

Green

ISSUE 19

the magazine of the Australian Greens

AUTUMN 2006

Cover Story

The search for Australian values



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Keogh's Creek, Tasmania Photo: Philip Soano



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Please provide a graphic if possible. Send article in body of email or as an 'rtf' file to Co-editors at greenmag@greens.org.au

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editorial

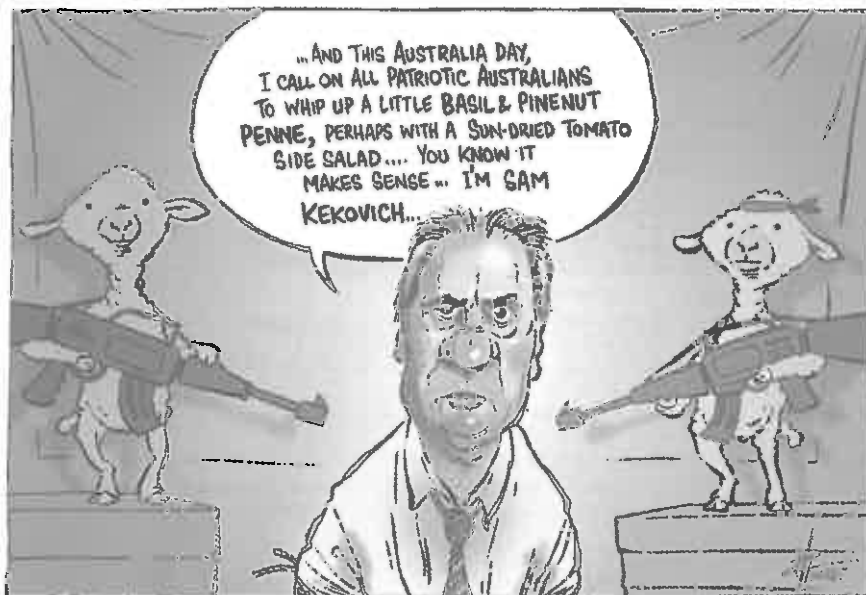
Recent statements by both John Howard and Peter Costello have focused popular attention on Australian values, with both 'dog whistling' code and direct, unalloyed statements to promote such conservative values as the priority of Anglo-Celtic culture, conservative Christianity, support for great power imperialism, xenophobic nationalism and the patriarchal family. The starting point for this edition of *Green* is that such values are anathema to a humane, caring society and need to be opposed. The question for progressive political campaigners like those in the Greens is to identify which values will be counter-posed to those of Howard, Costello and their supporters. Contributors to this edition have identified many of these values as well as expressing the view that progressive politics must be based on a wide and generous set of values rather than a narrow and possibly outdated ideology. This should fit in well with green politics but there is always the tendency in any political organization to become rigid and orthodox rather than expansive and pragmatic. The great political project for which the Greens formed was not to lend a helping hand to a traditional Left (of either the social democratic or revolutionary varieties) or to fill a vacant niche in Australian political life. Instead, a small group of activists in the early nineties recognized that no other political force was adequately addressing the destructive impact of human activities on the planet and that this 'ecological imperative' would drive much of politics over the next century. They also recognized that the challenge this imperative presented to our social institutions was so great that we should not limit our own responses to it by ensconcing ourselves in a safe but limiting ideology. Instead, the Greens drafted a charter to serve as an ethical guide to behaviour and act as a values framework for policy development.

We accept, then, that the challenge for the Greens is to step outside the old political ideologies and to examine the values on which our political action is, and

should be, based. David McKnight, one of the key contributors to this edition, takes various values that are addressed by several political ideologies, including conservatism, liberalism and social democracy and tries to work out which of these values fits into a framework that, in his recently-published book, *Beyond Right and Left*, he calls 'New Humanism'. It is on these values, he says, rather than ideology, that green politics should be based. Such values would include those of strengthening family and community bonds (leaving aside for the moment how these are defined); addressing environmental stewardship, countering inequality and injustice and strengthening democracy.

These themes are also developed by other contributors. Barbara Pocock argues that greens should take 'family values' back from conservatives who are actually undermining family life with their market-driven desire to eat into the time and energy we could be directing into family life. Both Marion Maddox and Noel Preston argue the Greens are in a good position to appeal to those people who are looking for values in politics but see only the conservatives and the right-wing religious groups as pursuing these. Brian Hoeppe uses his three decades experience as a leading history educator to show how Howard's view of history and history teaching would deprive students of valuable intellectual and life skills. And from remote Gulargambone, Angela O'Brien describes community values at work as a traditional rural population reinvigorates their town. The political challenge for Greens, then, is to articulate ecological, progressive and humane values in a way that connects with the real experiences of Australians and does not get diverted into the repetition of ideologically-driven prescriptions that would marginalise Greens and alienate them from the voting public.

Drew Hutton and Brian Hoeppe
Co-editors



letters to editor

Hope and Insight for the Greens

I do hope the quality of Richard Denniss's strategic advice to our senators is superior to his analysis in 'What Hope for the Greens' (Green, Summer 2005).

He trots out the old line that the left (he includes the Greens) is much better at articulating what it is opposed to than stating what it supports. This cliché gets aired by lazy journos every election. A glance at the 24-page Policy Snapshots booklet from the 2004 election reveals ample summary of concrete Greens' proposals to enhance, for example, compassion, sustainability and equity/fairness. The Greens have already begun well the process of defining and articulating what we stand for (and at election time usually more honestly, clearly and fully than do the major parties).

And I really struggle to locate the Australian Greens in Denniss's statement that 'progressive politics in modern Australia is far more interested in guilt and fear than it is in hope and joy'. The Coalition has had an absolute stranglehold on quality fear-mongering for a decade now.

And as for hope ...Denniss ascribes Howard's electoral success to his platforms, like his slogans, offering people hope. He does acknowledge that the Howard Government is cynical and insincere in promising voters a better world. But this 'hope' demands at least some analysis beyond pointing to its shallow material and spiritual character. It's not a hope founded on any vision of building and sharing a better society. It's all about hoping Howard will keep the several nasties at bay (the fear bit) while we (anxiously) go on hoping for more fun in the sun.

Further, Howard's election agenda includes denying some groups much hope at all. His heartless policies towards the vulnerable are an integral component of his brand of hope. He's far more into reassurance of the middle Australian voter through demonizing the vulnerable than into articulation of sound programs offering genuine hope that can be widely shared.

Such hope as he does engender is part of his 'distraction and delusion' strategy - ie: papering over the growing risks to which he's increasingly exposed the nation over a decade - environmental degradation, international debt, access to education and training, fragile public health and social cohesion.

It's true we Greens need to offer hope. I think we do. And we do need to improve our communication with voters, so they acquire wider understanding of Howard's alarming neglect of the birthright of young Australians. Only then can we expect them to turn their hope towards long-term security, health and happiness.

Ken Blackman
Victoria

Nanotechnology

We Greens are always looking forward to new technologies that promise greater energy efficiency and cleaner production.

However in the last issue of Green I was concerned to read an article lauding the ability of nanotechnology to save energy and decentralize production to the point that you could cheaply and easily manufacture products using nanotechnology at home.

If we suspend cynicism about the willingness of nano patent holders to decentralize production, and consider for a moment that in the space of not very many years we may have the capacity to produce almost anything we desire from a microwave sized box at home, the implications are very sobering indeed.

How many months would it be until the surface of the earth was littered with consumer products manufactured on a passing whim? How would we regulate waste production? How would we prevent people from manufacturing dangerous items?

Far from ushering in a new era of resource consciousness, nanotechnology threatens to intensify and exacerbate existing global environmental problems associated with industrial production and economic expansion, as well as to introduce distinctly new forms of environmental hazards.

In the coming years, the nano industry will be doing its best to convince environmentalists and social justice advocates to do its promotional work for it.

As the hype escalates around the next industrial revolution, it is very important for the Greens to be prepared to question its promises, its assumptions, and in whose interest nanotechnology is being commercialized without a public debate.

Check out the work Friends of the Earth has been doing on nanotechnology:
<http://www.foe.org.au>

Georgia Miller
South Hobart, Tasmania

The big myth

There is a big myth underpinning proposals to centralise decision making power and money within the Australian Greens to the national level of the party, and to further increase the power of Greens politicians within the party. Centralisation of power and assets within the Greens will not result in more Greens politicians being elected. It could in fact reduce our chances at elections.

One of the main reasons why we have been so successful is the huge number of members and supporters that enthusiastically staff polling booths. They do so because they feel empowered by the

party and that they have a genuine say in the significant decisions of the Greens. In NSW members in their local groups pre-select candidates for local government and lower house seats, control their group's finances which includes electoral funding, and determine preferences. This is one of our greatest strengths.

If members feel that their only role is to get individuals elected, then many will lose respect for the Greens and enthusiasm for helping the party on election day. Mass disillusionment amongst members of the Labor party, many of whom have come to the Greens, is an example of what happens when members feel disempowered by a party hierarchy that uses them at election time and then ignores them.

Another key contributor to the Greens electoral success is the media coverage generated by our candidates and politicians. This costs the party next to nothing. Centralising funds and power will do nothing to boost our media coverage.

The Australian Greens confederation structure has served us well and continues to do so. It helps prevent us straying from the principle of grassroots democracy. The Greens is one of the most electorally successful minor parties in the recent history of Australian politics and there is no evidence that our relatively decentralised structure has held us back. If the autonomy of local groups and state/territory parties is weakened we could face reduced parliamentary representation as disillusioned members simply withdraw their support.

Efficiency is often a dubious reason given to support moves to centralise power in organisations. There is no impediment in our structure to the authorisation of individuals, small groups or committees to get on with any task set by a local group, state or territory party or national level of the Greens. The benefit, however, of our structure compared to a centralised structure is that those carrying out tasks for the Greens or making delegated decisions for the Greens, are more accountable to the membership.

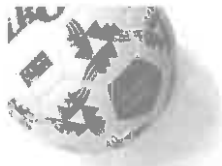
In addition to centralisation not sitting comfortably with the Greens principle of grassroots democracy, the reasons for transferring power and assets to the national level of the Greens are not convincing.

Geoff Ash

Bondi Junction, NSW

***Letters to Editor do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Greens.**

snippets



As the World Cup looms ...

In December 2005, Australia's first child-labour-free soccer ball arrived in Australia. The Etiko soccer ball - Fair Trade certified - allows consumers to make a stance against the use of children in sweatshop conditions.

Unlike other balls, Etiko soccer balls are made in safe working conditions in Pakistan by adult stitchers who receive medical entitlements and a sufficient wage to provide their families with life's necessities. These wages can eliminate the need for families to send their children out to work.

Etiko also contributes to a micro-credit scheme which encourages stitchers to develop their own businesses and thereby reduce their dependence on stitching. The balls are available at shops selling fair trade products (eg: Oxfam) and can be purchased online from the New Internationalist website. Read more at <http://www.etikosports.com.au>.



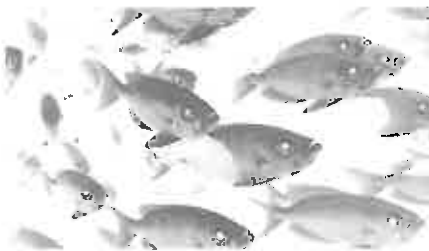
The bottle boom

The global consumption of bottled water reached 154 billion litres in 2004, up 57 percent in just five years. The United States is the world's leading consumer, with Americans drinking 26 billion litres in 2004, or approximately one glass per person every day. Italians drink the most bottled water per person, at nearly 184 litres in 2004. Some of the largest increases in total bottled water consumption have occurred in developing countries including China and India.

Transporting bottled water long distances involves burning massive quantities of fossil fuels. Nearly a quarter of all bottled water crosses national borders to reach consumers, transported by boat, train and truck. Making bottles to meet Americans' demand for bottled water requires over 1.5 million barrels of oil annually, enough to fuel some 100,000 U.S. cars for a year. Worldwide, some 2.7 million tonnes of plastic are used to bottle water each year. Yet at the same time 1.1 billion people worldwide lack a secure water supply. Read more at <http://www.earthpolicy.org/Updates/2006/Update51.htm>

Biodegradable Disposable Nappies!

At last a manufacturer has addressed that bane of environmentally-conscious parents everywhere - the disposable nappy! Swedish company Nature Boy and Girl has developed a disposable nappy which is 70 per cent biodegradable and they are now available in Australian supermarkets. Currently 2.2 million nappies go into Australian landfills every day. This will still happen but at least it won't take hundreds of years for most of them to break down.



Deep sea fishing

In 2005 Greenpeace and the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition worked together calling for a global moratorium on high seas bottom trawling.

The Fishing and Oceans resolution was debated and voted on in the United Nations General Assembly on 28 November 2005. The UN General Assembly once again called on nation states to urgently address bottom trawling's destructive impact on high seas biodiversity and called for accelerated progress. But despite renewed calls from the scientific community and a growing number of countries supporting a global moratorium on bottom trawling, the General Assembly did not advocate or propose any specific actions to protect deep sea life.

But there are indications a global moratorium will be considered more seriously at this year's UN General Assembly. In an unusual move, the UN Secretary-General will review actions states have taken to follow UN recommendations for protecting sensitive marine ecosystems (such as seamounts and cold water coral reefs) from destructive fishing, including using prohibitions. In February 2006, there was a special UN session on biodiversity, conservation and sustainable use in the high seas.

For more details go to the Greenpeace Australia Pacific site <http://www.greenpeace.org.au/> or the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition site <http://www.savethehighseas.org/index.cfm>

If you'd like to receive occasional email updates from the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition, contact Clare Henderson at clare.henderson@webone.com.au or 0419 266 110 or Lyn Goldsworthy 0412 300 642.

Kow-towing to China

Western internet providers have been accused of subverting democratic principles and freedom of speech to win favour with the Chinese government. Yahoo!, Microsoft, Google and Cisco have all been accused of various deplorable practices - closing down blog sites at the request of Chinese authorities, censoring search engine results to eliminate mention of 'democracy', 'human rights' etc, training Chinese technicians in internet censorship and user surveillance.

In particular, Yahoo! is accused of providing authorities with account-holder information on the dissident Shi Tao. He was charged with sending information to a website based in the US (via his Yahoo! email account) about Chinese Communist Party media controls. On April 27, 2005, Shi Tao was sentenced to 10 years in prison for 'providing state secrets abroad'.

Meanwhile Google has developed a new search engine Google.cn tailored to placate Chinese authorities. For example, the BBC website is unreachable through Google.cn and a search on 'Tianenman Square' directs readers to a collection of articles that condemn the pro-democracy movement! The company argues it can play a more useful role in China by participating than by boycotting it, despite the compromises involved.



Benefits of cycling

Did you know that when travel time is measured from door to door for short-distance travel (up to 5 km), bicycles are generally faster than all other modes of travel? Or that the average cost of building a car parking space in a multi-level parking station has been estimated at \$12,500 - \$14,500 compared with \$150 for providing a bike rack?

According to the Australian Bicycle Council recent studies overseas and in Australia continue to confirm the benefits, both economic and social, of increasing the number of bicycle trips that replace car trips. Read the full report which summarises the findings at http://www.abc.dotars.gov.au/Publications_Resources/benefits_of_cycling.aspx

snippets

Culture and Climate

the heat slows down one's thoughts
 is this why Australia's said to be
 uncondusive
 to culture and ideas?
 a climate suited
 to cricket, racing, drinking beer
 but does an outdoor life
 shut out all thoughtfulness?
 does brightness only thrive
 in weather cold and damp?
 could not open spaces
 unclutter minds,
 bushfire
 scorch away
 sterility of vision,
 hatch long dormant seeds,
 constant sunshine
 nurture creative flows?

Marc Marusic
 Enmore NSW

Australia bans computer game

Australia is the only country to have 'banned' a video game Marc Eckos Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure. The Classification Review Board refused to classify the game, a decision endorsed by Minister Ruddock. The reason: concerns

that the game will promote a 'criminal activity' - graffiti.

Set in a city of the future, the game features a world where freedom of expression is suppressed by a tyrannical city government. Players battle the authorities to overthrow corrupt officials using only street fighting skills and graffiti.

The Board convenor admitted that this was the first time a computer game had been refused classification for promoting criminal activity.

Given the violence, mayhem and antisocial behaviour that feature in most computer games, it seems strange that graffiti has fallen foul of the Board. Surely the subversive political context of the game wasn't a factor?



Press freedom around the world

In October 2005, Reporters Sans Frontiers (RSF) published their 2005 Worldwide Press Freedom Index http://www.rsf.org/rubrique.php?id_rubrique=554. On the whole, it showed that democracies ranked best and totalitarian and communist regimes ranked worst. Interestingly, the U.S. slipped down to 44th from 22nd in 2004. The top 20 were dominated by Europe (only two were from elsewhere). New Zealand (12th), Trinidad and Tobago (12th), Benin (25th) and South Korea (34th) are the highest-ranked countries in other continents. Australia ranked 31st on the list!



Peak oil

When will oil peak? Estimates vary. The United States Geological Survey says not for 30 years. The International Energy Agency (IEA) expects it to happen anywhere between 2013 and 2037. The London Energy Institute says 2008.

In May 2005 the IEA report 'Saving Oil in a Hurry' laid out a range of emergency oil-saving measures that oil importing countries should implement if world supplies fall by as little as one to two million barrels a day – equivalent to the disruptions caused by the 2003 Iraq war or Hurricane Katrina. These include reducing motorway speed limits by 25 per cent, shortening the working week, driving bans on certain days, free public transport and promoting car-pooling schemes. Elsewhere in the world some of these measures have already taken place. During May and June of 2005, the Philippines cut the working week for its civil servants to four days to reduce energy demand as part of a desperate attempt to reduce 300,000 barrels a day of oil imports. Read the full article 'The End of Cheap Oil'

http://www.theecologist.org/archive_detail.asp?content_id=504. Also read, '30 Steps to an Oil Free World' http://www.theecologist.org/archive_detail.asp?content_id=432

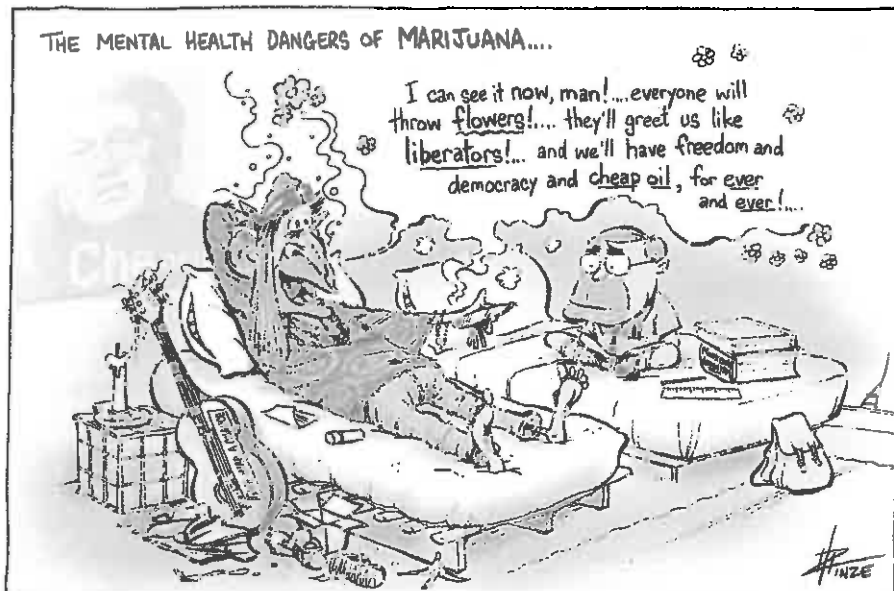


Cheam Channy released

Cambodian prisoner of conscience and opposition parliamentarian Cheam Channy was released from Phnom Penh's military prison following a pardon issued on February 5 by King Norodom Sihamoni.

'We welcome the release of Cheam Channy, who was imprisoned solely for peacefully expressing his political opinions,' said Brittis Edman, South East Asia researcher at Amnesty International. 'We hope this marks an end to the practice of using politically motivated trials to silence political dissent.'

News & Views Continued page 31



Rethinking ideas

DAVID MCKNIGHT



The power of ideas to shape societies is profound although we are largely unaware of their effect. Buried underneath people's common sense and the slogans of political parties are sets of philosophical ideas and values. These new ideas often begin with a small committed group, then filter out into the surrounding society. If they find fertile ground they can spread and transform societies.

But I am not talking about environmental ideas and Green parties. Instead, I am talking about the most powerful new political movement based on ideas in the last 20 years which has been the New Right. Few progressive people bother to think about and analyse the Right of politics - the terms 'right wing' and 'conservative' are simply words of abuse, not analysis. Yet the New Right is the force which largely calls the shots in Australia and the world and whose activities have to be challenged. In this article I want to discuss how this might be done but first I want to analyse what we are up against.

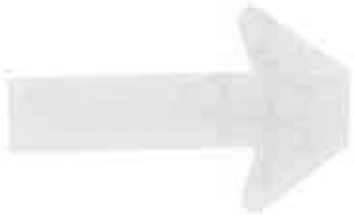
Also described as neo-liberal or 'market fundamentalist', the new Right's economic ideas support free trade, privatisation, deregulation. Its social ideas revolve largely around the individual providing for themselves - in health, education and so on. Like all deeply ideological movements (religious and political) it believes that it has discovered a magic key which explains the world and guides the path to a better life.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of this New Right is that it is a radical force. It is radical in re-shaping society along the lines of its libertarian economic ideology. And the consequences are radical. I say this for three reasons: First, it believes in the endless expansion of the economy and of production of commodities. It has no concept of 'enough'. This presents a radical challenge to the earth's carrying capacity. Second, its fixation with economic growth damages the social fabric. Human relations become more market-driven and anonymous. Working hours actually increase and the family comes under pressure. Increasingly, we live in an economy not a society. Third, it is an amoral force. Its values are commercial values and economic efficiency is its main yardstick of worth. These clash with many human values such as altruism and care for the community which are still entrenched in spite of years of cultivation of competition and self-interest.

All of these things - endless expansion, damage to community, and amorality - mean that neo liberalism is a radical force. How have people reacted to these changes? Many react in a conservative way. They want to conserve what exists. They feel uncomfortable with a libertarian ideology of individualism and the glorification of self interest.

In this article I want to argue that opponents of the new Right, including Greens, need to think about drawing on conservative attitudes and instincts as a way of re-thinking political ideas and their political appeal. Not to 'become' conservatives (in the disreputable, right wing sense) but to realise the potential of issues of security, caution, and social cohesion - with which traditional conservatives are associated. These can and should be re-framed as an agenda demanding stable jobs and communities, common values and social solidarity, rather than an agenda based on more individualism, more choice and even more freedom.

KEEP



RIGHT

Perhaps the most striking characteristic of this New Right is that it is a radical force.

The British sociologist Anthony Giddens is also one who argues the modern free market economy brings radical changes. An ever-expanding capitalism runs up against the environmental limits of the world and the freer play of markets and globalisation has the effect of making communal life less traditional, he says. The security associated with regular jobs, stable community and family life is undermined by the spread of markets beyond the economy and into society.

As a result of this radicalism, he argues, 'what might be called philosophic conservatism - a philosophy of protection, conservation and solidarity - acquires a new relevance for political radicalism today'.

The old paradigm of Right, meaning conservative, and Left, meaning radical, is eroding. A conservative frame of mind - as opposed to Big 'C' political conservatives - is not necessarily defined by the old verities of race, church and nation.

Conservative instincts often lie behind the political support for the Greens. Take the issues of genetic engineering and biotechnology. Many regard criticism of biotechnology as left-wing, but one of its thoughtful critics is the American conservative Francis Fukuyama. He

fears that continuing to apply biotechnology to humans will alter human nature and will move us into a 'post-human' stage of history. The stage may see the rise of new problems such as a genetically superior social elite, the creation of generations living well over 100 years, the possibility of new types of quasi-humans. He wonders what would happen to the notion of human dignity and equal worth of all humans. So do Greens.

Green ideas intersect with the conservative tradition in other ways. The conservative British philosopher Michael Oakeshott argued that to be conservative 'is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to utopian bliss'.

To prefer the sufficient to the superabundant could well be the motto of a society which rejects consumerism and which does not seek fulfilment through ever-increasing material goods. Frugal habits have been abandoned as a cornucopia of commodities is endlessly generated. This is common ground between Greens and conservative church figures in Australia today. And this common ground is not an accidental blip.

Tradition is central to conservatism and Green thinking. Practices handed down to us are the result of many generations of trial and error and should be valued. But as well as the traditions of humans, tradition presents itself through the ecology of the planet. The inter-dependence of living organisms which has evolved through millions of years is a tradition indeed. But the radical market ideology driven by profit attaches no value to ecological tradition.

Conservatives in this instance strive for sustainability. The conservative philosopher Professor John Gray says that there is a natural congruence between the ideas of the great British conservative Edmund Burke and green ideas. Burke saw society governed by a social contract, not as an agreement among anonymous ephemeral individuals, but as a compact between the generations of the living, the dead and those yet unborn. This conservative idea that the present generation must act as stewards of heritage, on behalf of our ancestors and to the yet unborn generations, is virtually identical to that found in the Greens.

At its heart the shared ground between conservatism and Green ideas is in scepticism towards ever-increasing progress. By contrast, Enlightenment theories of liberalism and socialism share a notion of unending progress based on the accumulation of material goods. Such theories have no concept of 'enough'.



This version of the good life and progress is understandable, since material deprivation for masses of people is still in living memory in industrial countries and is a living reality for millions in developing countries. But endless material progress on the model of advanced industrial countries cannot be applied to the rest of the world because it is simply unsustainable at a global scale.

I say all of this to try to provoke new frameworks of thinking which I see as the pre-requisite to a renewal of progressive politics at national level. I explore this more deeply in my recent book *Beyond Right and Left*.

On the other hand, some Greens supporters see their party as the rebirth of a defeated Left. They frame their political appeal around traditional radical Left watchwords. They emphasise it is not just an environmental party but one which stands for human rights, trade union rights and radical egalitarianism. In this mixture the genuinely new and profound ideas on the environment are sometimes in danger of being lost. This plays into the hands of critics who label the Greens 'watermelons': green on the outside and red on the inside.

But the Greens is not a rebirth of the Left nor should it be. Of course, privately owned corporations, as they are constituted, are major vehicles of environmental destruction. They are very powerful, they encourage over consumption and public needs are sacrificed to private profit. Massive changes are needed to economic activity. But abolishing private ownership and abolishing the

market (ie. socialism) is not the answer, even if it were possible.

The clash between labour and capital is not fundamental to a Green analysis of the world. Rather, the clash is between humanity and the natural world's need to sustain life.

The economic battle is not to redistribute wealth to create equality nor to abolish the market but to make the economy sustainable. Some environmental thinkers have seized on the market mechanism as one way of allocating scarce resources, by attributing a much higher value to water, coal, oil and other finite resources. And some private corporations are profiting from creating the building blocks of a sustainable society.

If the Greens are to consolidate their gains and expand, they need to recognise that part of their message is a conservative one. It is deeply attractive to certain conservative instincts in the broad public and this should not be a matter for embarrassment but for celebration.

The image of green politics as left-wing and radical not only drives away potential supporters, it more importantly straitjackets new thinking into old categories.

David McKnight is the author of 'Beyond Right and Left' (Allen & Unwin, 2005). He teaches in the humanities faculty, University of Technology, Sydney. david.mcknight@uts.edu.au

Searching for Australian values: Work and Family



Barbara Pocock

The question of how paid work fits with a family life garners plenty of headlines in Australian newspapers at present. The discussion has many dimensions. Should parents (usually mothers) go to work and use institutional care for their children or stay at home and be proper mothers? Are we a society that has gone work-mad in pursuit of money and consumption, letting the quality of home life fall by the wayside? Are increasing hours of work the result of greedy workers or greedy bosses? How will the newly amended workplace relations laws affect work and family balance? Is the work-family debate one that leaves out the increasing number of childless Australians who will nimbly make their way, care-free, into a new tomorrow of high income and happy independence?

All political poles in this debate attempt to stake a claim for family values - for the sacred place of families in Australian life, for the sanctity of children and the parent-child bond, and for the value of care. But not all the values that lurk just below the surface of these positions are the same and there are plenty of contradictions in evidence. For example, the Howard Government wants women to increase their participation in paid work - to meet prospective labour shortages and reduce the 'dependence' of sole mothers on welfare. At the same time it has turned our childcare system over to the market and compromised the provision of planned, affordable, accessible childcare. The consequence is ballooning government expenditure, inadequate supply, high costs, and some declines in the quality of care. Meanwhile the corporatisation of care has proved highly profitable for a few large companies. The labour market participation of women is now visibly constrained by gaps in social infrastructure like childcare, exposing serious weaknesses in a market approach to meeting what I call the work/care collision. **The market road to work-family balance has a few potholes.** And these are evident in areas well

"The market road to work-family balance has a few potholes"

beyond childcare. The market needs moderating and careful management if it is to be part of the solution on work and family.

What values should underpin a systematic response to the tensions around work and family in Australia? In his very stimulating book about values and political framing 'Don't Think of an Elephant', George Lakoff challenges the broad church of progressive thinkers and actors who demarcate their sub-groupings according to hierarchies of problem/solution, as environmentalists, feminists, socio-economic analysts and so on. He points out that those on the other side of the values debate have given up such niceties as part of their successful neo-liberal project. They concentrate on general agreement at the more macro level, and then set about framing issues in ways that make their values difficult to contest. This is the challenge for the opponents of neo-liberalism, in all their sub-cultures.

Interestingly, it is through the work and family debate that one of the major contradictions of the neo-liberal project comes home to roost. The sale of our labour, through a labour market increasingly greedy for our time and energy, eats into our capacity to reproduce ourselves. This 'eating into' undermines the very basis of market production and consumption. Without workers, the market can neither produce nor consume. Declining birth rates, increasing hours of work and work-related health issues have important implications for economic health as well as social sustainability.

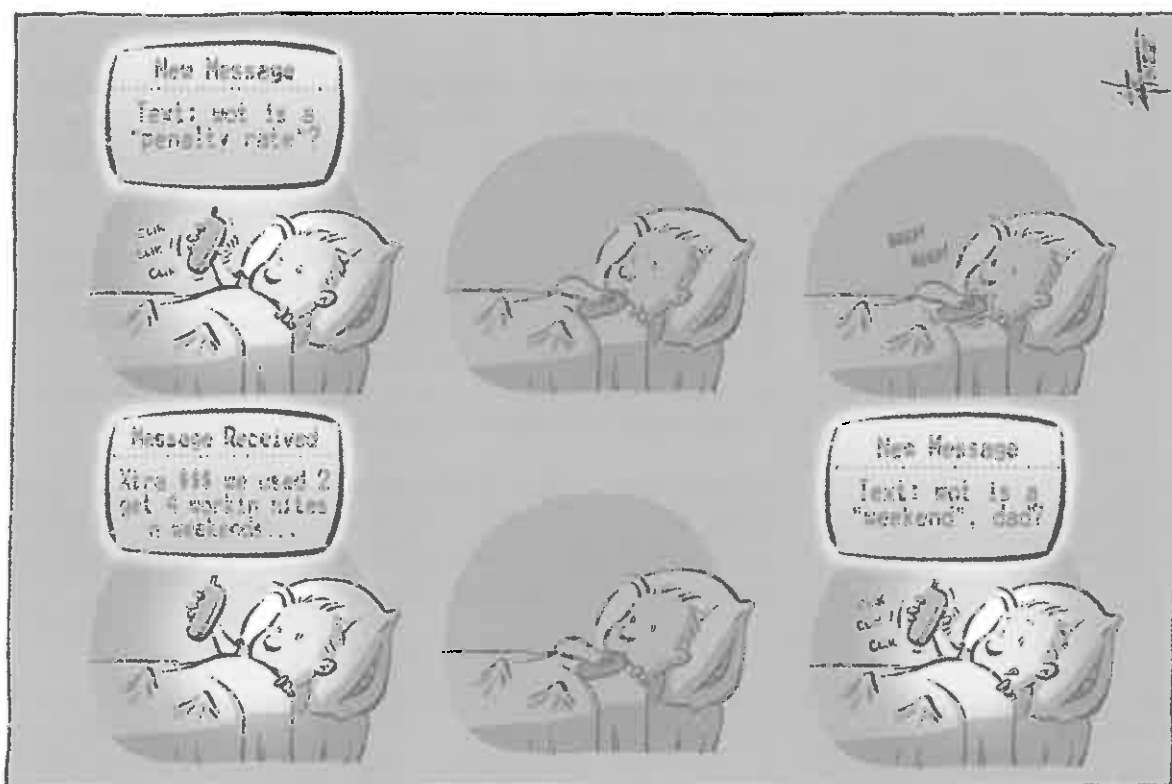
On the work and family issue, several values are important.

Firstly, the family (in all its diversity) is important - too important to abandon to conservatives. Most of us live in a family, despite the vigorous critique of its oppressive

possibilities - and they are significant. Most individuals live in families and even the footloose and carefree postmodern childless individual is likely to strike periods in life when they are trying to earn a living whilst also responsible for the care of others, whether partner, mother, child or neighbour.

The second value is that care matters and that humans in a civilised rich society like ours should be able to make arrangements to accommodate intermittent periods of work and care, or their combination. This requires social investment and social infrastructure, alongside the private investments made by employers and individuals. The market is inadequate to the task. We need social arrangements that allow individuals to smooth out the lumpy highs and lows of income and time variability. There are moments in our lives when we need a lot of time (when a child is born or a partner is sick), when we need a lot of time and money (when children are young) and when we have a lot of time but need more money than we can earn (in retirement). Public investment, social institutions like superannuation and paid leave, and common minimal labour standards can ensure this smoothing out, with valuable dividends for workers and those who depend on them.

Thirdly, all children deserve good care. This should be the primary goal of a national early childhood education and care system. Early childhood development should not be focused on economic goals or be a matter of luck. Private care solutions, even for the very rich, have their hazards: all children need a diversity of relationships, quality education and developmental opportunities, and social interaction. But private care solutions are a bad road for societies and especially for middle-income earners and the poor. They amplify inequality and require long term, large public expenditures for remediation. They suppress human potential. Australia can do much better on this



than it does at present. This should be a primary goal of a progressive system of work and care arrangements.

Fourthly, there is a role for community wide standards in relation to work arrangements which we know to be socially damaging. We require people to wear safety belts to protect their health, constraining their individual liberty. In the same way we have to constrain people's capacities to work in ways that are hazardous to social and personal health - even when they want to. Beyond the obvious issues related to health and safety, these standards should reach to working hours. Long and unsocial working hours create a new higher expectation of 'proper' workers who should by implication put work first. These hours make it hard for carers to be 'proper workers' on these terms and they are hazardous to families, children and to workers themselves. They put workers' health at risk as well as the health of the people they share the home, workplace and road with.

Fifthly, work arrangements should be fair. This requires minimal standards (including a living wage and decent job security), as well as the enforcement of standards. Fairness requires a recognition that pay should relate to skills and contribution, not to gender, age or the capacity

of the employer to pay. A decent work and family balance depends on a predictable, liveable income in the first instance. This is increasingly at risk under new workplace regulations, especially for those with weak bargaining power. Hardly fair.

In his analysis of political values, Lakoff refers to Orwellian language: whenever a political interest mobilises Orwellian language (that is language that is the opposite of reality) it signals a weakness of argument. The language of the 'Fair Pay Commission' and 'Workchoices' are examples of Orwellian language. Reclaiming values of fairness and social sustainability - contradicted by neo-liberalism - remains a major challenge for Australians who really care about families, good jobs and the possibility that they can be combined without loss of quality of life or long term well being.

Barbara Pocock is Director of the Centre for Work and Life at the University of South Australia and author of 'The Work/Life Collision' (2003) and 'The Labour Market Ate My Babies: Work, Children and a Sustainable Future' (out soon), both published by Federation Press.

Values? Whose Values?

In a publication commemorating ten years in power, John Howard has branded some Australian Muslims as unassimilable extremists, thanks to their commitment to jihad and attitudes to women, which are 'out of line' with the 'Australian mainstream'.

When the comments were made public, he hastened to assure us that his remarks had preceded the Cronulla race riot: 'I was not trying to make some kind of tawdry political point, it is a view that I have held for some time'.

Golly, it's a relief that the Prime Minister of Australia was not just jumping on a bandwagon set rolling by a bunch of neo-Nazi thugs, responding to broadcaster Alan Jones and rallying under the ensign of Blinky Bill. But we already knew that his views preceded the riots. He, not the rioters, led the bandwagon. The summer of 2005-6 only manifested ideas he had been steadily pressing for half a decade.

He coaxed us to Islamaphobia under the respectable-sounding heading of border security in 2001: 'I don't want people like that in Australia', he complained, as his government falsely asserted that Middle Eastern asylum seekers had thrown their children overboard.

After the torching of a Brisbane mosque, also in 2001, he expressed sympathy to the community concerned, but it came heavily qualified:

If their loyalty is to Australia as is ours, and their commitment is to this country, we must not allow our natural anger at the extremes of Islam . . . to spill over onto Islamic people generally.

By purporting to know the hearts of part of the population ('us') while questioning the loyalty and commitment of another ('them'), he drew sharp divisions between Australians. And he placed himself on the naturally angry, unquestionably patriotic, non-Muslim side.

Add the controversies about Muslim women's dress, the 2002 Ramadan raids on Muslim homes (producing much fear but no convictions) and his muted response to the Cronulla riots—born, he said, not out of racism, but from too many people, too much alcohol and 'an accumulated sense of grievance—the full extent of which I don't pretend to know'. It was an updated version of a tried-and-true formula, first made famous when, instead of denouncing Pauline Hanson's anti-Aboriginal and anti-Asian views as racist, he said he 'understood' the 'resentment' that fuelled them.

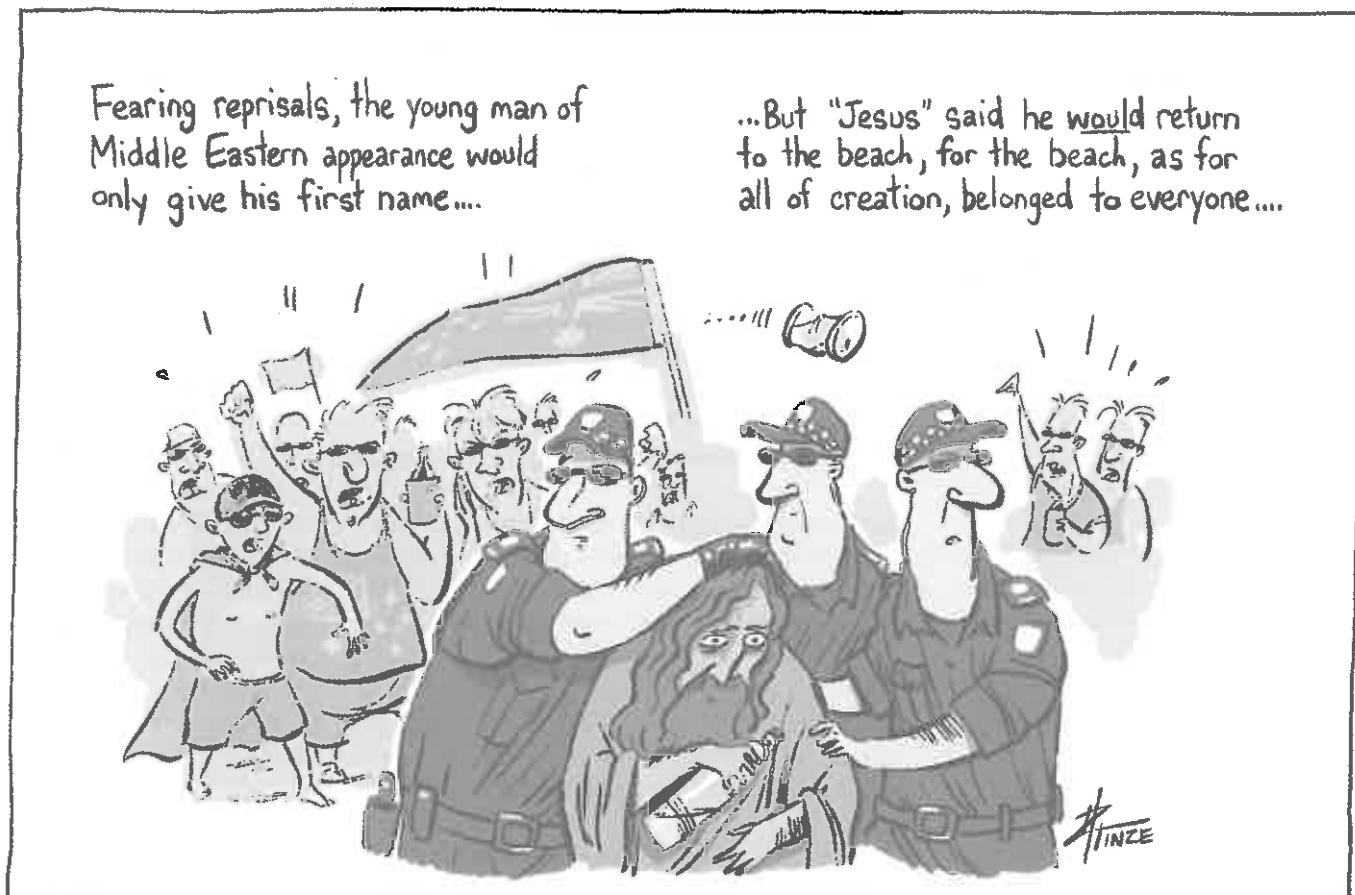
Howard's Muslim worries can be set against repeated depictions of Australia as 'Judeo-Christian'. From urging more nativity scenes in department stores, to explaining the drift to state-backed Christian schools by chiding state schools for their lack of 'values', to hailing Jesus as 'the most significant figure in human history' (whatever happened to the 'Judeo-?'), when Howard paints a big picture, Australian society is a stained-glass window.

Never mind that fewer than one in ten claim to be weekly churchgoers, the mantle of Christian (or 'Judeo-Christian') values falls on people for whom faith is largely a distant memory.

Consequently, it can stand for almost anything. And in John Howard's Australia, it has become code for social conservatism.



Marian Maddox



In the recent debate over RU486, and earlier examples like euthanasia, gay marriage and the right of the states to restrict single and lesbian women's access to IVF, the 'Judeo-Christian' tag implied that the nation's religious orientation supported the conservative position.

In his eye-opening *Playing God: Ethics and Faith*, Australian theologian Andrew Dutney cites numerous surveys showing that many Christians, practising as well as nominal, are in fact likely to support rights to abortion, euthanasia and other 'controversial' bioethical topics. Yet the association between 'Christian' values and social conservatism has become conventional wisdom. Of a newspaper claim that 'not one dissentient Christian voice has been raised in favour of any form of euthanasia', Dutney remarks, 'The remarkable thing about this statement is not just that it is false but that so many people seem to think it is true'.

"when Howard paints a big picture, Australian society is a stained-glass window."

How do we explain this exceptional rhetorical achievement? A recurrent theme in much recent Australian political commentary is the quest for lost 'values'. Once, nearly everyone had 'values'. Now we have lost them—to secularism, or postmodernism, or maybe the market—and, without them, drift helplessly.

Unsure exactly what 'values' are or where they come from, but only that we need more, Australians are said to be looking to churches, even if the allegiance doesn't extend to actually turning up on Sundays. Secular Australia seems open to the suggestion that 'values' mean 'Christian values' and 'Christian values' mean 'conservative'.

The ALP has tried to respond by sending Kevin Rudd out with sound-bites reminding us that 'Jesus is not the Liberal Member for Nazareth Central' and 'God is not a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Liberal Party'. But he's missing the point: not many Australians are terribly interested in God (and of those who are, many don't vote Liberal).

The people who need to be persuaded—the people Howard's religious positioning is aimed at—are the great, secular bulk, who know little about religion, probably don't care, but who want to know their schools, communities and nation are grounded in 'values'. Used for the last couple of decades to hearing an economically brow-beaten Left justifying its policies in terms of pragmatism and international competitiveness, Australians deserve an alternative story about where we might be heading.

During the last federal election, the Christian Democrats repeatedly denounced the Greens as 'pagan'. Yet, apart from the Christian Democrats and Family First, the Greens romp home as the party whose federal parliamentary representation has included by far the biggest proportion of practising Christians—just think of former WA Greens Senators Jo Vallentine and Christabel Chamarette and former MHR for Cunningham Michael Organ. (In 2001, the Australian found only sixteen per cent of federal MPs overall claiming regular churchgoing).

But, more than that, the Greens are beautifully positioned to respond to the broader societal unease that 'we need values'. Unlike other parties of the Left at the moment, the Greens have a clear, readily-graspable story about the kind of community we want to be. It's a story that can appeal to religious and non-religious alike, grounded in consistent values. Instead of relying on some mocked-up 'clash of civilisations', it appeals to our shared humanity, and addresses our shared fate. Responsibility to future generations, promoting sharing instead of greed and peace instead of violence—now there's a big picture with room for everyone.

Marion Maddox is Reader in Religious Studies at Victoria University Wellington and author of *God Under Howard: The rise of the religious right in Australian politics* (Allen & Unwin 2005)

2006 is fast becoming a catalyst year for the Australian Greens. It is a year that will see the implementation of the national strategic plan and all the endeavours associated with it. I am pleased to report that Party members, staff and office bearers around the country have already made an impressive indent in the initial To-Do list for 2006.

The Australian Greens strategic plan offers an unprecedented opportunity for Greens members around the country to engage in a meaningful and direct manner with the national body, while participating and engaging at the vitally important local level.

A dedicated space has been set aside in this edition of 'Green' to communicate important information about the Strategic Plan to the membership. Hence, I will not elaborate further, other than to say I invite all members of the Greens across the country to participate actively in the implementation of the plan.

A few important initiatives have been implemented in recent months in a move to improve communication, functionality and accountability within the Party. It is important that you as a member are aware of these changes which have been designed to help all members.

We have initiated a new 'Notes from National' e-bulletin which will be sent seasonally to keep all members of the Australian Greens informed and engaged with what is happening nationally.

Three new roles have been created for Australian Greens Coordinating Group (AGCG) members. Marg Rasa has been tasked with the role of Working Group Liaison, and shall be actively supporting and communicating with all national working groups to help them meet their objectives. Gurm Sekhon (Deputy Secretary) shall perform the function of ensuring that all office bearers, MPs, staff and working group convenors submit their reports for national meetings. Stewart Jackson (Deputy Convenor) shall be performing the role of supporting host cities for national meetings, providing logistical support and advice. Please support these office bearers and position holders in their new roles, while taking advantage of the support they offer.

In order to improve the ability of states and territories to engage in informed discussion prior to national meetings, we have established new cut-off dates for papers and reports. There shall now be two distributions scheduled before each meeting. The first will include all papers and proposals for the meeting and is scheduled 6 weeks prior to the meeting. A second distribution will occur 3 weeks prior to the meeting, and will be limited to reports and responses/amendments arising from the initial distribution. It is our hope that this increase in time for proposals to be considered at the grassroots level will increase the engagement of members around the country.

On the topic of members, I would like to take a moment to highlight an issue that has caused me some concern since taking up my role as National Convenor a few months ago. I have received contact from a number of long-term members who have been considering allowing their memberships to lapse. This was not due to disillusionment with the Party nor a change in ideological views, but rather an issue of guilt. It seems several members from a range of states feel that, as they are not attending branch meetings, taking on office bearer roles or standing as candidates, they are not serving any purpose in the Greens. I would like to take this opportunity to publicly acknowledge that every member of the Greens is playing an important role within the Party. Members can contribute by writing letters to the editor; being a party delegate; or by simply paying membership fees, keeping us registered as a Party and handing out HTVs every few years on Election Day. You are all valued and appreciated.

Finally, I want to thank all those members of the national working groups who have been enduring a numerous array of long but extremely productive phone link ups in recent months, and to all those members who have supported me in my first few months as Convenor.



Juanita Wheeler
Convenor, Australian Greens
convenor@greens.org.au

ACT *Looking Forward*

We've had a big start to 2006 in the ACT with a number of activities keeping us occupied and focused on the future including...

- a very well attended facilitation and consensus decision making workshop for members – with expertise generously donated by a member and supporter
- a new and improved members' website allowing for discussion forums and better ways for distributing information
- a regional meeting attended by members from four local NSW Greens groups, where we discussed common issues and opportunities to work together and agreed to future bi-annual meetings to which all regional Greens groups are welcome
- an initial discussion forum to plan our focus and activities for the next three years, which we'll be finalising over the coming few weeks and
- our Assembly team have used the Dec-Jan break to initiate 'Politics in the Pub'. (Unfortunately the pub wasn't big enough for the level of interest, so they're looking for a bigger venue - but what a great 'problem' to have!)

We've employed a new office manager, Tully Fletcher. Tully is also one of our delegates and both founder and co-convenor of the ANU Greens group.

And there is more

- Greenschool is coming to us in April – we hope that many of you will join us for some really interesting workshops and speakers, and
- members' breakfasts with Senator Christine Milne on some sitting weeks.

Don't forget that we share our office with the Australian Greens, so if you're in Canberra, do pop in and say 'Hi'.

Helen Woittiez: *ACT Greens convenor*

NSW *Building community capacity*

With twelve months until the next State election in NSW, preselection for the Upper House is well underway. Eight candidates have covered over 3,000 kilometres to speak with members at eight meet-the-candidates forums throughout the State. On current polling, one seat is safe, another is probable and a third is a slight chance. Local groups will soon open preselection for the 93 Lower House seats and then start activating their campaign teams.

Our focus continues on building community capacity. The big State-related issues include water, transport, planning, overdevelopment, education, health services, landclearing and climate change and the Greens have positive, practical solutions to take out to the community.

We experienced a campaign win recently when the Lemma Government announced the mothballing of the proposed

desalination plant in southern Sydney. Climate change remains a campaign priority with new t-shirts, stickers and more than a dozen workshops being organised with the assistance of local groups. We are also building credibility in coal-producing communities as the only party talking about real solutions of clean, renewable energy and long-term employment.

The NSW Greens are excited about hosting National Council in late March. As Sydney is big and expensive, we encourage anyone requiring a billet to contact our office on 02 9519 0877 or office@nsw.greens.org.au.

Lesia de Leau: *Convenor, The Greens NSW*

QLD *New staff, new groups, new campaigns*

The Queensland Greens are in the process of employing our first staff members to complement our office honorarium. We are set to fill three part-time roles including office manager, branch and member networker and campaign co-ordinator. This will see the office well prepared for an impending state election – a great achievement.

Branches have started entering into discussions about the State Election and some have begun candidate pre-selections. Within the coming months the Queensland Greens will be focusing on our two primary issues campaigns: Proportional Representation and Climate Change.

Queensland Greens members are embracing the idea of Working Groups with an active Greenscheme Working Group and Human Rights Working Group. An official launch of the Human Rights Working Group is set for March and we hope it and the group's ongoing efforts will help raise awareness of the work the Queensland Greens are doing in this area, particularly in relation to policy and direct action.

Roll-out of the much anticipated fundraising strategy Greenscheme is set for March. Queensland Greens have just launched an online fundraiser. Purchase wellness organic products at www.qldgreens.mifundraiser.com.

Peace to all around the country and good luck with your various issues and elections.

Elissa Jenkins: *Acting Convenor, Queensland Greens*

SA *In election mode*

The SA Greens election campaign got under way with a bang on Saturday 12 February. A full day of activity started with a march through the city streets to the campaign launch on the steps of Parliament House at 11.00. On the way to North Terrace we passed through crowded Chinatown, waving auspicious Green flags, mingling with stallholders and Chinese New Year revellers.

Once we got to Parliament House, Bob Brown opened the campaign, supported by Legislative Council lead candidate Mark Parnell and a crowd of House of Assembly candidates and supporters. Most of the 47 lower house candidates

were in attendance; creating a colourful backdrop to the campaign launch.

After lunch we returned to the South West Adelaide Community Centre for a three hour workshop on 'preparing for polling day' for candidates and supporters. After sharing our collective experience and wisdom, some rested for a few hours while others went down to Fowler's Live, one of Adelaide's premier entertainment venues, to make preparations for the campaign launch gig.

The bands started with Krysalis at 7.00 and a good crowd soon gathered to hear Bob launch the campaign and break the good news about the rescue of Recherche Bay. The lower house candidates were introduced, the green ribbon was cut and the party of the party started in earnest. The atmosphere was very upbeat and the crowd rocked to the unlikely-titled Thunderbox Carbunkle and the Lonely Cosmonauts, fast becoming a favourite band for the Greens in SA.

A great day for the start of a great campaign.

Kevin Phelan: *Convenor, SA Greens*

TAS *An intense four-week campaign*

I'm writing this report just after the calling of a snap Tasmanian state election for March 18. By the time Green magazine is published, the election will be over and (hopefully) the result clear. But right now we are now in full campaign mode.

The timing is great for us, with energy levels high and all planning of strategy and publicity completed. Recent polling has placed our state-wide vote at around the 22% mark, and suggests that we may well attract more votes than both the Labor Party and the Liberal Party in the Hobart-centred electorate of Denison. Much media attention is being given to the likelihood of a minority government result, and we are giving consideration to the options that will be open to us if we are in a balance of power situation. We hope to have all four of our sitting MHAs returned, and to gain an additional seat in Denison and one in Braddon in the northwest of the state.

Our slogan is 'This time, vote Green', and we have prepared radio and television advertising focusing on this theme. We are very excited going into the campaign. Hopefully we'll still have enough energy left after four weeks of electioneering to make it to National Council!

Karen Cassidy: *Convenor, Tasmanian Greens*

VIC *Elections, elections ... and an international study!*

Strong support for Greens candidates resulted in the election of five new Green local councillors in two regional and three metropolitan councils in the local government elections in November. Councillor Janet Rice was returned in Maribrynong with 37% of the primary vote and she was elected Mayor on 30 November. Janet is Victoria's second Green mayor and Australia's fourth.

Preselections have been completed in four of the new Victorian upper house regions (UHRs). There are eight regions - five metropolitan based and three regional, each comprising eleven of the 88 lower house districts. Each region will be represented by five members, elected by proportional representation from approximately 407,000 electors. The new regions have been prosaically named Eastern Metropolitan, Northern Metropolitan, South Eastern Metropolitan, Southern Metropolitan, Western Metropolitan and Western Victoria, Eastern Victoria and Northern Victoria.

Candidates pre-selected so far are Greg Barber for the Northern Metropolitan Region, Bill Pemberton for the Eastern Metropolitan Region, Marcus Ward in the Western Victoria Region, and Sue Pennicuik for the Southern Metropolitan Region. Pre-selections for the remaining four UHRs are well under way and should be completed soon. Preselections for the lower house districts are under way where the UHR candidates have been preselected.

The change to the electoral boundaries and the introduction of PR for electing representatives to the Legislative Council has improved democracy in Victoria and gives the Greens a very good chance of electing members to the upper house on 25 November this year.

Sue Pennicuik: *Convenor, Australian Greens, Victoria*

JOIN THE GREENS

To become a Greens member either:

- Fill out and return the coupon to receive a membership form in the post OR
- Go 'on-line' to the Greens website: www.greens.org.au and select your state or territory

For further membership information call **1800 017 011**

Yes, please send me a membership form

name

address

city state postcode

email

Post or fax to your local state or territory party office
(see page 16 for listing)

It's hard to believe, but it's almost 12 months since I started in the National Office. Our role has evolved considerably with the arrival of the Greens' National Officer Mark Jeanes. Our main focus is still threefold: to administer the functions critical to the Greens nationally; to facilitate communication between state branches; and to be the Greens' nationally recognised 'front door'. Through the inception of the Strategic Plan and all the activities associated with it, the contribution to the party we can make has been magnified greatly. It's been a privilege to assist in this, and very heartening to be in at the start of a party-building exercise which will weld us into an ever-stronger alternative not only nationally, but at state and local levels.

So much has happened. I've received a lot of public interest in our policies, particularly on the environment, abortion, drugs and the death penalty. The last item was mainly related to the tragic fate of Van Nguyen. In association with Bob Brown's office, we arranged a non-partisan vigil at the Singapore High Commission attended by 200 people. It was probably the saddest day I've experienced in the last decade.

Over the last year I've been thrilled to be part of the Editorial Board of Green. My term is now over, but I have been very impressed with the new vibrancy and feel of our national magazine. I have also been very busy managing our other main vehicle for communication – www.greens.org.au. Our new web editor, Elena Jeffreys has been supplying excellent features and we're working to make the current site as dynamic as possible. But you'll see a major change in a few months' time – we've started a major redevelopment project, the tender process for which has been a major work item. The new site will give us the very best political party site in Australia, placing us well for the next few years – and it will open up plenty of opportunities for contributions from Greens across the country.

There's so much more to describe: the SA and Tasmanian elections, PABX failures and replacements (and being able to cut phone bills in half), exciting new contacts, national meetings, volunteer tales and a request for the Greens' UFO policy and a heap of other things. Unfortunately I'm out of space – but if you'd like to drop me a line (02 6162 0036 or greenoffice@greens.org.au) I'd be delighted to talk.

Sean Downes
Manager, National Office

Get involved – it's **YOUR** party!

NATIONAL POLICY REVIEW 2006

Make a difference... it's what the Greens are all about! Have your say on this and many other important policy questions in the Australian Greens National Policy Review 2006. It's important. It's interesting. It's fun.

All members welcome! And we have 52 policies for you to get your teeth into - more than enough for everyone! Just drop an email to your friendly State Policy Co-ordinator:

ACT	Kate Taylor	kate.taylor@parliament.act.gov.au
NSW	Mary-Jane Gleeson	policy@nsw.greens.org.au
NT	Sue McKinnon	convenor@nt.greens.org.au
QLD	Greg George	gggreens@bigpond.net.au
SA	Dianne Atkinson	policy@sa.greens.org.au
TAS	Karen Cassidy	convenor@tas.greens.org.au
VIC	Elliot Gingold	gingold@netspace.net.au
WA	Margo Beilby	mikmarg@inet.net.au

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Arts & Communications
Foreign Affairs
Planning & Infrastructure

Hello there from the Global Greens desk, to which I am now delighted to welcome our new international co-secretary, Bob Muntz. Bob generously agreed to share the workload with me this year.

Ingrid Betancourt

In November 2005, 14 Greens from 10 countries gathered in Bogota, Colombia for the first ever coordinated Global Greens action. February 23 marks the fourth anniversary of the kidnapping of Ingrid Betancourt, Greens presidential candidate, and her campaign manager Clara Rojas by FARC guerillas in Colombia. (FARC are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. The taking of hostages is a criminal act under Colombian and international law.)

Over 5000 hostages are still missing, and Colombia is second only to Sudan in its three million strong number of refugees. Ingrid has insisted that she will not accept a negotiated solution that does not release all the FARC hostages. The campaign is thus not simply for the human rights of our esteemed colleague but a campaign against the war itself and all that goes with it!

The meeting agreed on a number of actions during this election year, including:

- Pressing for the implementation of the recommendations in a Report of the UN High Commission on Human Rights as it meets again in Geneva in March.
- The sending of a Green Ambassador to Bogota and the creation of an observer mission for the elections this year.
- Support for the Uwa and other Indigenous people in a caravan of dignity.
- Creation of an international network against the repression of environmentalists and Greens (the Green Shield).

Poland

The Polish Green Party is also resisting repression of their own, against the current rise of nationalistic and conservative forces there. In November many of their members who are gay and feminist activists were arrested with brutal force for defying the ban on a peaceful march, the March of Tolerance and Equality. They sent us a request: 'Send e-mails to your local Polish embassy, find out what's going on here, before it's too late and we regress into a police state!' Sound familiar?

Italy

Italian elections are scheduled for around April 2006. Press reports now caricature the Italian Greens as the 'no' party. No nuclear! No GM food! No to an alpine high-speed rail link and no to plans for the world's longest bridge! "It is a caricature but there is a value in 'no' - no to corruption, no to war, no to swindles - it's a healthy 'no'," Alfonso Pecoraro Scanio said. "We also defend saying 'no' to the disastrous things that some people want to do to this country."

The Italian Greens are asking us to put notices in newsletters and web sites encouraging Italians overseas to register to vote for the elections.

On to Nairobi

This year the global issues working group will begin to take shape, beginning with work towards the Ingrid Betancourt campaign and preparations for the 2nd Global Greens Conference, hopefully to be held in Nairobi in January 2008. Wangari Maathai of the Green Belt Movement, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, will be involved.

No bounds to the work ahead: campaigning, policy work, global networking and support for our colleagues overseas – but endlessly fascinating. If you would like to get involved, or would like more information by joining the GiG email list, send an email to myself or Bob: Miriam Solomon <miriams@netspace.net.au>, Bob Muntz <rmuntz@vtown.com.au>.



Miriam Solomon





Mohammed El-Said

He is a Green. His car is covered with stickers supporting such issues as saving wilderness and the rights of workers. He regularly goes to protests such as one recently called against a rodeo on the grounds of its cruelty to animals. Nothing unusual about this you say. You know a dozen people just like him. Well, this man just happens to also be a Muslim and was recently elected to one of the most conservative local councils in the country – the West Coast Council based on the Tasmanian town of Queenstown. His name is Mohammed El-Said (Mo to all who know him) and he is so popular in the area that he was elected with almost a quota in his own right in November 2005.

Mo was born in Wynyard, Tasmania in 1950. His parents are Christians and can trace their family background in Tasmania to 1818 on his father's side. Mo left Tasmania when he was nineteen to move to Melbourne where he pursued a nursing career. He converted to Islam in the late eighties during a trip to Egypt because he was attracted by its strong sense of family and the older-style values of the Muslim families he met. The 'El-Said' part of his name, which he adopted at this time, means 'from the south'.

He came back briefly to Tasmania at the time the Franklin Dam campaign was heating up. Although he did not take part in the campaign, he cycled around Tasmania for five weeks at the time and was amazed when people in various parts of the state would yell 'f*****g greenie' at him as he cycled past. After deciding to move back to Tasmania for good in 1989, Mo decided he really was a greenie and increasingly supported their causes, joining the Greens several years later. A turning point for him, he says, was taking frequent trips from Queenstown to Hobart on Nursing Federation business and becoming acutely aware of the beautiful wilderness areas along the way and, more tragically, the rate at which they were disappearing because of clear-felling. He was also appalled at the level of water pollution in Queenstown.

In late 2005 a friend persuaded him to run for the West Coast Council on a Greens ticket with him. The friend had to pull out through ill health but Mo continued in the contest and ended up, to the amazement of everyone in the Hobart tally room, winning a seat. There is no doubt that his job as a nurse, with the large number of people he came into contact with, was a big part of his success. However, everyone I spoke to insisted that Mo was one of those people it was impossible not to like, even if you didn't necessarily agree with his policies. He makes a point of talking with everyone, even the loggers and developers, and treats their views with respect. Even so, he will be out letterboxing and handing out leaflets for the Greens candidate Tim Morris in the Tasmanian state election due on March 18.

Mohammed El-Said spoke with Green editor Drew Hutton.

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GREENS OPTIMISM

I've had a very positive reaction to my article (last issue) on the Greens aiming for government. What a joy it is to be part of a new political movement that wants to displace the materialistic ethic now dominant in world politics. There is a widely held and healthy view in our Greens membership that we must not be frightened by power and leave it to the old parties.

ANCIENT CERTITUDE

I enjoyed opening Wollongong's Tibetfest exhibition of Karma Phuntsok's brilliant artworks. His work enmeshes Buddhist thinking, Aboriginal creativity and the destructiveness of Mao's materialistic dictum that power comes from the barrel of a gun – a thinking now taken on by George W Bush. Karma Phuntsok fled Tibet as a boy, was a refugee in India and now paints in the Australian bush at Kyogle, NSW. His depiction of the three interdependent deities of Compassion, Wisdom and Power reiterates, for me, an interplay which is also central to Greens politics.

RECHERCHE BAY

After four months of intense negotiations Recherche Bay's historic forested peninsula (see back cover) was saved. Dick and Pip Smith's magnanimity and love of the natural planet, the Tasmanian Land Conservancy's readiness to take on the ownership, and the Vernon brothers' agreement to keep the sale option open even as the schedule for their roading and logging plans passed, combined to ensure the astounding place will be protected forever.

CONSTITUTIONAL OVERRIDE

In February, parliament – the Government backed by Labor – overrode Australia's Constitution to give John Howard the power to call out troops to fire on Australians assembled and a threat to property (e.g. a Franklin Dam, parliamentary fence or concentration camp for

asylum seekers). Section 119 of our Constitution forbids this unless a state government specifically calls on the Commonwealth. On behalf of the Greens, I vigorously opposed the legislation. Labor voted with the Coalition to stop a Greens amendment to ensure either house of parliament could overrule the abuse of this new prime ministerial power. The press gallery, diverted by AWB and RU486, ignored the matter altogether. You can find out more about it on my website www.bobbrown.org.au

A SPECIAL NIGHT

Once again I get home to Liffey round midnight. I'll be off on a four hour drive to the next function by 8am. But in between I'll be regaled by the moon and Milky Way, the wallabies on the moonlit meadow, the boobook owl in the forest underneath the craggy bluff and a sleep where once my mother and father put their heads to rest. And as the kettle steams on the morning hearth, I'll think of everyone I share the Green future with – of you – and enjoy the dawn which brings such uplift to our spirits.

WIELANGTA

Heroic scientists have been cross-examined by Forestry Tasmania's barristers in the Hobart Federal Court which is hearing my charge that rare creatures in Tasmania's Wielangta forest should not have forests cut down around them. Costs of more than \$200,000 so far will more than double by the end of 4 more weeks of hearings in May. Our marvellous auction in Melbourne's Christine Abrahams gallery raised over \$70,000 to help pay the mounting costs. Anyone thinking the sheer cost of the case will force me (us – so many people are aiding this vital case) to back out should think again. Logging species towards extinction has to be tackled by us rather than lamented by our children.

All my best

Bob



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Bob Brown

