We need to work with like-minded economists, business and community to develop real alternatives to the conventional economic blandness proffered by the old parties.

Big questions to consider in this process include:

- What is our 'economic vision' and how do we describe it?
- Why should we continue to rely on GDP as a measure of national welfare (most economists agree that this is a bad idea)? How would economic policy change if we pursued Gross National Happiness instead?
- What kind of industries and economic activities do we actually want in Australia? What happens after the mining boom is over and how do we prepare for it?
- How can we encourage/utilize Australia's vast superannuation funds to invest in the kind of infrastructure we need to transition to a sustainable economy?
- What are the long run consequences of our continued reliance on the mining sector and on mining exports to Asia?

questioning the growth imperative

does a growing economy make for a better society? what does it mean for the environment? samuel alexander discusses whether growth at all costs is really the way forward



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Celebrated economist, Sir John Hicks, began one of his essays with the pronouncement, 'We are living in an age of growth.' It is a view that applies more so today than ever before, at least as a statement of economic desire, if not as a description of recent economic reality. As the world economy teeters on another meltdown arising from the economic crisis in Europe, the imperative of all governments around the world to maximize growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has never been stronger. In early 2010, then Prime Minister of Britain, Gordon Brown, arguably spoke for all nations when he declared: 'Going for growth is the government's number one priority.'

“The Living Planet Report 2010, for example, which is based on the scientific research of the Global Footprint Network, reports that humanity’s ecological footprint is now exceeding by 50% the planet’s sustainable carrying capacity.”

According to this dominant economic paradigm, growth in GDP provides governments, by way of taxation, with more resources to pay for the nation's most important social services. It provides the necessary funds needed for national security and a police force, democratic elections, sophisticated health-care and sanitation systems, public education, unemployment benefits, etc., as well as such things as environmental protection programs, foreign aid, and the arts. These are all good things, but they cost money, and funds are always limited. Therefore, by maximizing growth of the economy a government can secure more funding for

such services and thereby contribute most, so the argument goes, to social, economic, and ecological wellbeing.

Furthermore, the argument might continue, as an economy grows, so too do personal incomes, meaning that individuals, not just governments, have more money and thus more freedom to purchase those things which they desire most. Growth is unquestionably good, one might conclude, from which it would seem to follow that more growth always must be better.

This growth model of progress strikes many people as basically correct. Cracks have formed in this growth model, however, which can no longer be dismissed as minor anomalies in an otherwise healthy system. This is illustrated most clearly when we reflect upon the violence currently being inflicted on the natural world in the name of economic growth. Disturbing though it may be to consult, the best available evidence plainly illustrates that the global economy has physically grown to such a size that it now exceeds the regenerative and absorptive capacities of Earth's ecosystems.

The Living Planet Report 2010, for example, which is based on the scientific research of the Global Footprint Network, reports that humanity's ecological footprint is now exceeding by 50% the planet's sustainable carrying capacity. In other words, human beings are now consuming 'natural capital' and diminishing the capacity of the planet to support life in the future. This is hardly news, of course.

Even from an economic perspective, the current economic trajectory makes as much sense as the business that each and every year sells off some of its key assets and treats this income as profit – a practice of dodgy accounting that might seem fine on paper until the shareholders are told there aren't any more assets. Put more vividly, today's global economy resembles a snake that is eating its own tail. At what point, one might ask, will the snake recognize that it is feeding upon its own life-support system?

To put it proverbially, if we do not change direction, we are likely to end up where we are going.

The fact that the global economy is already in significant ecological overshoot is even more challenging to mainstream views of economic growth when we bear in mind that, in the poorest parts of the world today, great multitudes are living lives oppressed by extreme poverty. The global challenge, therefore, in terms of humanitarian justice and ecological sustainability, can be stated as follows: The human community must find a way to raise the material standards of living for the world's poorest people – whose economies surely have a right to develop economically – while at the same time reducing humanity's overall ecological footprint. The difficulty of this challenge is intensified, of course, by the fact that the global population is expected to exceed 9 billion by 2050.

Intellectually and morally – even in terms of economic self-interest – these issues raise questions that in good conscience cannot be avoided: Should the richest nations on the planet still be aiming to maximize the growth of their own economies? Or will that just exacerbate the greatest social and ecological problems of our age? The logic of growth scepticism is easy to ignore but is impossible to escape: The richest nations should begin to question the legitimacy of the growth model and seriously explore alternatives.

This is the point at which neoclassical economists and their handmaidens in the political mainstream speak up, declaring that environmentalists like me, in our naivety, have failed to grasp the importance of science and technology. Rich economies don't need to stop growing, these people will object. All that needs to happen is for economies around the world to adopt 'sustainable development,' which in theory means using science and technology to produce and consume more cleanly and efficiently.

A nice story, perhaps; but here's the problem. Although economies are demonstrably getting better at producing commodities more cleanly and efficiently (a process called 'relative decoupling'), overall ecological impact is nevertheless still increasing, because every year increasing numbers of commodities are being produced and consumed. We might have more fuel-efficient cars, for example, but the rebound effect is that we are also driving more and buying more cars. This is but one example of a phenomenon that permeates market societies and beyond.

It is theoretically possible, of course, for an economy to grow and its overall ecological impacts to reduce (a process called 'absolute decoupling'). Nobody denies that. And techno-efficiency improvements in production are indeed being exploited in many areas of life with that aim in mind. But despite many techno-efficiency improvements occurring, all the evidence shows that an overall reduction in the ecological impact of economies – which is obviously what is needed to achieve ecological sustainability – is not occurring. Therefore, it is dangerous and irresponsible to propagate the fantasy that rich nations will grow themselves out of the ecological crisis by relying on science and technology. It is time for such technological optimists to wake up from their dreamland before they impose a nightmare on the rest of us. Nothing less than the world is at stake.

I must not, however, be misunderstood. Techno-efficiency improvements will undoubtedly have an extremely important part to play in any transition to an ecologically sustainable society. We must exploit appropriate technologies in every way we can for the good of our planet and the entire human community. But science and technology are at best only part of the solution to the ecological crisis. What is needed, first and foremost, is a dedicated reduction in the overall ecological impact of the human economy, and this depends primarily on the richest nations on the planet voluntarily producing and consuming less stuff.

This brings me to my final point: Does producing and consuming less stuff actually need to sound so depressing? There is a quietly emerging social movement of people embracing 'post-consumerist' lifestyles that suggests not. Known as the Voluntary Simplicity Movement (see www.simplicitycollective.com), this diverse group is made up of people who are choosing to live 'simpler lives' of reduced income and consumption; not out of sacrifice or deprivation, but in order to be free, happy, and fulfilled in a way consumer culture rarely permits. By limiting their working hours, spending their money frugally and conscientiously, growing their own vegetables, riding bikes, rejecting high-fashion, and generally celebrating life

outside the shopping mall, these people are new pioneers transitioning to a form of life beyond consumer culture. It remains to be seen whether this movement ignites the quiet revolution in consumption behaviour of which it is capable. But it is decidedly the most promising social movement on the planet at the moment, as it is guided by an 'economics of sufficiency' so desperately needed in the political arena, especially in the West.

I do not pretend that any implementation of a macroeconomics 'beyond growth' would be straightforward. I certainly would not pretend to have all the answers myself about how such a transition would play out. But it seems clear enough



that the ideology of growth economics governing the world today is leading human civilization to a dead-end, and we need to start talking seriously and with some urgency about alternatives. As we move into the future, hope resides solely in Green politics and grassroots action. ▲

Samuel Alexander
For a copy of Samuel's doctoral thesis, '*Property beyond Growth: Toward a Politics of Voluntary Simplicity*,' (which provides evidential support and expands upon the position outlined above) please email: s.alexander@simplicityinstitute.org



the carbon price is law

australia can now celebrate a huge achievement, with the passage of the clean energy future legislation that finally puts a price on pollution and gets us ready for historical investments in clean, renewable energy, energy efficiency and protection of landscape carbon

Australia can now celebrate a huge achievement, with the passage of the Clean Energy Future legislation that finally puts a price on pollution and gets us ready for historical investments in clean, renewable energy, energy efficiency and protection of landscape carbon.

But, in a very real way, today's vote is a new beginning for the campaign for serious climate action, not the end.

This package of bills was designed carefully to have as many points of review as possible, as many opportunities for campaigning as possible, and as much independent expert advice as possible. Critically, it is designed with complete upward flexibility: there is no limit to our ambition if we are ready to aim high.

The challenge now is to build the political will for ambitious, science-based action over the years ahead.

The single most important innovation in the Clean Energy Future package is the process for setting targets for the emissions trading scheme that starts in 2015. Inspired by the British system, we will have five year rolling carbon budgets, updated each year for the following five year period. Annual targets for the trading scheme will be set within those budgets.

The carbon budgets, which will have to pass through the parliament, will be recommended by an independent expert panel, the Climate Change Authority. In the UK, it has already proven too hard for the government of

the day to disregard the recommendations of their Climate Commission - a key factor in the UK's world-leading position on legislated pollution targets. The Authority will have regard to but not be bound by the new 80% by 2050 emissions reduction target. It will undertake extensive public consultation and look in detail at current science, current global efforts and the local economy when determining what budgets it will recommend for the following five year budget each February. The parliament will have to act on those recommendations by the federal budget each year, marking out a critical period for climate campaigning.

This means that, each and every year from 2014 on, we will have the opportunity to lift our sights to greater ambition, to bring our targets closer into line with the science.

That brings us the first key challenge. As world-renowned climate scientist, Professor John Schellnhuber, who was here in Australia recently, said: "If political reality is not grounded in physical reality, it is useless". In order to create the space for the climate change authority to do its job, we have to embark on a major campaign to rebuild respect for the science and broad public acknowledgement of the scale of the problem we face in attempting to keep global warming to less than 1.5 -2°C.

And, of course, making the best possible appointments to the Authority will also be critical.

That brings me to the next critical area where what we are legislating today is only a start - driving the transformation to 100% renewable energy.

The Clean Energy Finance Corporation (CEFC) and Australian Renewable Energy Agency (ARENA) have the potential to dramatically re-shape the investment environment for renewable energy in this country. If they are to be as effective as they possibly can be, the renewable energy industry and those who want to see it grow as fast as it can have a very small window of opportunity to help shape the CEFC's investment mandate and make suggestions for who should be on the boards of both independent statutory authorities. We need to get these right and get them moving to give big solar and all the other technologies the market signal they need to start building.

At the same time, I have every hope that the initiatives we have instigated - from requiring the Australian Energy Market Operator to prepare scenario planning for 100% renewables to tasking the Ministerial Council on Energy with examining long overdue energy market reform to prioritise demand side management alongside supply side - will make bureaucrats and politicians alike sit up and think about the way our energy grid and markets work. We all need to support this process by gathering evidence and examples of how energy markets operate here and elsewhere in the world to stimulate innovation rather than stifle it, and bring it to the table here.

On that issue of driving the energy revolution and the opportunity to move to 100% renewables, I am determined to focus political attention next year on the grid infrastructure. The grid has been overlooked for too long in our debate. It clearly isn't a sexy topic, but everybody knows that, if we plan in the national interest, make the right investment decisions now and put the right management policies in place, we will

make the transition to renewable energy and energy efficiency easier, faster and less expensive.

Another major area of focus for the Greens next year will be the intersection between the food, water, energy and climate crises - namely, food security. We need to maximise food production and export by lifting agricultural productivity in the face of escalating climate change and oil depletion. Competition for land and water between agriculture, coal seam gas, carbon storage, urbanisation and land grabs from foreign governments must be resolved. The carbon farming initiative and the biodiversity fund have been designed in such a way that they can guide decisions on land use and encourage decisions that will benefit the climate, our biodiversity and our farmers, indigenous communities and other land managers. Again, appointments to the board will be critical, as will be public work to create the space for that board to do its job.

There is a myriad of reviews that have been negotiated through this agreement, such as the Productivity Commission's ongoing analysis of the compensation package to polluting industry. We all need to be gathering evidence, participating in and scrutinising these reviews to get the best possible results from them.

All told, the package we are legislating today is a very big first step. Where the old CPRS that we rejected was a full stop at the end of the campaign to tackle climate change, this package is an opening paragraph. We have a lot of work to do in the months and years ahead to make the best use of the opportunities we have created.

Only then will the story we have started to write today truly become the transformative narrative that underpins our future. ▲

Christine Milne is Deputy Leader of the Australian Greens and spokesperson on climate change

germany's ecological revolution

dr. klaus-peter klaiber reports on how the success of the greens in germany paves the way for a bright future

In the midst of severe economic and financial constraints worldwide and in particular in the European Union, Germany has embarked on a remarkable and courageous endeavour: Chancellor Merkel's government has decided to transform this industrialized nation of 82 million people from nuclear and fossil fuel energy to renewable power within the next 40 years. Merkel said: "We want to end the use of nuclear energy and reach the age of renewable energy as fast as possible."

The Germans have been aware of the scarcity of resources and the problems connected with nuclear energy for a long time. It all started with the Yom-Kippur war in the Middle East in 1974 when the price of a barrel of oil suddenly rose from 3 to 12 US Dollars.

Reacting to this sudden scare, the German government decided with immediate effect that cars with number plates, ending with even numbers could only drive on even dates of the month; cars with number plates ending with uneven numbers were only allowed on uneven dates.

On 4 Sundays in November 1974, the government imposed a complete ban on car travel. Thousands of people walked along the highways and enjoyed a car free environment for the first time in their lives.

This development led to the emergence of new political movements and parties in a number of German cities. These "Alternative Lists" or "Greens" stood for a cleaner environment, car free zones in city centres and against nuclear power.

This new political momentum quickly gathered strength. Already in 1979, a "Green List" successfully participated in elections to the state parliament of Bremen.

In 1980, a federal Party of "the Greens" was founded in West Germany. Only three years later, at the federal

elections of 1983, they obtained more than 5% of the votes. Since then, the Greens have established themselves as a respected party in Germany.

In the mid-eighties, another international event strengthened the hand of the Green Party enormously. This was the nuclear reactor explosion in Chernobyl in the Ukraine in 1986. It confirmed the view of the Greens that nuclear energy was a dangerous energy option, including the disposal of nuclear waste. Ever since, big demonstrations and sit-ins take place in Germany whenever a container of nuclear waste is being transported from France to Gorleben in Germany, where the waste is being stored at present.

At the 1998 general elections, the coalition government of Conservatives (CDU) and Liberals (FDP) lost its majority. The Social Democrats (SPD) formed the new government with the Greens. The leader of the Greens, Joschka Fischer, became Deputy Chancellor and Foreign Minister for the next 7 years. During that time, the government decided on a gradual phasing out of Germany's nuclear energy.

Since 2005, Germany's government is again led by the Conservative CDU. However, at the last general elections in 2009, the Greens recorded their best result ever polling 10.7% of votes. Out of the 622 parliamentarians of the Bundestag, the Greens presently hold 68 mandates. The party today has 56 000 members. They stand – as stated in their latest party program - for an "ecological market economy".

While the conservative government decided in 2010 to extend the life span of the 17 nuclear reactors in Germany for between 8 and 17 years, the Tsunami in Japan followed by the reactor catastrophe in Fukushima had an immediate dramatic impact on the perceptions of the Germans regarding nuclear energy. Only a



few days after the events in Japan, the government of Chancellor Merkel decided to suspend the operation of the seven oldest reactors with immediate effect. It set up an expert commission for global environmental changes. This commission submitted its report last June. One of its key sentences reads:

“The German economic model is ethically unacceptable. We need a transformation towards climate acceptability. The decarbonisation of the world economy has to be implemented quickly without nuclear energy and without coal.”

Interestingly, some observers cynically noted that Germany seems to be moving towards an eco-dictatorship. It is not a minority of the people that demands these changes, but a majority, led by the government.

This change of perception is also exemplified by the result of a State election that took place in Baden Württemberg a short time after the nuclear reactor disaster in Japan. While the Conservatives retained the majority of seats in parliament, the Green Party obtained 24.2 % of the votes and was able to form a new government in coalition with the Social Democrats. The third largest state in Germany

with a population of 10.7 million inhabitants and a GDP of 330 million Euros p.a., now has a Green Leader.

In July of this year, Chancellor Merkel's federal government took the following far reaching decisions:

- Seven nuclear reactors will close down with immediate effect. The remaining 10 reactors will be closed down in stages, the last one in 2022.
- The share of renewable energy will double from 17 to 35% of Germany's energy consumption in the next 9 years; it will reach 50% in 2030, 65% in 2040 and 80% in 2050. At the same time, the CO2 emissions will be cut accordingly.
- New legislation on renewable energy puts the main emphasis on the development of wind energy on land and off shore. Planning and implementation of new wind farms will be accelerated.
- Legislation was put into place to strengthen and enlarge the grids for the transport of renewable energy.

- Some new coal and gas power stations will be built to fill the potential energy gap before renewables can take over.
- The government will provide 1.5 billion Euros for the ecological upgrading of buildings which are responsible in Germany for around 40% of the annual energy consumption.
- 2 billion Euros have been put aside for research and development of electric cars.

It is envisaged that by 2020 1 million electric cars will operate in Germany. To achieve this goal, massive incentives will be given for the purchase of electric vehicles. Chancellor Merkel said that Germany had been the world leader in developing the Otto combustion engine and the leader of developing the diesel engine. She would like Germany to also take the lead in developing the electric engine.

What is most surprising in this context is the fact that the Germans in their large majority support this policy. They are prepared to pay for higher energy prices in order to make their country safer for future generations. The Germans now move far beyond the ecological targets set forth by the European Union which were already more ambitious than

targets set in most other countries of the world.

With this new policy, Germany hopes to create thousands of new jobs in the renewable energy sector. Already in the past 10 years, when the country increased its share of renewable energy up to 17%, 300,000 new green jobs were created. In the renewable energy field, Germany presently occupies 16% of the world market.

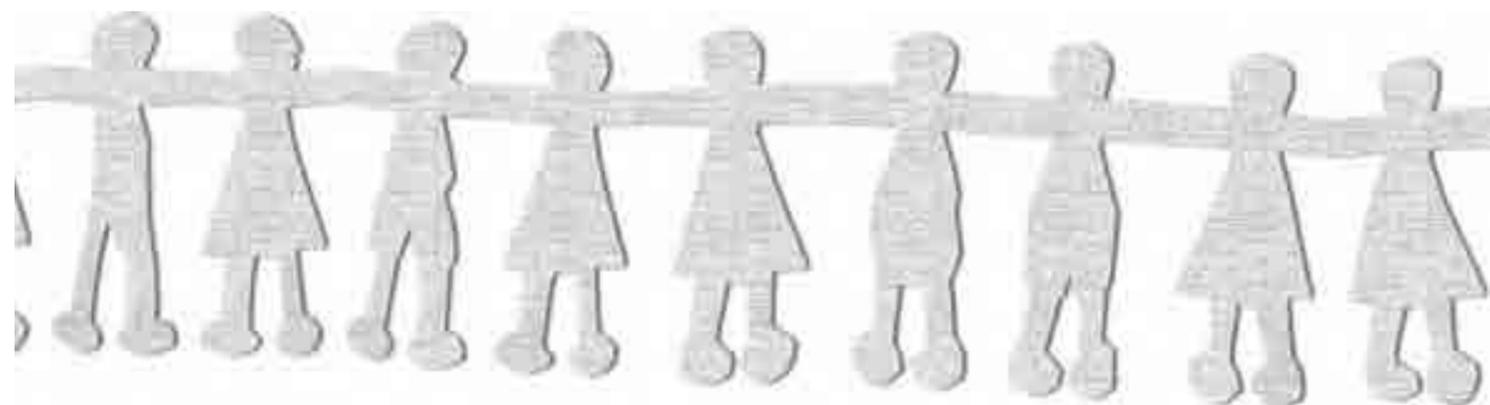
Chancellor Merkel has certainly taken the lead in Europe and probably world-wide to reduce dramatically its dependence on nuclear and coal generated energy. The future will tell whether this very ambitious project can succeed. If yes, she will be the first leader of an industrialized nation which replaces nuclear and fossil fuel energy with renewable power. ▲

Dr. Klaus-Peter Klaiber is a visiting fellow at the Centre for European Studies, ANU

“...Germany hopes to create thousands of new jobs in the renewable energy sector. Already in the past 10 years, when the country increased its share of renewable energy up to 17%, 300 000 new green jobs were created.”

deepening a green democracy

dr. peter h cock explores how we can transform our suburbs and towns by rebuilding our communities and reclaiming our power



Christine Milne, at the Great Debate at the Sustainable Living Festival this year in Melbourne, called on the packed audience to demand more of its politicians to help her in negotiations inside Parliament. As a Greens member I am concerned that with our new power we are at risk of being co-opted into the political mainstream and investing all hope into the existing parliamentary system.

As a citizen of a democracy I call on the Greens Party to campaign for the introduction of the citizens' right to have a direct say on matters of local, national and even global significance. What follows is a presentation of some of the arguments to support this call.

Democracy evolved through blood, sweat and tears over generations of aspirations to participate in shaping society. The journey isn't finished and its story of ups and downs of opportunities and movement is particularly expressed in the history of Europe and America. Now is a time when we can regenerate hope

and commitment to a deepened, enriched experience of what democracy can be. Our over-consuming citizens are part of the coming disaster and need to be part of the solutions. These begin with the transformation of our governance.

We now have the technological capacity to take power back to the people, to be involved in the decisions which impact on their lives and to reconnect the people with the earth. We need the support of the Greens to transform and deepen how we govern ourselves. There is still a long way to go to realising the dream 'of the people, by the people, for the people'.

One difficulty facing deepening democracy is the West's perception that, from a global perspective, it is as good as it can get. When we consider the effort to vote made by those recently released from dictatorship, such a perception is understandable.

The necessary revitalized vision of citizenship involves a multilayered participatory democracy, whose empowered citizens have the capacity to directly shape the decisions that most affect their lives and their offspring.

This begins with the rebuilding of grass roots power to reshape and empower local places and to directly have a say in national and global politics and policy. Such a vision is committed to building real partnerships between those who know and those seeking to know, to create a new synergy between citizens and the professional classes.

To reclaim local places and their people as a focal point for our lives means working towards the redevelopment of the city as a cluster of interdependent villages. We can never be self or community sufficient. We need wider worlds of engagement that locate our local personal worlds within a larger world. This reduces our excessive dependency on being just local, curtails NIMBY attitudes and assists in dealing with local vulnerabilities such as fire and flood. The challenge is to find balances between local, national and global governance that work.

National citizenship gradually came to dominate and replace tribalism. Its advocates criticise tribalism for its closed oppressive hierarchical mini

societies. There is now a declining risk of becoming trapped in the closed world of the one tribe or village. Nationalism and the technology of global communications are liberating developments from the excesses of such tribalism.

Today excessive individualism has stripped the citizen of the local community belonging that offers countervailing power to the state. Personal environments are often devoid of stability, of a range of significant others and resources and meaning that is no longer gifted but having to be created. As a consequence citizens are vulnerable to being manipulated by large institutions, feeling alienated, powerless and falling into addiction and mental illness.

A new tribalism that is virtual and real, distant and face-to-face, diverse and often involving plural tribal commitments, is a vital journey towards a deeper engagement in society. Deepening democracy at the local level could begin with the facilitation of neighbourhood decision-making powers. Allocating a percentage of local rates for street community projects.

People could control local speed limits, shape neighbourhood watch programs, manage a local park, and select or ban certain types of businesses. Particularly important is the capacity to generate at least some of our own neighbourhood power, water and food. Such empowerment would

“A new tribalism that is virtual and real, distant and face-to-face, diverse and often involving plural tribal commitments, is a vital journey towards a deeper engagement in society.”

build community resilience and thereby reduce dependence on the state and large corporations.

Monopoly knowledge can ‘dumb down’ the population and thereby justify continuing elite professional power. ‘Learning by doing’ democracy raises consciousness and increases engagement through having the right and responsibility to directly participate in policy formation. Deepening democracy includes reshaping professional-client relations to one of shared partnership. The obligation to educate as part of professional services and fees should be fundamental to the ethics of expertise.

Rebuilding community grass roots is fundamental to making the deepening of democracy possible. It is a counterbalance to distant ‘over governing’, of asking too much of big government and too little of local communities.

Vested institutional interests, money, and professional political parties largely control elections, leaving many of the electorate manipulated victims. It is no wonder that apathy is widespread and interests so narrowly defined. “Ballot boxes alone are nothing like enough. Unless solid laws protect individual and minority rights, and government power is limited by clear checks, at the very least, a culture of compromise—coupled with greater accountability and limits on state power” (*The Economist*, Dec 1st 2010).

The excessive governmental paternalism of the nanny state strips people of incentive and the capacity to act for themselves. The threat is also of a police state, legitimated in the name of security against terrorists or just to protect the monopoly power of the few. Now the ecological crisis compounds the risk of ‘over government’. When choices become more limited and demands more radical, the pressure for authoritarian rule grows. In a crisis we may no longer have the time to educate and engage with citizens, so we decide for them.

Making governments more transparent still leaves us looking to them to do all the governing. WikiLeaks has revealed not only the internet’s potential power to bring governments to account but its possibilities in reawakening and deepening citizens’ engagement in building a partnership with our elected representatives. A central issue is the relative power of the citizen vote to shape or control policy.

Over which issues should citizens have a direct say? Going to war, euthanasia, and population size? A move towards direct decision-making needs a gradual evolution, beginning with for example a 30% weighting of citizens’ voting to that of elected representatives. In the long run, progressive steps towards direct democracy need to reduce the gap between professionals who consider the variables and their likely consequences, with citizens who may not.

The best place to start expanding the role of direct voting may be through the budget. For example, what percentage should be spent on different areas, such as defence versus the environment, education versus welfare?

The risk is that we leave it too late and instead of transforming democracy we end up in a fascist state, legitimated by the consequences of eco catastrophe.

The first revolution in governance was the replacement of dictatorship with representative democracy. The next is for a direct participatory one. The future needs and hopefully we are evolving towards a diversity of sources of domains of authority that mean the individual isn’t excessively dependent on either the power of the state, corporations or the village/tribe. This will deepen citizenship and grow wisdom throughout our society and with it a core of consensus about what matters in our lives.▲

Dr. Peter H. Cock



greens around the globe

anna reynolds updates on green news from around the globe



Denmark's new ministers from the Green Left Party

pic credit: european greens

New Green Ministers in Denmark and Finland

Six Green Ministers were appointed in October as part of a new coalition Government in Denmark. The Green Left Party, which is an observer party of the European Greens, are in government with two other partners - the social-democrats and the social-liberals.

The three parties entered into a coalition agreement in October, in which (after 2 weeks of negotiation) the Greens secured a number of wins including the introduction of a congestion tax for a Copenhagen ring road; a budget boost to the educational system, improvements to the treatment of asylum seekers and the banning of endocrine disruptor chemicals in food and toys. The Green party Ministers and their responsibilities are (above from left to right):

- Møger Thor Pedersen, Minister for Taxation
- Ida Auken, Minister for the Environment
- Pia Olsen Dyhr, Minister for Trade and Investment,
- Villy Søvndal, Minister for Foreign Affairs,
- Ole Sohn, Minister for Business Affairs and
- Astrid Krag, Minister for Health

There have also been Green Party Ministers appointed in Finland, as part of a coalition government that is made up of six (yes 6!) parties, from Conservatives to the Socialists. Ville Niinisto is the new Minister of Environment and the new leader of the Finnish Greens and Heidi Hautula is the Minister for International Aid.

New rivals for Greens in Europe

Some established Green Parties in Europe have been surprised by new green rivals that have had a negative impact on election results.

In the recent Berlin State election the German Greens secured over 17% of the vote, but did not achieve the +20% that was predicted in the lead up to the poll. Some analysis shows that 17,000 former Green Party supporters switched their vote to the Pirate Party which some media have dubbed the 'new Greens'.



Finland Green Party Ministers Heidi Hautula and Ville Niinisto

pic credit: european greens

US Presidential candidate, Jill Stein



pic credit: amy tyler

the State twice. She hopes to build a national following by appealing to the people who have identified with the Occupy Wall Street protest movement. The main issues for her campaign are green jobs, universal health care, reversing student debt and pulling U.S. troops out of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Tunisia

The Green party of Tunisia, Tunisie Verte, ran candidates in the elections that took place in October following the democratic revolution. The party which was formed in 2004 but struggled with harassment and oppression for many years was finally registered in early 2011, in time for the elections. The party was however not successful in winning a seat in the national parliament but intends to run candidates in the local government elections that will take place in the first half of 2012. ▲

Anna Reynolds is International Advisor to Senator Bob Brown

The Pirates won 15 seats in their first election by campaigning on internet freedoms and digital privacy, free public transport and a student-teacher ratio in public schools of 15 to 1.

Meanwhile in Switzerland's recent national election the Swiss Green Party's vote dropped and they lost five of their 20 seats in parliament. The big winners of the election were the relatively new Green Liberal Party who increased their number of seats in parliament from 3 to 12. The Green Liberal Party was founded in 2007 by four branches that seceded from the Swiss Green Party over policy differences. The new party says that it combines liberalism on civil liberties and economics with a strong focus on environment issues.

The US Presidential Race

Jill Stein, a doctor from Massachusetts has launched a campaign for President of the United States in 2012. Jill has been an active member of the State Massachusetts Green-Rainbow Party since 2002 and run for Governor of



pic credit: new zealand greens

des ritchie

original member, christine bennett, reflects on the history of the maroochy greens and in particular key member des ritchie and his role in the growth of this vibrant group



The inception of Maroochy Greens dates back to the 1980s, when Des Ritchie provided the ground work and gathered support to form a Sunshine Coast Greens group. Prior to formation of the Greens as a political party in Queensland, the Brisbane-based group were known as Rainbow Alliance. This title indicated support for people of all nations, including indigenous cultures and those with multicultural backgrounds. Rainbow Alliance had representation in Qld, NSW, Victoria and ACT. In tandem, the Sunshine Coast group formed by Des also adopted this name. On the local scene, an avalanche of environmental concerns galvanised conservationists into focussed action: at centre stage from 1986-1989 was the battle for Mt Coolum.

Des initiated Rainbow Alliance meetings at his home in North Arm and invited Drew Hutton to speak at a meeting in 1988. A name change in Brisbane resulted, following a letter from Bob Brown saying: "If you don't call yourself the Greens, somebody else will." Consequentially, in November 1991, the Queensland Greens emerged as a registered political party in Brisbane. A series of meetings around the country between 1990 and 1992 culminated in the formalisation of the Australian Greens in November 1992. The decision to restructure as Queensland Greens in 1991 was in anticipation of being joined by other states. Within 18 months the Queensland Greens had branches from Cairns to the Gold Coast, including the Sunshine Coast.

By the early 1990s, Des Ritchie was actively involved on environmental frontlines as President of the Sunshine Coast Environment Council. This precluded him from an active position within a political party, although informal Sunshine Coast Greens meetings were initially held at his home. Subsequently, the local Greens group became dormant until prospective member, John Fitzgerald, contacted Des. A meeting of local Greens members was convened at the (Coronation Street) Meeting Place in December 1992, aiming to reactivate the group.

Des Ritchie then organised an information tent at the 1992-'93 Woodford Folk Festival, which was held at Maleny Showgrounds. A Greens committee was formed with John Fitzgerald, Doug Worth, Shanti Rooper (Denise Jones) and Faye Weyman; other original Greens members were also notified. In 1992, Peter Parnell became the first Federal candidate for Fairfax, achieving 3.94% of the vote. (The AEC rounded this up to 4%, as was required for reimbursement.) Suzie Chapman and Janine McLeod became our first local State candidates. In 1996, John Fitzgerald also stood as a candidate in the Federal election for Fairfax and then stood twice more in State elections.

As with any grassroots movement, Maroochy Greens has evolved over time with many active members, supporters, and candidates. Another name change from Sunshine Coast Greens to Maroochy Greens resulted, due to the existence of Maleny Greens. A Noosa Branch followed and members who lived in Caloundra were also interested in forming a branch.

A groundswell of support has seen Queensland achieve our first Greens Senator, Larissa Waters. Maroochy Greens candidate, Narelle McCarthy, achieved a record result of 18% for Fairfax in the 2010 Federal Election. The result of the 2010 election is a 50% increase from around 8% to an average of 12% nationwide. On a global level, the Greens are recognised as an international party.

Although it has taken time, the community is gradually awakening to the fact that the Greens movement has experience at the helm in a course set away from the brink of global warming. The Greens principles of social justice, respect for the environment, conserving resources and promoting renewable energy all make good sense. Maroochy Greens are forerunners in a growing movement of awareness, accepting the challenge to make a difference for our children's future in a changing world.▲

tweetin' green



@SenatorBobBrown
Australian Greens
Senator for Tasmania

I'm embarrassed. How did a program like the #Hamster wheel get such a bead on the inner working of the Greens?



@senatormilne
Australian Greens
Senator for Tasmania

After a frenzied day, it's great to reflect. Thanks to everyone who made this possible. #carbonprice



@StoneAdam
Greens Candidate for
Mt Coot-tha

Mt Coot-tha desperately needs change, true. Which is why you should vote for the @QLDGreens and not the old parties.



@melbgreens
The Melbourne City
Greens

Huge turnout at Melbourne City Council committee meeting tonight to support the inquiry into Occupy Melbourne evictions.



@Redman_Chris
Press officer to Senator
Rachel Siewert

So I guess I'm NOT coming to Canberra tomorrow? #Qantas

Find these green tweeps and more at www.greens.org.au

pic credit: cc licensed flickr user matt ham



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Bob Brown



BOB'S BACK PAGE JANUARY 2012

Media Misery

The Murdoch papers have gone apoplectic on the Greens' proposed media inquiry. They, who inquire into everyone else, can't stand the spotlight on themselves. Here's a fraction of the insults these papers have disgorged against the inquiry or the Greens in recent times: Brown's call is "disgraceful and opportunistic slander" (*Herald Sun*), "an attempt to limit public scrutiny of the privileged few who strut the halls of power" (*Adelaide Advertiser*), a "first step to totalitarianism" (*NT News*), "a golden opportunity to smear local journalists" (*Daily Telegraph*), "accusatory denunciations ... made by Brown and his mindless sycophants against those who question their ... extremist agenda" (*ibid*), "the media inquiry flagrantly designed by the Government and the Greens to punish only media organisations whose newspapers [such as this one] have most embarrassed them and exposed their mistakes" (*ibid*), "You'd think you were in the Soviet Union. Truly" (*Herald Sun*), "a witch hunt against the News Ltd newspapers which don't pay him enough respect" (*Brisbane Sunday Mail*), "We said Senator Brown and his Green colleagues ... should be destroyed at the ballot box ... we have been pilloried for it" (*The Australian, as victim*), "the Greens are salivating at the prospect of muzzling their critics" (*Herald Sun*), and "This is the green face of fascism" (*The Australian*). Meanwhile, Rupert Murdoch is here and refusing requests to be interviewed (imagine if I did that!). Perhaps the Murdoch empire is a house of cards.



Ida Bay railway train with driver, Mike Birks

Ida Bay Railway

Australia's southernmost train plies the 7km Ida Bay Railway near the southern tip of Tasmania. This little railway has a 60cm gauge, two carriages and lovely scenery. I am helping it find funding to survive. Proprietor Meg Thornton and her volunteers richly deserve help: the business keeps many others open. Paul and I caught the Ida Bay train in October, walked overnight to Southport Lagoon (where, in 1793, D'Entrecasteaux's scientists met the Aboriginal people and had feasts and music) and caught it home again. We had watched a huge seal float effortlessly down the lagoon on the ebb tide after sunset, and sea eagles jousting over the sapphire-blue sea. You can find details at www.idabayrailway.com.au

40 years and 20

2012 will bring a bevy of Greens celebrations. On 23 March, 1972, the world's first Greens party meeting was held in the ornate Hobart Town Hall. In the midst of the furore over flooding Lake Pedder, the motion to set up a new party was shouted down by pro-dam activists. But Dick Jones then called for a count of raised hands and ... the rest is history. The 40th anniversary in the Town Hall will be a grand night out for Greens history buffs. And, in August, we will celebrate 20 years of the Australian Greens, set up at a media-free meeting in North Sydney - all the cameras were at the opening of the Sydney harbour tunnel. Watch for details. 2012 will also see the 20th anniversary for the Victorian Greens and moves are afoot there...

Ben Oquist

"Bob, I hear you mentioned me in the Senate," said a beaming Chief of Staff Ben Oquist last week. "Oh yes, Christine wanted me to, after your huge role in getting the Carbon Package through." The nature of politics is that MPs get all the glory (or goring). But we are only as good as our staff. I have been terrified for years that a minister or corporation would offer Ben a huge incentive to move on. We are good friends who first met at the East Picton forest blockade in Tasmania in 1993 - when Ben was considerably younger! He has been a pillar in the rise of the Greens since then and is now the director of our remarkably good staff of 60 or 70. I will never write an autobiography, but I might well pen a poem to Ben!

Moving on

I am writing this high over the Great Australian Bight, sitting next to Lee Rhiannon, with KD Lang in front, and half a dozen other Greens MPs around. We're en route from Perth (our national conference was in Fremantle) to Canberra (where, on Tuesday, that carbon package will pass the Senate). ACOSS President Lyn Hatfield-Dodds, who covered a most informative discussion in aged care policy at the conference, is two rows back. Up front are Qantas pilots who survived the lock-out but must wonder about their future. The cabin crew are marvellous. We are all so lucky. And somewhere, far below, a seal is floating on the ebb tide. Last night, beneath Perth's gibbous moon, we celebrated 7 years of Rachel Siewert, Senator. A week ago, in Hobart, we celebrated Christine Milne's 7 years too. This is a great work in progress. We Greens are on the move and life is good.

Enjoy the summer ▲

Bob



'A company we can invest ethically with is music to our ears.'



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Greens MPs Past and Present Meet In Canberra



From left: Member for Melbourne Adam Bandt, former Senator Kerry Nettle, Senator Lee Rhiannon, Senator Penny Wright, Senator Christine Milne, former Member for Cunningham Michael Organ, Senator Rachel Siewert, Senator Bob Brown, former Senator Dee Margetts, Senator Larissa Waters, former Senator Christabel Chamarette, Senator Scott Ludlam, former Senator Jo Vallentine, Senator Richard Di Natale, Senator Sarah Hanson-Young